

Planning and affordable rural housing

The limits to rational policy

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Abstract

This PhD thesis looks at how UK Government policies to deliver more affordable housing in rural areas are being implemented – whether the policies are succeeding, and the social and micro-spatial effects of the policies.

The thesis reviews literature which identifies that there is a particular problem with housing affordability in rural areas, and that since the introduction of national planning advice designed to increase affordable housing provision in 1991, delivery in rural England has been consistently and significantly less than the established need.

Based on data from five case study local authorities in different regions of England, the thesis concludes that the shortfall in affordable housing provision is not just a technical problem with policy implementation, but in part due to the exercise of three dimensions of power by rural elites interested in the “containment of urban England”. Those rural elites exercise power as follows:

- 1) The first dimension of power: focusing on decision making, this strand of the thesis argues that decisions made with regard to planning for housing reflect the locus of power in the decision-making process, and that power lies with urban local authorities and anti-development rural elites.
- 2) The second dimension of power: focusing on non-decision making, this strand argues that the way that planning policy is made facilitates its domination by those urban and anti-development interests, at both the regional and local level.
- 3) The third dimension of power: focusing on how power is exercised by the shaping of needs/desires by the powerful, this strand of the thesis uses theories of social constructionism and discourse analysis to question whether the failures identified in strands 1) and 2) arise because society as a whole, and the planning system specifically, does not recognise at an ideological level that it is failing.

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Abbreviations and glossary

ADC	Alnwick District Council	One of the case study local authorities for this thesis.
AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty	Areas of landscape offered equivalent protection as National Parks, but designated solely for their physical characteristics.
ARHC	Affordable Rural Housing Commission	A commission launched by the Government in July 2005 to investigate affordable housing in rural areas. It presented its final report in May 2006.
ASHE	Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings	A UK Government survey to measure earnings on an annual basis.
CASE	Collaborative Awards in Science and Engineering	Awards given out by the ESRC in collaboration with a non-academic body. The CASE partner for this study was the CRC.
CPRE	Campaign to Protect Rural England (previously Council for the Preservation of Rural England)	A lobby group whose aim is reflected in its name.
CRC	Commission for Rural Communities	Established in April 2005, became an independent body in October 2006, replacing the Countryside Agency as the UK QUANGO with responsibility for providing advice to Government on rural policy.
CRE	Commission for Racial Equality	Now part of the Commission for Equality and Human Rights, the CRE was the UK QUANGO with responsibility for advocating racial equality in Government policy.
DCLG	Department for Communities and Local Government	Since May 2006, the UK Government department responsible for planning.
DEFRA	Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	Since June 2001, the UK Government department responsible for environment, food and rural policy.
DETR	Department for the Environment, Transport and the Regions	Between 1997 and June 2001 the UK Government department responsible for planning.
DoE	Department for the Environment	Before 1997, the UK Government responsible for planning.
DPD	Development Plan Document	Since the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the components of the LDF which are part of the statutory development plan.

DTLR	Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions	Between June 2001 and May 2002 the UK Government department responsible for planning.
EIP	Examination in Public	The process by which regional and local planning policy documents are assessed – EIPs are chaired by a representative of the Planning Inspectorate and are an opportunity for those who have commented on the draft plan to enter a public debate on it.
ESRC	Economic and Social Research Council	The UK Government research council (one of seven) with responsibility for economic and social research, which co-funded this project.
GDP	Gross Domestic Product	One of the measures of national income and output for a country's economy.
HBC	Harrogate Borough Council	One of the case study local authorities for this thesis.
HBF	Home Builders Federation (previously House Builders Federation)	A trade organisation of house builders in England and Wales.
HMA	Housing Market Assessment	The Government's preferred way for local authorities to work together to understand how their housing markets work. Often prefixed by Strategic (as in SHMA).
LASHG	Local Authority Social Housing Grant	A scheme of grants which local authorities could make to RSLs to subsidise the cost of affordable housing provision. The local authority could then claim this money back from the Housing Corporation. The scheme has now ended.
LCHO	Low Cost Home Ownership	Housing subsidised by the state with the purpose of opening up home ownership to some who cannot afford to buy on the open market.
LCI	Local Choice Initiative	A policy adopted by SADC with the intention of facilitating the development of housing schemes in villages with the support of the local community.
LDF	Local Development Framework	Since the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the "portfolio" of local development documents which guide how development will take place in a local authority area. Intended to be more streamlined and faster to produce than their predecessors, local plans.
LSVT	Large Scale Voluntary Transfer	The process by which a local authority can sell its entire stock of council housing to a housing association.

	Material consideration	Under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, and its predecessor the Planning and Compensation Act 1991, decisions on planning applications must be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The courts ultimately decide what constitutes a material consideration.
NIMBY	Not in My Back Yard	A pejorative description for objectors or objections to development which assumes the source of objection is opposition to development which affects the objector personally, rather than being based on “legitimate” planning considerations.
ODPM	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister	Between May 2002 and May 2006 the UK Government department responsible for planning.
PDL	Previously Developed Land	Also known as brownfield land.
PPG	Planning Policy Guidance note	Before the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the mechanism by which the UK Government published its planning advice to local authorities in England.
PPS	Planning Policy Statement	The replacement for PPGs, intended to be more streamlined and policy, rather than advice, focused.
QUANGO	Quasi Autonomous Non Governmental Organisation	The range of organisations, used commonly in the UK, to which the UK Government has devolved power and/or responsibility for certain issues.
RHE	Rural Housing Enabler	Often employed by rural community councils, RHEs usually act as independent drivers of rural housing, working with local authorities, parish councils, RSLs and others to deliver rural schemes.
RPB	Regional Planning Body	The organisation responsible for producing regional planning policy. Currently the regional assembly, the Government has proposed that the regional development agency (RDA) takes over.
RPG	Regional Planning Guidance	Before the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the expression of regional planning policy in England. They were non-statutory, and were intended to distribute development between county councils and unitary local authorities.
RSCP	Rural Social and Community Programme	DEFRA’s funding programme, based on the old Countryside Agency programme, for funding RCCs and other social and community projects.

RSL	Registered Social Landlord	Used here as a synonym for housing association, although in fact there are subtle differences – an RSL does not have to be a housing association but in practice virtually all are.
RSS	Regional Spatial Strategy	The replacement for RPGs, these are statutory and effectively also replace county structure plans, abolished under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
	Reverse commuting	The phenomenon where the usual direction of commuting travel, i.e. a rural home to an urban workplace, is reversed and those working in rural areas are unable to afford a home, so live in a nearby urban area and commute out to their rural workplace.
RTA	Right to Acquire	The right of RSL tenants to acquire (i.e. buy) their home, at a discount on market value – but a much smaller discount than in right to buy (see below)
RTB	Right To Buy	The policy adopted in 1979 by the new Conservative Government to allow council house tenants to buy their home, at a substantial discount on full market value.
s106	Section 106 agreement	A legal agreement (named after section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990) between an local authority and a developer. Can be used in combination with a planning permission to ensure that affordable housing is delivered.
SADC	Stratford-on-Avon District Council	One of the case study local authorities for this thesis.
SHDC	South Hams District Council	One of the case study local authorities for this thesis.
	Shared equity housing	Housing in which the purchaser buys a share of the property but does not pay rent on the remaining share. Often used interchangeably with “shared ownership”.
	Shared ownership housing	Housing in which the purchaser buys a share of the property and pays rent on the remaining share.
SPD	Supplementary Planning Document	Part of the LDF, but not part of the statutory development plan – intended to support DPDs and explain in detail how they will work.
SPG	Supplementary Planning Guidance	The predecessor for SPDs, prior to the implementation of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

	Stamp duty	Stamp Duty Land Tax is levied by the UK Government on purchases of property and land. The current rates are 1% on purchases of £125,001 - £250,000, 3% on purchases of £250,001 - £500,000 and 4% on purchases of £500,001 or more.
TCI	Total Cost Indicator	The mechanism by which the Housing Corporation used to judge whether any particular scheme submitted for potential funding would receive that funding. The TCI has now been replaced by the "Value for Grant comparator".
VAT	Value Added Tax	Value Added Tax (VAT) is levied by the Government on certain activities in the UK. The construction of buildings for residential use is 0% VAT rated, but renovation work attracts full rate VAT (currently set at 17.5%).
WDC	Wealden District Council	One of the case study local authorities for this thesis.

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1. Introduction

This chapter of the thesis will explain how the document came to be written, including the background to the topic; will define and explain some key terms to be used throughout; and will outline how the thesis is structured. This introduction contains references to a perhaps unusually high number of statistics – this has been done to add context to the discussion here, and allow the reader to understand the nature of the problems around rural affordable housing provision.

1.1. The project

This first section of the introduction focuses on the genesis of the project and the reasons why it was thought to be necessary.

1.1.1. Genesis of the project

Collaboration

This project is primarily funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), and is a Collaborative Award in Science and Engineering (CASE), with the collaborative partner being the Commission for Rural Communities (CRC). The CRC evolved from the Countryside Agency and defines its role as to “provide well-informed, independent advice to government and ensure that policies reflect the real needs of people living and working in rural England, with a particular focus on tackling disadvantage.” (CRC, 2007a).

At the time of inception, the Countryside Agency was still in existence, and that organisation had a long history of research, both in-house and via commissioning external research. The Commission for Rural Communities has continued in the same vein, and has been involved at every stage of this research project.

Rural affordable housing

House prices all over the UK rose sharply between the mid 1990s and 2007, and this increase was felt particularly sharply in the countryside.

Wilcox (2005) examined different data sets on house prices. After identifying that house prices rose so sharply in Great Britain because of economic growth and low interest rates, he looked at house price: household income ratios¹ and found that they have risen to record levels, exceeding 3:1 in 2004. Figure 1 is an extract from his work.

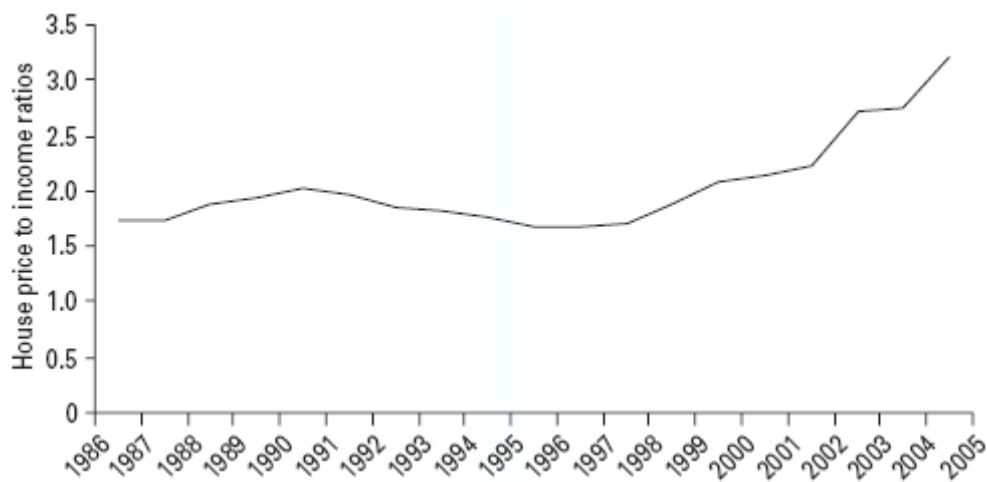


Figure 1 – House price to income ratios (Wilcox, 2005)



Figure 2 – Mortgage costs to income ratios (Wilcox, 2005)

¹ i.e. a ratio of 3:1 would mean that average house prices would be 3 times average household incomes.

The author also looked at a similar statistic, *mortgage costs* as a proportion of household income, i.e. a relationship which takes interest rates into account. Figure 2 shows that costs are high, but not quite yet at the level of the late 1980s. This comes, of course, in a period of low inflation, when we might expect people to be less prepared to take on the significant debt of a mortgage without the likelihood of imminent wage increases to reduce the financial impact of that mortgage. Clearly this discouraging effect has not occurred, so it might be argued that the current ratio of mortgage costs at 20% of income is more worrying than the early 1990s peak, which accompanied very high levels of inflation.

The Affordable Rural Housing Commission (ARHC) was set up by the Government to investigate the particular problems with affordable housing in rural areas. In their final report (ARHC, 2006), they noted that average house prices increased by 73% between 2000 and 2005 in rural areas, compared to a 68% rise in urban areas. Lower-quartile house prices are 12% higher in rural districts than urban, with the median prices 6% higher.

Figure 3, extracted from the CRC's State of the Countryside 2007, illustrates changes in average house price by settlement size and level of sparsity (the categories used by DEFRA to measure rurality). This graph perfectly illustrates that smaller settlements, i.e. those in rural areas, have higher house prices. For instance, an average house in a less sparse "hamlet and isolated dwelling" in 2005 was 79% more expensive than an average house in a less sparse "urban" area.

Of course, as the work by Wilcox identified, it is important we consider incomes as well as house prices. The ARHC noted that average incomes are similar in urban and rural districts, but workplace-based earning figures (i.e. looking at those who actually work in an area rather than those who might live in an area and commute elsewhere) show average earnings in the most rural districts were £17,400 in 2004/05, compared with £22,300 in major urban districts. Taking this figure of £17,000 the ARHC cite a study by Frontier Economics (2006) showing that someone earning £17,000 would be able to afford to buy a house in only 28% of rural wards, compared to 50% of urban wards. There are regional variations – the North is generally cheaper than the South (Frontier Economics, 2006).

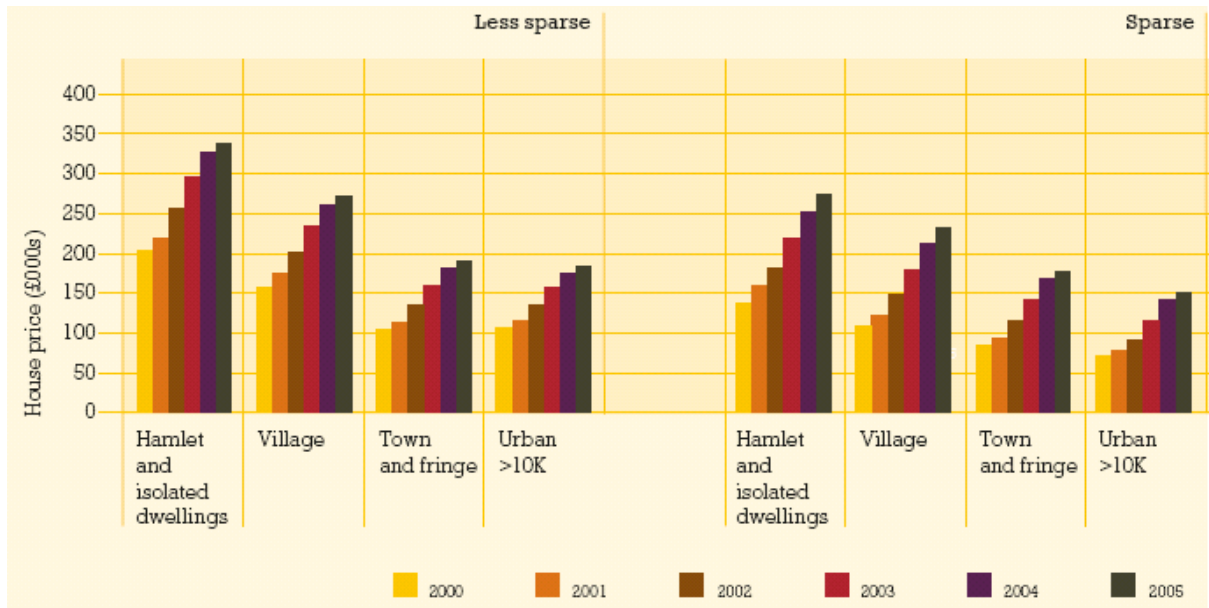


Figure 3 - Average house price by region and settlement classification, 2000 to 2005 (CRC, 2006c)

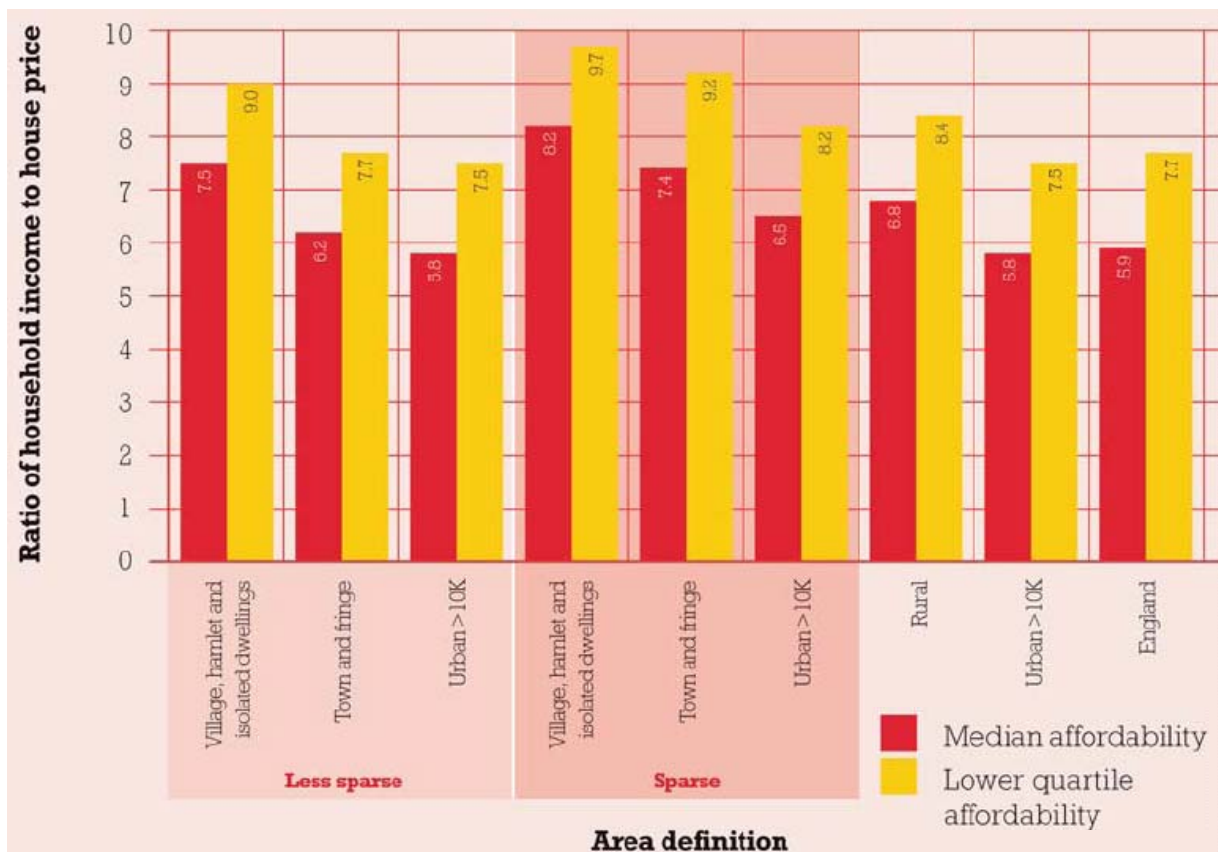


Figure 4 – Housing affordability indices for England, 2007 (CRC, 2008)

Figure 4 is an extract from the CRC’s State of the Countryside Report 2008, which shows the “housing affordability index” for 2007 for average and lower quartile house

prices², and demonstrates the difference in affordability between urban and rural areas. Figure 4 illustrates that lower quartile affordability ratios are higher than average ratios, and that in the “most rural” areas, i.e. the sparse village, hamlets and isolated dwellings, the lower quartile ratio is at 9.7 – i.e. lower quartile house prices are nearly 10 times lower quartile incomes in these areas. This ratio is unchanged from 2006, indicating that the widely observed house price falls occurring across the UK from late 2007 onwards were not having an immediate impact on rural affordability. Getting a mortgage at this kind of ratio would be impossible.

The State of the Countryside 2008 also included a map illustrating the affordability ratios across England. That map indicated that the South West is the least affordable region overall. Correlating this with house price data suggests lower average incomes in the south west, as other data in that document confirms that house prices in the South East and London are higher than in the South West.

1.1.2. Evolution of planning policy in terms of affordable housing

A relatively new term

The various statistics discussed above demonstrate the affordability problems with housing in the countryside. The planning system in England acknowledges the importance of providing affordable housing, and provides special provisions to facilitate this in small rural settlements. This is a relatively new aim of Government policy. As recently as 1990, the term “affordable housing” was not used in official Government planning policy guidance. The term was used in ministerial statements from the late 1980s onwards notably by Nicholas Ridley (Secretary of State for the Environment at the time), stating that affordable housing could be a “material consideration” in the determination of planning applications.

The first official Government policy came in the form of Department of the Environment Circular 7/91, which used affordable housing as a general term for

² This index shows the ratio between house price and income, both for median house price and income and ‘lower quartile’ house price (i.e. the price level that 25% of houses fall under) and lower quartile household income (similarly the income level that 25% of households fall under). The higher the index is the less affordable the housing is.

housing that was at a lower price than the market. It allowed local authorities to negotiate the provision of affordable housing with landowners and developers, based on assessments of need. For the first time, local authorities were allowed to permit “rural exception sites”, for affordable housing only. This approach was formalised by Planning Policy Guidance note 3 (PPG3) in 1992.

Department of the Environment Circular 13/96 introduced the requirement for affordable housing to include “low cost market” housing. Local authorities were to carry out housing needs assessments and set indicative targets for affordable housing provision on sites. This Circular, though, also introduced a threshold, below which it was considered unacceptable to seek affordable housing provision on market housing sites. This threshold was set at 40 dwellings.

DETR Circular 6/98, published shortly after the Labour Government came to power, lowered that threshold to 25 dwellings, or 15 in exceptional circumstances.

PPG3 was updated in 2000 by the Government to set out its new approach to housing and planning. There were no significant changes to affordable housing policies, but the document introduced the sequential approach and the target for 60% of all housing development to be on previously developed land (discussed in more detail later). It also encouraged “mixed communities”.

The Rural White Paper (2000) stated that a ratio of one affordable to one market house may be acceptable in rural settlements. No guidance was ever issued to support this statement.

Revisions to PPG3 (January 2005) allowed the “allocation” of rural exception sites, but also made explicit that housing on such sites (whether windfall or allocated) counted towards the local authority’s overall allocation of housing. These revisions prompted the development of this project, and are discussed in more detail below.

Planning Policy Statement 3³ (published in 2006, but not required to be a material consideration until April 2007, oddly) – requires consideration of the market in determining levels of housing. In relation to affordable housing, the “national indicative minimum site threshold” is reduced to 15 dwellings, with lower thresholds permitted if these can be justified/supported by evidence.

Policy following reality

It has often been the case that local authorities have developed their own policy to suit their circumstances, and that this has been adopted by the Government as national policy advice at a later date. According to Shucksmith (1990), New Forest District Council’s local plan in the mid 1980s seems to have been the first to include a rural exception policy.

PPG3, and now PPS3, set thresholds below which it was considered unacceptable to seek affordable housing provision on market housing sites. PPS3 lowered to 15 dwellings the previous threshold of 25, but this is unlikely to satisfy many local authorities who have adopted lower thresholds, to the level of two or three dwellings in some cases.

The revisions to PPG3 in 2005 followed a campaign by the Countryside Agency to allow “Sites for Social Diversity”, an approach which was pioneered by Wealden District Council in East Sussex. Wealden DC is one of the local authorities which will be studied in this project. Stratford-upon-Avon District Council also tried, in the 1980s, to allocate sites for 100% affordable housing, but were instructed to remove such policies from their local plan as they did not accord with national policy.

1.1.3. The success of these policies

Since the early 1990s, then, local authorities have been able to use the planning system to generate affordable housing. But how successful are these policies?

³ The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) changed the planning system in a number of fundamental ways – Planning Policy Guidance notes (PPGs) are to be replaced by Planning Policy Statements (PPSs); Regional Planning Guidance (RPG) is to be replaced by Regional Spatial Strategies (RSSs); and local plans are to be replaced by Local Development Frameworks (LDFs)

The number of affordable houses being built

It is hard to obtain precise figures on the numbers of affordable houses that are being provided in rural areas. This is partly because there are at least four sources of affordable housing:

- Registered social landlords⁴ can buy existing housing on the open market and convert it to affordable housing.
- Sites which registered social landlords have acquired in settlements which could have received planning permission for market housing (these are now less common, as land prices in urban and rural areas alike are often higher than RSLs can afford to pay).
- “Section 106 (s106) sites”, which are affordable houses built as a requirement of a section 106 planning agreement on a market housing development.
- “Rural exception sites”, which are affordable houses built on land within or adjacent to rural communities of less than 3,000 population, and which would not otherwise receive planning permission for market housing. Hence, its release for affordable housing is an exception from planning policy – until 2005 such sites could only be granted planning permission on an ad hoc basis, but they can now be “allocated” in local planning documents – designated for use as affordable housing only.

The lack of a definitive figure on “rural affordable housing” completions is also partly due to the lack of a consistent definition of what constitutes rurality. The Housing Corporation’s rural programme focussed only on settlements of less than 3,000 population, but a more commonly accepted definition is that of settlements of less than 10,000 population. The Housing Corporation funded 2,126 completions in 2005/6 and 2,255 in 2006/7 in settlements of below 3,000 population (CRC, 2007b), and Best and Shucksmith (2006) estimated they fund approximately 3,000 additional homes per annum in larger rural communities (Best and Shucksmith, 2006) – so a total of 5,000-5,500 per annum.

⁴ Registered social landlords (RSLs) is an umbrella term for those providing social housing. Housing associations make up the vast majority of these RSLs, and the two terms can be taken as meaning the same thing in this thesis.

In terms of solid data, we know from ODPM HIP returns that 551 houses were built on exception sites in 2004/05⁵. Best and Shucksmith (2006) found that in the smallest settlements this tended to be the *only* affordable housing being built, and that very few exception sites were being built on the green belt, in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs), or in National Parks. They considered that the abolition of local authority social housing grant in April 2003⁶ was a big factor in the decline in the importance of exception sites.

Best and Shucksmith also noted that 85% of affordable housing in rural England comes from s106 sites, which tend to be on the edges of market towns or large brownfield sites such as ex-hospitals. Those in smaller villages “tended to generate less cross-subsidy from profits made on private houses” (Best and Shucksmith, 2006), and so came up against a shortage of social housing grant funding. They concluded that as numbers of affordable completions are falling overall and the numbers funded by s106 are going up, an increasingly higher proportion of all affordable housing is now being funded by s106.

Table 1 is an extract from a paper by Crook et al (2006), who examined the Government’s Housing Investment Programme (HIP) data to determine the number of affordable houses being built across England (i.e. including urban as well as rural areas).

A note of caution should be sounded here, as earlier work by Crook et al in 2002 found that the HIP data used by the ODPM overstated the level of affordable housing provision, largely as a result of local authorities not understanding the HIP forms. They estimated that only 10% of market housing was in fact being built as affordable, compared to almost 15% implied by the HIP data at the time.

⁵ The figures for completions in previous years on exception sites read 694 (2001/02), 391 (2002/03) and 262 (2003/04). This increase in 2004/05 may be either a blip on a downward trajectory, or a turnaround after several years of low levels of completions.

⁶ Local Authority Social Housing Grant (LASHG) was a scheme of grants which local authorities could make to RSLs to subsidise the cost of affordable housing provision. Local authorities could claim this money back from the Housing Corporation. The scheme has now ended.

Notwithstanding that, table 1 shows that the number of affordable housing completions in England fell dramatically between 2000/2001 and 2001/2002, and has perhaps started to creep back upwards again in the more recent past.

Table 1 – Affordable housing completions in England, 1999 – 2005. (Crook et al., 2006)

	1999/2000	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05
North East	2,621	2,241	624	328	585	644
North West	5,698	5,717	2,374	3,022	2,565	2,531
Yorks and Humberside	2,036	1,940	1,456	1,330	1,736	1,232
East Midlands	4,190	4,350	1,846	1,837	1,906	1,807
West Midlands	5,730	5,465	2,858	2,789	2,864	3,410
East of England	4,154	4,328	2,968	2,796	3,485	3,865
London	8,114	9,130	7,055	7,377	8,769	8,552
South East	7,766	7,876	7,084	6,148	7,298	7,645
South West	3,917	3,924	3,541	3,164	3,397	3,468
England	44,226	44,971	29,806	28,791	32,605	33,154
Increase (%)		2	-34	-3	13	2

By bringing together different sources of data, the ARHC calculated that between 1998 and 2005, there was a 6% fall in the total number of new houses built in rural districts, with a 29% rise in urban districts. Over the same period, around 14% of new build in predominantly rural districts was affordable, compared to 22% in urban. These two factors together, they estimated, meant that that the amount of affordable housing built in rural areas rose by only 3% between 2001/02 and 2004/05, compared to a 22% rise in urban areas. (ARHC, 2006).

The tenure of the affordable housing that is being completed

Table 2, adapted from the ARHC report, which itself used unpublished ODPM figures based on local authority submissions, illustrates the gross affordable housing additions in different tenures across different types of area in rural England in 2004/05. These are district level figures, so will probably overestimate the supply of affordable housing in rural communities, as some of these predominantly rural districts include large settlements – e.g. Salisbury District, which has Salisbury, a city of 40,000 people, within it (Affordable Rural Housing Commission, 2006). The table indicates a higher proportion of new affordable housing being for social rent in rural

than urban areas, with “other sub-market rent” being only a negligible proportion of the total.

Table 2 – Gross additions (both new built and acquisition) in different tenures across England in 2004/05 (ARHC, 2006)

	Social rent	Low cost home ownership	Other sub-market rent	Total affordable housing	Percentage gross additional affordable units
Predominantly rural	4832 (65%)	2550 (34%)	55 (0.7%)	7437	19%
Mixed	6203 (53%)	4639 (40%)	831 (7%)	11673	30%
Predominantly urban	11068 (55%)	8469 (42%)	627 (3%)	20164	51%
England	22103 (56%)	15658 (40%)	1513 (4%)	39274	100%

Whitehead et al’s work in 2005 looked purely at affordable housing completions (excluding acquisitions) and calculated, across England, that 77% of affordable housing completions were social rented and 15% were shared ownership. For s106 schemes, these figures were 73% and 18% respectively, implying a slight bias in favour of social renting where greater levels of public subsidy are involved (Whitehead et al., 2005). This data was updated by Monk et al (2007), who noted that by 2005/2006, 60% of affordable housing provided through s106 agreements was social rented, with 33% being shared ownership, a substantial increase in the proportion of shared ownership housing (Monk et al., 2007). This was considered to be partly due to the preference of private developers for shared ownership housing as they can expect an immediate return on their investment from a purchaser. There are concerns about whether an ever increasing proportion of shared ownership actually meets the needs which have been identified - “The trade-off between intermediate and social rented housing may increase housing pressures for the very poorest and most vulnerable households” (Monk et al., 2007).

The number of affordable houses required

In 2005 there was an estimated need for 206,000 new homes per annum in England – 63% market, 14% intermediate and 23% social housing (Holmans and Whitehead, 2005). We have recently seen building reach 150,000 per annum. Approximately

20% of the population live in rural areas, so if we calculated 20% of the 206,000 total need, a need for 41,200 new houses in rural areas per annum can be imputed. Of that 41,200, using the proportions identified by Holmans and Whitehead, 13,500 would need to be affordable (4,000 intermediate and 9,500 social rented).

The CRC, in work published in 2006, estimated a need for 8,000 affordable houses per annum to meet existing needs, and an additional 22,800 per annum to meet the newly arising needs of those living in rural areas⁷ (CRC, 2006a). That is a much higher total of 30,800 affordable houses per annum needed in rural areas, which takes no account of migration. The CRC estimated that migration might be translated to an additional housing need in rural areas of 14,000–19,000 houses per annum.

The ARHC report, also published in 2006, estimated the need at a minimum of 11,000 affordable houses per annum. That figure was based on the fact that the Government accepts the need for 40,000 new social rented homes per annum was going to fund 18,000 intermediate units per annum in 2006/07 and 2007/08. If that 40,000 were split according to the proportion of people in urban and rural areas then we would see 3,500 intermediate and 7,600 social rented houses per annum in rural areas – 11,000 in total.

The Housing Corporation funded 3,000 affordable houses per annum between 2006 and 2008. Even adding those funded through cross-subsidy, there is a substantial shortfall between the need conceded by the Government and the affordable housing being funded (CRC, 2006a). There is an even greater shortfall if we consider the CRCs much higher estimates of need in rural areas. The planning system is expected to meet this gap between need and central government funding, and how it attempts to do this is the core subject of this thesis. The next section goes into more detail about the project.

⁷ “Existing needs” are defined as the homeless, those in unsuitable accommodation, registered on waiting lists. “Newly arising needs” means the new households being formed by age groups between 16 and 35 years, seeking separate accommodation but unable to afford to purchase the latter within the private housing market.

1.2. Details of this project

This section of the introduction explains in more detail the specific triggers for this project, specifies the title, aims and objectives, and defines the key terms to be used.

1.2.1. The trigger for the project

It is probably fair to say, based on the evidence discussed above, that the policies that have been in place since the early 1990s have not been universally acknowledged as a success. There are increasingly high levels of need, and the proportion of affordable housing being built in rural areas is not increasing to meet that need. We could debate whether this failure is a *cause* of the Government's rapidity in changing its policy advice on this issue, or an *effect* of that frequency of policy change! However, in 2005, several changes to planning and housing policy were proposed, with the intention of delivering more affordable housing. Those proposed changes prompted this research project to be commissioned, were summarised in the application to the ESRC for funding, and are set out below, with italicised commentary:

1. A revised PPG3 which is expected to confirm continuation of the 'Exception Planning Policy' which allows local authorities to grant planning permission for land within or adjoining existing villages which would not normally be released for housing in order to provide low-cost housing to meet local needs in perpetuity; and to introduce a new power to designate land specifically as sites for affordable housing provision in rural areas, expected to be primarily in market towns and larger villages, perhaps using previously developed land first. *Introduced in January 2005, in the form of revisions to PPG3.*
2. Revision of s.106 planning gain advice and perhaps pilot schemes to test proposals in the Barker Report⁸ for a planning gain supplementary tax. *The 2007 pre-budget report announced that the planning gain supplementary tax would not be implemented, and that the Government was looking into alternatives (Treasury, 2007).*

⁸ "The Barker Report" is used as shorthand for the report written by the economist Kate Barker on behalf of the Government in 2004, which investigated how the supply of new housing in the UK could be increased.

3. Introduction of regional affordability targets, recommended by the Barker Report. *Introduced by Planning Policy Statement 3 (PPS3) in November 2006.*
4. Attempts to 'join-up' housing and planning by ensuring that RSSs incorporate regional housing strategies (RHSs), again as recommended by the Barker Report. *In September 2006 the responsibility for producing regional housing strategies was passed to Regional Assemblies, the bodies responsible for producing regional spatial strategies, to ensure better co-ordination between the two documents.*

This thesis focuses on proposal 1, the first to be introduced, and will consider the effects of proposals 3 and 4, if they have been found to have any effect thus far. This leads us on to the aim and objectives of the project.

1.2.2. Title, aim and objectives

Returning to the bid for funding submitted to the ESRC, we have the following title, aim and objectives for the proposal:

Title:

Planning and Affordable Rural Housing: the social and micro-spatial effects in rural England of new planning policies.

Aim:

To explore both the social and the micro-spatial effects in rural areas of England of the series of planning policies currently being introduced by Government to promote affordable housing provision.

Objectives:

- To review, in the context of previous studies and relevant theoretical debates, the series of planning policies currently being introduced by Government to promote affordable housing provision.
- To explore the social effects of these policies in rural areas of England, in terms of distributive justice and social inclusion.

- To explore the micro-spatial effects of these policies, especially in relation to market towns, smaller settlements and landward areas (ie. areas outside settlements)
- To develop the research skills and experience of the student and to enhance collaboration between the academic research and policy and practice communities in this field.
- To contribute, through broad dissemination of the findings to user communities, to policy and practice development in relation to this highly important (yet seemingly intractable) issue.

These objectives are developed, following the literature review, into a set of research questions, which can be found in section 4.2.

1.2.3. Definitions and explanations

The title of the funding proposal was “Planning and Affordable Rural Housing: the social and micro-spatial effects in rural England of new planning policies”. It is important at the outset to discuss interpretations and constructions of some of the value-laden terms in this title, and explain what we mean when we use them.

Definition of affordable housing

Until recently, there was no definition of affordable housing in Government planning advice. This has now changed, to a certain extent. The recently published PPS3 includes a definition of affordable housing:

Affordable housing includes social rented and intermediate housing, provided to specified eligible households whose needs are not met by the market.

(DCLG, 2006)(Annex B)

This thesis will use that definition, with the addendum that the affordable housing is provided through some form of public intervention. This public intervention will either take the form of public subsidy through the Housing Corporation, usually in the form

of housing built by registered social landlords; or by the use of controls through the planning system, effectively requiring private developers and/or landowners to provide this subsidy. Often both forms of intervention are used – we will see a discussion of different approaches later.

The Government has also for the first time published guidance on what affordability means, relative to a household's income:

A household can be considered able to afford to buy a home if it costs 3.5 times the gross household income for a single earner household or 2.9 times the gross household income for dual-income households.

A household can be considered able to afford market house renting in cases where the rent payable is up to 25 per cent of their gross household income.

(DCLG, 2007b)

No information is given in this guidance as to how these figures were arrived at, or why one is based on a multiplier of income, the other on the proportion of income spent on housing. As long ago as 1993, it was stated that “it is more logical to use some form of residual income definition than one based on a prescribed ratio of housing costs to income” (Hancock, 1993). Hancock argued that from an economic theory point of view a definition based on a ratio was simplistic as it did not consider what was a “socially acceptable standard of both housing and non-housing consumption” (ibid.) after housing costs had been paid. Interestingly, the Government's definition of affordability in terms of rental accommodation uses residual income, whilst the definition for home ownership uses a ratio – no explanation is given for these different approaches.

A definition of affordability using a ratio or residual model is used in national Government publications rather than simply specifying an affordable value because incomes vary considerably in different parts of the country. The 2007 ASHE (Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings) data found mean earnings in the United Kingdom were £24,908 per annum, with large regional differences. The mean earnings in the

North East were £20,338, 18% lower than the UK average, with the mean earnings in London at £39,418, 58% higher than the UK average (Office for National Statistics, 2007). With these large differences in income, setting nation-wide affordable prices would clearly be inappropriate.

Affordable housing can take two principal forms, both of which will be examined in this thesis. The first is social rented housing provided at rents restricted by the Government (previously local authorities and now largely RSLs) – the “social rented” housing referred to in the PPS3 definition. The second is so-called “intermediate housing”, which is a more recent phenomenon – housing which is available at a sale price or rent above social rent, but subsidised so that it costs less than market housing. Low cost home ownership and shared equity housing are two common examples of this.

Definition of rurality

Rurality is a concept for which the definition is contested, partly due to the difficulty of arriving at such a definition. In the literature review we will consider the concept of social constructionism, but briefly, sociologists would argue that there can be no objective definition of “rural” because the concept of rurality is socially constructed. Cloke et al linked rurality to a particular kind of lifestyle choice amongst the middle classes, identifying that different social classes had a different view of what “rural” meant (Cloke et al., 1995). Murdoch and Marsden (1994) concluded that rural “is best regarded as the outcome of a variety of economic, social and political processes” (Murdoch and Marsden, 1994) which suggests that categorising an area as rural is not a straightforward process.

However, we need at this stage of the thesis to explain what we mean by rural and hence rural affordable housing. In terms of UK Government policy, DEFRA have detailed definitions of what constitutes rurality on the basis of (a) settlement size and population density at the level of census output areas or wards, and (b) which local authorities are classified as being rural, on its website. The former splits settlements by size into urban, towns, villages and “dispersed”, and splits each category by

population density into sparse or less sparse. The latter splits local authorities into one of six categories:

1. Major Urban: districts with either 100,000 people or 50 percent of their population in urban areas with a population of more than 750,000.
2. Large Urban: districts with either 50,000 people or 50 percent of their population in one of 17 urban areas with a population between 250,000 and 750,000.
3. Other Urban: districts with fewer than 37,000 people or less than 26 percent of their population in rural settlements and larger market towns.
4. Significant Rural: districts with more than 37,000 people or more than 26 percent of their population in rural settlements and larger market towns.
5. Rural-50: districts with at least 50 percent but less than 80 percent of their population in rural settlements and larger market towns.
6. Rural-80: districts with at least 80 percent of their population in rural settlements and larger market towns.

(DEFRA, 2006)

We are most interested in the Rural-50 and Rural-80 local authorities, as they are “most” rural. But, in even the Major Urban local authorities, there can be some settlements and quite large geographical areas that would be characterised as rural under the first of the DEFRA definitions, i.e. if we were looking at output areas or wards. Bradford, for example, is a Major Urban authority, but has a large rural hinterland including the village of Haworth (where the Bronte sisters were born, and surely took the inspiration for some of their works, which might be held up by some as being set in quintessentially rural England!).

Hence, for the purposes of this thesis, we have to be flexible and recognise the sliding scale of rurality. Case study local authorities will be chosen on the basis of the presence of rural settlements, rather than where they sit in the local authority classification. It is likely, though, that most or all of the case study local authorities will be Rural-80 authorities, simply because these are the most rural.

Definition of micro-spatial effects

The spatial effects of a planning policy include how development patterns change, and where new housing is being built at a regional scale, for example the Government's ambitions to see a high proportion of housing in the South East, including the Thames Gateway. We are interested in the micro-spatial level, which in essence means looking at a smaller geographical scale: both whereabouts in the countryside are new houses being built (i.e. where are they in relation to urban areas, and are they in market towns, villages or hamlets), and at an even more micro-spatial level, i.e. where *within* settlements are houses being built – on the outskirts, in the centre, on poorer quality land, on open spaces, etc. Some of these effects will be deliberate, for example we might see policy aiming housing at areas other than villages – see section 2.4.5 for a discussion of Government policy in relation to sustainability. Other effects will be accidental, or come as a result of external factors to planning – for example if funding from central Government is too low to allow RSLs to buy prime land, they may be forced to more peripheral locations.

Definition of social effects

Social effects can be harder to define and observe. By speaking to local authorities and RSLs or studying maps of where new housing is being built, we could, although it may be time-consuming, identify micro-spatial effects. Social effects may be hidden below the surface. They can include looking at whether new affordable housing is integrated into the settlement it is built in – are residents of the new housing part of the community? Are they excluded from village life? Other effects might be those of forcing families apart – if a young couple from a village cannot find housing in that village, and have to move to a nearby town, do they suffer from social exclusion or rupture social networks? Observing these kinds of effects may require the use of qualitative research methods, for example through interviews or questionnaires.

Other social effects include the tenure of new affordable housing being provided – as discussed above, there may be a tension between the need for social housing in an area and the desire for private developers to contribute towards shared ownership

housing. How local authorities manage this tension will effect the type of housing provided.

1.2.4. The structure of this thesis

Finding your way around

The thesis is split into chapters, each of which has a number of sections and sub-sections. Chapter, section and sub-section titles are numbered and can be identified as follows:

Chapter titles are in 16 point bold and italicised font, numbered X.

Section titles are in 14 point bold font, numbered X.X.

Sub-section titles are in 14 point font, numbered X.X.X.

Subject headings are not numbered, and are in 12 point bold font.

For example, on page 1, we see Chapter 1 (Introduction), followed by section 1.1 (The project), sub-section 1.1.1 (Genesis of the project), followed by a subject heading (Collaboration). This formatting should allow the reader to understand how what they are reading fits into the overall structure of the thesis. If confused, the easiest remedy is to flick back to the contents page, which is organised by chapter, section and sub-section title.

Chapter breakdown

This introduction has explained how this project came into being and what it hopes to achieve. It has discussed previous empirical research and identified a perceived failure of Government policy to deliver the scale of affordable housing in rural areas that is understood to be required. Relevant terms have been defined and explained.

The rest of this thesis is structured along fairly conventional lines. The next two chapters constitute a review of the relevant literature: Chapter 2 looks at why a lack of affordable housing is an issue, and explores various commentators' theories as to why there is a shortfall; Chapter 3 moves on to consider different points of view on what might be done about that shortfall. The literature review will inform the development of a set of detailed research questions and a methodology for gathering empirical research to answer those detailed questions, which will be outlined in Chapter 4.

Chapters 5 and 6 of the thesis analyse the data that has been gathered and relate it to the research questions. Finally, in Chapter 7, a set of conclusions are presented which seek to meet the aims and objectives of the project and answer the research questions.

The next chapter is the first of the two literature review chapters.

2. *Literature review I*

Or: Looking beyond the simple economics of provision

Introduction

This chapter forms the first part of a comprehensive review of literature around the subject of affordable housing in rural areas. We established in the introduction that empirical data demonstrates a particular shortage of affordable housing in the countryside. This chapter will first ask why that shortage of affordable housing is considered to be a problem. It will then examine the two sides of the shortage from an economics point of view – looking first at demand for, then at supply of, affordable housing in rural areas. It will go into some detail on why there is a high demand for rural housing, before examining why supply has not kept up with that demand, focusing on technical issues (for example resource shortages). The chapter concludes by widening the scope of the literature review beyond a simple analysis of the process for delivering rural affordable housing to look at wider issues in the housing and planning systems in England.

Scoping the literature review

Setting the scope of this literature review, i.e. deciding what to include and, perhaps more importantly, what to exclude was in some ways a ‘journey of exploration’. When reading about one subject, it was often the case that a related subject would be referred to, which seemed potentially relevant. That subject would be explored, and in some cases would indeed be relevant, in others less so.

Nevertheless, some boundaries needed to be set to ensure that the literature review did not sprawl to an unmanageable size. One boundary was questioning whether literature was of relevance to policy implementation in England – the title of the ESRC bid referred to England, but more importantly, the CASE partner (the Commission for Rural Communities) focuses on England. This meant that issues such as, for example, the different situations with rural housing in other European countries were not explored as whilst they might have been interesting on some

level, they were not practically relevant to the thesis and would have added relatively little to an understanding of how/why policy was implemented in England.

This kind of issue relates to the broader practical boundaries of the literature review – those of perceived relevance and time available. Some issues were identified of only tangential relevance, and were consequently not explored in any depth, as to do so would have taken too long. For example, in section 2.4.4 the theory of constructivism is introduced. There is a huge amount of literature on this subject, but to go into it in any detail would have taken too long, and led too far away from the subject of this thesis.

It is clearly difficult to correctly strike the balance between ensuring on the one hand that a literature review is comprehensive and covers all relevant issues, and on the other hand that it does not become unwieldy and overlong. Hopefully this literature review succeeds in achieving that delicate balance.

2.1. The implications of a lack of affordable housing in rural areas

The introduction summarised various pieces of empirical data which show a perceived shortage of affordable housing in the countryside. This numerical shortfall, though, should only be an issue for policy makers if it is having negative consequences in rural communities. The literature review begins with the identification of a number of possible problems resulting from this lack of affordable rural housing.

2.1.1. Spatial exclusion

Defining spatial exclusion

Shucksmith, in a presentation to the Housing Studies Association conference in 2007, noted the emergence of “spatial exclusion” in rural England, whereby those on lowest incomes are excluded from smaller settlements (Shucksmith, 2007). We have noted above the relatively very high house prices in rural areas, but even prior to the recent sharp increases in house prices, Shucksmith had noted the difficulties for the rural population.

Writing 25 years ago he concluded that 70% of the population of Cumbria were too poor to buy any form of accommodation in the Lake District, and that private sector renting was only really accessible via tied accommodation. (Shucksmith, 1981). In his later work, Shucksmith noted that building societies were less likely to lend money to purchase older/more rural properties. (Shucksmith, 1990)

Shucksmith et al (1995) carried out a classification of rural housing markets for the then Department of the Environment. From their interviews, they conclude that “It was evident that the main difficulty facing many local people in rural areas is their inability to compete in a market where increasing demand, combined with a restrictive supply, has pushed housing prices upwards” (Shucksmith et al., 1995).

A study published on behalf of the DETR in 1998, updating the work done by Shucksmith et al in 1995, carried out a fairly crude assessment of affordability, by

looking at households whose income was less than 40% of the price of an “appropriately sized home”⁹. They concluded that between 19% and 37% of all households in each case study area were unable to purchase. They also concluded that the majority of those in social housing would be unable to afford private rented accommodation, supporting Shucksmith’s earlier concerns that another potential source of accommodation for those disenfranchised by rising house prices was unavailable in rural areas (DETR and DTZ Pinda Consulting (Firm), 1998).

A study of youth unemployment in rural areas in the late 1990s found that “Most young people interviewed lived in the family home and had not considered moving” (Cartmel and Furlong, 2000)(p30). A number were graduates living at home temporarily. If they had moved away from the family home but lived locally, it was often in poor quality and expensive accommodation (for example caravans).

As referred to above, the CRC (2006) carried out research showing that 45% of prospective newly-forming households aged 16-35 in rural areas could not afford to set up home in the ward in which they currently live. In the least affordable regions (the South East, South West and East of England), the proportion unable to afford housing was even higher, approaching 70%. The CRC calculated that nationally, 22,800 newly forming households per annum could not afford housing in the ward in which they currently lived (CRC, 2006a).

So, we have a considerable body of literature which suggests that those on lower incomes cannot afford to become owner-occupiers in rural areas. The private rented sector is both small, and in some areas, unaffordable, for reasons which will be discussed in section 2.3.1. This leaves an increasingly large proportion of the population reliant on social housing, which has historically been underprovided in rural areas (again, for reasons we discuss below). Even if social housing is available, there can be negative consequences of a reliance on it. Bevan et al. (2001) found relatively transient populations in several rural villages, with significant migration in and out of them – residents had mixed views on the extent to which they had integrated into villages, and the authors felt that a high turnover of homes may stifle community development (Bevan et al., 2001). Another consequence of a

⁹ Based on the 2.5 times gross income lending ratio which was the norm at the time from building societies.

reliance on social housing is that households may become “trapped” in social housing, with no prospect of becoming home-owners.

This shortage of affordable housing across all tenures can result in the spatial exclusion identified by Shucksmith, where the poor are excluded from certain areas. Figure 5, using data from the CRC’s State of the Countryside 2005, illustrates this by showing the proportion of super output areas (an area roughly equivalent to a ward) across the five quintiles in each of three categories of village, hamlet & isolated dwellings; town and fringe; and urban settlements with over 10,000 population.

Figure 5 illustrates the startling point that in 2005 there were no super output areas (SOAs) in villages, hamlets and isolated dwellings in the lower quintile of incomes and only 4% of super output areas comprising villages, hamlets and isolated dwellings are in the second income quintile. This evidence suggests that smaller settlements are becoming less diverse and increasingly dominated by the wealthy. Correspondingly, we see, in many urban areas, concentrations of people in lower socio-economic groups, often living in social housing – some have referred to these as ghettos.

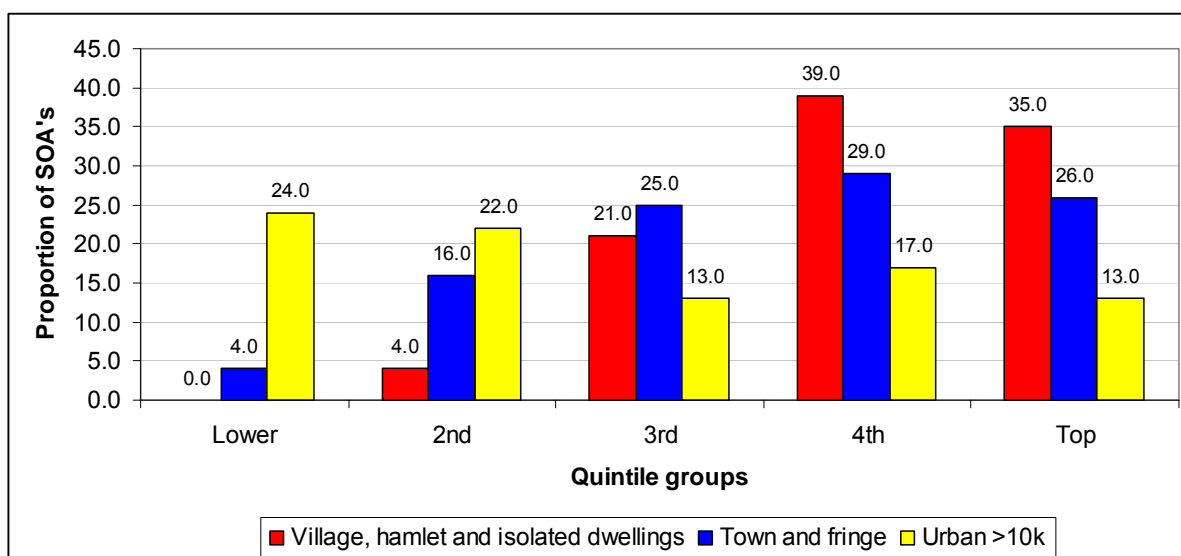


Figure 5 – Incomes by settlement size (CRC, 2005)

This trend towards spatial exclusion is not a new phenomenon. Commentators such as Newby (1985) have noted that as agriculture declined as a source of employment, middle-class urban newcomers have replaced the lower paid in rural areas, with

consequences on the pattern of land use in those areas. Urry (1995) argued that “the service class is currently remaking the contemporary English countryside” (Urry, 1995), citing the development of sustainable tourism and “alternative health and spiritual centres” in rural areas as evidence of that remaking. But does this income-based segregation matter?

Why “mixed communities” are considered important

Kleinhans (2004) summarised evidence from literature which identified some benefits of communities of mixed tenure:

- Tenure diversification leads to improvements in the physical characteristics of homes and neighbourhoods.
- If owner occupancy is added to an area dominated by rented property, the behaviour of owner occupiers has a positive effect (their increased emphasis on maintenance).
- Diversification may enhance collective action at the community level.

(Kleinhans, 2004), cited in (Keen et al., 2006)

Keen et al (2006) looked at economic segregation in England, and noted that “segregated communities, are in some sense, ‘natural’ outcomes, even if everyone agrees that integration is desirable” (Keen et al., 2006)(p1). Keen’s argument for why segregation is “natural” is that in a free market economy “Low-income households tend to be trapped in the worst locations, whereas high income households can escape more easily” (ibid.), resulting in polarisation. So if the Government wishes to promote mixed communities it needs to take action to counteract the effects of the free market.

Martin and Watkinson (2003) looked at initiatives carried out by local authorities and housing associations to introduce “mixed tenures” to social housing estates. They found the benefits of this approach included:

- reduced turnover (and related cost savings)
- increased demand

- improved reputation and confidence in area/reduced stigmatisation
- increased tenant satisfaction
- more balanced household mix
- increased property values

(Martin and Watkinson, 2003)

This could be seen as evidence of practical as well as social benefits to mixed communities, at least from the perspective of local authorities and those living in social rented housing. Some, though, have questioned the extent to which pepper potting home ownership into social housing estates will generate truly mixed communities, because people living in close proximity is not the same indicator of “community” as it once was (Atkinson and Kintrea, 2000).

Even if the practical benefits of mixed communities are hard to confirm from empirical evidence, there is a strong social argument that enclaves of the wealthy, from which the less well off are excluded, are at odds with any notion of equality in our society.

The imbalanced population in rural areas

The exclusion of lower income households from rural areas is an issue across the population, but most keenly affects the young, for the simple reason that young individuals, couples and families tend to be on lower salaries than older people, and are more likely to be engaged in household formation (i.e. as a result of moving out of the parental home). The result of this is an ageing population, identified as long ago as 1981 by Shucksmith. In 1981 in the Lake District the ratio of retired people to people of working age was 41:100 compared to a national average of 29:100. (Shucksmith, 1981)

There is some dispute, though, that a shortage of affordable housing automatically causes out-migration of younger people. The DETR carried out research in 1998 and found that the absolute number of “hidden households”, for example those who lived with their parents, was very small and highly dispersed. Out-migration had affected around 15% of households in the 5 years prior to the survey. Between $\frac{2}{3}$ and $\frac{3}{4}$ of this 15% was voluntary, which meant that only a residual four or five

percent of households were affected by involuntary out-migration. Only 40% of this small group, i.e. one or two percent of all households, would have stayed if affordable housing was available. (DETR and DTZ Piedad Consulting (Firm), 1998)

The hypothesis that a lack of affordable housing causes young people to out-migrate was further questioned by Bevan et al. (2001). They found that a lack of job opportunities was a more important factor in determining levels of out-migration, and that being a migrant was the characteristic most strongly associated with new household formation (Bevan et al., 2001).

There is then no definitive view on whether lack of affordable housing or jobs is more important to the retention of young people in an area. Cartmel and Furlong (2000) found that “even [young people] fortunate enough to find a rewarding job within the locality frequently move away due to the lack of affordable housing”. (Cartmel and Furlong, 2000) (p7). Either way, it seems from the evidence supplied by the CRC, amongst others, that young people are moving out of rural areas, sometimes involuntarily. But does this matter? Best and Shucksmith (2006) argued that there is an “overarching social justice imperative”, and considered that it is offensive to make it compulsory for young people to leave behind the place in which they were brought up, unless their parents are very wealthy and can buy them a home (Best and Shucksmith, 2006).

Particular issues with a shortage of affordable housing in rural areas

A common critique of a focus on affordable housing in rural areas in particular is that the “social justice” argument applies in urban areas too – in many parts of the UK, young people cannot afford to buy a home in the area in which their parents live. There are a number of issues, though, which mean the problem is more acute in rural areas. As Best and Shucksmith asked, is there a limit to how far from home the next generation is expected to move? In urban areas, if a young person cannot afford a home in a particular part of a city, it is likely they could afford a home in a different, albeit perhaps less attractive, part of that city. That different part of the city would in all probability be linked by public transport to where their parents lived, so “kinship networks” could be maintained. There is an obvious contrast in rural areas, where a

distance of several miles between “neighbouring” settlements may be impossible to cross without private transport.

A similar issue of access applies to service provision: The higher income people who dominate rural settlements are comprised of a number of different groups. Some of them are integral to the community in which they live, for example local farmers or business owners. Others have retired to a rural area. Still others, though, might live in a village and commute to work in a larger settlement or own a second/holiday home there. The entrance of this latter group to rural communities has had a specific impact on rural service provision. Commuters and second home owners might make use of the services in larger urban areas, such as supermarkets, instead of using local shops and facilities (Shucksmith, 1983, Gallent et al., 2004). That would mean that those local shops and facilities had an ever-decreasing market, and hence faced increasing difficulties in surviving. Whatever the reasons, access to services in rural areas is becoming more difficult – in 2008 the CRC’s annual State of the Countryside report noted “The availability of most service types has seen a decline [between 2007 and 2008]” (CRC, 2008).

So, we have a decline in rural services on the one hand, but as important is that key workers cannot find accommodation in the countryside. This is particularly an issue given the ageing population, a particularly acute trend in rural areas (CRC, 2008). If there is nowhere for groups such as care workers to live in rural areas, we might wonder who will care for those who live there as they age? It is also an issue for family businesses in rural areas – again, the problem is accessibility. If a young person is working in the family business in a village, there is a clear imperative for them to be able to live in close proximity to the business. That can be impossible in many rural settlements, in contrast to urban areas.

One solution which some young people have found to the lack of housing in rural areas is to remain in the familial home for longer. Rugg & Jones (1999) looked into this issue. They looked at the “transitions” of getting a job and moving out of the familial home for a selection of young people in rural North Yorkshire. They studied sixty 21-22 year olds in Richmondshire and Hambleton, who were living in the parental home at the age of 18. 79% of those questioned were still living in the parental home three/four years later. Roughly half were “returners”, i.e. had been

away and come back. Some of those had moved into unsatisfactory accommodation and not tolerated it, others had been living in digs whilst studying short courses (these two subgroups were generally poorly paid).

There are clearly both social and financial costs to these young people's parents of having to support their children beyond the age where perhaps a generation ago they would have been expected to have owned their own home and probably set up their own family. Overall, in many cases, independent living was only possible (or perceived to be possible) if there was a joint income. "There were acute difficulties in achieving the transition in a rural location, and only one or two of the interviewees had managed to succeed in this process" (Rugg and Jones, 1999).

In some cases of course, there is no parental home for young people to fall back on. An extreme symptom of a lack of affordable housing in that case can be homelessness, which is the subject of the next sub-section.

2.1.2. Rural homelessness

Introduction

Rural homelessness is not a subject which receives much attention – there is relatively little research into it. Those who have investigated the subject ascribe this to the fact that it is hidden – that is to say we do not tend to see homeless people living on the streets of our villages and market towns. That absence of visible signs of homelessness, though, does not mean that it does not exist. Several researchers have looked specifically at hidden homelessness, and found a surprising number of people who could be defined as homeless – Crisis, a charity that specifically looks at hidden homelessness, estimated that in 2003 that 380,000 people in the UK were living in hostels, staying with friends, etc, "off the radar" of official statistics (Robinson and Coward, 2003).

Definitions and policy development

A lay-person's definition of homelessness might commonly be that of someone sleeping rough. That, argued Cloke et al (2002), was in fact a different concept, that of "rooflessness" - literally those with no roof over their heads, i.e. the visual homeless sleeping in doorways, etc. Cloke et al's definition of homelessness was "those lacking a right of access to their own secure and minimally adequate housing space" (Cloke et al., 2002).

The statutory definition of homelessness is if a person has no accommodation available in the UK or elsewhere. For a local authority to have a statutory duty to rehouse someone, they have to be in priority need, have not become voluntarily homeless, and have a local connection. Only half of local authorities, found research from as long ago as 1988, accepted those living in statutorily unfit housing as homeless (Evans and Duncan, 1988). Cloke et al (2002) were concerned that for those who do not have a home of their own, but who are not accepted by their local authority for priority housing, and are not sleeping rough or using hostel accommodation; their homelessness is likely to be hidden.

Prior to 1977 homelessness was treated as a welfare problem, and it was only with the introduction of the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act of that year that housing authorities were given the obligation to house those in priority need. Homelessness has tended to be something of a political issue, with the Conservative government in the 1980s effectively arguing that rooflessness was the only true form of homelessness. Cloke et al (2002) were of the view that the Thatcher government implied that other people were basically cheating the system and jumping the queue for council housing, perhaps by deliberately making themselves homeless, and they argued that this position was adopted in an attempt to deflect attention from the inadequacy of housing supply generally.

Rough sleeping became an issue for the Government in the 1990s with increasing press coverage. £200million was spent between 1990 and 1997 on the Rough Sleepers Initiative, focussing on London, then Bristol, then a small number of other large cities. It was still a big problem, as identified by the formation of the Social

Exclusion Unit by the Government in 1997. Between 1998 and 2000, extra funding ensured that the number of rough sleepers fell by 36%, but these programmes were again almost exclusively focussed on urban areas (Cloke et al., 2002).

“Hidden” homelessness

Robinson and Coward (2003) looked specifically at people who were staying with friends or family. They found that at least three quarters of homeless people currently staying with friends or family were not appearing on official statistics. Only half had approached their local authority for help, and only half of that half (i.e. 25% of the total) had been recognised as homeless.

Those who had not stayed with friends or family were even less likely to have approached the local authority for help. The likelihood of any positive reaction seems to be a significant reason for this: in case studies in Yorkshire more homeless people went to their local authority in the urban local authority (Sheffield) than in the rural district (Craven), as in the former a greater proportion of people were accepted as homeless and recognised as being in priority need.

Cloke et al (2002) defined a number of categories of hidden homelessness, i.e. those that were not included in official statistics, but could be argued to be homeless:

- People whose objective circumstances are the same as those who are officially homeless, but who do not register under the formal system.
- People who are, or are about to become, homeless but who are not in the Homeless Persons Act priority groups.
- People whose circumstances put them at risk of becoming homeless within a finite period.
- Those who sleep rough but not regularly or in known sites.
- Those who live in an institution primarily because there is nowhere else for them to live.
- Those who want to live as a separate household but who have to share with another household.

- Controversially, those who describe themselves as homeless, or who say their present housing is not their home.

We should not assume that rough sleeping does not occur in rural areas. Evans (1999) interviewed a number of homeless people in rural areas and found that over 75% of them had slept rough at one time or another – in locations such as cars, garages, sheds & out-houses, churchyards, barns, parks, etc. The majority of those questioned said they preferred living in rural areas, though in common with wider society, the younger interviewees complained that there was nothing to do!

The rural dimension

If we accept, then, that the perhaps commonly held view that *rural* and *homelessness* do not belong in the same sentence is wrong, what are the particular facets of rural homelessness?

Homeless people in rural areas are more likely to be hidden as, given the proportionally smaller number of people affected, there are less facilities and services to help them. Cloke et al felt that the simple view might be that anyone becoming homeless in a rural area must move to an urban area. The authors observe that often any glimpse of rural homelessness is romanticised, for example “hermits” or “hobos” happily living in a cave, forest, etc. Evans (1999) carried out largely qualitative research, in which homeless people were interviewed, often by other homeless people. Table 3 summarises a number of advantages and disadvantages identified by the homeless people of being homeless in a rural area.

Table 3 – Positives and negatives of being homeless in a rural area

Positives	Negatives
A more tranquil environment	Homelessness not recognised
A safer environment	Intrusive community
Friendlier/more helpful people	Exclusive community
	Few services or facilities for homeless people

(Evans, 1999)

We can see that the advantages of a more tranquil and safer environment perhaps fit the stereotype of a “hobo”, happy to wander country lanes out of harms way. However, the disadvantages also identify some key problems, perhaps of an

exclusive community (not receptive to outsiders), or conversely an intrusive community (the common perception that “everyone knows everyone’s business”).

Robinson and Coward (2003) found that staying with friends and family was more common in less urbanised areas. 77% of those questioned had stayed with friends or family in the rural district of Craven, which fell to 72% in Sheffield and 69% in London. Looking at those people who had only stayed with their friends and family, i.e. had not slept rough, stayed in a hostel or anywhere else, the difference is more marked. 65% of those questioned in Craven had only stayed with friends or family, which is a much greater proportion than in London (13%) or Sheffield (4%). We discuss possible reasons for the seemingly greater reliance on the family in rural areas below.

There is an urban, and particularly London, bias towards media coverage and funding of homelessness issues. In 1998, the Government announced that £177m was to be spent on reducing rough sleeping between 1998 and 2002, with £145m of that going to London, and the rest mostly to other big cities. (Cloke et al., 2002)

Cloke et al uncovered unpublished statistics showing that 15,950 households were registered as priority homeless by local authorities in rural England in 1996. That was 14.4% of the total homeless number for England, and equated to 3.5 per 1000 households, compared to 7.6 per 1000 in London and 5.7 per 1000 in urban areas. Although homelessness declined by 17.8% between 1992 and 1996 in England, it went up by 12.1% in deep rural areas.

Why people become homeless

The reasons for becoming homeless are shared by urban and rural areas alike. Cloke et al (2002) looked at research by Bramley from 1992, which found three distinctive features of rural homelessness: (i) a higher proportion resulting from loss of private rented/tied accommodation; (ii) a lower level of parents/relatives unwilling to accommodate; and (iii) lower numbers previously sleeping rough or in hostels.

We can draw a number of conclusions from that research – as we might expect, a greater proportion of people became homeless because their rented/tied accommodation ceased to be available. That could be a result both of the decline in agricultural employment, and the trend of landlords selling/renting out their property to incomers or holiday-makers. We might also expect a smaller proportion of rural homeless people to have stayed in hostels, as there is less provision of hostels in rural areas. It is harder to draw definitive conclusions from the lower level of parents/relatives unwilling to accommodate. A stereotypical view of the countryside might suggest that families living in rural villages are somehow more inclusive than those living towns or cities. It could, of course, be more a matter of necessity, that parents/relatives in urban areas are aware that there is provision for homeless people, more council housing, etc, so are less concerned about the consequences of asking their family to move out. If there is no alternative, as is often the case in rural areas, parents/relatives might reluctantly allow their family to continue living in their home.

Further research by Cloke et al showed that in 1996, most homelessness accepted by rural local authorities came from four sources: Loss of rented or tied housing (33.2%), parents/relatives no longer being able to accommodate (23%), relationship breakdown (21.1%) and mortgage arrears (10.9%). The first and the last are more common in rural areas than urban. Mortgage arrears may be more common in rural areas due to there being less rental accommodation, so people may have to buy to stay in the area and hence are more likely to take on unsustainable levels of debt.

We will return to the issue of rural homelessness later, in the context of social constructions of the countryside (see section 2.4.4)

We have identified several negative consequences of a lack of affordable housing in rural areas. But what is causing this shortfall? There are two main causes of a numerical lack of affordable housing – too much competition for the housing which exists in rural areas (“demand side” factors in economic terms), and, probably more importantly, insufficient housebuilding in rural areas (“supply side” factors). We will now explore each of these in turn, beginning with demand side factors.

2.2. Demand for housing in rural areas

There are two broad sources of “external” demand for housing in the countryside (i.e. demand outside the conventional formulation of new households): demand from aspirant second home owners, and demand from in-comers to rural areas. These two sources of demand are discussed in turn in the following two sub-sections.

2.2.1. Second homes

Introduction

There are a significant number of second homes in England, and it is not surprising that these are often in rural areas, particularly in coastal areas or areas of high environmental quality such as national parks. No commentator would claim that the problems of rural affordability are solely due to second or holiday homes, but it is true that in some communities they exert a particularly strong influence.

It is important to differentiate between second homes and holiday homes. Second homes are homes owned by people whose primary residence is elsewhere – perhaps they use their second home at weekends, or for longer periods during the summer. Holiday homes are commercial properties owned by landlords who hire them out for short periods to holiday-makers. These can occasionally be a useful resource in terms of affordable housing as during the winter, if demand is low, their owners may rent them out to people seeking a home in the area. Conversely, this practice can have a negative effect, in that rents can suddenly increase dramatically in the high season, rendering properties unaffordable for their tenants.

It is arguably the case that the occupants of second homes are more self sufficient, i.e. will have a stock of basic foodstuffs and other essentials in the property and will bring with them a supply of fresh food, which might bring less benefits to local shops than the occupants of holiday homes do. But, owners of second homes pay council tax (see below), which goes to local authorities, whereas holiday home owners pay business rates, collected by the Treasury.

We might speculate that holiday homes are occupied for more weeks of the year than second homes (as there is a financial incentive on the part of the owners to have them occupied for as long as possible, in contrast to second home owners, who incur no significant difference in costs if they stay in the house for one week or for 20 weeks). This extra occupation may then generate more spending on food, etc. The economic benefits of tourism can be significant in rural communities. In 2002 the estimate was that nationally “visitors to the countryside spend over £12 billion annually and this spending supports 380,000 jobs” (SEEDA/The Countryside Agency, 2002).

Numbers

There are no definitive figures on the number of second homes in England, but approximately 200,000 is commonly accepted (Gallent et al., 2004). As mentioned above, many are in rural areas, but Gallent et al (2004), found that 15% were in London, and an increasing proportion of second homes are held abroad.

The actual number of second homes in England is not particularly large, indeed on the basis of the above figures, Gallent et al calculated that less than one percent of households have a second home in a rural area. The problem comes when individual settlements see high concentrations of second or holiday homes. Troutbeck, in the Lake District, has almost 40% of such properties (Cloke et al., 2002), which when coupled with the demand from commuters, retirees, etc creates a self evidently inflated market. The Lake District, and National Parks generally, have long been a focus of demand for second homes. In the Lake District in 1981, the proportion of owner occupied housing was 44% of the total stock, council renting making up 12.6%, private rented 18.8% and second/holiday homes 16.4% of the stock. At that time, retirement migrants comprised most of the demand from outside the national park (Shucksmith, 1981).

Financial impacts of second homes

Shucksmith (1983) identified six categories of costs and benefits to local communities of second homes. One was the impact on the housing market in

general, as discussed above. Shucksmith pointed out that in the UK specifically, there was an initial boom in numbers of second homes in the post war period. These tended to be more isolated properties, for example it was possible to buy a farm cottage in Norfolk for £50 in the 1950s (Shucksmith, 1983). He argued that at that stage there were essentially two markets, as there was very little demand for isolated ex-farm cottages from a “local” market, so in effect the sale and purchase of second homes operated in a quite distinct external market. Given the increases in personal mobility we have seen over the last 50 years, it is probably the case that this secondary market no longer exists, and second home owners are part of the mainstream housing market.

There can be some benefits in the acquisition process, as it provides work for local solicitors, estate agents and surveyors. If the home is bought from a local household, or bought new from a local builder, then there is a potential re-investment of that capital. Improvements to second homes provide work for local builders, and keep the housing stock in good condition (and generate additional council tax revenue). There is also scope for expenditure on food, drink, etc, which would generate jobs, but this is almost certainly less expenditure than a permanent resident.

Until recently, second homes were liable for 50% discounts on council tax. The Government has now changed the law, so local authorities can charge up to 90% council tax on second homes. The Commission for Rural Communities carried out research in 2006 to assess the extent to which this higher rate of tax was being used by local authorities. They found that 94 out of the 104 rural local authorities with more than 0.5% of their stock classified as second homes applied the higher rate of tax (CRC, 2006b). However, the additional 40% tax receipts are split between the County and District Councils, with County Councils receiving 80% of the extra. Some County Councils choose to return this to their Districts, but many retain it. Whether or not it is returned to Districts, there is no requirement for local authorities to “ring-fence” this money, so it often disappears into the base budgets, rather than being spent on affordable housing, as was the intention (CRC, 2006b).

Micro-spatial impacts of second homes

Clout, writing in Johnson (1974) considered second home ownership a form of “seasonal suburbanisation”. Clearly, the empirical situation has moved on considerably in the last 30 years, but much of his theoretical work remains valid.

He noted that “primary urbanisation permitted a spatial separation between place of work and place of rest within the built-up city. Second home occupation has introduced a new dimension to this process, allowing the urbanite to change his environment completely on a regular and repeated basis” (Johnson, 1974)(p104).

But, he argued, it was not simply a case of urbanites acquiring homes in rural areas and visiting them on occasion. Particularly in the USA, where there is no legacy of agricultural and other rural buildings ripe for conversion or re-occupation, many second homes were built from scratch, and it seemed to him that they were built and laid out in a similar way to the suburbs in which their owners lived for most of the time. Similarly, in Scandinavian countries, second homes are often purpose built and separate from the main housing market due to the level of demand for such properties – in 2006, it was estimated that one in 16 Scandinavians had a second home (Muller, 2007), compared to one in 100 Britons (Gallent et al., 2004).

It may be the case that if second home ownership continues to be popular in the UK the existing stock of properties will be insufficient, and there will be increasing pressure to see new development in rural areas specifically designed for second/holiday home ownership. This is likely to be controversial, given the shortage of affordable housing in those locations that we have discussed.

Social impacts of second homes

Clout, in Johnson (ed.)(1974), was concerned at the dilution of local culture that second homes could bring, and highlighted the example of English people owning second homes in deeply rural parts of Wales, where Welsh was still commonly spoken.

Shucksmith (1983) raises a similar concern, that second home ownership results in “ghost villages” out of the holiday season. He argued, though, that the issue of dilution of culture might be overstated – some argue that it is no different from the gentrification that occurs in most towns and cities.

Gallent et al (2004) argued that there was a social equity argument against second home owners that was not there for commuters or retirees pushing up house prices in rural areas – second home owners already “probably have a perfectly good place to live elsewhere”. However, the authors found no evidence either way to suggest that second homes impacted on service provision or social cohesion (Gallent et al., 2004).

The ARHC concluded that “across rural England as a whole, the impact of second homes is modest” (ARHC, 2006). In fact, the demand from other sources outstrips that for second homes in most rural communities. The pressure from those moving to rural areas and commuting to urban areas, and those retiring to rural areas, is usually more significant. This is the subject of the next sub-section.

2.2.2. In-migrants to rural areas

There are some particularly pressured rural communities which are so located as to be in prime areas of demand from both the second home and in-migrant markets – these tend to be, noted Richards and Satsangi (2004) “areas of environmental value” such as National Parks. National Parks such as the Lake District and Peak District are close to major urban areas, and so face obvious demand from commuters, in addition to their appeal as second home and retirement locations.

Shucksmith et al (1995) identified two types of pressure from commuting – short distance, more likely to be people working in urban areas who cannot afford to live there; and longer distance (20 miles plus), more likely to be those who choose to live in rural areas (i.e. wealthier households). Both types put pressure on rural housing markets. Reverse commuting can be an issue in some areas, if access to the local housing market becomes impossible – i.e. individuals working in rural locations and commuting back to homes in urban areas.

The 1998 research which developed the 1995 Shucksmith et al work concluded that in-migration was a common feature¹⁰, but illustrated the diverse nature of in-migrants, i.e. they were not all wealthy urbanites. In each area, ½ of in-movers formerly lived within 24 miles of their current home, and around 30% of moves involved moving 50 miles or more (DETR and DTZ Pidea Consulting (Firm), 1998).

Unsurprisingly, the case studies showed that job-related reasons are the most significant for moving to a rural area. The tendency seemed to be for people to move to a particular area of England for their job, then choose to live in a rural part of that area. Retirement was not found to be a significant factor in the demand for housing in the case study areas.

An increasing rural population is a relatively recent phenomenon – as recently as the 1970s, geographers were investigating ways to stem the decline in rural populations. Lewis, writing in Pacione (ed.)(1983), discusses the work of Dillman (1979), who pinpointed several identifiable trends involved in the repopulation of rural areas:

1. A continued suburbanisation of rural communities adjacent to metropolitan centres.
2. Some decentralisation of the manufacturing sector seeking lower land and wage costs.
3. An acceleration of retirement migration into the countryside, particularly as a result of early retirement.
4. A levelling off in the loss of agricultural population.
5. Exploitation of mineral and energy resources.
6. A desire for an alternative to the urban lifestyle.

Several of these can clearly result in wealthier in-migrants forcing up house prices in an areas. Pacione hypothesised that as there was evidence to suggest that the decline in rural service provision was continuing despite the rural population growing, this suggested “that multi-purpose journeys characterise much of rural consumer movements” (Pacione, 1983).

¹⁰ Each case study had more than 50% of households as in-migrants, and in the South East case studies, 70% of households were in-migrants

There seem to be, as we might expect, differences in the attractiveness of rural areas to in-migrants. Proximity to urban areas is probably the strongest factor drawing incomers to the countryside. Murdoch et al (2003) contrasted four different “types” of the countryside, the differentiation of which was partly caused by the presence or otherwise of middle class in-migrants. The *preserved countryside* was usually the most accessible, in which decision making processes are dominated by pastoral and preservationist attitudes (see section 2.4.4 for more details about pastoralism). These attitudes mainly come from “middle-class social groups living in the countryside, employed primarily in the service sector, and often working in nearby urban centres” (Murdoch et al., 2003)(p12). Murdoch et al contrasted this with the *contested countryside*, lying outside the main commuter zones, where incomers are less dominant but are increasingly in conflict with local agricultural, commercial and development interests who will tend to favour development for local needs. In the third type, the *paternalistic countryside*, large landowners (in the form of private estates and big farms) dominate both in terms of ownership and the development process. These areas are typically more remote and hence less subject to the pressures of middle class commuting. In the fourth type, the *clientelist countryside*, the greater level of remoteness means that “agriculture and its associated political institutions still hold sway” (ibid.)(p13). The reliance of that agriculture on state support means that agricultural interest groups work closely with state agencies and “local politics is dominated by employment concerns and the welfare of the ‘community’” (ibid.).

We have briefly looked at the demand for rural housing, but as mentioned above a potentially much more important factor is the supply of housing in the countryside, which is assessed in the next section.

2.3. Supply of housing in rural areas

Before considering literature related to the addition of new supply, i.e. building more affordable housing in rural areas, we must examine why the existing supply is not sufficient to meet demand.

2.3.1. The existing supply

There are several aspects to a historical shortfall in the supply of affordable housing in rural areas, relating to council housing, private rented housing and questions over the use of existing stock.

Council houses

There has historically been a lower stock of social housing in rural areas than urban – “generally, the remoter the area the smaller the proportion of council houses provided” (Shucksmith, 1990)(p96). Shucksmith went on to identify the reasons for that lower level of council house provision as including: The lack of political will of rural local authorities controlled by farmers and landowners; lower capital and revenue allocations from central government to rural local authorities; and economies of scale¹¹. He also believed that the policy of limiting the budget for new council housing by local authorities had a disproportionate effect on rural areas. He considered that by reducing capital allowances, the Government made housing authorities increasingly reliant on rental income to finance their existing debts and any new building. As rural local authorities have a smaller stock of council houses, they have to raise the necessary income from fewer tenants. Shucksmith concluded that “an increase in council house rents is both increased by, and contributes towards, council house sales in rural areas” (Shucksmith, 1990).

The lower existing stock of social housing in the countryside means the national trend towards transferring homes from public to private ownership has had a more significant effect in rural areas. The right to buy was introduced by the Conservative

¹¹ The greater the number of houses built as part of one development, the greater the economies of scale – so, building ten estates of ten houses each is likely to cost a local authority significantly more than one estate of 100 houses.

government in 1980 following a manifesto commitment to increase rates of home ownership (Munro, 2007). Given the neo-liberalist approach of the Thatcher regime, we might also hypothesise about other objectives of the policy, perhaps to reduce the power of local authorities and to save public money.

Some have argued that the latter reason in particular was invalid justification for the policy as housing subsidies would increase as right to buy grew in popularity (English and Martin, 1983). Whether or not this has occurred, we have seen three negative impacts of right to buy:

- 1) An absolute reduction in the number of affordable houses.
- 2) A reduction in the quality of council stock, as the best houses are usually those bought by tenants – why would a tenant buy a council house which is in poor repair?
- 3) The concept of “residualisation”: the wealthier social housing tenants have bought their housing, meaning those who remain are relatively worse off, so we see a concentration of “poverty, deprivation and social exclusion” (Malpass, 1999) in council houses.

There are, of course, positive impacts of the right to buy legislation, as many households have been able to access home ownership that would otherwise have not. We discussed in section 2.1.1 above the theoretical benefits of mixed communities, and a certain proportion of properties being bought by their tenants would, if those theories are correct, produce the same benefits as introducing new private housing to social housing estates.

However, rural areas have seen a disproportionately high take-up of right to buy. Between 1980 and 2005, the total stock of council houses in predominantly rural districts had fallen by 24%, in comparison to a 20% decline in mixed districts and an 18% decline in predominantly urban districts (ARHC, 2006).

These figures can be much higher in particular localities. Richards and Satsangi (2004) looked at the Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National park, and observed that in the rural villages of that area, half the stock of council houses had been lost.

Bevan et al (2001) noted that in some desirable areas of the South East, ex-council stock was found to be supplying the second homes market.

There remain high levels of aspiration among social and private tenants to buy their own home (Munro, 2007), and increasing the opportunities to do that thus remains a broad political consensus, despite the social problems it can bring in smaller communities.

Decline in private rented provision

Private rented accommodation has historically provided an affordable alternative to social rented or owner occupied housing in rural areas. This was often tied accommodation, i.e. a home provided with employment on a farm, or a landowner's estate. As the number of people employed in agriculture has declined, so has the quantity of tied accommodation.

Tied accommodation, and other properties owned by private landlords in rural areas are, found Shucksmith et al (1995), now more likely to be sold or rented as holiday accommodation than rented to local people. This is perhaps an inevitable symptom of the rise in demand for, and hence value of, houses in rural areas.

Better use of existing supply

Several commentators have noted that there is a large stock of vacant homes in the UK which could be exploited – there were nearly 700,000 empty homes in England alone in 2005 (ARHC, 2006). An examination of this statistic, though, perhaps undermines the argument that we should concentrate on the existing stock before considering building new houses. Less than half the empty homes had been vacant for more than six months¹², and the ARHC estimated there were approximately 58,000 houses vacant for more than six months in rural areas.

Kleinman and Shelter (1999) looked into the issue in some detail, and concluded that there were low vacancy rates across all tenures, including local authority and housing

¹² Only 1.7% of the private housing stock.

association stocks. They further found that another potential source of supply, the conversion of shops/offices, or at least the floors above them, was not likely to provide significant numbers of new homes (Kleinman and Shelter (Organization), 1999). They concluded that the chief problem was that new housing was not being provided in a large enough quantity. We can now examine two different explanations for this lack of new affordable housing provision, starting with a shortage of resources, then considering the complexity of affordable housing delivery arrangements.

2.3.2. Resource shortages

This sub-section looks at the evidence of a shortage of resources for rural affordable housing provision, and possible reasons for that shortage. Kleinman and Shelter (1999) identified four elements required for the building of new housing, which apply in general and specifically to affordable housing: Adequate land; a ready supply of building materials; the necessary range of labour skills; and the finance to pay for it. They noted that the first and last of these are key, with the middle two being addressed through the market. Let us then focus on those two key factors.

Land

Clearly, housing, whether for rent/sale on the open market or to be designated as affordable, cannot be built without land. Land for affordable housing can come from two sources – section 106 and non-section 106 sites (see section 1.1.3 for an explanation of what these terms mean). Monk et al (2005) looked at the mean number of sites developed by housing associations per year, and found that s106 sites were becoming increasingly important, but non-s106 sites were still the most common, yet increasingly difficult to obtain. Figures 6 and 7 show the changes in mean number of s106 and non-s106 sites by housing association and illustrate the changing relationship between the two.

These figures illustrate that the number of s106 sites per housing association is increasing, whilst the number of non-s106 sites falls. We explore the possible reasons for this in the “Finance” section below, but it is clear that the proportion of

non-s106 sites developed by housing associations is falling. Follow up work by Monk et al in 2007 found that RSLs were finding non-s106 sites increasingly difficult to acquire.

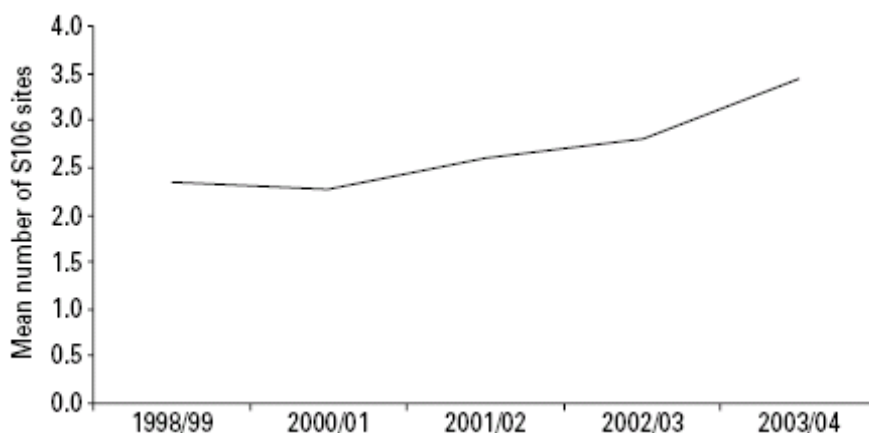


Figure 6 – Change in mean number of s106 sites by housing association (Monk et al., 2005)

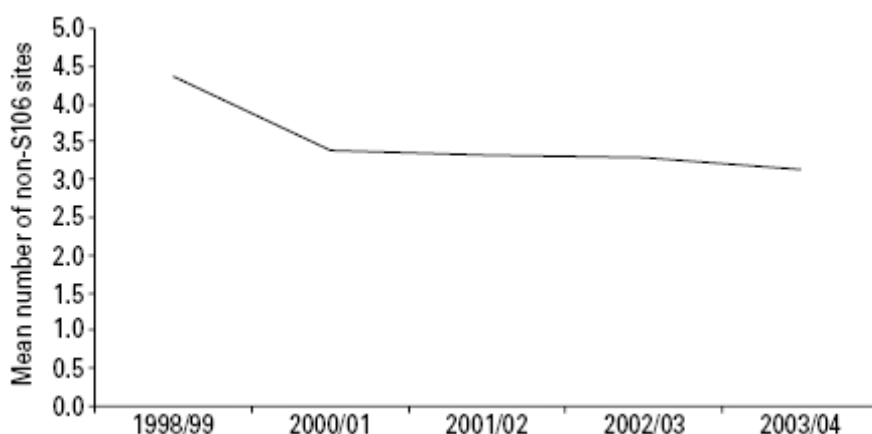


Figure 7 - Change in mean number of non-s106 sites by housing association (Monk et al., 2005)

This difficulty in acquiring non-s106 sites could have negative implications, land costs per unit to registered social landlords having been found to be generally higher in s106 schemes than in 100% affordable housing schemes (Whitehead et al., 2005). This may be as a result of lower densities in s106 schemes, they identified, with developers of private housing perhaps building larger homes with more private space than is the case with social housing providers.

Land prices for affordable housing are linked to land prices in general, which have shown an inclination to fluctuate quite significantly, generally in line with the stock market as opposed to house price changes. Figure 8 shows the greenfield land

index produced by “real estate service provider” Savills, plotted against the property sector share price, for 1986 to 2008, which in general illustrates this point.



Figure 8 – Annual percentage change in the property sector FTSE 350 and Savills greenfield land index (Savills, 2008)

Gallent and Bell (2000) were concerned that exception schemes were likely to fail to bring forward enough affordable housing due to a shortage of land – both landowners prepared to give land away or sell it at a very low cost, and a shortage of sites acceptable to planning officers.

There are a number of reasons for this shortage of land, including:

- “Hope value” – landowners may be hopeful of securing planning permission for market housing on their land, and hence the likelihood of a higher price.
- In some cases, disappointment at the outcome of an affordable housing development may mean landowners will not release any more land. Yarwood (2002) found resentment from landowners and parish councils alike that housing built by housing associations was going to non-local people. We explore this issue in more depth later.

- Several authors, including Bevan et al (2001) have pointed out that since the advent of “Best value”, local authorities and other public bodies such as the Forestry Commission find it hard to justify selling land to registered social landlords at below market value.

Monk et al (2005) found that housing associations were worried about land shortages, especially in the South, but were more concerned about a shortage of finance. Monk et al found that land prices per dwelling “appear to vary enormously”, even within regions (for example £16,000 to £60,000 per dwelling in the North West, £40,000 to £100,000 per dwelling in London). Housing associations perceived competition with private developers, the price of land and the total cost indicator constraints as the main difficulties in securing non-s106 sites. Most housing associations expressed the desire to expand development, but a lack of sites and the Housing Corporation’s new partnership bidding scheme (which has reduced the number of developing housing associations) were preventing them (Monk et al., 2005).

If there was an adequate supply of land, then, would there be sufficient finance to pay for more affordable houses?

Finance

There are two issues in relation to affordable housing in rural areas: a shortage of finance for affordable housing generally and a perceived failure to take account of higher costs of developing houses in rural areas.

Funding for affordable housing generally

All public sector bodies are under pressure to make efficiency savings as a result of the Gershon review¹³.

A report by the Audit Commission and National Audit Office in 2005 investigated how the ODPM were trying to save £335million from housing associations by:

¹³ The “Independent Review of Public Sector Efficiency” carried out by Sir Peter Gershon in 2004.

- allocating 80% of Housing Corporation funding to housing associations through “lead partnership” arrangements;
- paying some funding directly to private developers to encourage increased efficiency through competition and;
- designing a Value for Grant comparator, to assess how well housing associations use grants from the Housing Corporation.

The “lead partnership” scheme is designed to increase efficiency: 80% of Housing Corporation funding is now going to 70 housing associations, in contrast to 2003/2004, when 400 housing associations received funding. Housing associations are now expected to work with these lead associations, or seek funding through the “specialist programme”, which allocates a small amount of money to specialist schemes – for example rural housing. Many housing associations are looking at merging or adopting group structures in order to compete in this environment (Audit Commission and National Audit Office, 2005).

The Audit Commission/National Audit Office report took the view that the efficiency savings are working, citing the reduction in the average total public subsidies per dwelling for the southern regions¹⁴. It is of course arguable whether these cuts are in fact efficiency savings, or just cuts in public expenditure. Housing associations may be having to meet the shortfall by borrowing or using their reserves, or by ceasing to build in places where costs are higher (for example rural areas).

The money which is distributed by the Government through the Housing Corporation is known as Approved Development Programme (ADP) funding. Regional Housing bodies receive a proportion of the total national pot, according to “demand for affordable housing”, shown in the region’s regional housing strategy. Table 4 shows the distribution across regions, extracted from the Audit Commission/National Audit Office report.

¹⁴ In the South West, for rental, average public subsidy fell from £61,257 per dwelling in 03/04 to £50,373 in 04/06, and for sale from £27,248 per dwelling to £20,508. In the South East, the figures were £68,263 to £58,848 and £33,609 to £26,109.

Table 4 – The distribution of ADP across the regions (Audit Commission and National Audit Office, 2005). The period for which this data applies is not stated in the report.

Region	%
London	46.0
South East	18.9
South West	5.7
East Midlands	3.8
East of England	6.2
West Midlands	5.1
Yorkshire	3.9
North East	2.9
North West	7.6

Table 4 implies that housing associations in the north of England are likely to find it harder to extract social housing grant from their region, given the smaller allocations the northern regions receive.

Monk et al (2005) undertook a survey which backed up the perception that social housing grant and loan finance secured against future rental income were the main sources of funding for housing associations. This may seem anomalous, given the findings above that an increasing proportion of housing association sites are obtained through the s106 route, where we might expect developer contributions to be a component of housing associations funding. This, however, does not seem to be the case.

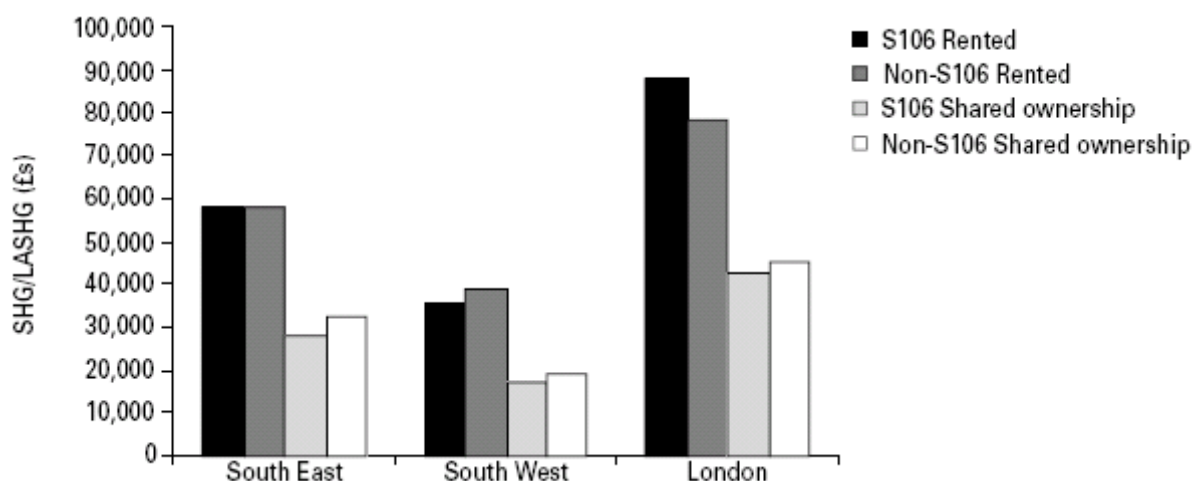


Figure 9 – Amount of social housing grant used on s106 and non-s106 sites (Monk et al., 2005)

Figure 9, extracted from work carried out by Monk et al, shows the amount of social housing grant used on s106 and non-s106 schemes, for the three southern regions. It demonstrates roughly similar amounts for both types, indeed for rented properties

in London, more social housing grant is needed for s106 schemes than for non-s106 schemes. We would expect a s106 contribution to reduce the cost of land to the housing association, and hence reduce the amount of social housing grant required. In practice, though, Monk et al found that other sources of grant may be available, or the land value of a s106 site may be higher, so the developer contribution just reduced the land cost to a non-106 level. Some housing associations saw s106 as a method of obtaining land, others saw it as a subsidy on land values (Monk et al., 2005). We return to the issue of s106 vs. non-s106 sites in more detail in section 3.2.2, below.

Whitehead et al (2005) carried out research demonstrating the necessity of public subsidy. Of the s106 schemes identified in their research (both in urban and rural areas), 82% needed some element of social housing grant or local authority social housing grant. That rose to 96% in the North East (Whitehead et al., 2005).

Funding for affordable housing in rural areas

Clearly the availability of funding through the Housing Corporation is vital for affordable housing to succeed. Many housing associations operating in rural areas have criticised the mechanisms used to allocate funding as being unfair – previously this involved the total cost indicator (TCI), which was used by the Housing Corporation to ensure that only schemes which represented value for money were funded – the total cost per new dwelling provided had to be below a certain level. An allowance was made for higher costs in rural areas, but there was always debate as to whether this allowance was sufficient. The Housing Corporation’s approach has now changed, with the TCI being abolished, and replaced with a “Value for Grant comparator” to ensure best value is achieved. There are ongoing concerns that this will continue the perceived bias towards urban areas. But what are the additional costs in rural areas?

Design requirements are often highlighted as causing problems for registered social landlords in rural areas – this was particularly a problem in National Parks, Richards and Satsangi (2004) found. The Housing Corporation offers a National Park subsidy specifically to address this issue, but qualitative evidence from housing associations

suggested it was inadequate to “bridge the gap”. Bevan et al (2001) found that this problem was not confined just to national parks – many rural areas have a design vernacular based on local materials, which may cost significantly more than “bog-standard” bricks and mortar.

Williams et al (1991) had identified, in addition to design costs, two areas of infrastructure provision that generated higher costs in rural areas: (i) highways access, with highways authorities objecting to schemes both in terms of access from poorer quality rural roads and manoeuvring round a small site and (ii) drainage.

This problem with costs for registered social landlords was illustrated by Gallent and Bell (2000), who found from interviews with developers that even if land for exception schemes was given free to registered social landlords, other costs such as design, highways access, etc. could make the scheme unviable.

We have identified in this sub-section some basic problems with a lack of resources – some argue that more land is necessary, some that more money is essential, and others that both are deficient at present. There are, though, other issues that must be addressed with relation to how the system for developing affordable housing works. Chief amongst these is how the partners in affordable housing delivery work together, the subject of the next sub-section.

2.3.3. “Partnership” working

The new importance of partnerships

It is now essential that for affordable housing to be developed, a number of agencies must work in partnership, given the restrictions put in place by successive governments on any direct investment by local authorities in social housing.

Yarwood (2002) identified three potential tiers of partnership which might develop in rural areas:

- 1) Partnership *programmes* – these are instigated and funded from a central body, e.g. LEADER or Objective 5b from the EU. They are strategic and highly

regulated through formal rules. Government is a powerful player. Perhaps they are in fact a new form of government, rather than governance.

- 2) Partnership *organisations* – these often emerge in response to a partnership programme – formal/semi-formal, they have two or more partners, with an identifiable administrative and financial structure. Regional partnerships are an example.
- 3) Partnership *projects* – a working arrangement between two or more partners established to manage or implement a specific project. They may be initiated by government, but they require voluntary support and public help.

(Yarwood, 2002)

Generally speaking, the building of affordable housing in rural areas involves the last of these, as organisations come together to develop specific houses in specific places. Many local authorities operate social housing partnerships, but these are generally information sharing, rather than resource spending, bodies.

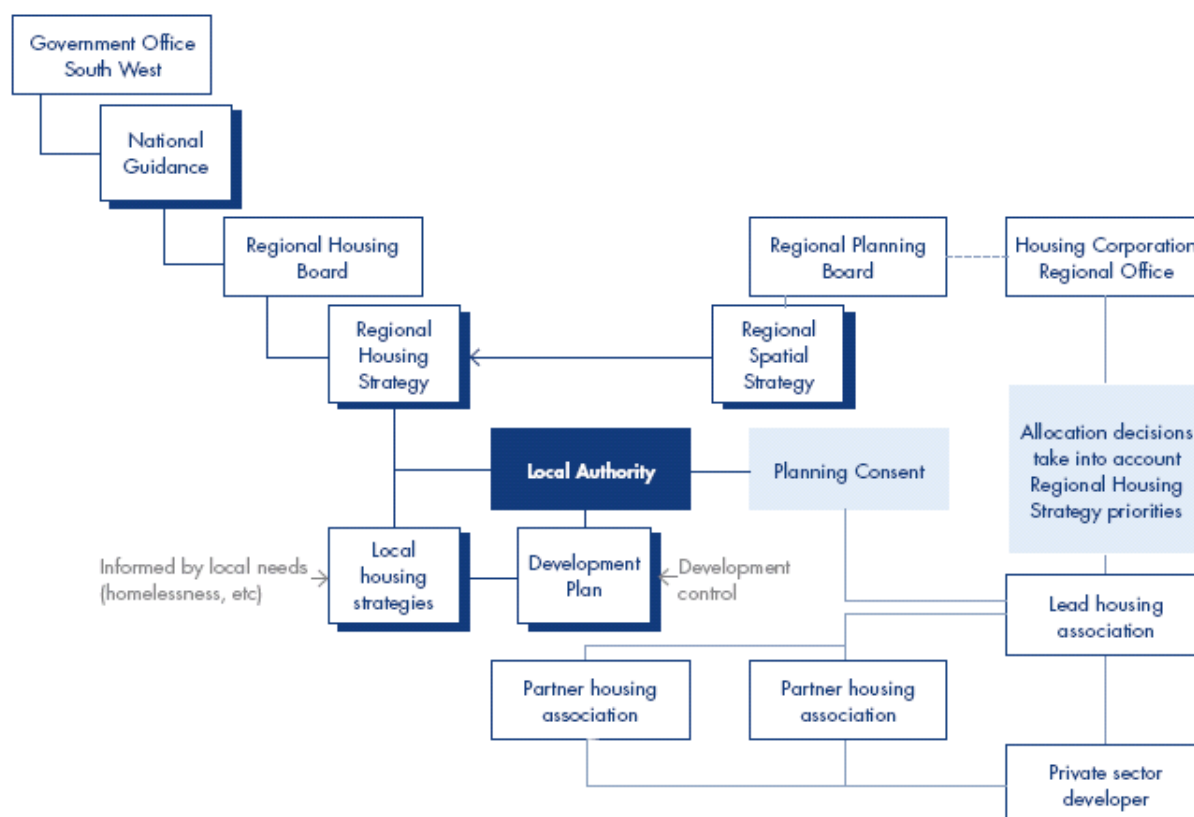


Figure 10 – The complexity of partnership working for local authorities in relation to affordable housing (Audit Commission and National Audit Office, 2005)

There may be a large number of organisations involved in affordable housing partnerships, as figure 10 illustrates. A particular “partnership” which has been the focus of a significant quantity of literature is that between local authorities (the planning, housing and legal departments), private developers (in the case of s106 sites) and registered social landlords.

Farthing & Ashley (2002) looked in some detail at the process of negotiation that local authorities go through with private developers to achieve affordable housing on s106 sites. They found that the local authorities’ “bargaining position” was key. Factors which affected that position included:

- The degree of development pressure. A strong market for housing may mean that local authorities can demand more in terms of planning gain generally, and affordable housing specifically.
- Development gain. Land values can affect the scale of “subsidy” developers are prepared to offer for affordable housing.
- Strength of planning controls. It is suggested by some researchers that restrictive land use policies increase the scope for negotiation of planning gain. Conversely, green belts generally increase the proportion of brownfield development and reduce the number of houses built.
- Housing Needs. A high quality, “robust” housing needs assessment is given considerable weight in policy guidance to justify negotiation (see further discussion below).
- Clarity and strength of policies. Involvement in social housing provision is seen by some as a move away from strictly land-use planning, but some consider the provision of a proportion of affordable housing to be legally unsure. The lack of a precise definition of affordability can hinder provision.
- Different priorities given to different forms of planning gain, and conflicting policy objectives. Some Local Authorities may be prepared to sacrifice affordable housing provision for more recreation provision, or vice versa, and the conflict between trying to ensure more land on previously developed land vs. the Government’s drive to encourage “mixed communities” can be a problem.

(Farthing and Ashley, 2002)

This latter factor can be further complicated by the “functional sectoralism” identified by Healey (2006). She noted that government at all levels is split into specific “silos” with little co-ordination. It can therefore be problematic when local authorities’ housing, planning and legal teams, all with different expertise and possibly different priorities, attempt to present a united front to registered social landlords and private developers.

Sub-regional housing strategies

The ARHC (2006) recommended that more rural local authorities formed partnerships to produce sub-regional housing strategies. This recommendation is based on the observation that housing markets do not follow local authority boundaries, and that local authorities could benefit by sharing their resources and learning from their neighbours. Very few local authorities had adopted this approach in 2006, but it is being encouraged by the Government and is becoming more common.

Needs information

We have seen that there is a significant need for more affordable housing in rural areas, argued for by the CRC amongst many others. It is clear, though, that the level of need varies enormously from region to region, local authority to local authority and settlement to settlement. It is vital that if affordable homes are to be built in a particular location, there is sufficient need to justify them. If they stand empty, there are immediate financial consequences for the developer, and possibly more damaging in the long term, local people can become cynical about affordable housing provision (Yarwood, 2002). Richards and Satsangi (2004) found there was contradictory data on need depending on the source of information used, and recommended good quality housing needs surveys which triangulated different data sources.

There are a number of ways of carrying out needs assessments, which are not of direct relevance here. What is relevant, though, is the fact that developers have been critical about the standards of studies, believing they are often based on

aspirations, not realistic new household formation numbers (DTLR et al., 2002). They have also been concerned that they “ignored that middle range of people” and tended to overstate the need for social rented housing and under-estimated the need for other types of housing.

The Audit Commission/National Audit Office report (2005) identified a number of problems with housing needs assessments: Few consultancies have the necessary skills to do them, so prices are high. Different consultancies use different methods, so comparison is difficult. Regional housing boards sometimes have to commission further work to try and get a coherent picture of needs. The frequency of housing needs assessments is not specified in ODPM guidance, so the report found that some local authorities were relying on out of date surveys. Some housing needs assessments underestimate the need – some groups of people’s needs are not identified. Developers often carry out their own surveys because of these weaknesses, which leads to arguments with local authorities (Audit Commission and National Audit Office, 2005).

The Government has recently shifted its focus from housing needs assessments to Housing Market Assessments (HMAs), which explicitly recognise what some local authorities had acknowledged before, that housing markets do not respect arbitrary local authority boundaries. Whatever form of assessment is carried out, there is ample evidence that there has been insufficient co-ordination between the different bodies involved in the past.

We have focussed thus far on more “empirical” reasons for the low levels of affordable housebuilding in rural areas, including a lack of resources and inefficient partnership working. One interpretation could be that with a few minor adjustments, such as an increase in Housing Corporation funding, the planning system could be made to deliver more affordable housing.

Already, though, a number of themes are beginning to emerge, and we might argue that what we are seeing is not simply a failure to implement planning policies correctly but a symptom of wider issues with the planning system itself. We shall

now move on to investigate these themes in more depth, starting with the next section of this literature review.

2.4. Wider issues

This section will examine some “wider” issues with regard to planning for affordable housing provision. It will look first at UK Government housing policy, then at other technical factors which affect the planning for housing system/process in England. We will then move on to examine opposition to housing, and the “constructions” which might cause that opposition, before concluding with a consideration of governance issues with relation to rural affordable housing.

2.4.1. Housing policy in the UK

Introduction

The provision of affordable housing in rural areas clearly sits as part of wider discussions about housing policy generally. Whilst the focus of this study is on a set of particular new Government policies, it is prudent to consider where that sits in a wider policy and historical context.

Many people, particularly those to the right of the political spectrum, place the blame for the UK-wide shortage of affordable housing, and indeed housing in general, at the door of the planning system. These concerns were met head-on by Gallent and Tewdwr-Jones (2007), who stated “Planning can be seen as a cause of unaffordable housing” (p16), but who also acknowledged that since the Government is keen to reduce public subsidy for new affordable housebuilding, planning is integral to solving the problem. Adams et al (2002) shared the concern about these unintended outcomes of the planning system:

...it is clear that planning constraints lead to higher prices, and densities, restrictions in the quantity of homes supplied, and convergence in the type and design of new homes.

(Adams et al., 2002)

Are such commentators arguing for the abolition of the planning system? One argument is that in a free market, with no planning constraints, the private sector

would provide sufficient housing for all. Gallent and Tewdwr-Jones questioned that argument, pointing out that scarcity of housing is in the developers' interests – in a conventional market, the less there is of something that people wish to buy, the higher the price will be forced up. In the absence of a planning system, they argued that developers would buy up land to stop others developing it and would build at a rate to achieve maximum profit – “we would retain a planning system but it would be a privatised system administered by big business rather than a nationalised system administered democratically” (Gallent and Tewdwr-Jones, 2007)(p17). Rather than abolishing the planning system, pro-development commentators might instead argue for reforming it, producing a system which matches housing supply and demand more effectively. We will return to this issue later.

Housing policy since 1900

In recent years strong links between housing and planning policy have been advocated (Barker, 2004). It was not always thus, however, and it is useful to look at how housing policy has developed since the start of the 20th century (on the basis that before then, there was no real policy – local authorities could built council housing from 1890 onwards, but there were only 24,000 council houses built between 1890 and 1914).

Adams et al (2002) considered that there were five important periods in the evolution of housing policy in that time:

1. *1914 – 1939*: Addressing the Victorian legacy of poor quality housing, etc – the introduction of rent control and slum clearance. There was much state involvement in new building. The Housing and Planning Act 1919 (known as the Addison Act) introduced subsidy from central to local government to build council houses.
2. *1945 – 1968*: The development of the post-Keynesian welfare state. From 1945-1953 the Labour Government increased supply through state provision. Post 1954, high production was maintained, but with more private sector involvement. Between 1964 and 1968 the Wilson Labour administration maintained a broad parity between the public and private sectors. The

general policy continued of addressing the housing shortage and clearing slums. This approach was supported because in 1951, there were 6.5% more households than dwellings, while around 75% of all households were living in substandard, overcrowded or shared homes. The Conservative government achieved a scarcely believable (by today's standards) 425,000 new units in 1958.

3. 1969 – 1979: The 1969 Housing Act emphasised improvement over redevelopment, and the 1974 Housing Act added action areas which gave grants for rehabilitation. Wider economic problems had led to cutbacks in output and “there were emerging concerns about the possible impact of large-scale development on urban communities” (Adams et al., 2002)(p27).
4. 1979 – 1997: The Thatcher years, with the introduction of right to buy and LSVT, and the deliberate policy of stopping new council house building.
5. 1997 onwards: Blairism – the private sector is still dominating, with the addition of social cohesion/inclusion to the mix.

Malpass (1999) noted that at the time of writing, it was being questioned whether or not there was a need for housing policy any longer. The argument was that the reasons for policy of the post-war years had been resolved: the shortages of housing immediately after WWII had been addressed; the slums had been cleared; the housing market had been “modernised”, i.e. owner occupied was now dominant; and most importantly the political consensus of the 1960s had gone. (Malpass, 1999)

Housing had slipped down the political agenda, the author using the example of the “political heavyweights” who used to occupy the post of Minister for Housing, such as Harold Macmillan, compared with the less important figures that had been responsible for housing in the 1980s and 1990s. We might argue that this situation has now changed, with John Prescott, the Deputy Prime Minister, having overall responsibility for housing until 2006.

Kleinman (1996) argued that housing policy had been *bifurcated* – split into two sets of concerns, issues and possible solutions:

- The interests of the majority, which at the time was again about ensuring continuity in the market.
- Provision for the minority – homelessness, social housing, etc – the majority do not consent as a type of collective provision, but rather as an expression of altruism, or as an insurance policy against social disorder; or as a social necessity, (because low-paid but essential workers need to live somewhere). (Kleinman, 1996)

Since the publication of Malpass' work, house prices have increased significantly, arguably making housing policy more important again (witness the Kate Barker report, the ARHC, etc). The "low-paid but essential workers" referred to above could now include "key workers" in the Government's language – nurses, teachers, etc. The Barker report also highlighted that a mismatch between housing supply and demand can have consequences for the UK economy: "A weak supply of housing contributes to macroeconomic instability and hinders labour market flexibility, constraining economic growth" (Barker, 2004). There is evidence then that housing policy has risen back up the political agenda.

Outcomes of those policies on housing provision

We can look at the changes in tenure structure in the UK in the light of these changing housing policies. Before 1914 there were only 24,000 council houses, and between 1919 and 1939 over 1 million were built, a direct result of the new level of state intervention. This continued after the Second World War. Councils received a "bricks and mortar" subsidy paid annually into their housing revenue account, which in some cases could last 40 years after a house was built. The private sector could not compete with this. The intention of the Labour government in the immediate post war years was to create a single class of housing, i.e. public sector housing for all (Adams et al., 2002).

As the free spending years of the post WWII era passed, there was a change in emphasis towards the private sector, which peaked in the 1980s. In the early 1970s, the census showed there were 700,000 excess dwellings in Britain, so bringing some of those homes into use rather than building many thousands more became the aim

of housing policy. As discussed above, the UK Government has effectively subsidised housing provision since 1919. There was a shift in the 1980s, under the Margaret Thatcher Conservative Government, from subsidising supply of housing through council house building to subsidising demand through housing benefit. We could see this as indicative of the neo-liberal desire to transfer subsidy from society in general to specific individuals, and hence target it on those perceived to be in greatest need.

The rise in owner occupancy levels since WWII is well documented, and one of the key factors was Mortgage Tax Relief. This subsidy was aimed purely at owner occupiers, and gave tax relief against mortgage interest payments. In 1975, at its highest, Mortgage Tax Relief was at 38% of house purchase interest, costing the UK £1billion at the time (Gibb and Whitehead, 2007). Critics argued that this was wasteful, inequitable and inefficient. Adams et al (2002) also believe it helped fuel house prices in the late 1980s boom. As the public sector declined from the 1980s onwards, household growth has outstripped dwelling provision once again.

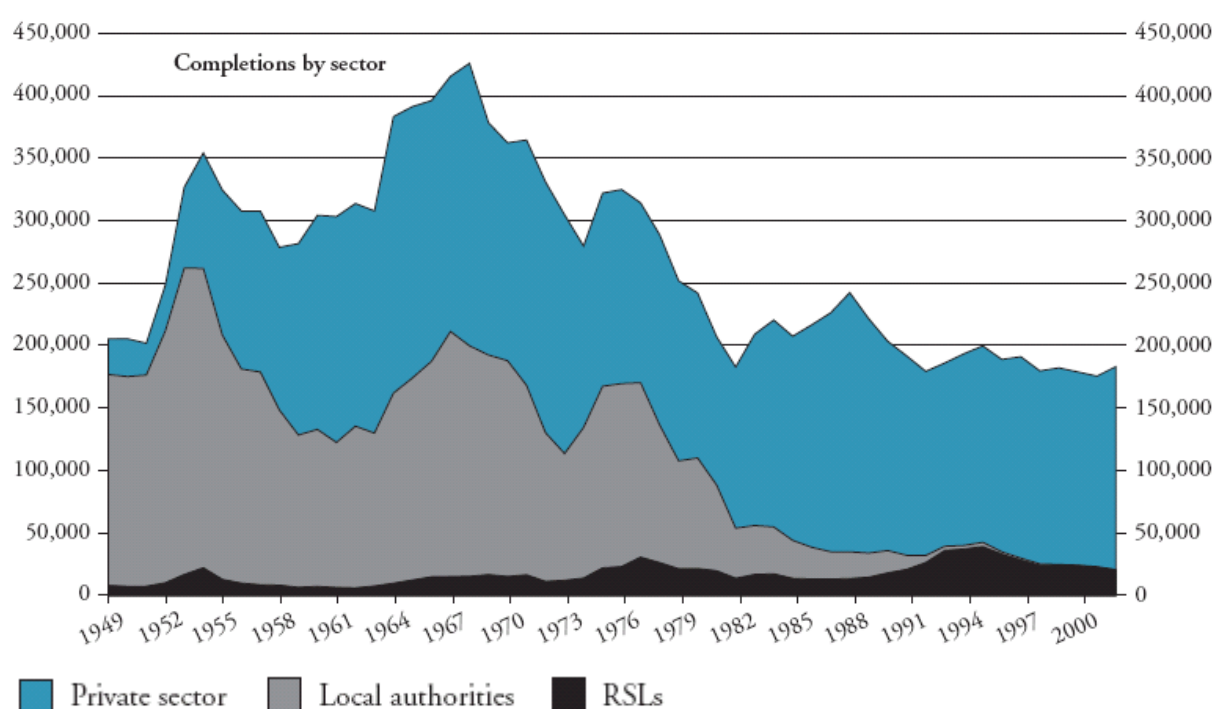


Figure 11 – UK Housing completions, 1949 – 2002 (Barker, 2004)

Figure 11, extracted from the Barker report, shows UK housing completions by sector from 1949 – 2002. The chart shows that from the 1950s onwards, the level of private

sector housing development has remained fairly constant, with the decline in completions largely due to the local authority contribution declining after the late 1960s and RSLs not replacing them as a large scale source of provision.

The role of private renting

In terms of tenure, private renting was historically an important contribution to the UK housing stock. As a proportion of total dwelling stock, it fell from 90% of all housing in 1914 to 10% in the late 1990s (Adams et al., 2002). Rent control and security of tenure legislation made being a landlord less attractive, and private landlords are now taxed on both rental income and capital gains. Adams et al noted that the net effect was that those who could afford to buy did, and households who could not went into the public sector. That left “low-income, non-family households, who failed to qualify for social housing, in the (private rented) sector” (Adams et al., 2002)(p33). They couldn’t afford rents which would provide a good return on well managed property, so it tended to be in poor condition and poorly managed.

In recent years, partly as a result of high house prices, private renting has again become more significant as a form of tenure in the UK. In 2008 it accounted for 12% of the total stock (Ecotec, 2008), with much of this recent growth coming from buy-to-let landlords – individuals who have bought one or more additional homes specifically with the intention of letting them out. By some estimates, the buy-to-let market has increased house prices by up to 7% (National Housing and Planning Advice Unit, 2008), but those promoting buy-to-let mortgages are unsurprisingly positive about the impacts the sector has on the market (www.hotproperty.co.uk, 2008) – they argue that the buy-to-let sector both provides extra demand for housing and supplies a valuable source of private rented accommodation.

This sub-section has featured a brief analysis of how housing policy in the UK has developed over the 20th and early 21st centuries, and what the outcomes of those policies have been. However, in addition to Government policy on housing provision, a range of factors affect the delivery of (affordable) housing. These issues are addressed in the next sub-section.

2.4.2. Factors affecting housing supply

This sub-section will look at factors other than Government housing policy which affect the supply of market and affordable housing. These include the overall effects of the planning system itself, the effects of migration, how regional planning works in England, and the role played by private sector housebuilders.

The effect of the planning system itself

It is only really since the Town and Country Planning Act of 1947 that there has been a planning system to speak of in England. Shucksmith (1990) categorised the shift in British housing policy after World War II as a move from building as many rural houses as possible to controlling housing in rural areas as part of the overall planning policy of containing urban sprawl. The Scott committee (1942) reported that new housing was essential in the countryside, but that agricultural land and rural amenity should be protected. The latter has taken precedent, thanks to the protectionist lobby (Shucksmith, 1990). We discuss these arguments in more detail later.

The planning system did not escape the attacks on the public sector in the 1980s under the “New Right” economic approach. The system was criticised for, *inter alia*, the financial cost of delays imposed on developers, a standardisation of development type and design, and high administration costs.

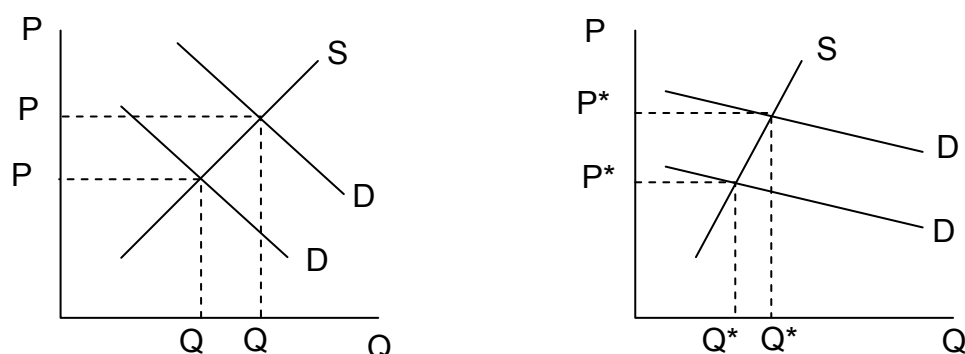


Figure 12 – Supply and demand curves for housing (Adams et al., 2002).

Neo-classical economists use supply and demand curves to demonstrate the problems caused by the planning system (see figure 12). In the first part of figure 12

(an economist's view of the conventional market), if demand levels go up, due to increased household formation or sharp increases in income, then the demand curve moves right. The quantity and price of housing goes up. The second part of figure 12 is a simplification of the operation of the planning system. Planning permissions are rationed, so supply is less elastic, i.e. less sensitive to price changes. A similar demand shock occurs, so price goes up, but the quantity produced does not go up as much.

So, the neo-classical argument goes, the development control system leads to higher land and house prices, higher densities, smaller dwelling/plot sizes and reduced quantities of housing provision – all costs which are borne by house buyers (Adams et al., 2002).

It is probably accurate to say that there are conflicting points of view on whether these theoretical effects of the planning system apply in practice. Some studies have found explicit evidence that they do (Hall et al., 1973a, Evans, 1991), with the effect on house prices of the planning system found to be between 2% and 12% depending on house type (Cheshire and Sheppard, 1989). This evidence might be taken as an argument for the planning system to release more land and hence reduce house prices.

Others, however, have questioned the extent to which there is a straightforward relationship between land release and house price falls. Research for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation by Bramley, in 1994, concluded that a doubling of land allocated for new housing would lead to a reduction in prices by only 10% in the long term (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 1994, cited in Adams et al, 2002). In response, critics of the planning system have argued that the models used in that research were flawed, and in fact planning had a greater impact on prices than suggested (Evans, 1996). Bramley went on to try and address these criticisms, and has produced further studies in support of his arguments (Bramley and Watkins, 1996, Leishman and Bramley, 2001). The Barker Review (2004) also concluded that the planning system was limiting the supply of land for new housing, with a concomitant effect on house prices.

Adams et al concluded that although there was an “implementation gap” between the allocation of new land for housing and the actual building of houses on that land, and that because the majority of homes on the market are pre-existing rather than new build, the provision of new housing would always have a limited effect on prices, “it is clear that planning constraints lead to higher prices, and densities, restrictions in the quantity of homes supplied and convergence in the type and design of new homes” (Adams et al., 2002). It is useful in this context to explore how the planning system works at the regional level in England.

Planning for housing at the regional level

Prior to the publication of PPG3 in 2000, the approach to planning for housing at the national and regional level was based on the model of “predict and provide” – constructing estimates of requirements for land for new housing development on the basis of demographic projections of household growth, which themselves are based on what has happened in the past. The Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE), amongst others, lobbied against this approach, arguing that it failed to take account of important factors such as wider shifts in the economy and the behaviour of private developers.

In 1995 the Department for the Environment released well publicised household projections, which projected 4.4 million extra households between 1991 and 2016, with a projected reduction in average household size from 2.47 persons to 2.17 (DoE, 1995). Later sensitivity analysis by the Government showed that a 1% change in real interest rates might cause a fluctuation of 200,000 in the number of projected households. Similarly, an 0.25% decrease in GDP would result in a drop of 150,000 in the number of households forming (DETR, 1999)

This provides some justification for the concerns of the CPRE and others that household projections are not sufficiently sophisticated to base housebuilding figures on. Of course, the CPRE are not a neutral lobbying organisation, they have a particular interest in reducing expectations that new households will lead to demand for new housing in the countryside.

The CPRE were also concerned that basing housing allocations on projections led to “circularity”, in effect a self-fulfilling prophecy that building X number of houses in a given location would result in that number of households moving to that location. They argued that “The projections approach to planning is misleading – it is in fact not based on a neutral assessment of housing need” (Bramley et al., 1995).

These concerns led to a change in approach to planning for housing in PPG3 – a move from predict and provide to “plan, monitor and manage”. The latter approach depended on regional and local planning bodies taking a more flexible approach to planning for housing, keeping land allocations under constant review so they could be measured against specific objectives (DETR, 2000). There is, of course, no guarantee that this approach is any more neutral than predict and provide, as the setting of those specific objectives is a matter for planning authorities.

Plans at any level are, of course, a compromise between a number of perhaps conflicting objectives. Planning is now recognised by the Royal Town Planning Institute as being about “the mediation of space”, so it is simplistic to pretend that housing figures are based on a technocratic approach to models of population and household flow. Indeed, it is recognised that planning for housing at the regional level is “overtly political” (Gallent and Tewdwr-Jones, 2007)(p151).

That said, those producing regional plans are likely to generate a huge amount of research in support of those plans, to try and minimise accusations of political decision making. For example, work on the housebuilding figures in the draft regional spatial strategy for the North East has involved considering several possible models of economic growth, and projecting likely household formation and hence housing requirements from that (North East Assembly, 2005). The models also take into account migration, which is a key driver in changes in population level, as birth rates fall across the country.

Migration

Migration from rural to urban areas was the driver behind the urbanisation of the UK in the 19th Century. The population grew from 10.5 to 37 million, with most of this in

urban areas. The population of London, for instance, grew from 1 million to 2 million between 1801 and 1851, doubled again to 4 million by 1881, and was up to 6.5 million by 1911.

It did not take long, though, for urban populations to start to decline, as people became wealthier, transport links improved, and choices about where to live were more easily made. Population loss in urban areas was occurring as far back as 1931 in many cities in the UK, and was happening everywhere by 1951. It has reflected de-industrialisation and the decline in employment in cities (for instance, between 1971 and 1981, there were 400,000 less jobs in London).

Table 5, extracted from Adams et al (2002), illustrates population changes resulting from within-Britain migration between 1990 and 1991 (based on 1991 census data).

Table 5 – Population change between 1990 and 1991 (Adams et al., 2002)

District type	Net migration	As % of total population
Inner London	-31009	-1.24
Outer London	-21159	-0.51
Principal metropolitan cities	-26311	-0.67
Other metropolitan cities	-6900	-0.08
Large non-metropolitan cities	-14040	-0.40
Small non-metropolitan cities	-7812	-0.42
Industrial districts	7194	0.10
Districts with new towns	2627	0.09
Resort, port and retirement	17736	0.49
Urban/rural mixed	19537	0.25
Remote urban/rural	13665	0.59
Remote rural	10022	0.61
Most remote rural	36450	0.77

The picture is straightforward – the population of urban areas declined in relation to rural areas. Bramley's work for the CPRE hypothesised five broad types of influence affecting net migration:

1. Geographical location: e.g. North-South divide. At the time of writing, the drift southwards was continuing unabated.
2. Environmental attractiveness: Overlaps with 1, people move from socially and physically less attractive neighbourhoods.
3. Labour market conditions: In general, more people move into areas with more jobs.

4. Housing supply: Certainly an issue at the local level. Private housing is more of a significant influence, as social housing is geared mainly to meet local needs and lower income groups tend to be less mobile.
5. Housing costs: Those households at the margins are likely to choose to live in a cheaper area.

(Bramley et al., 1995)

The reaction to the picture of urban depopulation was to call for an “urban renaissance”, in order to remove the “push” factors which caused people to migrate from urban to rural areas.

Urban renaissance

Support for an urban renaissance came not just from those wishing to regenerate urban areas, but also from organisations such as the CPRE, which (as its name suggests) wish to preserve rural England essentially by stopping any more people going to live in it. The CPRE supported such initiatives as the Government’s Urban Task Force, which published its “Towards an Urban Renaissance” in 1999. Indeed, Tony Burton of the CPRE was Deputy Chair of this task force.

A cornerstone of the programme of urban renaissance was to encourage the reuse of previously developed land (or brownfield land), at the expense of greenfield land. The CPRE adopts a fairly simplistic approach, that greenfield development is usually unsustainable, and brownfield development is usually sustainable (the meaning of sustainable development in the context of the UK planning system is explored below). Adams et al (2002) argue that this approach is far too simplistic. They point out that a greenfield development, if it is built in an energy efficient manner, with good access to green spaces, and close to schools, shops and employment, could easily be more sustainable than a brownfield development. But what does sustainable mean in this context?

Sustainable development

Sustainable development is a heavily contested arena. Several authors, including Adams et al (2002), have highlighted sustainability, or environmental modernisation, as being quite different from the traditional environmentalism espoused by organisations such as the CPRE (although the tactics adopted by the CPRE have changed in recent years – see section 2.4.4), which seek to protect the countryside above all else – this may be at a cost to the broader environment, as suggested in the discussion of greenfield vs. brownfield development above.

The Government's prioritisation of previously developed land is just one of its core "sustainability indicators". These are the indicators against which public bodies are expected to assess their plans and programmes to judge if they are "sustainable". This is an approach fraught with difficulty. For instance, and again using the example of previously developed land, it is quite possibly the case that prioritising previously developed land in a local development framework might have a negative impact on another of the Government's indicators, such as increasing GDP. No guidance is given as to which, if any, of the indicators, should be given higher priority.

We return to a more in-depth consideration of sustainability in section 2.4.5, but a brief investigation of how previously developed land came to be a planning consideration is useful at this juncture.

Previously developed land targets

An emphasis on previously developed land is a fairly recent, although now widely adopted, policy trend. It was in the 2000 edition of PPG3 that the Government introduced a 60% target for new housing to be on previously developed land (PDL). This followed the previous Conservative government tentatively committing to a 50% target. In the consultation on PPG3 the UK Round Table on Sustainable Development had argued for 75%, supported by the CPRE, whilst the Town and Country Planning Association had questioned raising the target above the Conservatives' proposed 50%.

Adams et al (2002) explored the data around this target, and found that in 2000 the target had nearly been reached – 57% of new housing was on PDL. That included conversions, which they argued was “cheating”. Because of the higher densities of brownfield development, the proportion of *land* used for housing which was PDL was significantly lower, at 48%. Furthermore, they pointed out that the improvement from the lower figures in the early 1980s had taken place by 1992, and since then the rate had remained largely unchanged.

A perhaps more relevant statistic is that due to the overall decline in the numbers of new houses being built, despite the proportion of new housing on PDL going up, the *absolute* amount of PDL being used had fallen by 9% between 1988 and 1998 (with an even larger decline in the amount of greenfield land being developed). There are particular constraints on the development of PDL, which merit identification.

Constraints to building on previously developed land

Several commentators are concerned that the Government’s targets for achieving 60% of new housing on previously developed land, whilst achievable in the short term, will cause significant problems in the medium to long term. They argue that most of the easier to develop brownfield sites have now been developed, and a large proportion of what is left is severely constrained. Adams et al (2002) looked at the Scottish Vacant and Derelict Land Survey, which found that 34% of vacant or derelict sites identified in 2000 had become vacant or derelict prior to 1981, and another 35% between 1981 and 1990 – so 70% of sites had been vacant or derelict for at least ten years. That would suggest serious problems exist which have prevented the redevelopment of those sites. Even given the stronger land market in England than in Scotland, we can probably assume that a reasonable proportion of brownfield sites are deeply unattractive to developers.

Adams et al identified three particular constraints to developing brownfield land over greenfield:

1. Planning constraints. The House Builders Federation (HBF) identified: There was no automatic presumption in favour of developing suitable PDL sites;

2. Physical constraints. Contamination can be overcome by adopting four overarching lessons: The need for a comprehensive site investigation, including historic land uses; keeping a comprehensive record of all remediation works; the need to validate remediation to ensure compliance with the remediation strategy; and information on past uses, site investigations and remediation works to be made readily available to purchasers.
3. Ownership constraints. It may be unclear who owns land, it may be fragmented, owners may be unwilling to sell, or unwilling to sell at a low enough price. The latter two are particularly difficult to overcome. Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPOs) may be necessary, but the Urban Task Force found they were hard to achieve because of: a) their cost to local authorities; b) the bureaucracy of their implementation; c) their complexity; d) the loss of necessary skills at the local level; and e) the widespread belief that CPO payment levels are unfair, so generating opposition from owners.

(Adams et al., 2002)

Gallent and Tewdwr-Jones (2007) pointed out that areas with a low previously developed land supply also tend to be the areas with the highest demand for new housing (i.e. rural areas), so constraining greenfield development in such areas could have a disproportionate effect on housing affordability.

A final argument used by some against development on PDL is that its generally urban location does not tally with where the bulk of the demand for housing is focused – in rural areas. Private sector housebuilders might argue that they prefer the development of greenfield land because this is where their market is. This is perhaps a circular argument – would there be greater demand for housing on previously developed land if more of it were built? But the influence of the private sector in decisions on planning and housing cannot be underestimated, as we move on to discuss.

The private sector

Since the late 1960s the private sector has been heavily involved in planning for housing. Now, more than at any other time, a partnership between the public and private sector is essential to deliver housing – since the vast majority of new housebuilding is now expected to be carried out by the private sector, the development industry argue that the planning system should be “streamlined” to facilitate development – indeed, the HBF have argued for a return to the presumption in favour of development which was in place before 1991 (Home Builders Federation, 2007).

The HBF is often a participant in formulating household projections and setting housing numbers in strategic plans (Adams et al., 2002). The debate about whether this is a “good thing” rather depends on the political leanings of those involved, but it is clear that the planning system is not the only factor in the greenfield vs. brownfield debate.

Given that the overwhelming majority of new housebuilding is done by the private sector, it is not surprising that it tends to be on greenfield land, outside urban areas, where it is cheaper and more popular with homebuyers (we discuss reasons for this later). Adams et al believed that “Since 1979 there has been a general assumption that the private sector has lacked the confidence to invest in inner cities” (ibid.)(p46). Government policy since then has been about restoring private sector confidence. They agreed that “The market has also become the dominant force in planning policy” (ibid.)(p52).

A brief examination of the profits to be made from land development and housebuilding go some way to explaining the desire of the HBF and others to influence the planning system. Speculative housebuilders are responsible for about 80% of all new homes built in the UK. In 2002 there were 18,000 housebuilders registered with the National House Building Council (NHBC), but the market was dominated by a small number of large companies. In 1980, there were only 24 companies building over 500 units, which was 39% of the total number of homes built. By the year 2000, the number of companies building 500 units or more had

increased to 43, and those 43 companies built 71% of all the homes built. Similarly, in 2000 there were 14 companies building two thousand or more units per annum (the “volume builders”), compared to only four in 1980 (ibid.).

Table 6 illustrates the top 10 housebuilders in 2000. All these housebuilders made profits in excess of £50 million, and half of them exceeded £100 million. The main way UK housebuilders generate profit is through land development gains - the increase in land value when planning permission is granted on it. Housebuilders speculatively acquire land (primarily unconstrained greenfield land) without planning permission at low cost, and gain planning permission on it, which dramatically increases its value. Some have argued that this process stifles innovation in the development sector – if builders make so much money from this process, they have no incentive to develop new, perhaps more energy efficient, homes, or in riskier locations. We can make a comparison with the situation in Sweden, where land is owned by the state and released to developers in accordance with the development plan. Commentators argue this has a number of beneficial effects, chief amongst them that development gain is nationalised. This “encourages more properly capitalist behaviour, where financial reward follows the efficient investment of capital in the productive process, rather than rewarding unproductive political influence or speculative skill” (Duncan, 1985).

Table 6 – The ten top housebuilders in 2000 by number of completions, with turnover and profits (Adams et al., 2002).

	Unit completions		Turnover		Profits	
	Rank	No	Rank	£million	Rank	£million
Wimpey	1	11437	1	1254	2	142.5
Barratt	2	10636	2	1165	1	150
Beazer	3	8223	3	841	5	104
Persimmon	4	7035	5	742	4	116
Bellway	5	5714	6	634	8	95.6
Westbury	6	4435	10	476	13	60.8
Wilcon	7	4215	9	571	9	78.6
Alfred McAlpine	8	4007	11	463	14	53.7
Bryant	9	3961	7	594	7	98.1
David Wilson	10	3604	8	569	6	103.5
Totals		63267		7309		1002.8

An approach to profit making which relies on land development gains may also make housebuilders susceptible to changes in the property market. In the middle of 2008

there have been a number of reports in the media of sharp falls in the profits made by housebuilders, and even some losses reported (Wearden, 2008).

Prior to the downturn in the housing market in 2008 there was some evidence that the large housebuilders were taking brownfield development more seriously. Adams et al (2002) noted that “It has taken time for this perception [that brownfield development could be made profitable only in specific locations at the height of a boom] to break down... two of three companies with the highest return on capital in British housebuilding in 1999 concentrated almost exclusively on brownfield development” (Adams et al., 2002)(p126).

Part of the reason for housebuilders perhaps moving towards the development of brownfield sites is the opposition they often face to the development of greenfield land. The next three sub-sections of this literature review advance into issues around planning and development that are less easy to gauge, the first of which is the presence of opposition to housing, followed by a consideration of how that opposition sits within wider “constructions” of the countryside and sustainability.

2.4.3. Opposition to new housing development in rural areas

Introduction

The c.5000 homes per year in rural England funded by the Housing Corporation falls significantly short of whichever estimate of need we use (see section 1.1.3). As we have discussed, there are a number of technical reasons for lower levels of housing in rural areas than established need, including resource shortages, but opposition to new affordable housing development from those living in rural communities is also an important factor in the number of new homes built in the countryside.

Monk et al (2005) carried out research for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation into the use of social housing grant vs. section 106 funding, and found that a negative perception of occupiers of affordable housing was common amongst developers and local people across urban and rural areas. This is one of the factors which can contribute to people objecting to proposals for affordable housing development.

Concern from local people is a “material consideration” when determining planning applications, if that concern is well grounded, so it can have a significant effect on the success or otherwise of schemes. This sub-section will discuss literature on the subject of opposition to different forms of development.

Reasons for “fear” of new development

Monk et al (2005) found that fears about affordable housing included that residents would be a source of anti-social behaviour and that house prices would be affected. Another perception held by developers was that purchasers of market housing may resent occupiers of affordable housing in the same scheme, as they are getting properties of a similar standard without having to purchase. The role of the media was important, with asylum seekers being suggested by some local media as potential residents of affordable housing.

The “bogeyman” of asylum seekers is one which certain sections of the press seem keen to promote. Hubbard (2005) looked at the issue of purpose built centres for asylum seekers, specifically proposals for two centres in Nottinghamshire and Oxfordshire. There was a large amount of local objection to the proposals. Hubbard noted that these objections generally tried to steer clear from opposing asylum seeker centres in principle, just in this particular location. They used “planning language” about the centre being incongruous and inappropriate in the open countryside, but Hubbard believed that these comments were obscuring more complex anxieties about asylum seekers themselves.

Hubbard went on to advance the proposition that objections to asylum centres were in fact a form of xenophobia, a fear of outsiders. He characterised the English countryside as “a repository of white values, ideologies and lifestyles” (Hubbard, 2005)(p12). He believed that residents of the countryside set out to exclude “Otherness”, so that they could maintain a particular way of life. Hubbard’s article referred specifically to asylum seeker centres, not affordable housing, but his suggestions about exclusion and the maintenance of some kind of status quo have been used by several commentators to explain opposition by local residents to any form of new development. Dear (1992) observed that suburban areas were

perceived as being less tolerant than urban areas. He believed that was due to their greater homogeneity, both in social and physical terms – urban areas are more mixed, both in terms of social groups and land use. The evidence from section 2.1.1 is that rural areas are potentially even more homogenous, certainly in socio-economic terms, than suburban.

NIMBYism

NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard) has become a popular acronym to describe those who oppose development which is generally perceived to be in the public good. Bell et al (2005) sum up the concept of NIMBYism as the gap between “attitude motivated by concern for the common good and behaviour motivated by self-interest” (Bell et al., 2005)(p460).

Dear (1992) examined responses to proposals for sites for “human services” (homes for people with disabilities, HIV, etc) in the USA. He noted that there are normally three specific concerns of NIMBYs: a perceived threat to property values; personal security; and neighbourhood amenity. He found that the peculiarities of the local situation are also brought in, e.g. increased traffic/less parking availability. He also pointed out that more sophisticated opponents might make the point that the host neighbourhood is unsuitable for the proposed use (Dear, 1992). In that context, a quote from Kenneth Clarke MP, who was local Member of Parliament for one of the asylum centres discussed by Hubbard (2005), could be an example of the “perfect” NIMBY quote:

“This is not about racism, it is about right thinking. I think there should be a large camp, but not be built on green belt land miles from any facilities. What we need is some way of helping asylum seekers by providing them with the facilities they need, not housing them in the middle of nowhere.”

(Hubbard, 2005)

This quote seems perfectly rational and sensible, and makes it appear that the objector is on the side of those who might occupy the new development. Those who

agree that NIMBYism is rife argue that this kind of approach is essential for those objecting to local development, because as Bell et al pointed out, “A self-interest argument is unlikely to win a public debate” (Bell et al., 2005)(p464).

But what actually constitutes this perceived “NIMBY” response, and what distinguishes it from legitimate comment on development? Kraft and Clary (1991) identified the five broad characteristics of NIMBY responses from the literature of the time:

- 1) Parochial and localised attitudes towards the problem, which exclude broader implications.
- 2) Distrust of project sponsors.
- 3) Limited information about project siting, risks and benefits.
- 4) High concern about project risks.
- 5) Highly emotional responses to the conflict.

(Kraft and Clary, 1991)

However, they found this a problematic description, particularly as empirical research into supposed NIMBYism found that only characteristics 2 and 4 occurred with any regularity. They found that those objecting to development proposals were often capable of seeing the bigger picture, understood the proposals and could not be generalised as being “highly emotional”.

Questioning the concept of NIMBYism

Wolsink (2006), in a critique of work done by Hubbard (discussed above), complained that NIMBY is not a well-defined concept, but “is more often used as a pejorative to imply selfish behaviour on the part of opponents” (Wolsink, 2006)(p87). Ellis (2004), in work discussing third party rights of appeal, felt that this perception was encouraged by property interests opposed to greater third party rights in planning, for obvious selfish reasons. These property interests will doubtless have been cheered by the UK Government ruling out third party rights of appeal in the Planning Green Paper on the grounds that (i) they are inconsistent with the

democratically accountable UK planning system; (ii) they may be dominated by frivolous appeals; (iii) they would add to costs (DTLR, 2001).

Ellis examined third party rights of appeal in operation in Ireland, where they are an integral part of the planning system, and concluded that those who appeal against planning decisions are emphatically not all simply self-interested and parochial. He identified five “discourses of objection”, or reasons why people appealed:

- A: The critical green – characterised by strong disagreement with the primacy of property rights, and a low opinion of the benefits of development, coupled with firm environmental beliefs.
- B: The public interest guardian – characterised by a close identification with public interest issues and a faith in the use of appeals to secure better communitarian outcomes.
- C: The predevelopment conservative – characterised by being parochial and conservative in outlook, with a poor opinion of the local planning process and strong support for community rights and development.
- D: The individual proceduralist – characterised by a high value placed on privacy, a procedural outlook, and a faith in administrative authority and technology.
- E: The antidevelopment process sheriff – characterised by a strong belief that third party appeals should be used to correct process failures in the planning system and a low opinion of property development.

(Ellis, 2004)

The third of these is the nearest to the conventional “NIMBY” perception, but Ellis felt it was clear that there was a significant complexity of motivations for objection/appeal, and that the context of the development proposal was particularly important. This is a view shared by others, Bell et al (2005) highlighting growing criticism of the NIMBY concept on the grounds that it fails to reflect the complexity of human motives and how those motives interact with the institutions which shape our daily lives.

Moving on from the language of NIMBYism

Bell et al (2005) identify two “gaps” in attitudes which they feel are more useful than the supposed NIMBY gap between attitude and behaviour mentioned above:

- The social gap – the gap between the high public support for X (wind power in their article) and low success rates in planning applications.
- The individual gap – the gap between an individual’s positive attitude to a concept in general but active opposition to a particular development.

Bell et al go on to propose three reasons for the “social gap” in relation to wind power, which we can easily apply to affordable housing, or any other type of development which elicits objections from local residents:

1. The “democratic deficit” explanation – a majority are in favour of X, but particular development decisions are controlled by the minority who oppose X. This may be because of the planning system’s “decide-announce-defend” model of decision making, i.e. people are involved only after a decision has been made – their role is to provide criticism rather than support, so more people object to than support an application.
2. The “qualified support” explanation – X is a good idea, but with limits on its development – the impact on the environment, etc. If many people adopt this qualified principle of support, we might see the social gap developing. So people objecting to a specific scheme may not be making an exception to their general support but may be following their general principle of qualified support. Organisations such as the CPRE are prime examples of qualified support in relation to renewable energy, housing, etc. in the countryside.
3. The “self-interest” explanation – people support X in general but oppose any schemes in their area for self-interested reasons. This is the NIMBY explanation and depends on an individual gap between attitudes to X in general and attitudes to a particular scheme. This is perhaps the gap between collective concern for the public good expressed in opinion surveys which cost nothing and self-interest which will motivate people’s behaviour.

The authors believe that a combination of these three explanations probably contributes to local opposition to development which is “in the public interest”, a fact which must impact on the development of policies to address opposition.

The issue of trust is an important one when we are trying to encourage local support for a proposal. As mentioned above, distrust of project sponsors is often perceived as being one of the characteristics of NIMBYism. The conventional argument is that local people do not trust local authorities/developers/expert spokespeople, so will not believe their calming words when they say there is no risk to property values/amenity/safety from a proposal. Margolis (1996), though, argued that perhaps the trust issue works in reverse – people decide that they are opposed to a proposal and thus distrust anyone who supports it – so distrust is as much caused *by* opposition to a development, than it is a cause *of* it (Margolis, 1996).

Smith and Marquez (2000) explored the issue of trust in more depth, looking at the particular example of proposed oil drilling off the Californian coast. They found that, as we might expect, opponents to the oil drilling confirmed that they did not trust the oil companies involved. But, critically, they also found that the pro-development lobby distrusted environmentalists and other objectors. Smith and Marquez concluded that we need to “look at the complete dynamics of disputes, rather than just at one side” (Smith and Marquez, 2000)(p279). This point of view receives support from Wolsink (2006), who asks is it not a prerequisite of an critical approach that we question the legitimacy of a policy as much as questioning the legitimacy of objections to it? He points out that it is not wise to ignore objections, or objectors may well turn their attention to obstruction, rather than adjustment and influence.

Perceptions of development

How people perceive development proposals is integral to their response to them. Clifford and Warren (2005) looked at three development proposals being considered around St Andrews, in Scotland, in 2003:

- A proposed housing development of 1,000 houses to the west of St Andrews. This was to be a mix of market and affordable housing.

- A rail link, which was first mooted in 1989 and has been suggested on and off ever since.
- A green belt proposed around the town in 1995, and subsequently included in the Structure Plan.

They asked local people how they thought the three proposals would impact on social, economic and environmental factors. Those who supported the housing and rail link proposals saw economic and social factors as most likely to be affected, with objectors highlighting the environmental factors as most likely to be an issue. Conversely, those supporting the green belt highlighted its likely positive impact on the environment, with the objectors concerned about its social and economic impact.

This highlights the importance of perceptions – if people supported a proposal, they tended to ignore or minimise potential costs, and if they objected to it, the benefits were downplayed. Clifford and Warren found that “There is good evidence for people pre-judging the planning proposals, entering development controversies with predisposed attitudes that are simply reconfirmed” (Clifford and Warren, 2005)(p377). This perhaps reinforces Margolis’ view, discussed above, that distrust is caused *by* opposition to development, rather than development being a cause *of* distrust – people perhaps decide what their opinion is before hearing the evidence *for/against* it. This would imply that engagement with the community is absolutely vital before development proposals are firmed up.

Interestingly, Clifford and Warren found that 98.1% of questionnaire respondents in St Andrews described themselves as “concerned about the environment”, but 74% of people primarily conceived the environment as a local, rather than global phenomenon. This might partly explain the “social gap” which Bell et al identified.

The form taken by past development can be an important factor in the formation of perceptions of proposed new development. Developments in nearby settlements can be a positive, or negative, influence on the form proposed developments will take, whether in terms of who will live in them, or what they look like – “standardised pattern book designs... account for the negative attitude to new residential

development, especially in the countryside” (Gallent and Tewdwr-Jones, 2007)(p110).

Characteristics of objectors

Commentators have suggested a number of characteristics of those who object to new housing development in rural areas:

- Owner occupiers (who wish to see the value of their property maintained, so object to new housing which may affect property prices)
- Relative incomers (people who have not lived all their lives in the countryside, rather have moved into a village recently)
- Pastoralists (who live in the countryside for “lifestyle” reasons and are opposed to future development which may change the characteristics of their village)

(Shucksmith et al., 1993, Milbourne, 1997)

Milbourne (1997), informed by previous work by Shucksmith (1993, 1995) carried out a case study of rural Wales to assess the extent to which different “housing classes” existed – whether those who were property owners really exhibited radically different attitudes to those who were not. He sent out questionnaires to find out if people were opposed to or supported new housing development. He found that about 50% of all householders (across all groups) who responded to questionnaires were opposed to new housebuilding. Social housing residents were less opposed than owner occupiers, but not significantly, and only among private rented residents was a clear majority in favour of it. He found less opposition to new housing development amongst younger residents, but explicitly did not find that length of time resident in an area was a differential factor. He concluded from his case studies that there are lifestyle-based rather than simply tenure-based trends in opposition to new housing, and that assuming that people’s ownership or not of a home was a major factor in their propensity to oppose development was too simplistic (Milbourne, 1997).

Ellis (2004) believed that those who object to development proposals may also not simply be claiming their *right* to challenge under the planning system but also exercising a perceived *duty* to challenge what they see as unsustainable

development. He wondered whether opposition to planning applications was a form of communication problem that arises from failure in the planning process.

Conclusion re opposition to development

This section has looked at different perspectives on opposition to new housing development. We have looked at the NIMBY concept, and noted arguments against a simple characterisation of objectors as narrow-minded and parochial. We have heard calls that we should not just ignore opposition, but try to understand it and the reasons for it. Clifford and Warren observed that existing preconceptions of development can affect our perceptions of it, and that most people conceive of “the environment” as something immediate and local as much as something all-encompassing and global.

Perceptions of development, the environment and the countryside seem to be particularly important in determining how people react to development proposals. The next two sub-sections look at perceptions of two key arenas in the area of housing development in rural areas – firstly, what is “the countryside”, and secondly, what is “sustainable development” in a rural context?

2.4.4. Constructions of “the countryside”

Introduction to the concept of constructions

How people perceive the space around them can vary widely. The countryside is no different from any other concept – ask any individual or organisation to define it and we would likely find many different definitions. This might be problematic for decision makers, but different views of the countryside, indeed any concept, fit into wider philosophical ideas about constructivism. Constructivists such as Michel Foucault argue that there are no objective truths, and that how we perceived everything is subjective, and based on our past experiences and how society tells us something should be perceived. Foucault, in his 1977 book “Discipline and punish”, used the example of the development of the prison system in 19th century France to argue that everything we “know” is socially constructed. A useful summary of this book is

provided in Harris' (2003) *Teach yourself social theory*. Harris contrasts Foucault's position with that of a Weberian scholar, who would argue that changes in the prison system simply followed changes in general conceptions of law and punishment (in the case of 19th century France as the monarchy was replaced by a "rational" bourgeoisie).

Foucault, though, argued that the development of the prison system took place at its own level, and generated its own effects on the debate about discipline and punishment. At the most obvious level, reformers could not argue for a system of the reform of convicts if there was no apparatus capable of delivering that reform. Some reformers helped devise a practical, cost-effective prison system.

Foucault considered that institutions create new concepts, arising from their practices. In the prison example, a new conception of individuality came about – "the internally disciplined subject" (Foucault, 1977). This person is aware that they can be seen at any time, and acts accordingly. They do not rely on someone to tell them what to do, but anticipate what they should do. This kind of person is an ideal student, worker or soldier.

Prisons are also responsible for creating an important category of illegality. No system can ever abolish all forms of illegality, people can always bend the rules. Some forms of rule-bending are tolerated by custom & practice (e.g. smuggling long ago or traffic offences now). Some people have sufficient power to bend the rules systematically and evade punishment for it (e.g. powerful people who evade taxes). This "minor" illegality could form a contradiction with a key principle of the law, that it applies to all. Certain aspects of illegality are considered particularly worthy of punishment, and these tend to be those practiced by the weak and powerless. This group serve as a representative of all illegality, and their punishment can help uphold the legitimacy of the law, and conceal its weaknesses elsewhere. So, certain people are made scapegoats so society forgets about the "minor" illegalities elsewhere. Foucault suggested that this is why prisons exist, given their lack of success in reforming convicts!

Foucault went on to argue that prison came to be seen as a particularly suitable punishment/corrective for juvenile delinquents, who had embarked on criminal careers for social and psychological reasons. They would be particularly likely to have their behaviour altered by using psychology and removing them from bad social influences. He argued that the prison system thus encouraged the growth of psychology and various social sciences. Prisons lent those disciplines power and immediacy, because they were helpful in solving the problems of crime and by offering working laboratories.

He concludes that the prison system was thus able to affect the system of law itself. The prison regime showed the importance of psychological and sociological knowledge about the offender, and hence that judges should consider that knowledge before handing down sentences. So, a large amount of power was stripped from judges and officials and transferred to other agencies, an example of how “constructivism” exercises power (Harris, 2003).

If we accept Foucault’s arguments, then different “constructions” of issues in any given field become tremendously important. Given the focus of this thesis, constructions of the countryside are key to the delivery of (affordable) rural housing.

Two main drivers in the countryside

It has been observed that there are two main narratives acting to shape perceptions of the English countryside, tending to be in opposition to each other – pastoralism and modernism (Murdoch et al., 2003).

Pastoralism has its roots in the 18th and 19th century, as the urban areas of England grew very rapidly. This growth in urban areas was accompanied by a decline in rural areas, and agriculture in particular was in depression in the late 19th century. This dual process of industrialisation and agricultural decline provoked some urban dwellers to feel nostalgic for the idyllic countryside they had left behind. Pastoralists seek to protect their romantic notion of rural life from outside influences, primarily new development (roads, new homes, industry, etc).

Modernism, on the other hand, embraces new development in the countryside on the basis that the benefits of urban society (i.e. access to jobs, services, a range of housing, etc.) should also be available to those who live in rural areas. Modernists see the urbanisation of the 19th century as an escape from “a backward and isolated world where boredom vies with boorishness, inducing melancholia and a suspicion of boorishness” (Newby, 1985)(p13) and a move “into the dynamic powerhouses of the modern world” (Murdoch et al., 2003)(p2).

Embodiment of these narratives in debates on rural housing

It is easy to find an organisation which subscribes, perhaps only implicitly, to the pastoralism narrative – the CPRE. It is the self-appointed guardian of the countryside, and has set its face against development in rural areas. Its vision is:

CPRE wants a beautiful, tranquil and diverse countryside that everyone can value and enjoy; a working countryside that contributes to national well being by enriching our quality of life, as well as providing us with crucial natural resources, including food. We wish to see the sustainable use of land and other natural resources in town and country. The countryside, including its villages and towns is ever changing, but we strive to ensure that change and development respect the character of England's natural and built landscapes, enhancing the environment for the enjoyment and benefit of all.

(CPRE, 2006b)

Finding a similar organisation which, conversely, promotes modernism in rural areas, is not so easy. The Government's rural advocate, the Countryside Agency¹⁵, had this as its vision:

Our vision is to make life better for people in the countryside and to make the quality of the countryside better for everyone. Everyone living in the countryside should have equal opportunities to enjoy a good quality of life, whether their home is in a market town, village or in remote countryside.

¹⁵ The Countryside Agency has now been replaced by the Commission for Rural Communities, but this vision is still a useful one for comparison purposes.

They should have access to the services they need, from shops and transport to affordable housing, and a say in how their community develops. All this should be underpinned by a vibrant rural economy providing jobs and incomes. The countryside should be managed to conserve and enhance its rich landscape, biodiversity, heritage and local customs, while recognising the changing needs of those who live there. Everyone should be able to enjoy the countryside for recreation and relaxation, and to benefit from high quality foods and the other products it creates. The countryside around towns, close to where people live, is especially important.

(The Countryside Agency, 2006)

These visions are in some ways very similar, both mention the importance of everyone being able to enjoy the countryside and both stress the importance of the economy to rural areas. We can quickly start to see, however, that the second vision places more emphasis on the need for people in the countryside to have equal access to services, and equal “life chances”. This is the essence of modernism.

The pastoralist construction of the countryside in the English planning system

In the eyes of many commentators, the pastoralist narrative has overwhelmed all others in the construction of what “the countryside” means today. The Town and Country Planning Act (1947) set the basic framework for controlling development in England. Hall et al (1973) in their landmark publication *The Containment of Urban England* critiqued the 1947 town planning system at some length. They concluded that the vision of the founding fathers of the planning system (such esteemed figures as Ebenezer Howard and Patrick Abercrombie) had been lost, and that the system was dominated by anti-development rural interests, with the effect that urban growth was contained, to the detriment of the majority of the population of England. They identified six objectives of the original town planning system:

1. Preserving a balance between regions in terms of economic growth and population change, by guiding employment provision.

2. Urban containment. This was based on ideas expressed by Howard at the start of the 20th century, i.e. 45 years before. His three magnets (Town, Country and Town-Country) still express the trade-off between access to services and environmental quality that people make when deciding where to live. Howard's objective was to maximise the two elements simultaneously. He advocated containment of the city, but with constant growth via the construction of garden-cities. He wrote at the turn of the century, when economic and population growth was still high, but by the 1930s decline was thought to be the norm, and hence it was considered that growth in one place would mean decline in another. Hence constraining growth was considered to be a positive thing by most planners at the time of the 1947 Act.
3. Land protection. The spread of low density suburbia was seen as a very bad thing.
4. Urban containment and land protection together formed the notion of green belts. They were intended to limit urban expansion and help preserve rural areas for urban dwellers, but would go hand-in-hand with new towns.
5. The garden city concept. The original concept, of Howard and Unwin, stressed a theoretically infinite level of growth via new towns of X size and Y population, separated by agricultural land, around an original city. This developed into the new town policies of the 1950s and 1960s. But the legislation they were based on was developed when population growth was expected to be modest, and the new town legislation did not provide enough capacity for growth.
6. At the town scale, the principles were improving the environment, usually via separating conflicting land uses; and improving accessibility. The obvious problem is that these two can be in conflict – separating land uses can make access more difficult.

(Hall et al., 1973b)

Hall et al concluded that the urban containment principles were put in place, but the garden city/new town principles did not go far enough, hence the trend towards suburbanisation (the rise of which in the 1930s prompted the 1947 system) continued. The planning system had merely, according to Hall et al, ensured that (a) the suburbs had been pushed further away from city centres than would have been the case if the system had not been in place, as development continued beyond the

green belts instead of immediately adjacent to the existing built form; (b) housing densities in urban areas increased; and (c) house prices were driven up due to a scarcity of supply in more desirable areas.

Hall et al concluded that the less well off, principally those who aspired to live in the countryside and could not due to a lack of affordable housing, and those living in high density urban dwellings, had paid the price of this “containment of urban England”. They found that existing rural inhabitants had been the overwhelming beneficiaries of the system – they continued to enjoy an undisturbed countryside and found the value of their land and property assets increasing at a rate significantly higher than if more development had been allowed.

Newby (1985) argued that environmentalism, and hence protectionism, grew as a phenomenon in the 1960s as a result of a combination of factors, including the reverse in traditional patterns of rural-urban migration. He argued that as the countryside became more visible to the middle classes who had started to move there, then the impacts of modern agriculture too could more easily be observed. Even in 1979, only three out of 100 residents of rural areas earned their living directly from agriculture, which meant that “most who live in the countryside are culturally, if not geographically, urban” (Newby, 1985) (p13). As agricultural methods have further modernised since 1979, this proportion is certain to have fallen, further reducing the economic relationship between farming and the countryside.

The influence of the CPRE and others

The CPRE are the public face of a very powerful minority in the UK that live in rural areas or the suburbs of our towns and cities. Those people live in those areas because, some argue, they are quiet, with a low population density and lower levels of the crime and social disorder that are seen in urban centres. The CPRE represents those people who, essentially, want to keep rural areas that way.

The CPRE were formed in 1926, from a group of 21 preservationist bodies. Their “overriding concern was to combat the blurring of the urban-rural divide” (Murdoch and Lowe, 2003)(p321). They have been involved in the making of planning policy

since their inception, giving evidence to the Scott report opposing urban sprawl, and advocating the protection of the countryside. They were behind the late amendment to the 1991 Planning and Compensation Bill to make planning applications be judged in accordance with the development plan (i.e. the plan-led approach), an amendment which they presumably judged would stop local authorities granting planning permission for developments in the countryside which did not accord with government policy. As discussed in section 2.4.2 above, they were represented on the urban task force and helped shape its recommendations, which directly influenced PPG3.

The CPRE lobbied to ensure that PPG3 (2000) required that “calculations of housing demand should be set against the capacity of regional and local areas to accommodate this demand... One CPRE policy officer claimed: ‘We invented all the key planks in PPG3. PPG3 is basically CPRE policy’” (Murdoch and Lowe, 2003)(p327).

The CPRE has approximately 60,000 members, which is roughly 0.1% of the population of England. There is little doubt that they exercise a disproportionate influence on issues of rural development. Pennington (2000) (cited in Adams et al, 2002), in a study of articles published by The Times, observed that the CPRE achieved prominence in over five times more articles on the urban containment debate than any other interest group (Pennington, 2000).

It is increasingly the case, and the Government is keen to promote this idea as evidence that it is listening to people, that planning decisions are not simply made on the basis of developers vs. planners. Community interest groups are involved in a form of “distributional bargaining”. However, some groups have a disproportionate influence. Affluent and articulate groups tend to combine conservation arguments with an interest in maintaining their property values (Healey et al., 1988).

Ball (1999) (cited in Adams et al, 2002) explained the success of some interest groups as reflecting the costs and gains of controlling development. Politicians stand to gain more votes from restricting development as the gains from such restrictions are concentrated in particular areas, whereas the costs are more dispersed. In other

words, the CPRE and other anti-development groups are the voice of those already living in rural areas, but there is no co-ordinated voice of those who are not living there and who are in need of housing (Ball, 1999, Hall et al., 1973a).

A glance at the CPRE website reveals some of the tactics used by the organisation, with the quote “Already 21 square miles of countryside, *an area larger than Southampton* [my italics], are lost each year” (CPRE, 2006a). An emotive reference to a city in England has been inserted into this statement, presumably to emphasise how large 21 square miles is. We have to, though, place that in the context of the 36,018 square miles of agricultural land DEFRA estimates were in operation in England in 2006 (DEFRA, 2008). If 21 square miles were lost every year, it would take 1,175 years to develop on top of all the agricultural land in England, without considering all the additional land in the countryside not used for agriculture.

Murdoch and Lowe (2003) identified a trend in CPRE publications to move away from a purely protectionist rhetoric to a more sophisticated, “sustainability” focus. This will be discussed in more detail in the next section, but it seems that this more sophisticated approach is targeted at policy makers, rather than potential CPRE funders. An appeal for funding from prospective funders sent out by the President of the CPRE, the author Bill Bryson, in June 2008 was contained in the eye-catching envelope shown in figure 13. The appeal letter, reproduced in full in Appendix 1, highlighted the “staggering 263,900 houses set to be built on some of the most beautiful, precious green fields across the country over the next five years” (Bryson, 2008), and identified several cases where the CPRE had been successful in thwarting planning applications for housing developments. The letter was accompanied by what can only be described as an extraordinary set of “choices” for the recipient, shown in figure 14.

Other powerful campaign groups share this use of dramatic language – the Chairman of the National Trust drew significant press coverage when, in his annual speech in 2007, he explained that the trust was concerned to protect the countryside from “irrevocable destruction” (Probert, 2007). Graeme Bell, writing in *Planning* magazine, summed up the views of those of the modernist rather than pastoralist persuasion rather well - “The spiritually uplifting beauty of the countryside is real enough if you

own a fine home, while railing against the pursuit of economic gain could be understood if everyone had a secure, well-paid job. For many young people, however, the reality is far different” (Bell, 2007).



Figure 13 – Envelope containing CPRE funding request (Bryson, 2008)

What do *you* want?

A hedgerow teeming with butterflies?	OR	An out-of-town supermarket teeming with cars and shoppers?
A quiet stand of oaks casting shade on the path?	OR	Roaring juggernauts belching exhaust on a motorway verge?
Children lying in the grass gazing at the starlight?	OR	Enough electric lights to make the night look like day?
A babbling stream winding among the bluebells in a wood?	OR	A stream of cars to new executive homes half a mile away?

What are *you* going to do?

YES, I'll help CPRE act locally by sending a gift of £2 a month. **OR** Do nothing. Our disappearing countryside can look after itself.

My countryside, my voice. I'm making a stand

Figure 14 – Accompanying the letter from Bill Bryson (Bryson, 2008)

Changing realities in rural areas

Between 1981 and 2003, the population of England increased by just over 3 million, a 6.5% rise. The urban population, though, increased by only 1.9%, with the rural population increasing by 14.4%. In 2002-2003, urban areas saw their population declining by 150,000, with rural areas seeing a 104,000 increase in population (CRC, 2005). It is clear, then, that there is huge demand to live in the countryside, in a complete reversal of the trends of the 19th century. Work carried out by the Countryside Commission as long ago as 1997 showed that more than half of urban dwellers wanted to reside in the countryside, and this proportion appears to be increasing. In 2006 Country Life magazine found that 65% of people surveyed said they would rather live in the countryside (Country Life magazine, 2006), and by 2008, that proportion had increased to 80% (Country Life magazine, 2008).

Are these urban aspirants in fact pastoralists? Probably not exclusively, but the pursuit of William Blake's "England's green and pleasant land" drives many people who have worked, or continue to work, in urban areas, to seek a perceived higher quality of life in the countryside. It is ironic, note Murdoch et al (2003), that the strongest protectors of rural areas have come from outside, as commuters or retirees, using the tools of modernism (i.e. improved roads and rail links). Conversely, modernisers are often those who have lived in rural areas for several generations, and want to experience the benefits of modern society (supermarkets, broadband communications, etc) without being forced to move to urban areas.

So, some aspects of modernism have succeeded, and much of the countryside is now extremely accessible to, and from, urban areas. As noted, though, this means not only that rural dwellers can travel easily to urban areas, but urban workers can move to rural areas and still commute to work on a daily basis. Unfortunately for those who have grown up in the countryside and wish to move out of the family home, these improved communication links have not been matched by significant extra housing. So, as discussed above, competition for existing housing drives prices upwards at a significantly faster rate than inflation. This has been a feature of the whole UK housing market in recent years, but has affected rural areas particularly badly, due to the specific shortage of housing in those areas. These higher house

prices in rural areas mean that those on lower incomes cannot afford to buy houses in many villages, as outlined in section 2.1.1 above.

Areas designated as being of particular value

Much of rural England is designated as being of particular landscape value. The latest estimate is that 3.4 million hectares of land (26% of the land area of England) is covered by designations intended to protect it from development. National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) comprise most of this. The statutory purposes of National Parks are:

- (a) To conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of their areas; and
- (b) To promote opportunities for the public understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of their areas.

(DEFRA, 2003b)

AONBs have as their statutory purpose to “conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area” (DEFRA, 2003a).

Several authors have raised questions about the implication of these landscape protection objectives on the communities within designated areas, or “whether the pursuit of environmentally protectionist objectives invariably entails the sacrifice of social justice goals and an exacerbation of social inequality?” (Richards and Satsangi, 2004). The latter quote introduced a study which investigated that question, and concluded, essentially, that it did.

Richards and Satsangi found that in National Parks in both England and Scotland planning policies on affordable housing development were relatively protectionist, and that design requirements were causing problems for housing associations (i.e. the additional costs of development made schemes unviable). They concluded that those on lower-middle incomes were being excluded by restrictive policies – they were not eligible for social rented properties in exception schemes, and could not afford to buy market housing.

Homelessness in rural areas as it relates to social constructions

An extreme symptom of a lack of affordable housing in rural areas is rural homelessness, as discussed above. A number of researchers have noted that such homelessness tends to be hidden, i.e. it is unusual to see the conventional urban construction of a homeless person sleeping rough on the street in a rural settlement. Such visible deprivation does not sit comfortably with the pastoral construction of a rural idyll, so rural homelessness is often manifested in other ways.

Cloke et al (2002) looked in some detail at the “cultural context” of rural homelessness, and believed that the particular cultural contexts of being homeless, and living in the countryside, served to resist/deny the recognition of rural homelessness. The notion of the rural idyll is the key problem, i.e. that the perception of rural areas is still the quaint notion of whitewashed cottages with thatched roofs sitting round a village green, probably with a game of cricket in progress on it, whilst ducks sit placidly nearby in a pond! The desire to live in such idyllic areas is of course more easily achieved by wealthier people, and it has been noted that “the rural has become an important constituent of the middle class’ dominant identity” (Cloke et al., 2002)(p56).

Cloke et al (2002) posit three lines of reasoning for why rural and homelessness are not coupled together in popular consciousness:

1. Spatial morphologies: The provision of hostels, etc occurs in urban centres. There are fewer places to go in rural areas, so homeless people either stand out like sore thumbs, or hide, whether this is on sofas, or in woods, etc. The latter can be appealing to some, but others consider it “bloody horrendous!” (Cloke et al., 2002)(p65).
2. Socio-cultural barriers: Rural dwellers deny that homelessness exists in “their” place. The rural idyll both exacerbates poverty (the relative lack of housing, transport and jobs makes rural areas attractive to urban people), and conceals it – the poor conceal their poverty because of the priority given to the rural idyll, family links, good health, etc.

3. Conceptual separations of rurality and homelessness: The focus on rooflessness tends to automatically lead to a focus on urban areas, and clearly misses hidden homelessness. “Homelessness exists predominantly in forms which are at odds with the conventional definition and associated images of homelessness” (Cloke et al., 2002)(p71).

Such a bias towards urban areas seems increasingly out of place. The traditional distinctions between urban and rural geographical spaces have been blurred. The idea of a village can be just as strong in cities, for example Hampstead in London, as it is in “traditional” rural areas. The issue of homelessness, and homeless people themselves, are cast as out-of-place in the rural idyll. Local media reinforces the apparent wish to purify rural spaces, for example campaigning to remove Big Issue sellers from the streets of market towns (ibid.).

The notion of the rural idyll contributing to the non coupling of rural and homelessness was reinforced by case studies undertaken by Cloke et al (2002) in Gloucestershire. They also found some “very localised constructions of rural identity”, which meant that some homeless people did not want to move even as far as the next village. Because (a) there is not much accommodation in many rural areas; and (b) any accommodation that there is tends to be concentrated in larger settlements, the obvious conclusion is that rural people might have to move some distance to obtain accommodation.

Some would argue that this is common sense – the pastoralist reaction to the problem of rural homelessness might be that those who cannot find a home in rural areas should move to a nearby urban location, where there are likely to be more support services for them. The modernist approach might, alternatively, be to suggest that in fact services should be available in rural areas to support homeless people.

Conclusion

A pastoral construction of the countryside has been co-opted by those who wish to place tight constraints on the level of housebuilding in rural areas. These groups

make use of pastoral language and imagery to propagate the notion that rural development is inherently wrong. However, the dominance of pastoralism in constructions of the countryside is having a detrimental effect on the ability of rural communities to sustain themselves. The CPRE and similar organisations, who as discussed above have a vision that it is hard to disagree with in itself, are perhaps inadvertently damaging rural England as much as they are preserving it. An interesting question is perhaps what are they preserving? Several commentators, including Newby (1985), have noted that the popular conception of the English countryside was in fact created by 18th century landowners working with landscape architects and gardeners such as “Capability” Brown, whose aim was to conceal the less visually appealing parts of the countryside, such as agriculture.

Shucksmith (1990) conceived that there were different costs and benefits of restrictive rural planning policies to different groups. Property owners gain from a general increase in land and house values and gain from the preservation of amenity. Urban dwellers share the benefits of attractive countryside, though they may suffer from higher urban densities and exported rural unemployment. And obviously, people without access to owner occupancy in rural areas suffer. If employers are discouraged from locating in an area, rural employment and wage rates also fall (Shucksmith, 1990).

Satsangi and Dunmore, writing in 2003, sum up their views on the issues with the planning system thus:

Unless planning policy is changed to put more emphasis on social justice, move beyond a symbolic cloak of national difference, and take a balanced view of what sustainability means, the planning system in rural areas is likely to remain a vehicle more suited to preventing development than to promoting affordable housing.

(Satsangi and Dunmore, 2003)(p215)

Related to how individuals and society perceive, or construct, rurality, is how they construct sustainability, and specifically how they construct sustainability in a rural context. This is the subject of the next sub-section.

2.4.5. Constructions of “sustainable rural communities”

Sustainability – a contested topic

The concept of sustainability is contested in all the arenas it is discussed in – whether this is related to energy, transport, industry or any other field. This subsection of the literature review will look specifically at sustainability in the context of how it is applied to rural communities in English planning policy and practice. More specifically, it will investigate what a “sustainable rural community” is taken to mean by the Government, and how this translates on the ground in terms of appropriate locations for new housing in rural areas. These are some of the questions also addressed in a series of five “thinkpieces” commissioned by the CRC in 2005 from various authors, on the subject of “what are sustainable rural communities”. We shall see how these different authors have tried to address this problem, following an assessment of how the UK Government defines a sustainable community.

How the Government defines sustainability

The Sustainable Communities Plan, published by the Government in 2003, identifies some “key requirements” of sustainable communities:

- A flourishing local economy to provide jobs and wealth;
- Strong leadership to respond positively to change;
- Effective engagement and participation by local people, groups and businesses, especially in the planning, design and long-term stewardship of their community, and an active voluntary and community sector;
- A safe and healthy local environment with well-designed public and green space;
- Sufficient size, scale and density, and the right layout to support basic amenities in the neighbourhood and minimise use of resources (including land);
- Good public transport and other transport infrastructure both within the community and linking it to urban, rural and regional centres;

- Buildings – both individually and collectively – that can meet different needs over time, and that minimise the use of resources;
- A well-integrated mix of decent homes of different types and tenures to support a range of household sizes, ages and incomes;
- Good quality local public services, including education and training opportunities, health care and community facilities, especially for leisure;
- A diverse, vibrant and creative local culture, encouraging pride in the community and cohesion within it;
- A "sense of place";
- The right links with the wider regional, national and international community.

(ODPM, 2003)

We could have a lengthy debate about the appropriateness of these requirements, and what they actually mean, but of more interest here is how they are operationalised, i.e. how these requirements are translated into Government policy advice. We might posit two alternative approaches – firstly, that these requirements should be used to attribute investment in service provision so that all communities could move towards being sustainable. The alternative approach is that they might be used to "screen" communities to judge if they are appropriate locations for new development – i.e. if a community does not meet these criteria, it should not be a focus for new housing development.

This latter approach seems to be that used in the Government's planning policy advice. Planning Policy Statement 7 (ODPM, 2004) states that most development in rural areas should be focused "in, or next to, existing towns and villages" as those settlements are more sustainable locations for development because, thanks to their service base, residents will not need to use private transport to access shops and other services. Shorten (2005) observed that this approach of focusing on so-called *key settlements* was also "the received wisdom of decades of rural planning".

As discussed in the previous section, many argue that the philosophy of the planning system since 1947 has largely been one of containing urban growth, which we might

see this approach as facilitating. However, the planning system has recently been the subject of what are intended to be radical changes, with the intention of making it more responsive to local people, and to generate more “sustainable” outcomes, by looking at spatial, rather than purely land use, planning. The publication of Planning Policy Statement 3 in 2006 might herald a different approach, with Local Planning Authorities being exhorted to take account of “The need to provide housing in rural areas, not only in market towns and local service centres but also in villages in order to enhance or maintain their sustainability” (DCLG, 2006)(Paragraph 38).

There is concern, though, that these changes in Government policy are not being reflected in planning documents produced by local and regional authorities (Taylor, 2008, Best and Shucksmith, 2006). It will inevitably take time for changes to national policy to have an impact on policies at a regional and local level, and this factor could be explored in the empirical sections of this thesis. Returning to sustainability, though, we can now assess whether Government interpretations of the concept fit with interpretations in academic literature.

How Government policy fits into interpretations of sustainability

The oft-quoted definition of sustainable development is that arrived at by the United Nations Brundtland Commission in 1987 of “development that meets the needs of the present while not compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. Sustainable development is now generally taken to mean development that “sustains” the environment, economy, society and culture over time (Bryden and Bryan, 2005). As Bryden and Bryan further note, despite 30 years of debate, no-one has been able to coin a more specific or operational definition of sustainable development, and how the concept might apply to rural communities is particularly difficult to pin down, as we have seen.

Many people operating in the spheres of both urban and rural planning would argue that the Government’s policy is indeed a “sustainable” approach – those seeking to protect the countryside, such as the CPRE, would support the Government’s aims to limit development in rural areas. Since the mid 1990s, the CPRE has tried to fit its desire for preservation into wider discussions about sustainability, in line with the

move towards sustainability as the goal of Government policy. In 1994 a CPRE Policy Committee paper noted that the “CPRE’s historic approach, which has been to highlight environmental threats, has allowed policy makers to resist making changes because it presents only one side of the issue” (Murdoch and Lowe, 2003)(p325). This approach seems to chime with the general public – Bramley (1998) thought that dressing NIMBYism as sustainability had increased support for Labour councillors in rural southern England.

At the same time, those advocating an “urban renaissance” would encourage the focussing of development on larger settlements. But what these arguments fail to consider is (a) whether these policies work, i.e. do people live, work and play in close proximity, and (b) the sustainability of smaller rural settlements, perhaps those with few or no local services, and the fate of those living in those communities.

Shorten (2005) analysed the Government’s stated policies on rural planning, and concluded that the idea of focussing new housing in areas which have some level of service provision is flawed, because people are “strategically disobedient” – they do not organise their lives how the planning system hopes they will. He argued that a significant reason for this is that between 1980 and 2005 the real cost of motoring had fallen by 9%, whereas bus and rail travel became 35% more expensive over the same period (Shorten, 2005). So, the “hypermobility” of *some* rural residents, i.e. those with cars and the resources to use them to travel long distances, means that they are having their cake and eating it – they enjoy the higher environmental quality of rural areas, but also enjoy the flexibility that urban dwellers have to live their lives over several neighbourhoods (the key difference, and hence why hypermobile lifestyles are not “sustainable”, is that neighbourhoods are usually closer together in urban areas, so a car is not necessary).

Quite apart from this question of whether Government policy actually works, a broader question might be – what is the role of smaller settlements without the requisite services? Should those who do not/cannot own cars (such as the elderly/disabled/poor) accept that they must move to a larger settlement? Is that approach, which might be economically and environmentally logical, sustainable in

terms of society and the notion of mixed communities? In fact, is a focus on key settlements sustainable in any way compared to other forms of development?

Forms of development

Adams et al (2002) looked at work done by Breheny et al (1993), which assessed five different development patterns against economic, environmental and social factors, and concluded that key villages and multiple village extensions (i.e. the preferred approach of most rural authorities) came out worst. Urban infill, urban extension and new villages came out as much more sustainable. One flaw in that research, it could be argued, was that it did not consider the market, and that people generally want to live in villages, and not in urban areas.

Adams et al (2002) explored the sustainability argument further, and commented that most new housing has taken the form of urban extension, and mostly private sector. The authors argue that such development can be sustainable, if (a) quality becomes as important to the planning system as quantity of housing; and (b) “community interests are brought to bear throughout the development process and not simply at the point of planning permission” (Adams et al., 2002)(p80). It could be argued that under the current planning system local people have all their influence at the planning permission stage, and if they are living in a suburban area, they are likely to object most strongly to an extension of it, or the intensification of development within it.

184 new settlement schemes were proposed in England between 1980 and 1992, 1/3 of which were in the South East. Most were less than 1500 dwellings, and all were privately sponsored. Very few were built owing to planning and local opposition (Breheny et al., 1993). The power of those living in rural areas in these instances could be argued to be out of proportion – if new villages are demonstrably a more sustainable form of development, why are they so rare? Perhaps part of the reason is a lack of a concrete definition of what constitutes a sustainable rural community.

Attempts to define sustainable rural communities

Of the five “thinkpieces” commissioned by the CRC in 2005, only one explicitly defines what the author considers to be a sustainable rural community. That was the Shorten piece, which stated “sustainable rural communities are those where residents meet most of their social and economic needs within their home settlement”. This conclusion followed his analysis of travel patterns of residents of villages, market towns and suburbs, which demonstrated that rural areas (the market towns and villages) are not necessarily less “sustainable” than urban areas, certainly in the context of travelling to work. Relatively high proportions of rural residents work from home or walk to work, with understandably higher proportions of urban residents making use of public transport. Shorten, though, concluded that rural areas are a contradiction as some residents work very locally whilst others travel comparatively long distances.

Transport, and the impacts this has on sustainability generally, are themes which crop up again and again in considerations of sustainability in a rural settlement context. As Shorten points out, “CO₂ emissions are one obvious impact of private transport use, but dwindling rural services, chronic rural housing affordability and spiralling rural commuting have social impacts and are equally directly linked to rural hypermobility” (Shorten, 2005). Levett-Therivel sustainability consultants (2005) identify further social impacts, noting that travelling takes time that could be spent on non-work activities, and of course can be stressful, for example in the form of congestion. They consider that mobility also opens places to competition, and reduces the opportunities for congestion charging, etc. Of course, we must place this point of view alongside the fact that “travel broadens the mind”, and has numerous advantages as well as disadvantages.

Levett-Therivel propose quite radical solutions – they argue that public intervention is essential, because “individual choice is like a lobster pot: it has got us into trouble but can’t get us out again” (Levett-Therivel sustainability consultants, 2005)(p8). Choosing to drive has been the easy option. Choosing not to drive is far from the easy option. They consider that public intervention to make cars less attractive should not be seen as interfering with personal freedom, but as action at the level of

social organisation needed to secure public goods, i.e. a better quality of life. We could probably all point to instances where we have been stuck in traffic and looked about at other motorists inwardly cursing that they have been selfish enough to drive unnecessarily – perhaps we all have to take responsibility.

Levett-Therivel's recommendations, then, are on similar lines to Shorten's, i.e. making communities more self-sufficient, but are perhaps more radical – they go beyond the planning system to recommend road pricing and rural bus subsidisation. Their recommendations perhaps sit slightly uneasily with the modernist construction of the countryside, which would probably highlight the great benefits to rural dwellers of being able to access private transport – particularly in areas which are so remote that no amount of subsidy will result in regular bus routes.

Bryden and Bryan (2005) asked a series of questions in their “thinkpiece”, which illustrate well some of the aspects which may contribute to particular constructions of sustainability. These questions are set out below, with an italicised commentary:

- What does integrated rural development mean? It is possible to have a joined up approach to service delivery? A flexible and sensitive approach to environmental regulations is needed.
- Do we wish to have a broad range of people living in the countryside or are we to encourage a move towards village/town dwelling? Should we focus on larger towns/villages with existing infrastructure and economies of scale? *This is a particularly contentious issue, and there are strong arguments that for affordable housing in particular we must make a choice. Is it right to build affordable houses, which we might assume will be occupied by less well off people, with lower car ownership rates, in less accessible areas? Should we simply accept that practicalities outweigh our desire to avoid “social apartheid”? Is it simply the case that we should ensure better provision of public transport in rural areas? There is an extremely difficult balance to be struck between a desire for social/spatial inclusion and the pragmatism of a limited amount of funding available for providing services in rural areas.*
- Do we want our countryside to be actively managed, and for what purposes – food, conservation, recreation, renewable energy? *It is often observed that “the*

countryside” that we perceive as being typically English, for example the dales of the Lake District, is in fact maintained in that way only because of agriculture. If we did not have sheep farmers on much of the Lake District then the landscape would be significantly different than it is now. This is particularly an issue given the ongoing crisis in sheep farming, wherein many farmers are giving it up as they consider it uneconomic and trying to sell their land for development. What are organisations such as the CPRE trying to preserve? At what point did the countryside become the landscape which should be protected?

- *What other economic uses are there for our countryside and where could they best be placed? For example wind turbines. This ties in with the previous question – the countryside has been completely altered by human intervention, and we might ask why it is less appropriate for renewable energy schemes such as wind turbines, which are necessary to cope with ever increasing energy needs of humans, to be built than it is for agricultural buildings.*
- *What do we mean by equality in terms of service provision? Is there scope for local variations which suit local conditions? Is the “efficiency” objective overriding social and civil rights? Perhaps here we need to draw a distinction between equality and equity. **Equality** refers to the **same treatment** in dealings, quantities or values, whilst **equity** refers to **fairness** which may require different treatment, or special measures, for some persons or groups. Should those in rural communities have equal access to the services that might be enjoyed in urban areas, or should we focus on ensuring they have fair access to services? There are particular issues here in terms of the emergency services, or access to doctors – what level of provision can those in very remote communities expect?*
- *How interventionist should we be? Are market forces to dominate? This is probably the key question – if we are to let market forces dominate, then other questions about equality/equity of service provision, where should housing be located, etc, become irrelevant. Some level of intervention is essential to achieve any form of social equity, but how much is both a political and sociological question.*
- *How much are we prepared to spend and what does value for money mean?*
- *Is there a role for dispersal of public sector jobs?*

- At what level should related decisions be made? Should legislative and fiscal capacities be devolved to local communities? *The move from government to governance has seen much devolution to local communities, but we might have to question how democratic complete devolution might be? If local communities decide that they want no development in their village, as they might decide via a democratically elected local council, then who speaks for the disenfranchised who might want, but cannot afford, to live in that village?*

(Adapted from Bryden and Bryan, 2005)

These thinkpieces raise some interesting philosophical questions, and we can now explore how they fit into broader debates in the field of environmental sociology.

Wider sociological issues

A common theme running through much literature on sustainability is that one of its core ideas is about people being willing to sacrifice some of their personal gain for the “greater good”. Banister sums this up by stating “the complexity is in balancing personal ambition against the potentially wider social and ecological consequences of those ambitions” (Banister, 2005). We can draw links between this notion and the wider sphere of environmental sociology, a field which effectively began in the late 1960s/early 1970s. Dunlap *et al* (2002) attempted to find reference to the environment in classical and twentieth-century sociological theory, and concluded that it was a seriously neglected relationship until recently. They did note, however, possible links to Marxist and Weberian literature. Marx argued that the first contradiction of capitalism was between the forces and relations of capitalism. Dunlap *et al* hypothesised that the second contradiction may be between capitalism and the biophysical resources it needs to flourish, returning to Banister’s notion of balance. Weber emphasised social action – people’s actions generate unpredictable structural change, and Dunlap *et al* noted links in that humans are perhaps in danger of making a world that controls them, rather than vice versa (Dunlap, 2002).

The Brundtland definition of sustainable development is concerned with linking our levels of consumption with the impact of that consumption on the world around us (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987). It might be argued

that human nature is such that ever increasing consumption is natural, with little thought of wider consequences without some Government intervention. Shove and Warde (writing in Dunlap *et al*, 2002) outlined six mechanisms that might be contributing to escalating levels of consumption:

- Social comparison (i.e. groups of people trying to distinguish themselves from others);
- The creation of self-identity (people in modern society are projecting messages to one another via their acquisition of goods and lifestyle practices);
- Mental stimulation (people consume things and learn new tastes as ways of overcoming boredom);
- The “Diderot effect¹⁶”, where acquisition of a new item results in a rolling effect as old items are rendered unacceptable;
- Specialisation (the separation of leisure activities into a variety of specialised fields leads to increasing consumption);
- Socio-technological systems (the acquisition of new devices leads to new forms of consumption or heightened expectations, for example a new washing machine leading to new expectations on the frequency of washing).

(Dunlap, 2002)

We could apply most of these to the “consumption” of rural housing by the urban elite – the first two in particular. Whether they are distinguishing themselves from less wealthy people in urban areas, or trying to create a self-identity of a rural squire, and whether this is conscious or unconscious, it is perhaps inevitable that those who can afford to will buy houses in rural areas, if the market is unconstrained. But, we might ask, if this lifestyle is widely perceived as being unsustainable would it become less attractive?

We can make comparisons to the arguments about NIMBYism – the NIMBY concept revolved around the difference between attitudes and individual behaviour. So, in the case of owning a property in the countryside and commuting to urban areas or

¹⁶ Named after the French philosopher Denis Diderot who identified the concept in an essay in 1772.

owning a second home, the *attitude* might be a recognition that it is generally a bad thing, but the *individual behaviour* might be justified by someone on the basis that they have no choice, or are keen to bring up their children in a particular location.

There are other issues in today's society – we face increasing societal and financial pressure to save for old age, and the way some people choose to do this is by investing in additional property – whether a second home in the countryside or a buy-to-let investment. So we might see a further justification for individual behaviour, that of ensuring that one's personal future, or the future of one's family, is secure.

So it is perhaps not as straightforward as using Levett-Therivel's recommendations of wider state involvement in rural communities to curtail the ease with which new residents thereof can continue their urban lifestyle. A source of complexity is that sustainability can have a number of components, some of which can be contradictory.

Elements of sustainability

As discussed above, the Government has identified four "aims" for sustainable development:

- social progress which recognises the needs of everyone;
- effective protection of the environment;
- the prudent use of natural resources; and,
- the maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment.

Several authors are concerned that the interpretation of sustainability in planning practice has focussed on the middle two of these, and has neglected social and economic aspects, particularly in terms of rural developments – "the ultimate prize of sustainability remains environmental (a prize that often supersedes all others and is viewed as the real "rationale" of sustainable development) and ecological quality" (Gallent and Tewdwr-Jones, 2007)(p251).

Hoggart and Henderson (2005) went further, hypothesising that any focusing on environmental aspects of sustainability is part of a broader trend in Government policy. They speculated that “a socially mixed countryside is a lesser goal for the Government than environmental sustainability and the economics of infrastructure provision” (Hoggart and Henderson, 2005)(p194). Their fear was that by deliberately not providing a direction to local authorities on how to balance economic, social and environmental aspects of sustainability “outcomes will be decided by the ability of groups to exert political muscle” (ibid.)(p194). From our previous discussion of the nature of opposition and constructions of the countryside, it seems likely that the groups most able to exert political muscle in this context will be anti-development rural interests.

Conclusion

This sub-section started by looking at the Government’s “key requirements” for a sustainable community, and asking how they were being operationalised. It seems that rather than the requirements being used to try and bring all communities up to a sustainable level, they are being used to focus housing development on communities/settlements which are considered as being most sustainable, in terms of reducing CO₂ emissions by reducing travel distances. But, as Shorten (2005), amongst others, has pointed out, this approach may be based on a false premise – because people are “hypermobile” and “strategically disobedient” they will use their cars regardless. In addition, this approach of focusing on key settlements heightens the spatial exclusion we see in many rural settlements (see section 2.1.1).

Perhaps the issue is one raised by Bryden and Bryan in their CRC thinkpiece – is the “efficiency” objective over-riding social and civil rights? By seeking to ensure that service provision in rural areas is most “efficient”, by concentrating it in locations where the most people can access it, i.e. larger, or “key”, settlements, are we over-riding the right of individuals and families to live in whichever settlement they choose?

Should the focus of Government policy be on facilitating sustainability in all areas, by encouraging innovation in service delivery and greater subsidising of public

transport? That approach would reduce the *need* for car use, which is, as identified by Shorten (2005), the key factor in considering the sustainability of rural communities. There is also the possibility that new forms of fuel will be developed which would allow car use without the carbon emissions which currently make it such an unsustainable form of transport. The other issue to consider is that raised by Shorten – that living in an urban area does not necessarily reduce car use. It is clear that a construction of sustainability which equates to “urban good, rural bad” does not fully take into account these factors.

It is significant, then, that that particular construction of rural sustainability, and a pastoral construction of rurality, has taken such a hold on policy making and implementation. It is useful now to explore in more detail how such interests can dominate in a democratic state like the United Kingdom.

2.4.6. Government vs. governance

The title of this sub-section of the literature review refers to the move in many neo-liberal states over the last 30 years from a model of top-down government by the central state to a theoretically more inclusive, broader model of governance. Decision making is increasingly devolved to partnerships between the state, private sector and the so-called “third sector” of voluntary and not-for-profit organisations. Planning for housing is no exception.

The planning system in England

To try and address concerns that the planning system in the UK was not responsive enough to local concerns, the Government changed the system in 2004 with the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act. Part of the 2004 Act required greater community involvement and “up-front” consultation. More generally, we have seen a shift towards more use of partnerships in governance – from the production of “community strategies” by partnerships of local authorities and wider stakeholders to the development of affordable housing by partnerships of local authorities and housing associations.

We can now examine how these partnerships are working in practice, and issues thrown up by this move from the role of local authorities as service *providers* to service *enablers*.

Partnership issues in affordable housing development

Yarwood was concerned that we need to better understand how local partnerships involve local people and their representatives. He noted that in general governance practices in rural England were placing more and more emphasis on parish councils to fulfil this role, as a readily-identifiable proxy for local views. The legitimacy of parish councils' role as community spokespeople is perhaps open to question. Tewdwr-Jones (1998) noted that parish councils often suffered from "a lack of credibility and influence, a lack of qualified professional support staff, a parochial outlook, a lack of political direction, an absence of competition for council seats" (Tewdwr-Jones, 1998, Yarwood, 2002). This is a damning criticism, yet Tewdwr-Jones was not alone in making it. In response to concerns of this nature, the Government launched "The Quality Parish and Town Council Scheme" in 2003. Under that scheme, parish and town councils can apply to become badged as a "Quality Parish/Town Council", if they meet ten tests, covering the following:

- Electoral Mandate
- Qualifications of the clerk
- Council meetings
- Communication and Community Engagement
- Annual Report
- Accounts
- Code of Conduct
- Promoting local democracy and citizenship
- Terms and conditions
- Training

(National Association of Local Councils, 2008)

These tests should address the concerns identified by Tewdwr-Jones, but as parish councils are under no obligation to try and achieve Quality status, in many cases his concerns remain an issue, in perception if not in actuality.

Parish councils play an important role in affordable housing delivery for three reasons:

- 1) They might initiate schemes, through a housing needs survey (indeed some local authorities make it an explicit requirement that parish councils are involved prior to the submission of planning applications).
- 2) They can help identify suitable sites and are well placed to liaise with local landowners for their sale.
- 3) They can be pro-active within their community and encourage local support (or conversely local objection) for schemes.

So, although they might not “make or break” schemes, their support or otherwise can play a significant role in whether a scheme comes to fruition. On this basis, Yarwood examined the case study of Malvern Hills District in Worcestershire. The local authority had carried out an Large Scale Voluntary Transfer (LSVT) of its council housing in 1995, so was involved with social housing only in an enabling context. He looked both at specific exception schemes, both successful and unsuccessful, and attempted to deconstruct the role of different organisations in these; and spoke directly to parish councils, to judge their attitudes to affordable housing.

He found that, as suggested by Tewdwr-Jones, parish councils were “dominated by middle-class, middle-aged males who were not in housing need themselves” (Yarwood, 2002)(p281). That notwithstanding, 59% of parish councils felt there was a need for affordable housing in their parish; 27% were opposed to the idea of building affordable housing; and 15% were “unsure or apathetic”. Evidently, then, parish councillors are often capable of looking beyond their own immediate concerns. Yarwood further found that where parish councils supported affordable housing, three main themes emerged:

- 1) “Localism” was important – they supported affordable housing for *local* people.

- 2) They hoped that the development of affordable housing would benefit the whole parish and help to support a balanced community.
- 3) Parish councils felt a strong sense of “ownership” in these housing schemes. When they were closely involved in initiating or developing housing, they often referred to them as “our scheme” or “our houses”.

In several cases, though, initial support for affordable housing ebbed away as schemes were built (often several years after an initial housing needs survey). Parish councils complained about not being consulted on occupants of affordable housing, which meant that people not local to the village sometimes moved in (based on the “doughnut” principle of seeking occupants from further and further away if no tenants can be found in the village itself). Not only were some occupants not local, they were sometimes also the “wrong sort of people”.

There is a tendency to assume that parish councils, and to some extent many occupants of rural communities, are anti-development and anti-incomers – the perception that they are NIMBYs, and/or follow the pastoralist construction of the countryside. Yarwood seems to slightly fall into this trap, as he notes that where parish councils had decided that they did not want any affordable housing in their parish, they appealed against schemes to local authority planners. He notes that although these comments “were overtly based on local plans, they represented more covert concerns about access to parishes from “other” groups” (Yarwood, 2002)(p288), but provides no evidence to support this assertion.

Examples of NIMBYism doubtless occur in some, perhaps many parish councils, so perhaps this case study raises important questions about rural governance. Parish councils are expected/required to take part in the development process, but they have no legal right to ongoing involvement – in fact, the opposite applies, as housing associations must ensure that tenancies in their property are determined on a fair and open basis. Perhaps this is community manipulation/exploitation, rather genuine engagement? *But*, are parish councils representative of the community? They can exclude certain groups, and indeed, may seek to do so by actively discouraging the influx of “the wrong kind of people”.

This case study illustrates the potential benefits, and similarly risks, of forming governance partnerships to deliver affordable housing in rural areas. Perhaps it illustrates the risks of building partnerships of too narrow a base. These partnerships between local authority, housing association and parish council are given legitimacy by government edicts, but how is legitimacy achieved for other rural partnerships, and how might we achieve legitimacy for a partnership which includes wider community representation than simply the parish council?

Identifying who is involved with/benefits from community participation

We have discussed the perception that parish councils are not representative of the wider community, but there has been concern amongst some commentators that different opportunities for community participation tend to be dominated by the same people – i.e. we might see parish councillors involved in community councils, or planning for real exercises, potentially to the exclusion of other community members.

Skidmore et al (2006) investigated these issues, and found that this hypothesis tended to be borne out by the evidence. They questioned why greater community participation was being promoted by politicians, and identified three justifications for it:

1. It leads to better and more responsive services.
2. It tackles people's disengagement from politics.
3. It builds social capital (which they defined as resources for collective action, e.g. contacts, friendships, ability to ask favours of people, which citizens access through membership of social networks.)

(Skidmore et al., 2006)

Social capital is attractive to policy makers as it is seen as cheaper/more legitimate than traditional public service delivery – particularly for disadvantaged communities without the money to buy their way out of problems. “Linking” social capital is of particular importance when we consider policies to promote community participation – people build relationships with public institutions or officials by being involved in governance. They can then access external resources.

Skidmore et al found that those already well connected tend to get better connected. They noted that relatively few people are involved in governance, and they tend to be the same people in different settings. They concluded this was down to a number of “network barriers”:

1. Preferential attachment: The more governance structures you are involved in, the more attractive a potential participant you become to others.
2. The rich get richer: Having some linking social capital makes it easier for you to create more – you acquire knowledge, skills and contacts.
3. Closure: The value of linking social capital often comes from preventing others from accessing it – public sector partners will choose people they feel most comfortable working with, and people enjoy being the community voices that are privileged in decision making.
4. Self-exclusion: People may choose to exclude themselves from governance because they decide it’s not for them, or because they want to take a deliberately alternative, or less formal, approach.
5. Community dependency: People taking on a disproportionate burden of activities create a vicious circle – non-participants expect not to participate because they assume others already will be doing; participants expect to participate because they assume no-one else will step in if they do not.
6. Institutional dependency: Institutions tend to recruit “known quantities” rather than investing time in new blood who may not be as adept.

(Skidmore et al., 2006)

If such a small proportion of the population is involved with governance partnerships, how do those partnerships achieve legitimacy in their decision making?

The (il)legitimacy of rural partnerships

The legitimacy of governance arrangements is an important issue – those governing have to be seen as legitimate (without the use of force, in democratic societies) if they are to have any power or influence. Traditionally, formal government was generally assumed to have legitimacy as it was elected through representative democracy. There were always those, such as anarchists, who would dispute this, and the shift from direct government to wider governance partnerships means this simple argument no longer confers legitimacy on many of the governance arrangements we see today.

The constructivist argument is that legitimacy does not simply occur, but is constructed by those involved in governance, both internally (i.e. those within a governance partnership) and externally (i.e. those being “governed”). This line between rulers and ruled is more flexible now than in the past, so how legitimacy is constructed by different groups assumes more importance.

Connelly et al (2006) carried out a study of how legitimacy was constructed in rural governance partnerships. They were concerned that partnerships are presented as “intrinsically good” (Connelly et al., 2006), with no specification of how/why they should be considered legitimate. The principle of “democratising” decision making is argued to be legitimate as it gives people direct access to decision making processes, but the specificities of particular governance arrangements need to be examined to judge the extent to which this is achieved in practice.

Connelly et al carried out a case study of transport policy in the Peak District National Park (PDNP), and three particular governance partnerships which had responsibility for developing different strands of that policy: a place-based forum, which sought to manage the use of a small area of the park; a partnership between the PDNP Authority and the local authorities surrounding/comprising it which was to establish a strategic transport plan; and the PDNP Authority itself, which is a partnership *organisation* as defined by Yarwood (2002) – it is comprised of members from the constituent local authorities, DEFRA “expert” appointees and Parish Council representatives.

This study observed quite different constructions of legitimacy, but all three partnerships had an explicit “discourse of legitimacy” (Connelly et al., 2006) which they used to justify their decision making. The place-based partnership argued for legitimacy through decision making by consensus, but difficulties arose when some of those involved questioned the parochial nature of the views of many of those involved, and the resultant bias in decisions taken. The strategic transport plan partnership was formally legitimised as it comprised of those elected by representative democracy, but internally a very different form of legitimacy was argued – issues were debated behind closed doors by officers from the various authorities, who justified this approach by stating that (i) they alone had sufficient technical expertise to do so; and (ii) they had successfully produced a strategy – “output based legitimacy”. Legitimacy for the National Park Authority itself was complex – none of the Members had directly representative legitimacy, so there were internal conflicts. The local nature of the parish council representatives meant that they argued that they had more legitimacy, but some officers and the expert appointees considered that they were too parochial, given that it was a *National Park*.

The authors concluded that none of the arenas successfully established a single overriding legitimacy discourse – they were all hybrids, which is perhaps inevitable as we move from the old certainties of representative democracy to a more collaborative, inclusive approach. They found that representative democracy norms were still strong, given the wide public understanding of such approaches, and that deliberative norms are less well understood/accepted. A particular concern was the focus on output-based legitimacy – the justification that “well, we produced a good output so the governance arrangements *must* be legitimate”. This is both ethically contentious, and can be practically questionable, if, as was happening with the strategic transport plan, implementation does not go smoothly.

We have briefly discussed two specific case studies looking at forms of inclusionary planning in rural areas. With the Yarwood study of affordable housing development in particular, it is questionable whether the partnership style of governance was adopted by all parties willingly. It seems that housing associations in Malvern Hills involved parish councils largely because they were aware of the influence they could have on the success of potential schemes, rather than through a genuine desire to

see more community involvement in development proposals. This may be a function of the perceived lack of true representation in many parish councils, and there may be scope for wider community mobilisation behind the principle of more affordable housing in rural areas. The literature discussed in this sub-section highlights that there are fundamental problems with the governance arrangements for rural planning, which may be a powerful reason why supply of affordable housing is not increasing to match demand.

This chapter of the thesis has considered a range of literature which looked at reasons for the supply and demand of affordable housing in rural areas not matching up. We now move on to chapter 3, which explores literature seeking to address these various problems from both a demand and a supply side of the economic equation.

3. *Literature review II*

Or: Attempting to better align supply and demand for affordable housing in rural areas

Chapter 2 identified a number of explanations for the shortage of affordable housing in the countryside. We now need to consider some potential solutions to the problem. This chapter of the thesis is structured on a similar basis to that of the previous chapter, i.e. it looks first at ways of curbing external demand for affordable housing in the countryside, before considering how we might increase the supply of housing.

3.1. Possible demand side solutions

There are three particular ways that the external demand for (affordable) housing in the countryside could be curbed: limiting second home ownership; preventing the loss of social housing through right to buy; and limiting the occupation of new housing to “local” people only. These three options will be explored in the following three sub-sections.

3.1.1. Reducing the impact of second homes

Second homes can have a serious impact on some rural communities, as the demand for such properties can drive prices to levels completely out of reach of local people (see section 2.2.1). Shucksmith (1983) considered that it might be necessary for the Government to change the law for the impact of second homes to be reduced. He proposed two options, which despite it being more than 20 years since his work was published demand consideration:

Differential rates/taxes: Shucksmith proposed charging second home owners more in taxes. He noted that the differential would need to be large, and there would surely need to be some kind of register – what incentives would there be for people to register their home as a second home? Gallent et al (2004) considered that equal council tax would not dampen demand, so the social & environmental impacts of

second homes are the justification for council tax alterations. They noted that owners need an incentive to register their houses as second homes, hence the current 90% rate. Best and Shucksmith (2006) proposed a 300% council tax rate on second homes, supported by the ARHC (2006), who advocated the Government developing “a robust method of identifying second homes based on the system of self-certification used for tax purposes” (Affordable Rural Housing Commission, 2006) to ensure that tax evasion was not an issue.

Gallent et al proposed further tax related restraints on second homes, including lowering the threshold for the higher rate of stamp duty on second homes, or even setting a punitive rate of stamp duty (say 30%). That would have a major impact on the property market, and it has to be considered unlikely that the current administration would be persuaded to bring in differential rates of tax.

Regulatory controls: It could be made compulsory to have a license to buy a second home, or force people to register their second homes. In 1983 this proposal was made to the Conservative Government, who responded that they were “not prepared to contemplate so great an incursion on individual liberty” (Shucksmith, 1983). A planning control might be to make change of use from first to second homes a material change of use, proposed again by the ARHC (2006). Shucksmith noted that a private member’s bill to amend the Town & Country Planning Act in this way was defeated, so this is by no means a straightforward proposal. Planning law generally does not concern itself with the owner of land, but only with the use of it, so it would be a radical step. It could also be considered as inequitable, as existing second home owners would not need planning permission. There is also the issue of compensation if we are withdrawing a previously held right.

3.1.2. The right to buy

The second way that external demand for rural housing could be reduced is by addressing the impact of right to buy. The impact of right to buy on rural areas has been noted in section 2.3.1 (a 24% reduction in the stock of council houses in rural areas). This significant impact is arguably a justification for restricting right to buy in rural areas, or at least in local authorities/settlements where there are particular

shortages of social housing. This was recommended by both Shucksmith and Best and the ARHC (both 2006), who also suggested that local authorities should be allowed to buy back the houses if they were subsequently resold. The Labour Government has been keen to maintain, and if possible extend, the right to buy, as they maintain the previous administration's fondness for owner occupation, so this may be politically unacceptable. The Scottish Government, however, has recently announced plans to suspend right to buy for all new council housing and for new council housing tenants (King, 2008) – this may provoke debate on the issue south of the border.

3.1.3. Limit the occupation of new housing

A third option for addressing external demand for rural housing, and one which is sometimes politically popular, is to restrict some or all new housing built in an local authority as to be occupied by “local” people only. This can be extremely controversial, and has been so for many years. Rogers (1985) identified five possible arguments for policies restricting new housing to locals only:

1. Local qualification acts as a proxy for welfare objectives, i.e. in the absence of information on household income, it must be assumed that local rural people are in need of positive discrimination.
2. The local qualification simplifies the allocation procedure by cutting out those that the local authority regards as lacking a serious claim on local housing resources.
3. Housing for local people relates directly to local employment support and generation, and to the maintenance of local services.
4. There is a moral right of local people for housing over the demands of outsiders. Members argue for this, for local government to reflect the views of a local electorate. It is popular with local people, and “frequently advanced by relative newcomers to rural areas who are vocal in expressing their concern over further invasions from outside”.

5. A cynical view that the “local” tag is useful, despite its limitations. It has genuine popular appeal and is an obvious way of politicising rural housing problems.

(Rogers, 1985)

Rogers went on to debunk these arguments, on both ethical and practical grounds. Ethically, he argued that excluding outsiders can be both “unjust and morally suspect”, citing the example of Jersey & Guernsey, where immigrants have to prove they can contribute a certain amount to the exchequer – thereby excluding the less well off. Shucksmith (1990) argued that locals only policies were regressive, as they cause the value of property of existing house owners to increase. In practical terms, too, Rogers found fault with locals only policies. He observed that it was hard to define “local”, and identified an inherent contradiction in allowing people to move in for employment purposes, in that “localness” can be justified for those who move from outside an area to work in it. Rogers concluded that a local priority policy would result in social atrophy, maintenance of the status quo and the squeezing out of new social and economic initiatives.

Shucksmith (1990) looked in some detail at the experience of the Lake District in the 1980s. In 1977 the planning board adopted the policy of restricting all new development to “that which can be shown to satisfy a local need”. They used this policy between 1977 and 1984, when the Secretary of State deleted it from the structure plan, as he felt it was outside the powers of planning. Interestingly he also said that “The effect of the control may merely be to increase the demand for older dwelling houses for use as holiday homes or for occupation by persons coming into the area to retire” (Shucksmith, 1990)(p121).

Shucksmith believed that the policy failed because it both reduced the demand for (as was intended) and supply of (which was not) new housing in the Lake District. Less building occurred, on smaller sites, which led to a reduction in economies of scale. So the number of new houses declined, but prices did not. And, as the Secretary of State had predicted, this was accompanied by an increase in demand for the existing stock. As the supply of existing stock is price inelastic (people do not sell their homes just because prices go up), the increase in demand led to a rapid

increase in price. Between 1977 and 1981, house prices in the UK increased by 73%. In the south-east Lake District, this figure was 137%. This difference in price increase occurred before, but to nowhere near as significant an extent.

Shucksmith points out that the locals only policy coincided with a general tightening of controls on the level of new building in the Lake District, as the planning board were concerned at the impact on the landscape of new development. He argues that the policy of allocating housing to local people only flows from a restrictive planning stance and attempts to legitimise it – the board felt that its duty to protect the landscape restricted development to such an extent that it was unacceptable for the limited development which did take place to go for second homes or retirees. (Shucksmith, 1990)

An alternative (or complementary) approach to “locals only” housing is allocating new housing development as to be for those in need only. Shucksmith (1990) argued that a new social housing class was the only way to generate sufficient affordable houses. He believed that this approach would not cause existing residents’ house prices to suffer, as market housing would be restrained alongside the provision of social housing. It does hinge on landowners releasing land at less than market rate – in accordance with what he called a “moral economy” (Shucksmith, 1990)(p196). There are issues of defining who is “in need”, but this approach has recently been legitimised by amendments to PPG3. Local authorities are now able to allocate housing sites for affordable housing only, which may prove to be a valuable expansion of the exception site approach. This project will examine best practice in this field in some detail.

This section has discussed the options for reducing the external demand for affordable housing in rural areas. We now move on to looking at the other side of the equation, i.e. how we might generate more affordable housing in absolute terms.

3.2. Supply side measures – how to build more affordable houses

This section of the thesis looks at five broad mechanisms for increasing the supply of affordable housing in rural areas. It starts with more technical options, before moving on to consider how we might address the more complex issues of opposition, problematic societal constructs and governance previously considered in sections 2.4.3 – 2.4.6.

3.2.1. More funding

An obvious way to facilitate more affordable housing provision from RSLs is to provide them with more funding. As discussed above, the Housing Corporation has a funding programme focussed on rural areas. Currently, this programme funds approximately 1,750 homes per annum in settlements below 3,000 population and roughly 3,000 homes per annum in larger rural settlements – a total of 4,500-5,000 homes per annum in 2006/2007 (Best and Shucksmith, 2006). In February 2008 the Government announced a new target for settlements below 3,000 population of 10,300 houses between 2008 and 2011 (HC Deb 20 February 2008 c883) – at just short of 3,500 per annum, an approximate doubling of recent rates in those smallest settlements.

Best and Shucksmith (2006) advocated doubling the overall programme of 4,500 homes in rural areas to 9,000 homes per annum, and estimated the costs from doing so to be in the region of £200-250 million. The ARHC went further, recommending a minimum of 11,000 homes per year be built in settlements of less than 10,000 population. They argued for this on the basis that rural areas should receive a proportion of funding equal to the proportion of the population that lives there – 13% living in settlements of below 3,000 in population and a further 7% living in settlements of between 3,000 and 10,000 (ARHC, 2006).

These calls come, of course, at a time of budget cutbacks across Government, so they may not be successful. The possibilities for “levering in” more money from the private sector could also be important. A report commissioned by the ODPM in 2002 looked at “fiscal policy options” to promote affordable housing. It focussed on supply-

side subsidies, given that “in a restricted supply situation (as in the UK), subsidies on the demand-side would tend to drive up house prices” (Holmans et al., 2002). The report considered six policy options:

1. *Tax incentives – tax relief or tax credit.*

In the USA, the Low Income Housing Tax Credit subsidises developers who agree to build affordable housing units that will remain affordable for at least 20 years. This approach has been effective but inefficient. Tax relief is more common than tax credits in the UK, but credits offer the scope for deeper subsidy. The authors argue that tradability is important – then small firms and charities (which do not pay corporation tax) can participate and sell the tax credits to other companies.

2. *Government incentives to purchasers in high cost areas.*

This is cheaper than varying public sector salaries across the board. This kind of programme, depending on size, “would tend to feed through into higher house prices”.

3. *Saving schemes for 1st time buyers.*

These are tax inefficient in the UK at present as the “subsidy” is regarded as taxable income. Employers may be happy to assist with mortgage payments if it were tax efficient to do so, as it is in many other countries.

4. *Policies to increase employer involvement.*

For example contributing to savings schemes, paying relocation costs, by building/managing housing for their employees. It should be aimed at encouraging employer involvement in delivering policy options 1, 3 and 5.

5. *Providing affordable housing on non-residential land.*

The exception approach could be extended to urban areas. Section 106 agreements to provide affordable housing could be extended to non-residential development.

6. *VAT reduction on renovation of affordable housing.*

The authors proposed a policy to reduce to 5% (the lowest rate permitted by the EU at the time) the VAT paid by registered social landlords on renovation of their properties.

(Holmans et al., 2002)

The report concluded that there was a strong case for experimenting with policies 1 and 2, indeed policy 2 is being implemented via the key worker housing policies adopted by the Government. The authors also noted that all the policies would work better alongside a general increase in the supply of housing land, a topic which we return to later. Before that, we can examine literature which questions the rigour with which local authorities have been applying the policies open to them to deliver rural affordable housing.

3.2.2. Better use of existing planning policies

As noted previously, local authorities already have three mechanisms for generating affordable housing through the planning system: the s106 route, rural exception sites and the new “allocated exception” approach. The third of these is very new so there is little literature on its implementation, but there is no shortage of publications on the implementation of the first two mechanisms, some of which are summarised below.

Houses delivered through section 106 agreements

Crook et al (2002) and Whitehead et al (2005) were both concerned that the increasing number of s106 schemes was not resulting in a corresponding rise in the total number of affordable houses built. Both studies concluded that as affordable housing funded partly through s106 agreements still required considerable public subsidy, funding was simply being diverted from 100% affordable housing schemes (whether via the exception policy or simply via standalone development in larger settlements). This is in part because land which is being developed for market housing tends to be in more expensive areas, an issue we discuss below, but the authors were also concerned that it was because developers were being duplicitous, and trying to extract more money from housing associations, knowing the levels of

subsidy they could access through the total cost indicator (or its replacement, the value for grant comparator).

Several commentators have observed that local authorities need to improve their negotiation skills with developers, both in ensuring that public money is not used unnecessarily, and at an earlier stage, to ensure that affordable housing is actually provided as part of market housing developments (Monk et al., 2007). Crook et al (2002) and the Audit Commission (2005) found that there were communication issues between planning, housing and legal departments of local authorities, and between local authorities and housing associations. These problems, and a lack of understanding among some local authority staff, meant that many developments did not in fact contain any affordable housing despite a clearly identifiable local need.

Table 7, extracted from Crook et al (2002) illustrates the proportion of the 64 case studies of housing developments the authors carried out which conformed with policies on affordable housing requirements in local plans. We can see high proportions of developments in the Midlands and Northern regions which did not, i.e. the developments failed to provide sufficient affordable housing according to local plan policy.

Table 7 - Regional pattern of policy conformity (% in region) (Crook et al., 2002)

Region	Contribution consistent with district policy?		
	Yes	No	Compliance with conditions
South East	58	8	33
London	69	0	31
South West	91	9	0
East	60	0	40
East Midlands	86	14	0
West Midlands	50	50	0
North East	50	50	0
Yorkshire and Humberside	33	33	33
North West	75	25	0
Average	64	21	15

This data is now quite old, so we might hope that developers are now more amenable to including affordable housing in their schemes, a supposition supported by the work of Whitehead et al (2005), who found a more widespread acceptance of the need for affordable housing. That finding was supported by work carried out by

Monk et al in 2007. They found, however, that developers may accept the need for affordable housing provision, but argue about the tenure, pushing for a higher proportion of shared ownership housing.

Gallent et al (2004) looked at the scope for more innovative use of section 106 agreements. They were interested in the possibility of pooling/targeting planning gain, i.e. in larger settlements a payment in lieu could be used to fund a development in a nearby village. They concluded that land availability is crucial, i.e. that local authorities must be prepared to allocate sites in villages and not be overly constrained by the sequential approach. The changes in Government policy set out in PPS3 may remedy this situation eventually.

Quantity of housing vs. social inclusion

There is increasing evidence emerging that some housing associations are making a trade-off, perhaps not consciously, between the number of affordable houses they can develop and the location of these houses. An interesting philosophical question is – is it better to have a higher absolute number of houses which are less integrated into the wider community, or a smaller number of houses but which are in areas where we might not expect to see affordable housing? This relates to the Government's mixed communities agenda. Specific examples can be found in the work of Crook et al (2002) and Monk et al (2005).

Monk et al found that land in s106 sites was often as, or more, expensive to acquire than non-s106 sites, and concluded that housing associations were developing in more expensive areas. Crook et al concluded that, particularly in the south of England, the s106 policy seemed to be not necessarily providing more affordable housing, but was allowing affordable housing to be built in areas/on sites that would be too expensive for social housing grant alone to fund. In their 2007 follow up, Monk et al saw a key question for Government policy as "Is s106 intended primarily to secure land for mixed communities or to secure additional funding?" (Monk et al., 2007).

Houses delivered via the rural exception policy

The rural exception policy is intended to work in parallel with the section 106 route of delivering affordable housing. The implementation of exception policies has been the subject of published research going back as far as 1991, when Williams et al produced a Government sponsored report looking at the then new policy. They concluded that exception schemes would work best when local authorities had adopted a restrictive approach to the development of market housing, so local landowners had little “hope value” that their land could be sold for mainstream housing. Other share the view that exception policies will only work where there is a development plan in place and the local authority “has a reputation for adhering closely to plan policy. Research has shown that where there is uncertainty over a planning authority development strategy or its intentions for a particular site are unclear, owners will hang onto all land in the hope that one day, it may be earmarked for market housing” (Gallent and Tewdwr-Jones, 2007)(p133).

Gallent and Bell (2000) echoed the concerns of Williams et al (1991) and Shucksmith (1990) that exception policies depended on landowners releasing land at less than market value, and that the lack of landowners willing to do this, combined with the higher costs of developing in rural areas, meant that very few houses had been built through the exception approach (Gallent and Bell, 2000).

Richards and Satsangi (2004) agreed with the general point that exception schemes were few and far between, but emphasised that they were very important to the communities they had been located in. They advocated a lessening of restrictive policies imposed by local authorities on the size and design of affordable housing (Richards and Satsangi, 2004).

Best & Shucksmith (2006) felt that in order to encourage more exception schemes, local authorities should restrict the plot value of land granted planning permission through the exception approach (whether the “old” way or through allocation) to an affordable level – they suggested £10,000 per plot.

They also advocated something which has thus far been ruled out by Government policy and local interpretation thereof, that some market housing should be allowed, to “cross-subsidise” exception schemes – they proposed that this should be restricted to a level such as 20%, and should only be allowed in cases where development costs are such that stand alone affordable housing would not be viable. There are issues with this approach, for example how local authorities could determine what level of market housing was necessary to make the scheme viable, and to ensure that it was not merely a case of a private developer seeking a “back door” to achieving market housing development on a site.

Hoggart and Henderson (2005) studied exception site provision via surveys with local authority and housing association representatives. They concluded that securing land for exception sites and overcoming local opposition to them are important factors, but were secondary to what they considered to be the main issue – local authority planning department and housing association ambivalence towards exception sites. They found that planners were concerned about locating houses in villages with poor service provision, and unconvinced that building a small number of new houses in a village would help support services there. Housing associations similarly preferred larger developments in larger settlements on the grounds that they cost less per unit, are better located with respect to services, and do not have local occupancy restrictions (hence could be let on the basis of their waiting list rather than to local people who may not be in “priority need”). Putting aside the cost issues for a moment, we are returning to issues around constructions of sustainability – it seems that planning officers and housing association representatives alike consider smaller settlements inherently unsustainable, and hence exception schemes similarly so. This raises considerable questions over whether the new approach to allocating exception sites can/will succeed.

Thus far in this section we have considered some options to ensure a greater proportion of housing in rural areas is affordable. At the same time, though, some have argued that we should be increasing the total quantity of housing built in rural areas. This is the subject of the next sub-section.

3.2.3. More housing development overall

As we have observed from a number of literature sources, an increasing proportion of new affordable housing is coming through the section 106 route, i.e. as a proportion of market housing sites. It is simple mathematics that increasing the quantity of market housing will thus, if local policies are effectively designed and implemented, ensure a corresponding increase in the number of affordable houses. This sub-section explores several issues with regard to whether an increase in the overall level of housing in rural areas is feasible.

Arguments for increasing overall housing supply

The Barker Review (2004) recommended a significant increase in the total number of houses being built in England, and the Government has accepted the need for this. The assumption, though, encouraged by bodies such as the CPRE, as discussed in section 2.4.4, is usually that the vast majority of this additional housebuilding should be in urban areas, on previously developed land.

Those observing a modernist construction of the countryside, though, are keen to ensure that rural England “gets its fair share”, and the ARHC (2006) made a series of recommendations to try and achieve this, including ensuring that rural spatial strategies (the mechanism for planning development at a regional scale) take more note of the social and economic importance of maintaining viable rural communities.

There is much work to be done to achieve an increase in rural housebuilding. Best and Shucksmith (2006) identified four arguments that are put forward by opponents to the principle of increasing the rural housing stock, and attempted to rebut them:

- 1) *The residents will be likely to use cars*: The authors believed that the 75% of the population living in urban or suburban areas are as likely to use their cars for travel to work as those living in rural areas. More persuasively, they noted that reverse commuting can become an issue, including those who look after rural dwellers, e.g. care workers as rural populations age. They argue that road pricing and fuel taxation would be enormously more effective at reducing CO₂

emissions, as those policies would affect all residents of the countryside (and indeed urban areas), rather than just those seeking a new home. That is vital, given that the vast majority of the housing stock exists already rather than coming from new build.

- 2) *Households on lower incomes or who are elderly are likely to require services which can be made more cheaply available in towns:* Some formal services might indeed be more expensive to provide in rural areas, but the authors considered that informal networks which sustain older people can be very valuable, and kinship networks are important to families, particularly young/single mothers.
- 3) *Extra homes are more likely to be on greenfield land, which we might need for agriculture, and which will have a more serious visual impact.* In fact, argued Best and Shucksmith, we have a surplus, not deficit, of agricultural land. Virtually every village has a tucked-away site which could be built on, sometimes on previously developed land. Agreement can generally be reached in villages/parishes on locations for development. In terms of biodiversity, gardens might be better for biodiversity than monocultural agricultural land.
- 4) *There are higher construction and management costs for rural than for urban housing:* Sympathetic design may well add to cost, but values will also be higher, meaning more cross-subsidy would be possible.

(Best and Shucksmith, 2006)

But are these arguments in favour of rural housebuilding being made during the development of regional housing and planning policy?

Rural-proofing regional policy

The Commission for Rural Communities commissioned Three Dragons consultancy to assess the rural content of regional spatial and housing strategies in 2007, partly to consider the extent to which those documents reflected the recommendations of the ARHC, or would need to be changed to do so. That report concluded that the quality of the rural content of RSSs and RHSs was highly variable.

Three Dragons found that all the RSSs “operate from a core belief that the sustainability of the region means focusing development in urban areas, where the majority of the population lives and the infrastructure is most developed” (Three Dragons, 2007)(p23), in line with national Government policy pre PPS3. Their overall approach is to identify major urban areas and then consider how the rest of the region interacts with them. They all discourage market housing in smaller settlements, and place a focus on local needs housing, an approach which the authors considered conflicted with the ARHC recommendations.

The rural housing studies were little better in terms of a rural focus, found Three Dragons. They concluded that RSSs contained neither estimates of rural housing need nor the volume of rural housing needed over the strategy period, and RHSs did not seek to rectify those omissions.

However, as RHSs provide the evidence base for the distribution of the Regional Housing Pot, and the Housing Corporation have a rural housing target, rural investment was “inevitably” one of the specific themes of the RHS.

Lower thresholds and exceptions sites are widely referred to in RSSs and RHSs. The advice tends to reiterate national guidance, but “one RHS questions the value of exception sites in relation to cost – where there are better value urban schemes” (Three Dragons, 2007)(p36).

The Three Dragons report also investigated the constructions of sustainable development in regional strategies, and found similar constructions as identified in national Government guidance. Plan makers expressed the view that allowing rural housebuilding at a larger scale would be akin to “building commuting into the system” (Three Dragons, 2007)(p46).

Rural consultees were concerned at narrow interpretations of sustainability, and that sustainability criteria better suited to urban areas were being applied to rural areas. A common argument from rural consultees was that small increases in rural provision would not undermine the overall strategies of RSSs. The consultees wanted that additional housing targeted at local/poorer households.

At the local authority level, there were concerns about “sustainability ticklists” – lists of sustainability criteria used to decide which settlements were “sustainable” – and the variation in how local authorities apply those ticklists. One consultee put forward the argument that rural houses had positive carbon issues as well as the big negative issue of car use – there was more space for outdoor drying of clothes, house extensions as families grow, etc.

Three Dragons concluded that there was a variation in how well the “rural voice” can be expressed in RSS and RHS preparation. The RSS teams focused on statutory consultation and the Annual Monitoring Report, whereas the RHS teams had a greater tendency to involve the Regional Rural Affairs Fora and RHEs.

There seems, then, to be a lack of rural involvement in regional planning policy making, which should perhaps be addressed. The next sub-section looks at the local level, and considers how local policy makers might seek to address perceptions that the countryside is an area where above all else the environment should be protected, and that this protectionist approach means new housing development should be severely restricted.

3.2.4. Addressing opposition to new housing

We discussed opposition to housing in section 2.4.3, and concluded that it was an important factor in the success or otherwise of policies to deliver more affordable housing through the planning system. This sub-section looks at two broad ways opposition could be addressed – via “technical” solutions, attempting to provide more information to objectors, etc; and via the broadening of governance practices to facilitate a different approach to planning for housing.

Technical solutions

The literature reviewed in section 2.4.3 demonstrated that it is almost certainly the case that some opposition to new housing in rural communities comes from the stereotypical Not In My Back Yard point of view, but that some concerns are likely to be perfectly legitimate. If we accept that the three explanations for the “social gap”

between the high public support for development such as affordable housing and the low success rates in planning applications identified by Bell et al (2005) are likely to all contribute to opposition to new housing in rural areas, we could try and tailor policy responses to each of the three:

1. *Policy options in relation to the “qualified support” explanation:* Better information could be important for this group of objectors. Returning to the research carried out by Monk et al in 2005, they found that despite opposition from local people and developers to affordable housing, once schemes had been constructed and perceptions about possible occupants had been dispelled by the reality, further schemes were easier to develop (Monk et al., 2005). Perhaps this change in perception could be harnessed to convince other, sceptical, communities that affordable housing in their village can be a positive thing. Registered social landlords may need to publicise themselves better.
2. *Policy options in relation to the “self-interest” explanation:* The key here could be ensuring that the things that NIMBY-type objectors worry about can be avoided. Nguyen (2005) carried out a review of studies in the USA which examined the effect of affordable housing on property values. That work concluded that affordable housing can sometimes have a negative impact on property values but that this impact can be reduced by good quality design and management, locating affordable housing in healthy/vibrant neighbourhoods, and not seeing too high a concentration of affordable housing in one area (Nguyen, 2005). Ensuring that affordable housing is sympathetically located and designed (within appropriate costs limitations) would reduce fears about property devaluation.
3. *Policy options in relation to the “democratic deficit” explanation:* Involving local communities, at a scale wider than parish councils, at the earliest possible opportunity should be the approach here. But as far ago as 1973, Hall et al observed that simply consulting more widely did not necessarily reduce the democratic deficit. They urged the development of a way of measuring the welfare impacts on different sections of the population. Recognising the practical difficulty of this concept, they encouraged planners to seek opinions from those groups who do not get involved with the plan

making system. This in itself is not straightforward, and may demand significant changes to the way the planning process and system works.

Broadening governance practices

Local planning authorities in England are now statutorily obliged to involve the community in their planning decisions, and are attempting to alter their practices to meet these legal requirements. One option would be to move towards a more inclusionary approach to planning, as advocated by authors such as Patsy Healey. We have discussed the view that there is a “democratic deficit” in rural planning, and that the will of the majority for more housing is defeated by those who live in rural areas and who oppose it. Widening the scope of the planning process to include those who have not traditionally been able to express their views could be a way of remedying this deficit. Collaborative planning is one way that this might be achieved.

Collaborative planning theory

Much of the theory of collaborative planning was developed by Patsy Healey in her book of that name, recently republished. It is useful to briefly review that work before we see how the theory of collaborative planning might help us consider affordable housing in rural areas.

Healey (2006) identified three strands of thought which are woven together to “create” spatial planning:

- (a) Economic planning, key features of which in the last 30 years have been the collapse of Keynesian economics and the rise of neo-liberal approaches.
- (b) Physical development planning – by the 1960s it was being criticised for the “lack of any social scientific understanding of the dynamics of urban regional change”(Healey, 2006)(p19).
- (c) Policy analysis. We can perhaps identify a number of “stages” here – the management theorist Herbert Simon, in his work in the 1950s and 1960s, promoted the separation of values and facts in policy making. Planning thinkers such as Paul Davidoff, though, believed that planning could not be value free,

and advocated “advocacy” planning, where planners promoted the views of one group out of a plurality of societal groups. From this we moved to the development of constructivist ideas, mirrored in wider social policy work, which stressed that knowledge and ideas were subjective, and constructed by society – there were no objective “truths” to be found.

Institutionalism advances the concept of constructivism by positing the idea that individual identities are themselves socially constructed, within certain institutional structures, for example the need to find a job. So, every individual has his/her own identity based on particular ways of thinking and cultures, so those who might be perceived to have similar attitudes can in fact be very different. These differences are perhaps exacerbated by the way we live today, in a global culture. We have relationships on a regional, national and international level thanks to technology, so local relationships are less important.

This in turn means that the traditional planning concept of “place-based communities” is less valid than perhaps it used to be – groups of people living adjacent to each other may not in fact have very much in common at all. This can lead to conflicts at a local level, as Healey identifies – “One of the causes of local environmental conflicts is that people confront each other from often very different relational positions, without any past history of actual encounters, even when they are neighbours in space” (Healey, 2006)(p60).

One of the keys to collaborative planning, then, is trying to build up links across these disparate individuals and “networks”, who have different cultures, backgrounds and views and are often in very different locations. It is then, argues Healey, as much about process as it is about outcomes. She uses the phrase *inclusionary argumentation* to describe the trend in governance practices which might allow collaborative planning to be implemented in practice.

To achieve this *inclusionary argumentation*, Healey believes that both the soft and hard infrastructure of spatial planning need to change.

By soft infrastructure she means the processes used to produce strategic plans, which she argues need to be more inclusive, so participants can “come together, build understanding and trust among themselves, and develop ownership of the strategy” (Healey, 2006)(p249). Again, the constructivist argument comes into play here, as it is now understood that strategies are not produced in a value-neutral vacuum, but rather are influenced by the social contexts in which they are developed. Involving the widest range of stakeholders in the production of the strategy, then, should enable a greater understanding of that context to be reached.

Many observers have noted the failure of Western planning systems to adequately consider the views of those who are less articulate and less able to get involved with the technical and legal language used in traditional strategy-making. Healey is not alone in arguing that planners should explicitly recognise this fault, and take steps to address it, by recognising the differences in culture across the array of stakeholders in an area – for example some participants clearly feel more comfortable than others in formal arenas such as council chambers.

Addressing this “soft” infrastructure is only half of the job, though. The “hard” infrastructure of political, administrative and legal systems must too be reshaped to achieve collaborative planning. Healey identifies five attributes which she considers these governance systems should meet:

- i) They should recognise the diversity of stakeholders – their social networks, their culture, their systems of meaning, the power relations which exist between them.
- ii) They should acknowledge the role of informal, non-governmental agencies in governance and should seek to spread power to them without “creating new bastions of unequal power”.
- iii) They should offer opportunities for informal invention and local initiatives. They should enable and facilitate, encouraging diversity rather than imposing single ordering principles on social and economic life. They should cultivate the “framing” or enabling connection between policy and action.

- iv) They should foster the inclusion of all members of political communities while acknowledging their diversity, and should recognise the complexities inherent in this.
- v) They should be continually and openly accountable, making available the arguments, the information, consideration of stakeholders' concerns, etc. that lie behind decisions and should include requirements for critical review and challenge.

(Healey, 2006)(p288)

Healey argues that we need to change the *culture* of governance, not just the processes and structure thereof. She sees a potential change in approach in the planning system from the “I win-you lose” adversarial approach, but not to the “win-win” philosophy favoured by managerial gurus. Instead she seeks a philosophical change, a “re-framing” of how we think about winning and losing – can we all get on better if change how we think to accommodate what other people think?

She concludes in the hope that her book will contribute to the re-design of institutional frameworks to allow a “rich, inventive, locally-contingent and inclusionary form of local environmental planning to flourish. This will help political communities in western countries release the capacities of their members and re-build a public realm at the service of citizens rather than dominated by the abstract systems of government and economy” (Healey, 2006)(p314).

Applying collaborative planning ideals to the English planning system

In theory, the planning system in England is a discretionary one, i.e. is bound by policies which are brought into an argument when considering specific development proposals. The extent to which this actually happens, rather than a more pessimistic stance which views policies as being “written on tablets of stone” and considered as rules which must be adhered to, is a matter of opinion. Decisions, though, are made by elected politicians advised by administrators/professionals/experts – this is the tradition of governance in this country, and contrasts with the more inclusive arrangement proposed by Healey and other proponents of collaborative planning. They argue that technical knowledge, owned by these experts, is just one form of

knowledge, which should be held in no higher esteem (indeed possibly lower esteem) than the local knowledge of stakeholders.

Two particular features of the planning system, indeed the wider governance system, in England act against collaborative planning:

- The tiers of bureaucracy we find in government at all levels – it can be frustrating for those involved with planning at the “grass roots”, as they participate in discussions only to find decisions overruled by one of a number of more senior figures.
- The functional sectoralism of government – i.e. government is divided into specific functions, or “silos” with little active cross-boundary working. This means that planning has traditionally been linked only with land use, and wider issues, such as for example the provision of schools, have been considered as out of planners’ remits.

The approach taken by planners to demographics is an example of how these issues have an effect on the ground – until recently, planners have assumed people were basically the same – *in extremis*, Le Corbusier’s “modular man” – his standard measure for building and urban design, based on a 6 foot tall man (which, of course, not only excludes men who are shorter than this, but more importantly creates problems for women, who tend to be shorter than men on average). Planners were accused of being interested only in numbers of people – how many individuals, how many households, the age distribution, and therefore how many houses, jobs, schools, etc would be needed. It is only now, for example with the use of housing market assessments, that we see a more sophisticated approach – rather than simply judging that we need X,000 houses in region Y, we investigate what form new households might take, and what their particular needs for housing might be.

The Government tried to introduce changes to both the “hard” and “soft” infrastructure of planning through the 2004 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act, though it remains to be seen whether these changes lead to the cultural shift thought necessary by Healey.

In rural areas, the parish council is often used as a proxy for community involvement. True collaborative planning would seek out wider stakeholders in an area – both those who currently live there but are not involved in governance (perhaps they have been excluded from the parish council, or just have no interest in getting involved) and, crucially, those who do not live there but perhaps would like to. Reaching those without a voice is a cornerstone of collaborative planning, and in rural areas in particular an important group without a voice is aspirant residents.

Skidmore et al (2006) concluded that under current participation arrangements, there will never be more than 1% of people who get involved in community participation. They suggested a two-pronged approach to improving the efficacy of community involvement: 1) Maximising what this 1% achieves; 2) Making longer-term changes to the approach we take. The key to the latter, they argued, is embedding governance into the “the informal everyday spaces of community life” (Skidmore et al., 2006), such as community groups, faith groups, book groups, etc. This would require a cultural change, similar to that espoused by Healey, in which those consulting the community move away from the culture of “if we arrange an event they will come” (the problem being that “they” often do not) to a culture of making community involvement fit in with how people live their lives.

One difficulty that local authorities may face in trying to implement collaborative planning theories is that there is a conflict between localism/promoting wider participation and strategic planning to ensure that development and economic growth occur. As Gallent and Tewdwr-Jones point out, irrespective of levels of participation, the south east will have to see high levels of housebuilding according to the Government’s growth strategy. Collaborative planning “will not make difficult choices less difficult” (Gallent and Tewdwr-Jones, 2007)(p265) but may enable people to understand why that level of housebuilding is needed, or why it might be best on one site, and the implications of not building it. Planners should be sharing knowledge, and working with communities to foster local ownership in local strategies.

The changes to the planning system recently introduced mean that greater community involvement is now mandatory for local authorities, and for other participants in the development process. It is important, though, not to lose sight of

the reasons for this – at an ethical level, it is surely vital to ensure that all those with a stake in an area have a say in its development. Perhaps as importantly, in the pragmatic world of local authorities, without wide “community buy-in” to a strategic plan or specific development proposal, implementation will be difficult – stakeholders may try and find ways to circumvent a strategy, or sabotage a proposal.

We have reviewed a substantial quantity of literature across this and the previous chapter, looking at issues ranging from why a shortage of affordable housing is considered a problem by commentators to radical suggestions for how to broaden the scope of the planning system to better reflect the views of “the community”. It is now essential to summarise the literature which has been reviewed, and try to draw conclusions from it to inform the next stages of the thesis. Section 3.3 attempts to achieve this in a systematic way.

3.3. Summary of and conclusions from literature review

This section of the thesis contains two sub-sections: a summary of the literature on the shortage of affordable housing in rural areas and potential solutions to that shortage; and an assessment of how that literature can inform this thesis and help to develop research questions which reflect the aim of this project, as defined in 2005:

“To explore both the social and the micro-spatial effects in rural areas of England of the series of planning policies currently being introduced by Government to promote affordable housing provision”.

3.3.1. Summary of literature review

Establishing whether there is a shortage of affordable housing in rural areas

Various statistics demonstrate that there is a larger problem with affordability in rural than urban areas (Frontier Economics, 2006, CRC, 2006c), due to three main factors. Firstly, there are lower numbers of new affordable houses being built than needed (ARHC, 2006, CRC, 2005). Secondly, there is a lower stock of affordable houses due to there being less social and private rented stock than in urban areas (Shucksmith, 1990, Shucksmith et al., 1995). Thirdly, there is high demand for homes in the countryside from second-homes (Gallent et al., 2004, Cloke et al., 2002), and in-migrants (Richards and Satsangi, 2004, Shucksmith et al., 1995).

Identifying why that shortage matters

That shortage of affordable housing causes “spatial exclusion” – the less affluent are excluded from the countryside (CRC, 2005, Bevan et al., 2001). *In extremis*, it can cause rural homelessness, which is not usually manifested in the stereotype of people sleeping rough, but is often hidden, for example in the form of “sofa-surfing” (Cloke et al., 2002).

This is a problem in rural areas more than in urban because of the lack of housing options in the countryside – living in another village or market town even three miles

away from family or employment may create a barrier which is impossible to cross without access to private transport, a problem less likely to occur in urban areas, where different parts of a town or city would usually be linked by public transport.

Exploring why supply is not increasing to meet demand

The lower numbers of new affordable housing being built than the need would suggest could be down to a number of factors. There are simple supply side factors such as a lack of Housing Corporation finance or a lack of appropriate land in rural settlements (Monk et al., 2005, Whitehead et al., 2005). The inability of local authorities to successfully make use of the planning policies available to them has been highlighted by a number of commentators. There is huge diversity in the policies adopted by local authorities (Farthing and Ashley, 2002, Best and Shucksmith, 2006), with many local authorities not going as far as they might do, for various reasons.

Partnerships are increasingly important in rural affordable housing delivery, and some local authorities are better than others in working with the huge number of partners involved with delivering affordable housing (Audit Commission and National Audit Office, 2005, Yarwood, 2002). One particular issue is that local authorities need to agree with their partners on a method for assessing housing needs in their area (DTLR et al., 2002).

There is often opposition to new housing development in rural areas. This is usually characterised as NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard), but the situation can be more complex than that (Monk et al., 2005, Dear, 1992). The notion of social constructivism (Foucault, 1977) may be an important one. Constructions of “the countryside” as a pastoral idyll which needs to be protected are widespread (Murdoch et al., 2003, Newby, 1985). The Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) are key to this. The CPRE is a small pressure group (approximately 0.1% of the population of England) with an influence far outweighing their membership (Pennington, 2000, Ball, 1999). Similarly, constructions of “sustainable rural communities” fit into a wider discourse that interprets sustainability as meaning that

rural housing development is inappropriate because it generates higher levels of car use, and hence greenhouse gas emissions, than urban housing (Shorten, 2005).

Looking at possible solutions to the problem

Many authors have looked at the demand and supply sides of the equation and proposed alternative solutions. These include limiting second home ownership (Shucksmith, 1983, Gallent et al., 2004); ending the right to buy your council house in the countryside (ARHC, 2006); providing more funding from the Housing Corporation to build more affordable housing (Best and Shucksmith, 2006); more efficient use of the planning policies available (Williams et al., 1991, Whitehead et al., 2005).

Some have argued that there are wider issues in planning for housing that might need major structural changes to the housing/building market (Adams et al., 2002). Patsy Healey, and others, have argued that the planning system itself needs to change, to become more “collaborative”, and there is evidence that governance structures are changing, possibly in line with collaborative planning ideals (Healey, 2006, Skidmore et al., 2006, Yarwood, 2002).

3.3.2. Research issues suggested by the literature

The empirical part of this project will seek to explore the social and micro-spatial effects of the new policies, and as importantly – the reasons behind those effects. This literature review has suggested issues which can inform the detailed research questions. This sub-section could best be described as being inspired by the literature review, and highlights five broad issues which could be developed into research questions. These five issues are summarised below and will be further developed into research questions in section 4.2.

The effects that planning policies on (rural) affordable housing are having

The first phase of the empirical project must be to explore the extent to which the new policies are being implemented by regional and local planning bodies, and what are the reasons behind any variations. As discussed in section 1.1.2, national

planning policy for affordable housing provision has been in place in some form since 1990, so it is likely that all regions and local authorities will have an existing approach to delivering affordable housing. These approaches may or may not reflect the new planning policy initiatives introduced from 2005 onwards, but irrespective of whether the new planning policy initiatives have been introduced in regional and local planning documents, we can assess the social and micro-spatial effects of affordable housing planning policies, and try to gauge whether those effects are likely to change in response to the new planning policy initiatives.

The role played by national and regional planning policy

There are different constructions of sustainability in relation to rurality, identified by Banister, Bryden and Bryan, Levett-Therivel, Owen and Shorten (all 2005) amongst others. We can analyse the presence of different constructions present in Government policy to explore the aims and objectives of that policy, both explicit and implicit.

Something relatively under-explored in the literature is the impact that regional policy has as a “lens”, refracting national policy onto local authorities. This project should explore the roles of the different tiers of government/governance in the (affordable) housing delivery process in rural areas, and whether there is a set of common objectives guiding that process.

The factors affecting local policy

Some commentators have expressed concern that national policy is not being reflected in local policy (Three Dragons, 2007, Taylor, 2008). We can explore the extent to which that is true. We can also identify the constructions operating in local policy, attempting to identify the roles those discourses play.

The “technical” reasons for the success (or otherwise) of national policy

Many authors have investigated whether different aspects of the Government’s policies towards planning and affordable housing are succeeding, investigating

questions such as whether local authorities are able to negotiate effectively with private developers (Farthing and Ashley, 2002); the extent to which issues such as a lack of Housing Corporation funding restrict development (Richards and Satsangi, 2004); and whether partnership structures are appropriate for the delivery of affordable housing (Yarwood, 2002). Similar issues may effect the implementation of the new planning policies – for example does how the planning and housing departments of a local authority work together directly influence where and in what form affordable housing is provided?

Looking beyond technical factors

There may, too, be deeper issues, going beyond such technical solutions. Those promoting collaborative planning ideals have critiqued the adversarial nature of the planning system (Healey, 2006). The Government is keen to see greater community involvement in planning policy development – this project can explore the extent to which this is happening in rural areas, whether this represents a genuine move towards collaborative planning, and whether outcomes, in terms of local policies and their implementation, are being changed as a result.

A potential reason for the failure of policies to deliver their stated objectives is the importance of social constructionism and the exercise of power. There is support for the views first expressed by Peter Hall in 1973 that an “unholy alliance” (Shucksmith, 2007) of urban local authorities and rural elites are stifling urban growth (Hall et al., 1973b), and that increasing the building of affordable housing in the countryside is essentially about reducing the opposition to rural housing in general, which in turn revolves around addressing constructions which hold sway in society (Bell et al., 2005, Monk et al., 2005, Nguyen, 2005). Those arguments, supported by the work of Hoggart and Henderson (2005), cast a pessimistic shadow over the project – they may mean that policies which seek to increase the supply of rural housing may be guaranteed to fail without an attempt to address wider constructions in society. So the project must also attempt to identify these constructions, and perhaps analyse how they have come to exert power over the arena of affordable housing development in rural areas.

4. Methodology

The previous two chapters discussed the literature related to this project, and have highlighted five key areas to help focus the research. It is now essential to devise an appropriate methodology to carry out the empirical research.

4.1. Choosing a research methodology

There are several components to deciding how to carry out research: differentiating between qualitative and quantitative research; deciding what data to gather; identifying a sampling strategy; and choosing a method for data collection. These components are discussed in turn over the following four sub-sections.

4.1.1. Quantitative vs. qualitative research

A key question to answer is whether to take a quantitative or qualitative approach to the research. The first stage here is to be explicit about the difference between these approaches, then to consider how each could be used for this project, before coming to a decision on which is more appropriate, or indeed if a combination of the two could be useful.

Practical issues

Babbie (2004) summed up the difference between quantitative and qualitative data by stating that quantitative data is essentially numerical data, qualitative data is non-numerical. He observed that quantifying data can make observations more explicit; and make it easier to aggregate, compare and summarise data. We can also analyse the data statistically. But quantitative data potentially loses richness of meaning. If we want to quantify a non-numerical concept we need to be explicit about what that concept means, so we must exclude any other meanings.

In terms of this research project, there are possible benefits from using both types of data. Looking at the aim and objectives suggests that qualitative analysis might form an important part of the research – subjective words like “distributive justice” and

social exclusion” are used. It is hard to measure terms like this quantitatively. But other aspects of the objectives, such as the micro-spatial effects of policies, might be measured quantitatively.

Scope for quantitative research

Quantitative data could contribute at the national, regional and local levels. Nationally we could explore where Housing Corporation investment was being directed – to what scale of settlement, in what geographical areas. Regionally we could investigate the role played by RSSs, in terms of how they allocated housing to rural vs. urban local authorities. At the local level we could examine the geographical distribution of new affordable housing, to assess where it is located – within what size of settlement, located how near to facilities, etc. There might also be scope to assess the social impacts of policies, perhaps by an analysis of house prices in the areas new affordable housing is being built, to assess the extent to which it is contributing to the development of mixed communities. This approach would be immensely time consuming, and would require the analysis of planning permissions held by local authorities. It would also address only one part of the research – what are the effects of the policies? It would not begin to answer why the policies have those effects.

Scope for qualitative research

Qualitative research is “an approach to the study of the social world which seeks to describe and analyse the culture and behaviour of humans and their groups from the point of view of those being studied” (Bryman, 1988). So for this research we would be describing and analysing the culture and behaviour of those designing and implementing affordable housing policies from their point of view – why they did certain things, what they were hoping to achieve, and whether what they achieved met their expectations. For example, we might try and explore through interviews whether “social inclusion” was an aim of those working in the affordable housing field, and if they thought the planning policies in place were delivering it.

Philosophical issues

Bryman argues that choosing between quantitative and qualitative research is as much about philosophical issues as it is about technical issues regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the different approaches. Until relatively recently, qualitative analysis was regarded as inferior to quantitative analysis, with books on research methods from the 1970s full of the “implication that the role of a qualitative technique such as participant observation is a very restricted one and that it does not possess the solidity of research designed within a framework more obviously redolent of the scientific method” (Bryman, 1988). The proponents of qualitative research argued that using a natural science model was inappropriate for studying people. “Increasingly, the terms “quantitative research” and “qualitative research” came to signify much more than ways of gathering data; they came to denote divergent assumptions about the nature and purposes of research in the social sciences” (ibid.). Bryman argues that at the root of much quantitative research is positivism – there is “an emphasis on facts which are the products of observation, either direct or indirect” (ibid.). It is possible to combine qualitative and quantitative data, but we must ensure “that the two sets of results are not in fact addressing different issues” (ibid.). This could be relevant to this research – would, for example, plotting house prices around new affordable housing developments be addressing the same issue as asking participants their view on social inclusion?

The complexity of the factors affecting rural affordable housing delivery

The literature review (see summary at section 3.3) identified that there was no one factor, nor even two or three, that meant the success or failure of affordable housing planning policy. A range of different participants interact, all of whom may have subtly (or unsubtly!) differing interpretations of Government policy and differing objectives. Trying to explore these issues quantitatively seems impossible – how could we analyse these interpretations and objectives on a statistical basis?

The approach taken for this PhD

On the basis of this discussion, it seems that the complexity of relationships and factors that are in play demand some form of qualitative analysis. Even the “hard” data in the form of planning policies can be viewed qualitatively, as the literature review also highlighted the different interpretation of policies by those trying to implement them, particularly in terms of the regional and local policy makers who are statutorily obliged to take account of Government policy. A qualitative approach can be supplemented by the use of quantitative data, for example in the form of RSS housing figures.

4.1.2. What data to gather

The merits of using a case study

As identified in the introduction to this thesis, although affordable housing provision in rural areas is perceived as falling short of the identified need for such, there were still more than 4,500 affordable houses built across many rural local authorities in 2006/2007. It would seem to be impossible to examine all those affordable housing completions or the practices of all those local authorities. To decide how to focus the research we need to use a case study or studies. A case study was defined by Silverman (2005) as a study of a specific case (or a small number of cases) in as much detail as possible/required. The essential characteristic of a case study is “the limitation of attention to a particular instance of something” (Babbie, 2004).

Stokes (2000), cited in Silverman (2005), identified three types of case study:

1. The *intrinsic case study* where “this case is of interest... in all its particularity and ordinariness”. In the intrinsic case study, no attempt is made to generalise beyond the single case or even to build theories.
2. The *instrumental case study* in which a case is examined mainly to provide insight into an issue or to revise a generalisation. Although the case selected is studied in depth, the main focus is on something else.

3. The *collective case study* where a number of cases are studied in order to investigate some general phenomenon.

(Silverman, 2005)

As we are trying to explore the effects of Government policy, the second of these, the instrumental case study, is of greater relevance – the case study/studies would be used to provide insight into the social and micro-spatial effects of planning policy. But is it desirable to study one area or carry out a number of case studies? Key to this decision is the idea of generalisation – can the effects of policy (and the reasons for those effects) in one particular location be generalised to the whole of England, or indeed internationally? Silverman observed that generalising from just one case can be difficult. It is important to ensure that the case study/studies is/are representative of the “population”, i.e. they do not represent outliers among the local authorities and affordable housing developments in England. Silverman identified a number of ways to obtain “generalisability”. The first is by combining qualitative research with quantitative measures of the general population – i.e. to draw statistical comparisons between the features of the case study and the population. We could apply this by comparing the level of rurality of our case study/studies to the general population of local authorities. As discussed in section 1.2.3, however, rural England is notable for its diversity. This may be an argument for a number of case studies to allow generalisation to different “types” of rural area.

The second of Silverman’s ways to obtain generalisability is to use what he referred to as “purposive sampling” – this requires the researcher to “think critically about the parameters of the population we are studying and choose our sample case(s) carefully on this basis” (Silverman, 2005)(p129). Creating a typology of cases can be useful here, which we will consider below. The third is to consider choosing “deviant” cases, which might not support the theory with which we are working – for this thesis, these might be local authorities that are not utilising the full range of policy options available to them to deliver rural affordable housing. The fourth, and most radical, is to argue that generalisability is present in a single case. This approach rests on the argument that “since the basic structures of social order are to be found anywhere, it does not matter where we begin to research. Look at any case and you will find the same order” (ibid.)(p134). We might apply this latter option by arguing that social

constructions of rurality, etc will be found anywhere in England, thereby we can generalise that constructions in play in one area will have the same effects everywhere. Again, though, the diversity of rural England might count against this argument.

Why multiple case studies may be useful

Thus far it would appear that more than one case study will be needed to reflect the complexity of rural England and the issues involved. Looking back to the aims and objectives, the effect of regional policy is one of the factors we are seeking to explore. Logically, it would therefore make sense to look at different regions of England. It seems, then, that to meet the objectives of this project it is necessary to carry out a number of case studies, to explore:

- Different ways in which local authorities use the planning system to try and generate affordable housing;
- The extent to which differing regional policy contexts affects delivery;
- The effects of different geographical contexts (proximity to dominant urban cores, housing markets, social structures, etc) of local authority areas on material outcomes of policy.

The next stage is to decide which case studies to use.

4.1.3. A sampling strategy (choosing case study locations)

To explore the variables identified above we need case study local authorities that are: in different geographical and administrative regions of England; have different approaches to generating affordable housing; and are in different housing markets (for example exhibiting different levels of demand from in-migration, or different forms of demand affecting house prices). The latter variable can be operationalised in terms of four factors: the change in mean house price between 1996 and 2006; the change in lower quartile house price over the same period; the proportion of second homes; and a subjective analysis of how “deeply” rural the local authority is.

Appendix 2 sets out a typology matrix which identifies different factors which affect how local authorities deliver affordable housing – their planning policies, their coverage of housing market assessments/housing needs surveys, whether they have a good anecdotal reputation for community engagement or receiving Housing Corporation finance – and “situation” factors, i.e. the variables identified above.

The key variable is the planning policies in place in the case study areas – one of the policy initiatives this thesis was intended to investigate was the revision to PPG3 (now incorporated into PPS3) to allow local authorities to allocate exception sites. It has become clear, following an analysis of existing literature and anecdotal evidence from the supervisory team, that very few local authorities have adopted this policy. In fact, the only local authority which can be found that has adopted it (by the time the data was to be collected) is Wealden District Council. That local authority is an obvious choice for one of the case study local authorities, and South Hams District Council, Stratford-on-Avon District Council and Harrogate Borough Council have been identified in the literature (including the ARHC report) as adopting an innovative approach to affordable housing delivery. Alnwick District Council is the fifth case study location because (a) it can be used as a pilot case study (to test methods of data collection, etc) because of its geographical proximity to the research base, and because it was the ex-employer of the author, so access could be easily obtained to a wider range of data than might be available in other areas; and (b) it could be viewed as a “deviant” local authority, which although it has devoted resources to employing an affordable housing officer, has not been identified as pursuing particularly innovative planning policies.

On the basis of those factors, the five case study locations which have been chosen are:

1. Alnwick District, in Northumberland (North East region)
2. Harrogate Borough, in North Yorkshire (Yorkshire and Humberside region)
3. South Hams District, in Devon (South West region)
4. Stratford-on-Avon District, in Warwickshire (West Midlands region)
5. Wealden District, in East Sussex (South East region)

These locations are illustrated in figure 15.



Figure 15 – Map showing the approximate location of the five case study areas

The contexts of the case study local authorities

The case studies chosen all are all in different regions, and have problems with housing affordability, whether identified on a statistical basis or through analysis of their corporate plans and priorities. Appendix 3 illustrates a range of additional contextual data for these case study local authorities, looking at both the supply and likely demand for affordable housing. This data illustrates that, compared to national averages, the case study local authorities are likely to be facing greater affordability problems.

All the case study local authorities saw their populations increase by higher than the English average between 1991 and 2001, increasing the demand for housing. They all have a lower than average proportion of the population which is of working age, i.e. are likely to have more retirees than average, driving up house prices. They all

have a higher than average loss of council housing through right to buy (the figures show that South Hams and Stratford-on-Avon are below the national average, but those two local authorities carried out a large scale voluntary transfer of their council stock in 1999 and 1996. Their figures would be almost certainly be higher were that not the case). Unsurprisingly, the number of households accepted as being homeless and in priority need across the case study local authorities is lower than the national average – as discussed in section 2.1.2, rural homelessness tends to be “hidden”. Finally, apart from Alnwick District Council all the case study local authorities have a socio-economic structure which is more weighted to the ‘top end’ than the national average – they have a greater proportion of their populations in the highest socio-economic groupings, and a smaller proportion of their populations in the lowest groupings. Again, that implies a greater proportion of wealthier people driving up the house prices in the case study areas.

This data confirms that, from secondary data, there are likely to be issues with housing affordability in the case study areas. The next phase of designing the research methodology is to ascertain how primary data to explore these issues in more depth can be collected.

4.1.4. Choosing the methods of data collection

There are a number of factors to take into account when choosing methods of data collection, including the approach adopted by others in the field, and the advantages/disadvantages of different methods.

Examples from the literature

The first step is to examine the approaches taken in other studies in this or related fields, with similar objectives. Appendix 4 shows a selected cross section of other methods adopted in some of the studies cited in the literature review.

The first thing to observe about the studies is that all but one of them employed more than one researcher, hence gathering a larger amount of data than is likely to be practical for this PhD. The studies used a mixture of qualitative and quantitative

data, with the emphasis on the former. Policy documents and statistics were analysed for several studies, usually to support qualitative data in the form of questionnaires and/or interviews. Nearly all the studies used interview data, and most used questionnaires, often to screen the data in search of useful specific case studies. We have already determined the case studies to be used, so this particular way of using questionnaires is not appropriate, but they could be used as a general form of data gathering for this research.

Identifying the most appropriate method(s) for this thesis

Robson (1993) has a set of simple rules of thumb for selecting methods:

To find out what people do in public use *direct observation*; to find out what they do in private, use *interviews, questionnaires or diary techniques*; to find out what they think, feel, believe, use *interviews, questionnaires or attitude scales*.

(Robson, 1993)(p189)

“Direct observation” in this context could refer to sitting in on meetings, etc and observing how people act. That form of data collection would be useful if we were analysing how policies were formulated, but what we are in fact looking at is what the policies say and how they are implemented. For this thesis, we can better establish the facts about what people (or organisations) do, in terms of the policies they produce, by carrying out desktop searches for the planning policies in place in the different case study areas. To investigate how and why people and organisations implement policies will require the use of interviews or questionnaires.

Robson goes on to explain that there are two extreme methods of interviews/questionnaires: The self-completion questionnaire, with a fixed sequence of closed questions; or the “free-range” interview, where the interviewer has a fluid agenda, and hence uses open-ended questions. The middle ground is semi-structured interviews, which have a clearly defined purpose but achieve that purpose through having flexible questions and question order.

As with the choice between qualitative and quantitative data, there are advantages and disadvantages to these different methods of obtaining qualitative data. In free-range or semi-structured interviews “the subject is given a much freer rein than in the survey interview” (Bryman, 1988). Bryman provides an extract from a participant observation of teachers:

Inevitably the interviewee will “ramble” and move away from the designated areas in the researcher’s mind. The interviewee in rambling is moving onto areas which most interest him or her. The interviewer is losing some control over the interview, and yielding it to the client, but the pay-off is that the researcher reaches the data that is central to the client.

(Bryman, 1988)

Rambling is not something that can usually be accommodated in survey analysis, and this surrendering of power “would be anathema to the survey researcher” (ibid.) as they are likely to view the interview schedule as a way of manipulating the topics to be addressed.

Table 8 illustrates a summary of the key advantages and disadvantages to the interview and questionnaire approaches, drawn from various sources.

Table 8 – Advantages and disadvantages of interviews and questionnaires (Babbie, 2004, Bryman, 1988, Robson, 1993)

Method	Advantages	Disadvantages
Questionnaire	Cheap and quick	Delay whilst wait for responses
	Respondents can be happier to respond to an anonymised questionnaire with controversial statements.	Possible low response rate No check on honesty/ seriousness of responses
Interviews	Guaranteed rate of return	Take more time
	More detailed responses possible	Power transferred away from interviewer
	Interviewee can “ramble”	Non-standard, so have to be careful to allow comparison between case studies

The table suggests that interviews are better suited to studying a small number of case studies, allowing a focus on a number of key actors in each case study area. As there are differences in policy frameworks and geographical contexts between the case studies, a standard questionnaire would not be appropriate. The research is

also about finding out *why* key actors behave in the way they do, which is harder to explore using closed questions – allowing respondents to “ramble”, as suggested by Bryman, will hopefully shed light on respondents’ own views on this. For several reasons then, using interviews rather than questionnaires is the most appropriate method of data collection. It is, though, important to allow some comparison between case study areas, so a similar set of questions will be used. Semi-structured interviews are therefore the most appropriate methodology to gather the primary data.

Issues to consider when designing the interviews

Interviews can be done on a one-to-one basis; by interviewing two or more people (known as joint interviews); or via a focus group. The standard approach would be the one-to-one interview, but there are advantages (and disadvantages) to the latter approaches.

Arksey and Knight (1999) identified a number of advantages and disadvantages of joint interviews, and their list is summarised below.

Advantages

- May establish rapport and an atmosphere of confidence more easily.
- Can obtain two versions of events rather than one, which may, or may not, produce a coherent joint account.
- The story that emerges may be more complete as interviewees fill in each other’s gaps and memory lapses.
- Bias in one account may counterbalance than in the other.

Disadvantages

- One informant may dominate.
- There is a risk of stirring up antagonisms and conflicts of interest.
- Depending on the relationship between the interviewees, they may not be willing to disclose detailed, honest information in front of each other.
- Interviewees may not concentrate as well when two people are present.

(Arksey and Knight, 1999)(p76)

Joint interviews are likely to be appropriate for this study only if requested by the interviewees, which may be possible if more than one representative from a particular organisation is to be interviewed.

Focus group interviews are comprised of a selected group of people “invited to respond to researchers’ questions” (Arksey and Knight, 1999). They may comprise people who are a cross-section of the population, or they may be homogenous, for example for this research we might seek to bring together representatives of all housing associations operating in an area. There are similar advantages and disadvantages to focus groups as to joint interviews, probably to a greater degree of magnitude – rapport may be more easily established, but participants are less likely to reveal confidential/controversial details.

Much of the data we wish to gather is about not just what organisations and people do, but why they do it. This is more likely to emerge through one-to-one interviews, where respondents know that what they say will be treated in confidence. Therefore it seems that focus groups are not the most appropriate way to gather data for this thesis.

We have now discussed what form of data is needed, and how it should be gathered. The next stage in devising the methodology is to produce some detailed research questions.

4.2. Research questions

The aims and objectives of this project, as originally set out in the application to the ESRC for funding, are laid out in section 1.2.2 above, with more detail to be found in Appendix 5. The first stage of outlining the methodology is expanding those aims and objectives into a set of specific research questions, informed by the literature review and discussion with the non-academic research partner (the Commission for Rural Communities). The five research questions are:

1. What effects are planning policies on rural (affordable) housing having?
2. What role is played by national and regional planning policy?
3. What factors affect local policy?
4. What are the “technical” reasons for the success (or otherwise) of national policy?
5. Does policy implementation depend on more than technical factors?

Each of these questions can be broken down into a number of sub-issues, indicative of the complexity of this subject. These are discussed below.

4.2.1. Research question 1 – What effects are planning policies on rural (affordable) housing having?

The first research question seeks to explore the current levels of affordable housing provision in the case study local authorities; what policies are in currently in place in those local authorities; and what social and micro-spatial effects the policies are having.

The quantity and type of affordable housing being provided

Secondary data gathered by the UK Government’s Communities and Local Government department can be analysed to assess how the quantity of affordable housing delivered by the case study local authorities is varying, and whether the affordable housing provided is in social rented or intermediate tenures.

The size of settlement affordable housing is being located in

This is the most immediate spatial impact of policies that can be assessed – firstly by analysing local authority policies, then exploring the interpretation of those policies by actors in the process and the rationale behind the policies. The investigation could both explore the effects of policies, and seek to identify if those effects are a deliberate intention of policy makers.

The extent to which affordable housing is well integrated into settlements

At the micro-spatial level, we can explore whether in general terms, affordable housing schemes are integrated into the settlements in which they are built. This may be in terms of physical integration – i.e. whether such schemes are developed on the edge of settlements, or are more integral to the built fabric of towns and villages. It may also be in terms of social integration, which is harder to assess, but interviews with local people may cast a light on whether the residents of affordable housing schemes are considered to be “part of the village”.

How affordable housing is helping to achieve social inclusion

The Government is keen to promote social inclusion. As we saw in the literature review, some commentators are concerned that rural areas are seeing social/spatial exclusion as a result of affordable housing delivery patterns. This issue can be explored from a number of angles, including:

- Is affordable housing being developed in locations with the greatest need for it? This can be explored by asking housing associations about needs studies/waiting lists and how these relate to development locations – is affordable housing being developed on an opportunistic basis depending on where land can be released?
- Are parish councils and others happy that affordable housing is going to local people who are in need? Yarwood’s work with parish councils suggests that parish councils can feel disillusioned if any affordable housing being built does not meet their expectations.

The implementation of 100% affordable housing policies

As Wealden District Council is the only local authority to have adopted a policy to allocated 100% affordable housing schemes, it is sensible to analyse the implementation of that policy in detail, to assess: whether it has been a success; what are its social and micro-spatial effects; and what are the reasons behind those outcomes.

4.2.2. Research question 2 – What role is played by national and regional planning policy?

As discussed in the literature review, many commentators have suggested ways that the efficiency and efficacy of affordable housing delivery could be improved. The focus of this thesis is on the effects of policies, so clearly some consideration needs to be given to whether the policies of Government, at the national and regional level, are appropriate. As with research question 1, there are a number of issues which come into play.

The clarity and/or ambiguity of Government policy

Hoggart & Henderson (2005) have argued that part of the reason for a lack of rural exception sites being developed is that the Government has not made it clear to local authorities, RSLs and other key actors how they should prioritise environmental, economic and social aspects of sustainability. They argue that these key actors are then struggling to balance the need for affordable housing with the need to achieve “sustainability”, which is interpreted as a need to reduce travel distances. Analysis in this section will explore the extent to which there is a “mixed message” in national government policy advice, both in terms of the headline objectives of that advice, and the supporting text, which outlines in more detail how the Government intends regional and local policy makers to write policy and make decisions on planning applications. We can analyse the language used to identify explicit and implicit guidance in policy documents.

The approach taken by RSSs in relation to rural housing

Here we will investigate whether RSSs include regional affordability targets, and the stance they take on rural local authorities' approach to affordable housing delivery.

The possible presence of different “constructions” in strategic policy

We have seen that concepts such as sustainability and the countryside are not valueless terms, and are in fact socially constructed. How different participants in the affordable housing delivery chain interpret these terms, and hence how that interpretation affects what they do, could be a significant factor in affordable housing delivery.

How the urban-rural balance of an RSS is negotiated through its preparation process

The author has previously been employed by Alnwick District Council, so has ready access to a wealth of documents which reveal the process of producing an RSS in some detail – the different drafts, and the local authority's published comments on those drafts. An investigation will be carried out into how a rural local authority goes about making its arguments for higher levels of housing development in the RSS, how those arguments are received by those making decisions on the content of the RSS, and whether they play any part in the final document which is produced.

4.2.3. Research question 3 – What factors affect local policy?

Clearly, national and regional local policy are major factors in the design and implementation of local planning policy. But given the lack of affordable housing delivery since the early 1990s, we might assume there is not a clear flow between national policy “at the top” and outcomes at the community level. So what are the factors which affect local planning policy?

The local policy at the time of the case study visits

The first task is to describe and analyse the situation in the case study local authorities at the time the interviews were carried out.

Emerging local policy in the case studies

We can then move on to analyse emerging local policy, to see if more recent Government advice is reflected in it.

The role played by national and regional government in the development of local policies

This is a particularly important, and perhaps under-researched, issue. In effect, we are asking whether local authority policies on affordable housing are being developed *because* of national and regional government advice/intervention or *in spite* of it? Data will be gathered to assess whether local authorities are following guidance from strategic bodies and/or receiving support from them in the development and implementation of their local plan and LDF policies. Anecdotal evidence from local authorities suggests that there are wide differences in practice in different regions of England.

Local authority actions vs. their stated priorities

Local authorities have many issues with which to juggle, and affordable housing may nor may not be one of their top priorities. Even if it is “the number one corporate priority”, we can explore the extent to which the actions of local authorities match that status – are they doing things which in fact lead to the provision of less affordable housing?

The attitudes towards development in local authorities

We will explore whether local authorities are broadly supportive of or opposed to rural development in general terms, and ask whether affordable housing is purely an exception to an overall approach of limiting rural development in each local authority.

Identifying potential different constructions of sustainability at the local level

Similarly to the considerations of constructions at the regional level, how local authority actors interpret what “sustainability” means in the context of policy making can have an impact on affordable housing delivery in rural areas.

4.2.4. Research question 4 – What are the “technical” reasons for the success (or otherwise) of national policy?

The effects of the delays inherent in the planning process

The new planning system, introduced by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, is intended to speed up the development planning system. The scarcity of local authorities that have implemented the 2005 changes to PPG3 might suggest that, at least initially, it has not, so we can explore the extent to which these delays are affecting the outcomes of Government policy.

The possible effects of resource shortages

There are two principle resources which are relevant here – land and finance.

- Are RSLs able to acquire the land they need to develop affordable housing, and if not, why not?
- How housing associations are funded is a key question for affordable housing delivery – historically this has been largely, or entirely, from the Housing Corporation, but grant levels are being cut as the Housing Corporation tries to make efficiency savings. This question will explore whether these cuts are delivering more efficiency, or simply less homes, or homes in different locations.

Similarly, evidence from the ARHC might suggest the Housing Corporation funding timetable does not match up with the typical timetable for developing sites through the planning process. Whether this is an issue for the case study local authorities can be explored.

The impact RHEs have on the outcomes of policy

Rural Housing Enablers (RHEs) are often considered to be important in delivering affordable housing (ARHC, 2006), and we can explore the micro-spatial impacts of their presence, including whether they focus on rural exception schemes. In addition, we can explore the viability of RHE jobs in the short and longer term, and investigate whether the way they have been funded, by DEFRA, is problematic.

Investigating communication problems

As discussed above, there are wide variations in the implementation of Government planning policy advice. Local authorities also vary in their insularity, i.e. the extent to which they co-operate with other neighbouring local authorities, or seek out best practice elsewhere. There are a range of issues including:

- Are participants aware of the report of the ARHC and its recommendations, has it had any impact on the participant, and what are the barriers to implementing its recommendations?
- Do local authorities co-operate with external bodies such as regional rural affairs fora or other local authorities? Is any sub-regional working involving housing and planning officers, and is the focus on discussion or strategy preparation?
- Do local authority departments work well together? Planning, housing and legal departments have clear joint responsibilities with relation to affordable housing delivery, and the extent to which they have common goals and values may affect that delivery.

Practical reasons why local authority priorities and actions might not coincide

We will previously have analysed the extent to which the actions of local authorities match their pro-affordable housing rhetoric. This question will explore technical reasons for any mismatch.

4.2.5. Research question 5 – Does policy implementation depend on more than technical factors?

Research question 4 looked at possible technical reasons for national affordable housing policy not being entirely successful. We have also to consider the possibility that a technical approach, or even positivism (i.e. that by improving the evidence base for policy makers the efficiency of policy implementation will improve) is not enough. There may be issues below the surface of affordable housing delivery which mean that such technocratic solutions are doomed to fail. These include:

The influence of opposition to affordable housing

The literature review identified some of the causes of opposition to affordable housing, and discussed NIMBYism. Several authors have discussed the impact opposition (whether NIMBYism or otherwise) can have on (affordable) housing delivery in the countryside, but anecdotal evidence suggests that with the extreme house price rises seen in the last decade, in some areas this opposition is becoming less vocal. We can explore this issue in depth in the five case study areas.

The inclusivity of decision making processes

The issue of the extent to which policy making processes are inclusive or exclusive is of relevance at both regional and local levels.

Peter Hall, writing in 1973 (see section 2.4.4) opined that urban authorities worked with the rural elite to limit development in the countryside. We can explore the extent to which regional policy making, via RSS and RHS, and local policy making, via LDFs, is dominated by urban interests and/or those keen to see less housebuilding in

the countryside, or whether pro-development advocates in rural areas can make their voices heard.

The extent to which “local communities”, however defined, have a positive or negative influence on the delivery of affordable housing has been touched upon by a number of researchers. Some key issues include whether there is a correlation (either positive or negative) between the level of community involvement/engagement in the planning for affordable housing process and the delivery of affordable housing on the ground, and whether the parish council is used as a proxy for “the community”. Yarwood (2002) was concerned that this was the case, but this may have changed with the emphasis in the new planning system on wider community involvement.

Exploring whether particular constructions dominate policy making and implementation

This tranche of analysis will explore the extent to which any one construction or set of constructions dominates policy making at a national, regional and local level, and if other constructions are being advocated by key actors at these different levels. It will also ask how and why any particular construction has achieved dominance, to question why affordable housing policies at a national level have consistently failed to deliver in rural areas. It will question whether this is because, fundamentally, there is a social construction of sustainability and rurality which is so ingrained in society that attempts to increase the delivery of affordable housing in the countryside are doomed to fail.

4.3. Methodological theories

We now have a framework for data collection, so it is necessary to discuss the theories that will be used to analyse the data collected. There are three broad theoretical areas which could be of value for this thesis – policy analysis, power relations and discourse analysis. These will be discussed in turn in the following three sub-sections.

4.3.1. Policy analysis

The aim of this project is to explore the effects of planning policies, so a logical methodology might be policy analysis.

Defining policy analysis

Policy analysis is a sub-field of political science. It focuses on the changing nature of institutional structures and on the way policy is made and implemented. Lowe (2004) noted that “it is a new institutionalist literature, which lays considerable emphasis on the historical and cultural foundations of society, and the changes brought about by globalisation” (Lowe, 2004).

It developed inside American political science after WWII, and aims to improve the rationality of decision making. We can all observe that very few policies achieve clear-cut results – there are gaps between what policy makers intended and outcomes at the moment of delivery. Policy analysis on the one hand tries to explore the reasons for this (so-called descriptive analysis), and on the other tries to promote better policy making (so-called prescriptive analysis).

Models of, and issues around, policy making

If we are to critique the way a policy has been made, then it is useful to have models to compare it against. As Hogwood and Gunn (1984) noted, we all build models, and try to see events around us in terms of a pattern. The constructivism theorists believe that we *create* reality, rather than simply *observing* it – that there is no

objective truth, and everything is subjective. For something as complex as policy making, this is particularly true – we do not all see the same “reality”. What one person sees as the reason for a policy, or how it is implemented, can be very different from another’s view. Below is a brief discussion of some of the theories and models of policy making, some of which are more cynical than others:

i) The policy process framework

Hogwood and Dunn (1984) believed there were nine stages in the formulation of a policy, which were to a greater or lesser extent iterative:

1. Deciding to decide (issue search/agenda setting)
2. Deciding how to decide (or issue filtration)
3. Issue definition
4. Forecasting
5. Setting objectives and priorities
6. Options analysis
7. Policy implementation, monitoring and control
8. Evaluation and review
9. Policy maintenance, succession, or termination

They believed that policy analysis had a role at all these stages.

ii) Ideal type models

“Ideal type” models are common across different fields of academia. An “ideal type” is not necessarily ideal in the day-to-day sense, it is rather the exploration of an idea to its logical conclusion – for example perfect competition in economic studies, which is essentially impossible, but is used as a comparison method.

iii) Implementation analysis

This theory developed after the failure of the US “War on poverty”. Some tried to say that the US policy failed due to a lack of rationality, and that more clarity was needed

between the top and bottom layers of government. But Lipsky (1980), cited in Lowe (2004) argued that implementation was often hampered by conditions on the ground, underlying economic conditions, a lack of resources and lack of clarity about what is intended (Lipsky, 1980). “Implementation has to be read in the context of the type of problem, its political salience and the complexity of the policy networks” (Lowe, 2004)(p31).

The importance of implementation analysis has increased in recent years, as the Government is keen to promote local decision making – in word if not in deed. Such an approach is not without its critics, though. Lowe (2004) was concerned that the influence of the “street level” may be to increase fragmentation and widen the democratic deficit. Hogwood and Dunn (1984) raise a potential problem with the “bottom-up” approach, using the Home Office and the individual police officer as examples. Police officers who have been working in communities for many years may disagree with the Home Office’s policy of racial equality – should we then assume that they have the right to ignore, or change, the policy of the democratically elected government? This is more of an issue when we have different layers of elected government - local parish councils may not want affordable housing in their village, contrary perhaps to the Government’s policy of seeking to increase social inclusion.

iv) *The importance of politics*

We are not talking here about party politics *per se*, but the patterns of power and influence between and within organisations. If a carefully planned policy implementation does not take account of the realities of power (e.g. the ability of groups opposed to the policy to block the efforts of its supporters), then the policy is unlikely to succeed. There is interdependence between most of the organisations involved in implementing affordable housing policy, as discussed previously – central government, local government, the Housing Corporation, housing associations, local communities. At every level, politics could play a role. In some cases it may actually involve party politics, i.e. there may be ideological differences in the views of people and organisations as related to affordable housing. The power relations between local authorities, parish councils and housing associations are also important.

v) *Positivism*

Positivism is a theoretical approach which is implicit in some approaches to policy analysis. Positivism is the belief in the objective nature of “truth” and the assumption that knowledge of that truth can solve societal ills (Marston, 2004). It is the philosophy behind the call from policy makers for “evidence-based policy” – i.e. if a policy is based on entirely robust evidence, it should not fail. It can be criticised by those who subscribe to the view espoused by Foucault and others that there are no objective truths – everything is socially constructed. An immediate problem with positivism in relation to policy analysis is that it does not tell us what policy makers mean when they write policies – how they define and interpret things. It is important then that any policy analysis methodology adopted attempts to explore these hidden truths, and does not rely on policy text alone.

Much of the theory of policy analysis takes a rational approach – i.e. if problems arise in the implementation of a policy, these can be solved by rational, technocratic solutions. We have to observe, though, that there have been problems identified with the implementation of affordable housing policies for many years, and solutions suggested to those problems. One conclusion might be that policy makers and those implementing them are simply too inept to implement those solutions, or that the structures in place mean that effective co-operation is impossible. A different conclusion might be that the failure to implement affordable housing policies is in fact down to something more sinister – the exercise of power. The theory of power relations will be explored in the next sub-section.

4.3.2. Power relations

Power relations were not part of the initial research design; indeed much of the primary data gathered was done so on the basis of a policy analysis methodology. However, when analysing that data, it became clear that policy analysis alone could not fully answer all of the research questions – it seemed that there was something else needed to explain what was happening. In section 2.4.4 the work of Peter Hall was discussed, and his belief that the “containment of urban England” was due to powerful rural elites acting to prevent change to the countryside. It was necessary to

identify an appropriate theoretical basis to explore whether the data gathered showed evidence of the exercise of power in this way. What follows is a short discussion of such a theory.

The three-dimensional view of power

The sociologist Stephen Lukes, writing in 1974 (in the book *Power: A Radical View*, which was republished, with additional essays by Lukes, in 2005), argued for what he called a “three-dimensional view of power”, building on and critiquing the work done by others which he argued took a one or two-dimensional view of power. Lukes summarised the three dimensions of power as follows:

The one-dimensional view of power focuses on decision making, and notes that we can observe the locus of power by seeing who prevails in decision making where there is an observable conflict. Those that prevail, we can assume, are the powerful.

The two-dimensional view of power focuses on non-decision making, and argues that institutions act to ensure that the most powerful retain power by excluding the less powerful from decision making processes.

The three-dimensional view of power introduces the concept of the powerful exercising that power by shaping wants/desires – leaders shape preferences as well as respond to them. “Is it not the supreme and most insidious exercise of power to prevent people from having grievances by shaping their perceptions, cognitions and preferences in such a way that they accept their role in the existing order of things?” (Lukes, 2005)(p28).

Lukes republished his book in 2005 to respond to some of the many critics of his 1974 work. On its republication, there were a number of reviews and discussions published of the reworked text. One in particular provides a good summary of Lukes’ position, written by Dowding (2006).

Dowding observes that “Lukes wants to be able to identify and criticise values that lead dominated people to acquiesce and even celebrate their own dominion”

(Dowding, 2006)(p136), but differentiates the position taken by Lukes from that of Foucault (discussed in section 2.4.4). Dowding considers that the latter believed that all people (dominated and dominant) are subject to the same power of structural relations, whereas Lukes theorises that the dominant can use structural relations to exercise power over the dominated.

Dowding makes an important point about the acquiescence of dominated people: that it can be “thick or thin” – thick is where people actively believe the values which oppress them, thin is where they are merely resigned to them.

He concludes that two particular aspects of domination in the third dimension of power which are relevant to us are important. Firstly, are all who gain at the expense of others dominant, and is everyone who loses dominated? Dowding concludes that they are not – gains and losses can be inadvertent. Secondly, do the dominant need to know what they are doing, or can their privilege be a result of forces they do not understand? Dowding, and Lukes, conclude that people can dominate unconsciously, because of the hidden nature of social constructions. “Power can be at work, inducing compliance by influencing desires and beliefs without being ‘intelligent and intentional’” (Lukes, 2005)(p136).

Applying power relations to planning

Lukes’ ideas about power can be applied to an exploration of the planning system. His first dimension of power could be investigated by looking at the decisions that are made about both strategic planning and development control (the determination of planning applications). Much of the literature reviewed above discusses how decisions are made, but the explicit focus is often not on power but rather seeks to provide more information for policy makers in the belief that “evidence-based policy” is more robust – it takes a positivist approach.

His second dimension of power might be investigated by considering how different voices are included in the planning system, and assessing whether the less powerful have a voice in the adversarial planning system in place in England. The work done by authors such as Bell and Healey, discussed in section 3.2.5, relates to this, and

argues that there is currently a “democratic deficit” in English planning, i.e. that the less powerful are excluded.

The third dimension of power, the shaping of people’s wants and desires, is harder to investigate, as by its nature this expression of power is often hidden. One methodology for exploring this dimension of power is discourse analysis, discussed in the next section.

4.3.3. Discourse analysis

Introduction

We have discussed constructivism in section 2.4.4 above, and from constructivism develops the notion of discourse, and hence discourse analysis. The concept of discourse analysis depends first on understanding what we mean by discourse in this context. Fairclough (1995) is a keystone author in this field, and he used the following definition:

Discourse is use of language seen as a form of social practice, and discourse analysis is analysis of how texts work within socio-cultural practice.

(Fairclough, 1995)(p7)

The idea of language being a form of social practice follows the theories of social constructivism developed by Foucault and others – those theories argue that there is no single objective understanding of society and social structures, we all construct these things in a particular way. In discourse analysis, we assume that discursive events are dependent upon and shaped by the language and order of discourse, but also cumulatively restructure them.

There is a relatively small, but valuable, range of literature which explores the use of language in policy development and implementation. A special edition of *Urban Studies* in 1999 brought together a number of articles on the subject. The introduction, written by Anne Hastings, explains that all the papers in the journal

“start from the assumption that our experience of the world will be shaped by the processes and practices by which we signify or represent the world” (Hastings, 1999b)(p7). Hastings goes on to note that language use determines meaning in the policy process: “Language constitutes or produces the concepts and categories we use to make sense of the world” (Hastings, 1999b)(p10).

The key thing to note here is that this exploration of the use of language is not simply an academic exercise – it can cast valuable light on how policies are developed and implemented.

Discourse, causality and solutions

In a later article, Hastings explores the use of language in the way different actors “construct” a particular “problem” in relation to a specific policy (in this case urban regeneration). She argues that the way policy problems are constructed is central to the rest of the policy process, particularly to the nature of the solutions proposed:

All conceptions of social problems invoke a theory of causation... Causal theories about social problems can be understood as discourses in the broadly Foucaultian sense, in that they are selective explanations of the nature of a phenomenon, and are productive of knowledge and action in the policy processes”

(Hastings, 1999a)(pp94-95).

So, Hastings argues, the way a problem is constructed, i.e. how the causes of that problem are identified by actors, is central to what solutions are proposed to solve that problem. She uses other examples to support this argument in an article looking at housing policy documents:

The growing literature which analyses housing policy documents... shows, for example, how language is marshalled to construct selective versions of the nature of the problem, or how narrative devices are employed as part of a persuasive strategy to convince readers of the appropriateness of a

policy 'response'. Overall, the studies point to the documents as aspects of social action rather than transparent means of communication

(Hastings, 2000)(p133).

Hastings thus argues that housing policy documents are not neutral, but use language to justify a particular course of action. This concept has been explored by others – Karen Clarke (2007) looked at discourses used to justify the early intervention in families living in disadvantaged areas. She argues that in the process of moving from looking at research on “intergenerational reproductions of social exclusion” (Clarke, 2007)(p154) to specifying performance targets for addressing it, the concept of social exclusion became more strongly rooted in a moral underclass discourse, which focuses on individual parental failings. The author argues this reflects a New Labour discursive strategy of arguing that social exclusion results from individual behaviour, i.e. a particular cause for a social problem is constructed, leading to particular solutions being proposed to solve it.

This concept of the use of language might be relevant to this thesis as, for example, different actors might have a particular theory about why there is higher demand amongst commuters to live in a certain area, and hence propose different solutions to reducing that demand.

Language and the implementation of policy

When we get to the stage of implementing a policy “on the ground”, does discourse really matter? Several authors have tried to demonstrate that it does. Maia Green (2007) argued that there is “no conceptual or practical discontinuity between discourse and delivery” (Green, 2007)(p151) for policy workers. She contended that discourse is actually delivered – it is the product of policy work processes. Policy is not distinct from implementation and practice – practices around implementation are shaped by and shape policy discourses.

Anna Coleman (2007) looked at discourses: how they are taken up, altered or discounted as a wider constituency becomes engaged in the process of delivering a programme, i.e. how Lipsky’s “street level bureaucrats” (see section 4.3.1 above)

affect discourses. She argued that any attempt at homogeneity of national policy implementation will be checked by local circumstances, power relations and processes to establish values and norms within organisations. Coleman pointed out that government policies are often vague, so local authorities can experiment. “The transformation of national discourses (set out in legislation and guidance) to locally acceptable versions of the discourse, which all actors understand and buy into, is key to the successful implementation of public policy” (Coleman, 2007)(p201).

So there is evidently considerable scope for discourses in national policy to be interpreted and transformed differently at the local level. But how does Lukes’ notion of power relate to discourse?

Language and power

The point of discourse analysis is not just to identify dominant discourses, but to consider who benefits from their dominance – is it the exercise of power by elites? When discourses are contested, what we are contesting is the power of the discourse to generate versions of the world which may have the power to shape the world. Power comes into play both in terms of unequal participation in discourse events, and in terms of “unequal capacity to control how texts are produced, distributed and consumed” (Fairclough, 1995)(p1). The powerful might be able to use their power to shape discourses – “The incumbents of political power can orchestrate political and social change through directing linguistic change” (Hastings, 1999b)(p11).

Discourse analysis can ‘shine a light’ on this use of power. It is possible to “use a focus on language to show how the (policy) orthodoxies have become established and accepted” (Hastings, 2000)(p136). Critical discourse analysis looks at how discourse figures within processes of change and with shifts in the relationship between discourses and other social elements within networks of practices. “We cannot take the role of discourse in social practices for granted, it has to be established through analysis” (Fairclough, 2003)(p205).

This section has looked at three broad theoretical areas, and identified how they

might be useful for this thesis. The next section tries to “operationalise” these theories, and develop a practical methodology.

4.4. A practical methodology

In the last section we saw a theoretical discussion of policy analysis, power relations and discourse analysis, but it is important to consider how those theories can be applied to this research project, remembering the five main research questions:

1. What effects are planning policies on rural (affordable) housing having?
2. What role is played by national and regional planning policy?
3. What factors affect local policy?
4. What are the “technical” reasons for the success (or otherwise) of national policy?
5. Does policy implementation depend on more than technical factors?

We must recognise the role power can play in decision making, but as Dowding (2006) concluded, one group or individual benefiting at the expense of another is not necessarily due to the exercise of power. It is important, therefore, not to forget that a lack of affordable housing, disadvantaging those who cannot access a home in rural areas, could simply be due to a failure in the policy implementation process, rather than the exercise of power by rural elites.

An approach which combines aspects of policy analysis and discourse analysis, placing those analytical theories within the context of power relations, may be the best approach to answering these questions. But how can we operationalise the analytical theories we have discussed?

4.4.1. Operationalising policy analysis

In terms of the nine stages identified by Hogwood and Dunn (1984) of the policy analysis process (see section 4.3.1), we are at stages seven and eight – the implementation and evaluation stages. The policies have already been determined, possibly in a rational fashion and possibly not. There is some value in assessing how the policies of the national government have been arrived at, using some of the methods discussed above, but analysis of how the policies are being/have been

implemented by regional and local planning authorities is clearly the intention of the project objectives.

Policy implementation and/or evaluation

Stages seven and eight of the policy analysis process have a tendency to be blurred together, but it is important to understand the differences between the two.

Monitoring of how a policy is being implemented looks at the *outputs* of a policy, which in our case might be the number and location of affordable houses being built. Evaluation of a policy, on the other hand, looks at the *outcomes* of a policy: what impacts the policy is having on social/spatial inclusion or rural poverty, for example.

We can fairly easily analyse the number and location of affordable houses being built, i.e. the outputs, but the broader outcomes are more difficult to explore in a project of this kind. It is probably impossible to judge the outcomes of new policies introduced only in 2005, but it is more feasible to investigate the outcomes of affordable housing planning policy as it has been implemented over the last 30 years.

Difficulties with joining the policy analysis process partway through

In an ideal world of policy analysis, objectives would have been set as part of the policy formulation process. We have yet to analyse in detail whether the Government's objectives are clear and unambiguous, but a brief glance at PPG3 and discussion with practitioners can tell us that there is no clearly defined set of measurable objectives. This is perhaps unsurprising – authors writing as long ago as the 1950s observed that policy makers did not necessarily specify their objectives, as without such clear objectives it is hard for opponents to criticise policies as being a failure (Lindblom, 1959). Hogwood and Gunn (1984) identified a number of options available to policy analysts if the objectives of a policy are unclear or not specified in any measurable form. Of those options, the only realistic alternative for this project is to set the question of goals on one side, and conduct a more exploratory, open-ended study into what policies are achieving.

Ideal model of perfect implementation

As discussed above, “ideal type” models of policy analysis are not intended to be taken as recommendations for how policy should be made and implemented, but one approach might be to see how the implementation of the new Government policies compares to an ideal model – in this case, “perfect” implementation. Hogwood and Gunn (1984) suggested ten criteria that would have to be met to achieve perfect implementation. One approach to implementation analysis might be to compare these criteria to what might occur in the implementation of the new affordable housing policies. The criteria, with comments italicised (based on the literature review and the consideration of Lukes’ dimensions of power), are set out below.

1. The circumstances external to the implementing agency do not impose crippling constraints. Political obstacles might interfere with the implementation of the policy (for example the policy or measures needed to achieve it are unacceptable to interests which have the power to veto them). *For the affordable housing policies, these interests might be those in rural areas who do not wish to see affordable housing, or any housing, development – they may exercise power to stymie affordable housing delivery.*
2. That adequate time and sufficient resources are made available to the programme – too much might be expected too soon. Expenditure restrictions might starve a statutory programme of adequate resources. Sometimes special funds are available but have to be spent within an unrealistically short time. *Are sufficient resources available to housing associations, and in an appropriate timescale, to build appropriate numbers of affordable houses?*
3. That the required combination of resources is actually available – in practice there is often a bottleneck, when a combination of money, manpower, etc has to come together but one or more is delayed, causing an overall delay to the project. We can get additional cash relatively easily, but turning that into land, manpower or materials quickly is not so straightforward. *Land acquisition has proved to be a problem in many rural areas before –due both to absolute shortages of appropriate land for sale by landowners and to planning restrictions.*

4. That the policy is based on a valid theory of cause and effect. The policy may be based on an inadequate understanding of a problem to be solved, its causes and cure; or of an opportunity, its nature, and what is needed to exploit it. We must be prepared to constantly test the underlying theory against problems and practice observed at later stages in the process. *Several issues could be relevant here – one of the principal cause/effect theories in relation to affordable housing provision is that increasing the overall supply of housing will reduce house prices, i.e. the Barker Report theory. This theory is not universally supported, however, and if flawed could have major implications for housing affordability.*
5. That the relationship between cause and effect is direct and there are few if any intervening links – the longer the chain of causality, the more reciprocal links there are and the more complex a policy becomes to implement. *There is a long “chain of causality” in the implementation of affordable housing policy, as identified by the Audit Commission (2005), so perfect implementation is unlikely to occur.*
6. That dependency relationships are minimal – “perfect implementation” requires a single implementing agency which doesn’t depend on other agencies for success, or if there is a need for other agencies that the dependency relationships are few and unimportant. Where agreement among a large number of participants is needed at every step, success or even predictability becomes less likely. *Any planning policy, and particularly affordable housing policy, could be affected by the proliferation of dependency relationships. As with criterion 5, the delivery chain for affordable housing is very complicated.*
7. That there is understanding of, and agreement on, objectives – in real life, the objectives of organisations or programmes are often difficult to identify or are couched in vague and evasive terms. “Official” objectives, where they exist, may not be compatible with one another, and professional or other groups may proliferate their own “unofficial” goals within a programme. *There are several layers of interest here – firstly, is the Government’s objective purely to increase affordable housing provision? Authors such as Hoggart & Henderson (2005) might suggest not, arguing that environmental protection objectives jostle for position as the number one priority. Secondly, do all the participants in the*

planning process agree on the Government's objectives? Again, the evidence from the literature suggests that they do not.

8. That tasks are fully specified in their correct sequence – i.e. each participant understands what and in what sequence they need to do. *Could there be failures here? For example, are those who carry out housing needs surveys fully aware of what they need to do to convince local authorities of the need for affordable housing in a particular settlement/parish?*
9. That there is perfect communication and co-ordination – for perfect implementation we would need a unitary administrative system, with no compartmentalism or conflict within it. *This is clearly impossible even in theory, but examples in implementation of affordable housing policy might be local authority departments failing to communicate properly with other departments or with outside bodies such as housing associations.*
10. That those in authority can demand and obtain perfect compliance – Hood (1976) argued that for perfect implementation, there would be no resistance to commands at any point in the administrative system, and any potential for resistance would be identified by the system's perfect information and forestalled by its perfect control. So, the possibly least attainable condition of "perfect implementation" is that those "in authority" are also those "in power" and that they are able to secure total and immediate compliance from others. This is self-evidently not possible, and not desirable to most people. Where implementation involves innovation and change management, there is a particularly high probability of resistance, suspicion, etc. Sufficient time for explanation and consultation may ameliorate some of these risks. *Although this is not possible or desirable in perhaps any situation, this is a key example where problems could occur in the implementation of affordable housing policy – the Government is not in a position to force local authorities, housing associations or local communities to facilitate affordable housing provision in rural areas. There are several nexuses of power in the affordable housing delivery chain, and one thing we can explore through this study is which is coming out on top in different areas.*

(Based on Hogwood and Dunn, 1984)

4.4.2. Operationalising discourse analysis

There are a number of aspects of discourse analysis that could be used relatively easily (i.e. without possessing any expertise in linguistics!). These include attitudes to difference, assumptions/implications, intertextuality, evaluation and modality.

Difference

A key factor in discourse analysis is how the text considers difference. The orientation to difference relates to the degree of *dialogicality* in a text. A dialogical text is de-privileged, aware of other, competing, points of view. An undialogical text is authoritative or absolute. There are various ways this approach to difference can be manifested, some of which are discussed below.

Assumptions/Implications

Texts often assume background knowledge, which subsumes “naturalised” ideological representations, i.e. ideological representations which come to be seen simply as common sense, and not ideological at all. This makes them opaque, and no longer visible as ideologies. We have to try and identify what is assumed in texts.

There can be implicit as well as explicit text. One form of implicit text is presupposition – e.g. in “The Soviet threat cost the West dear”, there is a presupposition that there is a Soviet threat, that presupposition being provided by the reader. Implicitness is important – social communication and interaction is impossible without some common ground. But the power to exercise social control includes the power to shape common ground.

If a group wishes to seek hegemony they need to universalise particular meanings that help to achieve and maintain dominance. So texts could be seen as doing ideological work in assuming X. We have to place texts in a wider context to decide which assumptions are ideological. Assumptions connect one text to the “world of texts”. Unlike intertextuality, they are generally not attributed/attributionable to specific texts.

Intertextuality

Fairclough (2003) contrasted assumptions with intertextuality. “Intertextuality broadly opens up difference by bringing other voices into a text, whereas assumption broadly reduces difference by assuming common ground” (Fairclough, 2003)(p41). How we consider difference is crucial to how we interact – if we reduce/ignore it we change the power relations we operate within. There is a sliding scale between openness to difference at one end – proper dialogues, and consensus at the other end – bracketing or suppressing differences.

Evaluation

We see statements of fact in texts which use what is known as persuasive evaluation – for example “the town is accessible by train within two hours” in an advertisement leaflet for a town is not just a fact, but implicitly evaluates the town as being desirable, by implying that two hours is only a short amount of time. This is an example of the slippage between facts and values.

Modality

Fairclough (2003) looked at what authors *commit* themselves to, which he considered an important part of how those authors identify themselves. Modality means what that author considers to be true and necessary. We can operationalise modality by asking what people commit themselves to when they make statements, ask questions, make demands, or make offers? The answer depends on the speaker’s judgement of the probability involved in what they say: does the speaker use words like “may” or “seem”, which commit them to less than words like “is”?

Potential problems/issues with discourse analysis

There is a problem with discourse analysis, in that the identification of discourses is obviously an interpretative exercise, leaving open the possibility of bias. There is no such thing as objective analysis of text – by looking for a particular thing we are automatically subjective.

Detailed text analysis is labour intensive, but is best applied to samples of research material rather than large bodies of text. We can address this problem by focusing on particular sections of PPGs/PPSs, RSSs and local plans/LDFs, and supporting that by identifying discourses present in interview data.

4.4.3. Bringing the methodological theories together

We can now try and design a framework which brings together the methodological theories discussed above, and relates them to the research questions. Table 9 illustrates how the research questions will be answered, and what theories will inform the methodology.

Table 9 – The research methodologies used

Research questions & issues	Methodology	Commentary
1. What effects are planning policies on rural (affordable) housing having ?		
The quantity and type of affordable housing being provided	Policy Analysis – Analysis of policy outputs in relation to policy text.	These questions demand an analysis of the outputs of policies, and a questioning of whether those outputs were intended by those writing national, regional and local policy or are unintended outcomes of a flawed policy implementation process.
The size of settlement affordable housing is being located in	Policy Analysis – Analysis of policy outputs in relation to policy text.	
The extent to which affordable housing is well integrated into settlements	Policy Analysis – Analysis of policy outputs in relation to policy text.	
How affordable housing is helping to achieve social inclusion	Policy Analysis – Analysis of policy outputs in relation to socio-economic factors and interview data.	Interviews with key actors in rural areas can be supported by an analysis of policy outputs (i.e. the number and type of affordable houses built).
The implementation of 100% affordable housing policies	Policy Analysis	We can explore whether Wealden's policy has delivered the number of affordable houses it was expected to, and investigate reasons for this through analysis of interview data.
2. What role is played by national and regional planning policy?		
The clarity and/or ambiguity of Government policy	Policy analysis – Hogwood & Dunn (H&D) criterion 7, Discourse Analysis.	Discourse analysis could be used to explore whether the objectives of Government policy are clear, and whether headline objectives match unofficial aims of policy.

Research questions & issues	Methodology	Commentary
The approach taken by RSSs in relation to rural housing	Policy analysis – H&D criteria 1, 6 & 10.	Does the approach taken in RSS help rural local authorities to meet their needs for affordable housing, or do “circumstances external to the implementing agency impose crippling constraints”?
The possible presence of different “constructions” in strategic policy	Policy Analysis – H&D criterion 7, Discourse Analysis.	This question demands an analysis of discourses present in policy text to explore whether different constructions of key terms are important, and whether there are competing constructions in operation.
How the urban-rural balance of an RSS is negotiated through its preparation process	Policy analysis – H&D criteria 7 & 9.	How does an local authority make its arguments for more housing, and do these arguments have any effect on the policy making process?
3. What factors affect local policy?		
The local policy at the time of the case study visits	Policy analysis	These questions simply require an analysis of the policies currently in place and those which will replace them, to judge how those local policies reflect national and regional policy.
Emerging local policy in the case studies	Policy analysis	
The role played by national and regional government in the development of local policies	Policy Analysis – H&D criteria 1, 7, 9 & 10. Discourse Analysis, power relations.	Are “intermediate” bodies, in the form of regional assemblies and the planning inspectorate, acting to thwart the intentions of Government and local authorities?
Local authority actions vs. their stated priorities	Policy Analysis – H&D criteria 2 and 7	It is easy for a local authority to state that they are fully committed to affordable housing delivery, but do their actions in terms of funding, planning policy, etc actually contribute to that commitment?
The attitudes towards development in local authorities	Discourse analysis	The analysis of discourses around development/the countryside and sustainability can explore the dominant constructions in local policy making and implementation.
Identifying potential different constructions of sustainability at the local level	Discourse analysis	
4. What are the “technical” reasons for the success (or otherwise) of national policy?		
The effects of the delays inherent in the planning process	Policy analysis – Hogwood & Dunn (H&D) criteria 2 and 3.	This is a technical issue, and we can use the more positivist aspects of policy analysis to explore whether the changes made in 2005 will eventually deliver more affordable housing in rural areas.
The possible effects of resource shortages	Policy Analysis – H&D criteria 2 & 3.	A simple technical issue – does the evidence support the literature findings in this regard?
The impact RHEs have on the outcomes of policy	Policy Analysis – H&D criteria 8 & 9.	Do RHEs help with specifying tasks in their correct order and bringing key actors together?
Investigating communication problems	Policy Analysis – H&D criterion 9.	There are several elements to this question, which will rely on interview data to explore whether key actors work with others and with best practice advice to improve outcomes.

Research questions & issues	Methodology	Commentary
Practical reasons why local authority priorities and actions not coincide	Policy Analysis – H&D criterion 7.	The issue here is identifying possible technical explanations for any difference between policy rhetoric and local authority actions.
5. Does policy implementation depend on more than technical factors?		
The influence of opposition to affordable housing	Discourse Analysis and power relations.	Analysing interviews with both professionals and parish councils can help explore whether opposition to affordable housing is an issue in rural communities, and whether the attitude to market housing is markedly different.
The inclusivity of decision making processes	Discourse analysis and power relations.	We can explore the extent to which different voices (e.g. pro-development voices) have the chance to influence the objectives of regional and local policy. An interesting question might be whether the consultation/community mechanisms in place for affordable housing policy making and implementation act to ameliorate conflict, or in fact either provoke conflict or make policy making easier to influence by anti-development groups. The extent to which local authorities, RSLs, RHEs, etc, involve the community or rely on the parish council as a proxy for that community, may be having an impact on policy implementation.
Exploring whether particular constructions dominate policy making and implementation	Policy Analysis – H&D criteria 1 & 10. Discourse Analysis, power relations.	This aspect might relate to all three of the dimensions of power, but perhaps most interestingly to the third dimension – if powerful interests are vetoing policies to deliver more affordable housing, how do they do so without generating opposition from those who might benefit from such development?

Table 9 demonstrates that the earlier research questions are more likely to be answered by policy analysis, but the later, arguably less technocratic, questions, will require a mixed methodology, with more emphasis on discourse analysis and the identification of the use of power.

4.4.4. Positionality

Before we move onto the data analysis section of this thesis, it is important to outline my positionality as a researcher, to recognise the scope for potential bias in this research.

In terms of my background, I am a professional planner who has worked in rural local authorities in planning policy, and immediately before undertaking this PhD I was particularly involved in writing and trying to implement a new policy on affordable housing provision for the local authority I worked for (Alnwick District Council).

My PhD supervisor has been Professor Mark Shucksmith, who has written extensively on this subject, and other related subjects.

The non-academic partner for this CASE project has been the Commission for Rural Communities.

The combination of my background, the involvement of Professor Shucksmith and the philosophy of the CRC will inevitably have influenced the direction of the literature review, the development of the research questions and the approach taken to analyse the data gathered. Every effort has been taken to minimise bias in the thesis, and the intention has been to support every argument with valid data.

4.4.5. The case study visits

The case study visits were carried out as follows:

Case study	Dates visited
Alnwick	31/10/06 – 27/03/07 (various dates within this range)
Harrogate	14/03/07 – 03/10/07 (various dates within this range)
South Hams	01/05/07 – 03/05/07
Stratford-on-Avon	11/06/07 – 13/06/07
Wealden	27/11/07 – 28/11/07

31 interviews were carried out with:

- Local authority planning policy officers
- Local authority housing officers
- Local authority “strategic” officers – in two cases, in addition to officers dealing with affordable housing delivery on a day to day basis, interviews were carried out with “strategic” officers. These were heads of department, who might be expected to have a more strategic perspective, perhaps more in line with the

corporate aims of the local authority rather than day-to-day practicalities of policy implementation.

- Affordable housing specialists at local authorities, where they were in place.
- Parish Council representatives. Where possible, these were chairmen/women of the parish council, but other representatives, including parish council clerks and affordable housing specialists, were interviewed in some cases.
- Registered Social Landlord representatives. These were generally development officers, responsible for developing affordable housing sites.
- Rural Housing Enablers. In three of the five case study areas, RHEs were in place. In the other two (Alnwick and Wealden) there was no RHE, but an ex-RHE for one of the local authorities was interviewed.

Appendix 6 is a list of those interviewed, as specific as possible without risking compromising anonymity.

Appendix 7 is a brief summary of the topic guides which were used to focus the case study interviews. These interviews were semi-structured, and were of course personalised for each area. In line with the advantages identified to interviews in section 4.1.4, a great deal of “rambling” took place, where those interviewed moved on to related subjects, or remembered relevant anecdotes. On that basis, the guides are no more than that – a guide to the topic intended to be discussed at the outset.

Where non-controversial, quotes used in the data analysis sections are attributed directly to individuals, but in many cases there are issues around confidentiality so quotes have been anonymised to protect the interviewees. 29 of the interviewees agreed to be recorded, so quotes are verbatim in those cases, but two interviewees did not consent to be recorded, and quotes in those cases are based on the interviewer’s detailed notes, so may not be 100% accurate.

5. *Data analysis I – Policies and their effects*

As laid out in section 4.2, there are five research questions which this thesis is seeking to answer:

1. What effects are planning policies on rural (affordable) housing having?
2. What role is played by national and regional planning policy?
3. What factors affect local policy?
4. What are the “technical” reasons for the success (or otherwise) of national policy?
5. Does policy implementation depend on more than technical factors?

This chapter and the following chapter of the thesis follow the structure of the research questions, and for each question analyse the evidence gathered to try and answer that question. Data relating to the first three questions is analysed in this chapter, which hence focuses on the policies introduced by the case study local authorities and the effects those policies are having. Chapter 6 then goes on to analyse data relating to the final two research questions, which are focused on reasons for policy outcomes.

The analysis is structured by theme rather than case study, as this helps to provide a better cross-comparison across the different contexts of the case studies. It will become apparent that there is more data presented for some case studies than for others, for two reasons. Firstly, the quantity of data available for the different case studies is variable (for example as the researcher previously worked for Alnwick District Council a larger quantity of data is available). Secondly, there is simply more of interest which can be drawn from some of the case studies, depending on the policies the local authorities have adopted and the different structures they have in place to facilitate implementation of those policies.

Both this chapter and chapter 6 seek to relate evidence to arguments, but stop short of drawing ultimate conclusions regarding policy implications or recommendations – that is the function of the final chapter of this thesis.

5.1. The effects that planning policies on rural (affordable) housing are having

This section of analysis relates to the first research question – what effects are planning policies on rural (affordable) housing having? As identified in section 4.2, there are five issues which have been explored in relation to this question, each of which is addressed in the following five sub-sections.

5.1.1. The quantity and type of affordable housing being provided

This issue is most easily addressed by analysing the data collected by the UK Government's Department of Community and Local Government (DCLG). DCLG collects data from every local authority in England on the number of affordable houses provided through new build and acquisitions each year, and whether those houses are for social rent or intermediate tenure.

Nationally, as discussed in sub-section 1.1.3, there has been a pattern of declining affordable housing provision since the mid 1990s, which may now have been addressed. Figure 16 shows the number of affordable houses provided and the tenure split of those houses changed between 1991/1992 and 2006/2007. The proportion of intermediate housing, including low cost home ownership and intermediate rented housing, showed an increase between 2001/2002 and 2005/2006, but declined in 2006/2007. Attitudes of key actors to intermediate housing are discussed in section 5.1.4.

Looking specifically at the case study local authorities, one immediately obvious conclusion is that the annual provision can change dramatically from year to year. Figure 17 shows the number of affordable houses provided in each of the five case study local authorities over the same period. The rapidly fluctuating nature of delivery in the case study local authorities (and the fact that the DCLG data rounds figures to the nearest 10) makes it hard to draw conclusions from this data, other than to observe that delivery in Alnwick has consistently been lower than the other four case study areas, and that for all five of them delivery in 2006/2007 was significantly lower than it has been in the past.

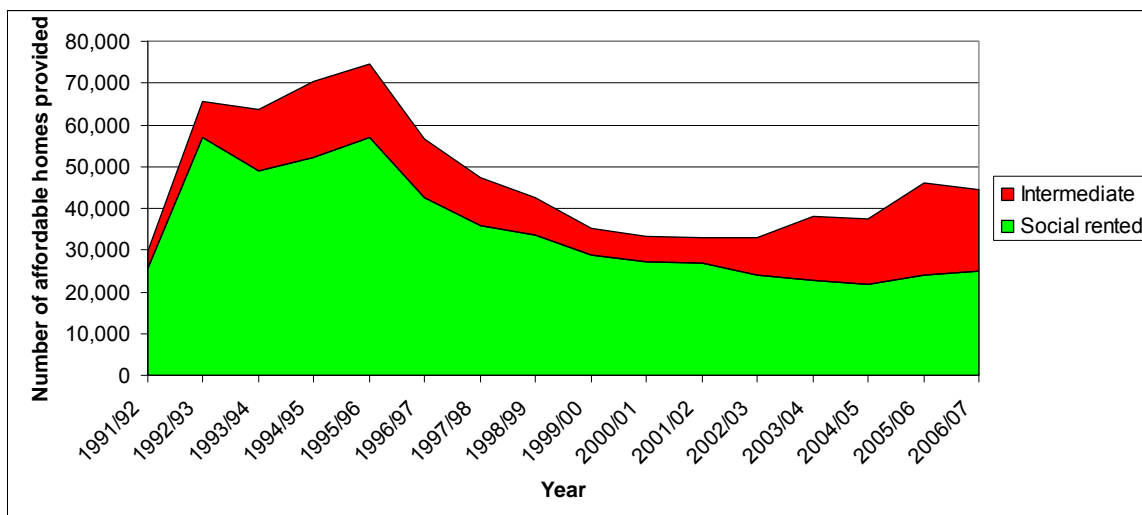


Figure 16 – The number and tenure of affordable houses provided in England, 1991/1992 – 2006/2007. Based on DCLG data (DCLG, 2008a).

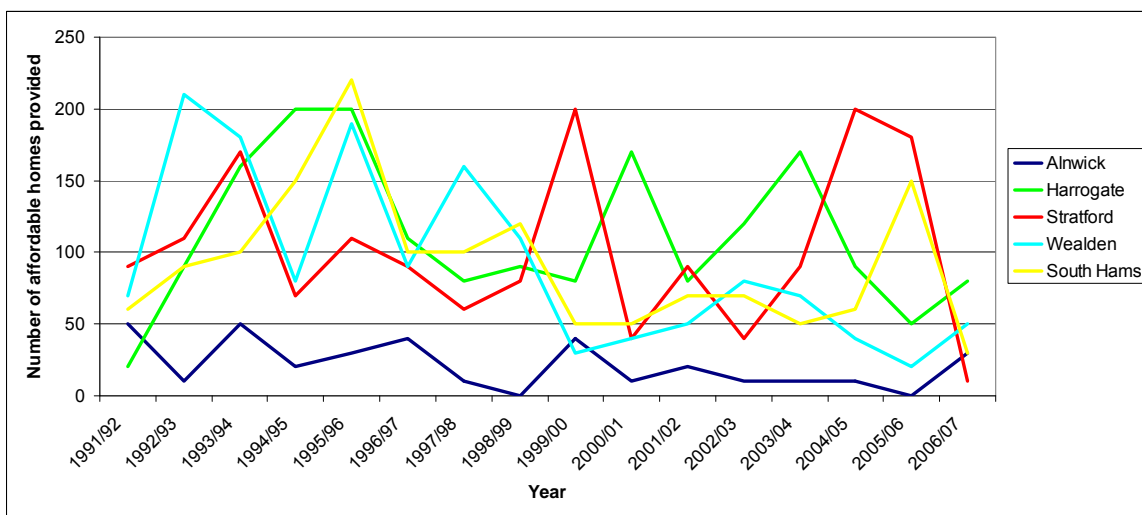


Figure 17 – The number of affordable houses provided in the five case study local authorities, 1991/1992 – 2006/2007. Based on DCLG data (DCLG, 2008a), figures rounded to nearest 10.

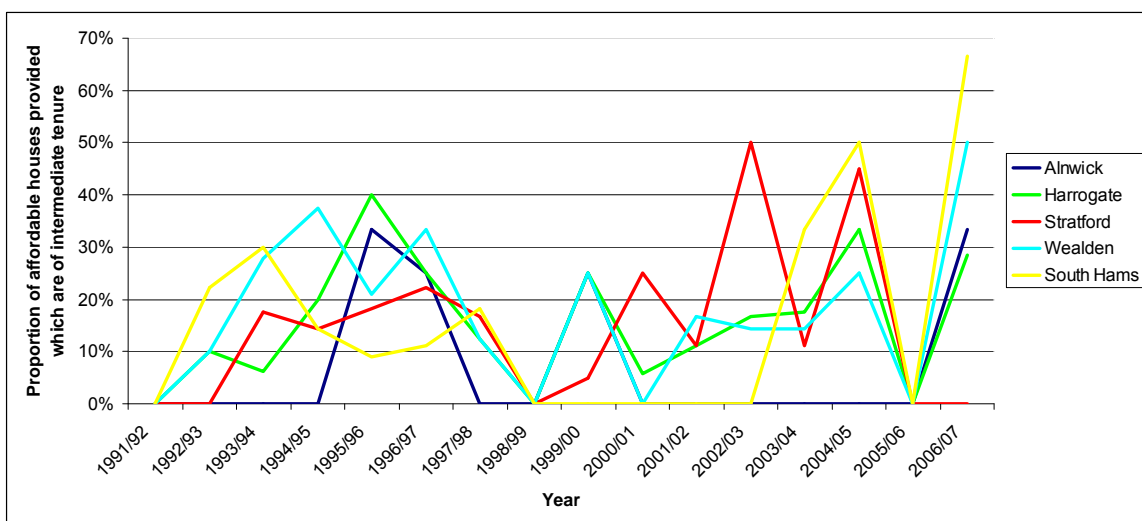


Figure 18 – The proportion of affordable housing provided which was of intermediate tenure in the five case study local authorities, 1991/1992 – 2006/2007. Based on DCLG data (DCLG, 2008a).

In terms of tenure, figure 18 shows the proportion of affordable housing provided which was of intermediate tenure in each of the case study local authorities. Again, this graph shows a rapidly fluctuating picture, but there is an overall pattern of a peak in intermediate provision in the mid 1990s, followed by a drop in intermediate delivery before an increase in the mid 2000s. That pattern does not reflect what we might expect if Government policy had been increasing in effectiveness year on year, so may indicate that external factors are affecting the proportion of affordable housing delivered that is of intermediate tenure.

We have now examined the raw statistics which demonstrate the quantity and tenure of affordable housing being developed in the case study local authorities. In exploring the effects that planning policies are having, however, we need to go beyond this and start to look at the micro-spatial effects of the policies – i.e. within what size settlements is affordable housing being located?

5.1.2. The size of settlement affordable housing is being located in

We can examine this issue across the case study local authorities by analysing the policies adopted and how those policies are being implemented.

In **Alnwick District**, the planning policy representative interviewed conceded that due to the low numbers of housing being provided through the RSS, and ADC's policy of focussing on the three largest settlements (Alnwick town, Amble and Rothbury), it was likely that the vast majority of section 106 affordable housing contributions would be in those three towns, with very little in the district's villages. The "sustainable village centres" (the ten larger villages at the next level down of ADC's settlement hierarchy) would see little market housing development, and any schemes that there were would be "only about half a dozen houses". ADC then has a third tier of its settlement hierarchy, a further 15 villages, where the only form of development acceptable is to satisfy local needs (for example rural exception schemes). Below the 28 settlements named in the three tiers of the settlement hierarchy, no development other than the reuse of existing buildings will be permitted. Affordable housing will only be required on schemes which are in one of the named settlements, for "sustainability" reasons. The overall approach in ADC,

then, is towards a concentration of affordable housing in the larger settlements of the district.

In contrast, in **Harrogate Borough** there is a tendency towards affordable housing development to be in smaller settlements. This is an accidental consequence of policies HX and H5 in HBC's local plan selective alteration combining to mean that no section 106 contributions are likely to be made in the three largest towns in Harrogate Borough (see section 5.3.1 below). Despite that, HBC is generating significant numbers of affordable houses through section 106 agreements, and according to a representative of the Council, most of those affordable houses are in more remote locations, via barn conversions. The Council's approach is "If it's good enough for housing it's good enough for affordable housing, you just have to get the tenure right", so for these more remote locations HBC requires the affordable housing to be in the form of discounted home ownership, on the basis that the occupants of such houses are more likely to be car owners than occupants of social rented housing. The outcome in Harrogate Borough, albeit partly accidentally as an outcome of a policy of housing restraint, is that most affordable housing is dispersed to more rural locations.

In **South Hams District**, thanks in part to the affordable housing policy vacuum which has developed (see section 5.3.3 for more details), there has been little affordable housing development in recent years. SHDC's core strategy has a settlement hierarchy which identifies 62 settlements as being appropriate locations for development, and distributes the housing provision in the District between these locations. The Council's approach to affordable housing provision through its new LDF has yet to be finalised, but following a recent public appeal for new sites for affordable housing, officers expect affordable housing sites to be distributed across the District.

Stratford-on-Avon District Council is in the process of refocusing its policy on the location of new housing. Between 2001/2002 and 2006/2007, 60% of new affordable housing was built in Stratford town, in 2007/08 the proportion in Stratford town was expected to be 43%, with that falling to 40% in 2008/09. Stratford town accounts for approximately 20% of the population of the District, so has perhaps received a

disproportionately high proportion of development in previous years. The Council has introduced a refocus (a) to try and meet some of the high levels of need in the smaller settlements of the District; and (b) as a consequence of the “reaction to the level of development that has occurred” in the town.

Wealden District Council introduced the innovative HOPe project (the template for the changes to PPG3 to allocate exception sites), which allocated 13 sites for affordable housing in villages across the district in 2005. None of those sites had been developed at the time of the case study visit, and there have been few rural exception sites in recent years, according to a representative of the housing department. In fact, there had been little housing development across the district, but what there has been was focused on the larger settlements. The Council was developing a new settlement strategy (it had reached the “Issues and Options” stage – as the name suggests, an early draft plan looking at different options for development – at the time of the visit), which contained a settlement hierarchy, and the unusual option of moving a village up that hierarchy if there was a need for development (including affordable housing) therein. Officers were hopeful that the new strategy, once adopted, might represent a consensus on the appropriate locations for new development, hence resulting in an increase in affordable housing development in villages.

Summary

The evidence from the five case study local authorities is that the size of settlement affordable housing is being located in varies in different areas according to local circumstances. SADC and HBC are focusing affordable housing delivery on smaller settlements (though in the case of the latter this is an accidental consequence of their restraint policy rather than a deliberate strategy). ADC apply what we might call a conventional urban containment approach, with development concentrated on the larger settlements. In WDC and SHDC, there has been little affordable housing development recently, and it is unclear as yet where the focus for future development will be.

A rural housing enabler working in one of the case study regions raised a concern which does not seem to have been considered by anyone else with regard to the location of exception sites. Their concern was that the allocation of sites for affordable rural housing (as permitted by the revisions to PPG3 and now PPS3) might lead to a focus on larger, more “sustainable” communities by local authorities, and less, if any conventional exception sites, and “therefore no affordable rural housing in small settlements”. At present there is no evidence that this will be the case.

We have now explored at the spatial level the effects of planning policies, but we can also investigate at a “more” micro-spatial level by investigating where affordable housing is being developed within individual settlements, i.e. is it well integrated into those settlements, or is it located on the periphery, whether physically or socially?

5.1.3. The extent to which affordable housing is well integrated into settlements

There will clearly be hugely variable practice as to whether a particular affordable housing scheme is well integrated into the settlement in which it is located. We can try to assess the general situation in the case study local authorities through analysing interview data, supported by specific examples of affordable housing schemes to illustrate whether the stated approach of key actors is reflected in practice.

Unsurprisingly, there was an acknowledgement across the case studies that integrating exception schemes, which by definition tend to be on land peripheral to or outside of settlements, is more difficult than s106 schemes. A housing officer at one local authority went so far as to describe exception sites as “ghettoes”:

Interviewer: Is [the affordable housing you are building] tending to be integrated [into settlements]?

Respondent: Well, it is completely integrated, apart from the exceptions sites, obviously, which I have a slight – not problem with, but that whole idea of allocating exceptions sites which we’re looking to do as well in the

LDF, and creating ghettos – they are ghettos when you build them like that, there's no doubt about it...because no matter how hard a housing association tries to make a 100% affordable housing site look like a normal site, it doesn't – it looks like an affordable housing site.

Figures 19 and 20, overleaf, illustrate this point – figure 19 shows two shared equity houses delivered via a section 106 agreement, figure 20 an exception site. Both these developments are in the same case study local authority as the above quote, and it is hard to argue with the housing officer's opinion that exception sites are more clearly identifiable as affordable housing on the basis of these images.

A housing association representative in a different area considered that location in relation to existing built form was as important as the design of the scheme:

Our sites tend to abut the village boundary, it's very rare we'll get anything inside the village because of the land value attached to it. How integrated it is, is a different thing again. We try to look at the built form of the village and pick sites where you can get good integration. Some parish councils will want to shove you off round where the previous social housing once was, because that might be more acceptable to the people who live round there to have social housing there.

This latter comment could be interpreted as a reflection of Lukes' first dimension of power – those who wish to preserve their physical/social environment are able to influence local governance procedures to locate developments they consider undesirable “out of sight, out of mind”.

Another aspect of this housing association representative's comment is the availability of land within villages. This seems to vary depending on the location – the case studies further south, with the greater development pressure therein, seem to reflect that pressure with an absence of land in villages. One planning officer in a less pressured authority was hopeful that the move to being able to allocate exception sites might mean that they would be more likely to be “within the fabric of the village rather than adjoining it”.



Figure 19 – Photograph of a pair of section 106 delivered shared equity properties



Figure 20 – Photograph of an exception site of social rented properties

Whether an affordable housing scheme is integrated into a settlement may also be about more than location within or without a technical settlement boundary – a parish council representative observed that proximity to services is more important:

I suppose by its nature the sort of sites that come up tend to be edge-of-community, don't they? This one is right on the edge of [the settlement], having said that, it is in reasonable proximity to a play area, and also to a school, which I think is one of the first things that happens, when the family get there and the children settle in to a school, then I think they tend to get involved with the community.

Finally, a housing officer in one of the case study local authorities questioned whether integration should be such an issue when land availability was so poor:

It is very hard to find sites which meet the criteria in policy X – that sites are immediately adjacent to the village boundary, and are integrated into the village. The planners are interpreting that literally, which I think is contrary to how people live in the countryside – there are people living in houses now which are not integrated into villages.

Summary

As with the previous issue, whether affordable housing is well integrated into settlements appears to vary based on local context – in less pressured regions, there is more likelihood of land being available within villages for exception schemes, whereas further south, any available land is more likely to have been developed, meaning exception schemes have to be built adjacent to settlements. This is likely to result in a clear lack of *spatial* integration, but perhaps more important are attempts to integrate affordable housing by following the existing built form and trying to ensure access to services is available, thus resulting in greater *social* integration or inclusion.

There are other effects relating to affordable housing and social inclusion which planning policies are having. Some of these are addressed in the next sub-section.

5.1.4. How affordable housing is helping to achieve social inclusion

This is a very broad issue that can be broken down further, into three more detailed factors: the question of need for affordable housing in a particular location versus the ease of developing in that location; the use/demand for local occupancy conditions on affordable housing; and the tenure breakdown of new affordable housing. Each of these factors are now considered in turn.

The extent to which affordable housing is being developed in the locations with the greatest need for it

There are three broad factors which might affect where affordable housing is developed. The first is the identification of need for affordable housing through a waiting list and/or a housing needs survey. The second is if/where a housing association can acquire land. The third is whether the local authority is prepared to grant planning permission for a site in principle, which is related to the second factor (e.g. if the authority will only grant planning permission for affordable housing on a site, the value of the land may fall). This issue perhaps relates to trying to identify which is the most important factor, or in simple terms – are the locations for affordable housing development following patterns of need or are housing associations taking a purely pragmatic approach and developing wherever they can acquire land with a good chance of gaining planning permission?

From analysis of interviews with RSLs, it seems practice varies depending on the general extent of need in the local authority and the focus of the particular RSL. One relatively large RSL (approximately 10,000 homes), asked if they chose sites on the basis of where their waiting list need is, was categorical:

No. The way we get sites – they're either brought to us by the local authority or we'll identify private sites that we think will meet both the local authority's housing needs strategy documents and/or fits in with regional housing priorities. We might find a private site and say to the council 'what is the need in this village, we think we've potentially got a good site/scheme, we obviously need to back that up with data, have you done a needs survey?'

Another fairly large RSL (approximately 6000 homes) in a different local authority also took an availability led approach:

In general terms, site choice is more to do with the opportunities of land availability. There is such a long waiting list across [case study local authority] that we know there is a need pretty much everywhere. There is a hierarchy where the Council likes to see development, and in the main towns there is both an established need and it fits with that hierarchy.

In another local authority, which has a particularly local authority driven approach, the need was such that describing the approach taken by the RHE, a housing officer stated:

We find the sites first, we know there's need everywhere, we've got a needs assessment that gives us need on a parish breakdown, [the RHE] just then goes to talk to the parish councils.

That top-down approach can be contrasted with that taken by a smaller RSL (approximately 500 homes) in a different area:

We've always worked on the standard rural exception site basis, and we've always had a strong community focus to what we do anyway. We've always engaged with the parish council, worked with them to undertake housing need surveys, to identify potential sites around the village and worked with them on the design process – a very iterative process going down the line with them, so communities have a real stake in the scheme when it comes out the other end.

A mid-sized RSL (approximately 4,000 homes) operating in one local authority area was keen to simplify the process:

There's no mystique around affordable housing in rural areas. It's a case of checking with the local authority to see whether there's a need, housing association finding out whether there are sites in those districts...

There appears to be a correlation between size of RSL and the extent to which they are needs/community led – the larger the RSL, the more they seem to be land availability led.

Local connections

The second factor relating to social inclusion with regard to rural affordable housing is that of the use of planning conditions and/or obligations making that housing available only to people with a local connection – this is common practice for rural exception schemes, supported by Government advice in PPS3:

A Rural Exception Site policy should seek to address the needs of the local community by accommodating households who are either current residents or have an existing family or employment connection, whilst also ensuring that rural areas continue to develop as sustainable, mixed, inclusive communities.

(DCLG, 2006)

We might identify this as an example of the Government's aims not being clear and unambiguous, a subject returned to in section 5.2.1 below – the aims of providing housing for those with a local connection and also developing mixed, inclusive communities seem to be in conflict, particularly in rural areas that are likely to have less mixed/inclusive communities at present. If, of course, the housing market in a rural area is favouring wealthier in-comers, there may be less conflict between these aims, as the local connections policy could be argued to be acting as a counterweight to market forces.

As discussed in section 3.1.3, some commentators have criticised the use of locals only policies as being “unjust and morally suspect” (Rogers, 1985), but such policies are undoubtedly popular with some rural people – many of the parish councils interviewed, across the case studies, stressed the importance of providing housing for local people who could not afford to buy housing otherwise, as the following three interview extracts illustrate:

Local people have got the priority, which is what we want.

We're very much happy that the people living in the new affordable housing at the moment are local people. There are a set of key criteria that have to be met before an allocation can be made. And there's a pecking order – the village itself first, [then] it's the villages which immediately bound [the village], and if there are still no takers it's thrown open to the District. But when the village itself is considered, that includes returners to the village, so you can have families who are scattered around the area argue that they want to move back to the village. They would have a high priority in this pecking order, and would have to be linked to the village by a very substantive link, i.e. were children of people living in the village at the moment, or something like that.

There are so many people in this village – I have three children, my daughter married a local farmer, and they needed somewhere to live. They couldn't buy anything here, no way. There are lots of people in that position, who's children wanted to stay locally but couldn't. A lot of people felt this was a good idea, there wasn't much opposition.

The corollary of this approach, though, is that some argue it can be exclusionary, and potentially discriminatory – for example if a village, as many tend to be, is dominated by people of a white British ethnic background, then policies to provide housing for local people may exclude those of a different ethnic and social background. This has been identified by the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) as a potential problem (Commission for Racial Equality, 2006). The CRE noted that the more restrictive a local connection policy, the more likely it is to be discriminatory, and hence unlawful.

Some of the interviews with parish council representatives have an element of exclusiveness, potentially even discrimination, either from the representative or from the wider community, in them:

In order to keep riff-raff from [nearby city] out of the community you need this s106 agreement.

The fear of the objectors is, if there isn't enough local people, it's going to be thrown open to outsiders. And they don't want outsiders coming in, that's the top and bottom of it, even if they're needy cases. They have this impression that we're going to get asylum seekers.

If, later on, when somebody moves, there isn't somebody local to take it on, it can go to adjoining parishes, *but we're hoping that that will never happen* [my emphasis]... so it's not as if we're bringing outsiders in, we're bringing back the villagers, which makes them part of the village because they want to be back here.

I suppose the people of [village X] might say "well, if there's no-one with a [village X] connection, we don't mind it going out to, say, [neighbouring villages]", in a sort of doughnut arrangement, but wouldn't be too happy about people coming up from [nearby town]!

There are, however, other parish council representatives who recognised that a locals-only approach might not be what their village needed:

If you're trying to encourage small businesses in a village, there could well be a need for affordable housing to attract the workers to those businesses. Rather than looking at long term residents of the community needing affordable housing, to be able to stay in the community, if you're creating a business you sometimes need to be able to attract specialists, who also need housing.

The problem is getting families to come and live in these affordable houses. But when [case study local authority] were looking for tenants for the last two, we ended up with a retired couple moving in, because they've got village connections. It's all very nice for them to come and live here, but in my view it defeats the object of what it was intended to do... We had Kosovans in the first time! They lived in a holiday cottage for six months and they qualified. I think they've changed it now, you have to live here for two years now, but it was for six months only. Oh no, I think we are

desperately short of some sort of affordable housing in this village for families.

It doesn't take into account who's on the waiting list over there somewhere, it has to be people who had an interest or were living here already, or a family connection. The next ring was people who had a connection or identified here as somewhere they wanted to be. We don't want people who don't want to be here – a lot of people don't want to be here, because of the reputation its had in the past. If you've got people who want to live here, then that's better.

From the evidence of the interviews carried out, it appears that in some cases, the local connections policy is acting in an exclusionary, and hence indirectly discriminatory, way – some powerful residents of villages are using the first dimension of power, through the parish council, to protect their rural enclave. This approach is endorsed by local authorities and the Government, which might be an example of Lukes' third dimension of power – the exclusionary preferences of the powerful are condoned, even encouraged, by those seeking to provide affordable housing in rural areas.

Tenure mix

The third issue affecting social inclusion with regard to affordable housing provision is that of tenure. As identified in the literature review, the concept of mixed communities receives support from the Government and commentators alike (Keen et al., 2006, Martin and Watkinson, 2003). Local authorities are encouraged to develop mixed communities through affordable housing provision by mixing tenure of new provision between social rented and “intermediate” housing, often some form of low cost home ownership (LCHO).

LCHO is often the favoured option of private housing developers required to provide affordable housing through a section 106 agreement. In Alnwick, the planning policy officer interviewed noted that due to ADC's policy of ensuring low prices in perpetuity through covenants on the property, developers prefer LCHO, “as they hand over the

responsibility to the purchaser, who is responsible for ensuring that future occupants meet the requirements in the covenants on the land/property, and confirming the price with the Council”. An RSL operating in a different location opined that private developers liked to see “an amount of shared ownership being a buffer between the owner occupied and social rented properties”. Despite this apparent social exclusionary motivation (and an example of Lukes’ first dimension of power), that RSL was of the view that the primary driver behind developers’ preference for LCHO was a financial one – “we are able to pay more for shared ownership properties as we are going to sell 50% of them straight away”.

Almost universally, however, those interviewed – whether RSLs, local authorities or RHEs, did not consider low cost home ownership to be affordable in the current house price climate. Several noted a disparity between the aspirations of those on waiting lists for low cost home ownership and financial reality, one housing officer stating “many people in villages are seeking to buy, but are on incomes of £10,000 to £15,000, so they have completely unrealistic aspirations”.

The key actors interviewed were more positive about achieving a tenure mix between market housing and affordable housing in whatever form was appropriate, and the benefits such a mix would bring. A housing officer from one local authority noted the positive impacts of a s106 development in a village: “Because they’re there at the moment, and they’re having barbeques together in the courtyards, and the people from the £895,000 [priced home] and the people from the £70,000 [priced home] are barbequing together”. Similarly, a RHE observed: “The tenure business is probably the most telling, as you’ve got owner occupiers living against people who’ll probably be renting for the rest of their lives. I think you only have to look at mixed tenure developments to see that the old prejudices about social housing tenants having old Ford Cortinas in the garden is a load of rubbish!”. We see more references to this particular prejudice later, as it crops up remarkably frequently in the interviews.

Summary

There is perhaps, then, a mixed picture in terms of whether affordable housing is helping to achieve social inclusion. The answer depends to a certain extent on how

social inclusion is defined – looking purely at incomes, it seems likely that affordable housing is having a positive effect, allowing those on lower incomes to live in homes in rural communities with high house prices. On other aspects of social inclusion, such as opening up home ownership to all, or introducing different people of ethnic backgrounds to rural areas, affordable housing policy is doing less well. Part of the reason for this difference is down to failures in Hogwood and Dunn’s ten criteria for perfect implementation. We can identify problems around their criterion 1 (circumstances external to the implementing agency imposing constraints), in terms of house prices being so high that shared ownership/equity is not a viable option in many communities. There are also, though, possible examples of the exercise of power to exclude “non-locals” from rural exception sites.

The first four sub-sections of this section have looked at different effects that planning policies on rural affordable housing are having. The last sub-section looks specifically at policies to introduce 100% affordable housing developments, i.e. the Government policy which this thesis was intended to examine.

5.1.5. The implementation of 100% affordable housing policies

As we have identified, the only local authority thus far to adopt a policy to allocate sites for 100% affordable housing is Wealden District Council. The policy was adopted in December 2005, so enough time should have elapsed for an assessment of the success or otherwise of the policy to be appropriate.

WDC calls its allocated exception policy the Housing Our People (HOPE) policy. It is contained within the Council’s interim local plan, which is not part of the statutory development plan but is a material consideration for the determination of planning applications. That plan has relatively standard section 106 and rural exceptions policies, plus the HOPE policy that allocated sites solely for affordable housing. 13 such sites were allocated in 2005. No houses have yet been built on any of these sites, but two of the sites now have planning permission for affordable housing schemes.

All the interviewees in Wealden were asked why they thought the HOPE project had not yet delivered any affordable houses. A number of reasons were put forward by the different key actors. To protect the anonymity of the interviewees, the source of the following possible reasons are not identified:

1. A number of parish councils had put sites forward but then changed their minds, either after local opposition to affordable housing development, or because the parish council had “changed their views themselves”.
2. It was presented to parish councils on the basis that development essentially wouldn’t happen without their support. One interviewee noted: “My experience is that many rural exceptions sites which have been built did not have that support. Parish councils in the district are not inordinately active or supportive in terms of affordable housing”.
3. The hope value held by landowners that they may be able to get market housing on the sites eventually, so they were reluctant to sell at discounted rates.
4. “The local authority wanted to have a say in land values which could be paid. Their perception of value didn’t always tie in with the landowners”. Speculators have got involved and told landowners that they could get a higher value for their land than RSLs would offer, so landowners are now reluctant to sell.
5. There has been change of land ownership, either within families (and the new family members perhaps changing their mind about hanging on to that piece of land), or a simple sale of land (and the new owners having a different point of view in terms of wishing to sell to an RSL for affordable housing).
6. Staff turnover in the housing and planning departments of the local authority, with new officers perhaps having different priorities. Also, the officer who worked across housing and planning to get the project up and running has not been replaced.

Those factors combined with the result that of the 13 sites in the local plan, six will now not come forward. Of the remaining seven, two have planning permission. Two are dependent on redeveloping allotment sites, replacements for which cannot be found at present. The other three may be developed in due course.

It is fair to say that WDC is disappointed that the HOPE project has yet to deliver any houses, albeit there are two sites which now have planning permission. There seem to be lessons that can be learnt for other local authorities who wish to implement this type of policy, though part of the problem seems to be that because WDC were the first, parish councils and landowners have struggled to understand the concept. This underlines the importance of Hogwood and Dunn's criterion 6 – if the policy implementing agency (WDC in this case) is dependent on others to co-operate with policy implementation, "success or even predictability becomes less likely" (Hogwood and Gunn, 1984). Some of the other reasons for the HOPE policy not being as effective as hoped are also to do with policy implementation problems – new staff with different priorities, for example. But we could also identify parish councils withdrawing their support as a possible example of the exercise of power.

Ways in which delivery from an allocated exception policy might be improved are discussed in the conclusions chapter.

This section has analysed evidence in relation to research question 1 – what effects are planning policies on rural "affordable" housing having? It has looked at both social and micro-spatial effects of those policies, and has identified variable practice across the case study local authorities. Section 7.1.1 will attempt to answer the research question in more detail, but the data analysis part of this thesis continues with section 5.2.

5.2. The role played by national and regional planning policy

This section looks at the second research question – what role is played by national and regional planning policy? Again, there are a number of aspects informing the answer to research question 2, each of which is addressed in turn in the sub-sections below. First is an examination of the aims and objectives of national advice, followed by an analysis of regional policy.

5.2.1. An assessment of the clarity and/or ambiguity of the Government's aims and objectives

In sub-section 2.4.5 of the literature review we looked in brief at some evidence that Government policy and “received wisdom” (Shorten, 2005) in rural planning dictate that new development is focused on larger settlements as they are more sustainable. In this sub-section we look in detail at both the headline aims laid out in different pieces of Government planning guidance, and the explanatory/supporting text present in those documents. The aim is to both assess whether it is possible to decipher a single, coherent goal with reference to rural affordable housing provision from these policy documents (relating to Hogwood and Dunn’s criterion 7), and to explore different constructions/discourses which may be present around topics such as sustainability, the countryside and housing development.

Government planning policy is expressed chiefly through Planning Policy Guidance notes (PPGs), which are now being replaced by Planning Policy Statements (PPSs). These do not form part of the statutory “development plan” against which all planning applications must be determined, but local authorities are expected to take them into account when preparing their development plan documents, and making decisions about whether or not to grant planning permission for development proposals.

The first thing to note with relation to this question is that the Government’s aims and objectives for planning for (affordable) housing in rural areas are not set out in one place – instead, it is necessary to analyse the various Planning Policy Guidance notes and Planning Policy Statements which have some relevance to the issue for clues as to what the Government intends. We can also find other hints as to

Government policy in Ministers' speeches, white papers, etc. These latter sources of policy carry little weight in the formal determination of planning applications or the independent examination of planning policy documents, so are referred to here only where they convey an idea of the direction Government policy is moving in.

So, firstly – the Government's aims and objectives are not easily found, which must impact on their clarity from a local authority or RPBs point of view.

Five documents were analysed in depth for this study, and these are discussed in the chronological order of their publication below. PPG3, and paragraphs 12-17 of PPG13, were cancelled with the publication of PPS3 in November 2006, but in view of the fact that they have influenced the development of much regional and local level policy developed from 2000 onwards, it remains important to assess their content.

Planning Policy Guidance note 3 (Housing), March 2000

Planning Policy Guidance note 3 on housing, published in March 2000, is perhaps the dominant piece of national government guidance affecting regional and local planning policy documents adopted since then. The context for the publication of PPG3 is important – it was published shortly after the Urban Task Force had published their report "Towards an Urban Renaissance", and is heavily influenced by the concepts therein – focusing on previously developed land within urban areas, in the belief that this would lead to the urban renaissance which was evidently needed. As discussed in the literature review, both the Urban Task Force and the production of PPG3 were heavily influenced by the CPRE (Murdoch and Lowe, 2003), which perhaps makes a focus on developing in urban areas (and hence not in rural areas) inevitable.

There were two aspects of PPG3 which could be argued to discourage housing in rural areas – the "key settlement" policy, and the "sequential approach". The key settlement policy could be summed up by the following extract from PPG3:

Villages will only be suitable locations for accommodating significant additional housing where:

- it can be demonstrated that additional housing will support local services, such as schools or shops, which could become unviable without some modest growth. This may particularly be the case where the village has been identified as a local service centre in the development plan...

(DETR, 2000)(Paragraph 70)

This paragraph refers to “local service centres”, which are now in common use in local plans and LDFs in rural areas. Often referred to as key settlements, the identification of which has been advocated in some form by successive Governments, local authorities have embraced the notion that particular settlements, because they have a critical mass of “services”, should be the foci of residential development in a local authority. The corollary of that approach is that other settlements which do not have that critical mass are effectively “red-lined” and categorised as being unsuitable locations for development.

The sequential approach is introduced in PPG3 with the statement that “the presumption will be that previously-developed sites (or buildings for re-use or conversion) should be developed before greenfield sites” (DETR, 2000). Regional and local policy documents have interpreted this advice as justification for introducing policies which rank potential development sites in order of preference, with previously developed land being prioritised over greenfield land.

By studying the language used in PPG3 we can look behind these headline policies to find the explicit or implicit justification for them. Paragraph 1 of PPG3, under the title “The Government’s Objectives”, states:

The Government intends that everyone should have the opportunity of a decent home. They further intend that there should be greater choice of housing and that housing should not reinforce social distinctions. The housing needs of all in the community should be recognised, including those in need of affordable or special housing in both urban and rural areas. To promote more sustainable patterns of development and make better use of previously-developed land, the focus for additional housing

should be existing towns and cities. New housing and residential environments should be well designed and should make a significant contribution to promoting urban renaissance and improving the quality of life.

(DETR, 2000)

There are a number of aims explicit and implicit within this paragraph, but some clear objectives are those of focusing development on existing towns and cities and promoting urban renaissance, which is considered to be more “sustainable”. There is also the aim of meeting the housing needs of those in both urban *and rural* areas. No conflict between these aims is acknowledged in PPG3.

PPG3 makes a number of assumptions, many relating to sustainability. For example terms such as “sustainable patterns of development” (paragraph 1), “sustainable development” (paragraph 3), “more sustainable residential environments” (paragraph 46) are introduced with an assumption that they are commonly understood, hence require no definition. It very quickly becomes clear that the most important aspect of sustainable development is protecting the environment:

To promote sustainable development, the need for economic growth has to be reconciled with social and environmental considerations, particularly those of conserving and enhancing the quality of our environment in both town and country.

(DETR, 2000)(Paragraph 3)

To achieve this protection of the environment, the overall emphasis in the document is of a prioritisation of urban development over rural, an urban containment discourse:

The Government is committed to promoting more sustainable patterns of development, by [*inter alia*] concentrating most additional housing development within urban areas...

(DETR, 2000)(Paragraph 21)

A clear cause and effect relationship is implied between locating development around public transport corridors and a concomitant reduction in car use:

The Government places particular emphasis on the importance of integrating decisions on planning and transport in order to reduce the need to travel by car. Local planning authorities should therefore seek to exploit opportunities to locate larger housing developments around major nodes along good quality transport corridors.

(DETR, 2000)(Paragraph 47)

In terms of rural development in particular, PPG3 emphasises that new rural housing should be the exception, with a focus on urban housing. The justification for that new housing can only be that the new housing will support local services and will meet a local need. Readers can be left in little doubt that the Government is keen to focus development in urban areas, and that small scale rural housing provision should be seen as an exception from a general policy of urban containment.

Planning Policy Guidance note 13 (Transport), March 2001

Planning Policy Guidance note 13 on transport was published shortly after PPG3 and reflects many of the same messages. Paragraph 4 of PPG13 sets out the objectives of the guidance, to:

1. promote more sustainable transport choices for both people and for moving freight;
2. promote accessibility to jobs, shopping, leisure facilities and services by public transport, walking and cycling, and
3. reduce the need to travel, especially by car.

(DETR, 2001)

Similarly to PPG3, the emphasis is on sustainability, and assumptions are again made about what sustainable means, in the form of “sustainable development” (paragraph 2), “sustainable transport choices” and “sustainable distribution” (both paragraph 3).

PPG13 frequently identifies the need for development to be concentrated in existing urban areas, near public transport routes – the urban containment discourse. The guidance provides specific advice for rural areas, acknowledging their difference, but then silences this difference by reiterating that the same overall approach should be used in urban and rural areas alike (ibid.)(paragraph 40). The clear emphasis is again on urban containment, in the belief that this will reduce car use.

Planning Policy Statement 7 (Sustainable development in rural areas), August 2004

PPS7 was published in 2004, and even by this stage there was no significant change in the approach from Government to balancing development in urban/rural areas. The move to the production of PPSs instead of PPGs (as a result of the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004) heralded generally significantly shorter documents. The objectives section of PPS7, however, is anything but short. Four headline objectives are supported by other sub-objectives. The headline objectives are:

- (i) To raise the quality of life and the environment in rural areas
- (ii) To promote more sustainable patterns of development
- (iii) Promoting the development of the English regions by improving their economic performance so that all are able to reach their full potential
- (iv) To promote sustainable, diverse and adaptable agriculture sectors

(ODPM, 2004)

Again, “sustainability” is frequently used, featuring in two of the four objectives and in four times in the sub-objectives for objective (i). No attempt is made to define sustainability – the assumption is that its meaning is understood by readers, and that that meaning is one of urban containment.

The sub-objectives to objective (ii) emphasise urban containment, “preventing urban sprawl” and focusing development in existing towns and villages. RPBs and local authorities can be left in little doubt about the aim of PPS7, which is reinforced by one of the Key Principles (paragraph 1 (iv)), which states:

New building development in the open countryside away from existing settlements, or outside areas allocated for development in development plans, should be strictly controlled; the Government's overall aim is to protect the countryside for the sake of its intrinsic character and beauty, the diversity of its landscapes, heritage and wildlife, the wealth of its natural resources and so it may be enjoyed by all.

(ODPM, 2004)

There is little advice on how local authorities might accommodate both this aim and the aim of PPG3 to meet the needs of those in rural areas for housing. Later in PPS7, though, there is perhaps some inkling of a change in approach. In contrast to PPG3, there is a potential relaxation in the justification for development in rural areas:

Planning authorities should set out in LDDs their policies for allowing some limited development in, or next to, rural settlements that are not designated as local service centres, in order to meet local business and community needs and *to maintain the vitality of these communities* [my emphasis]. In particular, authorities should be supportive of small-scale development of this nature where it provides the most sustainable option in villages that are remote from, and have poor public transport links with, service centres.

(ODPM, 2004)(Paragraph 4)

So in addition to the strict needs-only justification in PPG3 and PPG13, we see that rural development might be acceptable if it maintains the vitality of communities, and later PPS7 is more specific about what this might mean:

Planning authorities should adopt a positive approach to planning proposals designed to improve the viability, accessibility or community value of existing services and facilities

(ODPM, 2004)(Paragraph 7)

There is as yet no consideration of the possibility of meeting demand for new housing as much as need for it, but we might consider this paragraph as looking more favourably on rural development.

Planning Policy Statement 1 (Delivering Sustainable Development), February 2005.

PPS1 was published in 2005. The “Government’s objectives for the planning system” section of PPS1 is a fairly lengthy introduction to the planning system, which intertextualises documents such as the Brundtland report and the Government’s own sustainable development strategy. It reiterates the Government’s aims for sustainable development as:

- social progress which recognises the needs of everyone;
- effective protection of the environment;
- the prudent use of natural resources; and,
- the maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment.

(ODPM, 2005)(Paragraph 4)

PPS1 goes on to explain that planning should “facilitate and promote sustainable and inclusive patterns of urban and rural development” by:

- making suitable land available for development in line with economic, social and environmental objectives to improve people's quality of life;
- contributing to sustainable economic development;
- protecting and enhancing the natural and historic environment, the quality and character of the countryside, and existing communities;
- ensuring high quality development through good and inclusive design, and the efficient use of resources; and,
- ensuring that development supports existing communities and contributes to the creation of safe, sustainable, liveable and mixed

communities with good access to jobs and key services for all members of the community.

(ODPM, 2005)(Paragraph 5)

These aims are, probably deliberately, hard to argue with and fairly bland. The emphasis throughout PPS1 is on “sustainable development”, and the Government’s interpretation of that, which on the basis of this document is about balancing economic, social and environmental objectives. Specific guidance on how to achieve sustainable development is generally left to the subject-specific PPGs and PPSs.

There is, though, some evidence of an environmental focus to this document’s interpretation of what sustainability means. The “Key Principles” of PPS1 show this focus:

The following key principles should be applied to ensure that development plans and decisions taken on planning applications contribute to the delivery of sustainable development:

(i) Development plans should ensure that sustainable development is pursued in an integrated manner, in line with the principles for sustainable development set out in the UK strategy. Regional planning bodies and local planning authorities should ensure that development plans promote outcomes in which environmental, economic and social objectives are achieved together over time.

(ii) Regional planning bodies and local planning authorities should ensure that development plans contribute to global sustainability by addressing the causes and potential impacts of climate change...

(ODPM, 2005)(Paragraph 13)

The first key principle stresses the importance of an integrated approach to sustainable development, but the second immediately emphasises the importance of climate change, i.e. environmental sustainability. Is this element of sustainability thus considered to be more important than economic and social elements? That is certainly the interpretation one could put on this part of PPS1.

Much of the rest of PPS1 is full of vague endorsements of “sustainable development”. There is some reflection of an urban containment discourse, in terms of focusing development on existing centres, but it is couched in such a way as to be uncontroversial.

Planning Policy Statement 3 (Housing), November 2006

PPS3 was published in November 2006 and was part of the Government’s response to the Barker Review. The Barker Review, published in March 2004, recommended an increase in the supply of housing across the UK, as a shortage of housing was having a negative effect on the economy (*inter alia*). It took the Government until December 2005 to publish its response, but that response contained strong indications of the direction of travel they wished to see, and an indication that *demand* for housing should join *need* for housing as a consideration:

Where rural affordability is an issue, regions and local authorities should consider the need to secure growth, in both the affordable and market housing sectors, in rural areas as well as in urban ones.

(HM Treasury and Office for the Deputy Prime Minister, 2005)(Para 2.24)

At the same time as publishing that response to the Barker Review, draft PPS3 was issued. Following consultation, the final version of PPS3 was published in over a year later, in November 2006. This is perhaps indicative of the length of time it can take for planning policies to be amended – it took 2 years and 8 months for new policies to be introduced that would work towards what the Barker Review called “significant benefits from a higher rate of housebuilding” (Barker, 2004). As we will see below, it can take significantly longer for changes to national policy to filter down to the local level.

Another influence on PPS3 was the Affordable Rural Housing Commission. Although that body did not publish its final report until May 2006, its members clearly influenced the draft PPS3, with the result that the emphasis on urban containment prevalent in PPG3 was significantly reduced.

PPS3 emphasises “the Government’s commitment to improving the affordability and supply of housing in all communities”. The “strategic housing policy objectives” of PPS3 are:

The Government’s key housing policy goal is to ensure that everyone has the opportunity of living in a decent home, which they can afford, in a community where they want to live. To achieve this, the Government is seeking:

- To achieve a wide choice of high quality homes, both affordable and market housing, to address the requirements of the community.
- To widen opportunities for home ownership and ensure high quality housing for those who cannot afford market housing, in particular those who are vulnerable or in need.
- To improve affordability across the housing market, including by increasing the supply of housing.
- To create sustainable, inclusive, mixed communities in all areas, both urban and rural.

(DCLG, 2006)

The difference in emphasis between these objectives and those in PPG3 is striking – the focus here is principally on increasing the supply of housing and opening the housing market up to those who are presently excluded. Sustainability is less of a prime consideration. PPS3 is unique amongst the planning policy advice analysed so far, in that it includes an encouragement to regional and local plan makers to do more to meet demand, in addition to need, for housing:

The specific outcomes that the planning system should deliver are:

...A sufficient quantity of housing taking into account need and demand and seeking to improve choice.

(DCLG, 2006)(Paragraph 10)

Specifically in relation to rural areas, and in what could be seen as a development of PPS7, PPS3 is supportive of housing in rural areas in some contexts:

The delivery of housing in rural areas should respect the key principles underpinning this PPS, providing high quality housing that contributes to the *creation* [my emphasis] and maintenance of sustainable rural communities in market towns and villages.

(DCLG, 2006)(Paragraph 3)

PPS3 goes on to say:

Local Planning Authorities should, working with stakeholders, set out the criteria to be used for identifying broad locations and specific sites taking into account:

- The need to provide housing in rural areas, not only in market towns and local service centres but also in villages in order to enhance or maintain their sustainability. This should include, particularly in small rural settlements, considering the relationship between settlements so as to ensure that growth is distributed in a way that supports informal social support networks, assists people to live near their work and benefit from key services, minimise environmental impact and, where possible, encourage environmental benefits.

(DCLG, 2006)(Paragraph 38)

There are more significant changes in the abandonment of the “sequential approach”. The presumption that brownfield sites should usually be developed before greenfield sites is excluded from PPS3. Instead, local authorities are expected to carry out sustainability appraisals of potential sites for new housing. Whether the land is previously developed will presumably form part of this consideration, but there will also be an opportunity to consider the social and economic sustainability of housing in rural areas.

There is still a national target for 60% of new housing to be built on previously developed land, but local authorities are now given the flexibility to set their own targets, where they can justify departing from this national aspiration. There is self-

evidently likely to be more previously developed land in urban areas and larger settlements than in rural areas and villages. As we saw in section 2.4.2, authors such as Adams et al (2002) have critiqued the blanket approach that says previously developed land is inherently sustainable as a location for new housing development whereas greenfield land is inherently unsustainable. It seems that the new PPS3 recognises that a more balanced approach is to be commended.

The delivery of housing is the main focus of PPS3, and it is emphasised frequently within the document. Sustainability and sustainable development are mentioned, but in contrast to the other documents analysed, it is not the first thing mentioned in relation to any subject. Tellingly, of the four strategic housing policy objectives, discussed above, three are to do with increasing supply, and only one mentions sustainability.

Summary

This lengthy sub-section has examined the Government's aims and objectives, with the intention of contributing to research question 2 – assessing the role played by national and regional planning policy. It seems fair to see PPS3 as being indicative of a step change in Government advice, a move away from an anti-development discourse to one of encouraging development of housing where there is need *or demand* for it – a contrast to previous Government guidance which focused purely on meeting need for housing, with little or no consideration given to demand for housing.

However, documents such as PPS1, PPS7 and PPG13 (excluding paragraphs 12-17), are still in place, and plan-makers are expected to take them all into account. This sub-section of analysis has demonstrated the breadth of objectives present in these different documents, and hence it could be argued that the Government's aims and objectives are far from being clear and unambiguous.

This is problematic because, as has been outlined previously, the Government does not implement the planning policy advice it produces. It is dependent on regional and local government for implementation, so is dependent on those regional and local bodies interpreting its guidance in the "correct" way. Glancing back at Hogwood and

Dunn's criteria for perfect policy implementation (see section 4.4.1), we could see the problems this might cause, even if the Government's aims were clear and unambiguous. As they are not, and each policy document seems to have a different focus, some more subtly different than others, it is left to plan makers at the strategic and local level to prioritise the issues they consider most appropriate.

As important as the aims of Government policy documents is the discourse running through those documents. This sub-section has identified that until the publication of PPG3 there was a dominant urban containment discourse present in planning policy advice, with rural development being, either implicitly or explicitly, painted as being less sustainable than urban development.

We can now move onto assess how the strategic planning policy (i.e. at the regional or sub-regional level) affecting the case study local authorities reflects the different aims and objectives identified in national policy.

5.2.2. The approaches taken by RSSs in relation to rural housing

An analysis of regional policy in the case study areas is split over the following three sub-sections. The first part of this analysis, set out immediately below, is a statistical examination of the housing numbers allocated to the rural case study authorities in strategic plans (summarised from data contained in Appendix 8), which can tell us the level of development proposed in rural areas for each regional spatial strategy (RSS), compared with the proportion of development allocated through the old regional planning guidance (RPG) and County Structure Plan¹⁷. That quantitative analysis is followed by a qualitative approach in sub-sections 5.2.3 (a selective discourse analysis of the strategic policy documents in place) and 5.2.4, which looks in detail at one RSS in particular.

¹⁷ The proportion of housing allocated to the local authority level through the RPG and structure plan must be imputed – the RPGs allocated housing numbers to county level only, and the county structure plans then divided the county allocation by local authority. We can work out the proportion of the regional total going to the county in question, and the proportion of the county total going to the case study local authority, and hence work back to find the proportion of the regional total going to the case study local authority.

In four of the five case study areas, the new RSS for the region had reached submission draft stage at the time of the case study visits (the exception being SADC in the West Midlands region, whose RSS reached submission stage in December 2007). Having been submitted to the Secretary of State, the RSS can be used as both a material consideration in the determination of planning applications and as a reasonably accurate guide to what the finalised policy would be for the purposes of local policy making. The RSS is then subject to an Examination in Public (EIP) by the Planning Inspectorate, who will report to the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State then issues Proposed Changes, subject to consultation, before a final RSS is issued.

North East Regional Spatial Strategy

The housing allocations for ADC in the strategic policy frameworks for the local authority have varied to a significant extent. In the RPG and Structure Plan, ADC was allocated 1.84% of housing development prior to 2006. This fell to 1.19% in the submission draft RSS, but came back up to 1.44% in the EIP panel report. The EIP panel report figures took account of the large number of existing planning permissions for housing in the District, so there were increased in the early periods, but a sharp fall in housebuilding in the last period. ADC remained unhappy with these figures, and was unlikely to be happier with the figures in the Secretary of State's proposed changes or final RSS, which reduced its allocations to 1.25% of the regional total.

The final RSS also introduced variable targets for the proportion of housing to be delivered on PDL, with that for Northumberland (the county within which Alnwick District is located) being 50% - compared with the North East target of 70%.

Yorkshire and Humberside Regional Spatial Strategy

At each stage of preparation of the Yorkshire and Humberside RSS, the proportion of housing allocated to Harrogate Borough Council fell. In the RPG/structure plan, HBC was allocated 2.66% of the regional total. This was reduced to 2.35% in the

submission draft RSS, 2.02% in the EIP panel report, 1.87% in the Secretary of State's proposed changes and 1.86% in the final document.

The final Yorkshire and Humber RSS (in table 2.22 of that document) contains a list of all the local authorities in the region, broken down into three categories:

- Annual net housing growth likely to rise from below the 2008-2026 average to above it;
- Annual net housing growth likely to remain broadly consistent 2008-2026;
- Annual net housing growth likely to fall from above the 2008-2026 average to below it.

Harrogate is in this latter group, as are the other most rural/high demand local authorities in the region. How this squares with the requirement in PPS3 to better match supply and demand for housing is unclear.

South West Regional Spatial Strategy

The previous South West RSS (formerly RPG) essentially duplicated national guidance. It does, though, include a regional target of 6,000-10,000 affordable homes per year.

The submission draft of the new RSS had a target of 7,500 affordable homes per annum, from a total of 23,600 houses built per annum – approximately 30%, and states that “authorities can specify rates [of affordable housing provision] up to 60% or higher in areas of greatest need.” (South West Regional Assembly, 2006)(Policy H1). The Panel Report recommended increasing the regional target to 10,000 houses - 35%, and making it clear that local authorities could exceed 60% targets in areas of greatest need.

The Panel Report also recommended an increase in the total housing provision in South Hams, indeed across the region, as a consequence of more up-to-date population projections becoming available during the EIP Process (The Planning Inspectorate, 2007a)(Paragraph 0.25). As a proportion of the regional total, however,

the allocation for South Hams has again fallen at every stage of the RSS preparation process. In the RPG/structure plan, SHDC had 2.73% of the regional total. This fell to 2.39% in the submission draft RSS, and 2.07% in the EIP Panel Report.

South East Regional Spatial Strategy

The picture in the South East differs from that in the other regions. The proportion of housing allocated to Wealden in the RPG/structure plan was 1.42%. That fell to 1.38% in the RSS submission draft, but was increased to 1.5% in the EIP panel report, and increased again to 1.66% in the Secretary of State's proposed changes. That increase has to be seen in the context of an ongoing dispute between the Government and the South East of England Regional Assembly (SEERA) about the level of development proposed in the South East – the Government has consistently pushed development targets higher in the South East, but SEERA and the local authorities in the South East, including Wealden, have opposed these moves on the grounds of overdevelopment and a lack of infrastructure.

West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy

The West Midlands RSS is at the earliest stage of preparation of any of the RSSs studied. It has only as yet reached submission draft, but so far the pattern of most of the other regions is being followed – the proportion of housing allocated to Stratford-on-Avon in the RPG/structure plan was 2.6% of the regional total, and this has fallen to 1.53% in the submission draft RSS.

Summary

Table 10 brings together the proportion of housing allocated to each of the case study authorities in their respective RSSs as they have gone through the various draft stages. Only the North East and Yorkshire and Humberside (Alnwick and Harrogate) had reached completion stage as at 1 August 2008.

Table 10 – The proportion of housing in each RSS allocated to each case study local authority

	North East	Yorkshire & Humber	South East	South West	West Midlands
	Alnwick	Harrogate	Wealden	South Hams	Stratford
RPG/Structure plan	1.84%	2.66%	1.42%	2.73%	2.6%
Submission draft RSS	1.19%	2.35%	1.38%	2.39%	1.53%
EIP Panel report	1.44%	2.02%	1.50%	2.07%	
Proposed changes	1.25%	1.87%	1.66%		
Final RSS	1.25%	1.86%			

This table shows a fairly mixed picture, but there is a clear trend downwards, with the exception of Wealden, in the South East, which at each stage of RSS preparation has been allocated more housing. Wealden District Council is opposed to these increases, and has issued press releases objecting to them without concomitant increases in infrastructure provision.

From this (admittedly crude) piece of quantitative analysis, we might conclude that reducing levels of housebuilding in rural areas is considered to be a legitimate aim of the RSSs in these five regions. The Government has made clear that in its view, based on the Barker Review and the evidence gathered to support that review, there is a clear link between a shortage in the supply of housing and increases in house prices making housing unaffordable for many (DCLG, 2007a). This view, however, is not necessarily shared by its planning inspectors.

The North East RSS EIP Panel summed up their views on the issue thus:

Adjusting housing allocations to compensate in retrospect for a reduction in available low cost housing is to use a very blunt planning tool...It was put to us that the level of net additions should be increased to allow provision [to meet local housing needs] to be made through the planning process... In our view this approach is unrealistic. We agree that there is scope to achieve a higher level of provision through existing mechanisms and conclude that there is no need for further modification to the Submission Draft.

(The Planning Inspectorate, 2006)

This Panel Report was published in July 2006, and one might suppose that in the interim, with the formation of the National Housing & Planning Advice Unit and the publication of, amongst other things, the Housing Green Paper in July 2007, that Planning Inspectors may look more favourably on increasing housing provision. However, writing in December 2007, the South West RSS EIP Panel were unconvinced of the merits of increasing housing supply:

It was put to us that the overall level of housing provision should be increased due to the considerable evidence on housing needs within the region, particularly the shortage of affordable housing... We have no doubt that there is a need for more affordable/social housing in the region, but we are not convinced that an overall increase in the level of housing provision for the region is justified...

(The Planning Inspectorate, 2007a)

It seems the Planning Inspectorate are unwilling to increase supply to attempt to address affordability problems. Are the Government prepared to do so? The stage following Panel Reports is for the Secretary of State to issue Proposed Changes, then a final RSS. Two final RSSs have been published so far in the case study regions – the Yorkshire & Humber RSS in May 2008 and the North East RSS in July 2008. The evidence from those documents, published post-PPS3, is that supply is going to be increased on a regional basis, but the supply going to the case study authorities is not, so their proportion of the regional total has actually being reduced.

It seems, then, that despite PPS3 and the Government's overall commitment to better match housing supply and demand, when given the opportunity to do just that via amending RSSs, the Secretary of State is unwilling to do so. The reason for this lack of amendment is unclear, especially as in the South East, the Secretary of State's Proposed Changes include higher housing figures both for the region and for Wealden as a proportion of that regional total.

This sub-section has looked purely at the levels of housing provision allocated to the case study local authorities – an important component of the role played by regional planning policy. In the next sub-section we can try and explore the reasons for a

downward trend in rural housing provision – do RSSs seek to justify this, and if so, how?

5.2.3. The different constructions in strategic policy

The previous sub-section considered the specific issue of housing numbers and whether these were going up or down for our rural case studies as the RSS went through the drafting and examination process. Here we look beyond housing numbers and try to identify any dominant discourses running through the RSSs, and in the case of SADC the Warwickshire Structure Plan (as this document was the, albeit outdated, strategic policy in place at the time of the case study visit). The intention is to gauge the general “mood” of the strategic policy in place for the case study local authorities, to assess whether in that region (or county) there is a general presumption in favour of rural development or more of an urban containment theme.

North East RSS Submission draft (June 2005)

The submission draft of the North East RSS relies heavily on particular sources of “evidence” to support its strongly anti rural development stance:

House prices, housebuilding and migration show a trend away from the creation of sustainable communities to a more dispersed pattern of development. This is influenced by people’s greater willingness to travel; their increased financial mobility; and the availability of housing and living environments that people aspire to outside of the region’s conurbations.

(North East Assembly, 2005)(Paragraph 3.56)

No empirical evidence is presented in support of these assertions – they are presented as fact. This is known in discourse analysis terminology as *modality*, and it is something which features strongly in this RSS.

An urban containment discourse is matched with what we might almost call a positivist approach in other places in the document:

The RSS tackles both the cause and effect of affordability by better meeting people's aspirations and needs to help alleviate pressure on popular areas... Removing the factors that influence people to move away from the urban and former coalfield and heavy industrial areas, through improvement of housing and living environments, would help to alleviate some of the pressure on rural areas.

(North East Assembly, 2005)(Paragraphs 3.78 & 3.80)

This quote illustrates the perception that a simplistic, one-way causality is in effect in the housing market of the North East – urban areas are unattractive locations for “people” to live in, so they seek to move to rural areas, hence increasing the demand for housing, hence making that housing less affordable. Again, assumptions and predictions about the effect of “urban renaissance” are presented as fact, and used to justify an urban containment approach in the RSS. No evidence is presented to support the assumption that revitalising urban areas would somehow stop people wanting to live in rural areas – an alternative argument might be that it may remove the *push* factors which drive people out of urban areas, but could do nothing about the *pull* factors which draw people to rural areas (the quality of the environment, the “rural idyll”, etc).

Some other voices are brought into the RSS on occasion – there is a recognition that there is a need for affordable housing in rural areas, but the urban containment discourse is dominant, and as illustrated, used as “evidence” that both urban and rural areas would benefit from the approach. Hall et al demonstrated in 1973 that this was not necessarily the case, but the North East RSS considers no alternative points of view. It also, despite acknowledging that rural areas are diverse, does not reflect that diversity in its policies relating to rural areas. For example, the former coalfield areas in Northumberland and County Durham (villages and towns which would previously have relied on employment from mining but are now often deprived and feature high unemployment and a poor quality physical environment) are recognised in the document as requiring a particular approach. Housing-led regeneration is acknowledged as being important to bodies seeking the improvement of these areas, but no additional housing is proposed in the RSS to facilitate that regeneration.

In short, the submission draft North East RSS is entirely urban focused, with no recognition of alternative discourses. It demonstrates a domination of an urban containment discourse, little intertextuality (see section 4.3.3 for an explanation of what intertextuality means), and many assumptions. It can be seen as an embodiment of the “unholy alliance” between urban local authorities and rural elites discussed by Hall et al.

Yorkshire and Humber RSS submission draft (January 2006)

The submission draft of the Yorkshire and Humber RSS shares the strong urban focus of the North East RSS, and uses some of the same arguments to justify this. Increasing mobility and “increasing dispersal between places where people live, work and shop” (Yorkshire and Humber Assembly, 2006)(Table 2.5) is highlighted as a “Key Sustainability Issue” in the region, “issues” apparently being a euphemism for “problems” in this context. To solve these issues, the plan’s spatial vision states that the RSS will “Achieve a more sustainable pattern and form of development...” (ibid.)(Table 3.2). These extracts demonstrate an assumption that an increased dispersal between places where people live work and shop is a bad thing, and that a “more” sustainable pattern of development is necessary – these are implicit critiques of rural development, and are developed into concrete policies later in the document.

Relating to climate change, paragraph 4.16 of the RSS cites a study which demonstrates that the majority of the region’s greenhouse gas emissions come from three large power stations in the region. Perhaps paradoxically, paragraph 4.18 then goes on to state that “Perhaps the greatest impact the Plan can have on greenhouse gases is through increased urban density...” (ibid.). We can contrast this approach with that seen in the South West RSS (discussed below). Again, though, an urban containment discourse is being implicitly developed. This discourse is embodied through Policy YH5, which is entitled “Urban focus”, and Policy YH8, which specifies the “Location of Development” for the region via a sequential approach. The latter states that development outside the main towns in the region will be “limited... with a focus on meeting local needs for affordable housing...” (ibid.).

A similar logic to the North East RSS is used to justify this urban containment approach: “An overall approach of strategic restraint in rural areas... helps to support urban regeneration... thereby countering dispersal trends and safeguarding the character and attractiveness of the Region’s countryside” (ibid.)(Paragraph 5.18). This extract perhaps demonstrates the true intention of the urban containment approach – to maintain the countryside as an attractive place, in line with the Government’s “main aim” in PPS7, discussed in section 5.2.1 above.

South West RSS submission draft (June 2006)

The South West submission draft RSS, perhaps as a result of the fact that the South West lacks the dominant urban core present in other regions, takes a more balanced approach to rural development. There are still references to a relationship between reducing car use and a more “sustainable approach” (South West Regional Assembly, 2006)(paragraph 1.2.8), but the different approach is highlighted as early as paragraph 1.3, which asks “What sort of region do we want to be?”. The first feature of “The regional future this strategy is working towards” is that “All communities enjoy the benefits of further development and where housing needs are satisfied”. This is a clear break from the North East and Yorkshire and Humber RSSs which make clear that all communities should *not* see further development.

Similarly to the Yorkshire and Humber RSS, a study is cited showing sources of greenhouse gas emissions. But the South West RSS is clear about the contribution that urban containment might make to reducing these emissions: “Concentrating growth in Strategically Significant Cities and Towns should contribute a further 2.2% reduction” (ibid.)(Paragraph 1.6.11). The emphasis is on sustainable construction techniques, which it is estimated will contribute a much larger 10.3% reduction in emissions.

This realistic, positive approach to rural development continues with:

The Strategy recognises that many South West residents will continue to live in a dispersed pattern of small towns and villages and the difficulties of

securing a sustainable future for these rural settlements is recognised with measures to enable these communities to continue thriving.

(ibid.)(Paragraph 1.6.18)

The document contains much more intertextuality and recognition of alternative voices and discourses than the two RSSs analysed previously – it acknowledges PPG3 and the need to move to a more sustainable pattern of growth, but is clear that this cannot be at the expense of rural communities. In this sense it demonstrates a more balanced approach.

South East RSS submission draft (March 2006)

The South East RSS might be described as occupying a middle ground between the North East/Yorkshire and Humber RSSs and the South West RSS. The urban containment/renaissance discourse is strong throughout, but it is balanced with a recognition of the needs of rural communities, as evidenced by the following:

Although most people live in the region's urban areas, and the Plan has an overall urban and urban renaissance emphasis, the rural part of the South East forms an important part of the region...

(South East England Regional Assembly, 2006)(Section B, Paragraph 5.2)

The RSS goes on to state that in view of the importance of rural areas, although the majority of development in the South East will be in urban areas, "rural issues have been approached as a core context for the Plan" (ibid.)(Section B, Paragraph 5.6). There is still support for changing the overall pattern of development in the South East, to make it "more sustainable" (ibid.)(Section C, Paragraph 2.2.1), but there is a recognition that land use planning cannot achieve this in isolation:

Adaptations of lifestyle and business practices will also need to accompany these development changes. Attitudes towards consumption of energy and the production of waste, for example, are probably more important drivers of change than physical development.

(ibid.)(Section D1, Paragraph 1.7)

This is in marked contrast to the tone in the Yorkshire and Humber RSS, which stresses the importance of urban containment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

The South East RSS uses intertextuality to bring in justification for an urban focus to its development strategy:

It is Government policy, and part of the fundamental strategy of this plan, to make best use of previously developed land, to protect the countryside and to promote urban renaissance... This plan therefore seeks to focus future housing provision in the region's urban areas.

(ibid.)(Section D3, Paragraph 4.2)

This reference to Government policy marks this plan as different from, for example, the North East RSS, which although it relies on the same arguments does not explicitly refer to their source – that document makes assumptions that this is common sense/knowledge, rather than opening up the debate through intertextuality as the South East RSS does.

Policy H3 of the South East RSS sets out the locational strategy for housing development, and has a relatively positive attitude to rural development, acknowledging that there may be a range of reasons for housing in the countryside: “In rural areas some housing development will be needed in order to meet identified social or economic needs...” (ibid.)(Policy H3). There is still a need, rather than demand, focus, however.

Overall, then, the South East submission draft RSS incorporates pro-development voices for rural areas, allowing differing interpretations to be drawn from the document. The urban containment discourse is strong throughout, but is not dominant to the extent that it is in some other RSSs.

Warwickshire Structure Plan (August 2002)

The West Midlands draft RSS was published only in December 2007, some time after the case study visit. As a consequence, the strategic policy in place for Stratford on Avon District Council at the time of the case study visit was the Warwickshire County Structure Plan, adopted in August 2002 (and thanks to the epic timescales of structure plan preparation, drafted and publically examined before PPG3 was published).

This pre-PPG3 status is reflected in the introduction, with a set of objectives that promote/accept migration into the County of those commuting back to Coventry and Birmingham. This type of approach is not seen in any of the RSSs, or indeed the local plans/LDFs of the case study local authorities. Over half of the houses planned for Warwickshire in 1996-2011 are for those moving from Birmingham and Coventry (18,400 out of a total of 31,100). The justification for this is given as the 1998 Regional Planning Guidance (via intertextuality) so the drive in the draft RSS to focus development on the urban areas is clearly a relatively recent phenomenon.

There is still an attempt to concentrate development within the County in towns, perhaps understandably given that “In Stratford-on-Avon District, for example, less than 20% of the new housing growth has been in the town of Stratford-upon-Avon” (Warwickshire County Council, 2002)(Paragraph 2.3.5). The structure plan has evidently been (too?) successful in shifting the focus of development to Stratford-upon-Avon, given the recent changes to local policy instituted in SADC (see section 5.1.1), in response to the fact that between 2001/2002 and 2006/2007, 60% of new affordable housing in the district was built in Stratford town.

In terms of rural housing (in the context of a largely rural county), the plan seeks to implement a needs based approach beyond the main towns:

The very maximum housing provision to be made in the rural areas beyond the main towns should be the equivalent of the local growth in households attributable to the rural community in any rural location. Any

lesser degree of concentration would perpetuate past trends towards an unsustainable dispersed pattern of development

(ibid.)(Paragraph 2.3.14)

There is an assumption here that development in (more) rural parts of the County is unsustainable – not an uncommon point of view, but interesting given the encouragement of commuting from Birmingham and Coventry into the County. The structure plan, though, is keen to focus that commuting-based migration in settlements with good public transport links, which tend to be the main towns, so there is some logic behind the approach taken.

There is evidence of a pastoralist construction of the countryside in policy RA.1 (Development in rural areas): “Development should be aimed at achieving a balance between enhancing and protecting rural life” (ibid). The clear assumption here is that “rural life” is something apart from urban life, and whilst not specifically assuming it is idyllic, the implication is that rural life is special in some way – the pastoralist construction (Murdoch et al., 2003). That pastoralist approach is manifested through the encouragement of a settlement hierarchy for local authorities. Settlements considered appropriate for development should be determined on the basis of “availability of public transport and basic social facilities, i.e. at least a school, shop and bus service” (ibid.)(Policy RA.3) – the key settlements advocated by PPG3. In the same policy, though, there is justification for SADC’s COM1 policy, allowing modest growth in settlements without such services if it is supported by “community appraisals”.

The plan analyses the need for affordable housing in the County, concluding that between 1991 and 2011 15,100 affordable houses are needed (7,400 of those from migration from Coventry and Birmingham). It identifies that between 1991 and 1996 (i.e. 50% of the plan period) only 1,300 were built (10% of the need). No comment is made on this apparently huge underprovision, or advocacy of any special measures which may be needed to increase the rate of provision.

In conclusion, the Warwickshire Structure plan is a slightly strange blend between the beginnings of sustainability-led policies (i.e. PPG3) and a laissez-faire attitude to

large-scale migration of commuters. The structure plan advocated large-scale migration into the county by those currently living and working in Birmingham and Coventry, and attempted to guide development to locations which would facilitate ongoing commuting. It could be argued it thus facilitated urban decline, making it possible to work in those urban areas and live in a (relatively) rural area. This acceptance that rural communities were likely to become little more than dormitories would arguably also have negative impacts on rural communities. It is easier to understand, having read this plan, why PPG3 was considered necessary, and why an urban containment discourse has been readily accepted by many key actors in rural areas.

Summary

This sub-section has demonstrated that the strategic policy in place in the case study local authorities could be placed on a broad continuum from a pre-PPG3 approach in the Warwickshire Structure Plan, through a heavily PPG3-influenced approach in the North East and Yorkshire and Humberside RSSs, to an approach in the South East, and particularly South West, RSSs that is pro-rural development on the grounds of social sustainability. To a certain extent these differences reflect the timescale of the production of strategic policy, but there was only two months between the publication of the Yorkshire and Humberside and South East RSS submission drafts, so there seems to be other reasons for the difference in discourse.

Another potential difference between the regions is the extent to which they are broadly urban or rural in character – although the South East is immediately adjacent to London, the biggest conurbation in England, it is relatively devoid of large urban areas itself. Similarly, the South West, although it contains the cities of Plymouth and Exeter, is a largely rural region. In contrast, the West Midlands, Yorkshire and Humberside and the North East have several large towns/cities which perhaps dominate regional decision making. This might be an example of Peter Hall’s “unholy alliance” – exercise of power by rural elites and urban authorities to constrain urban growth, to the benefit of both parties, but the disbenefit of many others.

This sub-section has looked at discourses across the strategic policy affecting the case study local authorities. To complete the analysis in this section of the role played by national and regional planning policy, the last sub-section looks in detail at the preparation of one of the finalised RSSs, the North East document, to perhaps try and understand the rationale behind how strategic bodies balance urban and rural issues in preparing an RSS.

5.2.4. How the urban-rural balance of an RSS is negotiated through its preparation process

This sub-section looks specifically at the process of producing the North East RSS from the perspective of Alnwick District Council. This is achieved by analysis of documents produced by ADC, the North East Assembly and the Planning Inspectorate.

ADC, in its response to consultation on the submission draft RSS, made lengthy and critical comments on the document, including this statement:

Paragraphs 2.130 and 2.148 state “It is vital that rural areas are not seen in isolation from the rest of the region” and “It is important to ensure that their (the secondary centres) specific local economic and regeneration needs are provided for...” respectively. The Council absolutely agrees with this sentiment, but must make the point again that sentiment is useless without relevant policy text to back it up.

(Alnwick District Council, 2005b)

The examination in public into the RSS, held after the publication of draft PPS3 but before the final document was released, did not fundamentally alter the rural-urban balance in the RSS (summarised in sub-section 5.2.3). If anything, the recommended changes increase the priority given to urban areas. Set out below are a number of specific policy areas where ADC was concerned about the priority given to urban over rural development.

The sequential approach

Policy 3 of the draft RSS was the sequential approach, and set out the following order of priority for land to be released:

- a) suitable previously-developed sites and buildings within urban areas, particularly around public transport nodes;
- b) other suitable locations within urban areas not identified as land to be protected for nature or heritage conservation or recreational purposes;
- c) suitable sites in locations adjoining urban areas, particularly those that involve the use of previously-developed land and buildings; and
- d) suitable sites in settlements outside urban areas, particularly those that involve the use of previously-developed land and buildings.

(North East Assembly, 2005)

ADC's specific concerns about this policy were:

Policy 3 is just one example of policies in the regional spatial strategy which make it impossible to achieve this vision of a sustainable rural area... The preamble to policy 3 defines "urban areas" as including only the "rural service centres" in the rural areas of the region. This means that, on the basis of the sequential approach set out, greenfield land adjoining Alnwick town should be developed before a brownfield site in the centre of Rothbury. This is fundamentally unsustainable, and runs contrary to PPG3. Given the availability of greenfield land around Alnwick and Amble, the two "rural service centres" in Alnwick District, the policy could disbar any development in any other settlement in the District.

(Alnwick District Council, 2005b)

The panel concurred with this view in part, and recommended that the definition of urban areas be expanded to include "other settlements identified in Local Development Frameworks as providing a significant opportunity in terms of previously developed land and buildings". We might though, particularly in view of the guidance in PPS3, mount a more robust challenge of this policy. The sequential

approach has now been abandoned at Government level, to be replaced by a more balanced view of sustainability. It seems that the North East RSS is out of date before it has been published.

Overall policy on rural areas

Overall, it is hard to escape the view that there is little in the way of coherent policy on rural areas running through the document. Simply by stating that the RSS should accelerate the rural renaissance of the North East, the document raises expectations that policies will actually try and achieve this. There are some admirable policies, but too often they are contradicted by other policies, or undermined by bland policies that focus on urban areas.

The panel did not share this view, commenting that:

It was noted that the range of problems associated with maintaining sustainable rural communities cannot be divorced from the prioritization of urban core regeneration which, to be successful, requires constraint throughout the rural areas. However, none of the participants suggested that urban core prioritization should be relaxed; it being recognized that rural sustainability problems were a consequential issue that had to be dealt with.

(The Planning Inspectorate, 2006)

This latter comment is particularly contentious, if not factually incorrect – virtually every rural local authority argued for more housing, and ADC in particular stated that “the focus (on conurbations and towns in the city regions) remains too heavy in the submission draft Regional Spatial Strategy, and places unrealistic restrictions on development in rural Northumberland” (Alnwick District Council, 2005b). So it would seem that at least one participant did suggest that the urban core prioritisation should be relaxed, if not in overall strategy then certainly in terms of housing numbers. ADC further argued that the supposition that restraining development in Alnwick would somehow aid the regeneration of the urban core of Tyneside (specifically the NewcastleGateshead Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder area) was misguided:

It is also simplistic to assume that reducing housebuilding rates in rural Northumberland will slow or stop population decline in the conurbations. They are quite different housing markets, and the only direct result, particularly in the short to medium term, will be further problems within the rural housing market.

(Alnwick District Council, 2005b)

This latter comment was not addressed in the Panel Report, and does not seem to have been addressed by the North East Assembly at any stage.

Housing provision

ADC, and several other local authorities, argued for increases in their housing allocations in order to meet their growing needs for affordable housing, based on housing needs surveys. The panel's view on housing needs was:

Any formula or range of criteria that sought to determine the amount of development necessary to ensure sustainability of individual or a collection of rural settlements would be likely to generate a cumulative requirement significantly in excess of that which could be reconciled with any reasonable assessment of housing need, or district housing allocation.

(The Planning Inspectorate, 2006)

In other words, the panel is saying that providing enough development in rural areas to keep villages sustainable would result in levels of housebuilding significantly higher than the levels allocated to rural districts in the RSS. Put another way, they prioritise the limiting of housing development over the sustainability of rural communities – exactly in line with the Hall et al's critique of the planning system (see section 2.4.4). They are also concerned wholly with the need, rather than demand, for housing, an approach which PPS3 rejects (see section 5.2.1).

The submission draft RSS allocated a lower level of housing to the District than had been the case in the past. ADC argued that:

The reductions proposed will have a detrimental effect on the local economy, in terms of the building of the housing itself (particularly the local construction industry and housing led regeneration), new business development/business expansion and put considerable strain on the local housing market creating a serious shortfall in supply.

(Alnwick District Council, 2005b)

ADC requested a higher level of housebuilding in the district, which would:

allow a managed reduction in housebuilding, in accordance with the overall strategy of focussing development on the urban areas, but at the same time allowing the Council to meet its objectives of delivering affordable housing and regenerating the rural economy.

(ibid.)

The increased housing allocation ADC requested would have resulted in a 0.5% increase in the overall housebuilding figures for the region.

Affordable housing development

The RSS contains little support for local authorities in trying to achieve the maximum level of affordable housing development. Paragraph 3.81 (explicitly not a policy) of the draft document read as follows:

It will be for LDFs to determine the actual target for affordable housing provision and the range of housing requirements through up-to-date local housing assessments. However, low level thresholds should be set to determine the size of developments above which affordable housing should be provided. In some circumstances these may be below the levels indicated in PPG3. It will also be useful to incorporate the sequential approach by having different thresholds dependent on the needs, size and function of the settlement. The Assembly and the RHB will work closely with local authorities to identify local level affordability targets. LDFs will also need to recognise circumstances where affordable housing can be

built that will be discounted against the provision made in policy 30 because it replaces living space lost to second/holiday homes. However, this approach will only be applicable to affordable units within a regionally consistent monitoring framework.

(North East Assembly, 2005)

ADC requested that the RSS be amended to give more support to local authorities by explicitly stating that lower thresholds would be needed in some cases, and that targets for the proportion of housing to be affordable could be as high as 50%. The panel did not recommend any such changes to the RSS. They also considered that the RSS' proposal to allow affordable housing to be discounted against the figures laid out in policy 30 (see above) where second homes were an issue was inappropriate:

Adjusting housing allocations to compensate in retrospect for a reduction in available low cost housing is to use a very blunt planning tool.

(The Planning Inspectorate, 2006)

Their less blunt planning tool was to recommend the RSS should:

Include additional supporting text supporting the innovative use of "exception sites" as a sensitive approach to the problems associated with the increase in second homes in the more remote rural settlements.

(ibid.)

It is a matter of conjecture whether this addition, included in the Secretary of State's Further Proposed Changes, would have made any difference to the provision of affordable housing in the north east, particularly as ADC, in their representations to the EIP, noted that none of the affordable housing built in the district in the five years up to 2005 came from exception schemes. In fact, the final RSS removes even this mild encouragement for rural local authorities, and maintains the housing figures in the Proposed Changes. The Secretary of State has not made any of the changes to the RSS requested by ADC or any other rural planning authority, and has maintained the urban focus in the document.

Summary

From this detailed case study it seems that Alnwick District Council has found it impossible to convince the North East Regional Assembly, the Planning Inspectorate, or indeed the Secretary of State, of the need to increase its housing allocations. There appears to be a clear gap between policy rhetoric and implementation of that policy by central or regional government.

This section has presented evidence relating to research question 2 – what role is played by national and regional planning policy? It has looked firstly at the discourses present in national planning policy, and concluded that the Government's aims and objectives are far from clear and unambiguous. It has then looked at the strategic policy in place across the case study local authorities, and observed that there are dramatic differences in the extent to which rural development is encouraged or discouraged. It has concluded with an in-depth examination of the process an RSS goes through before it is adopted.

The next section moves on to examine local policy in more detail.

5.3. The factors which affect local policy

As with the strategic policy, we can investigate local policy, in the form of local plans, LDFs and other policies adopted by the case study local authorities with regard to (affordable) housing provision, and seek to answer research question 3 – what factors affect local policy? The next sub-section looks at the policies themselves, and this is followed by a consideration of the role played by strategic planning bodies in the development of local policy, a consideration of whether local authorities match rhetoric with action, and a selective discourse analysis of the policy documents as a whole.

5.3.1. The local policy at the time of the case study visits

Alnwick District Council

The Alnwick District local plan, adopted in 1997, includes policy H14, which states:

On all new housing development of 10 or more dwellings the council may seek to negotiate with developers for the inclusion of an appropriate amount of affordable housing in the light of established local need.

(Alnwick District Council, 1997)

This is an unusual policy in that it went beyond national policy at the time, which advocated a general site threshold of 25 dwellings, with 15 as the minimum, in rural areas with particularly high levels of need.

There is also a standard rural exception policy, policy H15, which allows sites “on small sites within or adjoining existing villages” (ibid.). There is no explicit restriction in the policy of a minimum size threshold of village to qualify for policy H15, but discussion with the planning policy representative demonstrates that ADC will only allow exception sites adjacent to villages where there is a level of services to support housing. This level is generally considered to be a school and a shop. This process of identifying key settlements was made more specific in ADC’s interim policies.

ADC adopted interim housing and affordable housing policies in June 2004 and March 2005 respectively. These are specifically not supplementary planning guidance or supplementary planning documents, but ADC has been using them as material considerations in the determination of planning applications.

The interim housing policy was intended to:

Ensure that, any new development is directed towards sustainable locations, giving priority to previously developed land in towns [and] Effectively manage the building rate in accordance with the housing requirement set in strategic plans, in order to ensure a consistent supply of housing throughout the Plan period.

(Alnwick District Council, 2004)

To achieve this, the policy set out to prioritise “tier 1” housing development – housing on brownfield sites in Alnwick, Amble and Rothbury - because “It is considered that the market towns are sustainable locations for further development as they have a range of services and are accessible by public transport” (ibid.). Part B of the policy further emphasises this priority by effectively operating a moratorium on anything other than tier 1 development when there is a 10 year supply of land with planning permission in the district.

In addition, housing sites are required to meet five “sustainability criteria”, one of which is: “that the development is accessible to jobs, shops, services, the transport network and modes of transport other than the private car” (ibid.).

The interim affordable housing policy stated:

On all allocated and windfall housing sites over 10 units or 0.33 hectares in Alnwick and Amble and over 3 units or 0.1 hectares in other settlements below 3000 population developers/applicants will be required to provide an appropriate element of affordable housing within the site...

...The proportion of affordable housing and its type sought on each site will depend on the assessment of need in the local area but in Alnwick, Amble and Rothbury, in view of the current extent of need, the proportion will not be less than a minimum of 35% of the total number of units.

(Alnwick District Council, 2005a)

In practice, ADC has been applying the 35% target across the board, where it is supported by HNSs.

The interim affordable housing policy also updated ADC's exception policy. It included the following requirements:

The development will apply the principles of sustainable development particularly in respect of its design, infrastructure requirements, availability of services and its location with regard to the highway and public transport network (as set out in the Interim Housing Policy)...

..Housing developments under Part B [the exception policy] can be considered in all villages listed in Policies H1 and H2 of the Alnwick District Wide Local Plan.

(ibid.)

The latter paragraph is ADC's key settlement/settlement hierarchy policy, which restricts development to settlements with a certain key level of services.

Harrogate Borough Council

Harrogate Borough Council adopted a "selective alteration" to its local plan in May 2004, and has been using the policies in it as material considerations since July 2002. Policy H5 in the selective alteration states:

The council will negotiate for the provision of an element of affordable housing on suitable new housing developments as follows:

A) In Harrogate, Knaresborough and Ripon on housing developments of 15 or more dwellings gross or sites of 0.5 of a hectare or more, irrespective of the number of dwellings.

B) in all other locations, satisfying policies H6, GB5, GB7 or C16 and policy HX, on housing developments of 3 or more dwellings gross or sites of 0.1 of a hectare or more, irrespective of the number of dwellings.

(Harrogate Borough Council, 2004)

The situation in Harrogate is complicated by the fact that at the same time, Policy HX in the selective alteration was introduced. This is a “growth restraint” policy, which states that only a very limited range of housing development will be accepted. 100% affordable housing schemes is one of the forms of acceptable development, as is schemes of less than ten houses on previously developed land. This latter restriction, combined with the 15 unit threshold in the larger settlements of the Borough, means that in theory there would be no section 106 affordable housing provision in Harrogate, Knaresborough or Ripon¹⁸.

Policy H5 refers to a number of other policies. Policy H6 is HBC’s settlement hierarchy, which identifies settlements which are considered appropriate locations for new development. It also states that development will be appropriate in “other small settlements with well defined built-up confines” (ibid.), if it constitutes infill only. This is an unusually relaxed approach to rural development, though before the advent of PPG3 would have been the norm in local plan policies. HBC is also relatively unusual in that policy H5 is applied to all forms of housing development, even those outside settlements. It also applies to conversions of existing buildings, again an approach which differs from many authorities.

South Hams District Council

The South Hams District local plan, adopted in 1996, includes policy SHDC2, which states:

¹⁸ To clarify: HBC seek affordable housing only on schemes of 15 houses or more in Harrogate, Knaresborough and Ripon, but simultaneously have a policy only allowing schemes of ten houses or less in those towns.

In order to meet identified local housing needs in settlements in the District, the Council will negotiate with developers to provide elements of affordable housing in new schemes on sites well related to community facilities and services and public transport routes, or which are suitable for development of high density schemes.

(South Hams District Council, 1996)

Part 2 of this policy is SHDC's standard exception policy. That policy requires that, *inter alia*, "local services, particularly schools, are available to cope with the development" (ibid.).

In 2004 SHDC adopted SPG on affordable housing. This SPG introduced thresholds above which SHDC would require affordable housing: in settlements of 3,000 population and above, the threshold was 15 dwellings, and elsewhere the threshold was two dwellings. The SPG also introduced a target of 50% affordable housing on sites above these thresholds. However, the SPG was "fatally damaged" by appeal decisions in 2006 – one appeal inspector decided that the local authority could not introduce thresholds without going through the statutory plan-making process, so deemed the SPG to be invalid. Such a decision is not unique; it is down to the discretion of the individual inspector as to the weight which can be given to non-statutory plans. Interestingly, the interim policies adopted by Alnwick District Council and Wealden District Council do not appear to have been disregarded despite sharing a non-statutory status.

In January 2002 SHDC published a deposit draft replacement local plan. This proposed a number of new housing sites, and required that $\frac{2}{3}$ of the housing on those sites would be affordable – $\frac{1}{3}$ social rented and $\frac{1}{3}$ of intermediate tenure. Because SHDC abandoned the local plan review to start work on an LDF under the new planning system, the policies in it, though still a material consideration for the determination of planning applications, carry very little weight when planning inspectors are determining appeals.

SHDC has no policy on affordable housing in its core strategy, due to different interpretations of appropriate level of policy detail from the Planning Inspectorate and

Government Office South West (see section 5.3.3 for more details). SHDC, at the time of the case study visits, was therefore in the position of being unable to require any affordable housing on sites below the indicative threshold in PPS3 of 15 dwellings.

In terms of its settlement hierarchy, SHDC identified 62 settlements in its 1996 plan that “had opportunities remaining for limited infill or small scale redevelopment” (ibid.) and drew a development boundary around them. These 62 settlements have been retained in the adopted core strategy as locations where development is acceptable in principle.

Stratford-on-Avon District Council

Stratford-on-Avon District Council adopted its local plan in July 2006. Policy STR.1 of that document is SADC’s settlement hierarchy. It defines the settlements within which development will be acceptable – the main towns, main rural centres and local centre villages. The latter must have a “basic range of facilities including, as a minimum, a general store, primary school and regular public transport” (Stratford-on-Avon District Council, 2006b). In all other settlements, development is not acceptable, except for exception sites. The exception policy, Policy CTY.5, is standard, except for the unusual aspect that it contains no specific sustainability criteria which settlements have to meet in order to have an exception scheme, but it does specify that service provision will be a factor in assessing the suitability of schemes.

There is also a section 106 affordable housing policy – policy COM.13. That policy requires affordable housing on sites of 15 dwellings or more/0.5 hectares or more in settlements with a population over 3,000, and on sites of 10 dwellings or more/0.4 hectares or more in smaller settlements. The target for affordable housing contributions is 35%.

In addition to the conventional means of delivering affordable housing, SADC has policy COM.1, the “Local Choice Initiative” (LCI) policy. This policy is essentially similar to a rural exception policy, but it allows local market housing as well as

affordable, and in a much wider range of settlements – those above 3,000 in population as well as the rural exception villages. According to interviews with SADC staff, the idea behind allowing local market housing is that it would perhaps be used by older people wanting to downsize. The key to implementation of the LCI policy is that a scheme would usually flow from a parish plan – so parishes with no plan are less likely to be able to have an LCI scheme.

Policy STR.2 in the local plan states “Planning permission will not be granted for housing proposals which would lead to or exacerbate significant over-provision of housing in relation to the requirements of the Regional Spatial Strategy” (ibid.). A supplementary planning document (SPD) specifies that “significant” over-provision is defined as 10% over the RSS housing requirement. A planning policy representative at SADC confirmed that there was a current oversupply, of such a scale, that planning permission for new housing schemes was likely to be withheld “until the end of our current local plan period, which is 2011.”

Wealden District Council

Wealden District Council adopted its local plan in December 1998.

Aim 5 (from Strategy section) in the local plan is “To maintain the existing settlement pattern in the District, generally restricting development in the rural area (i.e. outside settlement boundaries)” (Wealden District Council, 1998).

Policy HG5 seeks affordable housing on sites of 25 dwellings/1 hectare or more, with a target that 30% of those sites will be affordable housing.

Policy HG3 is WDC’s exception policy. It states that sites outside settlement boundaries are appropriate for exception sites, if “the proposed development is located within or adjacent to an existing village or other settlement and provides good accessibility to local services, e.g. shops and schools” (ibid.).

WDC does not appear to have a settlement hierarchy, other than through the allocation of settlement boundaries to only a proportion of their settlements.

WDC also adopted a non-statutory local plan in December 2005 for development control purposes (the local plan process was abandoned at that stage so WDC could concentrate on developing their LDF under the new planning system). That document has a similar use of settlement boundaries to restrict rural development.

Policy HG4 of the non-statutory local plan maintains an affordable housing target of 30% - 25% social rent and 5% intermediate. The thresholds are reduced to 10 dwellings/0.4 hectares in largest settlements, 5 dwellings/0.2 hectares elsewhere, and on sites of 3 and 4 dwellings, a requirement for 1 affordable housing unit.

These lower targets and thresholds, despite being in the non-statutory local plan, do not appear to be subject to intensive challenge from developers. A planning policy representative from WDC opined this may be because “although the non-statutory plan has lower thresholds than the adopted local plan, the allocations on which they might be appealing are in the non-statutory plan as well so they have similar weighting – they would be appealing against the allocation itself”.

There is a similar exception policy to that of the formal local plan, but perhaps the key policy for us is policy HG6. This is the “HOPE” policy, which allocates sites solely for affordable housing, with a local occupancy restriction. In terms of the location of those sites, the policy states:

Where only one or two dwellings are proposed, and no other suitable sites are available in the Parish, the requirement to have reasonable accessibility to local services may need to be relaxed, notwithstanding the sustainability issues which could be outweighed by the pressing need for affordable housing.

(Wealden District Council, 2005)

Summary

This sub-section has provided a context to a consideration of the factors affecting local policy by explaining in detail what those local policies are in the case study local authorities. Based on the above analysis, one conclusion which seems obvious is

that there is a remarkable degree of variability in the approaches adopted by local authorities to planning policy for affordable housing. WDC are the only local authority to have adopted an allocated exception policy, and practice is variable in terms of affordable housing thresholds and targets. Another conclusion is that policies of housing restraint are present in three of the five case study local authorities – Alnwick, Harrogate and Stratford-on-Avon. These policies are justified by reference to strategic constraints in housing provision, perhaps the recurrence of Peter Hall’s unholy alliance between urban authorities and rural elites. We will return to this issue in section 5.3.3.

The next sub-section moves on from adopted policy to look at emerging policy, i.e. draft policy which has not yet been adopted by the case study local authorities or has not yet been independently examined by the Planning Inspectorate.

5.3.2. Emerging local policy in the case studies

Since the time of the case study visits the adopted policy has changed for several of the local authorities, as new DPDs have been through the examination process and been adopted by the local authorities.

Alnwick District Council

ADC submitted its core strategy in November 2006, the EIP was held in July 2007, and in October 2007 ADC adopted its core strategy, following receipt of the Inspector’s report. The adopted core strategy contains the following relevant policies:

Policy S1 states that the majority of new development will be in the main rural centres of Alnwick and Amble and the secondary rural centre of Rothbury. A range of “sustainable village centres” is identified, which have:

Public transport and a strong service base usually comprising school, shop, post office, pub, church, community hall, sports and recreation

facilities and where development will be well-related to the scale and function of the settlement

(Alnwick District Council, 2007a).

Below these in the settlement hierarchy are “local needs centres”, where development will be restricted to that satisfying local needs only. Below these, in hamlets, development will be restricted to conversion of existing buildings only. Policy S4, “The phased release of housing land” states that until 2011 the only housing developments that will be permitted will be windfall developments on previously developed land which must “demonstrably deliver specific social and economic regenerative benefits for the communities in which it is located” (ibid.). In effect, this means that until 2011 the only housing developments for which ADC will grant permission are those delivering 100% affordable housing schemes on previously developed land.

Policy S6 requires “an appropriate element of affordable housing” (ibid.) on sites of 10 units or more or 0.33 hectares or more in Alnwick and Amble and 3 units or more or 0.1 hectares or more in other settlements below 3000 population. The target proportion of affordable housing will be 35% between 2005 and 2010.

Policy S6 also contains scope for exception sites “In the secondary, sustainable and local needs centres” (ibid.). The preamble text amplifies this to explain that such sites may be within or adjoining these settlements.

Harrogate Borough Council

HBC’s core strategy was submitted in September 2007, and includes a chapter “Homes for local people”. This chapter comprises policies HLP1 – HLP4.

HLP1 requires a financial contribution for affordable housing on single dwelling developments, so HBC is proposing that it requires some form of affordable housing provision from all housing developments – an extremely rigorous requirement.

HLP2 states that on sites of two or more dwellings, 50% of them should be affordable.

HLP3 is HBC's allocated exception policy, and states that a future DPD will "allocate small rural exception sites within or on the edge of Group B and C settlements listed in Policy SG2" (Harrogate Borough Council, 2007). It also makes provision for standard exception sites within or on the edge of these settlements, "or the main built up form of another rural settlement not listed in Policy SG2" (ibid.). Policy SG2 categorises the settlements within the Borough in a similar way to policy H6 in the adopted local plan (see above).

HLP4 relates to rural conversion schemes, and makes clear that with such schemes, the affordable housing component can take the form of new build, i.e. does not have to form part of the converted building fabric.

These new policies appear to be making full use of PPS3, but it remains to be seen whether the Planning Inspectorate accepts them in full or demands modifications.

South Hams District Council

SHDC submitted its affordable housing DPD in January 2008, and this was declared sound by the Planning Inspectorate in August 2008. The DPD, which SHDC adopted in September 2008, contains new policies to implement targets and thresholds for affordable housing delivery:

Policy AH2 in the DPD sets targets for affordable housing provision of 50%, 55% and 60% of homes provided on allocated sites, depending on their location (the 60% target is for allocations in rural parts of the District).

Policy AH3 sets a sliding scale for affordable housing provision on unallocated sites with targets between 10% and 50% depending on site capacity as follows:

- capacity for 1 dwelling 10% (off site)
- capacity for 2 to 5 dwellings 20% (off site)

- capacity for 6 to 14 dwellings 35% (on site)
- capacity for 15 or more dwellings 50% (on site)

Any part of the resulting requirement making up less than a whole unit of affordable housing shall be provided as a financial contribution.

(South Hams District Council, 2008)

The DPD also includes policy AH5, a standard exception policy, which states that “Permission will be granted for exception sites in rural communities where the development will [*inter alia*] be well related to community services and facilities”. SHDC is currently considering its position on the range of settlements that it will allow housing within, whether market or affordable.

Stratford-on-Avon District Council

SADC has only recently adopted its local plan, so is in the early stages of LDF preparation. The Council is considering allocating sites for 100% affordable housing in that document.

Wealden District Council

The core strategy is intended for adoption in February 2010 and is at the early stages of preparation. The Council is reviewing the HOPE policy to try and improve its efficacy.

Summary

As with the previous sub-section, this sub-section has demonstrated that there is a perhaps surprising degree of variation between the case study local authorities, with different targets and thresholds for affordable housing provision depending on local circumstances. We now have a context to begin to explore in depth research question 3 – what are the factors which affect local policy? The next sub-section looks at the role played by national and regional government and governance bodies in the development of that policy.

5.3.3. The role played by national and regional government in the development of local policies

For a Government policy to be successfully implemented, Hogwood and Dunn (1984) identified that there must be good communication and co-ordination. In the case of English planning policy, there are several layers of government/governance which must be co-ordinated to ensure that a national policy is effective on the ground in a local development plan. Regional planning policy, in the form of RSS and the work of the regional planning body, should reflect the letter and the spirit of national policy, as should the Government's Planning Inspectorate. In theory, the latter are responsible for ensuring that regional and local planning policy reflects national advice, but in practice, thanks in part to the lack of clarity in that national advice discussed above, planning inspectors can be unpredictable and inconsistent.

This sub-section examines three examples of how different interpretations of national policy advice by the Planning Inspectorate and regional government has affected the policy in place in the case study local authorities.

South Hams District Council's policy vacuum

At the time of the case study visit, South Hams District Council, despite having an unusually integrated approach to affordable housing delivery via a multi-disciplinary team, were effectively operating in a local policy vacuum thanks to interventions from national/regional government. This situation had two causes, outlined below, supported by quotes from interviews with staff at South Hams.

SHDC adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) in May 2004 which sought 50% affordable housing on qualifying schemes. That SPG was introduced (based on "high level legal advice") as an interim measure until SHDC could adopt a development plan document (DPD) under the new LDF system. Unfortunately, the SPG was "fatally damaged by a couple of appeal decisions". Two Planning Inspectors, in granting appeals against refusals of planning permission by SHDC, concluded that affordable housing targets and thresholds could only be introduced through the statutory development plan, and not through an SPG. As discussed

above, this approach has been taken by a number of inspectors, though others have given non-statutory plans more weight. It is probably fair to characterise the approach taken by the Planning Inspectorate as inconsistent.

Secondly, SHDC did not include affordable housing targets and thresholds in its core strategy DPD on the basis of “very clear and strong advice” from the Government Office for the South West (GOSW) that such a policy was insufficiently strategic for inclusion in a core strategy. SHDC removed the policy which had been in its draft core strategy, only to find that, “Lo and behold, the inspector said to us at the examination – I’m rather surprised in your housing policy that you haven’t got details relating to affordable housing and thresholds”. This unfortunate difference in opinion on what constitutes “strategic” can perhaps be explained by the fact that all parties are coming to terms with a new planning system, but the fact remains that thanks to intervention from “intermediate” governance bodies, SHDC operated for several years an affordable housing policy based on the indicative national thresholds in PPS3, not the lower thresholds which that document permits based on local circumstances. It is hard to argue that this situation is due to malevolence (or the exercise of power) on the part of any of those involved, and it seems that this case is down to simple confusion, coupled perhaps with an over-zealous approach from planning inspectors dealing with appeals against planning application refusals.

The examination in public of Alnwick District Council’s core strategy

Alnwick District Council (ADC) adopted in October 2007 its core strategy LDF document. The North East Assembly objected to the submission draft core strategy (in December 2006) as being unsound as it contained the potential for housing figures to be higher than those in the RSS. The North East Assembly stated in its objection that “it is important that the LDF adopts the final RSS figures to ensure that the RSS housing strategy is achieved” (Alnwick District Council, 2007b). At the EIP (in July 2007) ADC argued for higher levels of development, but the EIP Inspector decided that

Representations in favour of more or less housing have not generally been supported with the kind of evidence-based reasoning I would expect

to be necessary to justify departing locally from regional policy... It would therefore be unsound to allow for housing levels above the RSS figures...

(The Planning Inspectorate, 2007b)

This suggests that the North East Assembly and core strategy EIP Inspector both considered RSS figures to be maxima. This approach may change following the Housing Green Paper, which as mentioned above stresses RSS figures are in fact intended to be minima.

Local authority policies to restrict planning permission for housing

In order that ADC could reduce its oversupply against RSS figures it introduced a policy into its core strategy to “phase the release of housing land” (Alnwick District Council, 2007a). The effect of that policy is that until 2011 the only housing developments for which ADC will grant permission are those delivering 100% affordable housing schemes on previously developed land, essentially a moratorium on all but a very narrow range of housing developments. This approach maintains that which was adopted in June 2004 via their interim housing policy.

Such an approach is not unusual – Of the five LPAs studied, three have some form of restraint policy to reduce housing supply as measured against their RSS provision. Harrogate Borough Council has been operating a policy since May 2004 which states that housing development, except for a limited number of exceptions (including 100% affordable housing schemes), would not be permitted. HBC justified this policy by identifying a 27% over-provision compared to the housing figures in the North Yorkshire Structure Plan (the predecessor to the RSS), and pointing out that “PPG3 and RPG12 prefer the development of previously-developed sites in urban centres” (Harrogate Borough Council, 2004). Policy SG5 in HBC’s draft core strategy, submitted to the Secretary of State in September 2007, seeks to maintain this approach by including the option of deferring the release of housing land if HBC reaches 10% oversupply on its RSS figures.

Stratford-on-Avon District Council local plan policy STR.2, discussed in section 4.4.1 above, is effectively a moratorium, and the SADC website refers to the policy as such

(Stratford-on-Avon District Council, 2008), if there is an “oversupply” of housing land of more than 10% above RSS figures. The oversupply in the district is such that SADC is not granting planning permission for housing proposals, and anticipates that it will not do so until at least 2011.

Summary

This sub-section has sought to examine the role played by national and regional government in the development of local policies. The analysis here has shown that in several cases, the position adopted by the Planning Inspectorate, the local Government Office or relevant regional assembly is actively acting against local authority attempts to deliver more rural (affordable) housing. This appears to be a failure of Hogwood and Dunn’s perfect policy implementation, which may be due to differing interpretations of government advice, or to the effects of power – particularly in the case of the housing moratoria in place in three of the five case study authorities, where local authorities have received advice from strategic policy bodies that they must reduce their “oversupply” of housing against strategic targets.

The next sub-section moves on from national/regional policy to examine how the policies adopted by the case study local authorities reflect the corporate priorities that those local authorities have announced.

5.3.4. Local authority actions vs. their stated corporate priorities

To successfully implement policies, local authorities must match words with actions, and adhere to policies set out in development plans (Gallent and Tewdwr-Jones, 2007). All the case study local authorities feature the provision of affordable housing at, or near, the top of their list of corporate priorities:

- Wealden has “Affordable housing and sustainable housing development” as one of its ten “Priorities for 2007/08”.
- Alnwick has “Community Development” as one of four “New Council Priorities for 2006-2009”, stating “The priorities focus on supplying affordable housing...”.

- Stratford-on-Avon has “The development of sustainable communities” as one of three “Aims for 2005-2008” set out in the Council’s Corporate Plan. “Provide 250 new affordable housing units across the district by April 2008” is one of the four detailed targets under the aim.
- Harrogate features “Affordable housing” as one of seven corporate priorities in its Strategic Plan 2005-2008.
- For South Hams, to “Secure a supply of housing for local people at affordable levels” is one of six Council aims and priorities for 2002-2008.

It is easy enough for a local authority to adopt these kinds of aims or priorities, but the extent to which the practices of the case study local authorities match up with these aims may differ.

The extent to which activity matches stated aims

South Hams are one of the two case study local authorities that do not operate some form of moratorium on new housing development. SHDC has lobbied for additional housing through the RSS process, and have a dedicated sum of money which is allocated to delivering affordable housing – this has been used to set up its multi-disciplinary team, amongst other things. The council garnered support from an RSL operating in the area for the way it dealt with the disposal of a piece of their land – “They could have easily marketed it on the open market and got a lot of money for it, but in the interests of their own strategic policies they sold it to us”. It is hard to see what more South Hams could do to promote affordable housing development.

Data from the other case study local authorities, though, suggests South Hams are an outlier in this regard. It is possible to criticise all four of the other local authorities for implementing policies which directly or indirectly impact on their ability to meet their stated aim to deliver more affordable housing, across a range of council activities. Four examples of these activities are discussed in turn below, starting with the planning policy adopted by the local authorities.

Planning policy approach

As discussed above, three of the five case study authorities operate some form of moratorium policy to restrict the supply of new housing, which is directly acting against the increased delivery of affordable housing. These policies, though, tend to be due to pressure from regional government to reduce their housing supply. Wealden District Council, though not operating a moratorium, has opposed increased levels of housing through the RSS.

Funding

SADC, HBC and SHDC contribute in some way towards an RHE – HBC fund one in its entirety and host the position in-house. ADC and WDC do not contribute towards an RHE, so there is no RHE support for those local authorities. We discuss the impacts of RHE presence in section 6.1.3 below, but we could interpret the lack of RHE funding as an indication of less than 100% commitment to affordable housing delivery.

There are other ways to deliver affordable housing beyond the conventional rural housing enabler post – SHDC has invested a significant amount in setting up its multi-disciplinary team to deliver affordable housing, and hopes to reap the rewards soon. Other local authorities have cut funding which relates less directly to affordable housing provision. SADC, for instance, has the Local Choice Initiative policy, which facilitates affordable or market housing in an area where a need can be demonstrated through a parish plan. A potential problem with this policy is that it prejudices those parishes that, perhaps because of a shortage of volunteers or expertise, have been unable to produce a parish plan. Unfortunately, the local authority has reattributed its internal funding and cut the support it offers to parishes to prepare parish plans. This is a less direct cut in funding to deliver affordable housing, but could have as significant an impact on delivery.

Sale of local authority assets

In addition to directly funding affordable housing delivery, local authorities can subsidise delivery by selling their land at a discount to an RSL. Until recently, local authorities were obliged under the Government's Best Value legislation to sell their land for the highest price they could. This has now changed, so if there is a demonstrable benefit to the community from selling land at a discount to a particular user, local authorities can do so. The extent to which they do, though, varies considerably.

Some local authorities are keen to maximise their profits, which RSL representatives argued might not be compatible with maximising affordable housing delivery. "They have to accept, if there is a need for affordable housing, and we want to buy it for affordable housing, they can't get what they'd get on the open market", was the view of one. One particularly irate RSL representative went into some detail about his/her experiences:

But, as recently as six months ago, a certain local authority not a million miles away from [case study authority], brought a site to us. We designed a scheme, went for planning permission, got what we thought was an agreed land value, and then at the last minute they said "oh, that's not quite what we thought you were going to give us. Yes, we need affordable housing but we're going to put it on the open market and see what we're going to get". And that's currently underway at the moment. And on the back of that we've got about forty or fifty grand's worth of abortive costs. So – not every local authority is acting sensibly, rationally in our view. What I would say is that's often down to Members, not Officers.

These issues have not gone unnoticed, with a representative of the National Housing Federation (NHF) discussing his/her conversations with the Housing Corporation:

One of the things that I was talking to the Head of Investment for the Housing Corporation about – she was saying what worries her is that basically costs for housing development in the North East and North West

are very high, they're second to London, and they shouldn't be... one of the reasons is local authority land costs – if we want to buy land off the local authority, they're maximising it and getting as much money as they can. So it's like cross-subsidy, it's stupid, it's the Housing Corporation, one government body, funding another.

Use of second home council tax

Similarly, the NHF representative was concerned at how local authorities were using the additional council tax receipts available from second homes following the 2004 changes (i.e. local authorities are now able to levy up to 90% council tax on second homes, this having previously been limited to 50%). Helpfully, the case study areas were included in the CRC's 2006 report looking at this issue for the 2004/05 financial year (CRC, 2006b).

In SADC, the local authorities and the County Council (Warwickshire) were unable to agree on how the resources should be used, so the discount was not reduced. This was set to change in 2006/07 as the County Council had agreed the money could be ring-fenced for each district, and spent on affordable housing. No detail was available in the report about what HBC spent the money on, but an agreement had been reached at North Yorkshire County Council level for 80% of the County Council's proportion to be distributed via the district Local Strategic Partnerships, and for approximately one fifth of that proportion to be spent on capital finance for new affordable housing. In Devon, the money was refunded from the County Council to the District Councils, and SHDC had spent at least some of its proportion on affordable housing, through enabling, new build provision and refurbishment, after £100k was top-sliced to support RHEs in the county. In East Sussex, 22% of the County's 90% share was returned to WDC, and all the money which WDC received was simply added to their mainstream budget. Similarly, in Northumberland, the additional income was split 50-50 between the County Council and the district councils, and ADC added its share to its mainstream budget.

So, again, there are marked differences in how the use of council resources reflects the local authorities' agreed priority to increase affordable housing provision.

Summary

This sub-section has examined how local authority actions match up to their stated priorities, as this was identified as one of the factors affecting local policy development and implementation. It has found that some local authorities have what appears to be a clear focus on delivering more affordable housing, and all the aspects of practice which have been analysed support this focus. South Hams are the only case study local authority whom it is hard to criticise in this regard. The other four all, to a greater or lesser extent, do something which acts against their corporate commitment to affordable housing delivery. This could be ascribed to competing priorities between different parts of the local authority, but could also be identified as those not supportive of rural housing exercising their power to influence decisions on local authority policy. Other reasons for a mismatch between rhetoric and policy are discussed in sub-section 6.1.5.

The next sub-section specifically explores the attitudes taken by the case study local authorities towards development – whether they are pro or anti development will surely effect how their policies to deliver more rural affordable housing work.

5.3.5. The attitudes towards development in local authorities

Several commentators have noted the importance of local authority attitudes towards development (Williams et al., 1991, Gallent et al., 2004) affecting the likely success of affordable housing policies. In terms of their overall attitude to levels of housing development across the board (i.e. not just affordable housing, for which all five express support), the case study local authorities can be divided into two broad categories – pro-development and anti-development. Alnwick District Council and South Hams District Council are both broadly pro-development, with the local authority as a whole in both cases lobbying regional government to increase their proportion of housing in the draft RSS. Harrogate, Stratford-on-Avon and Wealden are, to a varied level, anti-development, with the Council's official line one of accepting lower figures in RSS or in fact lobbying for even lower levels of housebuilding.

Analysing interview and policy document data can reveal how these pro or anti development discourses operate at the local authority level, justifications for them and if there are conflicts within local authorities. *Nb – In local authorities with a consistent line, it is easier to discuss interviews without prejudicing the interviewees, but in the local authorities where interviewees are expressing a point of view contrary to the official line, the interviews have been anonymised to protect the sources.*

The pro-development discourse

Conversations with local authority officers in the pro-development local authorities demonstrate a consistent line of negotiating with strategic policy makers to increase housing provision, with variable success. In its response to the submission draft RSS, Alnwick DC set out its arguments for a small increase in its housing allocation, which its officers calculated would lead to an 0.5% increase in overall housebuilding for the North East region between 2004-2021. The Council was concerned about the ageing population in the district and lack of affordable housing provision. It opined that increasing that affordable housing provision would be impossible without an increase in its RSS figures.

These arguments held little sway with the regional assembly or EIP panel, with the resulting reduced housing allocations discussed elsewhere. This caused considerable frustration on the part of officers at the local authority. A planning policy officer from Alnwick DC complained that “What strikes me as strange is that the RHS and RSS have acknowledged that we have a problem [of housing affordability], but they are not accepting the argument that because of that problem we need an increased supply”. This is an obvious conflict between the pro-development discourse operating at the District Council level, and the anti-development discourse applied to rural areas in the North East by regional policy makers.

This latter discourse is heavily evident in ADCs interim housing policy that was in place at the time of the case study visits (adopted June 2004). That document draws heavily on PPG3 and interprets the guidance therein as discouraging rural and greenfield development, supported by structure plan and draft RSS figures interpreted as maxima. The policy embodies an urban containment discourse, there

is no recognition of alternative (e.g. pro-development to meet local needs) voices. There are many assumptions in the document about what words like sustainability mean, with the general interpretation that it means smaller settlements are less sustainable. That approach is generally carried forward into ADC's core strategy (adopted October 2007) which accepts RSS housing figures and seeks to reduce the supply of land with planning permission for housing in the District. It appears from these policy documents that despite a pro-development discourse from officers and members at ADC, planning policy documents follow the line in strategic guidance. This could be interpreted as pragmatism, or an acknowledgement that the urban lobby is so strong in the North East that ADC has little choice in the matter.

Officers from South Hams DC, on the other hand, were optimistic that their lobbying and involvement with the RSS process would glean positive results. They have argued that they are trying to achieve unprecedented levels of affordable housing, so should be allowed higher allocations to facilitate that. In the words of a senior officer at SHDC:

Our message at regional and governmental level has been that where authorities are prepared to take these bold approaches, they should be given the scope within the higher tier regional policy to be able to do that, and not to be constrained by the convention that might otherwise have been applied that environmental safeguarding is important.

This approach seems to be working, with the RSS allocations for South Hams being "a little bit higher than they otherwise might have been". The key, then, for local authorities, may be in being able to demonstrate to policy makers that they are doing as much as they can to deliver affordable housing. ADC, of course, do not fund a rural housing enabler, so may be open to criticism on this issue. That said, the SHDC approach has yet to glean any significant numbers of affordable housing, but is in only its early stages.

The pro-development stance expressed by interviewees at South Hams is reflected in SHDC's core strategy DPD, adopted in September 2006. The "overarching aim" of that document is to "improve the well-being of the people of the South Hams" (South

Hams District Council, 2006), an aim which differs from other local authorities in that it does not reference environmental protection. In discourse analysis terms, the core strategy demonstrates intertextuality, in that it references other documents such as the structure plan and local transport plan. It also brings other voices into the debate, acknowledging that the need for homes and services is as important as environmental protection. The core strategy introduces a needs-based argument for building more houses than the structure plan (now superseded by the RSS) recommends, not something commonly seen in local policy documents.

A mixing of discourses

In Harrogate Borough Council and Stratford-on-Avon District Council there have been relatively high levels of recent development, which has caused public dissatisfaction in both local authority areas. This has led to political decisions to oppose “overdevelopment”, which is not universally supported by planning and housing staff.

The political control of Harrogate Borough Council changed in 2003, when the Conservative party gained overall control. They had campaigned on the issue of the Liberal Democrat run authority being a “concrete council”, and made a commitment to reducing housebuilding levels in the Borough. They evidently had some success:

We are pledged to apply the brakes to over development. The latest figures reveal a significant drop in the projected housing over supply and I have set targets for further year on year reductions. At last Harrogate Borough Council seems to be losing its reputation as the ‘concrete Council’.

(Quote in HBC press release from Richard Cooper (Conservative)
Member for Planning, HBC, 25 March 2004).

Given this change in approach, it is perhaps unsurprising that the Council was opposed to a suggestion from the regional assembly that that its housing allocation in the RSS should increase from 400 to 600 houses per year (in the context of a need for 840 affordable houses per year in the Borough).

The policy context in HBC at the time of the case study visits was of a local plan (adopted in February 2001) and a “Selective alteration” (adopted in May 2004, after the Conservative party gaining control of the Council). The former document was published shortly after PPG3, and adopts wholesale an urban containment discourse, justified by frequent references to sustainable development. For example, paragraph 2.29 sets out the strategy of the local plan, which includes “Housing development in the District will be restrained because of the quality of the environment and in order to limit in-migration from West Yorkshire” (Harrogate Borough Council, 2001). In discourse analysis terms, the plan is heavy with this kind of assumption, that the quality of the environment is the most important factor, and indeed that limiting in-migration from West Yorkshire will be achieved by restraining housing development.

The selective alteration of the local plan is if anything even more dominated by an urban containment discourse, and introduces an urban renaissance discourse – focusing on previously developed land, for example. It does, though, demonstrate intertextuality, with PPG3 and RPG heavily cited. Paragraph 9.x.2 of the selective alteration is clear that those two documents require/justify “severe restrictions” (Harrogate Borough Council, 2004) on the release of housing land to reduce over-provision against structure plan figures. The “regeneration of neighbouring urban areas” (ibid.) is cited as an important justification for this approach.

Similarly, in Stratford-on-Avon, the Council is supporting a maintenance of the levels of housing proposed by the regional assembly, thanks to the concerns of local people about excessive development in the town of Stratford-upon-Avon itself.

The policy context in SADC is provided by the local plan (adopted July 2006) and a supplementary planning document “Managing Housing Supply” (adopted November 2006). The local plan demonstrates a mix of discourses, with the urban containment/sustainability discourse frequently present, justified by intertextuality with the Warwickshire structure plan and the housing figures therein. But other voices are introduced, including a recognition that social and economic factors are important with reference to sustainable development. Arguably the most important policy with reference to housebuilding, though, is policy STR.2, which states planning permission will not be not granted “for housing proposals which would lead to or

exacerbate significant overprovision of housing in relation to the requirements of the RSS” (Stratford-on-Avon District Council, 2006b). That policy is supported by the SPD, which adds justification to the policy via intertextuality with the RSS and structure plan, and the housing figures therein (treated as maxima). The SPD identifies a 14.2% overprovision of housing against those housing figures, and states “the effect of overprovision would be to undermine the aims of the RSS to achieve an urban renaissance in the major urban areas of the region” (Stratford-on-Avon District Council, 2006a). This is a clear embodiment of an urban containment discourse.

Officers in HBC and SADC recognise that these stances of restricting housebuilding may not be assisting in the provision of affordable housing. One housing officer referred to the potential increase in housing numbers for their local authority in these terms: “It’s not nice for the Council – yes, it’s nice for us, but it’s not nice for the Council – they are resisting it like mad”. Another revealed that s/he had argued with council members to request higher housing figures in the RSS, but that members had disagreed. Environmental protection, rather than meeting affordable housing needs, took priority in this authority, a stance which this officer disagreed with:

Ultimately we do have this issue where the assessments show we have a high need for affordable housing, but our ability to address those needs isn’t assisted if we have relatively low housing requirements in the RSS. Unless we find a radical new way of delivering affordable housing, i.e. something other than the section 106 sites, we’re really not going to make significant inroads into meeting that housing need. So far, it’s a nettle that members aren’t willing to grasp.

The anti-development discourse

In Wealden District, there have similarly been similarly high recent levels of housing development as in Harrogate and Stratford-on-Avon. In contrast to HBC and SADC, the anti-development discourse appears to be more universally accepted. In response to the South East RSS EIP Panel Report’s recommendation to increase the housing provision in the district by 80 houses per year (a 20% increase), WDC issued a press release in which the Cabinet Portfolio holder for Planning and

Development stated “I am dismayed by the contents of this report” (Wealden District Council, 2007). The Leader of WDC followed this up with “All Councillors, across our District, will be deeply concerned about the implications of this report” (ibid.).

Planning and housing officers offered support for this stance when interviewed, expressing concern that the infrastructure in the area was inadequate to cope with any additional housing. One was particularly concerned about a lack of jobs being provided in the District to match the level of housebuilding: “There is a mismatch between the housing numbers built and proposed in Wealden and the provision of employment opportunities – I am concerned that new housing will simply be to house retirees moving from London”.

WDC adopted a non-statutory local plan in December 2005, which was used for the determination of planning applications. That document includes the HOPE policy, allocating sites for 100% affordable housing. As discussed in section 4.1.4, the policy has not been entirely successful. Could part of the reason for that be constructions/discourses present in the rest of the plan?

The plan contains some positive statements and policies regarding development in the countryside, but there is a strong dominance overall of an urban containment discourse, often justified via intertextuality by national and strategic policy guidance.

Paragraph 7.6 of the plan begins to set out its strategy, and states that “the emphasis is on creating balanced and sustainable communities... On this basis, this chapter contains policies for *controlling* [my emphasis] housing development in the District” (Wealden District Council, 2005). The use of the word *controlling* is a clear example of an urban containment discourse, despite the appearance of advocating a balanced approach. In terms of the HOPE policy, of the total housebuilding proposed between 2006 and 2011, 2% at most was to be in the form of rural affordable housing allocations, which is indicative of an overall focus on larger settlements.

Interestingly, paragraph 7.36 of the plan acknowledges that:

To meet the projected level of affordable housing need would require the Council to seek around 50% of the total housing provision of the Plan period in the form of affordable housing... However such a requirement

would be difficult to justify in financial and social terms, and a figure of 30% will be expected.

(ibid.)

This paragraph demonstrates an assumption that it is not possible to increase total housing provision to meet their affordable housing need, and highlights an interesting discourse that 50% affordable housing would not be justifiable in “social terms”. No explanation is given as to what this means – one interpretation could be the potential social imbalance caused by such a high level of affordable housing provision. However, given that this situation has arisen because of a previous underprovision of affordable housing, this approach seems hard to justify.

Summary

This sub-section has sought to identify the attitudes towards development of the case study local authorities, by analysing discourses present in policy documents adopted and statements made by the local authorities. By its nature, discourse analysis is a subjective form of data analysis, but the extracts from policy documents and interviews discussed above demonstrate that in some rural local authorities there is a clear anti-development discourse in policy documents and rhetoric. Could one of the reasons for this be how local authorities are interpreting sustainable development in their rural contexts? The last sub-section in this section looks to explore constructions of sustainability in the case study local authorities, arguing that these constructions have an important effect on local policy design and implementation.

5.3.6. Different constructions of sustainability at the local level

As identified in the literature review, there are a number of different constructions of the meaning of “sustainable rural communities”. The perspective in national Government planning advice has tended to imply that rural communities are inherently unsustainable thanks to their lack of employment opportunities and services, meaning residents have to travel by car to access jobs and amenities (DCLG, 2008b). Others, notably Shorten (2005), have questioned this point of view, observing that urban areas can see as high levels of car use as rural. We can

broadly categorise these different constructions of sustainability in a rural context as “negative” or “positive”. Similarly to the consideration of attitudes towards development, we can identify these constructions of sustainability among the case study local authorities.

Negative approaches

The usual justification for the “urban development is common sense” attitude is to quote sustainability. National and regional planning advice (see sub-section 2.4.4 and section 5.2) is replete with avowals to move to a “more sustainable pattern of development” (for example PPG3, PPG13, and the Yorkshire & Humber RSS). Rural development is hence presented as being intrinsically *less sustainable* than urban development, with sustainable in these terms largely defined as meaning a reduction in travel by car.

That advice/policy at national and regional level is reflected in the fact that all five of the case study authorities have some form of key settlement and/or settlement hierarchy policies in their adopted development plan. Those policies focus the development, housing or otherwise, to be carried out in the local authority on the biggest settlements therein. There are signs of a shift in attitude amongst some local authorities, though this has yet to make it through to adopted policy. We have to explore interview data to identify how different local authorities consider the issue of sustainability in terms of rural development.

One planning policy representative explained and justified their local authority’s approach to exception sites:

There are some hamlets below that lower tier of local needs villages, in which no development is acceptable. That has been done on the basis, in terms of social inclusion, that people in housing need stand the best chance of a more sustainable, included lifestyle, in slightly larger settlements, where there may be a shop or there is a little bit more in terms of service base.

The meaning of “sustainable” here is clearly equated with the presence of facilities within walking distance. The planning policy representative believes that bigger settlements are more sustainable. This authority appears to be acting with the best of intentions, to protect people in housing need, but we might argue that this is a paternalistic approach – trying to stop such people living in settlements that are less sustainable for them. Several RSLs raised objections to this approach, one saying:

I think it’s about where people choose to live – they’re saying I know we have no shop, no post office, but we still want to live here. Or should they just become exclusive enclaves in some ways? Only for rich retired people to live in?

Another critiqued the approach taken in one of the local authority case studies – an effective moratorium on new housing to reduce the oversupply of housing land:

But it’s not designed in terms of affordable housing, it’s more about social engineering – “you want to live there? Well you can’t, we’re going to provide a nice little house for you over here!”.

We might of course argue that land use planning is a form of social engineering anyway, but in social equity terms, if someone was wealthy enough to buy an existing house where no new building was permitted, the lack of a shop or service base would still remain an issue, but the planning system could not prevent them living there. So we might view the urban containment approach as an exercise of power, conscious or unconscious, by those who wish to exclude the less powerful from rural areas.

Positive approaches

Some local authority representatives approached sustainability in a different way. One housing officer outlined an alternative discourse:

I say “sustainability is not a bus stop”, right, because the first thing planning say to me is “where’s the nearest bus stop?”. Well, bugger that,

it's not about a bus stop. If you're talking rural areas, sustainability is about keeping local people living and working in their local area – keeping the villages alive, keeping the local areas alive.

A “strategic” officer in a different local authority shared this general perspective:

When it comes to the spatial expression of sustainability, and distribution of development, it's not just to do with the economic and environmental sustainability, there is a spatial expression to social networks. It's to do with families and local communities who depend upon one another for mutual support... Although support services and facilities are important, it isn't just about that – it's actually about sustainable society networks, and that's what sustainable communities really means.

Those operating at the community level offered support for this approach, identifying practical objections to a reliance on the presence of shops and services to define sustainability. One parish council representative observed that “The other thing, you talk about cars – quite often, because transport is so blooming poor, families do shopping for their parents, or vice versa”. An RHE in a different area observed the pragmatism that a lack of services breeds: “there might not be a shop, but people do car-pooling and go to the local Tesco, or they have internet shopping”.

Others pointed out that the presence of shops and services did not necessarily mean that a settlement was an appropriate location for new development. A planning officer in one local authority identified a town in that district which was in a high tier of the local plan's settlement hierarchy but which was not necessarily a “sustainable” choice for focusing future housing:

It would tick the boxes for a sustainable community because its got a train station, its got shops, its got community facilities, its got a very active community, but it's just suburbia, basically, its a very nice little village with lots of new eighties housing estates stuck on the side of it. And if that's what sustainable development is, God help us!

It appears in some areas that a change in philosophy is developing as new development plans are produced. A housing officer identified a move to broaden “sustainability criteria” in their local authority:

For the LDF, we were looking at the villages we would like to see growth in, and they [the planning department] did their sustainability assessment, and you got two points for a pub, and three points for a shop, and nine points for a railway line going through the middle of the village, or whatever. And one of our rural members stood up in planning committee, and she said “I’m not happy with this”, she said “what about those villages where they might not have a railway line, but they have a really active WI, right, and you may mock the WI, or they have a bridge club, or they have a sense of community because they’ve got after school clubs, or they’ve got this – and you need to take those into account as well. It’s not just about jobs in the village, it’s not just about that – it’s about life in the village as well, and how is it functioning as a village”. And they agreed with her.

These social aspects of sustainability are harder to quantify, which is perhaps why local authorities have not reflected them in their settlement hierarchies or key settlement policies thus far. Indeed, it is hard to see how they can be measured, which would make such factors extremely hard to integrate into the statutory development plan. But some key actors are trying to develop social-type indicators of sustainability. The Commission for Rural Communities has co-commissioned research into developing a “more sophisticated approach (within the planning system) to addressing the ‘sustainability’ of rural settlements” (Roger Tym & Partners, 2008). There is clearly a groundswell of support in some regions for a change in approach, and although this research is in its early stages, it may generate useful data to allow local authorities to broaden their view of sustainability.

Summary

This section has presented evidence in relation to research question 3 – what factors affect local policy? It has demonstrated that there are a number of different factors affecting the development of local authorities’ policies regarding (affordable) housing

delivery, and concluded with an analysis of discourses present in those local policy documents and in key actors' interpretations of them. In several of the case study local authorities there are "negative" attitudes towards development and towards sustainability, which is perhaps an explanation for why those authorities, despite policies seeking high levels of affordable housing provision, are not delivering such.

We will return to a consideration of discourses and why/how they are so important to affordable housing delivery in section 6.2, but the next chapter moves on to investigate in more details the reasons for how policy is developed and implemented.

6. *Data analysis II – Reasons for policy outcomes*

This chapter seeks to answer research questions 4 and 5 and as with the previous chapter is structured by those research questions and the issues which can be analysed to help answer them.

6.1. The “technical” reasons for the failure of national policy

In this section we seek to answer research question 4 – what are the “technical” reasons for the success (or otherwise) of national policy? This is done by looking at five issues, addressed in the following five sub-sections, which look at technical reasons for the lack of success of Government planning policy on affordable housing. “Technical” in this context means that these are possible problems with implementation of policies which might easily be addressed – for example through the provision of greater resources, or better communication between partners. We might also term the discussion in this section as positivist – it tries to explore practical ways in which the process currently fails, from the point of view that remedying these issues would increase affordable housing delivery.

6.1.1. The effects of the delays inherent in the planning process

The first issue which relates to research question 4 is that of the delays in the English planning process. These perceived delays are sometimes used by critics of the planning system to argue for its abolition or replacement with something more “streamlined”. But there may also be an argument that delays in the system are causing problems with affordable housing delivery, which is reliant on that system to carry out interventions into the housing market.

The changes to PPG3 to allow the allocation of sites for affordable housing in rural areas were published in January 2005, and this project was initially conceived as a chance to investigate the impacts of those changes. However, as discussed previously, the only local authority to actually allocate any sites for 100% affordable housing in England at the time of writing is Wealden District Council, which had decided to do so in advance of the publication of the revised PPG3. One conclusion

we might draw from this is that such a policy is not something local authorities actually want to implement. The evidence from the case study local authorities, however, is that they are all keen to see the allocation of 100% affordable housing sites, and intend to introduce such a policy through their forthcoming LDFs.

It is fair to say, though, that the production of LDFs has not been as rapid as the Government foresaw when it introduced the new planning system in 2004. According to *Planning* magazine, the Government expected 80% of local authorities to have adopted their core strategy, the central component of the new LDF, by September 2007. In fact, only 8% had adopted them by June 2008 (Gillman, 2008) – a very significant underprovision.

It is perhaps unsurprising in this context that more local authorities have not adopted a policy providing for the allocation of 100% affordable housing sites. Local authority representatives from all five of the case studies confirmed their intention to eventually implement this policy, with several expressing frustration at the pace of the new planning system:

Interviewer: It sounds like the length of time it is taking to finish the RSS, and the length of time it would take to get a policy adopted in an LDF, are two of the main reasons for bringing forward your interim policy?

Respondent: Yes. When the core strategy is submitted, which will incorporate the requirements of the interim affordable housing policy, supported by a SPD, and improved evidence base, the policy will become a material consideration for development control officers. At that stage, I will feel more comfortable that we can hold our position on appeal, but I will be happier when we submit our core strategy and the policy has some statutory weight.

The LDF process could be much more efficient and quicker – obviously, the new system was introduced to try and speed up the process! Our experience is, and what I can gather from every other practitioner, it's almost had the reverse effect. We're frustrated by the length, complexity and bureaucracy of what it is.

Summary

This sub-section has presented some evidence that the new planning system, and delays to policy introduction as key actors adjust to that new system, are partly to blame for local authorities not having implemented the changes to PPG3 published in 2005. In section 5.2 we explored the role the role played by RSSs, and whether they are being modified to reflect changes to Government policy re housing provision, and that evidence suggests the time taken for national policy to filter down to regional policy is also contributing to a lack of affordable housing delivery.

The next “technical” issue which this section focuses on is that of resource shortages.

6.1.2. The effects of resource shortages

As discussed in section 2.3.2, there are two resources without which it is impossible to provide affordable housing – land and finance. Both these resources are in finite supply, and the literature review identified particular issues in rural areas. The interview data casts some light on whether the lack of land and finance are causing problems in the case study local authorities.

Land

Monk (2007) found that RSLs were finding 100% affordable housing sites increasingly difficult to acquire. We have discussed above the implementation by three out of the five case study local authorities of what are effectively moratoria – policies to prevent planning permission being granted for new market housing developments. The justification for these policies is to reduce oversupply against the housing figures in the relevant RSS, but a perceived side-benefit for the three local authorities was that RSLs might find it easier to acquire land (as affordable housing developments are one of the very few exceptions to the moratoria). One local authority representative stated “I think one of the outcomes may well be that some schemes for affordable housing may come forward which wouldn’t have done otherwise. I can’t point to any at this point in time...”.

RSLs are less convinced that this side-benefit will transpire, with one RSL operating in that local authority area scathing about the local authority's hopes in this regard: "That's the theory! The reality is that landowners are just holding on to sites". This interviewee was more concerned that the lack of market housing developments meant affordable housing section 106 contributions were not coming forward. Hope value was ascribed as being as important as current policy, with landowners being prepared to wait for a change in approach. Another RSL shared this concern:

I think everybody sees the moratorium as temporary. Some of these landowners have been sitting on land for generations, so they're happy to wait another five years or so.

A big issue in many rural areas is the dominance of a single large landowner – often a landowning trust with a long history (i.e. the landed gentry). Such trusts may have been in place for many years and take a long term view to land sales, in contrast to a smaller landowner who might wish to sell some land in order to raise money or retire. As one RSL put it:

[The trust] – they're in effect more like an RSL in terms of their outlook – they're in it for the long game, they're not looking for instant profit. They're quite happy to look at a 50-60 year horizon.

One parish council in this area reported that the trust owned all of the undeveloped land in the parish, and was not prepared to sell any land at a discounted rate for affordable housing without being allowed to develop market housing in exchange. Some trusts, however, will sell land for affordable housing, with a parish council in a different area reporting that the local landowner had provided some land to be developed for a rural exception site:

Interviewer: So was the land given free, then?

Respondent: Erm, no! I don't think anything's free! I was quite shocked when I heard the amount that was being paid for it – it's not my job to say what it was, but it was not a free gift. Obviously, it wasn't the same as if you're going to have a commercial development on there.

So it would be unfair to categorise all large landowning trusts as obstructing affordable housing development. One RHE representative was sympathetic to the concerns of trusts in that area: “A lot of them don’t want a capital receipt because they don’t like the tax implications of that capital receipt. And also they’re involved in complex trust structures where disposal of land is very difficult for them”. Perhaps a new way to work with these trusts needs to be found.

Housing Corporation finance

As noted in section 2.3.2, the Housing Corporation is attempting to introduce “efficiency” savings across affordable housing delivery by reducing grant levels (Audit Commission and National Audit Office, 2005). Commentators are concerned that the additional costs of developing affordable housing in rural areas are not reflected in the Housing Corporation’s funding regulations, and hence that RSLs operating in rural areas face increasing problems in delivering affordable housing (Gallent and Bell, 2000, Bevan et al., 2001). Interviews with RHEs and RSLs in the case study local authorities support this to a certain extent, as this interview with an RHE shows:

The grant levels are just not enough for rural areas – we all know about the additional cost of developing rural – land can be more expensive because it’s at a premium, you have planning restrictions with materials, etc, you’ve got greater distances for contractors to travel, etc. You’ve also got the affordable rent issue – if we are talking about building affordable rented accommodation, which we are primarily in rural areas, because the incomes are so low, the pressure is hugely on to try and keep rents as low as possible, so if you’ve got higher development costs and the same grant levels, it has to be reflected in the rents in order to make the equation work, and it can’t! Because then you would have accommodation that’s not affordable, so what’s the point of doing it in the first place? You then end up with accommodation that’s only accessible to people on housing benefit, which is a huge problem in rural areas.

Not all interviewees shared this concern. One RSL (in a different area to this RHE) did not think that it was a major problem:

Interviewer: Are you able to make 100% affordable on rural sites stack up financially?

Respondent: We have no problem there – generally 100% schemes are cheaper to build, but in rural areas there are access and sustainability issues – we are putting in groundsource heat pumps into a scheme in [one of the case study parishes]. But we tend to be paying less for land as sites are not worth full housing land value.

A specific concern for some was the policy of the Housing Corporation in Yorkshire and Humberside to restrict the grant it will pay to £5,000 per plot. The RHE in Harrogate, whilst acknowledging that this restriction had not caused a problem in that local authority, reported anecdotal concerns from colleagues in other areas. An RSL in a more southern case study area felt that a similar approach would seriously inhibit development in that region:

The standard in [case study local authority] generally, and it's probably a standard for [the county] generally, is £10,000 a plot. Meanwhile, the Housing Corporation talks about capping [land] values. As far as this funding regime goes, the Housing Corporation north office is trying to push it to £5,000 a plot. That would probably knacker the whole process.

More of a concern across the interviews was that the longer timescale for development of rural sites (particularly rural exceptions) is not reflected in the Housing Corporation bidding process (a two year “bidding round” in which RSLs are expected to predict the funding they will require for the forthcoming two years). An RHE summarised the issue well:

One of the issues is the structural way the grant is allocated – the two year issue. Rural housing is basically very long term to get a scheme on site – it takes much longer than two years, it can take five years or even longer. I'd say the average was about three to four years, and that's if you don't have huge problems. Also you get issues where you might have an opportunity that arises suddenly and you have to go for it then – a plot of land that comes available, and if you have a two year grant allocation,

you've lost it. That can be true in urban areas as well, but when you're talking about small communities and small areas, you have to be able to develop straight away.

This is a concern of a number of the RSLs, though they are keen to make use of the Housing Corporation's "in-year bidding" route, which offers RSLs the opportunity to bid for any funding that has not been spent thanks to schemes collapsing. That approach was considered vital by several RSLs, and perhaps of particular benefit to those operating in rural areas:

I've been here for two years, things are getting better. I'm glad we've got the in-year bidding option. It suits us, because we're bidding for six or eight houses, so there's the chance that there's going to be that bit of money in there somewhere, it's not like we're putting 200 houses in in the middle of the year.

The Housing Corporation has moved to a three-year bidding round for 2008-2011, which should improve the situation for rural RSLs, but the continuation of the in-year bidding option seems essential, particularly for small-scale community led schemes. The Housing Corporation has also introduced a process of "Continuous Market Engagement", to allow bids for such funding at any time, rather than on the previous quarterly basis.

Another Housing Corporation scheme to improve efficiency in affordable housing delivery is the partnership scheme, whereby the Housing Corporation directs most of its funding to a small number of larger, "partner" RSLs. This may have a knock-on effect on the popularity of rural sites, as one housing officer noted a preference for urban sites amongst RSLs: "I don't think most housing associations can be bothered looking for rural sites – in the Government push for numbers, it is a lot easier to get houses through section 106 agreements". If the move to Housing Corporation partners reduces the number of smaller, specialist rural housing associations, then the number of rural schemes may fall.

Summary

There is evidence of localised resource shortages in the case study areas, with land rather than finance being highlighted as the principle area affected by shortages. However, the release of land could be considered as a political as much as a practical issue – local authorities and landowners need to be convinced of the merits of land release before affordable housing can be built on it. We might then view a lack of land in a particular location as being a possible example of the exercise of power by those resistant to development – whether landowners or those with an influence over local authority policy.

We have now looked at two “technical” issues which might explain why national policy has yet to deliver significant additional rural affordable housing at the local level. A third issue is that of the presence, or otherwise, of a rural housing enabler.

6.1.3. The impact RHEs have on the outcomes of policy

Rural Housing Enablers (RHEs) are considered by some to be key to the delivery of affordable housing in rural areas (Best and Shucksmith, 2006, ARHC, 2006). As there is variance across the case study local authorities in the extent to which support is given to an enabler, we can explore whether the presence of an RHE correlates with the effectiveness of local authority policy, and so speculate as to a possible causality – i.e. investigate whether the presence of an RHE increases delivery of rural affordable housing. The first stage is to examine what exactly an RHE does to facilitate rural housing delivery.

The role of RHEs

Persuading local people of the merit of specific affordable housing schemes was seen by some interviewees as being a vital role carried out by RHEs. One parish council representative observed that “The enablers meet right at the bottleneck, because if you haven’t got the parish council on board, you’re not going to go anywhere with it”.

One RHE described four key parts to their role: Winning the trust of the parish council; carrying out a housing needs survey; carrying out a site investigation (talking to development control, highways, etc); passing the site onto a housing association to progress its development. Much of the first part, working with the parish council, was done in the context of preparing parish plans in this local authority area. That RHE focused on “community driven schemes rather than allocated or windfall sites”.

In other areas the RHE might be used as a source of expertise on affordable housing in general – the previous approach of one of the case study local authorities was described by an RHE as:

Every planning application they got in, they used to send me detail of, and if I'd done a housing needs survey, I'd then say what I thought the [proportion of] affordable rented should be on that site, or, if we had time, I'd rush out and do a housing needs survey if I thought there was any potential.

That same RHE stressed the value of the enabling programme in treating each community differently, as a different approach might be needed for particular local communities:

That is the only way you're going to get rural development, actually by sitting down with the village, sitting down with the parish council, sitting down with the maps, and actually looking at that individual community. It's not a one policy will fit all, it's basically looking and seeing which individual priorities will fit that individual community, and the combinations are enormously varied, and you need to look at that individually, otherwise it's just not going to happen.

That flexibility in approach was something emphasised by a number of RHEs as being a real strength of the programme. One of the RHEs was very focused on supporting parish councils, and reiterated that the level of support would vary from case to case:

It might be that we come in, do the HNS, and see it through to the end, or we might just go in for a specific reason, and that could be to talk around what is affordable housing. It depends on what they want, but usually we go in and talk about what my role is, and that leads to them talking about HNSs.

Impacts of RHE work

Given the variety of work carried out by RHEs, it is legitimate to ask whether their presence actually increases the quantity of affordable housing delivered in general terms or specifically on rural exception sites.

It is hard to make a direct causal link between the presence of an RHE and the number of affordable houses delivered. One piece of indirect evidence is that for the two case study areas (Alnwick and Wealden) that do not have RHEs it is notable that there are problems with the delivery of rural affordable housing. In Alnwick there have been no exception sites delivered in the last five years, and in Wealden, the much-vaunted “HOPE” policy, the allocated exception policy which prompted the amendment to PPG3, had not, at the time of the case study visit, delivered any affordable houses. We discuss reasons for the lack of RHE funding from these local authorities below.

Support for RHEs comes largely from anecdotal evidence from key actors. Rural housing enablers (RHEs) are seen in the areas in which they operate as a vital cog in the machine of affordable housing delivery. A number of the parish councils interviewed stressed the importance of the RHE to them – “Well, I can’t praise XX enough... S/he’s been brilliant”; “XX, as the enabler, has been invaluable to us”; “I couldn’t speak highly enough of [the enabler]”. One local authority housing officer was categorical that “I think it’s fair to say that there are now schemes under construction that would not have been built were [the RHE] not in post”.

Support for RHEs from other key actors

Away from the community level, in some case study areas there was some scepticism about the role played by RHEs. One RSL representative in an area where an RHE was operating considered RHEs to be “Basically job creation schemes... you know, there’s no mystique around affordable housing in rural areas. It’s a case of checking with the local authority to see whether there’s a need, [then the] housing association finding out whether there are sites in those districts”.

In other areas, as identified above, there is no rural housing enabler in operation. The reason WDC and ADC do not enjoy the services of an RHE is because they do not contribute towards the funding of an enabler. There is currently no rural housing enabler operating in the county of Northumberland, thanks to a lack of funding from authorities including Alnwick District Council. Similarly, Wealden no longer funds an RHE. When questioned on this, staff from the two authorities opined that they did not feel the enablers which had been in place had contributed to their delivery of affordable housing. A housing officer from one of those authorities explained their decision to discontinue RHE funding on the basis that they had no problem spending their proportion of the regional housing pot (on larger schemes in the main towns of the District), hence did not see what purpose the “reactive” enabler served in that local authority.

As discussed above, these two local authorities have struggled to deliver rural exception sites in recent years, so the logic for this lack of funding is perhaps puzzling. One of the local authority housing representatives who did not fund an RHE effectively contradicted themselves in the course of the interview. In answer to a question about parish council support for affordable housing, s/he said “I still think there are issues about NIMBYism, there are still issues about negative perception of affordable housing – what we mean by it, the type of clients that are housed”. This, one might think, would be an excellent argument for funding for an RHE, to try and address this negative perception of affordable housing. When asked whether the local authority funded an RHE, the response was:

We felt that the RHE wasn't adding anything in terms of what the staff were doing already, because we were quite well resourced... I do think they've got a very important role in terms of acting, particularly where there are communication issues, I think. Fortunately we haven't had so many, to warrant bringing in their expertise.

It is hard to explain this apparent failure to connect two seemingly linked observations!

Even those local authorities which part-fund an RHE do not escape criticism from other key actors. One rural housing enabler, while being grateful for the contribution by the local authority in question, pointed out that other corporate priorities received much more funding.

I think in common with most local authorities, if you're serious about providing rural affordable housing, you need to put your money behind it... It always rankles a little bit, local authorities have a corporate priority to provide more rural affordable housing, but they actually don't put any money behind it. If you looked at [case study LPA]'s contribution, putting in [several thousand pounds] a year into it, whereas if you look at some of their other corporate priorities they're probably putting hundreds of thousands of pounds in. And I'm sure that they would argue that by partnership working, etc, they actually put far more in, but I'm not so sure. The bottom line is that if there were three people doing my job in [case study LPA] district, you'd have three times the output.

We have discussed the issue of funding, from the perspective of local authorities' stated corporate priorities versus their actions, in section 5.3.4 above.

Summary

It is impossible to provide definitive quantitative evidence of the impact RHEs are having on the effectiveness of local authority policies. It is though possible to draw an implied conclusion from the lack of exception sites in Alnwick and Wealden, the

two local authorities without an RHE, that RHEs can help deliver such sites. The qualitative evidence from the interviews is that local communities consider RHEs to be a positive factor in the success of affordable housing policies. The cost of an RHE is relatively small, in the overall budget of a local authority, so we might argue that a lack of funding for one is perhaps indicative of an overall lack of enthusiasm for rural (affordable) housing development.

The technical issues discussed so far with reference to the failure of national policy to deliver more rural affordable housing are perhaps relatively easy to address – the new planning system should become quicker as those working within it adapt to it; whilst a lack of resources in general terms or specifically relating to an RHE would be easily addressed via a redistribution of funding. Not all technical problems with the affordable housing delivery system are this straightforward to dismiss, however. The next sub-section looks at a more complex issue, that of communication problems.

6.1.4. Communication problems

In relation to the implementation of many policies we might find delivery of supposedly common aims frustrated by the hidden ambitions and intentions of different participants in the delivery process. Hogwood and Dunn (1984) identify agreement on objectives as one of their ten “criteria for perfect policy implementation”, and note that a proliferation of unofficial objectives within a programme can explain the failure of a policy to be fully implemented.

Planning for affordable housing seems to be particularly subject to this potential “everybody paddling their own canoe” (Crook et al., 2002, Audit Commission and National Audit Office, 2005), in part due to the hugely complicated delivery chain (see Figure 10 in section 2.3.3). A partnership, whether formal or informal, is essential for affordable housing to be delivered in any local authority area, and particularly within small rural communities (Yarwood, 2002). There are a number of relationships which are of particular importance, discussed in more detail below.

Different departments within local authorities

The housing, planning and legal departments of a local authority all have a part to play in delivering affordable housing through the planning system. The housing department is likely to have a huge quantity of data on the priority areas and types of need there are for affordable housing within the local authority area. The planning department is generally responsible for negotiating with a developer over the proportion of affordable housing to be required on a s106 site, or with an RSL to determine the specific details of a proposal. The legal department will be responsible for drafting the s106 agreement to ensure that affordable housing is provided on the basis that all the participants in the process understood it was to be.

Some authors have cited a problem of “functional silos” within local authorities as frustrating the implementation of policies – different departments might sign up to common aims, but in fact have subtly (or not so subtly!) differing interpretations of the best way to achieve that (Healey, 2006). Most of the case study local authorities have taken steps to try and introduce a multi-disciplinary approach, often via (affordable) housing teams or working groups which meet on a regular basis. It may take some time, though, before such approaches bear fruit – one RSL officer commented that “It might be worth you speaking to the housing department up there as well [as the planning department] – I’m not saying that they don’t speak to the same hymn sheet, but...”. Even where local authorities have set up specific multi-disciplinary teams to ensure that everyone does “speak to the same hymn sheet”, there may still be problems between the aim of such working arrangements and their implementation, as an RSL officer observed – “I was aghast, I was invited to a meeting with the planners, to discuss affordable housing, but they hadn’t even invited their housing people!”.

In the majority of the case studies the planning, housing and legal departments do not co-operate fully. There are differences in opinion on what constitutes sustainable/appropriate locations for new housing; and disagreements over detailed issues such as the certainty of housing association dwellings remaining affordable in perpetuity. These are examples of areas within which greater co-operation and agreement (joint working) would increase the provision of affordable housing.

Elected members

Of course, it is not local authority officers who have the final say on determining planning applications, but the elected members of that local authority. Those elected members have to weigh the strategic aims of the local authority against the pressing personal concern that they may lose their council seat at the next election if their electorate disagree with their stance on any given issue(s). Several interviewees expressed extreme frustration as what they saw as “political” decision making by members, sometimes after lengthy negotiation between participants in the planning process. One parish council representative summed it up well:

I think politics comes into these things – not so much at the bottom level, and not so much the officers in [case study local authority], because they do a wonderful job, but when councillors start interfering with things – they’re awkward. They’re inclined to go with the flow.

RSLs can feel frustrated by members who they see as interfering at the last minute, after officers have negotiated an agreement. One RSL identified one of the case study authorities as being particularly poor in this regard:

The main issue would be District Council members, particularly planning committee members, acting as a corporate body. The planning committee refused an application at [village X] that the Council’s senior officers had been supporting. I know members are independent, but it’s time they took responsibility for their actions.

Exception sites

The development of rural exception sites are particularly dependant on partnerships, and hence communication. They were described by one RSL representative as “a very political area in many ways, because it’s not going to be in the local plan, it’s not going to be in any designated area for development, it’s always an exception to planning policy”. This idea of an exception to planning policy can be confusing for those not intimately involved in the planning system. One local authority housing

officer put it like this: “Planning policies are seen as being set in stone, so the idea of an officially endorsed exception to them is hard to sell”. That quote came from an area which did not fund a rural housing enabler, seen in other places as very useful in that process of “selling” schemes to local communities.

Summary

The data analysed above points to highly variable attitudes of different participants in the affordable housing delivery chain to one another. There is evidence of Healey’s “functional silos” operating in some local authorities, or as one local authority representative put it, “the tyranny of the urgent” – participants in affordable housing working groups in local authorities can make commitments with the best of intentions, but fail to follow those through when subject to day-to-day pressures and differing departmental priorities. Elected members were also cited as a potential problem, with local issues sometimes overriding strategic local authority priorities – or, to put it another way, elected members making decisions which might be popular with their immediate electorate but potentially to the disadvantage of others in the local authority. This latter point is evidence of power being wielded indirectly by rural elites who do not wish to see development in their community. The power which such anti-development voices can have is illustrated by the case of Heather Cairns, who was leader of Alnwick District Council until May 2007 – she lost her council seat to “an anti-wind farm campaigner” (Smith, 2007) following her support for a wind farm in Alnwick District.

We have now looked in some detail at four specific technical issues with how the affordable housing delivery process operates. To conclude this section, we return to an issue previously discussed – that of differences between the corporate priorities adopted by local authorities and the policy decisions they take and implement – and seek to explore whether there are straightforward reasons for those differences.

6.1.5. Exploring practical reasons for a disparity between local authority priorities and actions

In section 5.3.4 we looked at differences between local authority rhetoric and actions in terms of (affordable) housing delivery, and concluded that in some cases there was quite a gap between the two. One explanation for this might be the exercise of power by those opposed to rural development, which we will discuss in section 6.2 below. There may, though, be more prosaic reasons for such a disparity.

Resource and expertise shortages

The first, and most obvious, reason why some local authorities do not devote the same resources to affordable housing delivery as others is the differing economic situations local authorities find themselves. Factors such as population structure, council tax income and whether the local authority has sold their council houses (and hence might have a large capital reserve), all contribute to the level of resources available to local authorities.

How any given local authority chooses to spend the resources available to it will of course also differ. Different local authorities have different priorities. One local authority representative attributed their success in delivering affordable housing to the fact that “We’re quite lucky, because we’ve got one problem – we’ve got a shortage of affordable housing, a tremendous shortage. We don’t have competing priorities...”.

There may also be expertise “shortages” – Farthing and Ashley (2002) identified differences between local authorities in their ability to negotiate with developers. Farthing and Ashley also identified, however, that other factors can affect the success of negotiation, including the housing market in that area.

Geographical context

The housing markets across the case studies are, to a certain extent, different – there is a greater pressure for housing in the South of England than the North. That

said, all the case study local authorities exhibit high demand for housing, due to their high quality physical environment, and in some cases proximity to urban areas.

The more anti-development authorities are, arguably, geographically different from the pro-development authorities, which could explain why they might have seen more recent development, and perhaps why their populations and elected councillors have a different attitude. The town of Harrogate is one of the points on the so-called “Golden Triangle”, the other two points being the cities of Leeds (15 miles away) and York (20 miles away). Crowborough, one of the biggest towns in Wealden, is a one hour train ride from central London. Stratford-upon-Avon is not only an internationally famous tourist destination, but is easily commutable from Birmingham and its satellite towns. Alnwick and South Hams districts, on the other hand, are tangibly more remote – more “rural”, perhaps. These two districts, and the towns within them, have historically seen less development than the other three, and hence there is perhaps less opposition to more development.

We might also hypothesise that because these districts are deeper rural, their economies are more reliant on “traditional” rural industries such as agriculture, mining and tourism. Hence their populations and elected members might place a higher priority on development, to diversify their economic base, than on environmental protection. Figure 21 shows that there is a broad correlation between the local authorities most supportive of new development and those with the highest proportion of these traditional rural industries. The least supportive local authority (WDC) has the lowest proportion of these industries. A correlation does, not, of course, imply causality, but this may be a contributory factor towards the attitude of these pro-development authorities. Indeed, in their response to the submission draft of the North East RSS, ADC expressed concern that reducing their housing allocation would “have a detrimental effect on the local economy, in terms of the building of the housing itself (particularly the local construction industry and housing led regeneration), new business development/business expansion...”.

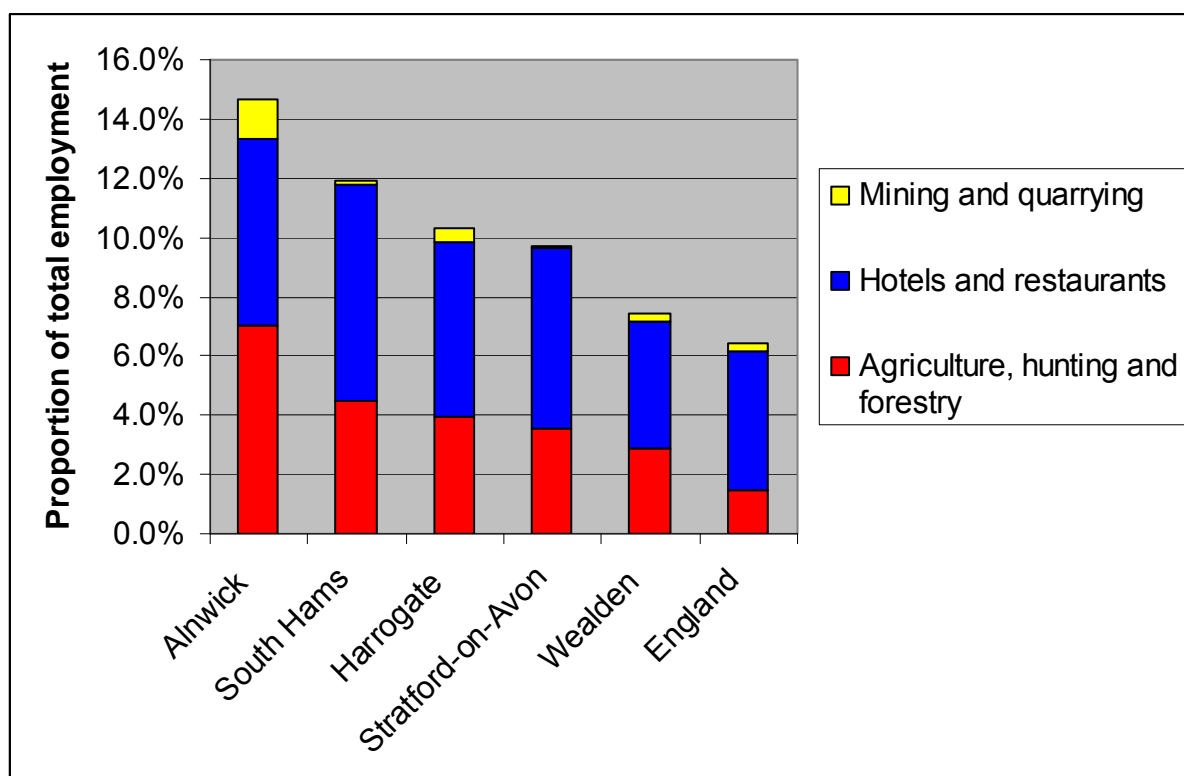


Figure 21 – Extract from 2001 census data illustrating the proportion of the working population employed in different industries (Crown copyright, HMSO)

Summary

This section has, in seeking to answer research question 4, identified some technical reasons for the lack of affordable housing delivery in the case study local authorities. It seems clear that some changes in practice would help generate more affordable housing, but the evidence also suggests that there are more than technical issues in play – the differences between the local authorities do not appear to be significant enough to explain the variability in their policies, and it should be noted that even in the most positive local authority, South Hams, delivery has not matched expectations in recent years.

The next section, then, will look at non-technical explanations for policy failure – namely the potential exercise of power, in line with Lukes' three dimensions of power, as being responsible for the lack of implementation of the Government's policies.

6.2. The limits to rational policy

Section 6.1 tried to seek out factors which might be to blame for the short-term failure of the changes to PPG3 in 2005 and the introduction of PPS3 to immediately deliver more affordable housing in rural areas. Some “positivist” factors were identified, which might be addressed as the new planning system becomes more established, or as more information/advice on how to deliver affordable housing can be distributed. We must, however, also acknowledge that there has been a national policy framework for delivering rural affordable housing since 1991, and that ever since then delivery of affordable housing has failed to match the need for it (ARHC, 2006). The case study local authorities have not increased their provision of affordable housing to match their acknowledged need for such.

The policy analysis methodology initially adopted in this thesis cannot adequately explained why the local authorities have failed in this way – as discussed in section 4.3.2, it has become clear that another level of analysis is required. It appears that amongst the reasons for the ongoing lack of affordable housing delivery might be the exercise of power by rural elites, in line with the arguments of Lukes (1974) on the three dimensions of power.

This section of the thesis will try to answer research question 5 – does policy implementation depend on more than technical factors? It is broken down into three sub-sections, each of which can be related to one of Lukes’ three dimensions of power. The first, related to Lukes’ first dimension of power (decision making), focuses on the influence exercised by those opposing affordable housing in rural areas.

6.2.1. Opposition to affordable housing

Section 2.4.3 of the literature review considered academic literature on the subject of the opposition to rural affordable housing, and concluded that such opposition tended to be complex, and not easily characterised as legitimate vs. NIMBY. Some opposition to affordable housing in the case study local authorities could indeed be

perfectly legitimate, and perhaps based on concern about the impacts development has on the environment, often at a very local level.

One of Hogwood & Dunn's ten criteria for perfect policy implementation was that policy objectives were understood, agreed upon, and complementary. The last of these, that policy objectives are compatible each other, could be a significant factor in why some local authorities do better in terms of how they deliver affordable housing. For many, there is an inherent conflict between a policy objective to protect the environment and an objective to meet affordable housing needs, as the latter will almost inevitably require some form of built development, which by definition has some degree of impact on the environment. Attempting to meet policy objectives that, to some local authorities, appear incompatible could be placing restrictions on affordable housing delivery. One local authority representative was concerned that in that local authority "I don't think Members have the will to develop housing or affordable housing – environmental protection is their number one priority."

As discussed above, all the local authorities studied feature affordable housing as a corporate priority. Attitudes of particular local authority members, parish councils, and others, however, can vary. One RHE noted "We're in a very Conservative controlled area... there are many district councillors in [case study local authority] who believe there is no need for affordable housing in the district, even though they've got 3,000 households on the waiting list".

The reason given by the anti-development case study local authorities for their stances was that there had been unacceptably high recent levels of development. As we have seen from analysis of the interview data above, local authority members' definitions of unacceptably high do not necessarily tally with those of their officers, but it seems that anti-development attitudes are politically popular in some quarters.

There is evidence that the approach adopted by Harrogate Borough Council changed in 2003, when the Council became Conservative run (see section 5.3.5 above). This does not appear to be a party political issue, as four out of the five local authorities studied were Conservative run at the time the interviews were carried out. There is little to suggest that current practice depends on the political control of the local

authority – South Hams District is as dominated by Conservative councillors as any of the local authorities and yet performs well in terms of resources devoted to affordable housing provision. The change in approach in Harrogate is perhaps as much about conservatism “with a small c” – i.e. a general reluctance to change the status quo, an opposition to new development in what is an attractive and historic borough. We can now go on to assess how widespread such opposition is across the five case study areas.

NIMBYism

Not in My Back Yard (NIMBY) opposition is a concept not without critics, as discussed in the literature review (Wolsink, 2006). It can be difficult to identify whether opposition to affordable housing is on the basis of “legitimate” objections or is purely opposition to new development on the grounds of self-interest (Ellis, 2004). Interviewees were specifically asked about the source of any opposition to affordable housing, and some identified what they perceived as straightforward NIMBY attitudes:

You get NIMBYs wherever you go, you’re bound to encounter one or two... We’ve all potentially got a bit of NIMBY in us, haven’t we? I wouldn’t want a new house built next to me, I wouldn’t want to lose my view, I wouldn’t want the noise, construction, etc – these are people’s lives, and you can understand it.

Interviews with parish council representatives also revealed what might be called NIMBY attitudes:

I don’t [see any need for market housing]. I know they say you should expand or die, but we haven’t got any room for any new houses! Unless you go into green fields, and we’re a conservation area as well here. There are one or two bits that could be infill, but do you really want to get rid of the spaces in your village? We’ve got 204 houses in the village.

There was an overwhelming response [to the parish plan questionnaire] that there is sufficient open market housing at present – we don't want any more, we don't need any more.

But, as identified by, amongst others, Kraft & Clary (1991) and Ellis (2004), those often accused of being NIMBYs may in fact object to planning applications for entirely legitimate reasons. One RHE felt the language of NIMBYism was unhelpful:

It's a myth, the NIMBYs. NIMBY is a generic term, and actually a lot of people who are classified as being NIMBY have valid concerns about where development is located, the design of it, people who occupy the homes, and I think if you work with them, spend a bit of time with them, you can actually get over those concerns, you can reassure them.

Several interviewees stressed this latter point, that opposition arose for particular reasons, and that working with local communities was key to overcoming that opposition. They felt that in many cases opposition was unfounded, due to a misconception of what affordable housing was.

Perceptions of affordable housing

A number of local authority, RSL and RHE representatives highlighted what they considered to be a misconception of the term "affordable housing". This misconception was described in a similar way by several rural housing enablers:

I think you only have to look at mixed tenure developments to see that the old prejudices about social housing tenants having old Ford Cortinas in the garden is a load of rubbish!

I think amongst rural communities, particularly for people who have moved out of urban areas to go to the rural idyll, they take the concepts of social housing and their experiences of that, and feel that they don't want that to happen again, that's what they moved away from the cities for. They have

the perception of burned out cars – that’s what they worry about... [they say] “if you build social housing here, crime will go through the roof”.

The latter quote is an interesting interpretation of why opposition to affordable housing might arise, and fits with the views of Hubbard (2005), who, as discussed in the literature review, expressed a belief that residents of rural areas set out to exclude “Otherness”, i.e. anything that detracted from their perceived notion of what the countryside should be.

The perception appears to remain amongst many people living in the countryside that affordable housing means social housing, and that social housing means a stereotype common in media representations (see figure 22).



Figure 22 – A stereotypical social housing tenant? (copyright Channel 4)

In recent years, however, a shortage of affordable housing has begun to affect more and more people. A local authority housing officer attempted to pinpoint the moment when that local authority made affordable housing provision a priority:

...the moment when the chief executive and the director of finance realised that both their sons couldn’t afford to buy. All of a sudden that was when things started to change – senior officers within the council realised that affordable housing was not just a problem for single mothers with five kids – you know, Cortinas on bricks, it was a problem for them –

middle class families with well-to-do children who couldn't actually afford to get accommodation.

We could argue that this was either a genuine broadening of understanding of what affordable housing meant; or a realisation for these senior council officers that their children could not afford housing, so they needed to coin a new meaning (or construction) of affordable housing. Indeed the very term “affordable housing” is not universally popular – several local authorities have tried to use different terms in their policies. Council members in Harrogate tried to introduce the term “housing for local people”, and in Stratford-on-Avon the supplementary planning document used to promote affordable housing in local communities is known as “Local Choice - meeting the needs of Rural Communities”.

Many interviewees stressed the importance of communicating to local communities that new affordable housing provided would specifically be intended for local people. One local authority representative was optimistic about this programme of education – “I think education that affordable housing can be for your sons and daughters, and your doctors, your teachers, and your hospital workers, is changing perceptions”.

We discuss above the effects of focusing new affordable housing provision on “local people”, and the extent to which this contributes to social inclusion/exclusion. It seems local authorities are attempting to ameliorate objection through hiding affordable housing programmes behind a focus on local people. It is useful to question whether this approach is simply pragmatism – an appropriate way to avoid NIMBYism by addressing the importance of perceptions of development (Clifford and Warren, 2005); or whether it constitutes an abetting of rural elites in the use of power to exclude “otherness”. Further attempts to avoid change in rural communities can be found in the interviews – we can label these comments as attempts to preserve the rural idyll.

The rural idyll

The “rural idyll” is the concept of the countryside as being a repository of certain ideals of rurality – the village green, Maypoles, etc. (Hubbard, 2005). Despite the

fact that the rural idyll has probably never existed in reality, and was created as a concept in the 18th century by landowners seeking to conceal the less attractive parts of the working countryside (Newby, 1985), some people living in rural areas are keen to try and preserve it, which means excluding types of development – for example social housing – which might detract from it.

A fear of stereotypical social housing tenants leads many parish councils and communities to lobby for shared ownership rather than social rented housing. Virtually all interviewees were in agreement that shared ownership was not a realistic option for the majority of those in housing need because it was still too expensive for those people to afford. One RSL identified the tensions these different perspectives could bring:

We get a lot of concern from local residents sometimes when we put a proposal forward and it contains so few shared ownership – residents will say “isn’t the point of providing affordable housing to give people a step up so that eventually they can make the transition to owning their own home?” And you have to say to people “Actually, no. That may be what high level policy says it’s for, that may be what you as owner occupiers want, particularly if you lean towards the right side of politics, but that’s actually not the purpose of affordable housing. It’s ultimately to put roofs over people’s heads”.

Again, is this an example of the exercise of power to reject “otherness” – social rented tenants being just too different from owner occupiers to be acceptable? Many individuals and parish councils in rural areas do not agree with this RSL that the purpose of affordable housing is “to put roofs over people’s heads”. The priority of many of these communities is to maintain the status quo, and we could view their selective support for affordable housing development as an attempt to do that, by ensuring that their children have access to affordable housing via local connection requirements.

Several parish council representatives expressed a concern that their village may become a depository for social housing tenants from a nearby urban area. This

seems unlikely, as the villages in question are often 20–30 miles away from that urban area, with infrequent (at best) public transport links: not what social housing providers are likely to see as ideal locations for those currently living in the inner city! Again, this seems to be a reflection of a fear of otherness, in this case social housing tenants from cities. An RHE identified a contradiction in the attitudes of some communities:

It's quite a bizarre situation, someone can go into an area and spend a million and a half on a house, which is feasible in [case study local authority], and they might come from [nearby city]. But if someone goes into affordable housing and they're from [same nearby city] it's a totally different ball game! What's that about?! It's most odd.

There is also an unwillingness to sacrifice the physical environment to achieve social inclusion, a parish council representative (who admitted to having retired to the area for its physical environment) noting “The parishioners, en masse, like the environment they live in. They like all the open views that you've got away from the village, and they want to preserve those”. This seems like a prime example of the “preserved countryside”, where decision making processes are dominated by pastoral and preservationist attitudes (Murdoch et al., 2003), and hence the exercise of power by those keen to avoid change.

The best locations for affordable housing are often considered by parish councils, and some local authority members, to be those which are “out of sight, out of mind”. One RSL representative identified this view amongst the members of one of the case study local authorities:

There are some district councillors, one of which I was having a conversation with the other day, who firmly believe in the concept of estates for social housing, and believes that those places work... his view is one of it is to the benefit of everyone else if all these people are over there, out of the way somewhere.

This seems to be the epitome of the exercise of power to protect the status quo, and to try and avoid the mixing of different social types in the community. This power can be exercised indirectly, through the planning system, but there are also examples from the case studies of power being exercised more directly. One parish council representative revealed that in relation to a rural exception site which was currently being built in the parish, a “millionaire” who lived in the village but was not directly affected by the proposed location, had offered the landowner more than was to be paid by the RSL in that instance to sell the land to him rather than the RSL, to stop affordable housing being developed. It seems that on that occasion the landowner preferred to sell the land to the RSL, which the parish council representative identified as an example of “social conscience”.

Difference between the five case study areas

An interesting difference has emerged between the case study areas – in Alnwick, South Hams and Stratford-on-Avon, interviewees reported/showed a greater acceptance of affordable housing development than market housing development – often on the basis that it was for local people only. In Harrogate and Wealden, however, several interviewees reported the opposite, that 100% affordable housing development might be less acceptable than market housing development with an element of affordable housing in it. In the following lengthy interview extract a local authority representative explains why this might be.

Interviewer: Do you get any opposition from Parish Councils?

Respondent: No – it’s great, because on the mainstream planning policy sites the amount of opposition is miniscule, if at all. On exceptions sites, the level of opposition, the threats of judicial review – the planning consultants that are drafted in by the neighbours... What they fear on exceptions sites, I think, is that – we go along and we say they’re just for local people – then they look at the council estate in the village, which is not just for local people. They look at all the ones that have been sold, the mutual exchange, the right to exchange with the people that have come in from [nearby city], and they think “yeah, we really believe the Council. Why should we let them take our nice little field, there, when that’s what

they did in the 50s and 60s, and look what they've done with that site". And you can't blame them, whereas these (s106 schemes) come in, and it's about maybe tidying up an ex-employment site, or a bit of garden, and they seem a nice design, and I think it's – you know, I don't think they like XX Council's involvement in an exceptions site. A housing association is building that. Even though they use the same contractors as the private developers – you know, if they see Charles Church come along and say "we're building, you know, a stylish development for and it'll include two homes for local people", it's incredible – the difference.

This again seems like a rejection of "otherness", whether in the form of people of a different socio-economic background, or people from outside the village. A parish council representative from a different local authority concluded that it was the former, or simply NIMBYism, when s/he explained a recent 100% affordable housing proposal had been the subject of opposition on the grounds that the local school was full. Shortly afterwards, a market housing scheme with an element of affordable housing was proposed, and "strangely enough, we didn't get any letters of objection to say that the school was full, hence my reasoning for thinking it was a Not In My Back Yard comment for [the 100% affordable housing scheme]".

Summary

The evidence presented in this sub-section appears to demonstrate that opposition to affordable housing in rural areas is still an important factor in the success or otherwise of local authority policies. Some interviewees characterised this opposition as NIMBYism, others felt that such a characterisation was unhelpful. It is hard, though, to escape the conclusion that in some areas rural elites are using power to exclude the less powerful from their community, i.e. this is a reflection of Lukes' first dimension of power. This is the first issue which perhaps contributes to answering research question 5, and suggests that policy implementation may depend on more than technical factors.

6.2.2. The inclusivity of decision making processes

The section non-technical factor which might be affecting affordable housing delivery is the operation of decision making processes in the planning arena. If we interpret opposition to affordable housing by local communities as an example of Lukes' first dimension of power (decisions that are being made are favouring the powerful), we then need to explore possible examples of the Lukes' second dimension of power – non-decision making. Are pro-development voices excluded from decision making, either by accident or design, allowing the powerful anti-development lobby to dominate?

As discussed above, local authorities now have a statutory requirement to involve the community in the development of planning policies. This shift, introduced as part of the 2004 Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act, was intended to introduce a more inclusive and participatory agenda to planning practice, as advocated by authors such as Healey (2006). Analysis of the case study data reveals marked differences in the extent to which practice and discourse within affordable housing delivery reflects this new agenda, or alternatively regards community involvement simply as something which has to be done – “going through the motions”.

The importance of parish councils in affordable housing delivery

The extent to which parish councils are integral to affordable housing scheme delivery varies across the case study local authorities. One RSL representative described the situation they were working in as “what we have in three of the four districts in XX county is almost a parish council power of veto [on exception sites]”. One local authority does not enshrine a requirement to involve the parish council in policy, but informally it is strongly encouraged:

Any time I tend to speak to people about exception schemes, I encourage them to go into a tripartite agreement with the parish council and an RSL. I think it helps to give some legitimacy to a proposal. I suppose it's not essential that it happens, but if you're working from the premise that you

are trying to meet grass roots local needs, I think the community should be in a position to buy into that.

This reliance on the parish council as a *de facto* proxy for the community may be a worrying trend, as discussed below. In Stratford-on-Avon, the COM1 policy emphasises the importance of support in a parish plan for community housing schemes:

The views of the local community as expressed preferably in a Parish Plan (or equivalent) or in its absence an alternative source of reliable evidence, will be fully taken into account in the planning process.

(Stratford-on-Avon District Council, 2006b)

The policy does not make support in a parish plan an absolute requirement, but key actor interview data suggests the absence of such a plan means a COM1 proposal is unlikely to succeed. How a community might generate an “alternative source of reliable evidence” as suggested in the policy is not made clear.

Good practice on parish plan production suggests “The whole community should be involved in producing the Parish Plan, with the parish council taking lead responsibility” (The Countryside Agency, 2004), and the general approach of the parish councils interviewed was of a semi-independent group, reporting to the parish council, consulting the community and producing the draft plan. It seems unlikely then that a parish plan would be produced without the support of the relevant parish council, again equating the community with the parish council.

Key actors in other areas placed less emphasis on securing parish council support for schemes. One RSL summed up their approach as:

We don't actively go and discuss it with the parish council. It's likely, as part of the process, in terms of planning applications and so forth, the scheme would be passed in front of them. But we don't tend to actively court the parish council unless there is going to be some local resistance to the scheme. We tend to work with the district council – if they have

identified a need, we try and meet that need. If there is resistance from local people to it, we will meet them and discuss it.

The approach of RHEs to parish councils also varied. One RHE characterised their approach as being focused on delivery, so took a pragmatic approach to parish council involvement:

I will still get the parish involved in trying to find a site, because they know who the landowners are – very often they're the landowners themselves. And so, if you're actually getting a site forward, you need the help. But if you have a site, that they don't know about, I normally find it's better to approach them after we've done our homework about whether the site's actually viable. Erm, because if the site isn't viable there's no point in upsetting anybody!

Other RHEs, as discussed in section 6.1.3, take an approach of working with parish councils to identify need and potential sites. The risk, of course, with this approach, is that parish councils may not be pro-development.

Exclusionary parish councils

Some RSLs identified parish councils as being a block on the delivery of affordable housing, with one parish council accused of preventing development because “They didn't want any housing at all, they don't want the village to expand”. Sometimes this is characterised as pure protectionism, but others identify snobbery as being an issue:

As one parish councillor said to me, “they're not invited to the dinner party”, well I'm sorry, but they bloody are! They have a right to eat at the same table, my friend.

Tewdwr-Jones is one of several authors who have critiqued the role that parish councils play in the development process, accusing them of having “a lack of credibility and influence, a lack of qualified professional support staff, a parochial

outlook, a lack of political direction, an absence of competition for council seats” (Tewdwr-Jones, 1998). One local authority representative (where there was no RHE) shared these concerns, asking:

Who are the parish council serving? The parish councils in this area tend to be comprised of articulate professionals who are effectively looking after their own. There are pro-active parish councils, but they are in the minority.

An RSL in one of the case study local authorities which places strong emphasis on parish council involvement was concerned that some parish councils might be exclusionary:

Interviewer: Would there be any fear from your point of view that if you had a community where the parish council was dominated by anti-development interests that the wider community that might be in favour of housing doesn't have the forum to make their views heard?

Respondent: There is always that danger, I think it's a worry.

Of course, part of the role of an RHE can be to work with parish councils to try and change attitudes. One of the RHEs was more optimistic about parish councils:

I've got to say I don't find there are that many communities who take that view, where you've got an elite bunch of people at the top who act as a gatekeeper. They are out there, and I could probably list half a dozen in [case study local authority], but mercifully they are few and far between.

It is fair to say, then, that there are mixed views on how inclusive parish councils are, but a reliance on parish councils as a proxy for the community may in some cases be frustrating the development of affordable housing.

Parish council involvement and delivery

Stratford-on-Avon District is probably the most “community” (equated by SADC with the parish council) focused of the case studies, where the local authority and one of

the housing associations place a strong emphasis on parish council led schemes – indeed the local authority planning policy specifically requires parish council support. The other local authorities can be placed on a spectrum from a high level of community involvement to a largely top-down, reactive approach which relies on private housing schemes providing an element of affordable housing rather than community led schemes.

Coincidentally or otherwise, possibly the least community-led local authority, Harrogate Borough Council, is seeing the highest level of delivery of affordable housing, largely through a multitude of s106 schemes, most of which are barn conversions. That outcome is as a result of both the unfortunate coinciding of a policy of restraint coupled with higher thresholds for affordable housing provision in urban areas (see section 5.3.1 for more details); and what seems to be a conscious decision of the housing department to focus on s106 provision because “rural enabling [is] very difficult to do – it’s very pro-active”. HBC do have an in-house enabler, but their role is, according to a housing officer at HBC, “to go out and make sure sites get delivered, that’s her job”, rather than focusing on community engagement as some RHEs do.

The parish council led local authorities, particularly Stratford-on-Avon and Wealden, have as yet seen few community-based affordable housing schemes. That is partly a result of the parish council led policies being relatively new, and it may be that the other participants in the development process have yet to structure their approach appropriately to achieve community support for affordable housing. It might also be that the “community involvement” approach adopted by some of the case study local authorities is itself a valid target for criticism – some of it could be described as tokenism, patched onto the end of the policy development process, rather than the radically different approach to policy development which collaborative planning demands.

This could be seen as evidence of Lukes’ second dimension of power – the exclusion of the less powerful, in this case those not on parish councils. This might not be a problem were parish councils truly representative of their community, but as we have seen, they may not be – a local authority representative identifying parish councils as

comprising “articulate professionals”. That same interviewee stated: “The Government is keen on local democracy, but haven’t answered the question about how that works if you have a local need for affordable housing but a parish council that is anti development”.

Widening the scope of consultation to those who are not involved with the parish council, whether that is by choice or because they have been excluded, might be one way to address this concern.

The planning system and consultation

Bell et al (2005) have criticised the UK planning system’s “decide-announce-defend” method as being particularly susceptible to voices raised in opposition dominating the debate. Some interviewees critiqued the “traditional” way communities are consulted on planning policies and applications – using public meetings to garner views. One RHE noted that:

I’ve been to parish council meetings where I’ve come out so disappointed, you have the articulate minority who could take over the meeting, and you know, it was their views, their needs, their way of life, and they couldn’t give a damn about anybody else.

A local authority planning officer told an anecdote about a meeting s/he had attended, and observed that following a schoolteacher who “had *some* guts!” and stood up in a public meeting to point out that she couldn’t afford to buy in the village, “just like that, the whole mood of the meeting changed – “Oh well, if it we’d known it was for people like *you!* That’s completely different!””. This anecdote illustrates that public meetings, and perhaps the planning system in general, can be criticised for being confrontational and not conducive to voices speaking in opposition to the prevailing view.

The regional decision making process

At regional level, the regional spatial strategy is officially produced by the regional assembly (shortly to be the regional development agency under the Government's Integrated Regional Strategy proposals), but the vast amount of work involved means much work is done by working groups of local authority officers. One local authority representative noted that in that region, all of the local authority officers leading on individual policy strands were from urban authorities. That was ascribed to "probably a capacity issue", i.e. urban authorities had more capacity, thanks to their greater numbers of staff, to get involved. That local authority officer was concerned about the outcome of this:

But I think inevitably, if you look at the personnel involved, there is a strong urban bias and I think ultimately that's got to be reflected in the output, and I think it is, to a certain extent.

All of the local authority authorities were, to a greater or lesser extent, struggling to get their voices heard at the regional level – it seems likely that this domination of the process by urban voices could be partly responsible.

In one of the case study areas an interview was carried out with the chief executive of the rural community council for that county. That person sat on the regional housing board, with a direct influence on the regional housing strategy, and hence the RSS. S/he described his/her role as trying to "mainstream rural" thinking as part of the RHS process:

Actually getting rural issues considered as one of all the things that are considered – so if there is a strategic policy issue to do with healthcare, that rural is automatically discussed as part of that. In the same way as you if you were doing a strategic environmental assessment, you would do rural proofing, but in a more pro-active way.

That level of rural influence appears to be unusual at the regional policy making level, there is anecdotal evidence that specifically for the North East RSS there has been

no rural “voice” in the policy making process. We could view this as another example of the exercise of power through non-decision making – if there is nobody putting forward a rural-centric point of view, there is no need to make a decision on the importance of that point of view. As discussed in the literature review, there is a concern from some that the RSS preparation process relies on formal consultation procedures rather than actively engaging with the “rural voice”, as tends to happen with RHS preparation (Three Dragons, 2007). That rural voice might take the form of the Regional Rural Affairs Forum, as following the dissolution of the Countryside Agency there is no statutory rural agency operating at the regional level.

Summary

The evidence in this sub-section suggests that despite the Government’s commitment to community involvement (and a statutory requirement for local authorities to involve the community), decision making processes remain far from inclusive. Those local authorities that do place an emphasis on community-driven affordable housing schemes equate “the community” with the parish council, which can have the effect of excluding those who might have a different (pro-development) point of view, if the parish council is supportive of affordable housing development. This fits well with Lukes’ second dimension of power – the less powerful, those not on parish councils, are excluded from decision making processes, meaning the powerful can exercise their dominance more easily. The end result can be the dominance of an anti-development rhetoric in rural areas.

The interview data has been assessed against the first two of Lukes’ dimensions of power in the last two sub-sections, and the evidence appears to show some exercise of power by those keen to exclude “Otherness” from rural areas. It is important now to explore how power is exercised in this way without there being something of an outcry by those disenfranchised by the development patterns which result. This is addressed in the third and final sub-section in this section.

6.2.3. The dominance of particular constructions

Lukes' third dimension of power, is, as he described it, "the supreme and most insidious exercise of power" (Lukes, 2005). The powerful, he argued, shape the wants and desires of the less powerful. Is this third dimension of power in play in the planning for affordable housing system, and does it explain how an anti-development discourse dominates rural policy and decision making?

On the basis of the evidence analysed, an anti-development approach is dominant at regional, local and community level in the planning for rural affordable housing process. There are notable exceptions – the South West region advocates rural housing development, SHDC is pursuing every opportunity available to it to deliver rural affordable housing, and at least one parish council demonstrated a universally positive attitude to new affordable housing in its area.

Overall, however, policy documents at the national, regional and local levels are dominated by a discourse which assumes that rural development should be constrained, with a focus for new development on urban areas. We have identified that part of the reason for this could be the exercise of two of Lukes' dimensions of power – decision making and non-decision making. We have yet, though, to establish why this approach does not engender greater levels of opposition from those disadvantaged by a lack of (affordable) housing development in the countryside.

A triangulation of discourse

The dominance of the rural constraint discourse can perhaps be explained by identifying it as a triangulation of three other constructions/discourses: firstly, an urban containment discourse which argues that urban areas should be constrained for reasons of efficiency and "better planning"; secondly, the use of a pastoralist construction of rurality to argue for the protection of the countryside; and thirdly a construction of sustainability that mitigates against rural development on climate change and social equity grounds.

Lobby groups such as the CPRE succeed in wielding such a significant influence over decision making with regards to rural development because, in part, they use these three discourses to powerful effect, described below in turn.

Urban containment

The reason for a lack of vocal opposition to the urban focus of regional and local planning policy perhaps lies in the use of discourse to suggest that urban containment is a common-sense approach (see section 5.2), and that any rural disadvantage occurring as a result of that approach is either: simply something that must be accepted – a “that’s life” argument; or is a short term consequence that will ease when “urban regeneration” has removed the push factor which causes people to migrate to rural areas (hence easing the pressure on the housing stock and reducing problems of affordability).

The former argument, one of “that’s life”, assumes that urban renaissance/regeneration should be the natural priority for policy making, given that the majority of the population live in urban areas (Urban Task Force, 1999). The latter argument, one that assumes the removal of push factors from urban areas will hence eventually ease rural affordability problems, is used explicitly in the North East and Yorkshire and Humber RSSs, despite the fact it is unsupported by evidence in either of the documents. It is safe to say the theory does not have universal support from local authorities in those regions!

The co-option of the pastoralist construction

Section 2.4.4 of the literature review discussed the theory of pastoralism, and the evidence analysed throughout chapters 5 and 6, particularly in section 5.3.5, suggests that this construction of the countryside as a rural idyll is not only commonplace, but has been co-opted by those seeking to avoid further development in the countryside for their own ends. It is important to note that pastoralism in itself does not simply equate with social injustice, nor does a modernist construction of the countryside automatically imply greater social justice, but equally important is that it is how these constructions are used by those exercising power which dictates whether

they are progressive or regressive forces. Those whose interests are served by limiting the availability of housing in rural areas use the pastoralist construction of the countryside to exclude “otherness”, by emphasising how important it is to protect the precious, limited resource which that countryside represents. The areas where these voices hold sway could be identified as being part of the “preserved countryside” as identified by Murdoch et al (2003) and discussed in section 2.2.2.

Sustainability

The third discourse which supports the constraint of development in rural areas argues that a focus on urban areas for new development is a common-sense approach – urban locations are more sustainable, hence it is obvious that housing and other forms of development should be concentrated in urban areas (DETR, 2000). This discourse is based firstly on a construction of sustainability that focuses on car use and assumes rural areas generate more carbon dioxide than urban areas, hence are less sustainable; and secondly on the paternalistic notion that affordable housing should not be built in settlements with less service provision as those living in them are less likely to have access to private transport, hence should be guided to locations which are more “suitable” for them.

The genesis of a new discourse

The evidence from interviews with the local authority representatives is that some accept the assumption that development should be focused on urban areas and tailor their policies accordingly. We could charitably label this approach as pragmatism – local authorities might see little point in trying to promote rural development in the face of an urban-focused RSS and planning inspectorate. Other local authorities, though, are taking a more bullish approach, and are strongly advocating their case at a regional level, supported by strong policies and practice, and/or or simply bypassing regional policy to support their local areas.

Why do some local authorities take this approach and others do not? It is doubtless not easy to “paddle your own canoe”, as one interviewee put it, and it requires “strong leadership and continuity of service of members and officers” to quote a

strategic officer from South Hams District Council, who was explaining how they succeeded in devoting so much effort to affordable housing delivery. Another officer from South Hams summed up the situation for rural local authorities:

It's Government policy – a lot of the recommendations [of the ARHC report] require the Government to take the initiative – that's the world in which we work. Or the planning authority to be really radical, to propose controversial things, and to challenge national policy. But you have to be a certain kind of council, to have the capacity to do that. Because it's much easier to keep doing what you've been told, rather than saying "actually we think you're entirely wrong about the whole notion of sustainability in rural areas". That's a huge ask of a little rural council, who doesn't have many staff, and they're all busy trying to deliver things anyway.

The question we might have to ask is – if South Hams can do it, why can others not? South Hams appears to be the one case study local authority that fully matches rhetoric with actions, though it has to be noted that their proactive approach has yet to yield significant affordable housing delivery – they have the same problems with community level opposition and regional policies as anywhere else. Perhaps part of the reason is that affordability problems in the South West are worse than in any other region of England, and South Hams, at the forefront of those problems, has had longer to adjust to a different approach.

So we are seeing the beginning of an alternative discourse of rural development – one which argues that the need for some newly forming households to live in the countryside must play more of a part in decision making, and also pragmatically recognises that there remains a large demand from other market sectors for a rural home.

Unquestionably, though, this discourse is expressed by only a minority of key actors, and is present in few, if any, policy documents.

Summary

This section has analysed evidence collected from the case study authorities and appears to show that the implementation of the UK Government's planning policies on rural affordable housing do depend on more than "technical" factors. The evidence suggests that power is being exercised by those who oppose higher rates of rural affordable housing development to prevent such development occurring. That power is exercised in line with the three "dimensions" of power identified by Lukes (1974): in the first dimension, power is exercised to affect decisions regarding the location of housing development to guide that development to larger settlements and hence urban, rather than rural, locations. In the second dimension, those who might advocate a more balanced pattern of development are excluded from or minimised within the decision making process. In the third dimension, power is exercised by the use of language through discourse to suggest that this focus on urban areas is a natural outcome of policy making and any negative outcomes simply short term in nature or an unfortunate consequence of policy making for the greater good.

These findings have significant implications for policy makers, and may demand radical solutions if the Government's stated aim of better matching housing supply and demand is to be achieved. Suggestions for how these solutions might manifest themselves are outlined in the next and final chapter of this thesis.

7. Conclusions

This final chapter is split into four sections.

The first, section 7.1, seeks to summarise the data analysed in the previous two chapters and hence answer the research questions. The second section (7.2) moves on to making conclusions which cut across the research questions, and where appropriate making policy recommendations, taking a broadly positivist stance. The third section (7.3) takes a more radical stance, and argues that a new approach is needed to the delivery of rural (affordable) housing to overcome the exercise of power by rural elites identified in section 6.2.

Sections 7.2 and 7.3 are supported by interview responses where appropriate – interviewees were asked to recommend one or more ways the system for delivering affordable housing could be improved. The vast majority of interviewee responses related to positivist technical solutions – i.e. accepting the system worked the way it did and trying to find ways to make the best of it.

The fourth and final section of this chapter (7.4) contains reflections on the thesis, identifies limitations of the research which has informed it, and proposes areas for further research.

7.1. Answers to research questions

Following the detailed analysis of primary and secondary data in chapters 5 and 6, we can now try to pull the data together to answer the research questions set out in section 4.2. The next five sub-sections of this section answer each question in turn.

7.1.1. Research question 1 – What effects are planning policies on rural (affordable) housing having?

From the analysis in section 5.1, it is clear that there are hugely variable effects of planning policies on rural affordable housing. In spatial terms, there has been a general trend of focusing on larger settlements at every scale – cities rather than towns, towns rather than villages, larger villages rather than smaller villages. Some local authorities are still pursuing this approach, driven by the notion that the larger a settlement is the more sustainable it is, in terms of access to jobs and services without the need to use private transport. At the micro-spatial scale, affordable housing is tending to be less well integrated into settlements in areas with a more buoyant housing market – land within settlements is more expensive in such areas, meaning that rural exception sites are thus forced onto more marginal land on or outside the edges of villages. Socially, too, the level of integration of affordable housing into settlements varies. The level of social integration seems to depend as much on attitudes as it does on the spatial location of affordable housing – some parish councils seek to concentrate new affordable housing in locations where there is, or has been, social housing before, “because that might be more acceptable to the people who live round there”.

In terms of social inclusion, there seems little doubt that by building affordable housing in rural areas those areas are becoming more socially inclusive. What is in more doubt, though, is whether those most in need of affordable housing can access it in the areas they would prefer to live in. Larger RSLs tend to be land availability rather than needs led when choosing where to develop, which can mean that smaller settlements, with less available land, see relatively less development. The widespread use of local connections policies, whilst broadening inclusivity in one sense by facilitating access to housing for those on lower incomes, is in its own way

exclusive, as those who are not represented in a community (ethnic minorities for example) are not able to gain a foothold there.

The only local authority which has thus far implemented an allocated exceptions policy, Wealden District Council, has found delivery through that policy to be disappointing, due to a number of factors – changing attitudes by landowners and parish councils chief amongst them. An ongoing drive by policy makers to ensure implementation seems essential to ensure delivery from such policies matches expectations.

7.1.2. Research question 2 – What role is played by national and regional planning policy?

The analysis in section 5.2 first found that national planning policy, in the form of planning policy guidance notes and statements (PPGs and PPSs), does not present a clear and unambiguous statement of the Government's aims and objectives for planning for rural affordable housing. There are a mixture of discourses present in those documents, but the dominant thread running through them is one of urban containment, justified principally by an interpretation of sustainability which places larger settlements above smaller settlements in a hierarchy of sustainability.

Moving on to the regional policy picture, regional spatial strategies (RSSs) are matching this urban containment discourse by reducing the amount of housing allocated to rural local authorities. This downwards trend is magnified as RSSs move through their public examination process, with the Planning Inspectorate and Secretary of State tending to further reduce rural allocations. These reductions are justified, in most cases, by the same sustainability discourse as in national guidance, supported by an urban renaissance argument for focusing development in larger settlements. Arguments from rural local authorities for more housing, for local needs and economic reasons, are disregarded and minimised by policy makers at “higher” levels.

Something which this analysis of regional policy indicates is that there is a significant time-lag between the publication of new national government advice and the

implementation of that advice. PPS3 was published in November 2006, but finalised RSSs published as recently as July 2008 do not seem to be reflecting its advice to better align demand for and supply of housing. It will hence take even longer for advice to be reflected in LDFs, as they must be in general conformity with RSSs.

7.1.3. Research question 3 – What factors affect local policy?

Local policies and practices are highly variable, as the analysis in section 5.3 found. Given the broad degree of contextual commonality between the five case study local authorities, there is a perhaps surprising lack of common/best practice in how planning policies to deliver (affordable) housing are designed and implemented. Policies of general housing restraint are present in the majority of the case study areas, introduced by local authorities in the face of pressure from regional government to reduce “oversupply” of housing against targets laid out in strategic planning documents. Those regional planning bodies are, in some cases, causing significant difficulties for rural local authorities who are seeking to deliver more rural affordable housing, through various practices which demonstrate both a misunderstanding of planning processes and perhaps a reluctance to embrace changing Government policy in terms of better meeting housing demand. The Planning Inspectorate can exacerbate these problems, whether by (sometimes) ruling that local authorities’ interim policies which seek to introduce lower affordable housing targets are not valid unless they have been through the time-consuming statutory processes, or supporting lower levels of housebuilding in rural areas to aid urban renaissance.

Local authorities, though, are far from blameless in terms of whether they act in a unified way to meet their objectives on delivering affordable housing. Whether through a lack of funding, a planning policy approach which has perverse effects on the supply of housing, or through strategic choices regarding the sale of assets, some local authorities show a surprising lack of “corporate thinking” in the way they make decisions. This muddled thinking reflects widespread anti-development attitudes in rural local authorities, amplified in some cases by the dominance of the *urban good, rural bad* attitude towards sustainable development.

As discussed previously, the impacts of PPS3 are taking some time to be felt at the regional, and hence the local, level. An indication of the length of time it can take for local authorities to amend their policy might be the fact that Alnwick District Council took until June 2004 to publish interim housing policy which was intended to bring its approach in line with PPG3 (which was published in March 2000). It might then take several more years before PPS3 is reflected in local policy – several years in which the problems of housing affordability may worsen considerably in rural areas.

7.1.4. Research question 4 – What are the “technical” reasons for the success (or otherwise) of national policy?

A positivist approach would argue that with a better evidence base, policy implementation could be made more effective – i.e. with minor changes to the way current practices work, outcomes would be improved. The evidence presented in section 6.1 demonstrates that there are changes to policy and practice which could apparently be easily made and which would help deliver more rural affordable housing.

The first thing to note is that the new planning system, introduced in 2004, has taken significantly longer to implement than expected, which has meant that local authorities seeking to introduce new, or more stringent, affordable housing planning policies, have been frustrated by lengthy delays. This was perhaps inevitable, though there was a remarkable lack of realism in Government targets for the production of new LDFs. There is little that can be done about this problem, it is unfortunately a matter of waiting for the new system to bed in.

In terms of resources, in some areas there are issues with a lack of public subsidy for affordable housing, but more pressing is a lack of land – this reflects both high demand for land from market housebuilders and a reluctance to sell at a discount from landowners. Rural housing enablers (RHEs) can do important work in terms of the latter issue, with the local authorities which fund them demonstrating a strong case for the positive influence they can have on the development process. Those local authorities which do not fund RHEs have had a marked lack of rural exception sites built in recent years.

Communication between the different parties in the affordable housing delivery chain seems to be problematic, even in those areas which exhibit strong inter-disciplinary working. The “functional silos” problem cited by Healey (2006) is an issue across the case study local authorities, and even if all departments of a local authority are working together, elected members can sometimes make decisions contrary to both officer advice and the adopted policies of the local authority.

There are a number of practical reasons why local authority stated policies/priorities are not fully supported by the actions of that local authority, but those reasons do not seem adequate to explain the lack of success of what in theory are effective policies to deliver affordable housing – a number of commentators have identified them before, and little improvement in delivery has been noticeable.

7.1.5. Research question 5 – Does policy implementation depend on more than technical factors?

It is hard to escape the conclusion that the failure of local authorities and their partners to implement national government policy on affordable housing in the countryside is down to more than technical factors. The lack of affordable housing in rural areas seems to be the result of the exercise of power by rural elites, in line with the three dimensions of power identified by Lukes (1974).

Lukes’ first dimension of power, related to decision making, is reflected in the fact that vocal opposition to (affordable) housing development in rural areas from influential voices often restricts development in villages and small towns. A fear of “otherness”, and perceptions about the impact affordable housing building might have on house prices, leads to some parish councils dominated by these anti-development voices acting against the development of rural housing, both market and affordable.

Lukes’ second dimension of power, related to non-decision making, is an issue both at the local community level, where pro-development voices struggle to make themselves heard in the planning process; and at the regional level, where an “unholy alliance” between urban local authorities who wish to see more development

within their own boundaries and rural elites who wish to restrict development in rural areas acts to shape regional policy along urban containment lines.

The reason the exercise of the first two dimensions of power is not resisted by those directly disenfranchised by this approach (those who cannot access housing in the countryside) is in part due to the exercise of Lukes' third dimension of power – opinions are shaped by the use of powerful discourses to suggest that rural development is inappropriate. The construction of the countryside as a pastoral idyll has been appropriated by powerful groups which use pastoralism to argue that rural areas need to be protected. That discourse is matched with an argument that villages and market towns are intrinsically unsustainable locations for new development, and the powerful urban containment arguments of efficiency and sustainability. Building in urban areas is therefore presented, and accepted, as the logical outcome.

The next two sections of this final chapter seek to address these findings by identifying a series of implications for policy makers and recommendations for those seeking to overcome the problems in rural affordable housing delivery.

7.2. Policy implications and recommendations

This section of chapter 7 addresses the technical problems identified with the affordable housing delivery process. It is not structured in line with the research questions because there are some issues which cut across those questions and demand a different approach. The section is split into four sub-sections, each dealing with a different aspect of the system and process for delivering affordable housing in rural areas.

For some of the issues raised, there is merely a need to highlight implications for policy makers. For others, though, there may be recommendations arising from this research which could improve the efficiency or efficacy of affordable housing delivery. These recommendations are highlighted where they appear in bold and italics.

7.2.1. The planning system

The planning system has been the focus of much of this thesis and the research which has informed it, for two reasons. Firstly, the project was conceived as an examination of the effects of new planning policies introduced by the UK Government. Secondly, the planning system, at national, regional and local levels, is absolutely central to the delivery of any form of new built development, but particularly rural affordable housing. There are a number of specific issues with that system, dealt with below, most of which amount to there being a requirement for the clarification of national Government policy with regards to rural affordable housing.

Delays

The introduction of the new planning system in England in 2004 has delayed the introduction of some local authorities' new policies on affordable housing. This is certainly a contributory factor to the lack of allocated exception policies being adopted – all the local authorities interviewed stated they were intending to allocate exception sites in their forthcoming DPDs. The delay in DPDs being issued is a

source of frustration for central and local government alike, and seems as if it must be borne until those involved in the planning system become used to its new format.

Policies being overruled

The Planning Inspectorate can frustrate local authorities' attempts to deliver more rural affordable housing, as illustrated by the example of South Hams District Council. SHDC's supplementary planning guidance, aimed at generating more affordable housing through section 106 agreements, was effectively damaged beyond repair by planning inspectors concluding that as the SPG was not part of the statutory development plan, they could afford it little weight. Given the delays in implementing the new planning system discussed above, we might argue that refusing to consider local authority policy because of an incorrect process being followed, rather than a fundamentally flawed policy or evidence base, is unnecessarily contributing to a lack of affordable housing in rural areas.

Recommendation: *The Government should advise The Planning Inspectorate that supplementary planning guidance or documents, if they are supported by legitimate evidence, can be used to introduce lower thresholds and higher targets for affordable housing provision whilst a development plan document is being prepared.*

Alternative approaches

One approach ruled out by PPG3 but highlighted by several interviewees as having potential value was that of cross-subsidising rural exception sites by allowing a small proportion of market housing on those sites. PPS3 does not explicitly rule out this approach, unlike PPG3, but neither does it endorse it. Several other reports published in recent years have advocated this approach (ARHC, 2006, Best and Shucksmith, 2006), it may be that guidance from Government on the acceptability or otherwise of this proposal would clarify the situation.

Recommendation: *The possibility of allowing cross-subsidy on rural exception sites should be considered through a consultation exercise, on the proviso that it should be rigorously monitored to ensure that developers are not abusing the system.*

Guidance for local authorities

One local authority representative, from a local authority which was particularly proactive in affordable housing delivery, considered that government advice on what local authorities should be doing, particularly in terms of commuted sums, would be useful.

Insufficiently precise Government advice may be contributing to a lack of consistency between local authorities in geographical proximity to each other – a number of respondents identified local authorities, often neighbouring the case study local authorities, with lower targets for affordable housing provision despite no apparent difference in levels of need. Local authorities are free to set their targets at whatever level they feel appropriate, and political factors or the need/desire to encourage development can lead to lower targets being set. Similarly, consistency of definition was considered to be important – different definitions of affordability generate differential outcomes in areas with similar contexts, for example using mean earnings and house prices instead of their lower quartile equivalent may make affordability appear less of an issue.

One interviewee was concerned about density requirements in national, regional and local planning policy. They observed that high densities are harder to achieve in rural areas because of the existing built form, and that the higher densities that “people say exist” are in the centre of villages, whilst rural exception schemes are usually on the lower density outskirts of rural settlements. Variable density targets are not uncommon, however, with PPS3 giving scope to local authorities to set lower targets than the “national indicative minimum” of 30 dwellings per hectare. This option should perhaps be taken up by more local authorities, based on more detailed evidence of the density patterns in rural settlements.

Recommendation: *Government should publish advice on the issues of commuted sums; definitions of affordable housing; and at the very least, co-ordinating affordable housing policy across sub-regions.*

Allocated exception sites

As discussed in section 5.1.4, Wealden District Council are the only one of the case study local authorities to have adopted an allocated exception site policy, and it has not been as successful as hoped/expected. A number of reasons for this failure of implementation were identified by interviewees, and some lessons could be learnt for other local authorities who get to the stage of adopting such a policy.

The first is to try and bring the development, adoption and implementation stages of a policy closer together. At the time of the case study visit, it had been two years since the non-statutory local plan containing the HOPE policy had been adopted (in December 2005), and the process of trying to identify potential HOPE sites had started in 2002. It is perhaps unsurprising that in the five years since initially identifying sites, land ownership and parish council views on the appropriateness of development had changed for some sites. Several interviewees from across the case study local authorities have warned that it is vital not to raise expectations of affordable housing delivery which are then not met, as this breeds scepticism and mistrust on the part of local communities.

Part of the reason for the lack of immediate implementation of the HOPE policy seems to be that the project did not receive the same level of ongoing staff resource as it did during the policy development phase. The specific member of staff who worked across housing and planning retired and was not replaced, meaning that perhaps the drive to see sites developed was not as strong as it had been. This issue of non-implementation may be something that the new planning system will address – LDFs are now expected to demonstrate clear delivery plans, and regular monitoring reports are intended to identify any policies which are not being implemented, and why this has occurred.

Recommendation: *Clear and appropriate implementation plans should be in place for all policies, but it is vital for policies involving small rural communities (and hence small sites often owned by small landowners) that implementation follows swiftly on the heels of policy development and adoption.*

Another issue with allocated rural exception sites is perhaps that identified by one interviewee – that local authorities may choose to allocate them in larger settlements, as these are perceived to be more “sustainable”. Larger settlements may also be a preferred location for RSLs, given the greater efficiency of building and management that occurs in those larger settlements. The Government should ensure that its guidance on this policy is clear – 100% affordable housing sites should be allocated in every size of settlement where a need for them has been identified.

Recommendation: *Guidance should be published making clear that it is not acceptable to allocate 100% affordable housing sites only in larger settlements, whether for sustainability or “efficiency” reasons.*

7.2.2. The development process

Separate from, but closely related to, specific issues with the planning system is the process for the development of particular rural affordable housing schemes. Again, there are a number of issues with the development process, outlined below.

The complexity of the process

Several interviewees highlighted the complexity of the affordable housing delivery chain, and, importantly, that some participants did not recognise the scale of that complexity. One local authority representative observed that local authorities are “at the bottom” of the delivery process, but carry most of the accountability for delivery, and thought that “housing associations should recognise the importance of what the local authorities do” – this was a point echoed by others, one of whom also noted that the Housing Corporation did not appreciate the importance of land assembly, wanting “sites laid out on a plate”.

Landowning trusts

The dominance of large landowning trusts was acknowledged by interviewees in several of the case study areas. Some were resigned to, albeit frustrated by, the power these bodies could have in determining whether affordable housing was

developed in rural communities. One interviewer, though, proposed a new approach to working with landowning trusts – because the trusts were reluctant to dispose of land to RSLs due to tax implications, s/he suggested a new approach was necessary, and was investigating whether one could be found: “the concept was built around them retaining ownership of the land and buildings, and either leasing out to an RSL, or developing themselves through a collective vehicle set up by the landowners, to get the economies of scale in some of the funding”. It is clear that such trusts can be very influential in some areas, so a new approach may have merit. There are, though, clear reasons for a preference in Government policy for RSL involvement, not least the transparency of RSLs’ allocations procedures.

Recommendation: *The potential for landowning trusts to contribute in different ways to the delivery of affordable housing in rural areas should be investigated by Government, in order to try and identify ways that public money can be invested in homes which may not meet the traditional requirements of affordable housing delivered through RSLs.*

Perpetuity

The issue of retaining affordable housing in perpetuity was challenging some planning officers. One was concerned that the right to acquire RSL properties applied in settlements over 3,000 population, which is where s/he envisaged much new affordable housing being constructed. The potential availability of right to acquire, s/he argued, meant that affordable housing provided could not truly be considered as being affordable in perpetuity, so might be in conflict with national and local policy. An RSL in that area, though, and indeed a housing officer from the same local authority, argued that the small levels of discount available meant that the right to acquire was taken up only infrequently.

On a similar theme of perpetuity, local authorities, based on advice in PPS3, frequently raise concerns about “mortgagee in possession clauses”. Such clauses are added to planning obligations seeking to deliver affordable housing and “enable lenders of private finance to dispose of property on the open market as a last resort if a borrower were to get into financial difficulties” (DETR, 2000). They were ruled out

by PPG3 on the grounds that affordable housing provided through a planning obligation containing such a clause would thus not be available in perpetuity. But RSLs report that financial bodies lending to them demand such clauses, which are generally not accepted by local authorities. One RSL thought opposition to mortgagee in possession clauses unnecessary, as he observed that housing associations very rarely get into “financial difficulties”, and if they did, the Housing Corporation would “parachute another association in” to take over the housing association’s properties.

Recommendation: *The Government should work with financial institutions to address the conflict between Government policy and banking practice with regards to mortgagee in possession clauses.*

Community land trusts

A third issue relating to perpetuity specifically concerned Community Land Trusts (CLTs). CLTs have been advocated as a way for local communities to deliver affordable housing through a trust owned and operated by that local community (ARHC, 2006, Taylor, 2008), but as with the larger landowning trusts above, some interviewees questioned whether such CLTs could achieve the transparency of allocations to qualify as being affordable housing under PPS3. Government guidance making a definitive decision on this issue was advocated, and indeed was the subject of a DCLG consultation paper in October 2008.

Recommendation: *The Government should publish guidance clarifying whether affordable housing delivered through community land trusts can be considered as affordable housing under the definition in PPS3.*

Parish Council/community involvement

There is considerable anecdotal evidence to suggest that actively involving the community in planning for affordable housing, whether through the parish council or via a wider community involvement exercise, is vital for gaining the support of that community for any developments proposed. Some have argued that the

Government should devolve to parish councils the right to allocate one or more sites for affordable housing if those parish councils have decided they need them (Taylor, 2008). That would allow development to proceed in regions or local authorities where a philosophy of curtailing rural development dominates. There should be, though, a concomitant increase in responsibility to go with these proposed new rights – if a parish council identifies a need for affordable housing through a parish plan and/or housing needs survey, there should be an obligation on the part of that parish council to instigate an affordable housing development to meet those needs.

Recommendation: Any increase in rights devolved to parish councils to develop sites to meet their needs for affordable housing should be matched with an increased responsibility to both identify and meet those needs.

Integration of affordable housing into settlements

There is a tendency for affordable housing sites, particularly sites of 100% affordable housing in rural areas, to be located on the fringes of settlements, both spatially and socially (see section 5.1.3). The spatial element is in part a natural consequence of the rural exception policy, as it allows development on land which would not otherwise be acceptable in planning terms (which may be outside the “development boundary” of the settlement). It could, though, also be seen as the exercise of power by those keen to maintain the *status quo* within rural settlements by keeping affordable housing “out of sight, out of mind”.

Those involved with affordable housing developments should be aware of these tendencies, and should try to ensure that any new affordable housing built in rural communities is fully integrated into those communities, whether spatially (by seeking sites within development boundaries or not cut off by natural or physical boundaries) or socially (by ensuring that those living in new affordable housing are welcomed into the community).

Recommendation: The CRC should publish guidance emphasising the need for, and benefits of, integration of affordable housing into the spatial and social fabric of settlements.

7.2.3. Resources

Development of rural affordable housing sites cannot take place without an adequate supply of resources to facilitate that development. This can come from several sources – central Government, through the Housing Corporation or other body; or from local authorities themselves. The different aspects of funding which have emerged as issues through this thesis are discussed below.

Funding for/from the Housing Corporation

In general terms, interviewees were concerned about cuts to Housing Corporation funding and how this would effect delivery. One RSL representative observed that costs were increasing all the time – “Land values are rising substantially still, works costs are still rising at 10-12% per year” but rent increases were capped, and grant levels were being “squeezed”. How to “square that circle” was taking up more of his/her time. A local authority representative observed that the Government needed “to accept that affordable housing is an issue and needs to be paid for, and that there is grant there to match it [affordable housing delivered through the planning system]”. If levels of grant were reduced, they opined, “in viability terms you get more shared ownership and less rented, when the need is for more rented and less shared ownership”.

As with previous studies (see section 2.3.2), several respondents highlighted the particular problems with delivery in rural as opposed to urban areas. One of the reasons for the long timelines of rural affordable housing schemes was identified by one interviewee as a higher turnover of staff in smaller, rural focused housing associations than the national average. The consistency of staff was stressed by a number of respondents as being important in rural delivery, as it was essential for the building up of relationships with other key actors. A RHE in one area noted that the way the housing corporation funding works disadvantages rural areas – schemes take longer, so do not fit with two year bid rounds, costs are higher, and rents can be lower due to lower rural incomes. This was only likely to get worse, one local authority representative noted – as the Housing Corporation are seeking more

“efficiency”, which is more deliverable in larger settlements, more expensive schemes in smaller settlements are less likely to receive funding.

Recommendation: *Government guidance to the Housing Corporation should be explicit about the higher costs for affordable housing in rural areas, and that “efficiency” should not result in rural schemes automatically being rendered less attractive targets for funding.*

Rural housing enablers

Every rural housing enabler questioned was concerned about the long-term funding of the RHE programme. Making the funding for RHEs mainstream, and not requiring them to negotiate with local authorities and RSLs for funding on a short term basis, was argued to be essential to allow RHEs to focus on delivering rural affordable housing. Since DEFRA has subsequently announced that it will no longer fund any part of an RHE, the situation will presumably now worsen.

A number of reports published in recent years have advocated the “mainstreaming” of funding for RHEs (ARHC, 2006, Best and Shucksmith, 2006), so the decision by DEFRA to axe funding is unfortunate. This research has demonstrated that in areas without an RHE, the level of delivery of small rural developments of affordable housing is significantly lower than in areas where an RHE is working. For a relatively small outlay delivery can be dramatically improved in rural local authorities.

Recommendation: *The decision by DEFRA to axe RHE funding appears short-sighted. This should be remedied as soon as possible, or alternative mainstream funding sourced. It is clear that the presence of an RHE is a major contributing factor to the successful delivery of small schemes of rural affordable housing.*

The gap between rhetoric and actions

Several respondents, mainly RHEs and RSL representatives, expressed irritation at local authority actions not matching their priorities – there are clear implications for this issue, but it is hard to see how anything could be changed by legislators to

encourage local authorities to match rhetoric with actions. One area that could be enforced is the spending of additional second homes council tax revenue – this was intended to be spent on affordable housing, but the evidence from the CRC (2006b) is that many local authorities disperse the money into their general budget.

One respondent suggested that publicly owned land should be sold at a discount for affordable housing provision, which given the large scale programmes of land disposal underway by the NHS and the MoD amongst others, would certainly aid delivery of affordable housing.

Recommendation: *The Government should introduce guidance emphasising that additional council tax receipts recouped from second homes should be spent on delivering more rural affordable housing; and should give serious consideration to contributing to its own targets for affordable housing delivery by encouraging public sector bodies to sell land at a discount for affordable housing provision.*

A housing officer considered that many local authorities were “risk averse”, so highlighted the positive role played by such reports as the ARHC, as it gave local authorities comfort that there was good practice available for how to deliver more affordable housing. There was, though, some concern that the valuable messages contained within such reports were often not clearly expressed, or perhaps more importantly, acted upon or followed up.

Recommendation: *The increasing base of quality research into rural affordable housing provision, highlighting best practice as it does, should be better communicated to key actors. The Government should commit to actually following through on these reports, and putting their recommendations into practice.*

7.2.4. Communication and partnerships

This last sub-section considers some perhaps less concrete issues regarding “communication and partnerships”, which although harder to pin down in terms of specific issues and recommendations, remain important factors in the success of affordable housing policies.

The evidence analysed in section 6.1.4 supports the theories advanced by Healey (2006) and others that local government is dominated by “functional silos” – i.e. departments and groups operating to their own, functional, agenda, rather than co-operating to achieve shared goals. All the local authorities studied have identified increasing the delivery of affordable housing as a corporate aim, target or priority of the council, but the evidence from interviews with local authority partners (principally RHEs and RSLs), and the scrutiny of decisions made by different departments of the local authorities, is that there is far from a unified approach geared towards achieving those headline objectives.

Different perspectives on issues such as perpetuity between planning, housing and legal departments of local authorities cause problems with specific schemes, but there are also problems with local authority members taking decisions contrary to officer advice on the basis of very localised opposition. It is perhaps unsurprising that some councillors place more emphasis on political expediency than the strategic aims of their local authority, but this can have serious implications for affordable housing delivery, particularly in smaller communities. We will return to issues of attitudes towards development in section 7.3.

A representative of a local authority identified the significant difference in culture between local authorities, which were concerned with meeting need for affordable housing, and RSLs, who s/he identified were more concerned with “operational convenience” and efficiency. This seemed to be a fundamental clash of cultures:

I went to a shared ownership conference, where they were handing out prizes to various housing associations for their good efforts, and it was all very American – ‘yippee’, and T-shirts, and so on. And I thought “hang on, this is about providing homes for people to live in, not about the glorification of people who are achieving it”.

Recommendation: More effort should be put into the “soft infrastructure” for the delivery of policy objectives regarding rural affordable housing: the different participants in planning and housing departments of rural local authorities, RSLs and RHEs should be brought together in formal partnerships at a sub-regional level to try

and explore and overcome differences in attitude with the objective of meeting the common aim of delivering more rural affordable housing.

This section has looked at the technical issues identified in section 7.1 and has identified some implications for policy makers and some recommendations for improving the process and system for delivering rural affordable housing. The next section turns to examine the issues which go beyond technical solutions and explores how the exercising of the three dimensions of power identified in section 7.1.5 raise implications for policy makers.

7.3. Why technical recommendations may not be enough

Most of the writing on the subject of rural affordable housing takes a broadly technocratic approach, i.e. it assumes that with alterations to the process for delivering affordable housing, a greater number of homes will be delivered. The previous section provided the sort of technical recommendation which might have that effect. The evidence analysed in this thesis suggests that there are, however, less easily resolved problems with the affordable housing delivery process. These problems centre around attitudes to development, and are bound up with discourses around rurality, sustainability, etc.

The conclusion which seems hard to avoid is that the shortfall in affordable housing provision is due to three “failures” in the planning system, which are caused not just by technical incompetence on the part of national, regional or local government, but by the exercise of power by rural elites. Using the three dimensional view of power (Lukes, 1974), it is possible to identify the exercise of power at three key junctures in the planning for housing system, and the following three sub-sections look at each of these in turn.

7.3.1. The first dimension of power

Lukes’ first dimension of power focuses on decision making. Using policy analysis theory, it has been argued in this thesis that decisions made with regard to planning for housing reflect the locus of power in the decision-making process – the regional planning system focuses development on urban areas in each of the five case study regions, and local authorities, despite claims to the contrary, do not deliver on stated policy objectives to build more rural affordable housing.

National Government policy is now quite clear that in areas of high demand for housing, whether market or affordable, supply should be increased correspondingly. This is simply not happening, and the problems of affordability in rural areas can only worsen unless it does.

A range of technical explanations for this failure have been discussed in the previous section, but the fact that these, or similar, explanations have been advanced in the past, with no noticeable improvement in delivery, suggests something more than technical problems in the system. This thesis has found evidence to support the work of Peter Hall, who argued that urban authorities formed an “unholy alliance” with rural elites to block housing development in rural areas, to their mutual advantage but to the disadvantage of those who cannot access housing in the countryside.

Regional assemblies and regional offices of the Government might reasonably be expected to implement Government policy, but the data analysed in sub-sections 5.2.2 and 5.3.3 suggests that in terms of housing policy, they are not doing so. Draft regional spatial strategies are consistently allocating restrictive levels of housing development to rural local authorities, generally significantly lower than the levels requested by those local authorities. Four of the five case study local authorities examined in this thesis (the exception being Wealden District Council) have sought higher RSS allocations to reflect the level of need for affordable housing in their districts.

The Planning Inspectorate is supporting the lower allocations set out in draft RSSs in Examinations in Public, and the evidence is that this is led by a professional ideology of constraining “unsustainable” development, rather than Government policy in this regard. However, even the Secretary of State has proved unwilling to amend regional policy in line with national policy in her Proposed Changes or final RSSs, which suggests that this professional ideology also affects planning advisors within DCLG.

There is a clear need for Government policy as expressed in, amongst other places, Planning Policy Statement 3 and the Housing Green paper, to be better reflected in regional planning policy. It seems fair to conclude that the lack of changes at the Proposed Changes or final RSS stages (the Secretary of State’s opportunities to change draft RSSs) are not sending a clear direction to regional policy makers as to the Government’s intentions.

7.3.2. The second dimension of power

Lukes' second dimension of power focuses on non-decision making. The exercise of power through non-decision making works at two key levels – the regional policy making level; and the local policy making level.

Regional policy making

At the regional level, there does not appear to be a consistent rural “voice”, arguing for more housing development in rural local authorities. Those rural local authorities are making full use of the formal consultation procedures, as we saw in section 5.2.4, but the RSS making process is dominated by urban local authorities and urban voices in general, meaning arguments made by rural local authorities carry little weight. To redress the balance, it is essential that there is some form of “rural-proofing” introduced into the regional planning system – whether informally by involving the Regional Rural Affairs Fora or more formally through the commissioning of expert assessment of regional spatial strategies.

Local policy making

At the local level, local authorities have attempted to introduce a more inclusive and participatory agenda to planning practice, as prescribed by the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. The evidence analysed suggests that in rural areas in particular this pursuit of greater “community involvement” has in fact narrowed rather than widened the debate on rural housing and has reinforced existing power relations rather than democratising planning. This is not to suggest that the principle of opening up decision making is wrong, in fact it is absolutely right, and essential to deliver more equitable outcomes. However, using the parish council as a proxy for the community has demonstrably frustrated affordable housing delivery in some areas, and even those local authorities which place more emphasis on supposedly wider policy making process (such as parish plans) are still open to the accusation that more articulate groups and individuals will find it much easier to participate. As there appears to be a strong (though far from uniform) overlap between articulacy

and an anti-development perspective, those opposing housing development in rural areas find their opposition facilitated by the planning system.

There seems to be a need for local authorities to properly engage with the principles of community involvement – not just because there is a statutory requirement so to do, but because without doing so they cannot claim to be making policy which represents the views of all those who live in rural areas. To achieve this, local authorities must move beyond the “bog-standard” approach to consultation, which is more about informing the community of draft proposals than it is about empowering the community to make decisions. Equally importantly, local authorities should, assisted by bodies such as the CRC, make more effort to engage with “hidden” groups who do not (or cannot) make their voices heard in the planning system.

7.3.3. The third dimension of power

If the power exercised by the powerful lobby which is opposed to rural development is to be challenged, it must be challenged in all three of Lukes’ dimensions of power. The previous sub-sections of this section have addressed the first and second dimensions of power. This final sub-section seeks to address the third dimension of power.

Lukes’ third dimension of power focuses on how power is exercised by the shaping of needs/desires by the powerful. Given the lack of widespread condemnation of the planning system, it may be that the failures identified in sub-sections 7.3.1 and 7.3.2 arise because society as a whole, and the planning system specifically, does not recognise at an ideological level that it is failing. The power of discourse lies in the fact that it can operate at an unconscious level, affecting not only the policies which are designed and adopted by decision makers, but also the implementation of those policies.

Sub-section 6.2.3 identified that three constructions/discourses are “triangulated” by those opposing rural development to add weight to the argument that rural development should be constrained. This triangulation can perhaps explain why the *urban development good, rural development bad* discourse is so powerful, and hence

why levels of rural (affordable) house building remain so much lower than the established need and demand for that housing. Any attempt to promote a new discourse that treats rural areas as suitable locations for development must seek to address these three sub-discourses of urban containment, pastoralism and sustainability.

Urban containment

Hall et al., in 1971, identified the “Containment of Urban England” occurring as a by-product of the operation of the planning system. This urban containment was to Hall et al. a criticism of the system, but there remains strong support for the notion of focusing development on urban areas. Section 5.2.3 identified several manifestations in regional policy of the argument (possibly based on a genuine belief) that this focusing would ease rural affordability problems in rural areas by reducing the demand for housing in those areas. This is highly questionable logic, as there is little evidence that, for example, those seeking to move to Stratford-on-Avon would instead live in nearby Coventry if there were more houses available. In the absence of that evidence, policy-makers should be more wary about making assumptions regarding the extent to which different housing markets are related in this way.

Pastoralism

The use of the rural idyll is an extremely powerful tool for those promoting the constraint of rural development. Those exercising power to exclude otherness from rural areas do not hesitate to use powerful language and imagery to illustrate the damage they argue development will do to the countryside (see Appendix 1). It is harder for those promoting rural development, in an attempt to promote social justice, to use this kind of language, but organisations such as the Commission for Rural Communities should perhaps be prepared to “get their hands dirty”. Emphasising the damage that a lack of affordable housing availability does to rural communities could be a powerful way to engage with policy development – the impact on service provision is one obvious avenue.

Sustainability

As found by Hoggart and Henderson (2005), there is a definite split between the attitudes of some planning officers and their colleagues in housing departments. The latter are concerned with meeting the need for affordable housing wherever it occurs, but the former express concerns about the “sustainability” of rural housing. This is not a universal phenomenon; in some local authorities, notably Stratford-on-Avon and South Hams districts, there is general support for taking a different approach to sustainability that reflects more than simply reducing carbon dioxide emissions and hence car use.

A local authority planning officer was concerned about attitudes to rural development. From their point of view, “what needs to change is attitudes. The processes in theory should work but in practice don’t, and nobody seems to understand why that is”. They concluded that there needed to be a planning profession-wide rethink about what sustainability means in a rural context.

Part of the justification for this proposed rethink is that social factors such as the importance of kinship links and social equity should be as important as the environment in our view of sustainability. There is also, though, evidence that the assumptions about development in rural areas automatically generating more car use than development in urban areas may be flawed. Empirically, the South West RSS cited research which identified only a 2.2% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions as resulting from a policy of concentrating growth in their “Strategically Significant Cities and Towns”. This contrasted with a 10.3% reduction which could be achieved through sustainable construction techniques being used in new development. That research is supported by the work of Shorten (2005), who found that “strategic disobedience” (people not living their lives in the way the planning system would like them to) coupled with a lack of alignment in Government policy (for example the fact that the cost of public transport has increased in real terms whilst the cost of private transport has fallen) meant that the assumption that policy makers could engineer changes in travel patterns by designing the built environment in a particular way was flawed.

Anecdotally, too, there is evidence from the case study interviews that rural residents make use of kinship networks to limit a dependence on private modes of transport – people share lifts to work, relatives shop for each other, etc.

The evidence gathered for this thesis supports the argument of the planning officer quoted above – there needs to be a rethink in the way the planning profession considers sustainability. The Royal Town Planning Institute, the UK based professional institute for town planners, has recently been promoting a shift from land-use planning to spatial planning. It could be argued that if planning is about more than land-use, then it is essential that attempts to achieve sustainable communities move beyond simply considering land-use. Rather than labelling rural communities as inherently less sustainable, the efforts of policy makers should be focused on trying to make all communities, whether urban or rural, more sustainable.

7.3.4. Summary of theoretical findings

This sub-section concludes the main sections of the Conclusions chapter – it tries to bring together the “theoretical contribution” that this thesis makes to the subject and discipline. There are three areas in particular where the data analysed and the conclusions drawn shed new light on the issues of (affordable) housing provision in rural areas.

The triangulation of discourse

Several authors have identified that there is a powerful anti-development lobby operating in rural areas, often led by the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE), and that a variety of sophisticated methods are used by this lobby to convince decision makers of the strength of their arguments. What has not been elucidated before is that the anti-development discourse gains much of its strength from the “triangulation” of three other discourses, each of which is powerful on its own, but combined together form an often impenetrable “wall of discourse” through which pro-development actors cannot make their voices heard.

These three discourses are that of urban containment (constrained urban growth is common sense and benefits the urban majority), pastoralism (the countryside must be protected for its own sake) and sustainability (rural development leads to more car use, which is unsustainable). Elements of these three discourses can be found in national, regional and local planning policy documents, in addition to the publications of groups such as the CPRE. Identification of the elements of the broader anti-development discourse demonstrates how that discourse has achieved its status as part of mainstream planning ideology, and in turn highlights potential ways to address it.

A professional ideology of constraining rural development

This thesis has identified that the discourse mentioned above is not only present across the board in policy documents, but appears to be deeply engrained within the psyche of planning professionals. Perhaps unsurprisingly, some local authority planning officers accept it largely without question, as do those operating at the regional level. What is more surprising is that after the publication of documents such as PPS3, which make clear that rural areas should be seeing higher levels of housing to meet need/demand, planning inspectors, the neutral arbiters of whether a planning document broadly accords with national planning policy, are not amending regional spatial strategies and local development frameworks to ensure they deliver more rural housing. But even more surprising is that the Secretary of State is not making changes to regional spatial strategies when she has the opportunity to do so. Clearly, the Secretary of State herself is not writing RSS policy, this will be the work of civil servants, so it is evident that the belief in constraining rural development is deeply rooted in the minds of senior planners at the Department for Communities and Local Government.

The only conclusion that one can draw from this is that the anti-development discourse has become part of the ideology of professional planners – over many years the work of CPRE and others has succeeded in embedding an ideology of constraining rural development into the planning profession. This might imply that any effort to promote an alternative discourse needs to work at every level of the planning profession, from education onwards.

Preventing rural development is about power

The most important contribution this thesis can make is in highlighting, perhaps for the first time, that the many technical reports and academic treatises seeking to generate more affordable housing in rural areas are likely to fail. Not because they are poorly written, or do not address legitimate problems with the affordable housing delivery process, but because there is a more fundamental issue affecting rural (affordable) housing delivery. That issue is the exercise of power.

This thesis has concluded that those who are in a position of power in the planning system are exercising that power to prevent the building of more (affordable) houses in the countryside. They are doing so for a variety of reasons, including fear about the effect development might have on houses prices, and (sometimes arguably legitimate) concerns about the impact of development on rural tranquillity. The chief reason, though, appears to be a fear of “otherness”. To quote an interviewee from a village at the extreme top end of the house price spectrum, new housing should be restricted to local people only “in order to keep riff-raff from [nearby city] out of the community”. That this interviewee made this utterance (in a taped interview with a researcher) with no apparent sense of irony is revealing – s/he evidently considered it to be common sense, and uncontroversial. There are many other examples, but a particular favourite is: “If, later on, when somebody moves, there isn’t somebody local to take it on, it can go to adjoining parishes, *but we’re hoping that that will never happen* [my emphasis]”. So this fear of otherness not only extends to nearby urban areas, but actually to *adjoining parishes*, i.e. the neighbouring village!

This kind of attitude is relatively common in parish councils, as other authors have identified. What is more worrying is that the exercise of power to exclude otherness from rural areas is manifested at the local authority, the regional and possibly even the national level, where referring to individuals from a medium sized provincial city as “riff-raff” would be political suicide. There is very little, if any, existing literature which focuses on the massive underprovision of rural housing being as a result of the exercise of power, so it is my hope and belief that this thesis makes a valuable contribution in this area.

7.4. Reflections, limitations and further research

This concluding section contains three sub-sections. The first contains some reflections on the methodology adopted. As with any research, there are ways that this project could be improved if it were done again, and avenues of future research that it has suggested – these are briefly discussed in sub-sections 7.4.2 and 7.4.3. This section is largely personal and subjective, so has been written in the first person.

7.4.1. Reflections

Progression as a researcher

As outlined in section 4.4.4 (Positionality), before returning to academia to undertake the project which led to this thesis, I was a planning practitioner working for Alnwick District Council, one of the case study local authorities I have used. That practical experience has been useful throughout the writing of this thesis – for example, having worked in several rural local authorities, I have been able to view the policy implications and recommendations I have developed through the “lens” of practicality, i.e. think about how feasible they might be in practice.

However, valuable as my practical experience was, I feel that I am able to plot an ‘arc of progression’ from the early days of my research to where I am now.

When I began this research, I considered myself something of an expert in affordable housing policy and its implementation, having worked in the field as a practitioner for several years. I also considered myself to be a reasonably competent planner, doing the best I could within the constraints of a local government planning department.

Within a fairly short time, though, informed by the reading I was doing for the literature review, it became clear to me that I knew a lot less than I thought I did! The work of Patsy Healey, amongst others, demonstrated to me that I had accepted the dominant doctrine within planning practice – that planners, in general, know best, and that the way the planning process works is essentially fair, efficient and effective.

This process of learning led me to question much of what I did as a practitioner, and hence to question much of what other practitioners did then and do now. For example, I have organised public consultation on draft planning policy documents, and bemoaned the lack of quantity and quality of responses received to that consultation. At the time, I blamed this on the inability of local people to grasp the strategic issues which impacted on local policy (for example the settlement hierarchy approach advocated in PPG3). I can now see that as a planner I was far from blameless, and that perhaps the questions I asked, or the way in which I asked them, were at fault.

As I have read more and analysed the data I have gathered in greater depth, I have become more critical of the approaches and attitudes of those I have interviewed – for example, I am no longer prepared to simply accept the arguments of some planning officers that an urban containment approach within local planning policy is simply pragmatism based on low RSS figures. I feel able to challenge assumptions wherever I see them, something that before I undertook this life-changing experience I was perhaps less ready to do. This challenging of the assumptions of planning officers was particularly an issue for me personally in Alnwick, as I used to work there, indeed worked closely with the planning officer interviewed for this thesis. It has thus been necessary to walk a fine line between the natural empathy I felt for the position of that officer, knowing the particular issues affecting planning in Alnwick, and having respect for their personal views, and my new-found reflexivity. Hopefully I have walked this line successfully, and the threat of potential bias has not detrimentally affected my analysis of data and the conclusions I have drawn.

Linearity

The temptation in this work, indeed in any piece of academic writing, is to try and make the research process appear linear – i.e. follow a theoretical path of literature review → methodology development → data collection → data analysis → conclusions. It is inevitable, however, that no piece of social science research actually follows such a simple, linear route – there is always an element of iteration in the design of research questions, the methodology adopted and the collection/analysis of data.

In the case of this thesis, it is undoubtedly the case that if the research had followed a strictly linear path that the quality of work herein would have been weaker. If I had not recognised that policy analysis was failing to fully reveal what lay behind some of the policy implementation processes, and hence not introduced the notion of power into the data analysis chapters, the thesis would have still answered the research questions, but would have explored the issues in significantly less depth.

It is important to point out that bringing in power relations at a relatively late stage in the production of the thesis (i.e. after much of the data had been collected) does not necessarily reduce the quality of the conclusions reached. Power, by its nature, tends to be hidden, and thus very difficult to explore through interview questions – asking a planning policy officer “does the failure of your policy reflect the exercise of power?” would have been highly unlikely to produce a response reflecting the actual role of power in the policy implementation process! Whatever questions had been put to the interviewees, it would have been necessary to analyse their responses to find hidden meanings, and the subtle exercise of power, as has been done in chapters 5 and 6.

7.4.2. Limitations

There are a number of hopefully minor limitations to this research that, while they do not undermine the conclusions reached, would, if addressed, possibly have enhanced them.

Data depth

It did not prove possible to interview every key actor of relevance for every case study – for example, no RSL was interviewed in Wealden (see Appendix 6 for a list of those interviewed across the case studies). This was partly due to contacts at the local authorities not always being able to suggest other appropriate contacts to interview, which in itself was partly because in the time since some of the affordable housing developments were undertaken the RSL contacts have moved on. The non-comprehensive nature of the interviews was also due to me being unable to spend

more than a week in the locations further south (i.e. other than Alnwick and Harrogate), and possible contacts not being available during the case study visits.

As a result of this slight variation in the quantity of data available from the case studies, it is necessary to treat the conclusions drawn for some of the case studies, notably Wealden, perhaps more tentatively than for others. The level of analysis has been no less deep, but the initial data available is shallower for Wealden than for the other areas. That said, the analysis of discourse present in plans and policies for Wealden has been done to the same extent, so the conclusions remain valid, though arguably based on slightly weaker foundations.

In contrast, for Alnwick, given my previous role in planning policy at the authority, more data was readily available on the process of production of the North East Regional Spatial Strategy. I have only explored the detailed process of production of that one RSS, largely for reasons of time, but there is a similar downwards trend regarding housing numbers for the other case study local authorities, so I hypothesise that similar processes went on in preparing the other RSSs.

Methodology

The principle form of data analysis undertaken for this thesis has been qualitative analysis. As discussed in the Methodology chapter (section 4.1.1), quantitative data in terms of house prices around affordable housing developments would have been useful to analyse the extent to which new developments were broadening social inclusion. The time this would have taken meant that it was ruled out

One of the theoretical underpinnings to the data analysis chapters of this thesis has been discourse analysis. Due to limitations of both the author (i.e. I am not a linguist) and practicalities (full-scale discourse analysis is very time consuming), the analysis of discourse in the arena of planning for rural affordable housing has been fairly shallow and limited in breadth. The discourse analysis would have been a more compelling source of evidence had it considered more documents, and gone into them in more depth.

7.4.3. Further research

Further research could address both technical issues and the exercise of power in Lukes' three dimensions.

Technical issues

One of the issues raised by an interviewer in terms of an urban bias to planning policy was that rural density is variable depending in which part of villages it is measured. More research into density patterns in rural settlements, perhaps to facilitate lower density requirements in policy, would be of use here.

The three dimensions of power

This research has focused on how planning policies adopted by local planning authorities have been implemented. Regarding Lukes' first dimension of power (decision making), research could investigate in more detail what factors were taken into account in the development of that policy, through a study of draft policies and the committee meetings where those policies are agreed.

Another aspect of the first dimension of power is the influence held by those opposing rural affordable housing developments. How that opposition arises and what methods are being used to ameliorate it would be a valuable piece of research.

Regarding Lukes' second dimension of power (non-decision making), one potential future research project would be to explore policy development at the regional and local level, looking at how inclusive the policy and decision making processes are – for example, are those in need of affordable housing in a particular area involved?

In terms of Lukes' third dimension of power (discourse), a more detailed and in-depth analysis of the discourses around rurality used in policy documents, press articles, lobbying organisation publications, etc, would provide more evidence of the triangulation of discourse identified in sub-section 6.2.3.


In terms of addressing that discourse, more evidence of the issues around sustainability would be invaluable to those promoting a different approach to rural development. That evidence could include: a better statistical understanding of how different settlement patterns help combat climate change; examples of rural areas actually making a positive contribution to climate change amelioration; and the importance of “social” aspects of sustainability in rural areas – kinship links, etc.

There is also work to be done regarding discourses around affordability and affordable housing: as discussed in section 6.2.1, regarding perceptions of affordable housing, in Harrogate, amongst other areas, council members were keen to avoid the use of the term “affordable housing” in policy. Other euphemisms such as “Homes for local people” are popular with members, presumably reflecting a concern that “affordable housing” carries with it negative connotations which may not be popular with the electorate! It would be interesting to trace the evolution of the discourse around social/affordable housing, from its origins as charitable provision, through the post-WWII perception of social housing as “housing for all”, to the residualisation we have seen since the neo-classical policies of the 1980s, to today, when “affordable housing” is apparently not a popular term amongst some.


Appendix 1 – Fundraising letter from Bill Bryson, President of CPRE, June 2008

Page 1 of the letter itself

From: Bill Bryson
CPRE National Office



Campaign to Protect
Rural England

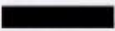


URGENT
REPLY BY 25 JULY 2008

June 2008

This is the number of houses planned to be built on greenfield sites over the next five years: 263,900

Just £2 a month from you can help us save the countryside we love, before it's lost forever

Dear 

I am writing in person from the Campaign to Protect Rural England, because you have a right to know what is about to happen to our countryside, unless you act very soon.

I can only hope that you will respond as quickly as you can – today, if possible.

As President of CPRE, I make it my business to find out what local and national Governments are planning for the countryside we love. I am sorry to say that there is alarming news.

A staggering 263,900 houses are set to be built on some of the most beautiful, precious green fields across the country over the next five years – and once they are built, there'll be no turning back.

Just think of the countryside that means something special to you. Then imagine the hedgerows replaced by rows of houses, the meadows covered in concrete, the peaceful sounds of nature replaced by raucous noise pollution...

The thought makes my blood boil – so much so that I have no hesitation in asking you to help me protect the precious tranquillity and beauty of our countryside from this sort of ever-increasing, ugly development.

Just £2 a month will make a huge difference.
Will you add your voice to ours at CPRE, and give us the practical support that is absolutely vital to our work, through a gift of £2 a month?

All too often, when confronted by intractable government papers and sheaves of

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Patron
Her Majesty The Queen
President
Bill Bryson
Chief Executive
Shaun Spiers

The Campaign to Protect Rural England exists to promote the beauty, tranquillity and diversity of rural England by encouraging the sustainable use of land and other natural resources in town and country.

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Registered Charity Number 1080685

0022304

council minutes, people think there is nothing they can do, that their views and opinions – and yes, their anger – will go unheard.

Together we can win.

If you or I act alone, there is little that we can do. But if we work together, CPRE has shown that we can cut through the legal and bureaucratic confusion, to achieve important, lasting victories.

Take our work in Cambridgeshire, where CPRE discovered plans to build over 1,000 homes overlooking Grantchester Meadows, a beautiful stretch of ancient countryside with a famous view to Cambridge. CPRE quickly alerted the press and local action groups who fought it vigorously with petitions and local and national media coverage. Our efforts paid off in November 2003 when city councillors quashed the proposals.

Or New Mills, near Stockport – a wildlife oasis in danger of being buried under a new housing site. The prospective developers claimed the land was a brownfield site that had been built on before – all because of a few reservoirs put there 50 years before! With help from CPRE, the plans were thrown out, and the river valley was saved. We have since heard that six further applications have been submitted, so our fight continues.

We want to challenge every single instance of inappropriate development before it happens, but we depend on you to help us do it.

Please act now, before it is too late for the countryside we love.

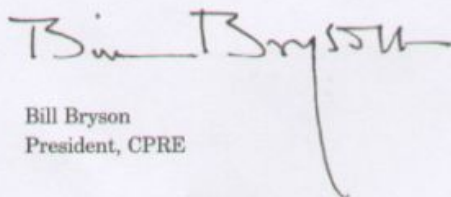
All we are asking is £2 a month towards our work.

Without it, we just can't be there at planning meetings, in ministers' offices, at town halls... at all those places where so often monumental, uninformed decisions are taken about the future of our countryside.

And if we are not there, who will be? (Apart from the house builders and developers, of course...)

Thank you for your support.

Yours sincerely



Bill Bryson
President, CPRE

If you don't state your view you won't have a choice



You will see that I have enclosed a postcard for you. It gives you the chance to get your voice heard, by sending a message through us to the Government. It is vital that we let them know just how we feel.

Send us your card – with your donation – and we'll make sure your message reaches them. With our respected position at CPRE, we can help ensure that your opinions are made loud and clear.

Direct Debit Guarantee

- This Guarantee is offered by all Banks and Building Societies that take part in the Direct Debit Scheme. The efficiency and security of the Scheme is monitored and protected by your own Bank or Building Society.
- If the amounts to be paid or the payment dates change CPRE will notify you 30 working days in advance of your account being debited or an otherwise agreed.
- If an error is made by CPRE or your Bank or Building Society, you are guaranteed a full and immediate refund from your branch of the amount paid.
- You can cancel a Direct Debit at any time by writing to your Bank or Building Society. Please also send a copy of your letter to CPRE.



**To stop this
happening
we need
your help**



**See how much
your gift can help**

£2 a month can help ensure that CPRE representatives are there at crucial planning meetings – the places where our countryside can so easily disappear – raising the voice of all of us who care.

£2 a month can support our vital work to monitor and challenge what the Government's doing – work that can affect thousands of acres of countryside, and millions of the people who love it.

£2 a month can help us keep up with policy developments on every front, so that your opinions are respected and listened to by those who hold the future of the countryside in their hands.



**The solution to our
housing shortage**

At CPRE, we recognise the need for housing, and work hard to promote positive solutions that won't threaten our countryside. Thankfully, there are plenty of answers, and one of the most important involves 'brownfield' sites – sites that have been developed before. At least 27,600 hectares of brownfield land is available for housing, with enough room for over one million new homes. What is stopping us from using this land first? Perhaps you'll want to ask the Government the same question...

A postcard which came with the letter, which the recipient was encouraged to sign

Stop urban sprawl

To: Bill Bryson, President, CPRE

Dear Bill _____

Here's my view... _____



Campaign to Protect Rural England

Signed _____

Name (Mr/Mrs/Ms) _____

Address _____

Postcode _____

Vast stretches of our unique countryside are under threat from ill-advised, insensitive housing development – yet thousands of homes lie empty, and acres of 'brownfield' land sites are available for use. It's our countryside – please help us save it!

Please return this card to Bill Bryson, FREEPOST RRRZ-BREZ-HRXY, Campaign to Protect Rural England, Worksop S80 2RT, in the envelope provided. We'll make sure the Government know just how you feel! Registered Charity Number 1050655.

Appendix 2 – Typology matrix of potential case study locations
(CRC comments in italics)

Local authority	Region	Planning policy	HMA/HNS?	Community involvement	Accessing finance	Partnership working	“Situation”
Alnwick	NE	Pilot study in the North East? Trying to get affordable housing on small sites – policy not part of the development plan. Possible “deviant”?	No. Patchy coverage of housing needs surveys. Starting to collaborate at County level with a view to a county-wide HMA.	Not leaders in the field.	Have a record of spending all their Housing Corporation grant.	Have appointed an affordable housing officer.	7 th highest ratio of mean house price increase 1996-2006, 5 th highest ratio of lower-quartile house price increase 1996-2006, 19 th highest % of second homes in England. Heavily rural area, nearest major urban area is Newcastle, 35 miles away.
Wealden	SE	Pioneer local authority in allocating affordable sites – see ARHC report.	<i>No – but 100% housing need surveys completed in each village</i>	<i>Yes – with every community</i>	<i>Yes – Housing Corporation agreement to fund every scheme identified in each village</i>	<i>Yes – between Housing Association, local authorities and the communities</i>	In the South East, commutable from London.
South Hams	SW	High proportion of affordable housing required on market housing sites – see ARHC report.	<i>Yes – teams set up with planner, housing officer and development officer</i>	<i>Yes – the teams are given areas where they actively work with the communities.</i>	<i>Yes – Housing Corporation funding for each scheme and are accessing private finance</i>	Yes	<i>This area is very rural – tiny roads everywhere including to market towns</i> 30 th highest ratio of mean house price increase, 82 nd highest ration of lower-quartile house price increase, 3 rd highest % of second homes in England. Halifax data puts South Hams as 2 nd least affordable District.

Local authority	Region	Planning policy	HMA/HNS?	Community involvement	Accessing finance	Partnership working	“Situation”
Stratford-upon-Avon	WM	“Local choice initiative” where new housing (market or affordable) is permitted in villages if there is an identified local need.	<i>I don't know much about this project</i>	Policy demands community involvement to see housing development in villages.			In close proximity to Birmingham and Coventry, and popular tourist destination – implies high external demand for rural housing.
Harrogate	YH	Use high targets and low thresholds plus a standard s106 agreement to generate affordable housing.		<i>Yes – RHE in post to work with communities</i>	North Yorks CC have become a housing authority so they can spend second homes money.	Work extensively with neighbouring authorities.	Part of “Golden Triangle” with York and Leeds, high external demand for housing.
North Norfolk	EE		<i>I don't know much about this project</i>	Fairly pro-active stance. Have developed an Affordable Housing guide for “parish councils, communities and individuals” to facilitate exception sites. Have a number of exceptions sites.			48 th in mean house price change list. Relatively deep rural, Norwich is major urban area, probably beyond commuting distance from London.
Peak District National Park	EM		<i>Sub-regional housing strategy which includes HMA in whole area</i>	They are exemplars in involving the community in deciding where development should take place.	<i>Yes - HCorp</i>	The East Midlands Regional Assembly has a good partnership scheme with local authorities for developing affordable housing.	Particular constraints as it is a national park. Has been extensively studied by others. Also limit to generalisability due to national park status?

Local authority	Region	Planning policy	HMA/HNS?	Community involvement	Accessing finance	Partnership working	“Situation”
Hambleton/North Yorks CC.	YH	Hambleton have carried out a district wide survey, and are committed to developing where there is a need.	<i>No – using district wide survey as evidence – but it is comprehensive</i>	<i>Yes – RHE in post to work with communities</i>	North Yorks CC have become a housing authority so they can spend second homes money.	<i>Yes – primarily RHE role why appointed to take the housing need survey forward and bring all partners together</i>	Reasonably deep rural, further from urban cores than Harrogate (also in North Yorks)
Bradford	YH	Particular issues with development in the urban/rural fringe – might provide an interesting contrast.	<i>Housing Need surveys in all urban/rural fringe areas undertaken by RHE’s</i>	<i>Very much community focussed as two part-time RHE’s in place</i>	<i>Yes – accessed Housing Corporation funding for the schemes which are to be enabled</i>	<i>Yes – again RHE role pivotal</i>	Some rural parts of the district, but dominated by urban core, which is reflected in policy priorities of local authority. Possible “deviant”?
South Shropshire	SW	<i>Have accessed substantial funding to complete housing need survey and complete schemes – no RHE</i>	<i>Comprehensive district wide housing need survey</i>	<i>Yes – local authority proactive role in engaging with the communities primarily through the second homes money – very community focus on how that money should be spent – not needed on housing but has been used to ensure community involvement structures in place</i>	Have done a “stock-take” of existing stock of Council Houses to access Housing Corporation funding.	<i>Yes – enabled via second homes money – clear structures for engaging all partners</i>	<i>Very rural area. 8th least affordable rural district, according to Halifax data.</i>

Local authority	Region	Planning policy	HMA/HNS?	Community involvement	Accessing finance	Partnership working	“Situation”
Hampshire CC/HARAH	SE				The alliance funds two RHEs to work across the Districts, and is an attempt to secure funding from the RHB.	The HARAH – Hampshire Alliance for Rural Affordable Housing is a partnership between 6 local authorities in Hampshire and the Housing Corporation.	County level operation, not local planning authority – questionable generalisability?

Appendix 3 – Contextual data for the case study local authorities

Case studies	Population increase 1991 - 2001 ¹⁹	Percentage of population that is of working age ²⁰	Percentage of economically active working age population unemployed 2007/2008 ²¹	RTB loss as a proportion of total housing stock in 1979 ²²	Average no. of households accepted as being homeless and in priority need per year 2002 – 2008 per 1,000 households ²³	Percentage of population in managerial and professional occupations 2001 ²⁴	Percentage of population in semi-routine and routine occupations 2001 ²⁵
Alnwick	3%	59%	4.2%	49%	0.79	25%	21%
Harrogate	8%	61%	2.8%	41% ²⁶	3.16	33%	17%
South Hams	5%	58%	3.4%	30% ²⁷	2.84	28%	17%
Stratford-on-Avon	6%	58%	3.1%	34% ²⁸	2.56	34%	18%
Wealden	7%	56%	3.3%	37%	3.91	31%	16%
<i>England</i>	<i>2.5%</i>	<i>62%</i> ²⁹	<i>5.2%</i> ³⁰	<i>35%</i>	<i>4.89</i>	<i>27%</i>	<i>21%</i>

¹⁹ Data source: UK Office for National Statistics (www.statistics.gov.uk).

²⁰ Data source: NOMIS Official UK Government labour market statistics (www.nomisweb.co.uk).

²¹ Data source: NOMIS Official UK Government labour market statistics (www.nomisweb.co.uk).

²² Calculated by (a) adding the current stock of local authority housing taken from DCLG website, Live tables on stock (<http://www.communities.gov.uk/housing/housingresearch/housingstatistics/housingstatisticsby/stockincludingvacants/livetable/>) to the loss to RTB/LSVT, taken from DCLG website, Live tables on social housing sales (<http://www.communities.gov.uk/housing/housingresearch/housingstatistics/housingstatisticsby/socialhousingsales/livetable/>) to obtain an original total local authority stock, then (b) dividing the RTB loss 1979-2008 by the original total.

²³ Data source: DCLG website, Live tables on homelessness (<http://www.communities.gov.uk/housing/housingresearch/housingstatistics/housingstatisticsby/homelessnessstatistics/livetable/>)

²⁴ Data source: UK Office for National Statistics (www.statistics.gov.uk).

²⁵ Data source: UK Office for National Statistics (www.statistics.gov.uk).

²⁶ Harrogate data is incomplete – DCLG data for HBC not accurate, partial data source available in Appendix 10 of HBC local plan (<http://www.harrogate.gov.uk/harrogate-2320>) – the years 1995-1998 are missing from the latter source, so this figure underestimates the total loss.

²⁷ South Hams carried out Large Scale Voluntary Transfer of its council stock in 1999, this figure does not include any housing subsequently lost to RTA in the intervening years.

²⁸ Stratford-on-Avon carried out Large Scale Voluntary Transfer of its council stock in 1996, this figure does not include any housing subsequently lost to RTA in the intervening years.

²⁹ Refers to Great Britain, rather than England.

³⁰ Refers to Great Britain, rather than England.

Appendix 4 – Methodologies used in other relevant studies

Author(s)	Year	Title	Methodology
Monk, Crook, Lister, Rowley, Short, Whitehead.	2005	Land and finance for affordable housing. The complementary roles of SHG and the provision of affordable housing through the planning system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of case-study sites. • In-depth telephone interviews with 28 housing associations. • Interviews with housing and planning staff. • A questionnaire survey of housing associations covering 381 associations across the country.
Milbourne	1997	Housing conflict and domestic property classes in rural Wales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 43 interviews with key actors. • Questionnaire survey of 400 households.
Burgess, Monk, Whitehead, Crook.	2008	The provision of affordable housing through Section 106: the situation in 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questionnaire survey of “all” local authorities in England, 117 responded. • Telephone interviews with respondents from 14 local authorities.
Burgess, Monk, Whitehead, Crook.	2008	The provision of affordable housing through Section 106: an update	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Builds on above study, with additional research in the form of interviews with “relevant officers” in five of the 14 local authorities.
Hoggart, Henderson	2005	Excluding exceptions: Housing non-affordability and the oppression of environmental sustainability?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desk based research. • Statistical analysis. • “Almost 100 in-depth interviews with planners, housing officers, community organisations, councillors and business groups”. • Questionnaire survey of 471 households.
Crook, Currie, Jackson, Monk, Rowley, Smith, Whitehead.	2002	Planning gain and affordable housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of HIP data. • Postal questionnaire to 197 planning authorities. • Case study visits to subsample of 40 planning authorities. • Site-specific analysis in subset of 16 planning authorities.

Author(s)	Year	Title	Methodology
Audit Commission, National Audit Office.	2005	Building more affordable homes: Improving the delivery of affordable housing in areas of high demand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviewed and conducted workshops with over 200 key actors.
Yarwood	2002	Parish councils, partnership and governance: the development of "exceptions" housing in the Malvern Hills District, England	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific housing developments examined using records from housing associations and local authority. • Postal questionnaire to 41 parish councils. • Semi-structured interviews with key actors.
Gallent, Mace, Tewdwr-Jones.	2002	Second homes: a new framework for policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Postal questionnaire of planning and housing departments in 143 local authorities.
Shucksmith, Watkins, Henderson.	1993	Attitudes and policies towards residential development in the Scottish countryside	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Semi structured interviews with key actors in two local authorities, 6 parish councils in each. • Interviews with "interest groups' representatives and civil servants at national level". • Files of planning applications & appeals were scrutinised. • Documentary evidence studied. • Policy statements, etc and statistics examined.

Appendix 5 – Outline of proposed project, from ESRC application

Title: Planning and Affordable Rural Housing: the social and micro-spatial effects in rural England of new planning policies.

Aims and Objectives:

The aim is to explore both the social and the micro-spatial effects in rural areas of England of the series of planning policies currently being introduced by Government to promote affordable housing provision.

The objectives are therefore:

1. To review, in the context of previous studies and relevant theoretical debates, the series of planning policies currently being introduced by Government to promote affordable housing provision.
2. To explore the social effects of these policies in rural areas of England, in terms of distributive justice and social inclusion.
3. To explore the micro-spatial effects of these policies, especially in relation to market towns, smaller settlements and landward areas (ie. areas outside settlements)
4. To develop the research skills and experience of the student and to enhance collaboration between the academic research and policy and practice communities in this field.
5. To contribute, through broad dissemination of the findings to user communities, to policy and practice development in relation to this highly important (yet seemingly intractable) issue.

Background

According to DEFRA (2004), in rural England, “Where economic performance is strong, house prices tend to rise putting them out of the reach of many local people. The Countryside Agency’s State of the Countryside Report 2004 recently highlighted this, and also showed evidence of an increase in rural homelessness in some areas. There is therefore a pressing need for affordable housing that helps sustain mixed and viable rural communities. Planning policy supports this aim through special provisions to provide affordable housing in small rural settlements. Ministers’ decisions on allocation of funding for affordable housing are informed by recommendations from Regional Housing Boards based on needs and priorities identified in Regional Housing Strategies. These strategies, which must be rural-proofed, ensure that housing investment links with other regional plans/strategies, eg. on economic development and planning strategies, which promote sustainable communities.” Meanwhile, the responsibility for planning policies and guidance rests with ODPM who, in its Communities Plan (2003) seeks both “to ensure that in tackling housing shortages we protect the countryside and enhance its quality rather than create sprawl” and “to address the housing needs of rural communities who are often the guardians of the countryside.”

To address these challenges, and also to respond to the recommendations of the Barker Report, a series of new planning policy initiatives are currently being introduced. These include:

- A revised Planning Policy Guidance statement (PPG3) which is expected to confirm continuation of the 'Exception Planning Policy' which allows local authorities to grant planning permission for land within or adjoining existing villages which would not normally be released for housing in order to provide low-cost housing to meet local needs in perpetuity; and to introduce a new power to designate land specifically as sites for affordable housing provision in rural areas, expected to be primarily in market towns and larger villages, perhaps using previously developed land first.
- Revision of s.106 planning gain advice and perhaps pilot schemes to test proposals in the Barker Report for a planning gain supplementary tax.
- Introduction of regional affordability targets, recommended by the Barker Report.
- Attempts to 'join-up' housing and planning by ensuring that regional spatial strategies incorporate the regional housing strategies mentioned above, again as recommended by the Barker Report.

The proposed project will explore how this series of initiatives is introduced, negotiated and mediated in selected case study areas of rural England, and will seek to elaborate the distributional outcomes for social groups and the micro-spatial effects.

Appendix 6 – List of those interviewed in each case study local authority

Alnwick District Council

- A planning policy representative
- A housing department representative
- A registered social landlord representative
- A parish council representative
- An ex-rural housing enabler for Northumberland

Harrogate Borough Council

- A housing department representative
- The rural housing enabler
- Representatives of three parish councils
- A senior representative of North Yorkshire Rural Community Council

South Hams District Council

- A planning policy representative
- Two members of the affordable housing team
- A senior manager from South Hams District Council
- A registered social landlord representative
- Representatives of two parish councils
- The rural housing enabler
- Two members of Devon County Council affordable housing task group

Stratford-on-Avon District Council

- A planning policy representative
- A housing department representative
- Representatives of three parish councils
- Representatives of two registered social landlords
- The rural housing enabler

Wealden District Council

- A planning policy representative
- A housing department representative
- A parish council representative
- A senior manager from South Hams District Council

Appendix 7 – Topic guides which were used to focus the semi-structured interviews

1. Interview with planning department

- 1.1. Have your policies on affordable housing been developed *because* of Government and regional policy advice or *in spite* of it?
- 1.2. Are you aware of the recent report by the Affordable Rural Housing Commission, and the recommendations it made?
- 1.3. To what extent do you co-operate with other departments of the council, and external bodies?
- 1.4. Are the delays in the planning process stymieing the development of affordable housing?
- 1.5. (How) are schemes involving local people?
- 1.6. Is affordable housing helping to achieve social inclusion?
- 1.7. What size settlement is affordable housing being located in, and is this a deliberate policy?
- 1.8. Where is affordable housing being located in specific settlements – is it integrated into the community or is it located on the edge of the village?
- 1.9. Does how the housing association funding works cause problems?

2. Interview with Registered Social Landlord(s).

- 2.1. Background – scale of housing association – national, regional, local? Number of properties and number in the District?
- 2.2. Is affordable housing being developed in line with where the need is, or on an opportunistic basis depending on where land can be released?
- 2.3. (How) are schemes involving local people?
- 2.4. What size settlement is affordable housing being located in, and is this a deliberate policy?
- 2.5. Where is affordable housing being located in specific settlements – is it integrated into the community or is it located on the edge of the village?
- 2.6. Is affordable housing helping to achieve social inclusion?
- 2.7. Does how the housing association funding works cause problems?

3. Interview with Rural Housing Enabler

- 3.1. Background: Can you tell me a little bit about the RHE programme in XX?
- 3.2. Do you focus on rural exceptions sites or on rural affordable housing development generally?
- 3.3. Do you find there is a lot of opposition from local people to affordable housing or market housing schemes? How do you counter any opposition?
- 3.4. How are RHEs being funded? Is there any certainty of long term funding? Is the DEFRA funding crisis impacting on long term funding plans?
- 3.5. Does how the housing association funding works cause problems?

4. Interview with Parish Council(s)

- 4.1. Depending on whether schemes have been developed or not:
- 4.2. Are local authority policies on affordable housing being developed *because* of Government and regional policy advice or *in spite* of it?
- 4.3. (How) are schemes involving local people?

4.4. How is affordable housing helping to achieve social inclusion?

5. Interview with Senior Manager

5.1. Can you explain to me the breadth of your responsibilities?

5.2. Do you think the delays in the planning process are stymieing the development of affordable housing?

5.3. Have you been closely involved in the RSS preparation?

5.4. Other than the RSS, to what extend do you co-operate with other departments of the council, and external bodies?

5.5. Are you aware of the report by the Affordable Rural Housing Commission, and the recommendations it made?

6. Interview with Devon Affordable Housing Task Group

6.1. Background: Can you tell me a little bit about the Strategic Housing Group and the Affordable Housing Task Group?

6.2. Scope of the Housing/Task Group

6.3. Do the district councils vary quite widely in their approach to housing, and specifically affordable housing provision?

6.4. I've read about the affordable housing masterclass you're running – what was the driver for doing that?

6.5. Is any of your work to do with community involvement, or is it more about strategy preparation and information sharing?

6.6. Are you aware of the recent report by the Affordable Rural Housing Commission, and the recommendations it made?

Appendix 8 – Detailed tables of RSS housing figures

The key thing to focus on in the following tables is the bottom row of the tables, which show the proportion of housing allocated to the case study local authorities in their strategic policy.

North East/Alnwick

RPG (November 2002)

	2002-2006	2006 onwards
North East	5050 pa	6000 pa
Northumberland	700 pa	800 pa
Northumberland %	13.86%	13.33%

Northumberland Structure Plan (January 2006)

	2002-2006	2006-2016
Northumberland	905 pa	810 pa
Alnwick	120 pa	75 pa
Alnwick %	13.26%	9.26%
Alnwick % of RPG	1.84%	1.23%

Submission draft RSS (June 2005)

	2004-2011	2011-2016	2016-2021	2004-2021 total
North East	6775 pa	6170 pa	5760 pa	107015
Alnwick	95 pa	75 pa	60 pa	1275
Alnwick %	1.40%	1.21%	1.04%	1.19%

Panel Report on submission draft RSS (May 2007)

	2004-2011	2011-2016	2016-2021	2004-2021 total
North East	7635 pa	6915 pa	4765 pa	111860
Alnwick	135 pa	90 pa	50 pa	1615
Alnwick %	1.77%	1.30%	1.05%	1.44%

SoS Further proposed changes to RSS (February 2008)

	2004-2011	2011-2016	2016-2021	2004-2021 total
North East	7425 pa	7725 pa	7660 pa	128860
Alnwick	105 pa	95 pa	85 pa	1615
Alnwick %	1.41%	1.23%	1.11%	1.25%

Final RSS (July 2008)

	2004-2011	2011-2016	2016-2021	2004-2021 total
North East	7425 pa	7725 pa	7660 pa	128860
Alnwick	105 pa	95 pa	85 pa	1615
Alnwick %	1.41%	1.23%	1.11%	1.25%

Yorkshire and Humberside/Harrogate

RPG (December 2004)

	1998-2016
Yorkshire & Humber	14765 pa
York & North Yorkshire	2500 pa
York & North Yorkshire %	16.93%

York & North Yorkshire Structure Plan (August 2002)

	1991-2006 pa
York & North Yorkshire	2973 pa
Harrogate	467 pa
Harrogate % of York & North Yorks	15.7%
Harrogate % of RPG	2.66%

Submission draft RSS (January 2006)

	2004-2011	2011-2016	2016-2021	2016-2021 total
Yorks and Humber	15160 pa	16120 pa	19120 pa	282320
Harrogate	390 pa	390 pa	390 pa	6630
Harrogate %	2.57%	2.41%	2.03%	2.35%

Panel report on submission draft RSS (March 2007)

	2004-2011	2011-2016	2016-2021	2016-2021 total
Yorks and Humber	15160 pa	22140 pa	22140 pa	327520
Harrogate	390 pa	390 pa	390 pa	6630
Harrogate %	2.57%	1.76%	1.76%	2.02%

SoS Proposed changes to draft RSS (September 2007)

	2004-2008	2008-2026	2004-2026 total
Yorks and Humber	15160	22140	459160
Harrogate	390	390	8580
Harrogate %	2.57%	1.76%	1.87%

Final RSS (May 2008)

	2004-2008	2008-2026	2004-2026 total
Yorks and Humber	15160	22260	461320
Harrogate	390	390	8580
Harrogate %	2.57%	1.75%	1.86%

South West/South Hams

RPG (September 2001)

	1996-2016
South West	20200 pa
Devon	4300 pa
Devon %	21.29%

Devon Structure Plan (October 2004)

	2001-2016
Devon	4370 pa
South Hams	560 pa
South Hams %	12.81%
South Hams % of RPG	2.73%

Submission draft RSS (June 2006)

	2006-2016	2016-2026	Total 2006 – 2026
South West	23770 pa	22185 pa	459550
South Hams	650 pa	450 pa	11000 (5500 at Sherford New Community)
South Hams %	2.73%	2.03%	2.39%

Panel report on submission draft RSS (January 2008)

	2006-2016	2016-2026	Total 2006 – 2026
South West	28473 pa	28473 pa	569450
South Hams	590 pa	590 pa	11800 (5500 at Sherford New Community)
South Hams %	2.07%	2.07%	2.07%

South East/Wealden

RPG (March 2001)

	2001-2006
South East	39000 pa
East Sussex	2290 pa
East Sussex %	5.87%

East Sussex Structure plan (August 2002)

	1991-2006	2006-2011	1991-2011
East Sussex	2333 pa	2080 pa	2270 pa
Wealden	440 pa	880 pa	550 pa
Wealden % of East Sussex	18.86%	42.31%	24.23%
Wealden % of RPG	1.11%	2.48%	1.42%

Submission draft RSS (March 2006)

	2006-2026 pa	2006-2026 total
South East	28900 pa	578000
Wealden	400 pa	8000
Wealden %	1.38%	1.38%

EIP panel report on submission draft RSS (August 2007)

	2006-2026 pa	2006-2026 total
South East	32000 pa	640000
Wealden	480 pa	9600
Wealden %	1.50%	1.50%

SoS proposed changes to submission draft RSS (July 2008)

	2006-2026 pa	2006-2026 total
South East	33125	662500
Wealden	550	11000
Wealden %	1.66%	1.66%

West Midlands/Stratford-on-Avon

RPG (June 2004)

	To 2007	2007-2011	2011-2021
West Midlands	16680 pa	15280 pa	14650 pa
Warwickshire	2000 pa	1500 pa	1350 pa
Warwickshire %	11.99%	9.81%	9.22%

Warwickshire Structure plan (August 2002)

	1996-2011 total	1996-2011 pa
Warwickshire	31100 total	2073 pa
Stratford-on-Avon	8200 total	546 pa
Stratford-on-Avon % of Warwickshire	26%	26%
Stratford-on-Avon % of RPG	2.6%	2.6%

Submission draft RSS (December 2007)

	2006-2026 total	2006-2026 pa
West Midlands	365600	18280 pa
Warwickshire	41000	2050 pa
Warwickshire %	11.2%	11.2%
Stratford-on-Avon	5600	280 pa
Stratford-on-Avon % of Warwickshire	13.66%	13.66%
Stratford-on-Avon % of West Midlands	1.53%	1.53%

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