Rural Regeneration and Localism: A case study of Northumberland

A Thesis presented for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Newcastle

Elizabeth L. Juppenlatz

School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape

April, 2015

Abstract

The Localism Act (2011) was intended to bring about radical decentralisation, encompassing reforms to the planning system to make it clearer, more democratic and effective. Neighbourhood planning was introduced to address the democratic deficit experienced by communities under previous governments. Neighbourhood plans, the main plank of the new legislation and intended as a robust addition to the plan hierarchy, were envisaged as empowering and enabling communities to control the type of development in their area.

This research focusses on the delivery of neighbourhood plans from the perspectives of policy actors, planners and communities. With Northumberland forming the main case study, three sub-case studies have been used; two neighbourhood plan Front Runners are compared with the successful rural regeneration initiatives of a Development Trust. These are used to examine the extent to which the neighbourhood planning process is bringing about the changes vaunted by the government. The research was conducted using semi-structured, in-depth interviews and content analysis together with participatory and visual appraisal tools in the case study areas in the north and west of Northumberland.

Drawing on collaborative planning theory and theories of neo-endogenous rural development, the research indicates that, through the collaborative processes of delivering neighbourhood plans, a regeneration of local governance institutions may be emerging. This thesis argues, however, that the processes of localism, expressed through neighbourhood planning, cut across entrenched patterns of land-use, land ownership and power relations in Northumberland. The thesis also argues that to fully understand the processes of localism and neighbourhood planning, the underlying socio-economic and political context in which neighbourhood plans are developed must also be considered.

It is further contended that the decentralisation, community empowerment and control of development promised through the new localism legislation remain largely rhetoric and a guise for centralist control.

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

ACDT	Alnwick Community Development Trust
ACP	Alnwick Community Partnership
ADT	Amble Development Trust
AMT	Action for Market Towns
ANDP	Alnwick and Denwick Neighbourhood Plan
ASHE	Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings
ATC	Alnwick Town Council
BIS	Department for Business, Innovation and Skills
CA	Countryside Agency
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CDT	Community Development Trust
CPA	Comprehensive Performance Assessment
CEC	Commission of the European Communities
CLG	Department of Local Government and Communities
CLP	Community-Led Planning
CRC	Commission for Rural Communities
DETR	Department for Environment Transport and the Regions
DT	Development Trust
EAFRD	European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development
EAGGF	European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESDP	European Spatial Development Perspective
ESF	European Social Fund
EU	European Union
FMD	Foot and Mouth Disease
FoNDT	Federation of Northumberland Development Trusts
GCF	Glendale Community Forum
GDHI	Gross Domestic Household Income
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GRDC	Glendale Rural District Council
GGPC	Glendale Group of Parish Councils
GGT	Glendale Gateway Trust
HCA	Homes and Communities Agency
HMG	HM Government
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IIED	International Institute for Environment and Development
LAG	Local Action Group
LDF	Local Development Framework
LDS	Local Development Strategy
LEADER	Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l'Économie Rurale
LEC	Local Enterprise Company
LEP	Local Enterprise Partnership
LPA	Local Planning Authority
MAFF	Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
NALC	National Association of Local Councils
NCC	Northumberland County Council

NDF	National Delivery Framework
NDP	Neighbourhood Development Plan
NELEP	North East Local Enterprise Partnership
NF	Neighbourhood Forum
NGO	Non Government Organisation
NNPA	Northumberland National Park Authority
NSP	Northumberland Strategic Partnership
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PIU	Performance and Innovation Unit
RCPU	Rural Community Policy Unit
RDA	Regional Development Agency
RDC	Rural Development Commission
RDPE	Rural Development Programme for England
RGN	Rural Growth Network
SAC	Scottish Agricultural College
SG	Steering Group
TEC	Training and Enterprise Council
TGNDP	Tarset & Greystead Neighbourhood Plan
UDC	Urban Development Corporation

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Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction

'Localism is here to stay..' was the assertion made in mid-2014 by an MP three years after the Coalition government's launch of the Localism Act in 2011. This statement might be taken to be the usual rhetoric and hubris from a government while still in power, concerned to retain some level of political clout in the lead up to a general election. In fact it is from a Labour MP, Nick Raynsford, when discussing the need for new housing in his constituency (Kochan, 2014, 15). But at the time the Localism Act was introduced in 2011, initial responses and attitudes, especially from the academic and policy practitioner communities were less concerned with the staying power of localism than with the sudden abolition of regionalism which it replaced. Extensive efforts were made at academic conferences and seminars to draw clarity out of the confusion that resulted from the Coalition government's hasty introduction of its new localism programme (Ward and Hardy, 2012; Bellini et al, 2012). However, these forums tended to reflect less on the new localism policy than on the implications of a lost regionalism. This was perhaps to be expected, given the limited information and guidelines available from the government initially, leading to much initial speculation and guess-work.

A significant element of the new localism legislation was the reform of the planning system. One of the key components to emerge was the newly devolved level of local level planning. It is on that key component of the new legislation, neighbourhood planning, that this thesis focusses. It addresses the 'distance' that a policy such as localism, introduced by central government must travel to reach remote rural areas in the far north of the country. It concerns the processes in which such communities become involved in local level planning using the newly devolved powers. It explores the ways in which these new powers have been exploited, but also the checks and balances that exist to counter the new local level planning opportunities that have arisen. At the start of the research for this thesis, there was a sense among a number of observers that the apparatus of regionalism had been dismantled too hastily and the new localism policy introduced too recklessly, without due consideration of the adjustments required and the disruption and dislocation caused to the existing policy and institutional infrastructure. The term 'austerity localism' was frequently used to portray the stringent economic policies that the Coalition government introduced at this time,

which provided the economic backdrop to the years following the publication of the Localism Act 2011.

While the significance of this legislative and policy event could not be disputed, the consequences were not immediately apparent. This thesis therefore forms part of the literature to emerge from those early days and has aimed to explore the significance of localism and neighbourhood planning for local communities in the far north of England. In so doing, this thesis offers an original contribution to the extant literature on the topic, aiming to provide insights from the experiences of rural communities as well as from policy practitioners and planners.

Since those early days, however, some kind of equilibrium appears to have emerged from that era of policy turbulence. The notion that localism, regardless of its political trappings, is 'here to stay' seems no longer to be questioned in the way it was a few years ago. At the time the research was commenced, the 'practice' of neighbourhood planning was still in its infancy. There was therefore a gap in the research literature on neighbourhood plan experiences both on the ground. To my knowledge, research on neighbourhood planning by communities in Northumberland is still limited. This thesis makes an original contribution by focussing on the experiences of localism in rural Northumberland using insights from the literature on neo-endogenous rural development.

1.2 The Research Question
In designing the research for this study, a number of assumptions influenced its shape and range. Firstly, localism and the decentralisation of planning powers to local government and to the neighbourhood level has changed the way in which the different scales of national and local governance interact and operate. Secondly, the removal of the regional tier of governance has resulted in a transfer of some powers to the local level, whereby local government authorities, including local planning authorities, have been granted new responsibilities and consequently have been obliged to carve a new identity for themselves. Finally, an increased level of empowerment may have devolved to communities as a consequence of the planning reforms through collaborative planning and governance.

The following research questions were addressed:

- How is the localism agenda being interpreted at the policy level and by academic researchers?

- How is the localism agenda practised at the community level in Northumberland?

- In what ways are the power relations amongst local and extra-local actors playing out in localism?

- What are the implications of localism for the governance of rural communities?

Methodology

These research questions have been addressed through an exploration of the experiences of policy practitioners, planners, academics and community residents in the North East and Northumberland. The use of qualitative methods for the research was drawn from the social constructivist grounded theory method where both data and analysis are created from the shared experience of the process of data collection in an interview. Data collection was carried out through interviews, focus group discussions and attendance at consultation events as well as the study and analysis of policy documents and government publications. A total of twenty-one in-depth semi-structured interviews was conducted in Northumberland, North Tyne and Tyne and Wear (Annex B) and use was made of participatory techniques such as 'transects', 'visual assessments' and 'triangulation'. Consultation events held by the Steering Groups of the neighbourhood plans and the Glendale Gateway Trust were attended and use was made of the opportunities for group discussions (Annex C). The experiences of respondents of 'life and work under localism' however were relatively recent. As one of the research aims was to understand how localism was being interpreted at the institutional, local and individual level in rural regeneration, it was necessary to capture what individuals in their various capacities considered the most significant aspects of this experience.

The research questions, aims and objectives were initially used as the framework for the research design, but this was also supplemented by attendance at a number of conferences hosted by different professional and academic associations. This assisted the process of scoping the research questions and focussing its aims and objectives. The selection of the predominantly rural county of Northumberland, with its very specific demographic and geographic features, located within the wider geographic context of the North East fitted well with the decision to use qualitative methods in data collection.

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The research theme of localism, being broad and cross-cutting, needed to be 'bounded' or framed in some way. The adoption of the case-study as the main unit of design enabled a detailed study to be conducted of the specifics and complexity of the ways in which the new policy of localism was 'played out'. Using Northumberland as the 'case' enabled a degree of 'boundary setting' within the wider context of the North East of England. For the purposes of this thesis, Northumberland serves as the 'outer boundary' of the study, in terms of socio-economic, cultural, regional, rural and planning characteristics. Two of the sub-case studies, purposively selected from within this bounded system, comprised the northern town of Alnwick and the village of Tarset in Northumberland National Park. Both were in the process of preparing neighbourhood plans under the auspices of the Front Runner Programme funded by DEFRA. The third case was the town of Wooler in Glendale. Located at the gateway to the Northumberland National Park in the far north of the county, it had many years of experience in rural regeneration but had elected not to take part in the government's neighbourhood planning scheme.

1.3 The Research Context: Localism and Neighbourhood Planning

As noted above, the decentralisation of power from central government to local authorities and communities involved the dismantling of a complete tier of regional governance in England, including the Regional Development Agencies, Government Offices for the Regions and Regional Select Committees (Shaw and Robinson, 2011, 10).

Interpretations of the Coalition government's current incarnation of localism have inevitably been coloured by the dismantling of regionalism and its associated infrastructure (Bentley and Pugalis, 2013; Shaw and Robinson, 2011; Shutt, 2012; Pike, Pose and Tomaney, 2012). Reviewing the literature published shortly after the introduction of the Localism Act showed the extent of the efforts being made to draw clarity out of the confusion (Hildreth, 2011; Gallent and Robinson, 2013; Haughton, 2012; Bellini et al, 2012). Academic conferences and seminars tended to follow a similar pattern - 'localism' may have been the title, but the dismantling of 'regionalism' was the real theme. Examples include the debate hosted by the Smith Institute at the House of Commons in January 2012; the RSA sponsored conference 'Localism and Planning' in Manchester in November 2011 and the Northern Rural Network seminar on localism held in Newcastle in 2012. Many of the academic papers and publications

produced shortly after the launch of the Localism Act in 2011 also tended to treat localism as a counterpoint to the 'regionalism' that it displaced. For example, the titles of the following conference publications and papers indicate this preoccupation, with 'Changing Gear: is localism the new regionalism?' edited by Ward and Hardy, 2012; 'From Regionalism to Localism: Opportunities and Challenges for North East England' by Keith Shaw and Fred Robinson, 2011; 'After Regions: what next for local enterprise partnerships?' by Pugalis and Shutt, 2012 and 'From RDAs to LEPs: a New Localism? - Doomed to Fail' by Bentley et al, 2010.

The Coalition government placed localism at the heart of its legislative programme. In the Policy Green Paper 'Control: Shift: Returning Power to Local Communities', it states:

> 'To foster a new spirit of local enterprise and local social responsibility, we need to decentralise power and control... Our vision of localism is one where power is decentralised to the lowest possible level' (DCLG, 2009, 8).

Eric Pickles, Secretary of State, was clear on the role the Localism Act would have in ending the 'command and control apparatus of England's over-centralized state' previously endorsed by the Conservative Party's commitment to a 'control shift' from the centre to local communities (Conservative Party, 2009; Shaw and Robinson, 2011). At the same time, the reform of the planning system and introduction of a new tier of local planning heralded much commentary and debate among academic, planning and policy practitioner communities (Allemendinger and Haughton, 2012; Featherstone et al, 2012; MacKinnon et al, 2010; Brenner et al, 2010. Whether a polity as centralised as that of the UK could successfully devolve planning powers to the extent that was promised in the lead up to the election of the Coalition government in 2010 and the Localism Act has therefore been the subject of much critique. The range of planning powers transferred from local authorities to communities continues to be a source of a constant three-way tension: that between central and local government, that between local government and local communities but also between central government and local communities. As is later explored in Chapter 3, academic contributors to this debate pointed out that the Coalition government's new direction for local economic development policy "entails a considerable degree of centralist control" and that the delivery mechanisms that are to be decentralised "come with strings attached" (Bentley and Pugalis, 2013, 14). This thesis contributes to this debate, focussing on the extent to

which localism, through the neighbourhood planning process, is bringing about community empowerment and control over development.

This thesis also reveals the dynamics of local level government in rural areas and the way that governance spaces have been opened up in the process of neighbourhood planning. This renewal of local level democracy, which was purportedly the aim of the Coalition government in the introduction of its new localism policy, has been met with mixed responses from both central and local government. This suggests that some of these governance outcomes may not have been anticipated by the Coalition government. How these new governance spaces have been occupied is further detailed in the case study chapters 5, 6 and 7.

1.4 The Rural Context, Rural Development and Theorising the Rural

The ways in which 'rural England' has been characterised alongside the range of rural development theories and approaches that have underpinned rural development policies are considered in Chapters 3 and 4 of the thesis. Methods and approaches to understanding rurality are also considered, including the influence of post-modern and post-structuralist thinking. The rural has come to be seen in discursive terms as a social construct. As will be shown, different approaches to defining the 'rural' can be seen to be at work as planners and rural residents attempt to co-construct neighbourhood plans.

Writing in 2000, van der Ploeg et al pointed the way to a 'new rural development paradigm' (van der Ploeg et al, 2000). This new paradigm captured a 'differentiated' countryside, where regions and rural areas could demonstrate the unique qualities and economic, social and cultural resources with which their own distinct development could be pursued (Woods, 2011, 141). The new rural paradigm generated new approaches and principles on which to build strategies for rural development. The concept of endogenous development, or 'development from within', where local control and ownership can be maintained has attracted academic attention. For Ray, endogenous development comprised two essential qualities; the capacity to look inwards to mobilise local actors and resources while at the same time being able to look outwards and promote the area to 'extra-local' consumers and policy-maker (Ray, 2001, 4). In order to more clearly highlight and demarcate the role of extra-local actors, Ray devised the term 'neo-endogenous' development to characterise this new development model (Ray, 2001, 4). Further academic theorising from contributors such as Murdoch,

et al, (1995) and Shucksmith, (2012) has developed the significance of the linkages and networks between the local and extra-local elements of neo-endogenous (or networked) rural development. This work has emphasised the principle of local capacity building such that the maximum resultant benefit accrues to the local area concerned. Significant insights underpinning the research for this thesis have therefore been provided by the neo-endogenous rural development approach.

1.5 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is structured as follows. The next chapter, Chapter 2, explores the research methodology used to capture the range of experiences, opinions and understandings of a wide range of respondents who found themselves confronted with the trappings of the new policy of localism and its equally new expression, neighbourhood planning. This chapter expounds on the rationale for the selection of the grounded theory method used. It also describes the methodology selected of using three case studies located in one of the most northern counties of England with which to draw parallels and contrasts. It also outlines the limitations to the study that were encountered.

Chapter 3 provides the theoretical context in which the study was set. It explores the different phases of localism extending back to the 1980s and which have been adopted by each political party in turn, under both Conservative and Labour governments, illustrating its continuing cross-party appeal up to the point when it became enshrined in legislation for the first time under the Coalition government in 2011. Academic studies conducted on the different types of localism emerging, such as 'austerity' and 'neoliberal' localism, are reviewed together with the way these have shaped the practices of neighbourhood planning, discussed in later chapters. The chapter also traces the course of the 'other face' of localism, that of centralism, showing how this has been seen to work in planning practice.

Chapter 4 sets out the policy context into which the localism legislation has been introduced in England. The chapter first briefly reviews the early history of localism before considering more contemporary debates on the range of different 'localisms' that have emerged. The chapter then provides background to the planning policy context, and a review of post-war local and community level planning in England. The planning reforms introduced by the Coalition government are then considered, including the new National Planning Policy Framework and the national Front Runner programme.
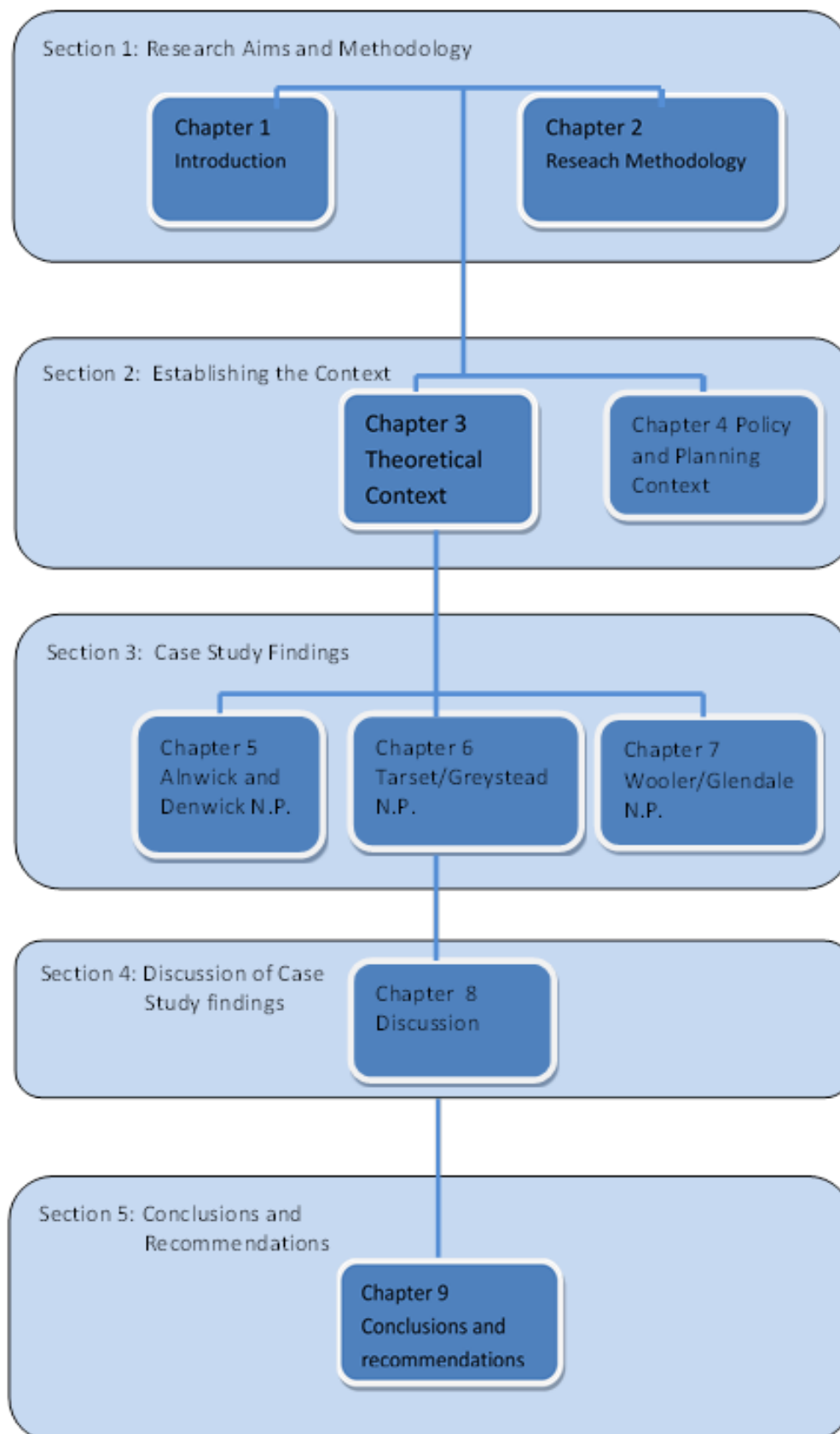
Figure 1.1: Structure of the Thesis

This is followed by a review of the main events that have shaped the history of rural development policy in England since 1997, charting the institutional and policy changes introduced by New Labour during its time in office (1997 to 2010) and the policy shifts adopted subsequently by the incoming Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition in 2010. It considers the ways in which the Localism Act is impacting on rural areas. This chapter frames the question of whether the intrinsic features of rural communities life constitute a 'rural' Big Society or whether this remains a notional aspiration. To conclude, an overview is provided of the next round of programming for the period 2014-2020.

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 comprise the three case studies conducted in the county of Northumberland. Two neighbourhood plans, that of Alnwick and Denwick (Chapter 5) and the village of Tarset with Greystead (Chapter 6) were analysed in order to compare experiences with that of a third case study area, that of Glendale (Chapter 7). The research design was concerned to explore and contrast the experiences of the two neighbourhood plans with that of Wooler and Glendale for the insights and lessons that could be learned.

Chapter 8 provides a synthesis of the findings of each of the case study chapters. It reflects on the themes raised in the case studies and the perspectives of academics, policy and planning practitioners interviewed in order to provide a more three-dimensional and nuanced account of the ways localism and neighbourhood planning have been experienced in Northumberland. It discusses the continuingly contested role of planners and planning in the existing policy climate and raises the question of the shortcomings identified in planning practice and neighbourhood planning with regard to issues such as equity and resource allocation. Use is also made of these approaches to identify and compare the legacies of neighbourhood planning and rural regeneration for the three cases. This is in terms of both tangible as well as intangible legacies such as the capacity local areas have acquired in negotiating, and retaining the required resources.

In two of the case studies the role of local authority planners in collaborative planning frameworks was questioned and this is further discussed in this section. In the third case study, the re-negotiation of governance space being undertaken between the development trust and parish council is further explored. As planners, communities and

developers are brought together in the neighbourhood planning process, a new orientation and role for planners may be seen as starting to emerge in relation to local level planning. The chapter questions whether the wider aims of localism in terms of social justice and deliberative democracy can be served within the current context in Northumberland. In spite of achievements at the local level of neighbourhood planning, there remain issues related to existing and unchallenged landownership patterns, associated power imbalances, neoliberal and centralised state power and planning control.

The final chapter, Chapter 9, brings this thesis to a close. It sets out the key empirical findings of the research conducted for this thesis. It reflects on the theoretical implications of the research, addressing the debates surrounding localism versus centralism, the pragmatic difficulties associated with collaborative planning theory and the insights provided by the neo-endogenous rural development approach. It goes on to draw out the policy implications of the research where the outcomes of localism are set against the constraints and limitations revealed by the research.

Chapter 2. The Research Methodology

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present the theoretical framework and methodology for this thesis. It considers the ontological and epistemological assumptions that underpinned the research, researcher positionality and reflexivity as well as the research design and strategy which in turn guided the choice of methodology. An account of this is provided in section 2.2 below. The research design and strategy are discussed in section 2.3 below. As part of the research design, I have chosen to use the case study approach. The further implications of this are discussed in section 2.3.2 below. As with any research conducted with social actors, ethical considerations have played an important role. An account of the way these considerations have been taken up in the research and treated is provided in section 2.5. Finally in this chapter a section on reflexive research, together with a consideration of its significance and the ways it has influenced this research, will also include the limitations of the study.

2.2 The Research Paradigm

2.2.1 *Researcher orientation*

"A clear and transparent knowledge of the ontological and epistemological assumptions underpinning the research" is required for a number of reasons, key among which is establishing the researcher's orientation to studying the social world (Grix, 2002, 176). It is also key to linking together the main research components, all of which should represent the orientation of the researcher to the social world. As it is then evident that both ontology and epistemology are 'central to all social research' (Grix, 2002, 176) this chapter aims to present my position as explicitly as possible. As Grix also goes on to explain, there are further reasons for clarity and consistency of terms in this area, being that they help prevent confusion in theoretical debate and, importantly, to avoid a scholarly 'arguing past one another' (Grix, 2002, 176). This can happen where, for example, those taking a positivist stance engage with others who take a constructivist position, as is illustrated in Section 2.3.1 below in the consideration of debates on the grounded theory method.

In considering the selection of a methodology for the research, a foremost requirement was the selection of an appropriate method with which to capture essentially fleeting moments in the working lives of policy practitioners and others concerned with localism

and rural regeneration. There were also personal impacts on the situation of those interviewed, as 'austerity localism' impacted on Northumberland. The working lives and futures of a number of those I interviewed were becoming uncertain, especially in local government where the impacts of rounds of 'restructuring' were still being experienced. Such a dynamic context necessitated the selection of research methods that were sufficiently flexible and sensitive yet also sufficiently robust and reliable. The methodological and theoretical frameworks selected for this research are discussed in the following sections.

2.2.2 *Ontology*

The objectives of this thesis centre on the study of the role that localism is playing in rural regeneration. This of itself requires an interpretation of the interplay and interaction between individuals (such as policy practitioners) with structures and institutions involved in the implementation of public policy. To best understand and interpret these interactions I have taken as a starting point the concept of agency in both individuals and the practice of policy and its implementation. From this viewpoint, it is not credible then as a social researcher to adopt the objectivist view that social reality is external to social actors when they are perceived as being involved in its construction. The ontological position of constructivism maintains that social phenomena and their meanings are in a constant state of being realized or 'constructed' (Bryman, 2012, 33). This also implies that social phenomena and categories are constantly being revised. More recently this approach has encompassed the role of the social researcher who is seen as a part of the process of this construction (Bryman, 2012, 33).

This perspective is the result of what has been described as an ontological/ epistemological revolution' that occurred some decades past and is still seen as taking place (Clarke and Friese, 2007, 367). Ubiquitous yet also contested postmodernism has changed scholarship and research fundamentally, with its emphasis on 'positionalities', 'contradictions', 'situatedness' and 'fragmentation' (Clarke and Friese, 2007, 367). The influence of the postmodern turn has been such as to lead some contributors to state that:

> '(q)ualitative research is no longer generally acceptable as serious scholarship in the absence of the kinds of reflexivities and acknowledgements of complexities that have drawn intellectual attention through the postmodern turn.' (Clarke and Friese, 2007, 367).

The political nature of research practices and the need for a heightened reflexivity has been increasingly recognised as a consequence of the postmodern turn to the point where 'the problematics of representation' have created a 'crisis of representation' (Clarke and Friese, 2007, 368). Research as well as the researcher are under increasing pressure to demonstrate legitimacy, while what was previously a taken-for-granted position of 'authority' is being transmuted to a position of 'acknowledged participant' (Clarke and Friese, 2007, 368). In this way, the social researcher is engaged in creating a specific account of social reality that is inevitably partial and cannot be assumed as authoritative or conclusive (Bryman, 2012, 33). This is the ontological position I have adopted for this research.

2.2.3 *Epistemology*

The epistemological position from which any research is undertaken is also fundamental to the way it is conducted. An a priori epistemological consideration is whether the social world can be studied along the same principles and ethos as the natural sciences. The epistemological position that considers that social research methods are closely aligned with those of the natural sciences is that of positivism. The term positivist has frequently been associated with the study of the natural sciences and the scientific method. This has provided the basis for the 'scientific method' which has long held sway in the conduct of research in the social sciences (Bryman, 2012, 30). Positivism has contributed much of what is generally considered as theory; positivist theory looks for explanations, treats concepts as variables and draws up hypotheses that can be tested empirically (Charmaz, 2006, 126). Theory serves an important function in positivist approaches to explain and predict the relationship between concepts so that these can then be generalized and universalized (Charmaz, 2006, 126). While positivist approaches to theory focus on deterministic explanations and rely on linear reasoning, they tend to result in 'narrow, reductionist explanations' and often fail to recognize multiple layered realities (Charmaz, 2006, 126).

A contrasting epistemology to that of positivism is that of interpretivism. This approach contests the positivist stance of applying 'scientific' methods in the study of the social world and posits an alternative 'logic of research procedure' that distinguishes the study of people from the study of the natural world (Bryman, 2012, 28). The 1960s saw the growing influence of social constructivism and the interpretive turn in theory. Social constructivism does not seek to explain reality or provide a single explanation of social

reality but recognizes the multiple realities that constitute the social world (Charmaz, 2006, 127). One of the main principles differentiating interpretivism from positivism is the focus on seeking to understand human behaviour as opposed to attempting to find explanations for it. This school of thought, 'hermeneutics', has given rise to a range of approaches such as phenomenonological, hermeneutical, interactional, feminist and postmodern approaches. In adopting the epistemological position of interpretivism for this research I have therefore sought to approach the research theme in a way that would reveal the meanings and interpretations attached to localism by those I interviewed.

2.3 Methodological Approach and Rationale

The research design for data collection and analysis adopted for this research reflects the importance attached to collecting rich detailed qualitative data in a specific setting. The research framework I have adopted for this thesis used the case study as its principal component to address the research objectives, these being:

- To examine how the localism agenda is being interpreted at the policy level and by academic researchers
- To examine how the localism agenda is practised at the community level in Northumberland
- To analyse the ways in which the power relations between local and extra-local actors are playing out in localism
- To examine the implications of localism for the governance of rural communities

The research logic therefore indicated that a qualitative research method as the most appropriate and effective method. Constructivism infers the constant 'manufacture' of social phenomena by social actors. Public policy can also be seen in this light, and researching the ways in which any public policy is being interpreted by individuals in their institutional role requires an a priori assumption that this interaction exists. As a result the research involved an analysis of texts and documents, observation of key events and meetings and a series of 20 semi-structured interviews.

The research was of an exploratory nature, looking into an area that was previously under-researched in the sense that the Localism Act had only been passed in the year prior to the start of my research. There was therefore little in the way of literature in the specific research 'niche' I had selected on which to build. While this has assisted my

claim to making an original contribution to the research literature, it raised questions as to which would be the most appropriate research methods. A concern to unearth interpretations of localism also required a research method which was sufficiently flexible to enable respondents to speak freely when they wished and not be constrained by the limits of a prescribed questionnaire. Interviewees' experience of 'life and work under localism' was relatively recent. As one of the research aims was to understand how localism was being interpreted at the institutional, local and individual level in rural regeneration, this entailed the need to capture what individuals in their various capacities considered the most significant aspects of this relatively recent experience.

The purpose of grounded theory is to construct or generate theory from the data collected. My rationale for the selection of the grounded theory method was based on the need to explore the relatively new territory of policy practitioners' experience of the recently introduced Act. Initially, I considered the use of discourse analysis but after reflection discounted this method for a number of reasons. Firstly, respondents' experience of localism under the Localism Act was so recent and of such relatively short duration that I considered it too fragmentary to yield a discourse adequate for study. Secondly, the method of discourse analysis I found too complex for the scale at which the research was being conducted. Thirdly, it became increasingly difficult to identify the necessary contrasting discourses which would help to define a discourse of localism. However, although I had rejected discourse analysis as a research method, I considered that familiarity with the theory would assist me in the subsequent analysis of opinions and attitudes.

Discourse analysis first emerged in the late 1970s. Its development was inspired by the philosopher Michel Foucault, who broadened the definition of discourse to include a wide range of linguistically mediated practices such as speech, writing, images and gestures used in the production and interpretation of meaning (Howarth, 2005, 7). In his later works, Foucault focussed more on the power struggles that shape and re-shape particular discursive formations. This new 'discursive power' emphasised the productive, as opposed to the negative classical notion of power as dominance and repression (Foucault, 1995). Here power and discourse are seen as inseparable, the one co-creating the other. Essentially, as discourse theory has developed, it has acquired a value in its capacity to pose 'other kinds of research questions than those generated by institutionalist or rational choice perspectives' (Howarth, 2005, 22).

The post-structuralist character of discourse analysis has led to claims that there is an inner contradiction in attempting to create structures and frameworks within which to research and analyse elements which are themselves essentially contingent. There is a paradox that lies at the heart of much Foucauldian-inspired discourse analysis in the avoidance of prescriptive methodologies. These are considered as conferring the status of truth on a particular position when truth, from this perspective is always conditional (Gilbert, Cochrane and Greenwell, 2003, 792) Consequently, it is common to find that those engaged in discourse analysis, whether social or political scientists, tend to omit details of the methods by which they conducted their research. This 'methodological deficit', as Howarth calls it (Howarth, 2005, 316), has been addressed by a number of contributors (Hajer and Versteeg, 2005).

The methodology and approach of discourse analysis I considered too complex for the scale, range and timing of the research I planned to conduct. Discourses, as Fairclough observes, are different ways of representing the world and imply 'a degree of repetition, commonality in the sense that they are shared by groups of people, and stability over time' (Fairclough, 2003, 124). The relatively short timescale available for the research was not sufficient to provide the element of 'stability over time', nor was it possible to identify a sufficient scale of 'commonality' that could qualify the representations I had hoped to identify as discourses. A further difficulty was that a discourse needs to be defined by alternative and different discourses (Fairclough, 2003). In this case, a likely opposing discourse for localism would be that of the regionalism it had displaced. However, discourses of regionalism have faded over time since regional bodies were dismantled and therefore I did not consider that these could adequately serve the purpose of contesting the discourse of localism.

2.3.1 *Applying Grounded Theory*

Grounded theory was originally developed by two sociologists, Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss and published in their book 'The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research' in 1967. The background to the collaboration of these two authors is worth recounting as it reveals the significant underlying differences in research orientation between them. An account of this demonstrates how these differences have implications for any researcher who wishes to adopt grounded theory as a method; ultimately it is these differences that have influenced my selection of research method. Glaser and Strauss' work has become one of the most influential

approaches used in qualitative research (Silverman, 2011, 67). The underlying purpose in writing their work on grounded theory was to challenge the predominant 'armchair theorizing' of the time through the creation of a more practical way of generating theory (Dey, 2007, 172). When Glaser and Strauss published their work on grounded theory in the late 1960s, it challenged the dominant paradigm at the time that held that the only form of 'systematic social scientific inquiry' possible was that of quantitative studies (Charmaz, 2003, 249). The traditional and positivist approach of generating theory had been to draw and test assumptions from existing theory. Glaser and Strauss proposed an alternative way forward, that of generating theory in social research directly from the data collected, allowing the data to lead to emergent theories. Following the publication of their work in 1967, however, the divergence in approach between the two collaborators resulted in subsequent separate publications where the differences between the two authors became increasingly evident (Charmaz, 2003, 254). With their publication of their book on grounded theory, Glaser and Strauss succeeded in elevating qualitative research from its relatively subordinate position in theory development.

The research orientation of the two collaborators differed, however. Glaser brought a rigorous positivistic methodological training in quantitative research and analysis to the project of developing grounded theory while Strauss contributed his experience in field research and symbolic interactionism (Charmaz, 2003, 253). These differences triggered further developments in grounded theory methodology, but along different paths. Glaser maintained his positivist position and continued to emphasise the importance of generating theory from grounded theory methods. Strauss, in the meantime (together with a new collaborator, Juliet Corbin) although less positivist, still operated on objectivist assumptions in different publications (Charmaz 2003, 255) including their best known work: 'Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques' published in 1998. Further developments in grounded theory methodology by social researchers critiquing the positivist stand of both Glaser and Strauss have introduced additional conceptual approaches into it, such as social constructivism (Charmaz and Bryant, 2007).

While grounded theory has generated considerable controversy over the years (Bryman, 2012, 567), subsequent developments in the methodology made it suitable for this thesis. As Charmaz warns, 'Most grounded theorists write as if their data have an objective status' (Charmaz, 2003, 258). It is therefore crucial as a researcher to be clear

on research orientation in order to avoid a minefield of potential errors. In adopting a constructivist stance, it helps to be reminded by Charmaz that data are 'reconstructions of experience; they are not the original experience itself' (Charmaz, 2003, 258). A definition provided by Kathy Charmaz sees constructivism as:

> '..a social scientific perspective that addresses how realities are made. This perspective assumes that people, including researchers, construct the realities in which they participate. Constructivist inquiry starts with the experience and asks how members construct it. To the best of their ability, constructivists enter the phenomenon, gain multiple views of it, and locate it in its web of connections and constraints. Constructivists acknowledge that their interpretation of the studied phenomenon is itself a construction' (Charmaz, 2006, 187).

Constructivism is seen as a 'complex argument, not merely a know-nothing attitude' by Star, who maintains that 'people always interpret events from a situated and complexly principled point of view' (Star, 2007, 88). But claims that the grounded theory method actually generates theory are sometimes overstated and many of the underlying concepts of grounded theory continue to be contested (Charmaz, 2006, 177). In my approach I have followed the grounded theory method and attempted to allow the data to speak. I would be reluctant, however, to regard the outcome full-blown theory; rather, it has helped to generate theoretical insights, observations and findings.

Grounded theory has both positivist and interpretivist strands; it is possible to conduct grounded theory from within a positivist objectivist stance, but equally it is possible to work with grounded theory from within an interpretivist position. In social constructivist grounded theory, both data and analysis are created from the shared experience of the process of data collection in an interview. Any other researcher with a different background and experience might generate similar data from such interviews, but on the other hand, depending on the questions asked, might generate significantly different responses. Another researcher would almost certainly interpret the responses differently. But this is to distinguish the approach from positivism. My aim has not been to provide such an audit trail that the same or similar data could be generated, but in contrast, to gain an understanding of the ways in which localism is seen to be operating in the specific context of Northumberland.

In preparing the topics for the checklists in semi-structured interviews, I was able to draw on my own background and experience which was comparable to that of a number

of respondents I interviewed. From the outset of the interview, there was a partially shared language, understanding, experience and knowledge which produced the end product, the data. The nature of semi-structured interviews enables a more flexible approach in putting forward questions to respondents. I was then able to further explore different aspects of the research topics based on my own knowledge and experience. The grounded theory method emphasizes this as a necessary and valuable outcome, in terms of the nature the data acquired, but it also draws attention to the fact that this process needs to be acknowledged reflexively by the researcher (Mruck and Mey, 2007, 526). This distinguishes the social constructivist approach from an objectivist stance in grounded theory.

2.3.2 *The case study*

From a conceptual viewpoint, the research theme of localism, being broad and cross-cutting, needed to be 'bounded' or framed in some way. The selection of the county of Northumberland as the 'case' enabled a degree of 'boundary setting'. As Stake points out, 'the case is a "bounded system" (Stake, 2003, 135). For the purposes of this thesis, the county of Northumberland serves as the 'outer boundary' of the study, in terms of socio-economic, cultural, regional, rural and planning characteristics.

Five types of case studies have been identified, these being critical, extreme/unique, representative/typical, revelatory or longitudinal (Yin, 2009). In practice, as I found, a case study initially categorised as one type may include features of other types which makes it difficult to retain the original categorisation. Another issue that Bryman notes is that as the research process continues, especially when interpretive methods are used, the essential characteristics and substance of the case only emerge after lengthy and intensive scrutiny (Bryman, 2012, 71). This points up one of the challenges, but also the appeal of researching the social world – the constant evolution and the dynamics that are at work, frequently silently and unnoticed, until a new form emerges. Attempts to categorise case studies become more an iterative process in this way, but very much reflect the nature of the way it is being researched.

The sub-case studies, which have been purposively selected from within this bounded system, comprise specific locations within Northumberland where the research was conducted, being the northern town of Alnwick and the village of Tarset in Northumberland National Park. These are contrasted with a further study of the town of

Wooler in the far north of the county. This style of case study design Yin identifies as the embedded single-case design, where the case study itself comprises sub-units which are identified through sampling techniques (Yin, 2009, 52).

The possibility of adopting a case study approach as part of the research design emerged fairly early on in the research process. That is not to say that this took precedence over the research questions in leading the research, but that the selection of the case, being the county of Northumberland, was guided by its intrinsic interest. As Stake points out, however, the use of the case study "is not a methodological choice but a choice of what is to be studied" (Stake, 2003, 134). In this instance, the 'what' being research<u>e</u>d was a slippery concept, being the way in which localism was being interpreted.

The adoption of the case-study as the main unit of design has enabled a detailed study to be conducted of the specifics and complexity of the ways in which the new policy of localism in its early days has played out in the county of Northumberland. One of the research aims concerned how power relations between local and extra-local actors were being played out under localism and being interpreted in rural policy terms. The county of Northumberland, with its intra- and inter-linkages within and between county institutions and individuals in the adjacent district of Tyne and Wear, contributed to the 'fit' of the case study approach with the overall research aim. A personal consideration also played a role in the selection of the county of Northumberland, as I had worked as a researcher in the local authority offices in Morpeth, and previously in a planning consultancy office in Tyne and Wear. I was therefore familiar with the workings of the county council through both its previous history as a two-tier council as well as with its more recent single-tier unitary identity since 2009. A contingent consideration was the significance of the approach used to explore these local and extra-local relations and connections, using the neo-endogenous approach. This reinforced the decision to select the case-study as the main unit with supporting sub-case studies.

The case study approach has been subject to some critique (Yin, 2009). With a case study, it is not generally possible to evaluate the quality of the research or the findings through criteria such as external validity or generalizability; the nature of the case study itself precludes this. However, these critiques, as Bryman notes, have frequently been levied by researchers and writers influenced by the quantitative research approach (Bryman, 2012, 69). Most researchers would not attempt to claim that their case study

findings could be generalized and the research findings from this thesis are no exception.

One of the principles underlying the use of the case study as the unit of research design is the opportunity to explore in greater depth the specific characteristics of that case. Chief of the most important issues to consider when selecting the case study as the primary unit of research is how well the research generates theory from the findings (Bryman, 2012, 71). In the relationship between theory and research, the case study approach has been associated with the testing of theory as well as generating theory (Bryman, 2012, 71). In this thesis, it has been of prime importance to use an inductive approach in data analysis whereby the aim has been to generate theoretical insights and findings. This has been described as 'analytical generalisation', frequently used in case studies (Yin, 2009). The uniqueness of Northumberland does not preclude the findings from it as a case study being compared to other cases being researched elsewhere.

The description of the case study that follows is based on the following sources: Know Northumberland – First Release of 2011 Census Results, July 2012; Income, Salaries and Wages, Northumberland 2013; Northumberland Knowledge Research Report, May 2013, Policy and Research Team, Northumberland County Council; Research Report, Northumberland Local Economic Assessment Statistical Update, June 2012).

Population

The population of Northumberland was estimated as 316,000 at the last census conducted in 2011. Northumberland's population has increased by 8,600 in the last 10 years, rising from 307,400 in 2001, an increase of 3%. The proportion of the 2011 population aged 5-19, 30-44 and 50-54 has decreased since 2001. The population of Northumberland aged 65 and over was 20%, an increase from 18% in 2001 (placing it amongst the top 30% of local authorities in England with the highest percentage of people aged 65 and over). According to the latest interim 2011 Census-based population projections, this number is projected to increase to more than 25% of the population by 2021. Northumberland has a population density of 63 residents per square kilometre, lower than any other local authority in the North East region. Northumberland has the seventh lowest population density of all local authorities in England and tenth lowest population density in England and Wales.

Employment

Northumberland has a higher employment rate than the North East LEP (NELEP) and the region, but lower than the average for England. Most recently Northumberland had an employment rate of 69%, the NELEP 66% and for the NE region 65%. Substantial differences exist below county level. The Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) claimant count unemployment rate in February 2012 is higher than at any time during the last 6 years in Northumberland (4.4%), the NE region (5.6%) and England (4.1%). In February 2012 8,694 people in Northumberland were claiming Jobseeker's Allowance, 3,622 more people than at the same time five years ago which is an increase of 71.4%; while the NE region (86.8%) and England (96.6%) have seen even larger increases. Northumberland showed a 57% increase in JSA claimant numbers in August 2011, based on August 2006 figures (for England as a whole the increase was 64%, for the NE region and the NELEP this was 72%). The number of those aged 16-24 claiming DWP working age benefits in Northumberland was 26% higher in 2011 than 2006 (32% higher for England, 29% for the NE region and 30% for NELEP).

Income

In 2011, the North East region had the lowest Gross Disposable Household Income (GDHI) per head at £13,560. The UK average was £16,034 and the highest region was London at £20,509. Northumberland's median income levels range from £13,950 to £53,100. Cramlington North is estimated to have the highest median household income in the county. The Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) reveals that the North East area of England has some of the lowest median gross weekly earnings in the Country at £455 (£24k p.a.). The 2012 data indicates that a resident of Northumberland County will typically earn a median gross weekly salary of £465.20 (£24k p.a.), irrespective of the location of their employers. An employer in Northumberland will typically pay a median gross weekly salary of £439.10 (£23k p.a.). Overall Northumberland's residents' salaries have declined from a peak of £481.10 (£25k p.a.) in 2010 to £465.20 (£24k p.a.) in 2012 (a fall of 3.3%).

Employers in the former district of Castle Morpeth award the highest median gross weekly salary levels in the county, peaking at £493 in 2012. Alnwick employers currently award the lowest median salary level of £382. It is estimated that residents of Tynedale have the highest median gross weekly salaries in the county, currently at £574; they peaked in 2010 at £626.

The group with the highest incomes in Northumberland is 'Professional Occupations' which has a national median full-time weekly salary level of £694.3 (£36k pa) and accounts for just over 16% of residents' occupations. The highest earnings group was Managers, Directors and Senior Officials at £738 (£38k p.a.), accounting for almost 11% of resident's occupations. Sales and Customer Service Occupations were the lowest paid major group at £323 (£17,000 p.a.), which accounted for approximately 8% of resident's occupations.

Qualifications

In Northumberland, 70% of the population aged 16-64 were qualified to NVQ level 2 and above in 2010; this is a higher proportion than in the North East LEP area (66.1%) and England (67%). Northumberland also has a higher proportion of the population aged 16-64 qualified to NVQ level 4 or above at 29% compared to 26% in the NELEP area. This is lower than the England average however, at 31%. There is a slightly higher proportion of the population aged 16 to 64 with no qualifications in Northumberland (11.5%) than the England average (11%), but this is lower than NELEP (13%) and the NE region (13%). Also in 2010, 7% of 16-18 year olds were 'Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET); this is lower than the NE region average of 8% and a decrease of 0.3% from the previous year.

Accessibility

Department of Transport accessibility statistics provide a local level measure of the availability of transport to key services. Northumberland consistently has the longest travel times over the four year period (2007-2010) with an average of 15 minutes by public transport/walking. Northumberland also has the lowest overall proportion of users able to access employment centres by public transport/walking compared with the rest of the NE region and England as a whole. In 2010, 77% of Northumberland's working age population had access compared with 81% for the NE region and 82% for England. Large disparities exist when access is considered at a more local level, from 28% in an area such as Wooler to 90% in Seaton Valley (Source: NCC, 2012-2013)

2.4 Methodological Procedures

A basic assumption in the grounded theory method is that the research is not led by a hypothesis, but the hypothesis is induced from a close analysis of the data (Silverman, 2011, 67). Three main principles apply to the analysis of data in grounded theory:

coding, memos, theoretical saturation and constant comparison (Bryman, 2012, 568). The overall process is illustrated in Figure 2.1.

Coding is regarded as core to the process of grounded theory. The process of coding begins soon after the collection of the first round of data collection. Codes, as Charmaz describes, are 'devices' with which to label and organize data (Charmaz, 1983, 186) but are not to be identified with the coding generally used for quantitative data, which is more concerned with managing data (Bryman, 2012, 568).

Coding in grounded theory starts the process of generating theory and it is generally advised to begin the coding process as soon as the data is collected. I started coding the data soon after I had collected it. First I transcribed the interviews I had conducted in groups. This is a time-consuming process and while it is possible to have this done by a professional transcriber, I preferred to do this myself as a way of keeping close to the data and listening for 'cues', nuances and underlying meanings in the responses as I proceeded. I then began with line-by-line coding, as recommended in the grounded theory method (Charmaz, 2006, 45).

This took longer to master than expected, as the process of coding is to draw out analytic concepts from the text. Initially in the coding process it is tempting to make notes of interesting points in the interview but these have to be converted to concepts at some point. Short summaries or notes of what has been said are not analytic concepts. After completing this process for the first group of interviews, I then compared the codes between the individual interviews and carried out a further process of focused coding, which resulted in a synthesis of the initial codes. Grounded theory guidelines then refer to the next activity, of producing 'memos'. Memos can take any form; the main purpose of memos is to explore the codes and to explore the processes that have taken place during the interviews (Charmaz, 2006, 80). Memos also serve as the bridge between the coding process and drafting the research analysis, as well as providing the basis for further questions, to frame the next series of interviews.

With regard to the sample of respondents to interview, different forms of sampling were considered. According to Rudestan and Newton, since the grounded theory is an inductive method and theory emerges as data is collected and analysed, "it may be neither possible nor advisable to establish the precise sample size beforehand"

(Rudestan and Newton, 2007, 107). It was this non-prescriptive, evolving method of analysis that seemed most appropriate and fitting for the research I was conducting.
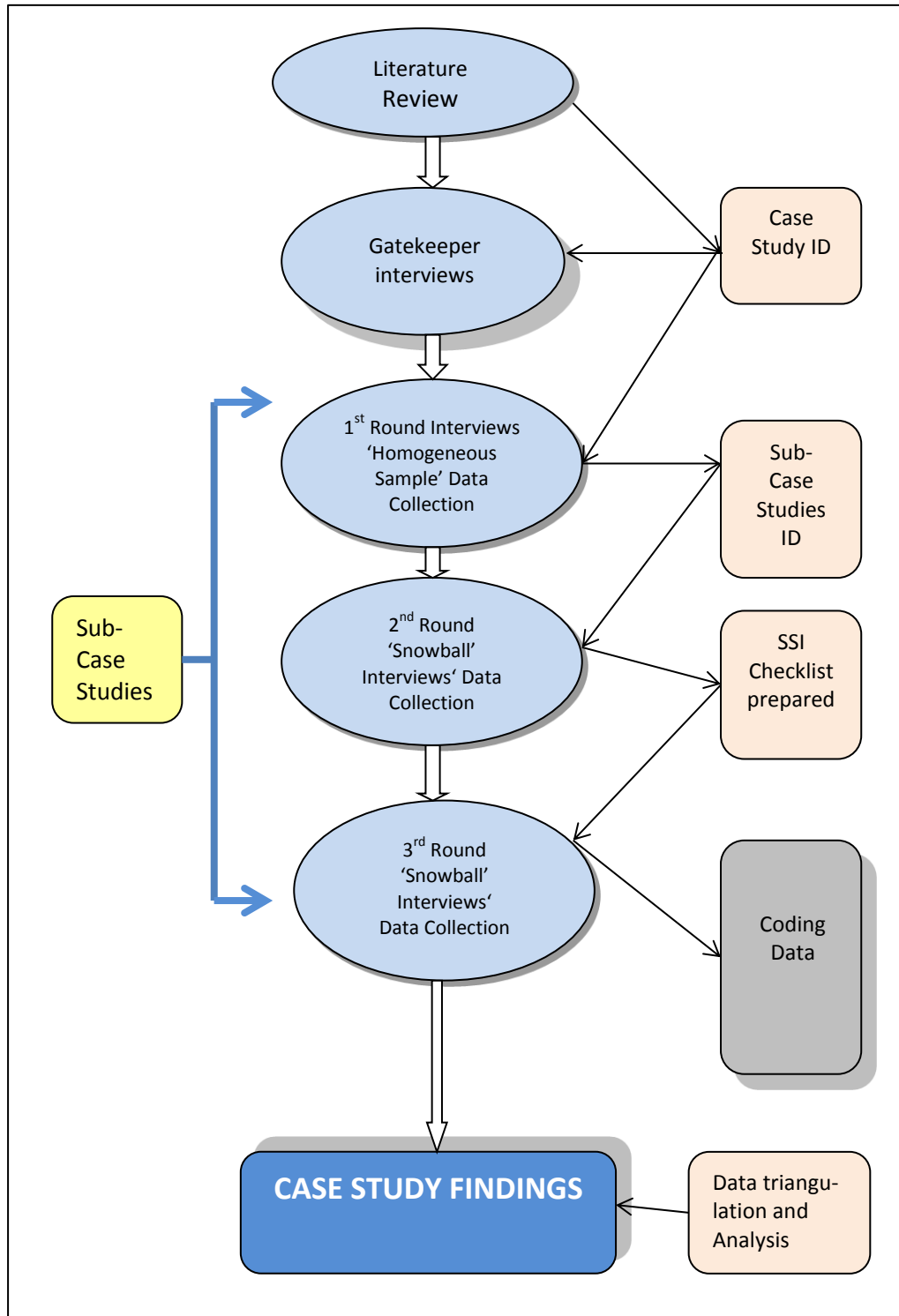
Figure 2.1: Research Methodology showing Grounded Theory process
(Source: Adapted from Charmaz, 2006, 11)

In order to draw up the initial checklist for the semi-structured in-depth interviews, I used my research questions, aims and objectives as the framework. I had attended a number of seminars and conferences on localism hosted by professional associations

such as the Regional Studies Association and the Royal Town Planning Institute in London and Manchester. Attendance at these had assisted the process of scoping my research questions and helped to focus the aims and objectives of my research. In order to refine the initial draft checklist for semi-structured interviews, my supervisors advised me to carry out a pilot interview. This was arranged with a policy practitioner who had substantial experience in rural policy-making, had recently achieved a PhD on the topic of regional discourses and, moreover, was known to me. I had prepared a draft checklist of themes and topics which I then used as a guide for the pilot interview. This provided useful feedback and resulted in the re-framing and re-formulation of certain aspects of the checklist to make it clearer, more focussed and relevant. Following the pilot interview, I then selected a sample size of four respondents using the technique that Glaser and Strauss term 'homogeneous sampling' where the respondents are likely to share a similar experience of the same event being researched (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). In this case, I selected planners and academics working in Northumberland and the North East who had some initial experience of the new localism policy.

Having selected my initial sample of interviewees, the next step was to gain access. From my previous experience, I was aware that this could be problematic, for various reasons. Policy practitioners and academics lead busy lives so I anticipated considerable delays in response to my initial contact. I used email to contact potential respondents, as this seemed less intrusive than the telephone and speedier than sending letters. I provided extensive background on myself and my research and provided a list of the topics and themes in which I was interested to gain more information. This was done to build up a connection with the respondents, establish common ground and experience and to build up the necessary trust in which to frame the interview process. It was also done to provide clarity on the nature of the topics I planned to pursue in the interview and to provide respondents with the opportunity to refuse to participate if any of the topics were not acceptable. I received positive responses in almost all cases. A significant consideration in gaining access was the contact provided by my supervisors to this particular category of respondents, arising from their extensive networks in the academic and rural policy world.

The semi-structured interview is a well-known and familiar research tool that has been in use for many years in the social sciences and one that I have used extensively over

the years. It is a flexible technique, in that topics and themes form a checklist for the researcher, but formal questions are kept to a minimum, if used at all. Semi-structured interviewing, however, is not necessarily for the faint-hearted. It can sometimes feel like sky-diving without a parachute. The only safety-net is the door, when all else fails. In my experience, to be successful, a researcher conducting a semi-structured interview needs to find an 'inner momentum' or pace for the interview at which researcher and interviewee can work through the choreography of interaction comfortably together. This in turn helps to free up any reservations and reluctance on the part of the interviewee. The ultimate aim is to generate the best quality of data possible from the interview and this means being 'active' in the role of interviewer and alert to the interviewee's particular interests, motivation, engagement and focus on the themes and topics as they arise. In the role of interviewer, therefore, I sought to achieve and maintain a certain 'pace', especially at the start of each interview, to help establish a more fluent exchange and avoid as much as possible artificial breaks in the discussion that would otherwise occur while I was looking for the next topic or question in the checklist. I found it worth memorising the checklist as though it were a script, to reduce the inevitable breaks and interludes from reverting to the script. In some subsequent interviews, as I worked my way into the research protocol I had designed, interviews became more like conversations; I became less dependent on the script and more engaged with the interviewee's responses. But there were also moments needed for respondents to reflect on what they wanted to say; if it seemed there was a need to pause to allow time for reflection, I was able to use my checklist as a prop to enable interviewees to gather their thoughts before continuing. I then interviewed (using the 'snowballing' technique) further groups of respondents who I considered would add their own specific experiences and enable a deeper understanding and interpretation of localism in Northumberland. As Rudestan and Newton point out, "(t)he trick is to choose participants who can contribute to an evolving theory, participants whose main credential is experiential relevance" (Rydestan and Newton, 2007, 107). In this instance, I discovered that the process of adding respondents to the sample was itself based on hunches, guess-work and using 'snow-balling' techniques and therefore more an art than a science.

At the start of each interview, I asked permission to tape-record the interview, which was given in each case. I had expected some reluctance on the part of interviewees to agree, but found that this was not the case. I confirmed to each interviewee that the

contents of the recordings would remain confidential and all interviewees appeared to be satisfied with this and comfortable with the idea of the discussion being recorded. On reflection, there could have been a difference in the nature and quality of information that interviewees were willing to disclose had there not been a tape-recorder running, but it was not possible to run a control for this. In addition to the use of the tape-recorder, I also took notes during the interviews. I found that note-taking in the situation of a 'one-on-one' interview was a fairly limited exercise, constrained by the other tasks of managing the interview process. Extensive note-taking could not be done in the same way as though at a conference or large meeting; I did not want to become too preoccupied with taking notes at the expense of maintaining the momentum of the interview, following up on interesting leads opened up by the interviewee, maintaining eye-contact and generally fostering as much of a two-way process of engagement as possible.

The sampling was carried out as a means of achieving theoretical saturation. This process required that more respondents continually be added to the sample in order to pursue some of the early insights that had emerged. I then changed the pattern of adding to the sample size by using more selective criteria in identifying the next group of respondents, a process referred to as 'discriminate sampling' (Rudestan and Newton, 2007, 107). Concepts were explored and related to other concepts until saturation point was reached. Further additions to the sample size were made in an iterative process which only ended when theoretical saturation had been achieved and I considered that no new relevant data could be identified. Josselson and Lieblich have raised an issue in this regard, by noting that real saturation can never in fact be achieved, as every additional respondent would have something new and distinctive to bring to the research (Josselson and Lieblich, 2003). In their opinion, it is more often the case that it is the researcher who becomes saturated; they advise that while it is necessary to collect sufficient data to adequately investigate the phenomenon under study, there is a risk of collecting too much data (Josselson and Lieblich, 2003). Rudestan and Newton observe that where interview transcripts are long and detailed, the fewer the number of respondents needed; the range of respondents can then be as few as five or as many as 30. As the majority of the interviews I conducted were fairly lengthy, lasting from one to two hours, I had rich detailed accounts and reached a total sample size of 21.

Triangulation is a means by which a higher level of confidence can be generated in the reliability and validity of research findings and at one time was associated mainly with quantitative research (Bryman, 2012, 392). It has also been part of the repertoire of participatory and action research approaches for many years, where a number of different participatory techniques are employed to verify or enhance the findings of qualitative research (International Institute for Environment and Development, 1995) and is frequently part of a mixed methods approach. In the research process for this thesis, I used a combination of three different (but all qualitative data) sources to cross-check the reliability and validity of the data I was collecting through interviews. This was done by comparing some of the data in the interviews with that obtained in conferences/seminars and also comparing and cross-checking the data from the rounds of interviews.

2.5 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations, as Bryman points out, have become increasingly central to social research over the years (Bryman, 2012, 131) but Silverman notes that it is only since the 1970s that researchers 'have seriously faced up to the ethical dimensions of their research' (Silverman, 2011, 90). The main ethical principles identified by Diener and Crandall in the late 1970s still appear to hold, even while it is difficult to establish a general agreement among researchers over what precisely constitute ethical principles (Bryman, 2012, 130). Throughout the research process of this thesis there were opportunities to attend various university and departmental seminars and workshops on ethics which alerted me to the numerous (and frequently unpredictable) ways in which ethical considerations are involved in the processes of social research. In addition, professional associations such as the British Sociological Association (BSA), the Sociological Research Association (SRA) and the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) provide codes of ethics for social researchers as guides to avoiding ethical transgressions. The main ethical principles to emerge from these different sources centre on four issues. These relate to whether: a) any harm to respondents is involved; b) there is lack of informed consent; c) an invasion of privacy takes place and d) whether deception is involved (Bryman, 2012, 135).

All four of these issues required me to reflect on the steps that needed to be taken in planning the research to avoid contravening ethical principles. The definition of 'harm' to respondents, whether real or potential, could be widely interpreted, but for the

purposes of my research, the critical concern was to maintain the anonymity of those I was interviewing and preserve confidentiality which I did through describing, at the start of each interview, the steps I would take to maintain confidentiality. I interpreted confidentiality to mean not only the care needed during the writing up process to 'anonymise' individual contributions, but also to avoid discussing topics raised during interviews with others that could cause a breach of that confidentiality.

Lack of informed consent has frequently been associated with covert observation. Although covert observation did not form a part of my research plan, lack of informed consent can also apply where respondents do not received sufficient information on the nature of the research to be able to give informed consent to the research interviews (Silverman, 2011, 94). I endeavoured to avoid this difficulty by providing potential respondents with a detailed description of my research interests, together with a list of all the topics I anticipated would be covered during the interview, as well as a profile of my own research background. A related ethical concern is invasion of privacy. The majority of those I interviewed were asked their personal opinions and judgements on the theme of localism and its effects, but as with informed consent, I endeavoured to minimise or eliminate altogether any personal details provided from the interview transcripts.

Deception is acknowledged as being widespread in the conduct of social research, albeit in varying degrees (Bryman, 2012, 143). Deception may also be inadvertent and issues such as transparency in the research process are closely aligned with notions of deception. Transparency, or a lack of it, seems to be a recurring element in qualitative research which can be partially addressed by being as clear as possible about the process of the research itself. To anticipate and minimise the potential problem that respondents might consider they had not been presented with a full description of the research intentions, I assured respondents that they would receive a copy of the relevant section of the thesis that concerned them for their information and for any feedback.

There are a myriad risks associated with social research. These can relate to the research procedures and logistics, misunderstandings arising with respondents during the interview itself, as well as practical issues, as research involves meeting others in locations usually of their choice and at their convenience. Meeting individuals outside their place of work, for example in a café or restaurant, occurred on various occasions.

Although this was arranged primarily for the convenience of the respondent concerned, I realised that this kind of setting presents potential risks to the respondent in terms of loss of confidentiality. The main risk arises from the informality of the setting and that, being away from the office or place of work, the respondent could inadvertently provide information that would not otherwise have been provided, due to the more informal surroundings and atmosphere. Other practical risks, but which did not arise in this study, are associated with meeting in the evening, at remote locations and in areas outside the satellite reach for mobile phones.

My experience in requesting interviews in previous research projects had led me to expect a range of responses from potential interviewees, from degrees of reluctance, to continual postponements of interview dates to outright refusal. In previous research surveys in which I had been involved, telephone interviews had been a very common method through which to collect information, due to the costs and resources involved in arranging face-to-face interviews with respondents who lived some distance away. Even these 'arms-length' interviews often took many days to set up, before agreement was reached on a suitable and convenient time and date. I was therefore prepared for a lengthy process of obtaining agreement from a sufficient number of respondents who would agree to take time out of their working day to share their experiences with a research student. I was quite unprepared for the willingness I encountered in the majority of cases, for people to agree to be interviewed. Subsequent discussions with my supervisors and other academic staff have shed light on some of the perceptions held on academic research (reliable, trustworthy, etc.) which contrasted somewhat with my experience in conducting research from a commercial or other public sector base. Some interviewees may have experienced identification with the challenges facing research students and this may have contributed in some cases to a willingness to agree. In other cases it may have been the links that had already been established by my supervisors in the communities in which I was interviewing that made for almost immediate access. In other cases the topic itself, of localism, of immediate concern to some individuals, may have been the 'door opener'.

When interviewing vulnerable respondents, or those who are experiencing economic difficulties, it is often recommended that the researcher offer some kind of compensation (financial or in-kind) for the time and effort they have contributed. I have done this in previous research contexts. When interviewing busy officials in their

workplace, however, the notion of offering incentives raises ethical dilemmas. Besides the risk of causing offence it can also be construed as condescension or even as a bribe to obtain inaccessible and confidential documents. Respondents who willingly give up their time to take part in an interview are highly valued by any researcher but it can be difficult to find ways to compensate for this.

2.6 Reflections on the Research Process

2.6.1 *Research reflexivity*

There has been a growing concern with reflexivity in conducting social research since the 1970s. Bryman notes the 'confessional' style of reflexivity emerging during the mid-1960s that exemplified this trend (Bryman, 2012, 394) where the 'nuts and bolts of research' were detailed in contrast to the detached and 'scientific' stand of researchers. As Denzin and Lincoln observe, by the end of the 1970s, new paradigms were entering the social sciences in the form of naturalism, post-positivism and constructionism through the works of contributors such as Guba, Lincoln and Stake, among others (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003, 25). Reinforcing this move towards reflexivity in the late 1980s was also part of the post-modern approach which emphasised the role of the researcher in the research process as co-producing knowledge (Bryman, 2012, 394). Earlier, the anthropologist Clifford Geertz had claimed that 'the old functionalist, positivist, behavioural, totalizing approaches to the human disciplines were giving way to a more pluralistic, interpretive, open-ended perspective' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003, 24). The researcher's voice was gradually finding its way into wider research publications and no longer limited to ethnographic accounts of fieldwork conducted in other cultural settings. Other sectors have since taken up the principle of reflexivity, such as literary, legal and cultural studies (Lynch, 2000, 33) but also the health and medical sectors have increasingly turned to reflexive accounts of the processes that nurses, for example, undertake.

In addition to the above interpretations attached to reflexive practice, reflexivity in social research has taken on a wide range of interpretations and meanings, as Lynch has observed (Lynch, 2000, 27). His inventory of the diversity of meanings and uses of the concept of reflexivity extends to six main categories of the different meanings attached to reflexivity, from mechanistic, substantive, methodological, meta-theoretical and interpretive versions to ethnomethodological ones (Lynch, 2000, 27). Reflexivity in methodology, however, dominates the field (Lynch, 2000, 34) and it is this that is of

concern here. The postmodernist stance noted above critiqued the type of research that 'extracted' information from respondents before communicating it to a different audience (Bryman, 2012, 394). The postmodern approach has also become increasingly influential in qualitative social research where it is now incumbent upon researchers to be "reflective about the implications of their methods, values, biases, and decisions for the knowledge of the social world they generate" (Bryman, 2012, 393). But in addition to accounting for the wide range of reflexive stances that the researcher can adopt, Lynch has also questioned the purpose of reflexivity and reflexive analysis, in that it "is often said to reveal forgotten choices, expose hidden alternatives, lay bare epistemological limits and empower voices which had been subjugated by objective discourse" (Lynch 2000, 36). He points out that reflexive analysis has been "invested with critical potency and emancipatory potential" but goes on to argue that such powers often rest on superficial or inconsistent methods. Ultimately what Lynch considers more important than the claims made for reflexivity are the capacities and approach of those engaged in it (Lynch, 2000, 36).

In another sense, reflexivity has become a criterion by which qualitative research can be evaluated. The traditional evaluation yardsticks of reliability, validity and generalizability have been contested by qualitative researchers as originating from a quantitative concern with measurement and that other criteria for evaluation should be considered (Bryman, 2012, 393). Among the criteria that have been proposed more recently are those of sensitivity to context, commitment and rigour and transparency and coherence (Yardley, 2000). The criteria of transparency and coherence require that research methods should be clearly specified, there should be a clearly articulated argument and that the researcher should adopt a reflexive stance (Yardley, 2012, 393). The knowledge generated in this way by social research "reflects a researcher's location in time and space" (Yardley, 2012, 393). It is this sense of reflexivity that is used here. In this chapter, as with the other thesis chapters, moments of reflection have been recorded throughout the process of writing up the research process and it is in this way that reflexivity has been incorporated into my research. Reflexive practice has been addressed more specifically in section 2.3 on the methodology used and in Section 2.5 on ethical considerations.

2.6.2 *Limitations of the study*

One of the limitations of the research was the relatively short time that had elapsed since the publication of the Localism Act. This research, conducted in a time of policy turbulence, faced specific challenges and limitations. The Localism Act had only become law in April 2011 and the interview schedule I had planned for the summer of 2012 meant that respondents had had a relatively short time in which to experience the effects of the new policy and legislation. This has meant that most interviewees, regardless of the sector in which they were employed, did not have extensive experience on which to draw during interviews. In some cases, it was a case of 'wait and see' or speculation on what might still happen under localism. The opportunity to conduct a longitudinal study could have brought out some further comparisons of experiences between the early and later years of localism.

The number of case studies researched for this thesis was limited to three. A selection of two neighbourhood plans was made from the five launched under the government-sponsored Front Runner programme in Northumberland. While initially it was planned to research four or five neighbourhood plans, the reduction to two was done to allow sufficient time and resources to address these in sufficient depth and avoid spreading resources and time too thinly. The status and rate of progress of the different neighbourhood plans was also a consideration in limiting the total number. Although this served to limit the range of data that could be collected, it enabled a more in-depth study to be made of each of the neighbourhood plans to contrast with the third case study.

A further limitation was the pace at which neighbourhood plans progressed, which was considerably slower than had originally been scheduled. The delays to the two neighbourhood plans amounted to an extra year which meant that the research could not be taken as far as originally intended i.e. to end the research at the point where both neighbourhood plans were adopted into the Local Plan. The decision taken in one case to align with the Local Plan, which itself was delayed, introduced yet a further postponement of neighbourhood plan completion.

The opportunity to become a participant-observer in any of the sectors being researched would have assisted in generating a more in-depth understanding of the evolving issues but time and availability did not permit this.

2.7 Conclusions

The main intention of this chapter was to provide an overview of the methodology adopted to explore the aims and objectives. It has also aimed to present a coherent account of the ontology and epistemology underlying the theoretical framework and the design of the research. Accounting for the research process in this way has meant addressing the wide range of debates and issues that have emerged since the 1970s especially concerning the different ways in which the social world can be researched. The social sciences have seen an explosion of paradigms and theories with which to explore the social world. Any social researcher attempting to understand and theorise the social world needs to engage with these paradigms.

In providing an account of the methodology for this research, therefore, I have sought to present in as transparent a way as possible the means by which this research was accomplished, and in so doing, meet the required criteria of rigour, reliability and validity. Transparency has also figured in the increasingly important indicators of reflexivity and ethics in social research. In offering accounts of reflexive practice and conduct in the research process, I have therefore also aimed to both reflect on and interpret my own role in the production of the research outcomes.

Chapter 3. The Theoretical Context

3.1 Introduction

In order to provide the background and context to the research conducted for this thesis, this chapter traces the origin and development of the major policy shift introduced by the Conservative-led Coalition government when it came to power in 2010. Localism as a policy discourse is dynamic and constantly evolving, particularly in the context of the institutional flux characterising the Coalition government's policy shift from regionalism to localism. This chapter looks at the enduring appeal of 'localism', its long history and the ways in which it has been adopted by different shades of the political spectrum. 'Localism' as a discourse of government has been a recurring theme in UK politics, having been adopted by successive political administrations of Conservative, Labour and Coalition governments over the past twenty five years (MacKinnon et al, 2010, 3).

The concepts of localism and regionalism have often been intertwined as a result of an almost nostalgic referral to 'how things used to be', at least in governance terms in England. This tends to impose an unnecessarily narrow frame of reference on any current study of localism in England, but by looking to mainland Europe, a broader perspective can be identified. The European governance context shows the distinctly different path being followed in countries such as France, Germany, Italy and Spain (Hildreth, 2012, 30; Halkier, 2012, 24).

Section 3.2 of this chapter reviews the debates on the different forms that localism has taken. Also considered is a theoretical framework proposed by Paul Hildreth which is used to analyse the different variants of localism finding expression in the political administrations of the past two decades in English politics (Hildreth, 2011, 703). The models also assist in analysing the relations between central and local government. A third model, that of representative localism, regarded by some commentators as being closest to 'true' localism (Cox, 2010), has been adopted by a number of West European countries but it is questioned whether this model could ever be adopted in the English political context.

Section 3.3 traces an alternative political narrative running parallel and frequently interwoven with it. Neoliberalism has come to be regarded as an increasingly pervasive

force and is also seen as a theme common to parties of all political persuasions in England (Bentley and Pugalis, 2013; Featherstone, et al, 2012; Mackinnon, et al, 2010; Brenner et al, 2010). As with the concept of localism, much debate has revolved around the nature, longevity, duration and resilience of neoliberalism. Fuelling this debate, some academic commentators have also come to identify localism as a 'recurring thread within UK neoliberalism, rather than as a wholly new agenda' (Featherstone et al, 2012, 178). The insights provided by these debates are drawn on in later chapters of this thesis.

The Coalition government's emphasis on collaborative planning is explored in the next section. In Section 3.4 the concepts underpinning collaborative planning and related principles of communicative governance are considered for the insights these have offered to the processes of decentralisation set in motion by New Labour. This section considers the role of collaborative planning, its origins in communicative planning theory and its philosophical roots. This section then goes on to consider collaborative planning and network theory, discussing issues of power and the implications for community empowerment particularly in rural areas. To conclude this chapter a review of rural development approaches emerging in the post-war years is presented in Section 3.5.

The following section begins with a review of the historical origins and associated understandings of localism in order to provide context and background to current interpretations and academic debates on localism.

3.2 Theoretical Frameworks for Localism

3.2.1 *Theoretical models of localism*

A set of theoretical models of localism have been devised by Paul Hildreth. As illustrated in Table 3.1 below, Hildreth has created three models of localism, 'conditional', 'community' and 'representative' localism (Hildreth, 2011, 703), but which as he points out, 'are not meant to be exclusive' (Hildreth, 2011, 703).

- Conditional localism is characterized in Hildreth's model as where "the centre recognizes the value in decentralizing to local institutions but makes it conditional upon them meeting the centre's policy priorities and service standards" (Hildreth, 2011, 706).

- In community localism, "the focus is on devolving responsibility from the centre to local communities" where communities are directly involved (Hildreth, 2011, 709).

- In representative localism, (also referred to as the Western European model), "local authorities are placed at the heart of local governance" with a role of mediating and facilitating the participation of citizens in conducting public affairs' (Hildreth, 2011, 708)

Each of Hildreth's models serve as a useful analytical tool with which to study central-local relations in English politics. To support each of these models, Hildreth has identified a set of 'soft' governance indicators to elucidate the nature of the relationships between the local, the centre and communities (Hildreth, 2011, 704-5).

Hildreth's models have been adapted to illustrate the form of localism that was also adopted by the Conservative administration immediately preceding New Labour in the years 1979-1997. In order to capture the style of localism pursued by the post-Thatcher Conservative administration, a further variant of localism, the 'Thatcherite/Competitive' model, has been incorporated into Hildreth's original theoretical framework. This variant of localism also became part of the new policy direction adopted by the Conservatives, of cutting back public spending and the welfare state (Duncan and Goodwin, 1988, 106). The first White Paper published by the incoming Conservative Government in 1979 on its public expenditure programme opened with the statement that: "Public expenditure is at the heart of Britain's present economic difficulties" (HM Treasury, 1979, 1; Hills, 1998, 1). The 'competitive' model is introduced here as a basis on which to draw comparisons between the policy approaches of Thatcher's Conservative Government and the current Coalition government. The term 'competitive localism' was used by Stewart in describing the increased powers of the Regional Office as a process of 'decentralisation of administration as opposed to the devolution of power and influence' (Stewart, 1994, 143). This variant of the model has been labelled 'competitive localism' therefore, in acknowledgement of one of the more prevalent discourses of the time concerning an emerging entrepreneurial culture (Davies, 2009, 411). This shift embraced a partnership approach between central and local government and business, whereby local authorities were encouraged to form partnerships to bid for funding (Davies, 411, in Flinders et al, 2009; Bailey, 1995, 46). This 'localist turn' demonstrates the way in which localism, in one form or another, has

been a consistent feature of government administrations over the past two decades, although its interpretation by different political administrations has varied.

The table below also illustrates other forms of emergent localisms accompanied by associated debates such as 'austerity localism', 'progressive localism' and 'neoliberal localism' (Featherstone et al, 2012, 177).

Type of localism	Examples	Characteristics
Thatcherite/Competitive (Author)	Conservatives (1979-1997) New Labour	A proto-type for the Coalition Government's Community model; top-down in execution, introduction of market logic on local services through compulsory competitive tendering; business-led localism with local government by-passed or activities curtailed through creation of UDCs, TECs, etc.; devolved responsibility for service delivery to the voluntary sector.
Conditional (Hildreth)	New Labour (1997-2010) Coalition	A conditional commitment by the centre to decentralise but dependent on local government support for political priorities set by the centre.
Community (Hildreth)	Coalition Government (2010-) Conservative Government (1990-97)	Devolving responsibility from centre to local communities; communities directly involved; centre retains commissioning role for public service bids
Representative (Hildreth)	W. European nations e.g. France, Germany, Italy, Spain	Devolution by centre to independent, local democratically elected local government according to European Charter of Local Self-Government; includes subsidiarity principle
Austerity (Featherstone/Mackinnon)	Coalition Government	Decentralisation of power to 'default' emergent groups/ individuals in communities; voluntarism is key element; the centre's priorities define localism in practice
Progressive (Featherstone, MacKinnon)		'Bottom-up' localism characterised by environment movements
Neoliberal (Peck and Tickell;)	Conservative Government New Labour Government Coalition Government	'Small' government allied with focus on economic growth and privatism; rhetorical focus on local responsibility with central oversight.

Table3.1: Models of Localism (adapted from Hildreth, 2011, 704)

Although Hildreth presents his conditional, community and representative models of localism to demonstrate the characteristics which correspond more or less to each political administration, he concedes that in practice a strict correspondence does not always hold, as certain features of each model have been taken up at different times by each political administration (Hildreth, 2011, 703).

3.2.2 *Phases of localism*

A review of the localism policies adopted by each of the political parties during their time in power over the past twenty-five years is provided below. A brief introduction to the model is followed by an analysis of the ways in which localism as a policy has been taken up. The various phases of localism are then viewed from a theoretical perspective using the analytical governance indicators of the four models in the table above. In addition, the emergence of neoliberalism in the 1970s as a global force influencing first the Conservative Government under Mrs Thatcher and John Major and subsequently the New Labour and Coalition governments is also covered (Walker, 2009, 668).

Conservative Government (1979-1997) and the 'Thatcherite/Competitive localism' model

In the Thatcherite/competitive model of localism, the centre retains control over local government but 'within a highly competitive and managerialist framework' (Davies, 2009, 411). Central-local governance relations remain hierarchical even while the rhetoric of 'partnership' between the centre, the local and business is perpetuated (Davies, 2009, 411). The 'competitive' model of localism can be seen as mainly characterising the policy shift adopted by the Conservative Government in its 'localist turn' following Margaret Thatcher's overthrow in 1990 and replacement by John Major.
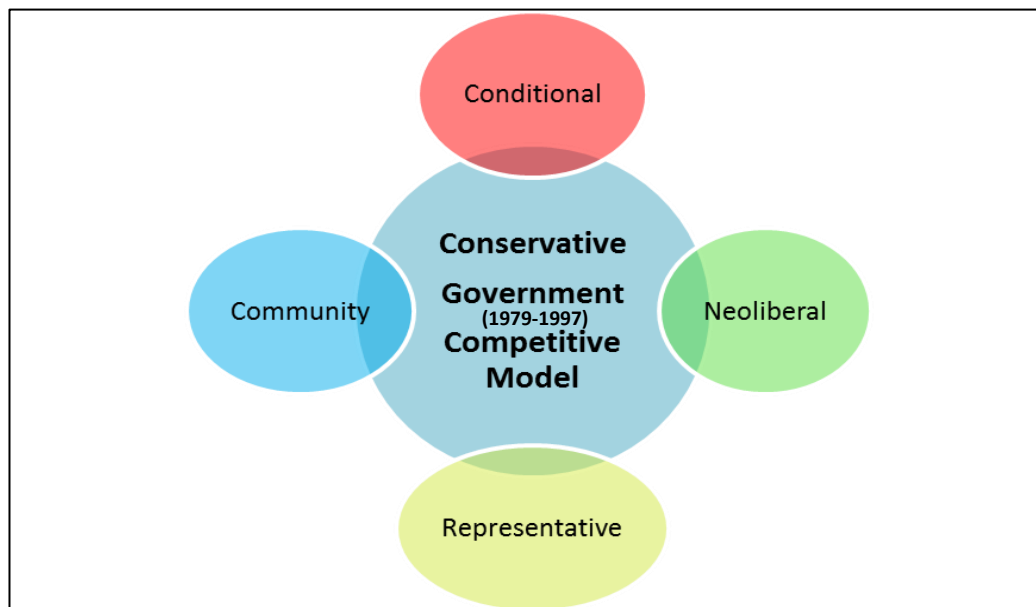
Figure 3.1: Example of the Competitive Model of the Conservative Governments

The particular variant of localism introduced by the Conservative government of the 1980s and 1990s, it has been argued, constituted an antidote to the 'dependency culture' induced by the welfare state (MacKinnon et al, 2010, 6). Behind this was the determination of the Conservative government to limit the range of activities of elected local government, by-passing them by creating special-purpose corporations and trusts (MacKinnon et al, 2010, 6; Jessop et al, 1988; Goodwin, 1992). This was most clearly exemplified by the Conservative Government's policy response to the problems of inner cities (Bailey et al, 1995, 14). Whereas the previous Labour Government had seen local authorities as 'the natural agencies to tackle inner area problems' as set out in the Labour Government's White Paper, Policy for the Inner Cities (DoE, 1977), an alternative model, that of the Urban Development Corporation (UDC) had been introduced by 1980 by Michael Heseltine, Secretary of State for the Environment (Bailey et al, 1995, 14). UDCs were single-purpose, non-elected agencies with sole powers to 'execute policies leading to market-led, property-based regeneration' (Bailey, 1995, 15) The introduction of UDCs, as Bailey indicates, epitomised the Conservative Government's policy approach throughout its period in office, characterised by the notion of the 'enterprise culture' and privatisation (Deakin and Edwards, 1993; Thornley, 1993). Other non-elected agencies soon followed the introduction of the UDCs, which acquired the same executive powers, these being Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) and Local Enterprise Companies (LECs), Inner City Task Forces and Housing Action Trusts (Bailey et al, 1995, 15)

Inner-city problems were no longer the domain of central-local government but became the remit of the new agencies. As Parkinson noted, the new model adopted by the Conservative Government was underpinned by the assumption that the UDCs would be 'free from the restraints of local democracy' (Parkinson, 1988, 110). Similarly, commentators observed the way in which UDCs were 'becoming increasingly embedded in complex local policy networks' and taking on a role that more or less supplanted that of local authorities (Imrie and Thomas, 1999, 15). There were also problems of accountability of the UDCs.

Voluntary and private agencies were brought in to take over the service delivery of social sector areas such as housing as a means of diluting state responsibility. This was part of a process of reinventing government by introducing 'business practices and norms into the public sector' (Bailey et al, 2010, 6). The rhetoric of localism was

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invoked at this time by the Conservative government to encourage the creation of local business-led agencies which co-opted business leaders onto their boards (Bailey et al, 1995, 53). Local and national entrepreneurs were nominated to the boards of UDCs and TECs.

To deflect criticisms that the Conservative policy was too dependent on 'amoral market individualism' emphasis was placed on the need for social responsibility and economic self-reliance at the local level. Private sector agencies, such as enterprise agencies, business support groups and Business in the Community were encouraged to become more involved in inner cities for both reasons of self-interest as well as social responsibility (CBI, 1988); this became part of a wider discourse of active citizenship and community which was designed as an antidote to a growing dependency culture (Kearns, 1995, 155-175).

As noted by Bailey, 'the rapid transformation of urban policy from a broadly public interventionist strategy in the early 1970s, to privatisation in the 1980s and 1990s brought a dramatic curtailment of local authority autonomy in their ability to influence the local economy' (Bailey et al, 1995, 14). The competition framework of the 1980s Thatcher Government introduced quangos such as the Urban Development Corporations (UDCs), Technical Education Councils (TECs) and Local Enterprise Companies (LECs) as non-elected bodies which were accountable only to the Secretary of State for Environment and Employment respectively, consequently bypassing the local authorities and ignoring local democratic accountability. There were no mechanisms for direct local accountability (Bailey et al, 1995, 76). The new initiatives of the Thatcher Government to promote enterprise and increase the direct involvement of the private sector were intended to bypass or undermine local authorities and 'long-standing mechanisms of local accountability' (Bailey et al, 1995, 59)

During the 1980s, the processes of political centralisation and shift of power away from local authorities to Whitehall were accompanied by a 'gradual leaching of powers and finance away from local government, and, in the case of the Greater London Council and the metropolitan counties, outright abolition' (Bailey et al, 1995, 8). The government, through the introduction of the Community Charge (later the Council Tax in 1993) acquired increased powers to cap total expenditure and put limits on ways budgets could be spent. Through Treasury regulations, income from Council house sales

was frozen. Central government therefore had complete control over local government finance (Bailey et al, 1995, 8) and an increasing degree of state control over the wider economy (Hall, 1983). Thatcherism, in picking up on the preceding Labour government's failure to resolve the country's mounting economic problems, succeeded in presenting an alternative solution, that of 'neoliberal ideas as the common sense of the British people' (Bevir, 2009, 132). Notions of self-reliance and personal responsibility were adopted as essentially core British features on which to build a new, competitive, entrepreneurial culture, one that chimed with a revived neoliberalism of self-interest and anti-statism (Hall, 1983) and the promotion of market-based initiatives.

While for most of the 1980s, local government was left out of strategic decisions taken by central government, by the early 1990s, a thaw was emerging in central-local government relations (Davies, 2009, 411). A policy shift occurred whereby the government looked for 'a spirit of co-operation, of partnership' between central and local government and business (Lawless, 1994, 1304). Thatcher's overthrow in 1990 and replacement by John Major in 1990 represented the opportunity for a new direction, inaugurating a partnership approach with local government (Davies, 2009, 411). This new approach, acknowledging the new tenor of relations between the centre and local government was termed 'new localism' by Murray Stewart in 1994 and Stuart Wilks-Heeg in 1996 (Davies, 2009, 411). But this new localism was set in a 'highly competitive and managerialist framework over which central government (retained) considerable control' (Wilks-Heeg, 2009, 411). As David MacKinnon has observed, the localism that had existed in the UK since the 1980s represented 'an important thread within the UK variant of neoliberalism in terms of its recurring rhetorical invocation by policy-makers' (MacKinnon et al, 2010, 6). In drawing out the similarities in the 'localism' adopted by the Conservative governments of this time with the Coalition government, observers have styled this localism as part of a process of 'roll-back' neoliberalism whereby 'unresponsive bureaucracies of the state (should) be dismantled (MacKinnon et al, 2010, 6). Further comparisons have been drawn between the neoliberalism characterising the Conservatives' time in office and that of New Labour, with New Labour's variant of neo-liberalism considered as being no more than a continuation of that of the Conservatives (Bevir, 2009, 132). This is further discussed in the following section.

The New Labour Government (1997-2010) and the 'Conditional localism' model

'Conditional localism' as presented in Hildreth's model is where the centre, while still retaining a degree of control over how resources are distributed and expenditures made, also recognizes the value of decentralizing to local institutions. This decentralisation, however, is made 'conditional' on the recipients meeting standards set by the centre. Critically, therefore, institutions such as local authorities are faced with balancing priorities: meeting the demands of the centre against serving its own communities (Hildreth, 2011, 704). Further issues arose over the differences between different places with regard to performance, trust and unequal outcomes (Hildreth, 2011, 706). This form of localism is said to have characterised the New Labour administration, 'a form of localism constrained by central interference' (Bentley and Pugalis, 2013, 10).

The New Labour government (1997-2010) is likely to be remembered mainly for its major policy shift to 'new regionalism', but 'new localism' and devolution were also key elements of its programme. The term 'new localism', as indicated in the previous section, was introduced to characterise this policy shift and the change in central-local government relations that took place at this time (Wilks-Heeg, 1996; Stewart, 1994). The devolution programme involved major institutional changes through decentralisation of power to Scotland and Northern Ireland and reform of local government.

The 'double devolution' programme was launched in 2006 by David Miliband, then Minister for Communities and Local Government (Atkinson, 2010, 426). The term refers to devolution of power from central to local government and through local government to communities. In a speech on 21 February 2006 to the National Council of Voluntary Organisations Annual Conference which was entitled 'Empowerment not Abandonment' he set out his views: 'I call it 'double devolution' – not just devolution that takes power from central government and gives it to local government, but power that goes from local government down to local people, providing a critical role for individuals and neighbourhoods, often through the voluntary sector' (Miliband, 2006).

Using Hildreth's indicators of accountability, leadership, coordination across boundaries, trust and finance/incentives enables an interrogation of the different natures of the localism policy of each of the political administrations in turn (Hildreth, 2011, 705). Hildreth characterises the middle to later years of the New Labour Government

under the premiership of Tony Blair as coming closest to reflecting the 'conditional localism' model (Hildreth, 2011, 706).

In the case of the 'conditional localism' of New Labour, the accountability of local councils was firmly directed to the centre through a performance management regime. Local government underwent modernisation through a succession of initiatives reflected in the introduction of new performance and target-based regimes in 2001 (MacKinnon et al, 2010, 7). Although there were rewards of 'earned autonomy' to be gained by local authorities which performed best, this was not accompanied by either additional freedoms or additional financial powers (MacKinnon et al, 2010, 7). Throughout the local government reform and modernisation programme, a performance monitoring regime was in place, organised through the regional Government Offices. The 'new localism' of citizen engagement and community empowerment was at the same time a contradiction, a 'centrally-orchestrated form of localism' (Harrison, 2008; Hildreth, 2011) with the government retaining control (Atkinson, 2010, 432).

The creation of Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) by New Labour in 1998 through the Regional Development Agencies Act continued the trend of centralisation, with such regional level quangos being largely unaccountable to local communities. Ruth Kelly justified this top-down approach by maintaining that:

> 'In 1997 this government, after decades of under-investment, inherited public services and institutions which were not always fit for purpose. We responded with massive investment and by setting a strong direction nationally.' (Davies, 2009, 412).

Interpretations of leadership became increasingly confused and the government was looking to share responsibility across partnerships with the growth of the 'Governance through Partnership' model. However, leadership arrangements in this model were complex and often unclear (Hildreth, 2011, 706-7). Issues of leadership arose as a result of the many structures and systems put in place which served consequently only to reinforce the role of the centre (Coaffee, 2005). As a consequence of the Governance through Partnership model, cross-boundary cooperation was required, through Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) and Local Area Agreements (LAAs). This mushroomed into an increased number of organisations becoming involved at different levels, including the EU, central government, RDAs, and local government organisations.

However, by 2006, the government was beginning to acknowledge that finally, local government could be trusted. In the White Paper, 'Strong and Prosperous Communities', Ruth Kelly emphasised the need to build trust between the centre and local government: "..we must have the courage at the centre to let go" (DCLG, 2006). As Davies points out, this confirmed that while centralism had been successful, it had come to the end of its life. Local government was now equipped and competent and could be trusted to drive improvement (Davies, 2009, 413). In stark contrast to the rhetoric, however, was the complex system of audit and inspection set up by the Labour Government and overseen by the newly established Audit Commission. The Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) framework set up in 2002 was designed to undertake a ranking of local authorities and depending on the ranking achieved, local authorities accordingly were subjected to intervention by central government.

In financial terms, local government has remained heavily dependent on the central government grant which constitutes three-quarters of its revenue (DCLG, 2007, 3); it has limited control over the remaining one quarter that is raised through Council Tax and local charges such as parking (Davies, 2009, 412). The ability of local authorities to generate increased revenue is constrained by the low priority assigned to this by central government. In spite of the rhetoric on decentralisation, New Labour's entrenched programme of further centralisation came to be recognised as the 'Blair Paradox' (Davies, 2009, 405).

The Blair Paradox, a term coined by John Davies, represents the contradiction between the espoused rhetoric of 'new localism' and the countervailing centralised approach of New Labour (Davies, 2009, 417). As Davies points out, 'political centralisation is a corollary of New Labour politics' much as it was for the Conservatives under Thatcher (Davies, 2009, 418). MacKinnon notes that New Labour, through its market-oriented economic policies, continued the neoliberal agenda of the Conservatives, even while it introduced 'more ameliorative and mildly redistributionist social policies (MacKinnon, 2010, 7). Other commentators have endorsed this view, noting the effort to combine socially progressive policies such as the introduction of a minimum wage, with a neoliberal commitment to ensuring the effective operation of the free market (Burnham and Kettle, 2009, 943). The combination of localism and neoliberal agendas followed by the succeeding Coalition government is discussed in the next section.

The Coalition government (2010 -) and the 'Community localism' model

The 'community localism' model, involves decentralization or devolution from the centre to citizens and local communities. The focus is on devolving responsibility from the centre to local communities and the direct involvement of local communities. The aim is engagement by local communities through the 'Big Society'. Two important variations of the model are the Commissioning Option and the Community Asset Option.

The Coalition government placed localism at the heart of its programme for a 'Big Society'. David Cameron first made reference to the term 'Big Society' in a speech made at the Hugo Young Memorial Lecture in November 2009 (Conservative Party, 2009, 7; Conservative Party, 2010). It was the antidote to 'Big Government' seen as characterising the previous Labour administration (Bentley and Pugalis, 2013, 4). The Coalition government's policy and rhetoric on the Big Society expects much from the voluntary sector (Cabinet Office, 2010, 2012). A White Paper issued in May 2011 proposed additional support of £40 million to the voluntary sector (Cabinet Office, 2011).

In March 2013, the Third Sector Research Centre at the University of Southampton published the results of a survey of public attitudes on the Big Society, exploring respondents' views on the roles of the voluntary sector, 'civil society', the private sector and the state with regard to public service provision. From the 100 respondents interviewed, a quarter regarded the Big Society agenda as a political stunt, as simply a ploy to gain popularity to improve election chances; still others criticised the agenda as being meaningless and unclear (Lindsay and Bulloch, 2013, 9).

A critique of the Big Society agenda was that it was simply a pretext for transferring responsibilities from government to other institutions, i.e. local government and was in fact a cover for the public spending cuts. A further interpretation was the notion that the reductions in state-run and taxpayer-financed institutions would result in their replacement by voluntary work. A majority of respondents also considered that the Big Society agenda was nothing new, and that the community engagement being called for was in fact already taking place. This appeared to reflect a prevailing sense that there was no government recognition or support for the considerable scale of voluntary work already being conducted, both formally and informally (Lindsay and Bulloch, 2013, 9).

The authors of the study concluded that there was limited public understanding of the Big Society agenda and there did not appear to be much interest in participating in the Big Society. Even given this limited understanding, however, respondents were at least aware of the Big Society as a new policy theme of the Coalition government. This was not the case with regard to the 2011 Localism Act. Very few of those interviewed could acknowledge having heard of it, reflecting a disconnect between public awareness of government policy and resultant changes in legislation (Lindsay and Bulloch, 2013, 19).

In recent years there has been less of the rhetoric and publicity that surrounded the Coalition government's initial launch of its Big Society programme. While in the early years of the Coalition government it appeared to be an integral part of the push to localism, with its focus on reducing the role of the state and meeting social needs through community initiative and engagement, the original initiative appears to have faded.

Eric Pickles, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, was clear on the role the Localism Act would have in ending the 'command and control apparatus of England's over-centralized state' and this was endorsed by the Conservative Party's commitment in its Green Paper to a 'control shift' from the centre to local communities (Conservative Party, 2009; Shaw and Robinson, 2011, 233). In the Policy Green Paper 'Control: Shift: Returning Power to Local Communities', it states:

> 'To foster a new spirit of local enterprise and local social responsibility, we need to decentralise power and control... Only through such thoroughgoing localisation of power can we create a new era of civic responsibility, in which local communities have – and use – real power over local spending, local services, local planning and the local environment… Our vision of localism is one where power is decentralised to the lowest possible level.' (Conservative Party, 2009, 8).

The six main principles comprising localism which set out the Coalition government's platform and are now incorporated into the Localism Act comprised the following:
1. Lift the burden of bureaucracy - by removing the cost and control of unnecessary red tape and regulation, whose effect is to restrict local action;
2. Empower communities to do things their way – by creating rights for people to get involved with, and direct the development of, their communities;

3. Increase local control of public finances – by ending public sector monopolies, ensuring a level   playing field for all suppliers, giving people more choice and a better standard of service;

4. Diversify the supply of public services – by ending public sector monopolies, ensuring a level playing field for all suppliers, giving people more choice and a better standard of service;

5. Open up government to public scrutiny – by releasing government information into the public domain, so that people can know how their money is spent, how it is used and to what effect;

6. Strengthen accountability to local people – by giving every citizen the power to change the services provided to them through participation, choice or the ballot box. (DCLG, 2010, 2-3)
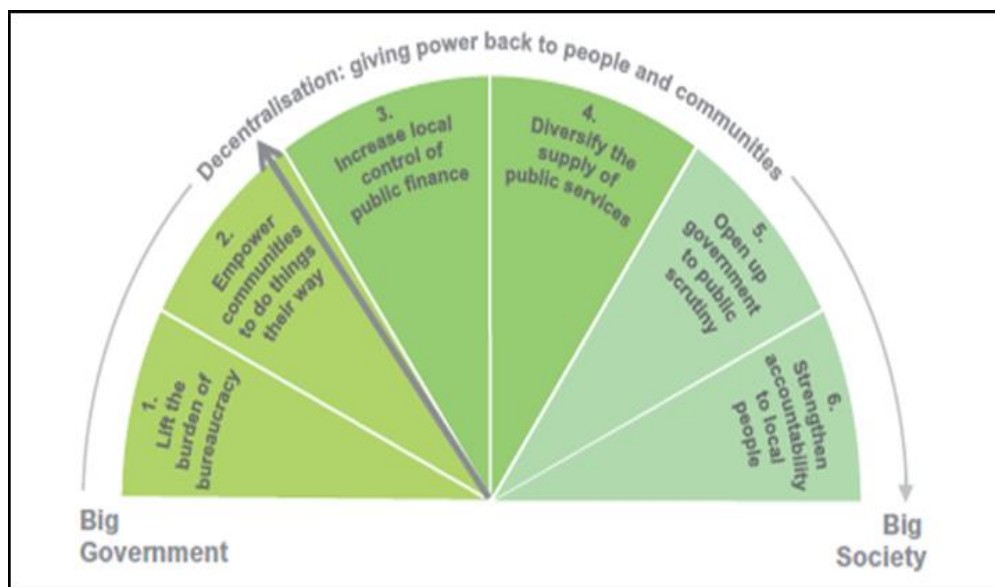
Figure 3.2: From Big Government to Big Society.
(Source: DCLG 2010b, 2)

Analysis of the Coalition government's localism agenda suggests that it may be as much a form of 'conditional' localism as 'community' localism, or even representative localism. A relatively short time has elapsed since the 2011 Localism Act entered the statute books, but there are indications that 'conditional' localism typifies the Coalition government's approach to localism.

The Localism Act 2011

The Localism Act 2011 introduced by the Coalition government on coming to power in 2010 was part of a major programme of devolution. It marked a significant turning point in the discourse of localism, being the first time that any government had made localism the major focus of a piece of legislation. The devolution of power from central government to local authorities and communities has involved the dismantling of a complete tier of regional governance in England, including the Regional Development Agencies, Government Offices for the Regions and Regional Select Committees (Shaw and Robinson, 2011, 10). The main measures of the Localism Act 2011 as outlined in the Plain English Guide to the Localism Act are:

• new freedoms and flexibilities for local government

The Localism Act includes a 'general power of competence'. It gives local authorities the legal capacity to do anything that an individual can do that is not specifically prohibited; they will not, for example, be able to impose new taxes, as an individual has no power to tax. The new, general power gives councils more freedom to work together with others in new ways to drive down costs.

• new rights and powers for communities and individuals

The Localism Act gives parish councils and local authority employees the right to express an interest in taking over the running of a local authority service. The local authority must consider and respond to this challenge and where it accepts it, run a procurement exercise for the service in which the challenging organisation can bid. It also requires local authorities to maintain a list of assets of community value which have been nominated by the local community. When listed assets come up for sale or change of ownership, the Act then gives community groups the time to develop a bid and raise the money to bid to buy the asset when it comes on the open market. This will help local communities keep much-loved sites in public use and part of local life. In addition, there is the right to approve or veto excessive council tax rises; transparency over senior council officials' pay and getting rid of fines and charges for rubbish collection.

• reform to make the planning system more democratic and more effective

The Localism Act contains provisions to make the planning system clearer, more democratic and more effective. This includes the abolition of regional strategies, Duty

to cooperate; neighbourhood planning; Community Right to Build; the requirement to consult communities before submitting certain planning applications; strengthening enforcement rules; reforming the community infrastructure levy; reform the way local plans are made. For nationally significant infrastructure projects, the Localism Act abolishes the Infrastructure Planning Commission and restores its responsibility for taking decisions to Government ministers. It also ensures the national policy statements, which will be used to guide decisions by ministers, can be voted on by Parliament.

• reform to ensure that decisions about housing are taken locally

The Localism Act reforms mean more decisions about housing are taken locally, and make the system fairer and more effective. It gives local authorities more control over the funding of social housing, helping them to plan for the long term and gives people who live in social housing new ways of holding their landlords to account, and make it easier for them to move. The main provisions are: social housing allocations reform; social housing tenure reform; reform of homelessness legislation; reform of council housing finance; national home swap scheme; reform of social housing regulation and abolition of Home Information Packs (DCLG, 2011, 18).

Although it is claimed that there is a clear philosophy behind the Localism Act, Hildreth has shown that there is 'a mix of approaches', combining 'conditional', 'representative' and 'community' localism models (Hildreth, 2011, 711). There are echoes of the Conservative approach of the 1980s in this latest brand of localism, with its focus on the reduction of the state's role.

Accountability under the community localism model takes on different forms, depending on which of the two types of community localism is being considered. Two variants of community localism have been identified which are distinguished by different levels of accountability (Bentley and Pugalis, 2013, 5). One variant is 'commissioning community localism' where the central state adopts a commissioning role for a community to take up responsibility for running a specific service. Here the central state remains the accountable body. In the second type of community localism, 'community asset localism', the central state hands over all responsibility to the community tasked with running a service. Accountability here rests with the community itself.

With the Commissioning option, it is central government that is the accountable body and accordingly, 'likely to involve some elements of control' (Bentley and Pugalis, 2013, 5). It reflects the conditional model typified by the Labour administration and is 'constrained by central interference' (Bentley and Pugalis, 2013, 10). Some scepticism remains among political commentators on the degree of accountability in the community model that in real terms will be permitted by a persistently centralist government. Ed Cox, Director of IPPR North, in an article for Local Society, noted that:

> 'Despite the persistent failure of the centre to transform public services to meet the challenges of a changing society, to tackle inequality, or to rebalance the economy, HM Treasury and minister after minister would appear to prefer to nurture the prevailing culture that they are prepared to be held accountable and bear the risk for even the smallest failings in the public service delivery chain.' (Cox, 2011).

Hildreth sees the potential for accountability in the creation of the Local Enterprise Partnerships as a bottom-up driven process (Hildreth, 2012, 32) while Ed Cox speculates that while bureaucratic governance is being avoided by many LEPs, "accountability…will be conveyed through local council leaders' involvement on LEP boards" (Cox, 2011). With the role of LEPs there are accountability issues and a number of 'unanswered questions' still remain relating to their governance and democratic legitimacy (Bell, 2013). As a result, an accountability deficit is seen to have arisen.

The Coalition government's 2010 White Paper 'Local growth: realising every place's potential' stated that:

> 'Local enterprise partnerships will provide clear vision and strategic leadership to drive sustainable private sector-led growth and job creation in their area. We particularly encourage partnerships working in respect to transport, housing and planning as part of an integrated approach to growth and infrastructure delivery. This will be a major step forward in fostering a strong environment for business growth' (Great Britain. BIS, 2010c, para 2.6).

Liddle et al (2013) note that the Coalition government was operating on the assumption that 'charismatic business leaders would drive the change agenda in different 'places', in partnership with local authorities and other public leaders' but that with the many multi-faced problems they confront, 'even the best strategy and leadership may be insufficient'.

The Localism Act provides Councils with greater control over budgets, as the Act accords local authorities the power to retain business rates and use these for economic development purposes but there are incentives from central government are limited (Bentley and Pugalis, 2013). Budgets are the responsibility of the centre which allocates these to local institutions (Hildreth, 2011, 710). Bentley and Pugalis point out that: 'the Coalition government appears to have set in motion a new direction for local economic development policy that entails a considerable degree of centralist control' and that 'those delivery mechanism that are to be decentralised come with strings attached' (Bentley and Pugalis, 2013, 261, 270).

In terms of central government funding available to the LEPs, this is a share of the £5m Start-up Fund and the opportunity to bid for a share of the £4m Capacity Fund. In April 2012, LEPs made a collective bid for central funding to be increased; the Government's response was that any additional funding would be accompanied by conditions. Financial indications suggest that the Coalition government in action is following the conditional localism model more closely than either the community or representative model, 'the outcome of which is fragmented and potentially divisive localism' (Bentley and Pugalis, 2013, 270).

3.2.3 Other localisms

Representative localism

The model of 'representative localism', seen by some as closest to 'true' localism, has as its defining element the principle of subsidiarity, where decision-making is seen to take place at the lowest appropriate level (Bentley and Pugalis, 2013, 260). This model can be found in a number of Western European countries, where local authorities play a central role as mediating the rights of the public to take part in local governance (Hildreth, 2011, 708). Hildreth contrasts it with conditional localism, in that it is: 'based on legal principles that define the nature of basic relationships between the centre, local government and citizens, and idealized the independence and representative nature of local government (Hildreth, 2011, 705). These legal principles have been incorporated into the European Charter of Local Self-Government (Council of Europe, 1985), to which the majority of governments in Europe are signatory, including the UK (Hildreth, 2011, 707). This model highlights the critical difference between many Western European nations moving towards some form of devolution and decentralisation (such as France, Germany, Italy and Spain) and the persistently

centralised English government and raises the issue of whether this could ever be more than an aspirational model for England.

Austerity localism

The localism agenda that influenced the legislation of the Coalition government in 2011 has been characterised by the economic climate in which it was so abruptly launched (Featherstone et al, 2012, 178). The global economic downturn of 2008 which impacted countries in Western Europe ensured that the stamp of 'austerity' was put on the Coalition government's version of localism by some commentators (Peck and Tickell, 2002; MacKinnon et al, 2010; Featherstone et al, 2012). 'Austerity localism' however, has also been identified as: 'part of a broader repertoire of practices through which the government has constructed the local as antagonistic to the state and invoked it to restructure the public sector' (Featherstone et al, 2012, 177-8, MacKinnon et al, 2010, 13). In a paper published shortly after the Coalition government came to power, Featherstone et al argued forcefully that localism, far from being invoked as a politically neutral policy vehicle, forms part of a policy discourse whereby the public sector is under attack and held accountable for the economic downturn and budget deficit (Featherstone et al, 2012, 178). Other commentators have contributed to this perspective, pointing to the many ways in which the 'local' has come to be identified ideologically with neoliberalism (Jessop, 2002; MacKinnon, 2010). As noted previously (p.38) further analysis of the Coalition government's variant of localism has led to the conclusion that localism is less a completely new agenda than a significant component of neoliberalism in the UK (Featherstone et al, 2012, 178). This point is further discussed in Section 3.3.

Progressive localism

In response to the 'austerity localism' launched by the Coalition government, the notion of 'progressive localism' has been generated from an alternative perspective which considers other ways in which localism can be taken forward (Featherstone et al, 2012, 177). In critiquing the assumptions on which the political discourse of localism has been based, David Featherstone considers the need to reclaim 'the terrain of localism' from the 'political right' and look again at ways in which 'localisms' can be shaped at the local level (Featherstone, 2012, 179).

Using examples from the UK, Featherstone proposes four key aspects of 'progressive localism' that require a reconsideration of the 'relations between place, politics and globalisation' (Featherstone et al, 2012, 179). The first aspect considers forms of 'place-based organising' that, far from being geographically contained, are communities of geographic diversity but which share a common interest. The example of industrial action taken by Gate Gourmet workers in West London supported by other Gate Gourmet workers in Norway and Denmark illustrates the way in which international solidarity can shape localisms (Pearson et al, 2010). The second aspect of progressive localism is the way the above example challenges assumptions about the 'homogeneity of local places and the role of local places simply as the victims of wider processes' (Featherstone et al, 2012, 180). Thirdly, the international connections and linkages of the example in West London can be used to contest government rhetoric against multiculturalism. The fourth aspect relates to the ways in which progressive localisms can feed into national policy frameworks. The example Featherstone provides is that of the movement 'Uncut UK' which has succeeded in getting issues such as tax avoidance by wealthy corporations onto the political agenda (Featherstone et al, 2012, 180).

The above discussion of the models and variants of localism has aimed to provide the background and theoretical context in which localism has emerged in the North East and Northumberland. The 'radical rhetoric' of localism as propounded by the Coalition government has been called into question, however, as 'bearing limited similarities to localism in action' (Bentley and Pugalis, 2013, 14). Concerns voiced by some academics and commentators were that the contradictions inherent in a localist rhetoric accompanied by centralist tendencies would lead to a 'divisive variant of localism in action' with the implications that while there would likely be winners, there would also be losers (Bentley and Pugalis, 2013, 14). The experiences of 'localism in action' in the shape of neighbourhood planning are further elaborated in chapters 5, 6 and 7.

3.3 Neoliberalism

Where localism can be seen as a theme common to all the political administrations in English politics throughout the past twenty five years, the other common thread identified, as noted above, is that of neoliberalism (Brenner et al, 2010; Jessop, 2002; Peck, 2001; MacKinnon et al, 2010). The evolution of localism as a policy discourse of government has been seen as part of a bigger project, that of a neoliberal agenda, using

the notion and rhetoric of 'local' as a counterpoint to 'centralised bureaucracy' (MacKinnon et al, 2010, 4).

Further comments on the Coalition government's agenda of 'austerity localism' by commentators such as Peck (2010) and Featherstone et al (2012), have led to its assessment 'as the latest mutation of neoliberalism' (Featherstone et al, 2012, 178). In this interpretation, the rounds of public sector cuts and financial austerity instigated by the Coalition government are identified as integral to this model of 'localism-as-neoliberalism' where the one supports and supplements the other. In this version, the 'local' is identified with communities and groups acquiring social responsibility and economic self-reliance which in turn challenge a burdensome bureaucratic state in a process of 'roll-back' neoliberalism (MacKinnon et al, 2010, 6). 'Roll-back' neoliberalism has acquired renewed traction under the Coalition government since its previous invocation by New Labour, with the public sector being held responsible for the economic downturn and recession in the UK (Featherstone et al, 2012, 178). This view is endorsed by Brenner et al, who note that:

> 'In England – and other nations – the private sector has been thrust to the forefront of economic development strategies as a variegated neoliberal orthodoxy prevails.' (Brenner et al, 2013, 2).

This stands in direct contrast to the political models adopted in Europe, discussed below. Neoliberalism is broadly defined as a belief in the principle that the market should remain free from intervention unless there are indications of market failure, at which point the state may be required to intervene. Neoliberalism reinforces belief in the value of limited government, in competition and an efficient and competitive labour force, minimum welfare provision and minimal state intervention (Cheshire, 2006, 43).

With regard to rural policy as it has been conducted, redesigned and commuted under New Labour, a clear recognition of neoliberal pressures has been made by Woods (2008, 258), who argues that: "In many respects, Labour's rural policy has represented a broad continuation of the neoliberal approach initiated under Thatcherism and refined in the Rural White Papers of the Major government". Other contributors have commented on the ways that community development has become an instrument in the pursuit of economic growth, it being rendered "functional to the neoliberal policy agenda" (Cheshire, 2006, 45).

To better understand the prevailing current preoccupation with neoliberalism, particularly in academic circles, it is helpful to consider at this point its historical and philosophical origins. A number of contributors, such as David Harvey and Stuart Hall regard neoliberalism as a relatively recent phenomenon which only emerged in the 1980s. Even the detailed historical narratives of neoliberalism by geographers, sociologists and historians such as Jamie Peck, Naomi Klein, Daniel Stedman Jones and Philip Mirowski have been seen as presenting only a partial case (Gane, 2013).

The origins of neoliberalism as a strand of political economy date back from earlier years than is often generally recognised (Gane, 2013). Attention tends to be focussed on the works of leading political economists and philosophers produced in the same period during the mid-1940s. Daniel Stedman Jones, in his book 'Master of the Universe', sees the three key contributors to the rise of neoliberalism as being Ludwig von Mises, with his publication 'Bureaucracy' in 1944, Friedrich von Hayek in 'The Road to Serfdom' published in the same year and Karl Popper's 'The Open Society and its Enemies' published in 1945.

The roots of neoliberal thought, however, can be traced back to an even earlier work of von Mise, who, in drawing on sociological theory in his book 'Socialism' published in 1921, presented a new form of political economy (Gane, 2013). In essence von Mises argued that: 'The fundamental law of action is the economic principle. Every action is under its sway' (Gane, 2013). The neoliberal trail in English politics can be traced back to the Conservative Government's period in office from 1979-1990, which was characterised by cutbacks in public spending and a reigning in of the welfare state, accompanied by privatising many services that were formerly provided by the state (Cheshire, 41, 2006). An exploration of this perspective helps to shed light on the ways in which successive governments of different political shades during the past twenty five years have pursued other objectives under the banner of localism (Featherstone et al, 2012, 178).

3.4 Localism and Collaborative Planning: the Theoretical Context
Among the major planning reforms introduced in the Localism Act were the new powers extended to councils and local people. One of the central planks of the Localism Act was neighbourhood planning. The Coalition government has emphasised the significance of collaborative planning as one of the means by which communities'

aspirations can be addressed and democratic renewal achieved. Collaborative planning rests on the principle of communicative action, whereby different stakeholders and interests meet and through constructive dialogue and interaction, collectively resolve the problems they face (Gallent and Robinson, 2013, 70). In this section, therefore, attention is given to the concepts underpinning collaborative planning and related principles of communicative governance.

3.4.1 Collaborative planning under localism

The Coalition government, as part of its localism agenda, has emphasised the role of collaborative planning in neighbourhoods and the ways in which this can empower communities:

> 'We will create a new system of collaborative planning by: giving local people the power to engage in genuine local planning through collaborative democracy – designing a local plan from the 'bottom up', starting with the aspirations of neighbourhoods'. (Conservative Party, 2009, 3).

Collaborative planning is seen by the government as the way forward for democratic renewal; its effectiveness is assumed in promoting empowerment for local people and collaborative democracy or neighbourhood governance.

Different interpretations of what constitutes collaborative or communicative planning have emerged since the 1990s but a central theme is the view that planning language and practices essentially distort and inhibit communication with non-planners (Allmendinger and Haughton, 2012, 96). A corresponding assumption underlying collaborative planning is that a 'discursive, open and undistorted process will lead to consensus' (Allmendinger and Haughton, 2012, 96). Collaborative planning, in its earliest form adopted in the US in regeneration and community development projects, focussed on 'dialogue, independent facilitation and a search for win-win solutions' (Bishop, 2010, 376).

Collaborative planning has been considered as 'the paradigm of the 1990s' (Tewdwr-Jones and Allmendinger, 1998) and as "an important direction for planning theory with significant potential for practice that will continue to dominate academic debate" (Tewdwr-Jones and Allmendinger, 2002, 216). It was received enthusiastically and became widely accepted by the planning world where planning has been increasingly

viewed as a "communicative, consensus-building endeavour" (Thompson, 2000, 131). Its origins are seen to have arisen out of a reaction of planners and planning academics to the de-regulatory and anti-planning era of the 1980s and early 1990s and a search for a more positive role for planning (Allmendinger and Haughton, 2012, 95). The main champions of collaborative planning in Europe have been contributors such as Albrechts, Swyngedouw, Hajer, Davoudi, Moulaert and the UK led in by Healey, while in the US its main proponents have included Innes, Booher, Forester, Friedman, Hoch and Fischer (Brand and Gaffikin, 2007, 284). Its place in the context of planning theory has been contested, with some seeing it as a theory, others as a 'world view', while yet others as only a 'form' of planning (Brand and Gaffikin, 2007, 285). Before considering the current status of collaborative planning and governance in England, it is helpful to review of the origins and approach of collaborative planning.

The philosophical roots of collaborative planning can be found in the works of two of the twentieth century's leading social and critical theorists, Giddens and Habermas. The core assumption of Giddens' work on structuration theory is that both 'agency' (human activities) and 'structure' (comprising the context of political and technological structures) are in a constant state of co-evolution, resulting in a "restless, dialectical process" (Healey, 2004, 96). Like Giddens, Habermas has sought to emphasise the interplay of the social system and the 'life-world' (the sphere of everyday life with its accumulation and interpretation of previous knowledge). His theory of communicative action (published in 1984 as 'The Theory of Communicative Action, Volume 1: Reason and the Rationalization of Society') is a call to increased self-reflection and through open impartial debate bring about rational mutual understanding (Brand and Gaffikin, 2007, 286; Baert and Carreira da Silva, 2010, 217; Allmendinger and Haughton, 2012, 95). In essence, communicative rationality "is about undistorted communication, openness, a lack of oppression" (Tewdwr-Jones and Allmendinger, 1998, 2).

The 'communicative turn' in planning, brought about by contributors to the communicative school of planning, such as Forester, 1989, 1999; Sager, 1994 and Healey 1997 is seen as the most recent body of theory to address the different roles of stakeholders in the field of planning. It has contributed to a redefinition of the role of planners; where formerly planners were mainly involved in land-use planning, now they were to work as 'consensus-brokers' in bringing together stakeholders on equal terms in a just and objective decision-making process thereby contributing to a more democratic

practice (Allmendinger and Haughton, 2012, 96). The processes and outcomes of neighbourhood planning activities which are described in the case studies of this research testify to the new role emerging for planners in this context.

As noted above, the Coalition government, in setting out its proposals for the new localism policy, appears to be endorsing the principles of spatial planning, with the emphasis on collaborative processes. However, the term 'spatial planning' as such does not appear in the Localism Act, it is simply 'planning'. The distancing from spatial planning has been observed in the government's removal of Regional Spatial Strategies (RSSs) and Local Area Agreements (LAAs). This has led some contributors to note that:

> 'At best, 'spatial planning is in transition in England – it may be in its death throes, or it may be in a process of re-invention. One thing is clear, however, whichever label we prefer to use: English planning now finds itself undergoing one of its periodic transformations from one paradigm to another' (Haughton and Allmendinger, 2013, 5).

This inevitably has consequences for collaborative planning and by association, collaborative governance practices which are associated with spatial planning. In the next section, the 'onward linkages' into collaborative governance, networks and network power are considered.

3.4.2 Collaborative governance, networks and power

The concept of 'collaborative governance' has emerged from what Ansell and Gash term 'local experiments', many of which have been a reaction to previous government failures (Ansell and Gash, 2007, 544). It was initially introduced from 1997 with programmes of state modernisation and local government reform (Gallent, 2013, 9). According to some contributors, collaborative governance 'has emerged as a dominant theme in political discourse and practice' (Allmendinger and Haughton, 2012, 91). Programmes of devolution and 'double devolution' were put in place that were to lead to a range of new actors from the public, private and voluntary sectors, all contributing to decision-making processes (Gallent, 2013, 9). New forms of collaborative and participative forms of governance were given legislative support by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act passed by the Labour Government in 2004 which were designed to be part of a governance shift in England (Gallent, 2013, 9). As Healey observes:

> 'by 2004, new English planning legislation (the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004) required more active ways of involving citizens and stakeholder organisations in framing strategic planning policy, oriented by a new purpose for the system – sustainable development' (Healey, 2010, 318).

The concept of collaborative governance has gained much traction internationally over the past two decades and generated much academic debate (Healey 2006, 318-9). Collaborative governance has been defined as:

> 'an arrangement where public agencies directly engage non-state stakeholders in a collective decision-making process that is formal, consensus orientated and deliberative and that aims to make or implement public policy or manage public programmes or assets.'
> (Ansell and Gash, 2007, 544).

In the UK, it has been seen as a movement in urban regeneration policy, taking the form of partnerships between the public and private sector in local area development (Healey, 2010, 318). Central principles of the collaborative approach that serve to distinguish it from traditional forms of government include 'participation, empowerment, partnership working and networked action', depending on consultation and negotiation to translate confrontational associations into collaborative relationships (Gallent, 2013, 13).

The 'networked action' noted above as a central principle of the collaborative approach is expressed in interaction between the multiple and diverse stakeholders that are involved in any project, each representing different perspectives (and interests) in a common problem and addressing that problem collectively in the formulation of a remedial strategy (Gallent, 2013, 70). As Gallent notes:

> 'Interaction is central to collaborative planning, triggering the formation of networks that evolve and strengthen over time. Through the sharing of skills and knowledge, networks develop greater capacity. The result has been described as 'network power'… built on the success that previously separate actors achieve in linking together agendas and manifest in their increased capacity to influence decision making.' (Gallent, 2013,71).

In relation to the interaction involved in collaborative governance and the engagement of a group of heterogeneous actors and stakeholders, the term 'networked governance' has been increasingly adopted (Holman and Rydin, 2012, 7). Networked governance is but one of the terms that have emerged from the increasing interest in networks over the past decade; new ways of conceptualising connections and relationality have been

developed to capture the increasingly dynamic nature of social and economic life, as the effects of globalising economic trends are experienced in a world made up of extensive networks and "flows of capital, money commodities, labour, information and images" (Lash and Urry, 1994, 24; Murdoch, 2000, 408; Castells, 2000). The concept of networks and an accompanying interest in 'policy networks' and power relations has given rise to a range of approaches including social network analysis, which in turn have generated further analysis and debate over concepts such as 'network power', 'social capital' and 'collaborative networks' (Gallent, 2013, 74). Social network analysis (SNA) in particular has been instrumental in unravelling the different ways in which actors are linked, the relationships between them and degrees of reciprocity and interdependency (Gallent, 2013, 74). The use of social network analysis can assist in identifying the differential degrees of access that network members may have or acquire, the extent of outreach to others (either beyond or in other networks), the flow of power across a network and between different networks as well as revealing alliances, cliques and coalitions (Gallent, 2013, 74).

3.4.3 Localism and community empowerment

The concept of community empowerment, much emphasised by the Coalition government in the Localism Act and neighbourhood planning, is considered here in its theoretical context. While the concept of community empowerment has gained in currency since its origins in the late 1960s and early 1970s, definitions of it remain elusive (Painter et al, 2011, 5). As with the principle of localism, it is supported by political parties of all shades and adopted by institutions operating at different scales, from multilateral aid agencies to charities and the voluntary sector. Community empowerment, as has been pointed out: 'has emerged as the enduring focus for public policy' (Painter et al, 2011, 18).

In terms of planning, there are numerous opportunities for community involvement in the partnerships, networks and fora that accompany regeneration projects. The claims made in collaborative planning for community involvement promote the idea that empowerment will emerge through participatory democracy (Bailey, 2010, 317). Definitions of 'community empowerment' have become interchangeable with 'community participation' and 'engagement' (Bailey, 2010, 318). The legislation on localism appears to have only added to this confusion. In the use of these terms and concepts there is an acknowledgement that communities have some kind of role to play

in the decision-making process and that local knowledge is an important contribution to the shape of outcomes; what is less clear is the extent of actual empowerment bestowed (Bailey, 2010, 318). As Bailey maintains, there has been a traditional view that community involvement can be 'an 'add-on' to existing decision making and service delivery bodies' but that the time has now come for these agencies to be reformed (Bailey, 2010, 319; Leadbeater and Cottam, 2009).

The appeal of the concept of empowerment is wide-ranging and it is claimed by some contributors to now be central to contemporary politics (Forrest, 2000). Along with decentralisation, empowerment appears to have increasingly become the focus of government policies (Painter et al, 2011, 21) but as has been pointed out, when community empowerment ends up as government policy, the outcome is essentially less about empowerment and more about containment and state control (Mowbray, 2011; Cruikshank, 1999). While Cruikshank acknowledges that the aim of conferring empowerment may be well-intentioned, it is also "a strategy for constituting and regulating the political subjectivities of the empowered … empowerment is itself a power relationship" (Cruikshank, 1999, 60).

Some contributors have focussed on the concept of agency to illustrate the fluid and dynamic characteristics of power; power is seen as emerging from power relations, which can serve as either positive or negative sources of energy and used collectively. Hence "power can be shared and new forms of power can arise…where people engage in power relations by exercising their agency either individually or collectively" (Dominelli, 2011, 22). Those who also see power as dynamic and fluid, such as Humphries, claim that empowerment is not something that can be 'done to' people, or conferred on them; it is a process or a continuum - not a finite product (Humphries, 2011, 24).

The debates driving localism have focussed on the political arena of governance where empowerment is seen to imply a transfer of power between stakeholders (Bailey, 2010, 320). As a wider range of stakeholders become involved in the partnerships and networks of governance, contributors such as Gaventa have emphasised the importance of exploring the relations of power contained within them (Gaventa, 2010, 320). Gaventa notes the potential for 'transformative engagement' by communities in the spaces opened up by new forms of governance but also sees these as simply presenting

more opportunities for 'reinforcing domination and control' (Gaventa, 2010, 320). Others, such as Cruikshank, also see empowerment as essentially constrained and as being essentially one form of the 'technologies of citizenship' which seek to control and regulate individuals (Cruikshank, 1999, 2). Increased opportunities for community participation, it has been argued, also result in increased responsibilities falling to communities, as in the case of neighbourhood planning, where in some cases, communities are experiencing less a feeling of empowerment than a sense of being over-extended and burdened (Painter et al, 2011, 42) as the state is seen to retreat further from its traditional role.

The concept of community empowerment, with its wide appeal across the political spectrum, has become ever more closely associated with that of localism, such that both terms have been in almost constant use by one political party or the other over the past two decades in England. Community empowerment as incorporated into the practice of governance, however, has raised conceptual challenges; even while governance opens up new spaces, those spaces effectively contain and limit what may be done.

3.5 Rural development approaches and theories

The rural dimension represents a significant component of the research conducted for this thesis using case-studies of rural villages in the north of England. As noted in the previous chapter on methodology, the research conducted in the case studies on localism and neighbourhood planning was in areas that could be described as ranging from 'rural' to 'remote' or even 'deep rural' locations in the county of Northumberland. It is therefore useful at this point to consider rural development theories and the approaches that have underpinned rural development policies.

Post-war rural development approaches in England followed a top-down, 'exogenous' strategy of modernisation by which rural areas, perceived to be lagging behind urban centres with regard to services and facilities, were effectively encompassed within a national welfare state (Murdoch et al, 2003, 3). At the same time, agriculture was re-structured with state intervention, resulting in a transformation in farm working practices and technical innovation (Murdoch et al, 2003, 3). Alongside this rural modernisation was a focus on industrialisation, improvements in infrastructure and settlement rationalisation (Woods, 2011, 135). At this time rural areas were considered synonymous with agriculture and agricultural production (Woods, 2011, 32). Generally,

empirical quantitative approaches were favoured at this time in both academic and government circles as a means by which to define rural areas and to provide a basis for rural policy-making (Woods, 2011, 48).

The government has continued to rely on quantitative methods to define rural areas, with criteria such as population density and settlement size being widely used to distinguish rural areas from urban areas and as a means with which to inform policy decisions (Woods, 2011, 33). In 2004 DEFRA introduced its own definition of rural, which enabled degrees of rurality to be identified as an alternative to a simple rural/urban distinction (Curry and Moseley, 2011, 1). This method of distinguishing 'the rural' relies on the collection of data and statistics conducted at different spatial levels; the lowest level is the 'census output area', the size of a typical parish or smaller. Population densities range between 'sparse' and 'less sparse' with further sub-categories based on settlement size such as 'small town and fringe', 'village' and 'dispersed' (DEFRA, 2004). Spatial definitions of this type which use data and statistical criteria such as population density and settlement size as a measure of rurality are frequently relied on by planners. The difficulties associated with these quantitative definitions, however, have been critiqued by commentators such as Woods, who notes the ambiguities and contradictions contained within the approach (Woods, 2011, 34). Under the influence of post-modern and post-structuralist thinking, such functional definitions have become contested in the social sciences where 'the rural' has come to be seen in more discursive terms as a social construct. As will be shown in later chapters of this thesis, both these approaches to defining the 'rural' can be seen to be at work as planners and rural residents attempt to co-construct neighbourhood plans.

Since the 1970s England's countryside has witnessed many changes (Murdoch et al, 2003, 19). Due to the relatively small number of landowners owning extensive estates, Northumberland has experienced less radical change than other areas of England. However, it has still been subject to extensive social and economic change. To capture and understand these changes, the government commissioned the collection of statistics on social, economic and environmental trends. Research conducted by the Rural Development Commission (RDC), the Countryside Agency (CA) and the Commission for Rural Communities (CRC) over the course of a decade (1999-2010) was concerned with detailed analyses of rural issues to inform rural development policy, bringing to light trends and changes experienced across England's countryside (Curry and Moseley,

2011, 3). The long term perspectives provided by the State of the Countryside (2003) reports indicated that although the rural environment was frequently seen as a relatively stable component of society, it was undergoing a process of change and that the pace of this change was accelerating (Curry and Moseley, 2011, 4). The CRC State of the Countryside 10 year perspective report 'Living in the Countryside' noted the trends emerging in the contemporary countryside (CRC, 2008, 73). In summary, these trends indicated:

- An improved quality of life in rural areas compared to urban areas, on indicators such as education and health, with lower crime levels and less deprivation
- In-migration trends were higher than out-migration trends
- Rural areas were characterised by an older age profile

However, other trends suggested that life in rural England was less positive. These revealed :
- Poor access to services and facilities in rural areas compared to urban areas
- Affordable housing becoming an increasing problem
- A higher incidence of illnesses in rural areas, due to an ageing rural population

The dependence on the collection of such data in identifying these trends was increasingly critiqued by academics who considered it as over-emphasising a representation of the English countryside as a single, homogeneous, coherent entity. A wide-ranging debate in the social sciences during the 1990s led to distinctions being drawn and conclusions reached that rural areas could no longer be considered in this way (Halfacree, 1993; Hoggart, 1990; Murdoch and Pratt, 1997; Woods, 2011). Woods, writing in 2011, noted that:

> 'by aggregating data to the level of 'rural England' reproduces the discourse that the English countryside exists as a singular, coherent entity.' (Woods, 2011, 33).

Other, qualitative methods were required to provide more reflective, discursive accounts of rurality and aid in its understanding. More nuanced qualitative methods of understanding the nature and characteristics of rurality have emerged with the 'cultural' turn in the social sciences. Under the growing influence of postmodernism and post-structuralism, the rural has become acknowledged as a social construct, as a hybrid entity that no longer needed to be defined in terms of what it was not (as in 'non-urban')

but could be explored discursively and positively in its many aspects (Woods, 2011, 265). During the 1990s, academic interest and debate grew over interpretations of different strands of rurality covering the rural economy, rural culture, the natural environment, the rural population, its living conditions and settlement patterns (Woods, 2011, 264). These have given rise to a host of discourses concerning interpretations of the rural and applying new meanings to the lived rural experience (Woods, 2011, 30/141). These varied discourses may be contrasting and even contradictory, but represent the diversity that had been 'discovered'. The most significant of these which will be drawn on later in this thesis (Chapter 4) are those of the 'rural idyll', 'counter-urbanisation', 'in-migration' and 'rural self-reliance'.

By the early years of the 21st century, the limits to the top-down model, or 'modernisation paradigm', first observed during the 1970s, were seen to have been reached. Writing in 2000, van der Ploeg pointed the way to a 'new rural development paradigm' (van der Ploeg et al, 2000). This could be distinguished from the modernisation paradigm by a number of key departure points, as shown in Figure 3.3 (from Woods, 2011, 140).
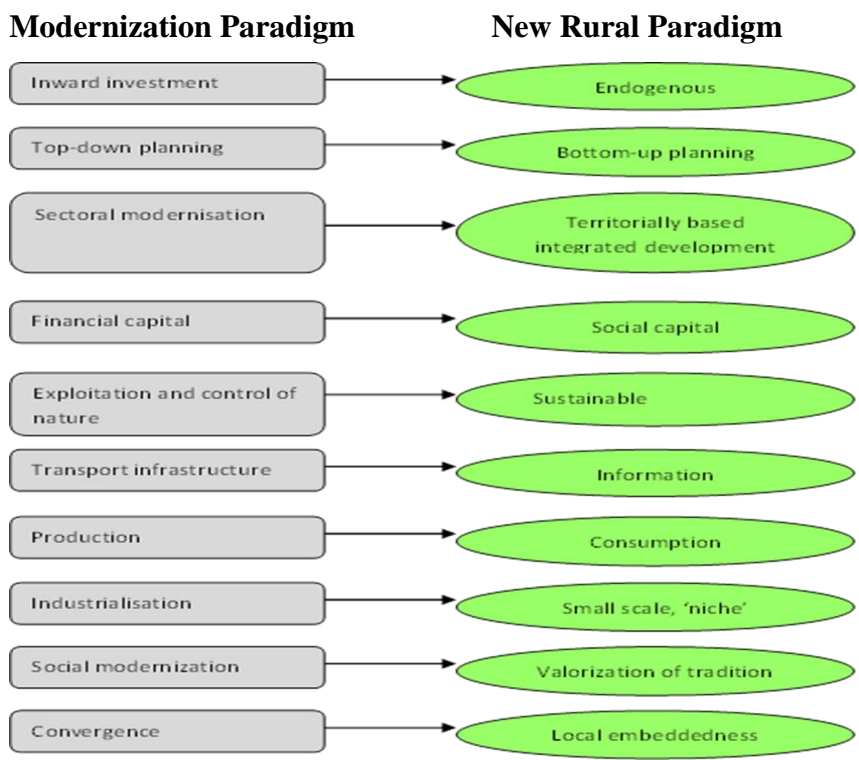
Figure 3.3: Contrasting features of Modernization Paradigm and New Rural Paradigm
(Source: Woods, 2011, 140)

No longer were rural areas to be seen as lagging behind urban areas; instead the new rural development paradigm captured a 'differentiated' countryside, where regions and rural areas could demonstrate the unique qualities and economic, social and cultural resources with which their own distinct development could be pursued (Woods, 2011, 141). The new rural paradigm generated new approaches and principles on which to build strategies for rural development.

The concept of endogenous development, or 'development from within', where local control and ownership can be maintained of the processes and outputs of such development has been key to the new rural paradigm. For Ray (1999), endogenous development comprised two essential qualities: the capacity to look inwards to mobilise local actors and resources while at the same time being able to look outwards and promote the area to 'extra-local' consumers and policy-makers (Ray, 1999, 263). In order to more clearly highlight and demarcate the role of extra-local actors, Ray devised the term 'neo-endogenous' development to characterise this new development model. Further academic theorising from contributors such as Murdoch and Lowe, 1995; Ward et al, 2005 and Shucksmith, 2012 has developed the significance of the linkages and networks between the local and extra-local elements of neo-endogenous rural development and emphasised the principle of local capacity building such that the maximum resultant benefit accrues to the local area concerned.
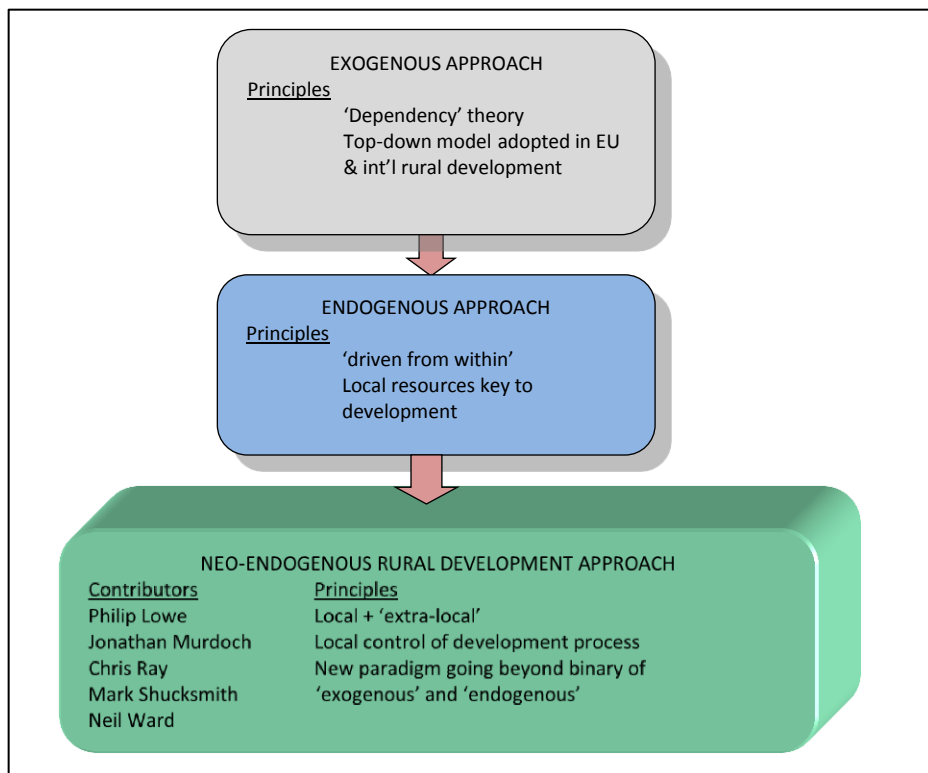
Figure 3.4: Evolution of the Neo-Endogenous Rural Development Approach

The neo-endogenous rural development approach has provided significant philosophical insights underpinning the research for this thesis. This has enabled the adoption of an alternative lens through which to consider the endeavours of communities and localities engaged in local planning, particularly neighbourhood planning.

The trends that have been noted as characterising rural areas in England over past decades have also been accompanied by competing claims on the countryside as part of changes in economic and social structures and the emergence of networks and flows across territories (Murdoch et al, 2003, 8). Other approaches to understanding the rural emerged from research conducted by theorists and contributors such as Murdoch, Lowe, Marsden and Ward (Murdoch et al, 2003). The approach adopted by Murdoch et al in characterising a 'differentiated' countryside, considered the way land and land use has mediated changes in rural economy and society (Murdoch et al, 2003, 9). The work arose from the need to re-assess the transformation which the countryside had undergone and was continuing to undergo. It took the form of four case studies drawn from different geographic areas of England, each covering one of the four types of countryside identified: 'preserved', 'contested', 'paternalistic' and 'clientelist'. Of particular relevance to the research for this thesis is the case study of the 'paternalist' county of Northumberland, (Murdoch et al, 2003, 14) with its large landed estates and associated traditional, semi-feudal land ownership patterns (Murdoch et al, 2003, 116). The implications of these land ownership patterns on development opportunities and therefore on the nascent neighbourhood planning activities being conducted in the county are further explored and discussed in Chapters 5 to 8.

Research for this thesis in the villages of Northumberland in the context of neighbourhood planning has also highlighted new discourses, or old discourses that have been revived, on the condition of England's countryside, particularly in the planning sector. As the Coalition government's reformed planning system has begun to be implemented, with the focus on economic growth, housing and development, pressures on land use have become increasingly manifest, raising anew debates, for example, on conserving versus preserving the countryside, protecting greenfield sites and the role of developers versus local neighbourhood plans. These themes are further explored in the chapters on the sub-case studies (Chapters 5, 6 and 7).

The above has aimed to provide an account of the range of rural development theories and approaches that have influenced the way the English countryside has been used, from the post-war years to the present. It is evident that rural areas in England, as elsewhere, have undergone a dramatic transformation over the past three or four decades, influenced by the forces of globalisation. The importance of observing and monitoring the trends affecting rural England was acknowledged by the governments of the time and an extensive body of analysis was built up. However, broader, qualitative characterisations of the way the rural was being experienced marked a shift away from the use of purely quantitative methods. These trends and changes have been characterised by emerging discourses reflecting the cultural turn in the social sciences. These new discourses of the rural have also generated significant new theoretical approaches, including the concepts associated with 'differentiated' rural development and the neo-endogenous rural development approach which are further explored in later chapters of this thesis.

3.6 Conclusions

This chapter has examined the background and context of the policy shift to localism by the Coalition government in 2010. It has presented a range of models of localism to highlight the way the principle of localism has been adopted over the past twenty five years by each of the political parties in English politics. It has shown that the rhetoric of localism in one form or another has been a consistent thread running through each of the administrations since the 1980s, culminating in its enshrinement in legislation by the Coalition government in 2011. This demonstrates the strong appeal that the concept of localism has held and continues to hold across the political spectrum in English politics.

In order to unravel the different interpretations and meanings attached to localism, use was made of a range of models of localism, each of which presents an 'ideal type' based on government policy approaches. These together served as an analytical tool with which to assess local-central relations. Two of the seven models reflected the policy approaches seen in England. However the boundaries between these two models can be seen as relatively porous; alignments have tended not to hold and it is clear that, pragmatically, the models also tend to flow into each other. Using the models to analyse central-local relations, it becomes clear that interpretations of the concept of localism differ according to the prevailing ideologies of the government in power and it is used to serve a specific political purpose. Each of the four models reveals that that

localism is revealed as another form of centralism, first initiated under the Thatcher regime under the guise of partnership and crystallized under New Labour. Notwithstanding Coalition government rhetoric on localism and its planning reforms, it is argued that centralism remains a fixed principle of government. The implications of these theoretical insights for the practice of neighbourhood planning are further examined in the case studies presented in Chapters 5, 6 and 7.

The central significance of neighbourhood planning for the Coalition government's legislation on localism has also brought to the fore other related activities such as collaborative planning. The government's neighbourhood planning reforms have required that the theory and practice of collaborative planning, coined 'the paradigm of the 1990s', be refreshed by the contemporary planning community, perhaps still seeking a more positive role for planning. Led by Healey, the communicative turn in planning in the early 1990s gave fresh impetus to the role of the planner, as 'consensus-broker' among the increasing number of stakeholders in the planning process. Accompanying the growth in collaborative planning was a parallel interest in collaborative governance. Collaborative governance is seen by some to have emerged as political praxis. As programmes of devolution were brought into being by New Labour, the doors were opened to a range of new participants from all sectors entering into the decision-making process. This shift in governance was supported by New Labour legislation. The chapter shows how the concept of 'networked governance' was adopted in order to capture the increasing range of interactions generated in this way. The theoretical study of networks deriving from the forces of globalisation (Murdoch, 1995 and Urry, 2000) shed further light on the new policy-making practices that relied increasingly on partnerships, groupings and alliances for effectiveness. This is relevant for not only urban but also rural areas.

This chapter has explored the concept of community empowerment, seen as so central to the localism legislation and sought to highlight theoretically the level of community empowerment has been achieved. While the term community empowerment has successfully eluded definition, at the same time its appeal has become as great as that of localism, perhaps due to the 'fuzziness' which surrounds it. The term community empowerment, which has become increasingly interchanged with the concept of community participation, has been much used in conjunction with localism, but some of the expectations which have accompanied its use have not been fully met and the extent

to which community empowerment is bestowed by localism, especially through neighbourhood planning, is not clear. Further theoretical directions explored in this chapter showed that in connection with neighbourhood planning, communities may well have experienced increased participation, but that this has not necessarily resulted in increased empowerment; it is as likely to lead to communities being over-extended and over-burdened.

Finally, the chapter aimed to provide a theoretical backcloth to the rural context. Different perspectives on what constitutes the rural have been underwritten by widely contrasting epistemologies. By early 2000, a new perspective had emerged in academic thinking that was to greatly influence rural development policy. Replacing the previous exogenous top down model of rural development, the endogenous bottom-up approach gained ground and in turn gave way to the neo-endogenous approach.

The chapter has highlighted the significance of the neo-endogenous model for the research conducted for this thesis; it brings together the normative principles of enhancing local capacities and engaging extra-local support with the prosaic issues raised by communities and planners in the space of the neighbourhood plan. These are further explored in the case study chapters (5, 6 and 7) and Chapter 8.

Chapter 4. The Policy and Planning Context

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter the policy context into which the localism legislation was introduced in England is set out. First a brief review of the early history of localism is presented before a consideration of more contemporary debates concerning localism. Background to the planning policy context, and a review of post-war local and community level planning in England is then provided. The planning reforms introduced by the Coalition government are then considered, including the new planning policy framework and the national Front Runner programme supporting the introduction of neighbourhood planning. This is followed by a consideration of the Front Runner programme in Northumberland, from which two of the case studies for the research have been selected.

The main events that have shaped the history of rural development policy in England since 1997 are then considered. The policy shifts adopted subsequently by the incoming Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition in 2010 are analysed together with the ways in which the Localism Act is impacting on rural areas. This chapter frames the question of whether the intrinsic features of rural communities and rural life constitute a 'rural' Big Society or whether this remains a notional aspiration without substance. To conclude, an overview is provided of the next round of EU programming for the period 2014-2020.

4.2 History of Localism

It is worth recalling that the principle of localism as a political concept has a long history extending back some thousands of years. One of the earliest expressions of localism has been traced back to the 3rd century BC and the Greek philosopher, Aristotle, who maintained that in order to prevent tyranny, intermediary groups were required to uphold freedom under any government (Davies, 2009, 405). Somewhat later, Alexis de Tocqueville, a French political thinker and historian writing in the first half of the 19th century, also maintained that democracy required the presence of intermediary groups, including municipal institutions 'which constitute the strength of free nations' (Davies, 2009, 406). During the second half of the 18th century in England, Edmund Burke, the political theorist, philosopher and politician mainly associated with

early British conservatism, was a supporter of localist principles as demonstrated in his writings (Davies, 2009, 406). For Burke, who is credited with providing the intellectual foundations for David Cameron's Big Society, the 'small platoon was the pillar of the state' (Crick, 2002, 497). In his most famous work, 'Reflections on the Revolution in France', he expressed it in this way:

> 'To be attached to the subdivision, to love the little platoon we belong to in society, is the first principle (the germ as it were) of public affections. It is the first link in the series by which we proceed towards a love to our country and to mankind.' (Burke, 1790).

These earlier calls for localism, however, were made by individual political philosophers but were not supported by any form of localist movements. It was only during the early to mid-nineteenth century in Britain, a period seen as marking the maturing of the British political system and the consolidation of local electoral government that localism as a political force began to emerge (Duncan and Goodwin, 1988, 1). This was a time when municipal government in cities such as Birmingham was strengthening (Davies, 2009, 409). A visionary form of localism was invoked in mid-nineteenth century England by the Reverend George Dawson, a Nonconformist minister, in his 'civic gospel' in Birmingham where he called for 'municipalism' to be recognised. This marks a significant point at which localism was being recognized as a new political force (Davies, 2009, 409). In one of his speeches, Dawson envisaged a time under 'municipalism' when 'a strong and able Town Council might do almost as much to improve the conditions of life in the town as Parliament itself…. (where) instead of discussing small questions of administration and of economy (would dwell) with growing enthusiasm on what a great and prosperous town like Birmingham might do for its people'. As Davies observes, it represented "a benchmark against which to compare and contrast the scope and ambition of contemporary localism" (Davies, 2009, 410).

It was this increasing and strengthening role of local electoral government that is seen as giving rise to the tug-of-war characterising central-local political relations (Duncan and Goodwin 1988) and which has characterised much of English political history since (Davies, 2009, 409). The height of localism is said to have been achieved in England during 1930-1948 where local councils had a far wider remit than presently and where 'whole spheres of public life were owned and managed locally that are now seen as entirely the province of national government or the private sector (White, 2005, 75). Against this can be contrasted the subsequent decline in local democracy and the

emergence of the 'centralisation era', forming initially in the late 1940s with the development of the welfare state and continuing as a trend since the 1970s (Davies, 2009, 410).

Terms such as 'localism' and 'local' are difficult to pin down; they remain elusive, fuzzy and very widely interpreted or adapted to fit the context for which they are being used. These concepts, while likely to be part of the daily lexicon of planners, geographers and sociologists, have found increased expression and traction since 'localism' became enshrined in the Coalition government's legislation in 2011. But these concepts have also become increasingly contested in recent years. Attempts to define localism and what constitutes 'local' have resulted in wide-ranging debates in the public domain, across academic disciplines and related professions. There has been particular debate over the challenges posed to localities by economic globalisation (Goetz and Clarke, 1993; Castells, 2010; Mohan, Giles and Stokke, 2000). In geography the debate has focussed on the use of relational concepts to explore the nature of the local (Massey, 2005, 2007; Featherstone, 2008; Mackinnon, 2010) while in political science, debate has revolved around the centralism versus localism theme (Davies, 2009, Pratchett, 2004; Duncan and Goodwin, 1988; Shaw and Robinson, 2011; Pugalis, 2012; Bentley, 2013).

These debates emerged in the late 1980s and early 1990s in parallel streams in the USA and in post-Thatcherite Britain. But while the 'localist turn' in the UK took the form of debate over central-local relations, in the US the debates were more concerned with the challenges posed to localities by the forces of increasingly mobile and unrestricted capital (Davies, 2009, 411). Localism is also upheld as a lifestyle (Jenkins, 2004) while alternative food movements have proposed localism as a means of resolving the perceived difficulties associated with supermarkets and their control of mass produced 'food chains' (Painter et al, 2011, 4). For the purposes of this chapter, it is therefore useful to explore further the ways in which localism as a concept has been defined by different disciplines and its understanding in contemporary politics.

The concept of 'local' has been the subject of recent debate particularly in the social sciences and geography (MacKinnon et al, 2010, 3) where it has become associated with concepts of place and space. Central to these debates has been a revised treatment of the concept of space with the adoption of a relational approach (Castree, 2004,

Featherstone, 2008 and Massey, 2005). As conventional notions of space have been challenged, these have influenced understanding of the concepts of 'local' and 'localism'. Doreen Massey has taken the debate further in arriving at a new perspective where the local is no longer seen as enclosed, still and unmoving, but as a process and product of interaction (Massey, 1985, 1994, 2007; Castree, 2004, 144). In more recent work, she has drawn attention to the importance of relational approaches to the nature of the local (Massey, 1995; Mackinnon et al, 2010, 3). The two concepts of the social and the spatial, according to Massey, should be conceptualised as relational, the one formed by, but also forming the other. This relational approach is based on three main principles.

The first principle is that space is a product of interrelations, with the corollary that places then can be seen as the outcome of such interrelations. Secondly, space constitutes multiplicity and plurality, where "distinct trajectories co-exist", offering the possibility of 'a simultaneity of stories' (Massey, 2005, 9-14). Thirdly, space is seen as continually evolving, changing and re-creating new spaces, as opposed to the notion that space is permanent or stationary, or is 'the dead, the fixed' in Foucault's terms (Massey, 2005, 48). 'Place' in this way can be understood as "porous networks of social relations" - it is a social construct, but social relations are themselves constructed over space (Massey, 1994, 168).

These principles enable a more nuanced understanding of the local and localism (Mackinnon, 2010, 3). Local is then no longer a contained and geographically exclusive entity, but can be seen to have wider social relations and connections (Massey, 2007). Furthermore, this opens up ways of re-considering the character of the local as being diverse and fractured rather than homogeneous and cohesive; it may comprise possibly competing interests with different demands and claims (Massey, 1994 in Mackinnon et al, 2010, 4). In governance terms, a relational perspective also offers a more positive way of viewing local-central relationships, so that these are no longer seen as a zero-sum game. Local spaces of governance are seen as being in part constructed out of their relations with other scales such as regional and national (MacKinnon et al, 2010, 4). The value of the relational perspective for understanding localism has been emphasised in further theoretical work which draws on this approach to open out some of the hidden assumptions underlying the localisation agenda of the Coalition government (MacKinnon, 2010, 3). In politics and governance, debates on localism have frequently

revolved around the centralism versus localism axis. In other circles, localism as a normative concept and a form of neoliberal governance has been a consistent theme in debates over the past two to three decades (Davies, 2009, 417).

Much academic and scholarly interest in localism has been re-kindled by the persistence of centralism in English politics (Davies, 2009, 406). Here the analysis has centred on the ways in which New Labour, despite its rhetoric of localism, increased political centralism. This contradiction has earned the name the 'Blair Paradox' (Davies, 2009, 405). Contributors to this debate, such as Davies, Flinders and Harvey have maintained that this arises from the effects of neoliberal governance and is therefore a matter of coincidence (Davies, 2009, 405; Flinders, 2005, 87 and Harvey, 2005). In response, Stoker maintains that the real cause lies in the nature of governing, which he considers chaotic and pressured (Stoker, 2002, 2004).

While debates around localism frequently revolve around political and governance issues, a number of concerns tend to be marginalised. These concerns relate to a set of assumptions underlying the principle of localism which see it as a consistently benign political force (Featherstone et al, 2012, 179). In contrast, contributors such as Mackinnon point out the essential fallacy of 'attributing political content to a particular spatial form' (MacKinnon, 2010, 9). Returning to the earlier discussion on geographic contributions to conceptions of place, Massey challenges the normative assumptions underlying 'community' as homogeneous. This leads to a critique of assumptions underlying the Coalition government's theme of Big Society, as she and others query the political basis of how localism is articulated, generated, mobilised and envisaged (Featherstone, 2012, 179).

As previously indicated, localism is a contested concept, with two main interpretations dominating the field (Bentley and Pugalis, 2013, 4). In the first, supported predominantly by left-wing political reformers, localism has been seen as a process of decentralisation with a shifting of control and power 'down the scalar hierarchy' (Bentley and Pugalis, 2013, 4). Particularly under New Labour, as previously noted in Chapter 3, the use of concepts such as 'double devolution' and 'place-shaping' began to emerge during the time of David Miliband's time as Secretary of State at DCLG (Davies, 2009, 413). The new localism was premised on principles of a transfer of power from central to local government and from local government to neighbourhood

level, with the implications for community empowerment that such devolution would entail (Bentley and Pugalis, 2013, 3). However, in practice this 'conditional' version of localism, as noted previously in Chapter 3, was translated into 'a centralised performance management and policy direction under Labour' (MacKinnon, 2010, 9). Local government was more frequently the passive recipient, rather than the initiator of policy initiatives (Laffin, 2008, 112).

The second version, favoured mainly by those on the right, regards localism as an expression of a new 'Big Society'. In this version, state intervention is regarded as undermining the potential of local communities to act; civic enterprise should be encouraged as should social responsibility at the local level, in a process which also sees a re-structuring and reduction of the public sector (Featherstone et al, 2012).

An important distinction has been drawn between the different interpretations of localism from the political left and right. This distinction however does not resolve the ongoing debate over central-local relations and the tensions between the centralist orientation of both New Labour and Coalition governments and localist rhetoric. In analysing the persistent trends of centralism combined with calls to localism, concerns over 'localism in action' have been raised by some academic observers:

> 'It is the tension between the apparent devolutionary principles of localism and the centralist tendencies of government activities that increasingly calls into question the Coalition Government's 'localist credentials' (Bentley and Pugalis, 2013, 3).

The tensions that have emerged in the 'localism as centralism' debate, however, have been as evident under New Labour as under the Conservative and Coalition governments. The way that the different political parties have adopted similar policies has caused some academic commentators to note the 'spooky similarity' between the main political parties. The apparent contradictions between the localist rhetoric and the 'centralist tendencies' of each party once in power remain the subject of continued debate (Brenner et al, 2010; Harvey, 2005; Peck and Tickell, 2002; Jessop, 2002).

4.3 Localism and Planning Reform

Community led planning has a long history extending back to the 1940s, when Lord Silkin stated, in the third reading of the Town and Country Planning Bill, that:

'It is not merely landowners in the area who are affected or even business interests. Too often in the past the objections of a noisy minority have been allowed to drown the voices of other people vitally affected. These too must have their say, and when they have had it, the provisional plan may need a good deal of alteration, but it will be all the better for that since it will reflect actual needs democratically expressed. In the past, plans have been too much the plans of oficials and not the plans of individuals, but I hope we are going to stop that.' (Herbert, 2012, 22).

The aspirational agenda expressed above was, as Herbert notes, furthered by the many village and parish plans and community planning statements that were subsequently produced across post-war England (Herbert, 2012, 22). Many of these have provided a basis for the production of current neighbourhood plans.

This kind of planning at the very local level emerged in a cautious and ad hoc manner (Owen et al, 2007, 52). The growth of parish appraisals from the early 1970s throughout the 1980s and 1990s resulted in about 1500 local communities being involved in household surveys and community discussions (Moseley et al, 1996, 311). The scope of these appraisals commonly included local service provision, concerns over land-use planning, community facilities and environmental concerns (Owen et al, 2007, 52). A key assumption underlying these parish planning schemes noted by Parker was the principle that at the local level, small communities could be instrumental in shaping local policy and service provision by the collection of such local data (Parker, 2008, 66). But despite the modest success of these 'self-help' initiatives throughout the rural parishes of England, the two main deficiencies seen as characterising these appraisals (from a planning perspective) were their ineffectiveness as planning instruments and their frequent lack of connection with parish or town councils (Owen et al, 2007, 52)

The history of post-war rural planning in England has been described as 'piecemeal' and 'lacking focus' (Robinson, 1990, 402). As Gallent et al have observed, for much of the post-war period, the 'very local community-based planning' represented by the work of parish councils (or voluntary groups linked to these councils) could reasonably be described as a marginal activity, confined to the periodic compilation of parish appraisals (the precursor to modern parish plans) and being no more than 'over-simplified data profiles that obscured the true nature of local challenges' (Gallent et al, 2008, 7). The majority of these local level plans was rejected by local authorities at that time (Gallent, 2008, 7). Many were not implemented effectively, especially on issues such as affordable housing or local traffic issues which required support from higher

levels of the statutory planning authorities. Parish councils at that time had no statutory planning responsibilities or powers (Gallent, 2007, 1). Parker, in critically reviewing the process and design of parish plans in a case study in the south of England in 2006, observed the difficulties encountered in parish planning to ensure 'inclusiveness' and take account of the needs of different socio-economic groups and ethnic minorities (Parker, 2008, 75). Noting that parish planning at this time needed to '..seek out the views and needs of more hidden or hard-to-reach citizens', Parker also pointed out how this was frequently beyond the capacity and resources available at the parish level (Parker, 2008, 75). This limitation was further consolidated by the 'boundedness' typically set for the parish plan by residents as a consequence of the limited availability of certain skills, resources, knowledge and funding, etc. (Parker, 2008, 69). Such challenges are a continuing concern in the process of neighbourhood plan-making, as will be demonstrated in the case study chapters 5 and 6.

During the Thatcher era of the 1980s, a continuing battle raged over development within the green belts where:

> 'the various Secretaries of State routinely overturned the judgements of local authorities on land use matters to support development at odds with local policies' (Gallent et al, 2008, 7).

This has led to a commonly held view that despite the various planning policy guidelines and regional planning guidelines that had been issued, the focus of power and responsibility was through structural plans at the county level and discretionary powers at the local level (Gallent et al, 2008, 7). A long-held view is that:

> 'planning has failed to engage adequately with the communities it is intended to serve, despite all the efforts invested to encourage greater public participation' (Haughton, 2012. 100).

The dissatisfaction with mechanical exercises of data collection throughout the 1970s and 1980s led in the 1990s to broader and more open-ended parish plans. A number of parish councils were quick to exploit the new opportunities to draw up 'wish-lists' with which to pressurise local planning authorities into delivering these as part of planning policy (Gallent, 2008, 7). Various commentators have noted the increase in the efforts applied by parish plans and village design statements (VDS) to influence the higher tiers of the planning system with regard to policy and strategy formulation (Gallent, 2008, 2).

The publication in 1995 of the White Paper Rural England (DoE, 1995) acknowledged the need for parish councils to play a more active role as well as the need to enhance their responsibilities (Ward, 1998, 29). At the same time the White Paper re-introduced an emphasis on community-led development and community self-sufficiency alongside promoting bottom-up models of rural development with which to empower local communities (Ward, 1998, 30). But while there has been a range of government publications pointing to the 'empowering' processes of such local level planning activities (DCLG 2006; DCLG 2008; 2009), Parker has noted how:

> '..the UK government has aimed to shift responsibilities and work onto rural communities under the guise of empowerment through a number of policies and policy vehicles' (Parker, 2008, 65).

Commentators such as Ward et al (1998), Rose (1993, 1996) and Murdoch (1997) have also drawn attention to the way that the term 'community' has come to serve as an object of government action, or:

> 'a new mode of governmentality – a new way in which the state reflects upon the legitimate scope for, and objects of, state action' (Ward et al, 1998, 31).

Murdoch, in reviewing the Rural White Paper for England, has analysed the way in which the shift in the scope of rural governance has taken place (Murdoch, 1997, 110). This has been through a withdrawal from a comprehensive national form of governance which in turn enabled new forms of 'governmentalities' to emerge (Murdoch, 1997, 110). His analysis shows that this is based on a discourse emphasising the need for limited government in the face of reduced resources. At the same time, local-level decision making is endorsed in rural areas, with the countryside portrayed as comprising 'small, tightly-knit and self-reliant communities' which are able to identify and address local needs. It is through these communities that the government can operate indirectly, at a distance, as 'government through community' (Murdoch, 1997, 116). One of the initial steps in this process to which Murdoch points is the identification of local issues on which local level decision making is then based. Through 'village appraisals' the views of community residents are obtained on a range of issues such as planning, transport and local services (Murdoch, 1997, 114).

Drawing on the work of Rose (Rose, 1993, 1996), Ward and McNicholas emphasise the importance for such new governmentalities of identifying ways through which the new objects of governance can be made 'visible' and how knowledge can be obtained on

them (Ward and McNicholas, 1998, 31). A clear example can be seen in the case of Northumberland which, along with a number of other rural counties and areas in the North East, attained Northern Uplands Objective 5b status in January 1994. The Objective 5b programme policy was implemented in two main rounds of EU Structural Funds with the Objective 5b areas in England (Ward and McNicholas, 1998, 32) covering the six year period 1994-1999. As Ward has pointed out, this was a 'Europeanization of rural development policy for Britain's more peripheral rural regions' (Ward and McNicholas, 1998, 36). As Ward notes, one of the strategic goals of the Northern Uplands programme was the creation of sustainable communities (Ward and McNicholas, 1998, 33). The Northern Uplands policy document emphasised that economic development could only be based on 'strong vibrant communities' and so established the rationale for funding community development (Ward and McNicholas, 1998, 33). In order to qualify for funding, applicants needed to be part of the village appraisal process, whereby the 'economic, social and training needs of individual villages or groups of communities' were identified (Ward and McNicholas, 1998, 34). Ward notes the way in which this link acted as:

> 'an important spur to many rural communities in the region and a host of appraisals have been embarked upon since the region was formally designated as an Objective 5b area' (Ward and McNicholas, 1998, 36).

The legacy of these earlier village appraisals for the case studies of neighbourhood planning and rural regeneration researched for this thesis is discussed further in Chapters 5 to 7. In each of the cases, the experience of participating in a village appraisal provided a useful launching pad and pool of experience from which to draw when neighbourhood planning was introduced under the Localism Act 2011. However, as will be shown in Chapters 5 and 6, plan-making at the community level has yet to fully capitalise on lessons from the earlier parish plans.

The distance in planning terms that has developed over many years between the very local level and the strategic level in rural as well as urban planning has been identified but there has been relatively little research literature on this 'gap' and the relationship between top-down and bottom-up planning (Owen et al, 2007, 50). In 2010 the Coalition government introduced the planning reforms which included the introduction of a new level of community led planning, the neighbourhood plan which aimed to

bring parish level planning into the statutory planning system and resolve the gap between the strategic and local level in urban and rural planning.

As previously noted in Chapter 3, the Localism Act 2011 represented the Coalition government's intentions to 'lift the burden of bureaucracy', seen as stifling activities at the local level and to 'empower communities' to take up development activities hitherto reserved for government officials and the planning profession (Great Britain, Department for Communities and Local Government, 2010b, 2-3). Eric Pickles was clear about this when, as reported by the BBC, he asserted that:

> '..local people have had too little to say over a planning system that has imposed bureaucratic decisions by distant officials in Whitehall and the town hall' ('Pickles promises 'people's planning power''. (BBC, 2010).

Shortly before the general election of 2010, the Conservative Party published a Green Paper entitled 'Open Source Planning' which presented a range of proposals for reforming the planning system (Great Britain. The Cabinet Office, 2010b). Two of the key points emphasised were reducing 'red tape' and giving more power to communities. Following their election to power in 2010, the Coalition government published the document 'The Coalition: Our Programme for Government' where it made clear its intentions: 'we will radically reform the planning system to give neighbourhoods far more ability to determine the shape of the places in which their inhabitants live, based on the principles set out in 'Open Source Planning' (Great Britain. Conservative Party, 2010b). The Coalition government's planning reforms were the focus of much media interest and publicity and generated a great deal of debate in Parliament as well as in the planning world, in local government and among rural campaigning bodies such as the CPRE and conservation and land-owning charities such as the National Trust. Much speculation revolved around the extent of the proposed reforms in the shape of the draft National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) first produced in July 2011. The draft was subsequently reviewed by a 'practitioners advisory group' and then worked on internally by civil servants before finally being published in March 2012 (Haughton, 2012, 100). In the foreword to the NPPF, the Planning Minister Greg Clark outlined the rationale behind it:

> '…in recent years, planning has tended to exclude, rather than to include, people and communities. In part this has been a result of targets being imposed, and decisions taken, by bodies remote from

them. Dismantling the unaccountable regional apparatus and introducing neighbourhood planning addresses this. In part, people have been put off from getting involved because planning policy itself has become so elaborate and forbidding – the preserve of specialists, rather than people in communities.' (Clark, 2011, v).

In March 2012, the revised version of the Coalition government's planning guidance, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) finally came into effect (Great Britain, DCLG, 2012). Its purpose was to provide guidance for local planning authorities and decision-makers, both in drawing up plans and deciding on planning applications, where authorities would be able to make decisions relevant to their areas. The NPPF is claimed to be a distillation of over 1,000 pages of policy contained in over 40 documents into just under 60 pages in one concise report (Haughton, 2012, 100). It represents part of the Coalition government's avowed aim to reduce the complexity of the planning system, make the planning system more accessible and to promote sustainable development. It replaced the previous national Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPGs) and Planning Policy Statements (PPSs). However, nationally significant infrastructure projects have not been addressed by the NPPF as these are to be set out in national policy statements for major infrastructure. The policies for sustainable development are set out in paragraphs 18-19 of the NPPF.

The NPPF also signalled the Government's intentions to revoke the Regional Spatial Strategies, although this was planned to take place only when the relevant environmental assessment had been undertaken. As no definite timetable for this had been set and the Government was seen as taking a cautious approach (RTPI, 2012), Local Planning Authorities at the time of writing (2013) still had regard to the 'Plan for the North East of England' Regional Spatial Strategy (Tetlow King Planning, 2012, para. 3.15).

Although much media attention and publicity was focussed on the government's localism legislation, a number of planners and policy practitioners considered that relatively little had changed. In the NPPF, however, the emphasis on the need to support economic growth through a 'presumption in favour of sustainable growth' together with the introduction of clauses on sustainable development have created a great deal more controversy. The references to sustainable growth and development have caused consternation due largely to their elusive and vague formulation and while this may

have been to the advantages of developers, it has been extensively critiqued by the environmental and conservationist lobby (Haughton, 2012, 100).

Towards the end of its first year in office in 2010, the Coalition government launched its neighbourhood planning policy. This was followed early in 2011 by DCLG inviting bids for its Neighbourhood Planning Vanguards programme of funding to test out the new approach and process prior to the enactment of the Localism Bill. Work on these was commenced prior to the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations being in place. The purpose was also to test the process before the Regulations were adopted in order that 'lessons learned' could be shared (DEFRAa, 2013a, 7). This was the first of five rounds, or 'waves' of funding subsequently made available for those local authorities which submitted applications for Neighbourhood Plans. The title 'vanguard' was soon abandoned in favour of the new designation 'Front Runner'. The initial number of twelve Frontrunners escalated rapidly to a total of 234 by the end of the fifth round. Three main delivery channels were established through which government funding for neighbourhood planning was distributed. These include:

- a government-funded pilot scheme awarding grants up to £20,000 for 234 front runners of neighbourhood planning – much of which was earmarked for advice on legal/planning issues, necessary local authority administration and the final referendum;
- £50 million support for local councils;
- the 'Supporting Communities and Neighbourhoods in Planning' programme projected to release approximately £3m for each year of the four years to four community support organisations which supported communities in planning for their neighbourhood. As part of this scheme, £3.2m was already allocated during 2011/12 to the four participating organisations.

Further funding to include grants of up to £30,000 from a new £10 million pot was made available to help local authorities support and advise groups taking forward neighbourhood plans. This was announced by Planning Minister Greg Clark in August 2012 (Carpenter, 2012). The funding for the 2012/13 financial year was to help councils ensure their communities were able to finalise neighbourhood plans. Payments of up to £30,000 were to be paid to councils to help them support and advise groups taking forward neighbourhood plans and to pay towards the examination of plans and a local referendum (DCLG, 2012).

The DCLG announced that the payments were to be made in two stages. The first of £5,000 was to be made once a neighbourhood area had been designated. The second payment of £25,000 was to be made on the successful completion of the independent examination of the neighbourhood plan (DCLG, 2012). Housing Minister Greg Clark announced that:

> 'This fund will give councils and community groups working on plans a big boost in getting their vision in place as soon as possible to ensure people can enjoy the benefits sooner rather than later.' (Planning Minister, Greg Clark, 2012).

The new funding was additional to the money paid out previously to Front Runners, with local authority chief executives provided with details on how to apply. Cash from the new £10 million fund was intended to help with the later stages of neighbourhood plan preparation, such as examinations and referendums (Kaszynska et al, 2012, 6).

Funding Rounds (Waves)	Dates	No. of funded Frontrunners
1st Wave	Early 2011	17
2nd Wave	Early 2011	30
3rd Wave	June 2011	43
4th Wave	August 2011	36
5th Wave	March 2012	108
Total		**234**

Table 4.1: Front Runners and the 'Five Waves' in England
(Source: Great Britain. DCLG 2012)

Following the first four waves of Front Runner applicants which had received government funding, an independent survey of Front Runners by SKM Colin Buchanan was undertaken across England in October 2011 to assess the different experiences of neighbourhood planning and identify lessons that could be learned from the process. The survey covered 45 of the 126 Front Runners that had succeeded in obtaining funding at that time and it provided feedback on a range of experiences, from how the plan was being funded, to how challenges and issues were being met and the lessons subsequently learned from the process (Herbert, 2012, 22). The survey was a mix of urban and rural frontrunners. Some of the key findings emerging from this were:

- The majority of those frontrunner neighbourhood plans surveyed were being led by communities.
- Many have spent time early in the process establishing effective governance, including involving local politicians.

- Most respondents were unclear as to what the core purpose of their neighbourhood plan would be and what form it would take beyond the inclusion of general policies and principles.
- Conversely nearly all were absolutely clear what their plan would not include.
- There was a wide variety of approaches being followed by the Front Runners – but it remained unclear what some plans would actually deliver.
- The biggest challenges were time and resources for the groups preparing the plans. Lack of knowledge and understanding of the planning system was also cited as an obstacle. Most of those who responded said that communities lack resources and expertise.
- The majority of respondents saw the process from commencement to submission for examination taking at least 18 months. This raised doubts as to the number of communities that would have the stamina for an 18 month neighbourhood plan process. The examination process and the referendum would extend the time taken.
- Funding was generally being spread between officer support and passing directly to the Parish or Neighbourhood Forum. Some earmarked the funding for document production, the examination and referendum. Funding was thus being spread thinly and there were concerns as to how the overall process would be funded.

The findings from the survey reflected the experiences of neighbourhood plan Front Runners at a relatively early stage in the process, less than a year following the publication of the Localism Act. The preparation of neighbourhood plans typically takes 18 months to two years to complete and the survey findings have therefore captured only a part of the process, while the outcomes are yet to be known.

In 2012, less than a year after the Localism Act was published, research on rural frontrunners was commissioned by DEFRA, with inputs from DCLG (DEFRA, 2013a). The research, conducted by the consultancy firm Parsons Brinckerhoff, presented an overview of the experiences of five selected Frontrunners in rural England, drawing on a number of common issues or themes through which each case study was examined. The purpose of the report was to produce a summary of findings on the neighbourhood planning process which could assist community groups in addressing specifically rural issues in drawing up a neighbourhood plan. These included the delivery of housing and

local development need, governance of the neighbourhood plan and community consultation/engagement.

By this point only two had passed the examination stage and gone through to referendum. The research provides a summary of the processes which had involved various stakeholders and agencies in the course of producing neighbourhood plans. The authors of the report have sought to distance it from the plethora of manuals on 'how to do' neighbourhood planning. But as a guide for communities hoping to draw up a neighbourhood plan, it falls short of providing sufficient level of three-dimensional detail on the gritty reality of neighbourhood planning as was likely to have been experienced in each of the case studies. Among the issues which could have been provided a more in-depth understanding of the processes include partnership arrangements, developer management, conflict management, stakeholder engagement and governance.

Front Runners in Northumberland

As previously indicated, under the Localism Act, an amount of up to £50 million was committed by the government until March 2015 to support local authorities in England in their required duty to support town and parish councils in neighbourhood planning. The Front Runner pilot programme in Northumberland was initiated in 2012 with a first round, or 'wave' of government funding amounting to £680,0000 which generated 17 applications (Kaszynska et al, 2012).

The first successful application to achieve Front Runner status in 2011 was from the village of Allendale, located in the former district of Tynedale in the west of Northumberland. The county planning staff has been on hand to provide guidance throughout the Allendale neighbourhood planning process, including the county's Chief Planner and other planning staff who have been involved in the preparation of the various drafts of the neighbourhood plan, as well as preparing the relevant policies. Allendale has also received assistance from other institutions such as Newcastle University in the form of technical assistance as well as media attention through being on the BBC Politics Show.

The Council's stated intention is that the investment of LPA staff time in Allendale has been made in order to generate lessons for other Front Runners across the county. The

Council's Head of Planning Services has emphasised the scale of the county's planning department resources that have been allocated to the first Front Runner, Allendale. The intention was that this should lead to 'lessons learned' from which other Front Runners could benefit.

In the subsequent four waves of government funding that followed (amounting to £2,520,000), a further four bids for Front Runner status were successfully made from different locations in the county. These included the market town of Alnwick to the north; the parish of Tarset with Greystead to the west, Cramlington, a previous mining town in the south east (9 miles north of Newcastle) and Morpeth, the county town of Northumberland some 15 miles north of Newcastle. Tarset with Greystead are also partly located in the Northumberland National Park and this therefore requires that both the planning authorities of the NNPA and NCC provide support to the neighbourhood planning process, with the NNPA as lead. As with Front Runners elsewhere in England, the approaches adopted by each of these five have varied widely.
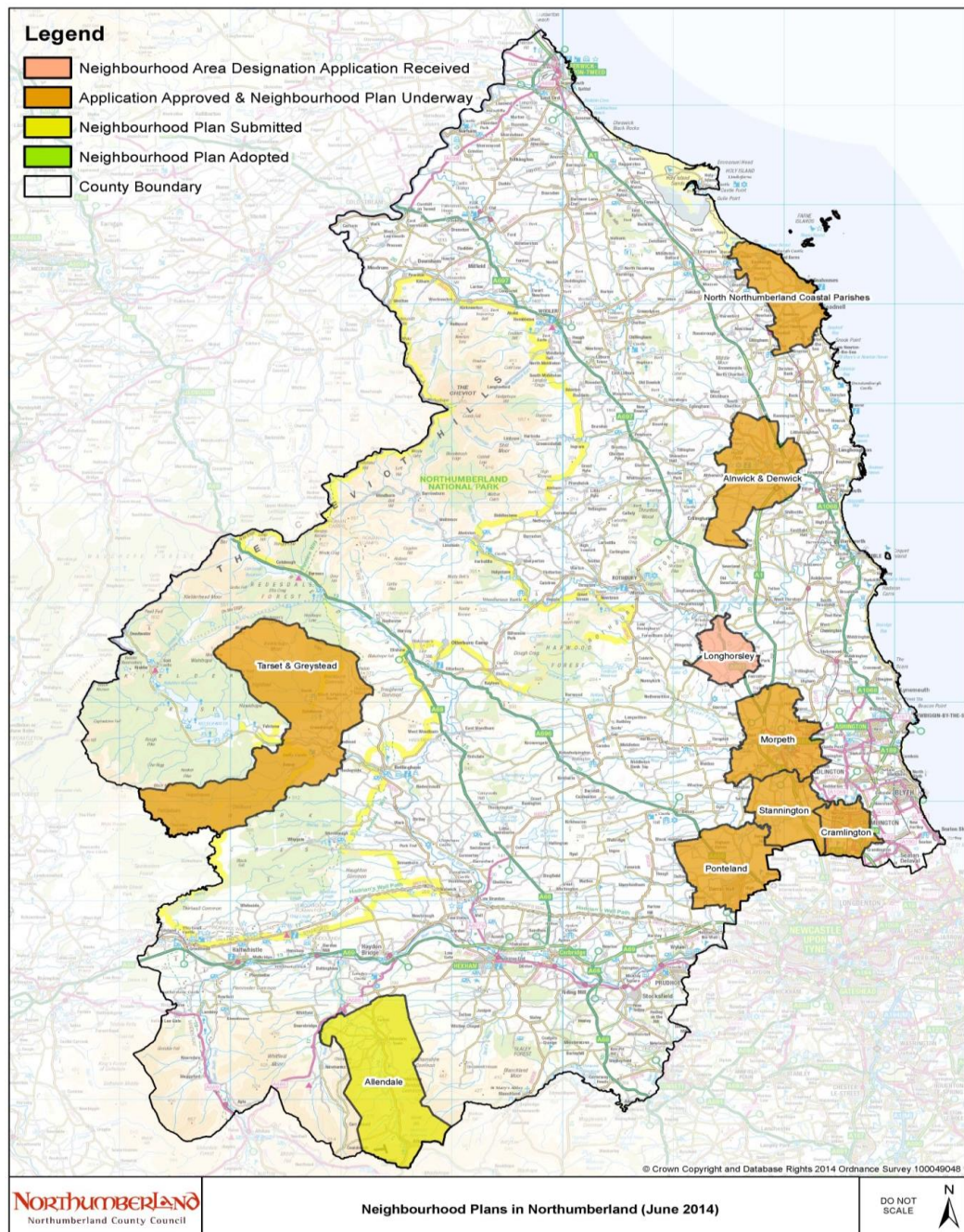
Figure 4.1: Map showing location of Northumberland Front Runners 2014
(Source: Northumberland County Council, Infonet, 2014)

The table below summarises the progress and current status of Northumberland's five Front Runners. Two of these Frontrunners, Alnwick and Tarset/Greystead have been selected as sub-case studies for the purposes of this thesis for more detailed examination.

Frontrunners in Northumberland	Date of FR application and/or designated N.A./Wave	Draft NDP	Examination	Referendum
1. Allendale	July 2011 & 04.05.12 /W1	Sept. 2013	TBA	TBA
2. Alnwick	31.08.11 & 19.06.12/W4	Autumn 2013	Summer 2014	Autumn 2014
3. Tarset&Greystead	10.01.13/W2	April 2013	TBA	TBA.
4. Morpeth	04.04.12 and 09.01.13/W5	Spring 2014	TBA	TBA
5. Cramlington	04.04.12/W5	TBA	TBA	TBA

Table 4.2: Status of Northumberland's Frontrunners
(Source: Northumberland County Council, Neighbourhood Planning, 2014b)

At the time this research was undertaken, Northumberland's Front Runners were all at different stages of completion. While the first of the Front Runners, Allendale, had completed its community consultation stages and passed the examination stage, the Alnwick and Denwick Neighbourhood Plan, initiated shortly afterwards, was not scheduled to reach the referendum stage before Autumn 2014. Morpeth, in contrast, was progressing at a fast pace, but Cramlington was (at the time of writing) still in the early stages of neighbourhood plan development.

The Localism Act 2011 is gradually being implemented throughout England. It is clear that many observers are sceptical of its ambitious scope and its capacity to achieve its proclaimed policy outcomes of decentralisation and community empowerment, particularly in the light of what is seen as the centralised nature of English politics (Corry and Stoker, 2002; Davies, 2009; Bentley and Pugalis, 2013). Despite the measures in the Localism Act intended to decentralise planning, such as the abolition of Regional Spatial Strategies together with its associated housing targets, a number of academics consider that central government still retains control over a range of planning measures (Holman and Rydin, 2012; Clifford and Tewdwr-Jones, 2013 and Haughton, 2012. This is seen as contributing to the tensions observed between central control and increased participation and 'a sense of hybridity in the system' (Holman and Rydin, 2012, 5). This is exemplified particularly in the regime of appeals that continue to be a key feature of the planning system, where development that is refused permission is subsequently reviewed by the Planning Inspectorate (PINS), a central government agency (Holden and Rydin, 2012, 5). Further, the final decision on major infrastructure projects now rests with the Secretary of State under the new powers transferred from the former Infrastructure Planning Commission (Holman and Rydin, 2012, 5). With regard

to neighbourhood plans, an analysis of PINS statistics showed the increased scale of intervention by the Secretary of State in 'recovered' development appeals, where the Secretary of State has the final say in how the appeal should be resolved. In 2010-11, Pickles took a total of 38 recovered appeal decisions; this rose to 56 in 2011-12. Over the year 2012-13, the Secretary of State decided 33 appeals; this number was exceeded in the first six months of the following financial year, when it again rose to 36 (Carpenter, 2014, 16). This increase in interventions by the Secretary of State was not due to a corresponding rise in overall appeal decisions (Carpenter, 2014, 16). The increasingly 'interventionist role' of central government is seen as a political move 'so that voters can see that the government is attempting to support housing growth' (Carpenter, 2014, 16). But the inconsistency of some of Pickles' decisions have also given rise to the view that:

> 'If you find that inspectors are not doing what the secretary of state wants, it's pretty much always because it's not clear what the secretary of state wants' (Carpenter, 2014 17).

As discussed in the next sections, the economic context in which the Localism Act is presently being implemented, at a time of austerity, presents specific challenges for rural areas in England.

4.4 Rural Development Policy in England

To assist in understanding whether, and in what ways, localism may be shaping the ways in which rural development initiatives are approached, it is first necessary to understand the ways in which the English countryside is an object of governance and how this has shifted over the last two decades.

4.4.1 Rural development policy in England 1997- 2000

When the New Labour Government came to office in 1997, it was on a mission to re-design and modernise rural policy, something that had not been achieved or even attempted for over 50 years (Woods, 2008a, 6). During a speech made to a farming conference in 2000, Blair stated that: "..what's striking is how similar the priorities are of those in the countryside and those living in towns". This set the stage for a review of central government's approach to rural policy (Woods, 2008a, 17). A range of White Papers, new legislation, new policies, strategies and a raft of initiatives related to re-assessing and researching the rural were released throughout New Labour's administrations. Its 2000 Rural White Paper 'Our Countryside: The Future – A Fair

Deal for Rural England' (Great Britain, DETR/MAFF 2000) has been seen as the high point of New Labour's rural policy reforms (Ward, 2008).

One of the key elements of New Labour's programme, however, was its regionalisation agenda. The implementation of this major institutional change played a critical role in the way rural development policy was treated during New Labour's time in office and ultimately "set in motion a process of retrenchment for the delivery of rural policy" (Goodwin, 2008, 46). As part of the regionalisation agenda, the RDA White Paper (Great Britain, DETR, 1997) showed the way in which rural concerns were to be devolved to the regional level (Goodwin, 2008). The long-standing Rural Development Commission (which had promoted rural development since 1909) was to be dismantled and its economic functions transferred to the new Regional Development Agencies, while its social and community functions went to the Countryside Agency and its conservation functions were allocated to English Nature.

The Rural White Paper 'Our Countryside: The Future – A Fair Deal for Rural England' (Great Britain, DETR/MAFF 2000) presented a new rural vision for the RDAs. They were to assist rural businesses, combat rural deprivation and promote sustainable development. It also promised to 'empower local communities so that decisions are taken with their active participation and ownership' (Ward, 2008, 34). The Rural White Paper was accompanied by a range of government reforms, starting at the centre and reaching to the Parish Councils. It also set out the ways in which urban and rural areas, from then on, would be treated as interdependent. The White Paper's four themes were of the countryside as living, working, protected and vibrant (Goodwin, 2008; Ward, 2008). The process of mainstreaming rural concerns in England had begun.

Alongside the preparation for the Rural White Paper, work was also being carried out on the Rural Audit, a 'health check' on rural Britain. It was accompanied by two major reports on the rural economy by the Performance and Innovation Unit (PIU) in 1999 and 2000. These provided a set of policy priorities for rural areas focussing on issues that were common to both urban and rural areas such as healthcare, education, employment, crime and public transport, but not the traditional issues long associated with rural areas, of farming and agriculture (Goodwin, 2008). Goodwin has pointed out how this shift paved the way towards "rendering the rural thinkable", or in other words, creating a discourse of rural reality which made it amenable to political negotiation and

debate. In this process, traditional and familiar components long identified with rural matters, such as agriculture, were pushed down the agenda, making way for a revised construction of the countryside where the similarities between 'rural' and 'urban' areas took precedence over the differences (Goodwin, 2008).

The processes of regionalisation were interrupted in England by the outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) in 2001. This was one of the most destructive outbreaks anywhere in the world (Ward, 2008, 35). It caused immense disruption to the farming industry and the rural economy. Within the year, the Ministry of Agriculture, Farming and Fisheries (MAFF) was replaced by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). One of the enquiries set up in 2001 to investigate the FMD outbreak was the Policy Commission on the Future of Farming and Food, which was charged with advising the government on economically and environmentally sustainable ways to improve the farming and food industries (Ward, 2008, 35). Most of its 105 recommendations were taken up by DEFRA subsequently in its 2002 Strategy for Sustainable Farming and Food, where the expansion of agri-environment schemes was recommended together with making farm and food industry more competitive to "become more closely connected with its markets and the food supply chain" (Ward, 2008, 36).

In 2003 Lord Haskins was commissioned to undertake a review of rural policy delivery. As Ward observes, this would have served the purpose adequately enough, as a "tidying up (of) the machinery of government" was overdue (Ward, 2008, 37). However, a wider remit of institutional change was also addressed in the Haskins Review. The recommendations of the Haskins Report, the majority of which were adopted, introduced comprehensive reforms to the way rural policy was delivered in England as well as major institutional changes; the RDAs were to delegate the management of the delivery of rural development programmes to local partnerships, local authorities and voluntary organisations were to take over the responsibility for the delivery of schemes and services to rural communities' (Haskins Review, 2003, 57). The Labour government's Rural White Paper of 2000 had earlier recognised the extent to which rural differences had been insufficiently incorporated into mainstream policymaking. This was addressed in the Government's 2004 Rural Strategy where the main priorities for rural policy over the next 3-5 years were set out (Goodwin, 2008, 52). Alongside a modernising of the institutional aspects of rural policy delivery was also an agenda for

addressing the economic, social and community development aspects of rural development (Goodwin, 2008, 53). These were made part of the remit of the Commission for Rural Communities (CRC) set up with a remit to monitor the delivery of rural policy across government, advise departments on rural issues, and be the 'voice' particularly for disadvantaged rural communities (Woods, 2008, 270). But as Goodwin notes, efforts were once again focussed on the 'how' rather than the 'what' of rural policy, marked by a preoccupation with 'targets, monitoring, reporting, rationalising, integrating, devolving and streamlining' (Goodwin, 2008, 52). Responsibility for the socio-economic aspects of rural policy were being pushed down the scalar ladder, and in the process, as Hewitt and Thompson note, "the capacity of national government to develop a coherent and consistent rural policy" was being undermined (Hewitt and Thompson, 2012, 268).

In 2005, a further change was effected when the responsibility for rural policy delivery was transferred from the Countryside Agency to the new RDAs and rural development policy was effectively 'embedded in the regional' (Ward et al, 2003, 203). This, according to Woods, marked the point at which tensions started to arise between the new modernised rural development policy of New Labour and its regionalisation agenda (Woods, 2008, 20). The following year, the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act in 2006 abolished the Countryside Agency (itself a product of the merger in 1999 of the Countryside Commission and the Rural Development Commission) and transferred its remaining divisions to Natural England. An OECD review of rural policy in England published in 2011 noted that:

> 'The period 1997-2001 is notable for the plethora of new institutions, strategies, priorities and reviews related to rural policy. The extensive institutional changes of this period were as much about improving economic development in English regions as addressing rural issues, and the creation of the RDAs reflected this concern (OECD, 2011, 21).

Besides the many institutional changes introduced by New Labour, devolution, rural governance and engaging rural communities were also key considerations. The 2000 Rural White Paper for rural England set out the rationale for transferring existing state responsibilities for community development and governance to local communities, seeing the strength to be found in rural communities in England as contributing much to the character of the countryside (Gardner, 2008). The White Paper went on to state that: 'a healthy and active voluntary and community sector is essential to the effective

functioning of society - urban and rural' (DETR/MAFF 2000, 155). This finds echoes both in past Conservative endorsements of 'active citizenship' and the Coalition government's advocacy of a Big Society, as was noted previously in Chapter 3. During the previous Conservative administrations, under both Thatcher and John Major, a new direction in rural policy had been taken in order to 'capitalise on the efforts of the voluntary sector by encouraging citizens to become more active in providing for their own well-being' (Cheshire, 2006, 41). Particularly under John Major, this principle was supported by the strategy of 'governing through communities' (Murdoch, 1997, 112).

The principle of governing through communities set in motion by the previous Conservative administration was continued by New Labour. In the first year of coming to power, the Active Communities Unit was set up at the Home Office (Gardner, 2008, 171). As New Labour scaled the focus of its rural regeneration strategies downwards to town and village level, community became 'an instrument of public policy' (Gardner, 2008, 175). For New Labour, it was the small towns and villages characterising rural areas that were considered key sites for the strategy of 'governing through communities' (Gardner, 2008, 184). In rural areas, parish and town councils perform the tasks of local government and have a wide range of powers and responsibilities, but quality and performance have always been uneven across the country.

New Labour's intent to modernise rural policy is generally seen as having been achieved in the main (OECD, 2011). But this process was undertaken at the same time as regionalisation; the consequence was the 'embedding' of rural policy in regional policy with rural policy essentially becoming a sub-category of regional policy (Ward, 2008, 39). Among the issues noted as unresolved throughout New Labour's time in office include the implementation of its new localism agenda, lack of clarity on how decentralisation was to work and what should be the role of local authorities. Alongside this were the challenges that beset rural organisations, as they were obliged to divert their resources into managing the consequences of the many institutional changes wrought throughout the New Labour administration (Ward, 2008, 39).

By the time New Labour's term of office ended in 2010, rural development policy had undergone major changes. The OECD 2011 review of rural development policy in England noted the extent of change in rural policy in England since its 'eclipse' under New Labour's regionalisation strategy. While some observers have seen regionalisation

as the main structural means used to dismantle national rural policy (Ward, 2008, 39), others have viewed it as more a case of its 'retrenchment' (Goodwin, 2008, 46). Table 4.3 summarises the milestones in rural development policy in England and Wales from 1999 to 2011.

Event	Context and Significance
1999 Countryside Agency formed	The CA replaces the Countryside Commission and Rural Development Commission as principal English rural development agency
1999 Creation of Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) (Regional Development Agency Act 1998)	Recognition of a regional tier for rural development – charged with implementation of parts of the Rural Development Programme
2000 Rural White Paper	Labour Government broadly in agreement with the Conservative 1995 Rural White Paper – communities should empowered
2000 Countryside and Rights of Way Act	Extended right of access on foot to open country for all people. Largely met with public indifference
2001 Creation of DEFRA	Merger of the Agriculture and Environment ministries with 'agriculture' no longer in a ministry title. Marks the ascending importance of environment at the expense of farming and rural matters
2001 Foot and Mouth	A farming crisis that led to many 'rural' policies being reasserted as 'agricultural'. Farmers fully compensated but other rural people who suffered did not do so well.
2003 Haskins Review	Intention was to 'streamline' rural policy but ended up being more about streamlining rural administration
2004 DEFRA Rural Strategy	An attempt to implement the Haskins Review. Accompanied by regional rural strategies but in the end, largely ignored.
2005 Hunting ban (Hunting Act 2004)	Hugely controversial and difficult to implement but took the pressure off the development of other rural policies that might consider the welfare of people as well as the welfare of animals
2006 Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act	After Haskins, Countryside Agency replaced by two agencies: Natural England and Commission for Rural Communities as the principal national rural development agencies.
2007 Sub-national Review	Declared that urban areas at the heart of 'city-regions' should be the engines of economic change. Many rural areas fell outside of city regions, however.
2007 (to 2013) New European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development	Next Phase of CAP reform – two 'Pillars' with Pillar I for farm income support and Pillar II for rural development but most of Pillar II still goes to farmers.
2008 Taylor review on rural planning and housing	Explicitly addresses rural problems in relation to spatial planning and local needs housing. Some of its recommendations found their way into national Planning Policy statements
2009 House of Commons Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee report on the rural economy	Not much about rural economic policy but a lot about how DEFRA's policies for rural communities and economies are unworkable.
2011 Closure of the Commission for Rural Communities and of most of the Regional Development Agencies	Part of the austerity and anti-quango measures of the Coalition government

Table 4.3: Milestones in Rural Development Policy in England and Wales 1999-2011
(Source: Curry and Moseley, 2011, 11)

4.4.2 Rural development policy in England since 2010

This section follows national rural policy through the policy and institutional turbulence characterising the early days of the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition government up to the end of the EU financial programming period 2007-2013. The

legacy in terms of rural affairs left behind in 2010 by New Labour for the incoming Coalition government was, as indicated above, a 'modernised' and 'mainstreamed' national rural policy in a 'regionalised' England. But it was also a rural development policy that in England, at any rate, was seen to be in a state of retrenchment, if not eclipse. The Coalition government's introduction of its new overarching policies of localism, 'Big Society' and economic growth cross-cut rural development priorities at national level.

Among the Coalition government's first actions on election to power was the dismantling of the institutional landscape furnished by New Labour. The new policy agendas were presented as the Coalition government's own brand of localism and decentralisation, but underneath the political camouflage, the policy continuity that was in effect carried over from New Labour on both these issues is evident. The difference was that these policies were being pursued against the backdrop of a global financial crisis, economic recession and public spending cuts, contributing to what has been described as 'austerity localism' (Featherstone et al, 2012, 177). New Labour's regionalisation approach was swiftly curtailed by the Coalition government with the dismantling of the RDAs, which had been key players in the delivery of rural policy, particularly since the Foot and Mouth epidemic in 2001. Responsibility for most of rural development policy then fell to DEFRA, while DCLG became the new home for rural planning policy (OECD, 2011, 22). With the removal of the RDAs, rural policy was once again brought back into central government.

4.4.3 DEFRA and rural development policy
Since its creation in 2001 by New Labour, DEFRA, the 'home' for rural development policy, has undergone numerous structural changes and its remit has varied widely over the years (Hewitt and Thompson, 2012, 256). The three priorities for rural policy identified under New Labour following the publication of the 2004 Rural Strategy, had been economic and social regeneration, social justice for all and enhancing the value of the countryside (OECD, 2011, 21). On the election of the Coalition government in 2010, the three main rural development priorities assigned to DEFRA were firstly, to support and develop British farming and promote sustainable food production, secondly, to improve the environment and biodiversity and thirdly, to support a strong and sustainable green economy, resilient to climate change (DEFRA, 2011, 3). Constant policy shifts characterised New Labour's time in office in the intervening years but one

constant factor throughout was the priority given to farming and food production and DEFRA continues to be dominated by the land-based sector (Hewitt and Thompson, 2012, 256).

In June 2010, a review by the Environment Secretary into DEFRA's 'arms-length' bodies resulted in the announcement of the Government's intention to replace the CRC by the Rural Community Policy Unit (RCPU), a unit within DEFRA (HC, 1st April 2011, col 41WS). The CRC, originally set up by New Labour only five years previously, had as its role the analysis and monitoring of socio-economic rural policy issues. As a result of the review, it was initially down-sized with some of its capacity and functions transferred to the RCPU. The CRC was finally closed in March 2013, with a consequent loss of research capacity into wider socio-economic rural issues, rural disadvantage and rural development policy and its implementation. A vacuum was left therefore with regard to the analysis and monitoring of the social condition of countryside at national level; as Paul Milbourne has noted, "The responsibility for monitoring the impacts of government policy on rural welfare now rests solely with the academic community.." (Milbourne, 2011, 57). The RCPU had itself been much reduced in size but one of its roles is assisting Government Departments to rural-proof their policies before decisions are taken (Derounian, 2013). The RCPU is intended to 'operate as a centre of rural expertise, supporting and coordinating activity within and beyond DEFRA', but in the course of providing evidence to the House of Commons on the topic of localism and the Big Society in rural communities, James Derounian questioned 'how, at a time of policy-led localism, a centralised unit within DEFRA and based in London, can effectively generate policy that is relevant across England' (HC. 16 July 2013. Vol II. Ev w55).

In November 2011, a year after the review, a Consultation was undertaken on the new rural policy functions within Government. Proposals were drawn up for a Government-wide rural statement. The rapidity with which New Labour had churned out its rural policies, strategies, and green and white papers has not been reflected by the incoming Coalition government, which took nearly a year to produce its long-awaited Rural Statement. Contributions from other government departments, such as DCLG, HM Treasury and No. 10 are seen as the main likely cause of the delays (Sellick, 2012). The Rural Statement, first discussed in April 2011, was eventually published in September 2012, with three main sections, economic growth, rural engagement and quality of life.

Among the proposals in the Rural Statement were the creation of five Rural Growth Networks, Rural Community Broadband Fund and a Rural Proofing Package, all of which were cast as new initiatives but which in fact were existing projects. In spite of the lengthy period of time taken to produce the Rural Statement, it received only a lukewarm response from practitioners, policy-makers and observers. The main critiques were that it offered nothing new, that it was simply 'a litany or repackaging of existing support systems' (Derounian, 2012) or 'a recap of existing initiatives' (Sellick, 2012). However, others have taken a more positive view of it, and while acknowledging that the Rural Statement offered 'no surprises', confirmed that it was a coherent package comprising "a mix of policies across government aimed at assisting rural businesses and communities, together with bespoke measures to support growth in rural economies, following on from the Rural Economy Growth Review" (Atterton and Rowe, 2012, 5).

While the mainstreaming policy approach to rurality in England is regarded as 'unique in OECD countries', caveats were sounded in the OECD 2011 review of rural policy in England (OECD, 2011, 22). DEFRA has undergone many re-alignments as well as institutional and structural changes since its creation; its new responsibilities now include the environment and climate change which 'threaten to divert attention and resources from rural affairs' (OECD, 2011, 24). Furthermore, while DEFRA is in charge of administering most rural policy, responsibility for rural planning policy and economic development falls to DCLG, resulting in rural development being divided between two separate government departments (OECD, 2011, 24). The challenge for DEFRA is to coordinate these objectives, as well as "inserting the 'evidence' of rurality into the policy discourse at the appropriate time" (OECD, 2011, 24).

The original intention behind the creation of DEFRA was "partly aimed at raising the profile of rural affairs within government" (Atterton, 2008). The scope and jurisdiction of the Department over rural development policies were expanded in order to maintain momentum (OECD, 2011, 163). But as is noted in the OECD Review, the rural affairs division in DEFRA has not only been reduced in form and function, but as its attention becomes increasingly focussed on issues such as climate change and environmental sustainability, rural affairs are being marginalised at the national level. Observers have seen rural affairs "becoming politically marginalised and being allocated ever diminishing staff and financial resources" (Atterton, 2008). Some see the rural policy journey over the past decade as having created a cross-roads for those living in the

countryside, with issues such as affordable housing, cutbacks in public services and planning serving as reminders that the 'countryside is not a picture postcard' (Sellick, 2012). This is endorsed by the OECD review, with its observation that: "The speed at which England jumped from specific rural policies at the national level to no rural specific interventions as mandated by mainstreaming may have prevented wider take-up" (OECD, 2011, 23).

4.4.4 DEFRA and the Rural Development Programme for England

Under New Labour, the RDAs had been responsible for a wide range of rural policy delivery, accompanied by substantial funding. These included 'key funding streams of the EU Rural Development Regulation 2007-13 Rural Development Programme for England and the LEADER approach (Hewitt and Thompson, 2012, 258). With the dismembering of the RDAs, the administration of EU rural development funds was assigned to DEFRA (Hewitt and Thompson, 2012, 258).

The RDPE has four axes, or objectives, for the programming period 2007-13: Axis 1 for improving the competitiveness of the farming and forestry sector; Axis 2 for agri-environment and land management schemes and Axis 3 for improving rural quality of life and diversifying the rural economy. The fourth Axis, the LEADER programme, is a mainstream delivery mechanism for RDPE funding in rural areas. The main focus of RDPE is to maintain the character of the English countryside; by far the greatest allocation of funds, £3.3 billion, is for agri-environment and land management schemes under Axis 2 (OECD, 2011, 136). For both Axis 1 and 3 measures, £540 million is available to promote the competitiveness and innovative capacity of businesses in rural areas. Axis 4 receives the least, which is 5% (£105 million) for the LEADER programme (OECD, 2011, 136). The LEADER Programme's success in its implementation in the UK (as in Europe) is not without its critics but its potential for harnessing creativity and innovation particularly at a time of austerity and government spending cutbacks provides sufficient grounds for its separate treatment here.

4.5 DEFRA, LEPs and the RDPE: 2014-20

During the first half of 2013, DEFRA was engaged in a series of consultative roadshows throughout England which included 'regional' rural networks (HMG, 2013). The consultation programme, entitled 'The development of the Next Rural Development Programme in England (2014-2020)' was a programme of meetings set up through the

Rural Farming Network (RFN) where DEFRA wanted to: "..engage informally with as wide a range of interested persons as possible to help … develop the next rural Development Programme in England" (DEFRA, 2013b). Among the agenda points was that of the funding arrangements for the next RDPE programming period 2014-2020. The document produced by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) in April 2013 finally shed some light on the many questions and concerns raised on the future arrangements for post-2013 European funding, particularly with regard to the role of the LEPs. The document, 'Structural and Investment Fund Strategies' indicated the arrangements for the new Growth Programme in which the two Structural Funds ERDF and ESF would be combined and also include part of the EAFRD (BIS, 2013), as illustrated in Figure 4.2 below.
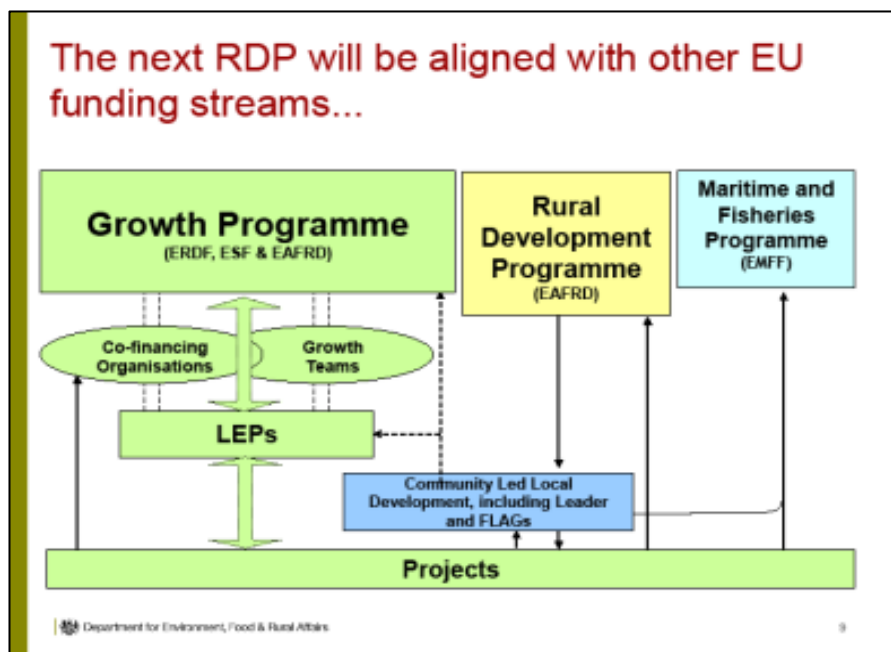
Figure 4.2: EU Funding Programme 2014-2020
(Source: DEFRA, 2013b)

LEPs are to be responsible for designing and delivering strategies on using the funding and to ensure outcomes are delivered, but will only receive a 'notional allocation' from the funds. EAFRD funding is earmarked for 'activities in rural areas'. LEPs are to "engage directly with rural partners to identify and address local priorities' as well as to plan outcomes to benefit rural areas" (BIS, 2013).   LEPs were required to submit the first draft of their ESIF plans by 7th October 2013 which, after government feedback, were re-submitted for approval. Plans were finalised in July 2014 (European Funding Network, 2014).

The North East LEP was one of five LEPs selected by DEFRA to receive funding of £3.2 m for its Rural Growth Network bid. In April 2013, DEFRA officials visited the North East to discuss issues related to the North East Independent Economic Review and RGN progress. The RGN bid was submitted on behalf of the NE LEP by the North East Farming and Rural Advisory Network (NEFRAN). A programme of pilot initiatives to strengthen rural economic growth and inform national rural economic policies was drawn up. These include grant support to setting up rural 'enterprise hubs' and a Small Businesss Growth Fund, improving rural broadband access and promoting research into the rural economy. Among the recipients of support for the new enterprise hubs were the Cheviot Centre in Wooler and Cawledge Park in Alnwick.

Since LEPs were initially set up, critiques on the weak links that appeared to exist between the LEPs and their rural areas were exacerbated by a lack of information over future European funding for rural areas. The significance of LEADER funding for rural areas in the current context of austerity localism and economic cutbacks is acknowledged in the BIS report 'Structural and Investment Fund Strategies' where it states: "community involvement will be key". LEADER funding will be continued under the next EU funding round for RDPE 2014-2020, in rural areas where:

> 'at least 5% of the RDP will as now have to be spent through Local Action Groups operating on LEADER principles.' (Great Britain. Depart for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2013, 4).

The document goes on to invite LEPs to also contribute to the LEADER Programme (Great Britain. Depart for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2013, 4). On April 11, 2014, DEFRA set out the requirements and expectations for the next programming cycle in its National Delivery Framework (NDF) for LEADER 2014-2020 (Sellick, 2014). The NDF sets out the policy priorities and measures that are expected to be met through the Local Development Strategies (LDS) prepared by the Local Action Groups in each LEADER area. Over 90 LEADER Local Action Groups (LAGs) have now been set up, involved in preparing bids and strategies to secure EU funding for the funding programme 2015-2020 (ACRE, 2014). DEFRA is to assess, on a competitive application basis, which of the LDSs is to receive the next round of LEADER funding (Sellick, 2014, para 4).

4.6 Conclusion: Rural Governance - and a 'Rural' Big Society?

The Localism Act makes only one reference to the term 'rural' and that is in relation to Greater London. For rural areas, the Localism Act and its promise of community empowerment engages a different institutional landscape and different governance processes – small towns and villages, town councils and parish councils. Rural England is served by different and more complex structures of local government than urban areas. These include two tiers of principal local authorities, National Park Authorities in many areas and an extensive tier of parish and town councils providing a significant governance overhead for local communities. The costs of local democracy at the parish and town council level are high, for example contested parish and town council bye-elections and local referendum (CRC/Respublica, 2011, 10). Not all of rural England has been 'parished' although Northumberland can now claim to be. It is in this institutional context that the implementation of the Localism Act is taking place.

In a speech entitled 'The Value of Parishes' delivered at the NALC Larger Councils conference on 28th November 2012, Eric Pickles, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, stated:

> '..we love our parish people. You are localism's magic wand…we all know parishes have the credibility to lead their communities. So we've made sure you're calling the shots" (DCLG, 2012).

But in the same speech, he also informed his audience that their precepts were rising too fast, at an average of 3% and that they should adhere to the council tax freeze adopted by principal councils (Burton, 2012). A DCLG decision was also taken that parishes "would bear some of the costs of cuts in localised council tax benefit through adjustments to their tax base" (Burton, 11.12.2012). The consequent reduction in resources available to parishes has raised the question for some observers as to how local authorities were supposed to run services "such as libraries, planning and economic regeneration, on a rapidly withering budget?" (Derounian, 2013). The centralist tendencies emerging yet again have prompted reactions from observers that: "the words may be localist but government actions tend towards centralisation" (Derounian, (2013) and that parishes were "under the same centralist control principal councils face and, in particular, coming under the Treasury's radar" (Burton, 2012).

In response to the Coalition government's launch of its Big Society agenda, the conclusion of a joint report by CRC and Respublica issued in 2011 was that: "We believe that rural communities could and should be a great test bed for the further

development of the Government's Big Society approach" (CRC/Respublica, 2011, 2). The report went on to state that 'many rural areas already possess the 'building blocks of the Big Society, containing a strong sense of community identity and actively converting this into productive forms of social capital' (CRC/Respublica, 2011, 2). The report also identified specific rural governance challenges presented by rural areas among which were included the complexity and cost of local governance; infrastructure (transport and broadband provision); maintaining community assets; an urban bias to procurement procedures; reductions in state spending and a rapidly aging population (CRC/ResPublica, 2011, 2).

However, the close alignment with the 'rural way of life' may not be consistent with the Big Society ideals. The underlying assumptions that rural areas already possess the necessary characteristics for the building of a Big Rural Society, of a shared community identity and rural solidarity have been disproved through research. As indicated above, rural areas have not benefitted equally either from New Labour's rural policy interventions or from its new localism strategy. England's countryside is differentiated. In times of economic recession, as has been the case in England for some years, rural areas in particular have become comparatively disadvantaged (Shortall and Shucksmith, 2001). The ideals and ambitions of the Big Society may have to be achieved through other channels, but models from the LEADER approach may prove one kind of solution.

This chapter has traced the political origins of localism from its earliest origins through its heyday in England in the 1930s and 1940s up to its current enshrinement in legislation under the Coalition government. It has also shown that ideological differences between right and left of England's political parties have gradually become less sharply defined as the policy of 'localism as neoliberalism' takes hold.

A brief review of the history of community level planning since its origins in the 1940s shows the legacy of the thousands of country-wide parish plans and appraisals undertaken since this time, many of which have provided the basis for many neighbourhood plans. The limit to these rural planning activities was demonstrated by their marginalisation by the statutory planning process, itself heavily criticised by the Coalition government on coming to power in 2011. Community led planning acquired a new statutory force in the form of neighbourhood plans. However, the constraints on

the new local level planning initiatives have been seen as arising from an economic climate of austerity as well as neoliberal influences requiring value for every public pound spent. The Front Runner pilot programme launched by DEFRA in 2011 has only been available for a limited number of neighbourhood plans, with little in the way of government funding available for those outside the programme. Rural planning policy and economic development falls under the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), creating a complex and, at times, incoherent policy arena in which neighbourhood plans are produced by communities, which adds to the challenges faced.

The policy shift from regionalism to localism was a major political landmark for the Coalition government, but also put England out of step with nearly every other country in Europe in governance terms. This, alongside the abolition of the RDAs and the downturn in the economy all contributed to an 'austerity' localism being implemented with immediate loss of support for rural areas - but also with uneven impacts. The introduction of LEPs to replace RDAs led to early critiques of their urban bias and lack of rural focus. LEPs, bidding competitively, could apply for RGN funding. For the North East, the NE LEP acquired funding with which to support rural economic growth. The opportunities and benefits for rural areas generally however may be seen as deriving from improved links between the North East LEP and LEADER/LAGs.

Chapter 5.   Localism and Neighbourhood Planning: Alnwick and Denwick Neighbourhood Plan

5.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the Alnwick and Denwick Neighbourhood Plan (ADNP). The parishes of Alnwick and Denwick made a joint application for designation as a Neighbourhood Planning area in 2012 which was accepted in 2013. The Alnwick and Denwick Neighbourhood Plan was accepted into the government-funded Front Runner Neighbourhood Plan programme in 2011. This chapter first provides background information on the town of Alnwick and the smaller adjoining parish of Denwick and includes a socio-economic profile and demographics of the two parishes. A brief overview of the local governance arrangements is then provided, followed by a summary of the main planning issues faced by the ADNP Steering Group. The findings of my research are then presented and analysed.

5.2 Background

The market town of Alnwick, in North Northumberland, lies just off the A1 between the city of Newcastle-upon-Tyne some 33 miles to the south and the border town of Berwick-upon-Tweed about 30 miles to the north. Its equidistance between these two centres, on a major north-south route and at a crossing point of the River Aln, contributed to its rise historically as a staging post. It acquired strategic significance over the years, reflected in the presence of Alnwick Castle, a major border stronghold for 900 years and home to the Percy family since 1309. It is currently home to the present Duke of Northumberland.

Alnwick, lying outside the area of the northern coalfield, has remained largely unaffected by industrial changes which transformed other towns in the south-east of Northumberland, although minor coal seams have been worked nearby and limestone was quarried on Alnwick Moor (Williams, 2009, 31). The A1 has been re-routed around the eastern edge of the town where it formerly ran through the town centre and on to Berwick. While there has been considerable expansion to the south and east of Alnwick, the development of the town has been historically constrained to the north by Alnwick Castle and its parks and gardens. The core of the town, however, has retained much of its early character (Williams, 2009, 5).

Photograph 5.1: Alnwick Castle, home to the Duke of Northumberland

The Parish of Denwick lies to both the north and south of Alnwick. It is divided into two separate areas, with the southern part known as Denwick Detached. The name 'Denwick' means 'the farm in the valley' and most of the parish is owned by the Duke of Northumberland, according to an online source (Keys of the Past, 2013). It has a total population of 266 (UK Open Gazetteer, 2001). Whereas Alnwick has been characterised by comparatively rapid change with regard to the housing sector over the years, in Denwick there has been only a limited amount of new construction.

With its twisting cobbled streets dating back to medieval times and a diverse collection of individually owned shops, Alnwick has been hailed as the 'Windsor of the North'. Alnwick Castle is a world-renowned destination for tourists, has been used as a film location over the years and more recently for the well-known series of Harry Potter films, as well as for filming the TV series, Downton Abbey, described in a recent article in the Northumberland Gazette (2014). It also offers other visitor attractions such as the Alnwick Garden (part of Alnwick Castle), an annual fair, a music festival and a Northumberland Gathering featuring traditional music and sports. Today the town serves as a key market centre for surrounding rural areas and is gaining increasing significance as a tourist destination within reach of the Northumberland National Park and the North East of England Heritage coastline. With growing awareness of the significance of tourism within the region and the UK generally and in the face of

increased competition from overseas destinations, Alnwick has a stronger profile and more recognition than most other Northumberland towns (Miller Research, 2008, 26). The town has a high level of services, facilities and transport networks for its size.

With regard to the overall quality of life it offers to its residents, in 2002 Alnwick was awarded the title of Britain's 'best place to live' by Country Life magazine, which described Alnwick as the most 'picturesque market town in Northumberland and the best place to live in Britain' (Mitchell, 2002). Alnwick came top in a survey of towns ranked by measurable criteria such as house prices, crime rate, amenities, character, quality of local produce, sporting and outdoor opportunities and historical/cultural buildings (Williams, 2009). It was also crowned the best market town in the country in 2011. This was followed in June the same year by Alnwick's high street, Bondgate Within, winning the title of 'Britain's Best Shopping Street' in the Google Street View awards. On 25th August, 2011, the Northumberland Gazette quoted the chairman of Alnwick Chamber of Trade, Carlo Biagioni as saying that:

> 'This award just goes to show how well we are doing. It is just
> one accolade after the other. It shows it is a really good town and
> reflects the beautiful area we live in.' (Northumberland Gazette,
> 2011).

These accolades, reflecting life in Alnwick as part of a perceived 'rural idyll', also contributed at the time to a sharp rise in property prices in and around Alnwick as a result of increased demand from holiday/retirement home buyers (ADNP Housing Topic Paper, 2014) seeking to buy into this rural idyll. For the younger population of Alnwick, however, it does not offer the same appeal. In the opinion of one resident:

> 'There is nothing in Alnwick for young people... people would
> rather travel to Newcastle than shop in the local businesses, half
> of the shops are empty anyways (sic) due to such high rent'
> (Northumberland Gazette, 2014).

Similarly, the awards celebrating the quality of life in Alnwick also tend to mask the scale of deprivation and inequalities to be found in neighbourhoods within the town. One such case, a council housing estate, reportedly revealed the same degree of socio-economic problems as an inner-urban 'sink' estate (Powe et al, 2007, 90). There is a severe shortage of affordable housing in Alnwick and Denwick, particularly for younger residents; increased house prices and low wage levels were identified in a housing survey conducted in 2012 by David Couttie Associates as driving out the resident

population from the owner-occupied housing market (ADNP, 2014d, 3) adding to the economic problems created by the recent recession.

The main employment sectors in Alnwick are public administration, tourism, health/social work and retail. Wages are 63% of the national average (Worthy and Gouldson, 2010) which reflects the lower rates paid in the tourism and hotel/catering sectors, significant employers in Alnwick's economy. While the number of unemployed is low at 246, the proportion of the economically inactive population is relatively high at 23%. This reflects wider findings on Alnwick District as a whole as having "relatively poor quality …human capital" and "a sense of comfortable inertia" (Courtney et al, 2004, 25).

The sections that follow on neighbourhood plan activities suggest that this 'comfortable inertia' has been displaced to some extent by the impetus and drive of those groups and individuals involved in opportunities for shaping "the future of the town and its surroundings" provided by neighbourhood planning, as noted in the ADNP website (ADNP, 2014a). Neighbourhood planning in Alnwick and Denwick, however, faces challenges of a very specific nature, rooted in its specific socio-economic and political context, as will be shown in this chapter.

5.3 Socio-economic profile and demography

The general socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the parishes of Alnwick and Denwick are summarised in Table 5.1 below. As in other rural areas, Alnwick and its surroundings are facing a decline in younger age groups and an increase in the average age of the population. Population projections between 2008 and 2025 indicate a 50% increase in the over 65 age group, with the number of those over 85 doubling in the same period.

POPULATION		HOUSING			EMPLOYMENT		
	No.		**No.**	**%**		**No.**	**%**
Total pop.	8,033	No. Households	3,467	-	Total econ. active pop.	3,656	66%
Density/sq.km	39.00				Total econ. inactive pop	1,874	34%
		Housing tenure				5,530	
		Owner occupied	1,986	60%			
		L.A. rented	856	25%	Total no. unemployed	246	7%
		Private rented	221	7%			
		Housing Association	254	8%			
			3,317				

Table 5.1: Socio-economic Profile: Alnwick and Denwick
(Source: NCC, Northumberland Knowledge, 2011)

5.4 Local Government Institutions

Prior to 2009, local government was based on a two-tier system of District and County Councils. Alnwick District Council was one of six district councils serving Northumberland. In 2009, district councils, including Alnwick District Council, were abolished as part of the re-structuring of local government and its responsibilities transferred to the newly formed unitary authority, Northumberland County Council (NCC). Alnwick Town Council (ATC) was then established in the same year, with 18 local councillors representing its three wards. Castle Ward has eight councillors, while there are six councillors each for Clayport and Hotspur Wards (ATC, 2011).

Alnwick Town Council meets monthly and is responsible for local amenities such as allotments, playgrounds and cemeteries and runs a number of civic events such as Remembrance Sunday. In addition, Alnwick Town Council is represented on a number of local organisations such as the Playhouse Trust, the Alnwick Citizens Advice Bureau and the Gallery Youth project. It is also consulted on planning applications in Alnwick by NCC (ATC, 2011). The composition of the Alnwick Town Council draws on a wide range of active and committed individuals, with a correspondingly wide range of interests. Professional, business, family and social connections also provide the networking context for Alnwick's Town Councillors where a number of officials are colleagues, sharing similar professional or business backgrounds, or are even members of the same household, while a number of Town Councillors are neighbours living close to one another in the same part of town. A number of Town Councillors are members of the ADNP Alnwick and Denwick Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group.

Other independent bodies that have formed part of the governance of Alnwick include the Alnwick Community Development Trust (ACDT) set up in 2000 to run community services and projects. While this closed in 2011 due to lack of funding, the Alnwick Community Partnership which was formed in 2010 has been centrally involved in setting up the governance of the ADNP.

5.5 Preparing the ADNP

The Alnwick and Denwick Neighbourhood Area application was submitted to NCC by Alnwick Town Council in partnership with Denwick Parish Council on 19th June 2012, in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (NCC, 2014b). It was approved by the Corporate Director of Local Services of NCC on 11

April 2013, with Alnwick Town Council declared the leading, or Qualifying Body (NCC, 2014b). It was one of the earliest areas to successfully apply for Front Runner status under the government's pilot programme in Northumberland, following Allendale and the Northumberland National Park. It was granted funding of £20,000 under Wave 4 of the Front Runner programme on 31st August 2011.

In order to deliver the neighbourhood plan successfully, the Alnwick Community Partnership (ACP) was formally instructed in August 2011 by the Town Council to act as the main discussion forum for all plan-related matters. A smaller Steering Group from the ACP was subsequently formed to assist with the routine management of the Neighbourhood Plan for Alnwick and Denwick. As was noted in the ADNP Steering Group Meeting Minutes, a project team of ten 'topic leads' was set up in September 2011 to support the Steering Group in further developing the Neighbourhood Plan.

Overview of ADNP activities 2011-2014

Prior to the start of neighbourhood planning activities in 2011, the Town Council had held an open day on 26th March 2011 to discuss and agree the principles of a Neighbourhood Development Plan for Alnwick. The outcome of this was an agreement to pursue the idea of a neighbourhood development plan and the Town Council approached NCC to open discussions (ADNP Scoping Report, 2011b).

Date	Activities
26th March 2011	ATC sponsored 'Planning Day' community workshop Steering Committee established
Sept/Oct. 2011	Press release issued on ADNP start-up ADNP Front Runner status confirmed by NCC
Nov. 2011	Community Engagement Strategy prepared Community questionnaire (A) prepared on priority areas for plan. Questionnaire (B) for young people prepared
Dec. 2011	Initial scoping draft issues of ADNP Distribution of community questionnaire (A) to h/h in Alnwick/Denwick Distribution of questionnaire (B) to schools
January 2012	Analysis of questionnaire responses
March 2012	Consultation events conducted
April 2012	Analysis of info. from further rounds of consultation
19th June 2012	ADNP Area Designation application submitted to NCC
4th April 2013	ADNP Area Designation application approved by NCC
2013	Preparation Issues/Options Consultation Document
2013	Preparation Preferred Options Consultation Document
2013	Preparation submission draft ADNP for examination

Table 5.2: Timeline of ADNP activities 2011-2013
(Source: Adapted from ADNP/ACP, 2011-2013)

A bid was made to DCLG to join the neighbourhood plan Front Runner programme and agreement was reached on the boundary of the area to be defined as the Alnwick and Denwick Neighbourhood Plan. In November 2011, the main activities and actions for the neighbourhood plan were set out in a comprehensive Community Engagement Strategy (ADNP, 2014h). This identified the following steps to be taken: preparing a scoping report; collecting information from the community; arranging consultation events; providing a website to share information; providing press releases on activity updates and exhibitions and displays during consultation events; preparing maps of the parishes and settlements; preparing an 'Issues and Options' consultation document and preparing and submitting the draft Neighbourhood Development Plan for examination.

In the original ADNP schedule drawn up, the Neighbourhood Plan was to be submitted in Autumn 2013. Following a number of postponements, the submission of the plan was then postponed to autumn 2014, (see schedule below). This took account of the range of neighbourhood planning and consultation activities still to be conducted, such as community consultation on the draft plan, collation and analysis of the consultation responses, preparation of the consultation report and preparation of the final draft neighbourhood plan for submission to NCC in June/July 2014. This was to be followed by the stipulated consultation period in which NCC would publicise the neighbourhood plan before it went to examination in October 2014. The referendum was planned to be held in December 2014 and if approved by over 50% of those voting, would be adopted by NCC in December 2014.

Date	Activities
March - April 2014	Consultation period for draft plan
April/May 2014	Collate and analyse consultation responses and prepare consultation report
June/July 2014	Prepare final draft neighbourhood plan for submission to Northumberland County Council
August/September 2014	Period for NCC to publicise the submitted neighbourhood plan
October 2014	Examination
December 2014	Referendum
December 2014	Adoption

Table 5.3: Timeline of proposed ADNP activities 2014
(Source: ADNP (2014b)

5.6 Neighbourhood Planning Issues for Alnwick and Denwick

The re-organisation of local government in 2009 and the consequent closure of District planning services had resulted in a feeling among Alnwick's Town Council and (now

defunct) Community Development Trust (CDT) members of disconnection and alienation from the planning process. According to one CDT member:

> 'The feeling about a neighbourhood plan when we first started in Alnwick with post local government reorganisation was a feeling of - probably 'alienation' is not putting it too strongly - from the planning process.' (CDT Trustee)

This sense of alienation however acted as a stimulus to Alnwick's civic leaders to initiate a process of localised planning activity. The notion of community-led planning (CLP) was already familiar to Alnwick's Town Council and leaders prior to the Localism Act. As in many other parishes and towns in England, the Town Council and the CDT had undertaken a range of community-led planning activities some years previously when a number of community projects had been identified (ADNP, 2014f). In January 2010, a draft Community Plan had been prepared which brought all the previous separate reports from the community planning exercises into a single document. This document, containing the details of 40 prioritised projects and activities, has formed the basis of the current draft ADNP.

A further impetus to preparing a plan for Alnwick was the realisation that NCC's schedule for the preparation of the new Local Development Framework (LDF) would delay the delivery of any detailed proposals for Alnwick for a number of years:

> 'There was an awareness that, given the timetable the county was working to for the preparation of the new Northumberland Local Development Framework, it was going to be a considerable number of years before there were any details proposals for Alnwick..' (CDT Trustee)

This growing awareness began to crystallise into an increasing pressure to take action, noted by one of the CDT Trustees involved at the time:

> 'there was quite a strong feeling, particularly among the Town Council and the (then) Community Development Trust that they wanted to try and do something about it and this was before neighbourhood plans really started fleshing themselves out… so it's kind of fortuitous the government then developed the idea of the Localism Bill and Act.' (CDT member)

The need for some type of local level planning had therefore been identified by the town's civic leaders prior to the Localism Act but the new legislation opened the way for the decision taken in mid-2011 by the Town Council to proceed with a neighbourhood plan. Members of the Town Council and the Community Development

Trust in Alnwick were the main motivators behind the neighbourhood plan, providing the leadership called for in the Localism Act. The application for inclusion in the DCLG funded Front Runner scheme was made in August 2011 (ACP Minutes, 2011-2013).

The original application to NCC made by Alnwick Town Council noted that initial proposals for the boundary of the neighbourhood planning area would have preferably 'been drawn more tightly on the town of Alnwick… given that the Neighbourhood Development Plan is to concentrate on the town' (NCC, 2012) but subsequent consultation with Denwick Parish Council had resulted in a decision to include the whole parish area (NCC, 2012). At this point the neighbourhood plan then became known as the Alnwick and Denwick Neighbourhood Plan (ADNP). This consequent expansion of the ADNP area opened up the scope for potential development in the area of Denwick Detached, which probably would not have been the case had the boundary been drawn as originally intended. The increased scope for new development was noted in the neighbourhood area designation decision:

> '(t)he main reason for extending the proposed boundaries of the neighbourhood planning area beyond Alnwick Town Council administrative area is that much of the southern parts of Alnwick Town, including all of Lionheart Industrial Estate, is located within Denwick Detached Parish. The area to the southern and eastern sides of the town are also areas where there is potential for further development. For example, a proposed new High School site is located within Denwick Parish.' (NCC, 2014b)

There has been a long-standing call from Alnwick residents to re-locate the deteriorating school buildings of the Duchess' Community High School, the new site for which has been identified to the south east side of the town in Denwick Parish. Other, more controversial but less publicised reasons behind widening the boundaries for the neighbourhood plan relate to the housing developments proposed by the Duke of Northumberland's own company, Northumberland Estates, on adjacent sites. One of these developments comprises a housing scheme of over 270 houses together with a community hub, creating what has been termed by local residents 'a small new town' in Alnwick (Daniel, 2013, 8). Outline planning permission was granted by NCC in March 2014 for this new development scheme. No mention had been made of the development proposals in the original application for designation by the Town Council, nor in discussions and meetings held at that time by the ACP. The speed with which the proposal was prepared and the lack of information provided to the ADNP Steering

Group on these proposals, which lie within the ADNP boundary, indicate the pattern of 'developer behaviour' that has since become familiar to the ADNP Steering Group and is discussed further in Section 5.6.4.

Each of the Front Runners in Northumberland has followed its own approach to developing a neighbourhood plan. Alnwick has followed a different process in its neighbourhood planning from Allendale, which has received both a high level of support from Northumberland County Council in terms of technical assistance and support from its planning staff as well as additional funding.

Early in the neighbourhood planning process, Alnwick Town Council appointed a paid, part-time professional planning coordinator (previously Head of Planning Services in NCC) to manage Alnwick and Denwick's neighbourhood plan. Given the capacity already available within Alnwick and Denwick, NCC decided to adopt a 'light touch' approach with regard to the ADNP, with less involvement and support from the county planning staff than provided to other Front Runners in Northumberland. The Steering Group was formed early in the process and received assistance from NGOs providing planning advice and guidance, Locality and Plangle, as well as from planning consultants. The decision was taken for the ADNP to align with the Core Strategy.

HOUSING	TOURISM
Objectives: • Provide sufficient land for Alnwick and Denwick's housing requirements to 2025 esp. for affordable housing • Provide choice of size, type and tenure of quality housing esp. for young and elderly *Key Issues:* • Housing provided to actual needs not house-builders perception • Complete development started and built-out brownfield sites before building more housing • Housing not at expense of open spaces • Ensure housing developments can be properly served • Flats above shops should be brought into use	*Objectives:* • Establish Alnwick as a high quality and accessible year-round tourism destination, improve the range and quality of accommodation • To encourage visitors to spend more time in town centre *Key Issues:* • Not yet available
COMMUNITY	HERITAGE
Objectives: • Provide access to high quality community facilities by 2025, and improve for vibrant, inclusive and healthy society *Key Issues:* • Partnership working community and business-multi-purposes Community/Business venues • Prevent issues with young people due to lack of facilities	*Objectives:* • To maximise the potential of heritage in Alnwick/Denwick • Ensure the area's historic/architectural design quality is celebrated through media *Key Issues* • Declaration of Historic Core Zone (see work of English Historic Towns Forum) • Extend conservation area/explore designation

ECONOMY/EMPLOYMENT	TRANSPORT
• Use market place as community space	of a Denwick conservation area/ protect threatened historic buildings and spaces • Survey, protection and replacement of trees
ECONOMY/EMPLOYMENT	**TRANSPORT**
Objectives: • To act as main service centre to the wider rural hinterland and economy • Meet the need of new investment and existing business • Offer a range of employment opportunities and creating wealth within the town *Key Issues:* • What are likely needs/demands of business to 2025 Building on Alnwick as a possible centre for green industries • Need to create a vibrant town centre- finding uses for unoccupied shops and extending market place activities	*Objectives:* • To improve access to homes, work,facilities and goods • To improve the provision of public transport • To increase pedestrian priority and reduce car dependence *Key Issues:* • Keeping transport infrastructure in safe and attractive condition • Supporting access, delivery and distribution of goods and services • Improve provision for public buses, community transport and private coaches
ENVIRONMENT	**EDUCATION**
Objectives: • To reduce the environmental impact of the town • To increase biodiversity/improve resilience of climate change *Key Issues:* • Scope for expansion of town re-cycling points/recycling materials • Connect Alnwick to surrounding settlements using lower-impact travel modes	*Objectives:* • To ensure that development in town is supported by sufficient quantity of school places and high quality of education provision *Key Issues:* • Return at least on site (High School) to NCC • Establish what plans Northumberland Estates, the owner of buildings and land at Bailiff site and Duke's Middle site
SHOPPING/ TOWN CENTRE	**SPORT/RECREATION**
Objectives: • Increase share of retail spend on local residents/business in the district *Key Issues:* • Need for integrated plan for spatial development of Market Place, Northumberland Hall and Town Centre • Invest in a Town Centre Retail Plan to encourage independent retailers • Need for further out of town retail development (location, type) and need for ADNP to integrate Town Centre/out-of-town retail for economic health of Alnwick/hinterland and for integration	*Objectives:* • Address shortfall of quality open space and recreation facilities *Key Issues:* • Address under provision of activities for young children and teenagers • Improve fall below standard of many play areas • Address quantity deficiencies semi open spaces

Table 5.4: Alnwick and Denwick Draft Neighbourhood Plan – Key Issues and Objectives
(Source: ADNP, 2014g)

The Topic Leads have each prepared papers on the ten topics to be included in the draft Neighbourhood Plan, these being Housing, Tourism, Community Facilities, Heritage and Culture, Economy/Employment, Transport, Environment, Education, Retail/Town Centre and Sport/ Recreation. For each topic, objectives and key issues have been set out, as indicated in Table 5.4.

5.7 ADNP Case Study Findings and Analysis

In this section, the findings emerging from my research into the neighbourhood planning process are presented and analysed. The findings and analysis are taken up under the main themes of community and stakeholder engagement in 5.6.1, community capacity in 5.6.2, neighbourhood plan governance in 5.6.3 and affordable housing and developer involvement in 5.6.4.

5.7.1 *Community and stakeholder engagement*

The work of engaging communities and stakeholders in any new initiative is acknowledged by local authority staff involved in supporting neighbourhood planning activities as inevitably time-consuming. The wide gap between government rhetoric on the topic of community engagement and the reality experienced by those involved in the process has been noted by one of the Steering Group members:

> 'It's quite easy for the government to trot out (community engagement) as a fine principle, that the plan should be based in the community - and I'm certainly not saying it's wrong - but its fiendishly difficult to do successfully and people's lives are too short. Until you get to the point where it's actually affecting the plot of land next to their house, they're not really engaged in thinking strategically at neighbourhood level.' (Steering Group member)

Lessons from experience elsewhere suggest that engaging local residents in the design process is likely to lead to more successful outcomes (Great Britain. DCLG, 2010d, 36). For community and stakeholder engagement in neighbourhood plans to succeed, however, the literature indicates that the process itself must also be 'meaningful' (Kaszynska, 2012, 5). That is, levels of interest and trust in the process need to be maintained in order to prevent that the exercise becomes merely token consultation and to prevent that continuing conflicts between different parties result in 'consultation fatigue'.

My research findings indicate that in addition to the two vital elements of interest and trust, that of motivation is equally as important, and further, that it is the identity of those motivated that is the key as to whether community engagement succeeds or not. It is not a straightforward matter to disentangle these three elements from one another but through the grounded theory method, it has been possible to identify these elements as

emerging from discussions and interviews with those individuals and officials involved in the process.

Photograph 5.2: Developing Proposals for the Alnwick and Denwick Neighbourhood Plan at a Community Partnership Meeting
(Source: ADNP website 2014)

The level of motivation among those chiefly engaged in neighbourhood planning, the Steering Group members, was evident from a number of angles. Key members of the Steering Group were also Town Councillors, who had been involved in the Community Plan and Visual Appraisal activities of previous years. After the collapse of the Community Development Trust (CDT) in which they had also been involved, there were a number of historical planning issues that had been dropped but still needed to be addressed. The neighbourhood plan was seen as a good opportunity and means by which to revive these planning issues. As elected officials, with visible profiles in the town, they also felt accountable for restoring some of the lost credibility through the failure of the CDT.

With regard to levels of interest, while establishing the actual number of those interested generates some insights, it is perhaps more important to ascertain their identity and role. One straightforward way of assessing the level of interest of community residents is through assessing attendance at neighbourhood planning meetings and events. This has been done to identify those individuals attending initial meetings and to monitor attendance. The range of community groups initially involved

in the planning process was extensive, but over time, attendance at Steering Group meetings decreased.

Trust in the process by stakeholders has been cited as the other vital element. Even where interest has tended to diminish, levels of trust between the inner circle members of the Steering Group appears to have remained consistently high, likely being reinforced by the extent of overlapping networks, both work-related and socially. The majority of the Steering Group members have spoken of the faith they have in the capacity of the Coordinator of the Steering Group to bring the neighbourhood plan to completion. They have also mentioned the frequent interaction between Steering Group members in other governance forums, which has clearly strengthened working relationships and built up confidence in the group's ability to achieve its aims. The principle exception to this is where conflicts have arisen over communication between the developer's representative and other group members. This is discussed further below and in Chapter 8.

The original levels of both interest and motivation of some of the stakeholders in the neighbourhood planning process was seen to be high, as evidenced by the involvement of the Town Council and Community Development Trust in previous community-based planning activities. As noted above, these initiatives had already been underway for some time prior to the publication of the Localism Act and therefore an independent form of 'neighbourhood planning' was already underway by the time the Localism Act was published, which indicates the level of interest of certain sectors of the community in community-led planning. The two main bodies generating the decision to create a neighbourhood plan and subsequently apply for Front Runner status were Alnwick Town Council and the Alnwick Community Development Trust (ACDT). Although the ACDT has since become defunct, membership of this institution overlaps to some extent with those currently involved in the governance of the neighbourhood plan. It can be seen that this relatively small group remains as the organising core and appears to remain committed.

Wider community involvement has been expressed through the community consultation events which are required by the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012. As noted above, levels of motivation and interest in the process are essential if momentum is to be maintained. But for meaningful and genuine community

involvement, the 'who' is equally important. It can be seen that this factor, when combined with the availability of other resources (such as the amount of time available of those involved) can create challenges for completion of neighbourhood planning schedules. Research elsewhere into community engagement in neighbourhood planning refers to the possibility of diminishing levels of community interest and enthusiasm leading to abandonment of planning activities altogether (Herbert, 2012, 22). As the interest and motivation of the wider community has been observed to fall away in the neighbourhood planning process in Alnwick and Denwick, the consequences have led, not to its abandonment, but to an extension of the length of time needed to reach completion.

Some of the successes and challenges emerging from the process of organising and coordinating the ADNP already started to become manifest in the neighbourhood planning process, some 18 months after it was initiated. The work of engaging communities and stakeholders in any new initiative is readily acknowledged by those involved in neighbourhood planning as necessarily time-consuming (Brownill and Downing, 2013, 374). The involvement and management of volunteers and unpaid community members has resulted in significant slippage of nearly a year to the original schedule. According to one of the Steering Group members:

> 'If you're dependent on volunteers, some of them have got day jobs and even those who are retired have other things to talk about than the neighbourhood plan. They are not being paid for it, so inevitably we haven't made as much progress.' (Steering Group member)

Particularly in relation to the exercise of conducting community consultation events and surveys, there was also the concern among members of the Steering Group that proceeding too quickly with these exercises could backfire, without sufficient preparation. As a Steering Group member expressed it:

> 'We were going to go out to options consultation in July, so we've slipped; so we were going to go out in November, but then there was a concern we were going to go off half cock and we'd be rubbished by the community, so we've said we'll go out in mid-November.' (Steering Group member)

The ADNP Steering Group, with the assistance of County Council community development staff, has undertaken the three required community consultations, all of which were deemed successful (ADNP, 2014c). They have also conducted community

surveys throughout the planning process which have yielded an 'excellent' response (ADNP, 2014c). However, while these events may have been seen as successful at the time, the level of community participation in these consultation events was not consistent. One of the organisers of a consultation event held in December 2012 did not consider that there had been a satisfactory turnout, in contrast to the views of some Steering Group members. It seems that there is a keenness in the Steering Group to denote such events as successful, even when it is not clear what criteria are being applied.

5.7.2 *Community capacity*

The capabilities and capacity of the Steering Group and its community volunteers are acknowledged by the Council's Head of Planning Services, who regards them as 'keen and able'. There are a number of professional specialists resident in Alnwick who have volunteered their services and been nominated as 'topic leads'. As a member of the Steering Group has pointed out, when comparing the Front Runner Allendale with Alnwick and Denwick:

> 'If you're not going to do what's been done in Allendale - just somebody rides in and drafts something - if you're genuinely going to do what neighbourhood planning is about… and you're involving volunteers from the community, you have to do something to make it manageable. We've split it up into ten topics with a 'topic lead' for each of the subject groups.' (Steering Group member)

The ten topic leads bring in a wide range of skills and experience. These include, among others, a graphic designer who manages the ADNP website (who is also Alnwick's Town Mayor), a researcher who has been assisting with the community consultation surveys, a specialist concerned with conserving historic buildings and a community development youth worker who liaises with the younger element of the town through a community youth project. Some of these volunteers have been able to draw on additional resources from their professional associations and backgrounds to support the neighbourhood planning process. Each 'topic lead' has been responsible for preparing a topic statement for the ADNP website and a contribution to the policies for inclusion in the draft neighbourhood plan. There is an acute awareness within the Steering Group of the complexities involved in the planning process, but there is also a motivation to 'get it right', notwithstanding the delays to the schedule this may incur.

> 'We are on a learning curve and this is not straightforward for us and we want to get it right.' (Steering Group member)

External factors and issues may also affect the neighbourhood plan schedule. As in other counties in England where it is estimated that over 25% of local authorities are anticipated to take over a year to adopt the Local Plan (Thraves, 2013), the adoption of Northumberland's Core Strategy is now expected to be 2015. As indicated previously, the decision has been taken for the ADNP to align with the Northumberland Core Strategy, which creates a further set of issues for the Steering Group and Town Council to address. Delays to the adoption of a Local Plan increase the risk that speculative developers will take advantage of the opportunities available where the draft neighbourhood plan is yet to emerge. Since the ADNP has elected to align with the Core Strategy, this consequently has implications for its timescale; to be in alignment with the Core Strategy requires that the neighbourhood plan should not be made before the Core Strategy is adopted. This therefore opens up opportunities in terms of the increased time available for developers to submit proposals well before the Local Plan is published and are not in line with ADNP objectives. The new draft guidance indicates that in the case of 'prematurity', that is, while a neighbourhood plan is still in preparation, it carries little to no statutory weight and it would therefore be unlikely to have the power to refuse planning permission to any proposed development within its boundary (Carpenter, 2013, 4).

A further issue of concern that emerges in the research literature is the capacity and skills available within communities to draft policies that are sufficiently robust. The literature notes that the kind of specialised skill required for this are generally in short supply (Brownill and Downing, 2013, 374). As indicated earlier, where the NCC had allocated a planning officer to complete this task in Allendale, this option is not available for other communities in Northumberland, given the pressures on the reduced number of county planning staff. However, the resources of Alnwick Town Council and the ADNP have enabled the hiring of consultants with the necessary skills to support and carry out this task. A local planning NGO, previously commissioned to assist with devising the stakeholder engagement strategy and running community engagement events, was appointed in March 2013 to provide support and assistance to the process of drafting neighbourhood planning policies.

The provisions of the Localism Act require that the local authority provide support and advice to parishes that want to prepare a neighbourhood plan. In terms of the level of support provided by NCC to the ADNP process, this has taken the form of both

financial and 'in kind' assistance from the county's planning and community development staff. For example, the skills and resources of the council's community development staff have been drawn on for community consultation events and the preparation and analysis of community survey questionnaires. As one of the county's most historic towns, with Alnwick Castle as home to the Duke of Northumberland, it is perhaps not entirely exceptional that Alnwick should be able to harness support from the Council in this way. However, although Alnwick has received less technical support and resources from the county planning authority for its neighbourhood planning process than other Front Runners such as Allendale, the Town Council of Alnwick has allocated funds for the appointment of a professional neighbourhood planning coordinator.

5.7.3 *Neighbourhood plan governance*

The distinct nature of the town's networked governance in Alnwick has contributed to a competent process of neighbourhood plan-making and its management. A number of individuals involved in the governance of the town in an official capacity as Town Councillors are also prepared to volunteer time and effort for the governance of the neighbourhood plan as Steering Group members. As one Town Councillor pointed out, most local government officers end up wearing two or three hats, a feature commonly found elsewhere in rural 'parished' areas and small towns. Cross-overs are common, with the same group of individuals meeting up at different local governance forums. Most are in regular contact and liaise with each other on different issues and topics as a consequence of this 'double' or 'triple' hat-wearing. The links of the Steering Group with policy actors and government bodies are seen as close as well as supportive:

> 'We've got close links with the County Council and we have two county council members on the staff side (two Planning Officers)…. who regularly attend Steering Group meetings.. they are our link officers in the county and they've been very supportive in the project.' (Steering Group member)

There is therefore a high degree of connectivity as well as overlap between the members of the ADNP Steering Group and the Town Council. Over time the composition of the Steering Group has changed, however, resulting in fewer members to attend meetings and work on the plan than at the start (personal communication from ADNP Steering Group member). While there is a 'hard core' of about six or seven Steering Group members who regularly attend, some Topic Leads have made only the occasional token appearance at meetings. This has led to breaks in continuity and tasks falling to other

members to complete. It has become increasingly difficult for the Steering Group to recruit new members to replace those who have left. The recruitment process adopted for new or replacement members was described as a 'safe' one by a Steering Group member; identification of new Steering Group members was generally by 'word of mouth' in preference to open advertising, as this was considered the best way of ensuring the quality of new recruits and to ensure that they 'fitted in' with the existing group. The disadvantage of drawing from a 'like-minded' pool of members in this way, however, presents the risk of promoting path-dependency as well as less opportunity to promote innovative thinking and approaches. These outcomes/issues have not been lost on the some of the Steering Group members, who feel that alternative methods of recruitment are likely to be needed in future.

While the close linkages between the Town Council and the Steering Group are evident, the level of connectivity between the Steering Group and the wider community appears to be less deep. Gallent has noted that the degree of connectivity, as well as the ability to maintain these links between council members and the wider community is a significant factor in capacity building (Gallent, 2013, 83). The links between Steering Group members and the specific 'interest group' they represent have been tested on various occasions through the consultation and community events held by the Steering Group and the questionnaires and surveys conducted as part of the ADNP procedures. This goes some way to explain the opinion of one Steering Group member on maintaining community interest and involvement as being 'fiendishly difficult'.

While the monthly Steering Group meetings are advertised on the ADNP website, the meetings as such are generally closed to non-members. This may contribute to the relatively low level of interest shown by the wider community in the processes and progress of the neighbourhood plan. As a consequence, the nodes, ties and flows characterising the dense networks operating among the ADNP Steering Group members appear to be highly effective for both formal and informal communication between them.

The ties and flows of their onward linkages to the wider community, however, appear to be less dense and less effective in terms of garnering the necessary support from the wider community for the neighbourhood planning process. This in turn raises issues

concerning legitimacy and democratic accountability further discussed below and in Chapter 9.

The foregoing account of the nature and functioning of the governance of the ADNP raises a number of issues with regard to the democratic legitimacy of neighbourhood planning, in particular that of its main governance organ, the Steering Group. The question of legitimacy for neighbourhood planning governance institutions under localism, however, is an under-researched issue. The work of Cowie and Davoudi, which analyses the nature of such claims, is as yet one of only a few providing empirical research into neighbourhood planning governance institutions (Cowie and Davoudi, 2015). As the authors have aimed to demonstrate, 'legitimacy is not a given within localism' (Cowie and Davoudi, 2015, 186). While their research is focussed on the claims to democratic legitimacy of neighbourhood forums (NF), which are non-elected bodies comprising volunteers and those involved through a process of 'self-selection', there are parallels that can be drawn with the Steering Groups of neighbourhood plans. These can be used to assess in turn the legitimacy of the ADNP Steering Group and to highlight some of the empirical findings emerging from the research conducted for this thesis. Cowie and Davoudi have devised a conceptual framework centred on democratic/procedural legitimacy to assess the claim to legitimacy of neighbourhood forums (Cowie and Davoudi, 2015, 175). The main criteria adopted, of descriptive, symbolic and substantive representation concern the processes of procedural legitimacy.

Descriptive representation concerns the extent to which representatives resemble those who are being represented through a sharing of common interests (Cowie and Davoudi, 2015, 182). It is assessed by focussing on the accuracy of any resemblance. In the case of NFs, it is based on group types (businesses, developers, etc.). It is the nature of the group in NFs that is the key. It could equally be argued that the nature of the group that goes to make up the ADNP Steering Group is a homogeneous one; the majority of the SG members are from similar backgrounds, being white, middle class professionals, frequently operating in the same or similar networks in the governance of the town.

Similar concerns arise with regard to symbolic representation, where it is the extent to which representatives are accepted by the represented. Here it is the extent to which the Steering Group is trusted with the preparation of the neighbourhood plan. As with the

case of NFs described by Cowie and Davoudi, the low level of turnout in Alnwick for consultation events also suggests that the Steering Group has not been widely accepted by the community they purport to serve.

Substantive legitimacy concerns the outcomes that serve the interests of the represented (Cowie and Davoudi, 2015, 180). While a number of outputs for the neighbourhood plan have been identified, these tend to focus on with relatively little attention given to social issues.

It becomes clear that, notwithstanding the 'derived' authority that the Steering Group of the neighbourhood plan may claim, this is not necessarily associated with an equivalent level of legitimacy to pursue their activities. This creates a need to emphasise not only how to address the challenge of including marginalized groups, but also how to limit the influence of privileged groups who are 'often over-represented' (Cowie and Davoudi, 2015, 185).

The question that then arises is whether the Steering Group adequately reflects and represents the diverse range of values and interests of Alnwick's residents. This reservation is supported by the lack of connectivity with the wider community that was noted earlier. Further marginalisation is then effected through the suppression of differences. The implication drawn by Cowie and Davoudi is that in order to make such community level planning and politics more inclusive, the emphasis must focus not only on ways of incorporating marginalised groups, but also on ways of limiting the influence of privileged groups who are often over-represented (Cowie and Davoudi, 2015, 185). The consequences are made clear:

> 'If these are not addressed, governance institutions that are set up under the localism agenda may reinforce rather than reduce the asymmetry of power relations and inequality in local communities' (Cowie and Davoudi, 2015, 186).

5.7.4 *Affordable housing and developer involvement*

Community consultation events on current housing issues, including the number and distribution of affordable houses, have been held. On this basis a draft housing paper (Housing Issues and Options Paper) was prepared by the Steering Group Coordinator. This indicates the community preference for the quantity and distribution of housing need over a 25 year timescale as being a total of 700-750 houses up to 2025, at a rate of

50 houses per year (ADNP, 2014d). As noted in the Housing Issues and Options Paper, the increasing demand for housing in Alnwick has arisen from its location and convenient commuter distance for Tyneside. Local housing needs identified through housing surveys indicated the increase in the shortage of affordable housing since 2000 (David Couttie Associates, 2012). The Northumberland Core Strategy identified housing requirements up to 2025, for which the draft neighbourhood plan has committed to ensure that sufficient housing land is delivered. In the Housing Issues and Options paper, the housing objectives were identified as:

- To provide sufficient land to meet Alnwick and Denwick's housing requirements to 2025 particularly the need for affordable housing
- To provide a choice of sizes, types and tenure of quality housing particularly creating opportunities for young people and the elderly.

Proposals for new housing developments indicated that these should be sited in sustainable locations, prioritising previously developed land and using a broad mix of housing types suitable for different households. The opportunity to be innovative in the neighbourhood plan has also been taken up through a proposal in the Housing Issues and Options Paper to apply a tariff on new development to cross-subsidise affordable housing. All sites over 10 houses would provide a minimum of 35% as affordable houses. Sites below 10 houses would pay a financial contribution applied by NCC to the provision of affordable housing in Alnwick (ADNP, 2014d).

The ADNP Steering Group has taken full advantage of the opportunity to address neighbourhood housing priorities and has attempted to use the potential of the neighbourhood plan to influence the amount, allocation and distribution of new development and housing. However, local developers, keen to maximise the opportunities available in the intervening time before the neighbourhood plan could be made, have bypassed the housing objectives set out in the draft neighbourhood plan for Alnwick. The proposals for two housing developments within the ADNP boundary have been approved since its area designation; one nearing completion by the end of 2013, the other receiving outline planning permission early in 2014.

The Steering Group was aware at the outset of the need for a strategy to 'manage' the involvement of developers with an interest in the area. The strategy adopted was the co-option of developer staff onto the Steering Group of the ADNP. One of the major local

development companies based in Alnwick is Northumberland Estates, itself one of the business ventures of the Duke of Northumberland, who has trained as a chartered surveyor and land agent and whose 'outlook is that of a property developer' (Murdoch et al, 2003, 117).

While the scale of the Duke's land ownership within the county is significant, including the town of Alnwick, central Northumberland, large blocks in the North Tyne Valley, the middle of Kielder Forest and southern Northumberland, it reaches well beyond the county boundaries to include properties in Tyneside as well as an estate in Surrey (Murdoch et al, 2003, 117). The Duke maintains a close interest in property development in the town as well as the surroundings through his company. As a Steering Group member pointed out:

> Their (Northumberland Estates) planning manager is represented on the Steering Group and we did that on the basis that because they are such a major influence on the town and a major landowner, it would be folly not to have them in the mix, as it were.' (Steering Group member)

The anticipated communication and feedback loops that this strategy could have generated for a genuine collaborative planning process between the Steering Group and Northumberland Estates have not materialised. The proposed development by Northumberland Estates for a new complex to the south of Alnwick in Greensfield as noted above, has by-passed the community consultation process of the ADNP, given rise to a wide range of objections from local residents and caused consternation in the local business community.

Another housing development scheme proposed by the smaller development firm Cussins, in Denwick Detached on the south-east outskirts of the town obtained planning permission and was completed by early 2014, well ahead of the neighbourhood plan. The construction of the housing estate, 'The Limes', also by-passed the neighbourhood planning process. It comprises 73 houses close to the town centre. The majority of houses were for sale on a 999 year leasehold basis, with only a small number potentially available on a freehold basis, illustrating the Duke's preference for retaining the ownership of estate land as opposed to releasing it by sale (Murdoch et al, 2003, 117).

The ADNP is one example that highlights the central role of developers in the new policy regime of localism and neighbourhood planning. This case also reveals the limited degree of empowerment and control over developers that a neighbourhood plan can expect to have. These two examples of development also illustrate the limited powers of a neighbourhood plan that has yet to be 'made', further complicated by associated issues of prematurity where the neighbourhood plan is aligned with a Local Plan which is not up-to-date. The Northumberland Core Strategy, as previously noted, is itself still to be updated, in common with those of many other LPAs in England. By the end of January 2014, only 52% of LPAs in England had an up-to-date Local Plan.

New draft legislation indicates the ways in which the government has also sought to limit the influence that communities can exert on speculative developer ambitions through a neighbourhood plan. Recent official draft planning guidance currently being tested provides an insight into the way central government continues to curtail community powers. This concerns the statutory 'weight' that can be accorded to emerging neighbourhood plans and appears to confirm the limited powers accorded to community planning. This has generated comments from those involved in advising local groups on neighbourhood planning that:

> 'There's a lot of political support for neighbourhood planning,
> but that's all under threat if they don't give communities the
> tools they need to keep speculative development at bay.'
> (Carpenter, 2013, 4).

The situation of the ADNP, as with emerging neighbourhood plans elsewhere in England, offers opportunities for property developers to take advantage of a slow-moving neighbourhood plan. The case of Alnwick presents a set of almost unique conditions, however, with regard to the context in which the ADNP is being produced and the relationship with the major stakeholder, Northumberland Estates.

The examples of developer opportunism in this case also present distinctly different challenges to the ADNP Steering Group. Property development activity, ongoing throughout the neighbourhood planning process in Alnwick, has paid little heed to the neighbourhood plan - there has been no obligation to do so. This highlights the central role of the developer in relation to neighbourhood plans and planning policy.

The relationship of the ADNP with the Duke, a major landowner who is also a property developer, is a complex one for the Steering Group to negotiate. The role of property developers in general has been the subject of much academic interest over the years (Gore and Nicholson, 1991; Byrne, 1996; Guy and Henneberry, 2000). Findings from the case study in this thesis support research literature on developers who see planning policy as a constraint and are able to identify effective tactics to circumvent it. The case of ADNP demonstrates how, under localism, developers have moved to centre stage in the planning process and are able to orchestrate events to suit their own agendas.

When the developer is a major landowner, such as the Duke of Northumberland, owning most of the land in which the neighbourhood plan is located, other forces - political, socio-economic, institutional and structural - come into play. These social and economic forces at work have been identified as very particular to the county of Northumberland (Murdoch et al, 2003, 112). The county is characterised by large estates of over 4,000 hectares owned by only about a dozen landowners (Murdoch et al, 2003, 114). Murdoch et al have noted how:

> 'Landowners continue to comprise a solid socio-economic formation at the core of Northumberland's rural economy and society' (Murdoch et al, 2003, 116).

While this may no longer be representative elsewhere of England's landownership patterns, this is still a common feature to be found across the border in much of Scotland (Wightman, 1996). In the case of Northumberland it has been observed that:

> 'This formation sets the context not only for the configuration of development patterns in the region but also for the assertion of particular conventions. It controls access to land and therefore the types of new development opportunities that can arise.' (Murdoch, 2003, 116).

It is evident that control of such 'types of new development opportunities' lies with the Duke operating as a property developer through Northumberland Estates. Such control is contrary to the policies set out in the draft neighbourhood plan. The latest new development proposed by the Duke is targeted at older residents, contrary to the need specified in the draft neighbourhood plan housing policy for more affordable homes for younger residents and sheltered accommodation for the elderly. This is not, however, what is to be constructed at Greenfields where (non) sheltered housing for older residents in 1 and 2 room apartments will be built.

But research conducted elsewhere in England has also demonstrated the similar exercise of power which can subvert planning processes. The research was conducted in a number of local planning authorities in England prior to the Localism Act 2011 and the revised planning legislation therein. It shows how powerful interest groups can take control of new development opportunities. The example of the Duke of Northumberland acting as a property developer demonstrates the 'power to build' contrary to local policies set out in the Alnwick and Denwick Neighbourhood Plan and in the process, bypassing community priorities and preferences.

In contrast, the examples from the research show the power to 'contain' urban development and prevent the construction of new housing in the English countryside (Sturzaker, 2010, 1004). Sturzaker uses data collected from five case studies in England (including the then Alnwick District Council) to argue that it was rural elites who were able effectively to block new development in the countryside at that time, in paradoxical contrast to the power currently exercised by the Duke of Northumberland to construct housing beyond the rural housing delivery targets set by the neighbourhood plan. Using Lukes' three dimensions of power, Sturzaker focusses on the third and least observable dimension, that of discursive power, the power exercised by leaders of particular interest groups to prevent rural development (Sturzaker, 2010, 1004) and further 'urban containment' (Hall, 1973). This resulted in an effective 'moratoria on most new housing development' in the five case studies (Sturzaker, 2010, 1013). These two contrasting scenarios both share a common feature, that of demonstrating the way in which planning processes can be subverted by the selective use of power by either interest groups or individuals.

5.8 Conclusions

At the outset there was little government guidance on how neighbourhood plans should be drawn up and communities were obliged to make decisions on a number of aspects of neighbourhood plan-making, such as approach and governance, based on their own collective judgement and local knowledge. However, the experience of Alnwick Town Council and the Community Development Trust in community-led planning in previous years provided a resource from which to draw for creating the Alnwick and Denwick Neighbourhood Plan. The motivation and leadership provided by these two bodies has also generated much of the momentum in the early days of developing the plan. The early momentum generated by the town's local councillors and civic leaders slowed for

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a period of time in the neighbourhood planning process, indicating that this leadership has not been sufficient to retain more than a relatively limited level of community involvement.

While this does not signify any likelihood of the abandonment of planning activities, signs of diminishing interest and motivation from the wider community were becoming evident after a year. The time required to complete the plan has also been postponed by a year. The ADNP Steering Group has at times found it difficult to recruit new members to replace those who have left. The ADNP neighbourhood planning process adopted by the Steering Group may itself be exemplary, following the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations to the letter. The ADNP has complied with the requisite number of community consultation events where some, if not all of which have been regarded as successful. The ADNP has a strongly networked governance 'hub' in the form of the ADNP Steering Group. The links of the hub to the wider networks of the community, however, appear to be less effective. This may have contributed to the pace at which it has proceeded which is slow compared to other neighbourhood plans elsewhere in England that started at the same time (or later) but which have already proceeded to examination and referendum.

There is therefore a need for the kind of 'meaningful' process advocated in policy guidance literature. Moreover, my research indicates that a significant factor is the identity of those tasked with taking the process forward. In this case, it is a relatively small, closely-knit group of the town's local elite who, while devoting much of their own free time to the neighbourhood planning process, are yet distinct from the wider community whose support is needed to ensure genuine community engagement in the neighbourhood planning process. This points to the need to distinguish between the adoption of community engagement as a 'mechanical' process as opposed to a 'meaningful' one.

Other forces likely to work against the fulfilment of the expectations of neighbourhood planning in Anwick and Denwick to shape and influence the neighbourhood include developer ambitions and lobbying, central government control and the constraints operated by current local authority planning. Much media attention has been focussed on those neighbourhood plans where an aspirational agenda has been to control and/or limit the scale of new development, with lines of conflict drawn between local authority

planners and 'neighbourhood' planners. In contrast, the emerging ADNP clearly identified community-based preferences for new development, in terms of quantity and distribution, with priority given to affordable housing for younger residents and sheltered housing for the elderly and the adoption of tariffs as a form of cross-subsidy. As an emerging neighbourhood plan, however, it carries no weight with the LPA. One of the biggest challenges for the ADNP Steering Group can be seen as managing developer interest; in this case it is outmanoeuvred not only by a bigger powerful player and stakeholder but also by the current national planning policy which favours developers. These issues are taken up and discussed further in Chapter 8.

It can be concluded that the opportunities for the neighbourhood plan to address the kind of social inequality issues it has attempted in the objectives for affordable housing, sheltered housing for the elderly and providing as wide a choice as possible, while not being dominated by market pressures, are being eroded.

Chapter 6. Localism and Neighbourhood Planning: Tarset and Greystead Neighbourhood Plan

6.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the events and activities involved in the preparation of the Tarset and Greystead Neighbourhood Plan. Background information is first provided on the area comprising the Parish known as Tarset with Greystead, including a socio-economic profile and demography. Local government institutions and arrangements are then examined; this is followed by the activities conducted in the process of preparing the draft neighbourhood development plan. This is then followed by a summary of the main rural planning issues faced by the parish and TGNDP. The findings of my research are then analysed.

6.2 Background

The Parish of Tarset and Greystead lies within the former district of Tynedale. Just over 40% of the parish is located in the Northumberland National Park. The parish, with its sparse population of under 300, covers a large area extending over some 75 square miles of rugged countryside.

Photograph 6.1: Tarset and Greystead showing isolated and scattered settlement pattern

The main settlements are the village of Lanehead and the hamlet of Greenhaugh, with other isolated cottages and farmhouses scattered across the open hillsides from the Cumbrian border to the west to Burngrange to the north. There are a number of listed buildings in the area, mostly privately owned. Formerly two separate parishes, Tarset

and Greystead became a single parish with two wards, Tarset and Greystead in 1954 (Tarset and Greystead Parish Council, 2014).

The main economic activities in the ward of Tarset, where the majority of the parish population live, are agriculture-based, dominated by upland hill farming renowned for its high quality traditionally-reared Tarset hill lamb. Tourism is also a well-established sector. Other businesses and trades (including artists and photographers) are also active in the area. A casual visitor walking through the village might get an impression of a sleepy rural backwater, with no clearly identifiable village 'hub', but this is belied by the wide range of social events and initiatives undertaken by its residents.

Socially, most of the community activities revolve around Tarset Village Hall in Lanehead, the Holly Bush Inn and First School at Greenhaugh. There is an extensive exchange and cross-over of activities with the adjacent communities in Bellingham, Falstone, Kielder and Redesdale resulting in a wide variety of community events and programmes. These include a gardening group, a Women's Institute, a toddlers group, an over-50s social club, a choral society, a Scottish country dancing club, sports groups, an amateur dramatics society and various classes in vocational subjects (Tarset and Greystead Parish Council, 2014). Among other community initiatives undertaken was the refurbishing and extension of the Village Hall and the creation in 2010 of a community orchard supported by the NNPA and DEFRA on part of the allotment area at Greenhaugh (Tarset and Greystead Parish Council, 2014). The local community newspaper is the Tarset News, published on-line. While high-speed internet is available locally, access to a mobile phone signal is limited.

Greystead has a population of only 89. It lies close to the Scottish border, stretching from the valley of the North Tyne River across high moorland to the boundary with Cumbria. The area is predominantly forest, being part of the border forests of Wark and Kielder. The name Greystead is thought to derive from the 17th century 'Grievesteads', being a manor house occupied by a mediaeval official of the time (Durham/Northumberland County Councils, 2012). The surrounding hillsides stand witness to the turbulent past of the area. Among the historical remains and ruins is Tarset Castle and a number of old 'bastles' (fortified farmhouses), including the Black Middens Bastle House just north of Greenhaugh. The 'pele' towers (stone towers formerly used as refuges) and many other ruins date as far back as the 15th and 16th

centuries. Such towers and castles arose from the need for defences against the raids of the 'reivers', lawless armed bands that roamed the border areas. The hillsides are also strewn with mediaeval stone pits, lime kilns and 19th and 20th century quarries reflecting the construction and mining activities formerly carried on in the area (Tarset and Greystead Parish Council, 2014).

The peace and tranquillity of the area is much valued by local residents, who as a community are well-informed, take an active interest in conserving and maintaining the surrounding countryside and have been reluctant to see changes introduced into the area (TGNDP Consultation Document, 2013a). A recent international acknowledgement of the quality of the environment has been the award to the Northumberland National Park of 'Dark Sky Park' status in December 2013, the first of its kind in England, by the International Dark Skies Association. This status enables the night sky to be protected from light pollution through the use of lighting controls. This has been welcomed by local residents - in contrast to the uneasy reception they have given to the application by the Forestry Commission in August 2013 to construct meteorological masts in the nearby Kielder Forest (Daniel, 2013b). The purpose of these masts is to assess conditions for the proposed construction of a 50-100 giant turbine wind farm. These and other development proposals (such as new housing in the area) are likely to have contributed to the early level of interest and participation of local residents in the Tarset and Greystead neighbourhood plan activities.

6.3 Socio-economic Profile and Demography

The total population of Tarset and Greystead is 290, living in 147 households. It is ethnically homogeneous with a predominantly white population, approximately 25% of whom are over 60. About a third of households have at least one member with a long term illness (LTI). The Parish has one of the lowest population densities in the county of Northumberland, at 4 persons per square mile. Out of a working age population of 146, 68% are economically active, with no recorded unemployment statistics (ONS, 2011a).

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│                      TARSET & GREYSTEAD PARISH                           │
│                                                                          │
│  Location:          W. Northumberland      Settlement type: Village/hamlets │
│  Parish:            Tarset and Greystead    Area:            204 sq. km   │
│  No. wards          2                       Density:         4/sq. mile   │
│  Total Population:  290                                                   │
│  Tarset:            201                                                   │
│  Greystead:         89                                                    │
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Table 6.1: Tarset and Greystead: Socio-economic profile
(Source: Office for National Statistics, 2011a)

6.4 Local Government Institutions

The Parish Council of Tarset and Greystead has a total of eight Parish Councillors representing the two wards. The Tarset and Greystead Parish Council is the leading or 'qualifying body' for the neighbourhood planning process (as are all parish councils) and therefore has neighbourhood planning powers. There is cross-representation between the TGNDP Steering Group and the Parish Council, with one member of the Steering Group represented on the Parish Council and one member of the Parish Council represented on the Steering Group. The Parish of Tarset and Greystead straddles the Northumberland Park boundary and is covered by two local planning authorities, that of Northumberland County Council as well as that of the Northumberland National Park.

6.5 Preparing the TGNDP

In May 2011 the Parish Council of Tarset and Greystead was invited by the Northumberland National Park Authority to become a Front Runner to develop a neighbourhood plan. Both Local Planning Authorities are responsible for determining planning applications for those parts of the parish that lie within their boundaries. Separate applications to designate the neighbourhood area have therefore been required. The decision to designate Tarset and Greystead Parish as the neighbourhood area for the purpose of neighbourhood planning was made on 10th January 2013 by NCC (NCC, 2013a) and on 10th April 2013 by the NNPA (NNPA, 2014). A Steering Group was set up to coordinate the preparation of the neighbourhood development plan for the area. The majority of the Steering Group members are long-term residents in the community, although originally most have moved into the area as 'in-migrants'. Funding of £20,000

was granted under the government's pilot Frontrunner programme under the auspices of the Northumberland National Park (NNPA, 2013).

In January 2012, community engagement events ('drop-in' sessions) were held to introduce the concept of neighbourhood development planning. In July 2012, as part of the plan preparation, events were held at Greenhaugh First School to identify ways in which children and young people could be involved in neighbourhood planning activities. In August 2012 a brief update published in the community newspaper, the Tarset News, reported on the progress made as well as delays that had occurred with neighbourhood planning activities and presented an outline of the next steps to be taken (TGNDP, 2012). Shortly afterwards, in October 2012, the Parish Council set up a six-member Steering Group for the Tarset and Greystead Neighbourhood Development Plan.

The Steering Group started work on preparing a questionnaire which was distributed in November 2012 to all parish households for completion. The questionnaire included themes covering housing provision, needs and local preferences; protecting the natural environment; local traffic, parking and cycling issues; tourism and sustainability for the area and new business and employment. A colourful brochure outlining the TGNDP activities prepared by the Steering Group was also distributed at that time. Although a number of activities had been conducted by the Steering Group throughout 2012, overall progress on drafting the plan was slow as little could be done before decisions had been finalised on the designation of the neighbourhood areas by NCC and NNPA.

At the start of 2013, a new momentum infused the activities of the TGNDP Steering Group, which set about drawing up a project plan with targets and deadlines. Regular fortnightly meetings continued to be held with minutes of the meetings regularly posted on the TGNDP website. Work commenced on a Community Engagement Strategy and analysis of the questionnaire results was carried out by a consultant (Travelscape) hired for the purpose in May. More consultation and 'open day' events targeting local businesses, farmers and young residents were held in June and October to gather further information to inform the draft TGNDP. The collation of the outputs from these consultation events and the questionnaire resulted in the production of the TGNDP 'Emerging Themes' Consultation Document (TGNDP, 2013a). The Consultation Document was prepared as a first draft of community priorities with the intention that

the themes and objectives enable more specific local policies to be drawn up for the area than have been available through the NNPA Core Strategy. The Consultation Document contains a Vision Statement, which is: 'to maintain and enhance the special qualities of the landscape and the environment, and the vitality of our community, for current and future generations who visit, live and work in the Parish of Tarset and Greystead'.

One of the most consistent findings emerging from the analysis of the questionnaire results was the need identified in July 2013 for some kind of design guide or statement specific to Tarset and Greystead and covering 'built design, landscape design and protection of significant views/sightlines' (TGNDP, 2013a). The Steering Group's intention for the Design Guide was that it should inform local planning authority decisions with regard to new development applications. A proposal to develop a Design Guide was presented at the Steering Group meeting held in July 2013. NNPA agreed the need for this and subsequently supported and facilitated the process of pulling it together. The Design Guide was a topic of discussion at several Steering Group meetings held during 2013 and was an important focus of activities in plan preparation. However, while there is a high level of community commitment to this addition, NNPA planners have advised the Steering Group that it carries no statutory weight. NNPA and Planning Aid staff members have indicated that, as a piece of research, while it provides a useful tool for the TGNDP planning process, it can only be regarded as supplementary to the Local Plan. It was decided in June 2013 that further work was therefore required to devise relevant policies, using the Design Guide as a basis.

Since the start made on plan preparation during 2012, the Steering Group had worked through a number of milestones. By December 2013, the Steering Group had completed three of the six stages required for the completion of the neighbourhood development plan. However, it had fallen behind its projected timescale (TGNDP, 2014a). The Steering Group had originally planned to have the draft Neighbourhood Plan out for consultation by the autumn of 2013 prior to its submission for independent examination in April 2014. This target date was subsequently postponed to the end of 2014, in order to allow sufficient time to complete the remaining activities, including the detailed work of drafting the plan, presentation of the draft plan for discussion and agreement with the community and the subsequent finalisation of the plan. An overview of TGNDP Steering Group activities throughout 2012 – 2013 is presented in Table 6.2 below.

Date	Activities
26 January 2012	N.Tyne Neighbourhood Plan Drop-In Sessions held in 3 parishes of N. Tyne Planning Group (Tarset and Greystead, Bellingham & Wark)
July 2012	Greenhaugh First School: discussions to involve children and youth in TGNDP
August 2012	Neighbourhood Plan Update Tarset News TGNDP SG meet with NNPA Head of Planning
October 2012	TGNDP Steering Group established by Parish Council
November 2012	NP brochure produced and distributed to all parish h/h Questionnaires distributed to all parish h/h
10 January 2013 10 April 2013	NCC designation of NDP planning area NNPA designation of NDP planning area Incorporation of Design Statement in NP
March 2013	Press Release issued by NNPA
April 2013	Deadline for completion of Final Plan (original target date)
14-15 June 2013	Open Day events for small businesses/farmers etc. held at Tarset Village Hall, Lanehead
22 October 2013	Community consultation event held in Tarset Village Hall, Lanehead on emerging themes for draft TGNDP TGNDP Consultation document prepared: 'Objectives and Issues'
December 2013	Planning Aid consultant appointed to advise on TGNDP policy development Preparation of draft NP commenced Draft plan presented to T&G Parish
February 2014	TGNDP Planning Policy Workshop held (04.01.14) Draft NDP prepared
December 2014	(Revised) Deadline for completion of Final Plan

Table 6.2: Timeline of TGNDP activities 2012-2014
(Source: TGNDP, 2014a)

6.6 Neighbourhood Planning issues for Tarset and Greystead

A number of planning, community engagement and governance challenges for Tarset and Greystead have arisen for the Steering Group. These include initial governance and leadership challenges; the relationship between the various stakeholders and the role of NNPA; the need to reconcile community planning preferences with the strategic planning aims of NNPA and NCC and practical issues in delivering the plan.

In 2011, the NNPA initially identified the Parish of Tarset and Greystead together with the neighbouring parishes of Bellingham, Falstone and Wark as potential candidates for the Front Runner programme. The original intention of NNPA was that the four parishes should develop a joint plan. A bid, led by the NNPA and supported by NCC, was lodged in the name of 'The North Tyne Plan' (Northumberland County Council, 2012). Subsequently Falstone Parish decided not to be included in the scheme, leaving the other three parishes to proceed without it. Following meetings with the other two

parishes (Bellingham and Wark) Tarset and Greystead Parish Council then decided to proceed independently. As a Parish Councillor commented:

'It was only Tarset and Greystead that entered into that (scheme) really, and we thought we would be far better off going on our own, if that was ok. There was a personality thing, partly - but they are totally different in the areas of concern…Bellingham has got transport links, shops, got big areas of wasteland.. waiting for development…You've got a demand for new development.. you've got council housing, ex-council housing – a huge amount of development that is not relevant to Tarset and Greystead … We were interested more from the point of view that – well, this could be a good opportunity and it was something we actually needed to participate in and we'd see how it went.' (Tarset and Greystead Parish Councillor).

The TGNDP Planning Group provided an update of its activities in the Autumn 2012 edition of the Tarset News:

'it was felt that the interests of Tarset and Greystead would be best served by withdrawing from this group of three and developing our own independent Neighbourhood Plan. It was the National Park that initially applied for Front Runner status for the three parishes and, whilst they would have liked the three parishes to develop a joint plan, they (NNPA) understood our reasons and have since confirmed that we would still be eligible for our share of the remaining grant money and continuing help from the National Park when we ask for it.' (TGNDP, 2012).

The initiative for creating a neighbourhood plan in the area therefore rested with the NNPA, which drew on the previous planning experience of the Parish Council with a Community Led Plan (CLP) and Visual Appraisal when inviting it to apply for Front Runner status. Initially the neighbourhood planning process was also led and managed by NNPA. This was due to the early difficulties arising from internal conflicts among Parish Councillors and the apparent lack of leadership and/or willingness of the Parish Council to take up the required tasks. The community development staff from NCC and planning staff from the NNPA therefore facilitated a range of activities for the planning process, including chairing meetings, providing the secretariat and other practical assistance. NNPA planning staff also undertook the task of collating the required planning documents for review by the Neighbourhood Planning Group (subsequently re-named the TGNDP Steering Group). These amounted to over 122 pages, which, as one of the NNPA staff commented:

'It's like hitting them over the head with a sledgehammer – to a lay person, that's daunting. The task was to put a red pen through

all the things they didn't want to see in the local plan.' (NNPA community development staff).

But this challenge was taken up by the Neighbourhood Planning Group who successfully addressed the task. As a member of the group commented:

'We did an exercise, took the planning documents from the NNPA, the Local Development Framework and went through them and made comments on the various bits that were relevant or not relevant.' (Neighbourhood Planning Group member)

This exercise, demonstrating that there was sufficient level of skills and knowledge in the community to take on the tasks of preparing a neighbourhood development plan for the area was recognised by NNPA:

'Tarset and Greystead has a strong and well-informed community that is already actively involved in a range of issues, including planning.' (TGNDP, 2013b).

The neighbourhood plan boundaries were defined in the application submitted by the Parish Council to NNPA, such applications being required under the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 as a pre-condition when preparing a neighbourhood development plan or order. It was decided that the Neighbourhood Plan should cover the whole parish of Tarset and Greystead, including afforested areas. In the application form, the Parish Council stated the rationale and purpose of the neighbourhood plan.

'Having considered the current Development Frameworks for the two planning authorities, the Parish Council feels it would be appropriate, through the Neighbourhood Plan, to prepare a local planning policy that can better address the needs and wishes of the local community and provide a degree of local distinctiveness to the way planning decisions are taken, giving priority to local people in the Parish.' (NCC, 2013a).

The decision taken by the Tarset and Greystead Parish Council to pursue the idea of a neighbourhood plan separately from the parishes of Bellingham and Wark was considered as a good opportunity by the NNPA to trial the neighbourhood planning process. As an NNPA planner commented:

I think the way NNPA approached it – I think they did want to use it as a model and see how it would work and obviously the NNPA having such limited staff resources, if groups of parishes came together and developed neighbourhood plans themselves, it was very much better for the NNPA. It was seen very much as a trial, as it should have been – it was a Front Runner.' (NNPA planner).

The Head of Planning, Conservation and Communities at NNPA observed:

Neighbourhood Planning is billed by Government as a significant new part of the planning system. The work being done by Tarset and Greystead Parish provides a very good opportunity to test Neighbourhood Planning in a deep rural area.' (TGNDP, 2013b).

Neighbourhood planning has been 'tested' extensively through the work of the TGNDP Steering Group and the collaboration with the NNPA, as is testified by the Consultation Document produced by the Steering Group in October 2013 (TGNDP, 2013a).

The TGNDP Consultation Document is the result of nearly a year's work and represents the combined efforts of the Steering Group and NNPA planning staff. It identified six main themes and objectives reflecting the primary issues of concern for local residents, as shown in Table 6.3 below. A number of these issues had been raised in previous community led planning activities conducted by the Parish Council and local residents. For each objective, the document sets out existing NNPA policies in force and identifies the policies required in the TGNDP that could address the specific and local needs of the parish. These include:

i) conserve and enhance landscape, biodiversity, natural habitats and cultural heritage of the parish; ii) ensure new development preserves the intrinsic character of the area; iii) cater for local housing need; iv) ensure a vibrant local economy; v) ensure tourism development does not continue at a cost to local parish residents; vi) support small-scale renewable technology.

Objective 1
Conserve and enhance the landscape, biodiversity, natural habitats and cultural heritage of the Parish through careful design in new development, and identification of key landscapes, views and heritage assets to be protected.
• *Why do we have this objective?*   Many respondents mentioned that the beauty and tranquillity of the National Park was their main reason for living here. Most were also concerned about the other issues.   • *What planning policies are already in place in relation to this objective?*   There are already a number of policies in the Northumberland National Park Core Strategy that protect these aspects of the National Park. The National Park already has Supplementary Planning Guidance on Landscape. Policies 1, 3, 17, 18, 19, 20 and 22 also seek to protect the special qualities of the National Park in different ways.   • *How could the NDP achieve the objective over and above existing planning policy?*   The NDP could contain a more specific list of locally important landscapes, views and open spaces that could be produced to clarify existing policy in the Northumberland National Park Core Strategy. The NDP could identify a list of locally important heritage assets, with specific policy guidance to ensure their protection, enhancement or re-use.
Objective 2
To ensure any new development in the Parish, whether it is new housing, conversion of existing buildings or other built development is carefully designed to preserve the intrinsic characteristics of the area in which they are to be located.
• *Why do we have this objective?*   97% of respondents stated in that they felt future development in the Parish should be in keeping with the character and landscape of the Parish. The individual comments indicate that there is a desire to ensure that future

development reflects the vernacular, and that inappropriately designed development in the Parish should cease.

- *What planning policies are already in place in relation to this objective?*

There are already a number of policies in the Northumberland National Park Core Strategy that protect these aspects of the National Park. The National Park already has Supplementary Planning Guidance on Design. Policies 1 and 3 are directly related to the objective above.

- *How could the NDP achieve this objective over and above existing planning policy?*

The NDP could contain much more specific guidance which is tailored to the special qualities of Tarset and Greystead Parish. The NDP steering group will commission architects to produce a design guide which will provide clarity on what new built development or type of conversion is acceptable in the Parish. New policies in the NDP will reflect this document and give clarity to developers.

Objective 3
To cater for local housing need where it arises and ensure that there is sufficient housing provision to meet the existing and future needs of residents in the parish.

- *Why do we have this objective?*

The questionnaire showed that there was a strong feeling that new housing should be allowed within the settlements of Lanehead and Greenhaugh. Written responses showed that most favoured Greenhaugh with few supporting further development in Lanehead. 63% of respondents also said more housing should be allowed in other parts of the parish.

Results showed there was a preference for conversions over new build. There was a preference for smaller properties and rented properties where need was expressed.

- *What planning policies are already in place in relation to this objective?*There are already policies in the Northumberland National Park Core Strategy that relate to housing for local needs. Policy 10, accompanied by the Definition of Local Need ensures that all new housing development is for 'local needs' only. Policy 5 relates to location of new development, and Policy 6 relates to the sequential approach (Previously Developed Land first,then sites within settlements, etc.)

- *How could the NDP achieve this objective over and above existing planning policy?*The NDP could have a policy that gives preference to residential use in conversions of existing buildings rather than tourism use. The NDP could provide guidance (maybe through a design/landscape guide) on where new housing development would be best directed. The NDP could identify redundant buildings/sites where residential development would be appropriate, and specify the type of development, influenced by the detailed design guide.

Objective 4
To ensure a vibrant local economy, there needs to be more support for the more traditional types of rural employment (farming, forestry, traditional apprenticeship schemes and food production). There also needs to be the means to encourage and continue to provide for home working, self- employed, and other local businesses.

- *Why is this important?*

The responses indicated that agriculture was felt to be the most important part of the local economy (to residents) with tourism being the least important.

- *What planning policies are already in place in relation to this objective?*

Policy 14 in the Northumberland National Park Core Strategy relates to the Sustainable Local Economy but includes tourism and recreation.

- *How could the NDP achieve this objective over and above existing planning policy?*

The NDP could have a specific policy similar to Policy 14 in the National Park LDF, but which focuses on those aspects of the local economy that are considered to be most important by local people in Tarset and Greystead. Tourism will have its place, but the wording could be different to shift the policy focus.

Objective 5
To ensure that tourism development does not continue at a cost to local residents in the Parish. The tourism sector is well established, but the NDP should reflect the majority resident response that is at variance with the current National Park policy.

- *Why is this important?*

Tourism is an important part of the local economy, but feedback from the community indicates that there is a feeling that the tourism sector is at saturation point and that local residents' needs should be a priority over tourism.

- *What planning policies are already in place in relation to this objective?*

Policy 14 in the Northumberland National Park Core Strategy relates to the Sustainable Local Economy but includes tourism and recreation. Policy 15 refers to Sustainable Tourism and Recreation Development.

- *How can we achieve this objective through the NDP?*

The NDP could have a specific policy on Sustainable Tourism which reflects the needs of the local community and restricts the scale of tourism development in the Parish.

The NDP could have a policy giving priority to residential use in conversions, rather than tourism use.

The NDP could contain a policy on new tourism development which will require applicants to submit certain information (i.e. traffic assessments, etc.), to allow the planners to properly assess the impact of proposals on the

local community.	

Objective 6

Sustainability is important to the community in Tarset and Greystead from an environmental, social and economic perspective. Small scale renewables should be encouraged in new developments and in existing infrastructure where it can be accommodated. Planning proposals that support the social and economic sustainability of the local community should be supported.

- *Why is this important?*

There was a high level of support for sustainable technologies in the questionnaire results - the smaller technologies (many of which are permitted development) had the highest level of support, with larger scale technologies receiving less support.

- *What planning policies are already in place in relation to this objective?*

Policy 1 in the National Park LDF Core Strategy is about delivering Sustainable Development. There are many other policies in the plan, which also contribute to achieving sustainable development.

- *How could the NDP achieve this objective over and above existing planning policy?*

The NDP could have its own GD1 (General Development) policy, which is more specific to Tarset and Greystead, about sustainability. This policy could be based on the National Park GD1 policy, but with a much higher level of specificity to the Parish.

Table 6.3: TGNDP Consultation Document
(Source: TGNDP, 2013a)

The Consultation Document has formed the basis for preparing planning polices specific to the neighbourhood plan area. At a planning policy workshop held on 4th February 2014 with the assistance of planners from the NNPA and Planning Aid, the Steering Group commenced the work of preparing these planning policies.

6.7 Analysis of Case Study Findings

6.7.1 *Community and stakeholder engagement*

The level of community engagement in the parish has been acknowledged in a press release issued by the Steering Group as the key to the success of the Tarset and Greystead Neighbourhood Plan (TGNDP, 2013b). But while there appears to have been a long history of good community relations and community spirit within the parish of Tarset with Greystead, the initial attitudes and opinions of individuals within the Parish Council towards localism and the idea of a neighbourhood plan were those of resistance and cynicism. The previous Chair of the Parish Council, according to a community member:

> '…was not convinced that localism was going to produce anything, it was just a government thing and I think he's going to be proved right.' (Tarset and Greystead community member)

Early on therefore there was scepticism and doubt as to the likely success of a neighbourhood plan. However, with a change in Parish Council leadership and continuing interaction with the NNPA and other agencies, this attitude has given way to a more positive outlook where the neighbourhood plan has been taken forward together with the community:

'It was felt that we had to take this opportunity to help influence the way in which the Parish develops in the future and not just regarding planning issues, by continuing to develop Tarset and Greystead Neighbourhood Plan.' (Tarset News, 2012).

This suggests that it is not only monetary benefits (such as Community Infrastructure Levies (CILs) that communities seek when embarking on a neighbourhood plan. The Steering Group was informed by the NCC planner that as CIL payments are linked to the amount of development, these payments would likely be small if there was limited development in the NDP area (TGNDP, 2014e). The possibility of generating income for the community from new development was not seen as a priority.

The motivation to have a neighbourhood plan for Tarset and Greystead Parish can be seen to derive from a long-standing involvement and interest among some of the Parish Councillors and residents in planning matters affecting the village. However, in the early stages, establishing the governance arrangements was complicated by differences among members of the Parish Council and leadership issues. This resulted initially in the need for the planning and community development staff of the NNPA to lead the process and take up the various governance tasks required that would normally have fallen to the Parish Council and community. Some misgivings about these aspects of the role of the NNPA were noted by one Steering Group member who commented that in terms of support:

'..we have the NNPA and I still don't know if that's a good thing….It was, I have to say, it was very much guided by the NNPA in terms of the questions and organisation and everything … but at the moment we are prepared to put the time in because it's an opportunity we can't *not* take.' (Steering Group member)

The dominant role of the NNPA in the early stages of preparing the neighbourhood plan had divided opinion among the members of the Parish Council. The Parish Council Chairman, as previously noted, was sceptical of the neighbourhood planning initiative. At the Parish Council elections, the election of a new, active Parish Council Chairman resulted in a more pragmatic orientation to the neighbourhood planning project. Initially, community motivation and involvement in the neighbourhood plan had less to do with trust and was guided more by down-to-earth, practical reasons. A member of the NNPA staff recalled discussions with residents at the time:

'One of the issues for the Neighbourhood Plan was: 'what do we (the community) get out of it?' (NNPA staff member).

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In Tarset and Greystead an initial incentive to participate was clearly the release of funding available for the community to spend as they wished. This assisted in overcoming the initial resistance of some Parish Council and Steering Group members to involvement in a collaborative process with a major player such as the National Park. As further incentives became available in the form of technical assistance, guidance and further funding through other agencies, the governance structure of the TGNDP has strengthened and motivation appears to have increased along with the pace of planning activities.

Some Steering Group members also felt that the reason the NNPA invited all of the Parishes together to apply for Front Runner status was primarily to 'make up the numbers' to achieve a successful application:

> 'I might have got this wrong but I think they had to put the parishes together to get the numbers' (Steering Group member)

This comment reflected the attitudes held by some local residents about dealing with an institution such as NNPA, with issues over transparency and collaboration. It was this kind of comment that tended to colour discussions in the early days with Steering Group members, among whom a certain level of distrust and scepticism was evident with regard to the role of NNPA at that time. This was accompanied by a feeling of being manipulated and outmanoeuvred by a bigger, stronger player. Differences of opinion between the Steering Group and NNPA have resulted in a breakdown in relations at different times. These have, however, been resolved on each occasion and the collaboration has continued. A more positive outlook has emerged from among Steering Group members as milestones have been reached and as progress on the work of the plan has increased in pace.

6.7.2 *Community capacity*

The organisational capacity of the Steering Group to mobilise and energise the community in Tarset and Greystead has been demonstrated by the wide range of consultation events arranged and the overall progress made with preparing the neighbourhood development plan. The Steering Group's proposal for the Design Guide represents an example of its capacity to coordinate, organise and invest intensive effort in an identified neighbourhood planning priority and to harness available support and assistance from major stakeholders such as NNPA. Preparing the Design Guide has

involved tasks including the selection and commissioning of architects, tendering processes, selection procedures, identification of potential funding sources, etc.

Living in the community are a number of residents who are also in-migrants of many years standing. These include retired teachers, academics, entrepreneurs, business executives and professionals. They have brought with them a wide range of what could be described as 'extra-local' experience, skills, knowledge, lifestyles and attitudes on which previous community led planning activities in the area have drawn. These skills have been drawn on yet again for the neighbourhood planning process. There is also a number of wealthy residents with resources to support the wide range of ventures that have been undertaken in the neighbourhood as part of the start-up of neighbourhood plan activities (Personal communication from Steering Group member).

The Steering Group is composed of a number of these retired local residents. Initially this membership, drawn from Parish Councillors, could have been likened to an exclusive 'cabal' as identified in research elsewhere (Bishop, 2011, 73). In the case of Tarset and Greystead, this designation, while it may have characterised the earlier behaviour and activities of the Steering Group, is no longer an accurate reflection. The Steering Group with its revitalized membership has made considerable efforts to reach out and involve the wider community and, as previously noted, has arranged an extensive range of community engagement events.

A point made at several Steering Group meetings had been the need for additional planning expertise, which the NNPA had provided on an 'as needs' basis (TGNDP, 2013b). The Steering Group, however, identified an increasing skills-gap that could not be adequately met by that provided by NNPA. Accordingly the Steering Group has addressed this by appointing a free-lance planner in February 2014 to assist with neighbourhood plan policy-making, using funds made available from the NGO, Locality.

A number of observers have commented on the strong leadership of the neighbourhood planning process. This may be connected to a recent change of Parish Council membership which has brought about a more positive attitude towards the ideas and principles of neighbourhood planning. As an NNPA planner commented:

'At the start of the process I always thought that Tarset could
prepare a plan themselves because the community is a lot stronger
(than Bellingham). They were very keen on the idea when the
Park first proposed it..' (NNPA planner)

This capacity has undoubtedly been enhanced by the support and assistance provided by
NNPA staff. But it is clear that its ability to negotiate with other agencies and
stakeholders to achieve outcomes for the neighbourhood development plan is what
makes the Steering Group successful. The community, represented by the Steering
Group has succeeded in pursuing its own independent role in the process.

6.7.3 *Affordable housing and developer involvement*

The concern to preserve and conserve the existing landscape and heritage of the area has
served as an incentive for many local residents to take an interest in the neighbourhood
planning process. As Rydin has observed:

> 'One overriding difficulty with conservation is that it comes at a
> cost…Development that is permitted is more costly than would
> otherwise be the case…Often development within a conservation
> area will carry a premium over and above the value of that
> development elsewhere… The gravest concern with this approach is
> the disregard of social inequalities that can result from the interaction
> of conservation policies with property prices......so houses in national
> parks and similar countryside designations are considerably more
> expensive than a similar property outside the designated area.'
> (Rydin, 2011, 84).

In this way, an inflated local property market can be created, leading to problems for
local residents, but particularly local first-time buyers.

Much of the early momentum for a neighbourhood plan appears to have been generated
by concerns both within the Parish Council and from local residents. These reflect the
unease over the prospect of speculative development in the area and clearly articulated
opinions that new housing development would be irrelevant to the needs of the parish.
There is a strong commitment in the area 'to maintain the beautiful landscape that we all
appreciate' (TGNDP, 2012) and the neighbourhood plan was seen as a primary means
of preventing, or at the least, controlling the level of any future development. A
comment by one of the Parish Councillors in the   edition of the Tarset News reflected
the ambivalence of these earlier attitudes:

> 'One acronym I hope we don't subscribe to in Tarset and Greystead
> (is) 'BANNANA' (Build Absolutely Nothing Near Anywhere Near

Anyone) but may well find that we do when we've looked at the comments from the planning meetings!' (Tarset News, 2012).

Policy 10 in the TGNP Consultation Document relates to ensuring that all new housing development is for 'local needs only'. The unsustainable nature of this approach, however, has been emphasised, as rural communities become more socially exclusive and less heterogeneous in composition (Shucksmith, 2012). As Shucksmith points out, quoted in an article by Anita Pati in the Guardian on 11th February 2009:

> 'Beyond the question of who is acceptable to join a rural community, there are issues of fairness and social justice. Rural communities are often proclaimed by those who live there as inclusive and neighbourly, but it seems they often prevent the new housing which would enable poorer and middle income groups to share the rural idyll.' (Pati, 2009).

Over time, some of the residents' attitudes and opinions have become more nuanced. At any rate, the TGNDP Consultation Document reflects a more flexible approach to the manner in which new development might take place compared to attitudes expressed earlier in the plan-making process.

At the same time, these attitudes and opinions have found expression in the Steering Group's proposal for the Design Guide, an aspirational community statement on managing new development. It also demonstrates the way in which localism can be misunderstood and misinterpreted at community level, even where planning guidance, advice and substantial community resources and capacity are available. The intention behind the Design Guide was that it would provide a reference point for future planning applications and would therefore meet the community's aspirations in retaining the existing character and visual amenities of the area. Much time and effort has gone into the preparation of this document, but it carries no statutory weight nor could it effectively serve to shape or even influence the design of any future development. Underlying the determination of the Steering Group to produce such a design statement is the evident conviction that neighbourhood planning should be about this kind of place-shaping and the Steering Group is clearly keen to take up whatever level of empowerment this might offer. This example also demonstrates the kind of planning hurdles and challenges that many communities face in the process of delivering the plan and the level of knowledge of the planning system that is required of communities. The Design Guide, while it appears to represent an end in itself for the community, is

regarded from the planning perspective as at best, only a basis on which to prepare relevant policies for incorporation into the neighbourhood development plan. This demonstrates an issue highlighted in research elsewhere (Brownill and Downing, 2013, 374) that neighbourhoods often face a steep learning curve in negotiating the new planning system. Even if the system has been simplified as has been claimed, it still presents significant challenges while also raising expectations at the local level that may not be met.

6.7.4 *Neighbourhood development plan governance*

The qualifying body for the neighbourhood plan, the Parish Council, has successfully delegated the management of the planning process to the TGNDP Steering Group. A commonly held view of Parish Councils and Councillors and mentioned by one of the NNPA staff was that:

> '..a lot of Parish Councillors don't have a lot to do with the people they're supposed to represent.' (NNPA staff member).

This tended to characterise the governance of Tarset and Greystead Parish prior to the events and changes set in motion by the neighbourhood planning process. Initially the Steering Group adopted a similar governance approach to that of the Parish Council. This could be expected since at the outset, the Steering Group had recruited its new members from among existing Parish Councillors. Parish Council governance, however, has reflected the difficulties of not only recruiting, but also retaining individuals in their posts, as evidenced by the frequently changing composition of Parish Council membership. As one Parish Councillor commented from his sixteen years' experience:

> 'In that time, the Parish Council has had a lot of people standing down but there are people who don't pull their weight, plus they are farmers, four out of eight who were farmers, which is not healthy, for some reason.' (Parish Councillor).

Parish Council recruitment was a closed procedure; recruitment to the TGNDP Steering Group was also initially a relatively 'closed' procedure effected by the (then) Chair of the Parish Council inviting other Parish Councillors and known residents onto the Neighbourhood Planning group:

> 'The Chair of the Parish Council approached three (others) who might like to be on the Tarset and Greystead Neighbourhood Planning Group. One Parish Councillor was taking a back step because he'd put in a planning application to build on some land in Greenhaugh which he owns and he didn't want to be seen to be part

of it, so… after that the Chair invited four other people – probably the right way of doing it' (Parish Council member/Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group member).

This comment reflects an endorsement of the approach to recruitment adopted by the Parish Council at the time. But the change of the post of chair and the formation of the Steering Group was followed by other changes that subsequently proved to be favourable for the governance process. A new infusion of energy appeared to turn around attitudes towards the activity of neighbourhood planning. A number of initial governance challenges facing the community and Parish Council were resolved as a consequence. A new momentum was established during 2012 with the Parish Council and newly formed Steering Group taking up the activities of neighbourhood planning. Consequently, the NNPA was able at this point to step back from its role of leading the process. As a member of the NNPA planning staff commented:

'We always tried to get them to take ownership but no one wanted to take the lead.' (NNPA planning staff).

At the outset of the collaboration process, the National Park, as a public sector stakeholder, was inevitably seen as the dominant actor by other stakeholders. It was the NNPA that had initially acquired Front Runner status, a status it could then pass on to those parishes invited to bid in successive rounds of government funding. Since then, a number of the procedural and management issues arising between the Steering Group and NNPA concerning the preparation of Tarset and Greystead's neighbourhood development plan have been resolved, with confident Steering Group members taking up the tasks with energy and enthusiasm. With the new leadership the neighbourhood planning process has survived the early challenges and produced through the Consultation Document a 'vision of the parish' that demonstrates the place-making ambitions and achievements made possible through neighbourhood planning.

The Northumberland National Park Authority remains the bigger player, however. It is a powerful institution in this context, retaining control of the funding resources. Managing this relationship presents significant challenges to the Steering Group. The NNPA holds the balance in terms of resources to support the planning process. But what it provides it can also withhold. Members of the NNPA staff have been highly supportive and provided substantial assistance to the Steering Group over time. These staff members, however, were withdrawn from this role when differences arose between

NNPA and the Steering Group over funding issues. Although the facilitating role has since been taken up again, it caused some disruption at the time. Such experiences where good collaboration and exchange between the NNPA and the Steering Group have been built up are invaluable and are difficult to replicate once disrupted. The break in continuity as well as the loss of a valued resource creates particular challenges for a group that is still on a learning curve and trialling a process. It demonstrates just one of the ways in which a bigger player is able to exercise power and control over a smaller one.

The question of the legitimacy of neighbourhood planning governance institutions under localism, raised earlier in relation to the ADNP case study is equally relevant for the TGNDP. The two cases share a number of similarities, but there are also differences which are explored below. The work of Cowie and Davoudi is again referenced here to assess the legitimacy of the neighbourhood planning governance of the TGNDP (Cowie and Davoudi, 2015). As previously noted, the authors challenge the notion that localism automatically confers legitimacy on new governance institutions (Cowie and Davoudi, 2015, 186). The authors therefore challenge the democratic legitimacy claimed by neighbourhood forums (NF), these being non-elected bodies comprising volunteers and those involved through a process of 'self-selection'. There are clear parallels that can be drawn with the Steering Groups of neighbourhood plans in assessing the legitimacy of the TGNDP Steering Group.

Neighbourhood planning Steering Groups co-exist with town or parish councils and, as shown in the cases researched for this thesis, the same individuals may hold posts in both organisations. As the newest of local governance institutions, Steering Groups have the authority. In the case of the TGNDP, the original leadership was taken up by the NNPA and then 'transferred' or handed over to the Steering Group. Over time, the initial leadership issues to which this gave rise appear to have been resolved. However, it is the governance aspects of the Steering Group, when examined with the criteria presented by Cowie and Davoudi, that raise questions of legitimacy.

As earlier indicated in Chapter 5, (5.7.3) descriptive representation, which relates to the extent to which representatives resemble those who are being represented, can be seen to apply in the case of the Steering Group. From the available evidence, those that stand or volunteer for these governance positions are drawn from a small population of just

under 300, and closely resemble the majority of residents from which they are drawn. This is middle class, retired, relatively well-to-do, ethnically homogeneous white British, with many being in-comers to the area and not from a rural background. But Cowie and Davoudi challenge the assumption that the potential benefits to be derived from descriptive representation do in fact apply. The broad similarities between Steering Group representatives and the resident population conceal, in the case of TGNDP, the diversity of interests that exist among the resident population. Among the population are local farmers dependent on hill-farming for their livelihoods, whose interests are therefore closely aligned with rural and agricultural development. Such issues that could be expected to be raised at the TGNDP Steering Group meetings, for example, rarely find their way on to the agenda. Another marginalised group comprises those disabled and experiencing long-term illnesses. This group, as was previously noted (Section 6.3) is represented in a third of households in the area. The interests of these groups, however, have effectively been bypassed in the final drafting of policies for the neighbourhood plan and are not considered a priority at Steering Group discussions.

Similar concerns arise with regard to symbolic representation, where it is the extent to which representatives are accepted by the represented. Here it is the extent to which the Steering Group is trusted with the preparation of the neighbourhood plan. As with the case of NFs described by Cowie and Davoudi, the low level of turnout in Tarset and Greystead for consultation events also suggests that the Steering Group has not been widely accepted by the community they purport to serve.

Substantive legitimacy concerns the outcomes that serve the interests of the represented (Cowie and Davoudi, 2015, 180). While a number of outputs for the neighbourhood plan have been identified, there is a clear division of opinion within the Steering Group itself over what priorities for action should be taken up. Delivery of the Design Guide appeals only to some of the Steering Group members, with other members and residents preferring to focus on social and health issues. The views of this group, however, have been bypassed, giving rise to asymmetric power relations within the Steering Group itself.

It becomes clear that, notwithstanding the 'derived' authority that the Steering Group of the neighbourhood plan may claim, this is not necessarily associated with an equivalent level of legitimacy to pursue their activities. As in the case in the ADNP, this creates a

need to emphasise not only how to address the challenge of including marginalized groups, but also how to limit the influence of privileged groups who are 'often over-represented' (Cowie and Davoudi, 2015, 185).

6.7.5 *TGNDP Consultation Document*

The Consultation Document marks significant progress in the work of the TGNDP Steering Group. It reflects issues raised by local residents in response to the range of consultation events held by the Steering Group. The objectives are further examined here in relation to the planning policies subsequently drafted by the Steering Group with the assistance of a professional planner.

Objective 1 reflects the concern to conserve and enhance the landscape and biodiversity in the area, such as protection and management of wildlife, 'dark skies' from the effects of light pollution and supporting options for walking, cycling, and signage (TGNDP, 2013b). A concern raised in a previous Village Appraisal conducted by the Parish Council was that residents did not want to see any change to the area. During the Planning Policy Workshop held on 4th February 2014, however, it was agreed that existing NNPA policies on biodiversity were 'excellent' and it would not therefore serve any purpose to draw up any additional policies for the TGNDP on these issues (TGNDP, 2014c). On the issue of the proposed windfarm development in Kielder, a survey conducted by the Parish Council revealed the opposition of residents both to the installation of masts and to any financial incentives offered by the developer. The offer of £120,000 made by the developer if the scheme was agreed was considered by the Steering Group at a meeting on 3rd December 2013. It was decided that since the scheme was not in Tarset and Greystead parish, it was not relevant but in view of the results of the residents' survey, that a policy on the exclusion of major windfarm development should be included in the draft neighbourhood plan. With regard to the cultural heritage of the Parish, the Steering Group drafted a policy on heritage assets in the parish for inclusion in the draft neighbourhood plan (TGNDP, 2013b).

Objective 2 deals with concerns over the design of new housing and that these should respect the existing character and landscape of the parish. The Design Guide commissioned by the TGNDP Steering Group is to be prepared by a local firm of architects specialising in conservation and heritage. It will then be integrated into the policy to be prepared rather than treated as an Annex. Specific policies are to be

prepared for Lanehead (with its dispersed nature of settlement) and Greenhaugh where the 'envelope' concept is considered more relevant (TGNDP, 2013a).

Objective 3, which covers local housing need, emphasises that new housing development should be for 'local needs only'. The exclusionary aspects of this policy, however, previously addressed in Section 6.7.3 are clear. The community preference is for residential over visitor use of existing buildings and for regeneration and/or conversion of existing buildings in preference to new construction. The Steering Group aims to produce a draft plan for submission that will provide 'suitable housing opportunities for those that require them'. While an element of affordable housing was included in a housing development scheme on the outskirts of Tarset some years ago, the theme of affordable housing has not been included in the TGNDP Consultation Document as it is considered that the NNPA Core Strategy documents contain sufficiently strong policies on this.

Objective 4, dealing with the local economy, reflects the community's concern to support agricultural and rural employment while at the same time encouraging more flexible and alternative forms of employment locally, such as home-working, self-employment and small local businesses. On planning advice this objective cannot be drafted as policy, but can be included in the plan as a non-planning issue (TGNDP, 2013a).

Objective 5 on tourism reflects the community position that further tourism should not be encouraged locally in the area. Community preference is also for the residential use of properties over tourist accommodation. This has presented an issue needing to be reconciled with policies 14 and 15 in the NNPA Core Strategy which addresses the potential to increase opportunities for tourism and recreation through the stipulated use of redundant buildings outside settlements for business purposes. However, as the Steering Group has been advised, NPPF policies take precedence over NNPA policies and the planning policy drafted by the Steering Group therefore has scope to focus on the specific local preference for residential use in conversions as opposed to tourist and visitor use (TGNDP, 2013a).

Objective 6, dealing with energy and sustainability, notes the high level of support in the community for sustainable technologies. It is clear that while some NNPA polices

offer environmental protection and benefits in general, a more specific planning policy is required for the neighbourhood plan. An additional seventh objective on sustainability is therefore to be prepared by the Steering Group. The TGNDP Steering Group plans to conduct a sustainability survey as has been done in Allendale to provide the evidence base and a visit to Allendale has therefore been planned.

The drafting of planning policies using the Consultation Document as a basis, brings the Steering Group close to the finalisation of the neighbourhood development plan. This stage has launched the Steering Group into a range of additional activities. In addition to the independent hiring of additional planning expertise, the Steering Group has prepared to undertake a sustainability survey for the parish, identified where the evidence base for its policies need to be strengthened and is prepared to draft the required additional policies for the neighbourhood plan.

6.8 Conclusions

This case study of the Tarset and Greystead Neighbourhood Development Plan has examined the events, activities, challenges and outcomes resulting from its preparation. In so doing it has sought to reveal the processes, power plays and governance issues arising between different stakeholders in neighbourhood plan-making in a remote corner of Northumberland.

In the early days of setting up the governance arrangements for the neighbourhood plan, the leadership of the Parish Council was sceptical about the potential of the new policy of localism. A change of leadership with a more constructive outlook on neighbourhood planning has brought into being a Steering Group which has mobilised and strengthened community motivation and engagement in the process, moving from an initial position of distrust and cynicism to that of active engagement. In the process of plan delivery, it has succeeded in developing a community engagement strategy and producing a consultation document from which to develop neighbourhood planning policies together with a 'vision' for the area. The neighbourhood planning governance process also appears to have resulted in a regeneration of local level governance. Through the cross-exchange of information, presentations and membership between the Parish Council and the TGNDP Steering Group, the formerly closed nature of parish council activities has been addressed.

One of the clear driving forces behind the momentum for the Tarset and Greystead Neighbourhood Plan has been a concern among residents that if change (in terms of new development) is required it should be under the control of the community, including any new proposed housing. This interpretation has been based on the way the concept of neighbourhood planning was originally presented to communities by the Coalition government. The neighbourhood plan has been seen by a number of influential community members and Parish Council representatives as an opportunity to preserve and conserve as much as possible the vernacular housing and landscape features of the area. This view of neighbourhood planning, however, is in conflict with and overlooks the elements that have since become intrinsic to the government's localism legislation. As one community planner observed:

> 'I'd say that 80% of communities I've been working with have dropped the development side and just talk about the neighbourhood plan – not what's coming but about what is, and not changing anything. I think they have to get into the mind-set that instead of saying 'we don't want anything to change' it should be: 'if change occurs, we want it to change in this way'. It's a development plan at the end of the day; that 'D' is missing so often from the neighbourhood plan'. (Community Planner)

This is the planning perspective; it has yet to be fully adopted in the community mind-set. But as the collaboration between the different stakeholders has continued, through meetings, discussions and sharing of planning advice and guidance, some of the early resistance in the community to any kind of new development, symptomatic of the 'BANNANA' syndrome, has been moderated. Community opinion has moved on to acknowledge that new development may be an option, but under certain conditions. This has been expressed by the Steering Group's engagement with the production of the Design Guide, in the conviction that any new development should be sympathetic to the rural context and historic setting of the village. This is underwritten by the strongly expressed and supported preference for the regeneration of unused buildings over new development in the area. There is a clear determination of local residents, led by the TGNDP's active Steering Group, to see that any changes that might take place should be in accordance with the 'vision' set out in the Consultation Document. This document represents the community's interpretation of the government's new localism policy. But this interpretation will inevitably be challenged as Tarset and Greystead Parish continues towards the finalisation of a draft plan for the neighbourhood. The TGNDP Steering Group has yet to start work on devising policies that will ensure it will pass the

independent examination as well as survive the test of time. The challenges are still to be faced of drawing out and devising policies from the Consultation Document themes and objectives as well as acknowledging the point made by planning advisors that the Design Guide cannot stand alone as a policy document. A further challenge in terms of the overall planning and management of the TGNDP is ensuring that it can be adequately 'future proofed' if completed before the NCC Local Plan is updated. This is an issue that has received increasing attention in the planning community (both academics and practitioners) as more neighbourhood development plans pass referendums ahead of the updating of the relevant Local Plan.

The work of drawing up policies that will address the specifically local needs of the area, that will be sufficiently robust to meet the aspirations of the community but yet also align with the Local Plan of NNPA and the emerging Local Plan of NCC is a challenge acknowledged by professional planners. Although the community has a wide range of local skills, resources and expertise on which to draw, writing planning policies that are sufficiently robust is a specialised skill. Few communities, especially in the rural hinterland, are fortunate enough to have a local resident planner among them. The Tarset and Greystead neighbourhood development plan process illustrates that putting the 'D' back into the neighbourhood plan may be one of the challenges the community faces; other challenges include addressing the lack of planning expertise. For the community to avoid disappointment and disillusionment from the neighbourhood planning process it will require a better understanding of the new planning system and the underlying intention of new development and meeting economic targets that lies at its core.

Chapter 7. Localism and Neighbourhood Planning: Glendale Gateway Trust

7.1 Introduction

This case study focusses on rural neighbourhood regeneration activities conducted in Glendale, a remote area of north Northumberland. These regeneration initiatives have been undertaken by a local development trust, the activities of which pre-date the Coalition government's policy of localism by some 15 years. This chapter examines these initiatives, activities and approach undertaken by the Glendale Gateway Trust (GGT) highlighting the main features of the 'development trust' model of regeneration compared with that of neighbourhood plans in Northumberland. Background information is first provided on the Glendale area, and the main settlement of Wooler (7.1) including a socio-economic and demographic profile (7.2). Local government institutions are then described (7.3). The background, approach, activities and achievements of the GGT are provided at section 7.4. The findings of the research are then analysed in section 7.5 and conclusions follow in section 7.6.

7.2 Background

The area of Glendale, which roughly follows the boundaries of the former Glendale Rural District Council, covers an area of some 250 square miles. It has a population of 5,106 (NCC, 2011) scattered across widely dispersed villages, farmsteads and hamlets. This leads to a number of families and households living in relative isolation, with little public transport. Population numbers in the area have not changed greatly, remaining either static or increasing slightly (NCC, 2011). Wooler, the largest settlement located in the heart of Glendale, is a market town which serves as the gateway to the Northumberland National Park. It has a population of 2,000 and offers a range of facilities for tourists.

The economy of the area was dominated until recently by land-based industries, including farming, forestry and gravel-extraction. The increase in mechanisation, combined with the consolidation of landholdings, employment in these industries has declined. Incomes across Glendale are low, particularly in Wooler (Brown et al, 2007, 32). This is underscored by the introduction of a Food Bank in Wooler accessed through Social Services (Wooler Parish Council, 2014f). The health and social care sector is an important source of employment, and with an ageing population, is one sector expected

to expand. A number of larger firms operate in the area, including Glendale Engineering, Tarmac, the A&J Scott Wood Yard, and Lilburn Estates. Tourism is now as important to the local economy as farming, but the lack of affordable housing in the area creates difficulties in recruiting local workers. However, the number of new, small and micro-businesses is starting to rise, with the increased availability of communication technology that enables these businesses to operate in more remote rural areas (Johnston et al, 2013).

There are three first schools in Glendale, with two located in Wooler. These schools provide education up to Year 8, but there is a lack of school provision for those over the age of 14 (Johnston et al, 2013, 27). For older children, this means attending schools in the nearest towns of Alnwick and Berwick, requiring long journeys of 10-15 miles every day. This, together with the limited public transport provision, results in few facilities and fewer opportunities available for after-school activities and recreation for those in this age group. School-leavers find it difficult to obtain employment and there is a consequent out-migration of this age group from the area in search of work (Johnston, 2013, 21). The level of crime in the area is reportedly low and local residents consider it on the whole to be a secure and safe environment (Johnston, et al, 2013).

Wooler's busy regenerated High Street now boasts several pubs, restaurants, cafes, shops and a supermarket, along with an art gallery and a youth hostel. This has not always been the case, however. During the 1980s, Wooler exhibited increasing signs of decline, with many empty shops in the High Street and decaying buildings, coupled with out-migration of families and younger residents in search of employment. Social problems such as drug dealing and drug abuse were common. The need for regeneration was identified as a result of a visual appraisal conducted in 1996, following which a local development trust, the Glendale Gateway Trust (GGT) was set up with the aim of addressing these issues (Countryside Agency, 2005, 30).

A range of social problems remain to be addressed, however. Out-migration, especially of younger residents continues to be an issue. In 2011, the Glendale Community Plan produced by the Glendale Community Forum in 2011, stated that:

> 'There is a need not only to arrest the outward migration of young
> people from the area but also to attract more of the 25-64 age group.'
> (Glendale Community Action Plan, 2011)

7.3 Socio-economic Profile and Ddemography

A demographic shift is taking place, creating an unbalanced demographic profile with the in-migration of older age groups. The group aged 0-15 comprises 13.4% of Glendale's population; the number in this age group dropped by 10.7% between 2005-2007, the largest decrease across all localities in Northumberland.

The proportion of owner-occupied households is 46.8%. A high proportion of private dwellings are classified as non-decent, at 77.9%, which is the highest of all localities in Northumberland. The proportion of households without central heating is 10.5%. Fuel poverty is high in Glendale, with 41.8% of private households classified in this category; this is the highest rate of all localities in Northumberland.

The highest proportion of those in the age group 16-74 is employed in agriculture, hunting and forestry (20.5%). Over half of those classified as economically inactive are retired, at 54.7%. Of the economically active population, 25.5% are self-employed and 22.6% work at or from home.

Total pop.	5,042	-	Households with residents	2,296	87.8%	Total econ. active pop.	2,360	64.5%
						Total econ. inactive		
Males	2,495	-	Second residence/holiday	168	6.4%	pop.	1,297	36%
Females	2,547	-	Vacant households	150	5.8%		3,657	
All people 0-15 yr	676	13.4%	Detached, whole house	909	34.8%			
People Working Age (16-64 Males, 16-59 Females)	2,845	56.4%				All people (16-74) in employment	2,242	
			Semi detached/whole hous	816	31.2%			
			Terraced, whole house or	732	28.0%			
All people 65+ Males/ 60+ Females	1,521	30.2%	bungalow					
Area (km2)	566.00		Flat, Apartment	153	5.8%			
Density/sq.km	9		Others	5	0.2%			

Table 7.1: Glendale and Wooler: Socio-economic profile
(Source: NCC, 2013b)

7.4 Local Government Institutions and Partnerships

The Parish Council of Wooler has a total of ten Parish Councillors elected for a four year term of office, with the post of chair changing annually or bi-annually (Wooler Parish Council, 2014a). The Parish Council is consulted by Northumberland County Council and other organisations on matters affecting the parish, including planning applications and policies, education proposals and highways issues (Wooler Parish Council, 2014a). The Parish Council is financed by precept at £14,000 for 2014-2015 (NCC, 2014a). Additionally, the Parish Council is engaged in identifying community needs and priorities, liaising with local organisations and services such as the Glendale

Gateway Trust, local police and health services, maintaining community assets owned by the parish council and undertaking the provision and maintenance of local amenities (Wooler Parish Council, 2014a).

With the re-structuring of local government in 2009, the Borough of Berwick-upon-Tweed was abolished and the unitary authority of Northumberland County Council formed. To counter an anticipated loss of voice for local rural areas, the Glendale Group of Parish Councils (GGPC) was created in April 2009, comprising ten Parish Councils, including Wooler (Northumberland Gazette, (2009). The purpose of the GGPC was to support Northumberland County Council's plan to set up county-wide Community Forums. The Glendale Community Forum (GCF) was one of 27 established by Northumberland County Council in 2009 to enable local organisations and communities to define their development priorities. However, funding from Northumberland County Council was withdrawn in 2011, which led to the subsequent closure of both the GGPC and the GCF (Northumberland Gazette, 2011a).

A range of issues associated with rural decline have been identified in Glendale and Wooler over the years through a number of assessments. These included a village needs appraisal conducted in 1996, a visitor survey commissioned by Northumberland Tourism in 2009 (Northumberland Tourism, 2010), a Town Centre health check (NCC, 2009), a community action plan drawn up by the Glendale Community Forum in 2011 and most recently, a report 'Stayin' Alive in Glendale' produced in 2013 by the Glendale Gateway Trust on the out-migration of young people from the area (Johnston, et al, 2013). The main priorities identified in these studies were affordable housing, unemployment, social isolation (particularly among the more remote villages in Glendale), lack of public transport and out-migration from the area of younger residents. The shortage of housing, especially affordable housing for those on low incomes, is a long-standing issue for residents of Glendale and particularly Wooler.

7.5 The Glendale Gateway Trust

The Glendale Gateway Trust (GGT) is one of 200 such organisations across the UK. In Northumberland there are 16 development trusts which have an umbrella organisation, the Federation of Northumberland Development Trusts (FoNDT). They share common approaches to creating community assets that are held in trust for the long term. The principle common to all is the way that land value has been 'decoupled from the

building cost to bring about affordability' (Countryside Agency, 2005, 3). As the report points out, this aspect is particularly significant for rural areas where housing affordability is an issue (Countryside Agency, 2005, 3).

The Glendale Gateway Trust was set up in 1996 as an initiative of Berwick Borough Council, the Community Council of Northumberland and Northumberland County Council to address issues of rural decline in the area following a village appraisal. The GGT, chaired by a local resident who is also a well-known academic and planner, has a Board of twelve Trustees representing a wide range of professional backgrounds, with the majority being retired or semi-retired. The main aims of the Trust as set out in its articles of association are to promote, maintain, improve, encourage and advance for the benefit of the inhabitants of Wooler and the surrounding area of Glendale. Among the supporting aims is the provision of affordable housing and sheltered housing. The GGT adopted a number of principles with which to pursue its 'social entrepreneurial' approach. These included ensuring that projects would benefit the wider area of Glendale, increasing affordable housing stock, reducing grant dependence and delivering services more effectively (Glendale Gateway Trust, (2014a).

Its confident entrepreneurial approach and independent stance on planning and rural regeneration issues have set the Trust apart from other government-sponsored initiatives in Northumberland and it has become well-known throughout the country. This approach has allowed bold decisions to be made resulting in a range of regeneration initiatives, including sustainable affordable housing, a community centre and sheltered housing. The Trust has utilised the wide range of negotiating and strategic skills of its Trustees and members, their combined networks as well as the 'social capital' they provide, all of which have contributed to its ability to lever in the necessary funds for its regeneration activities. The linkages and networks of the Trustees have been seen as vital to the success of the Trust.

The GGT has succeeded in achieving development initiatives and regenerating the market town of Wooler over a period of 17 years. In 2000, the GGT undertook its first project, the conversion and development of the old Glendale Rural District Council (GRDC) offices into a resource centre - the Cheviot Centre - in the heart of the town, to provide meeting, exhibition and office space and accommodate the Tourist Information Centre. The £600,000 project was funded by grants from the RDA One North East, the

EU Regional Development Fund, Berwick-upon-Tweed Borough Council, the Lottery and private funds and trusts (Community Lands Trust, n.d.).

Photograph 7.1: The Cheviot Centre, community resource centre and community hub for Wooler and Glendale

In November 2011, the existing library situated behind the High Street was re-located to the Cheviot Centre, bringing yet a further local service into a more convenient location for local residents. This enabled the opening hours to be extended for the library as well as for the Tourist Information Centre (Berwick Advertiser, 2012). The land was acquired through community asset transfer on a long lease from Berwick Borough Council. The Wooler Community Hub was the winner of the Action for Market Towns (AMT) 2012 North of England Partnership and Strategic Working award for the North East region. In 2003, the Trust purchased a number of empty shops on Wooler's High Street which were refurbished and the premises made available for a successful Youth Drop-In Centre and an outdoor clothing shop, 'Gear for Girls', the first outdoor shop to focus solely on women's wear, which also has an impressive online store (Hudson, 2008). When the owners required larger premises for their expanding business, the GGT identified further vacant properties which could be used for this purpose, thereby enabling the business to remain in Wooler instead of relocating to Berwick.

The decision of the Youth Hostel Association (YHA) to close the hostel in Wooler in 2006 prompted the Trust to buy it, with financial support from Northern Rock. The pioneering approach adopted by the Trust is considered as a model that could be followed by other rural villages and towns. In an article in a local newspaper, the Berwick Advertiser, the Trust Director said:

> 'We feel we've got a really good blueprint here for partnership deals that can benefit other rural communities around the country.' (Berwick Advertiser, 2012)

The Director of the Trust also reflected that:

> 'I think there are communities up and down the country that have the capacity.. it's a very simple formula, really. .. services are going to be challenged in the rural areas and one of the things is to link them together and share resources.' (GGT Director)

The GGT achieved financial stability due to its ability to attract further funding of £78,000 for affordable housing from Northern Rock in 2003 (Berwick Advertiser, 2004), as well as from the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) and business development support from the Rural Growth Network (RGN). With RGN funding in 2013, a number of business 'pods' available for hire at competitive rates to micro and small start-up businesses were constructed. Further major funding for 2013-14 has been provided by the Nigel Vinson Trust Fund and the Big Lottery Villages SOS (GGT, 2014b). The Trust has also sought to expand its existing affordable housing provision in Glendale.

By 2008, the Trust employed a total of 8 staff, managed a community and business centre, a number of commercial units on the High Street, a Youth Hostel with Shepherd Huts and nine affordable housing properties. With the decreasing availability of external public sector funding and grants, the GGT had to reduce its financial outgoings and the Trust staff was reduced from 8 to 6. In late 2013, the Trust adopted the concept of 'crowd funding' through which to finance its affordable housing projects on Wooler's high street, the Abbeyfield Home and part of the former Wheatsheaf hotel. A loan scheme was set up whereby community bonds to the value of £1000 were issued for purchase, valid for three years. As the Chair of the Trust said:

> 'You will get zero interest on your money, which is only slightly less than you are getting from your High Street bank at the moment. But what you will get is the satisfaction that you will be

helping the local community in a very practical way.' (O'Connell, 2013)

More recently, the Trust has initiated two other projects with wider socio-economic themes extending beyond affordable housing. One was a study, 'Stayin' Alive in Glendale' conducted in 2013 on young people's experiences in Glendale, identifying the reasons for the continuing out-migration of younger residents from the area and their experiences and aspirations in relation to housing opportunities, access to transport and ICT, recreational opportunities, school experiences and involvement in community activity (Johnston, et al, 2013). The second project was a community seminar held in Glendale and sponsored by Newcastle University's Institute of Social Renewal, the Northumberland Uplands LEADER programme, Communities for a Sustainable Europe and the GGT. Representatives of the public, private and third sectors as well as from the business and academic world met to explore the opportunities and challenges for community initiatives and the kinds of institutional support needed to promote them (Healey, 2013).

The achievements of the GGT since it was first established in 1996 have been extensive and its capacity to lever in funding for its social entrepreneurial projects has built up experience which the Trust shares with other community organisations and development trusts in Northumberland (FoNDT, 2013). The achievements of the GGT have led to its affirmation that:

> 'Over time, the Trust has also become a governance site to which people turn when they want to see something done, or to get a voice heard.' (GGT, 2014a)

The policy context at the time the GGT was first established in 1996 favoured partnership and management; development trusts were seen by central government as the appropriate managers of community assets (Connelly, 2011, 931). The election of the New Labour government in 1997 also saw an increased policy focus on community self-governance (Murdoch, 1997). At the regional and sub-national level, the case for local trusts was promoted but in spite of the favourable funding climate, the GGT Director recalled the difficulties and frustration of dealing with the county council and borough council at that time:

> 'Before we had the unified authority we had the Berwick Borough Council.. and one of the great sources of frustration from the NSP angle as well as ours, was that the local authority (Berwick Borough

Council at the time) would not support us with any revenue grant - which on the face of it seemed ridiculous because we were planning to lever in so much money in terms of inward investment - but they were refusing to support us with any revenue support at all.' (GGT Director)

This reflected the ambivalent attitude of some local authorities towards such organizations at the time. Connelly notes how in other areas of England some local councillors were: 'notoriously hostile to new, non-electoral structures for local representation' (Connelly, 2011, 939). This was demonstrated in the case of the GGT by the lack of support from both the county council and the borough council:

'So there was this ridiculous situation where the NSP was making a case across Northumberland for the development trusts to the RDA and they were managing to secure money for the RDA but the RDA were saying: 'But the local authority should be contributing as well' and Berwick Borough Council was the only local authority which would not contribute anything in terms of revenue. (GGT Director).

This was seen as a problem deriving from the county council culture of the time. For the Trust, therefore, the policy context was not experienced initially as a supportive one. The networks and connections of the GGT Board members, however, enabled the Trust to break through these barriers:

'I think it's only because we have the ear of people at the top who said 'Just get on with it' - so I'm convinced it wouldn't have happened without that. The irony is that now that it's happening, that the relationship is working and people are buying into it.' (GGT Director).

The Northumberland Strategic Partnership (NSP) provided the key in assisting trusts such as GGT to obtain funding. A good relationship had been forged over a number of years with the NSP and had provided an additional network with which to operate. Relations with the county council were less 'enabling' and 'facilitating' than with NSP. The NCC was seen as being more concerned with the notion of 'control' and 'delivery'. As noted by one of the Trustees:

'Unfortunately the relationship with the NCC was soured quite early on .. so it took quite a number of years to re-build that relationship. It's much better now. They (NCC) need to feel they can control the thing even though they don't know what it is.' (GGT Trustee)

The difficulties encountered with NCC have generated some benefits, however. As one Trustee noted: "In a way it has sharpened our negotiating skills" (GGT Trustee). A

change in governance culture taking place in subsequent years elsewhere across the country also assisted the GGT to move forwards. Connelly notes that where development trusts had initially been perceived as 'problematic and illegitimate' by state-sector partners, by 2006, these had gradually acquired a measure of respect through their achievements (Connelly, 2011, 939). These achievements are examined in the following sections in relation to the extent they confer legitimacy on the Trust.

7.6 Case Study Findings and Analysis

The localism policy introduced by the Coalition government in 2011 with its strapline of austerity and public spending cuts has impacted on a number of trusts in Northumberland and resulted in the closure of local community organisations in the area such as the Glendale Community Forum and the Glendale Group of Parish Councils as well as a significant source of funds at the regional level, One North East.

The GGT has, until recently, survived these cutbacks due to its substantial assets which it owns outright. These enable the Trust to generate income, which covers nearly two thirds of its expenditure, and provides a stable funding base. This has supported the Trust in its independent and self-sustaining approach. Some other development trusts in Northumberland have folded where there has not been an appropriate mix of confidence, entrepreneurial skill and ability with which to identify further funding opportunities and to take projects forward. Reflecting on the criteria for a successful development trust, a former NSP staff member commented:

> 'One of the trustees (of a Northumberland development trust) wouldn't speculate to accumulate. There's a whole mix of stuff of what makes a successful development trust. If left on their own they will wither on the vine. Some may argue that that's good, because they would wither anyway – others would say: 'Then you've got nothing anymore.' (former NSP staff member)

The GGT experience has demonstrated how the support it received from a wide range of private and public sector funding bodies over the years, combined with its own distinctive social entrepreneurial approach has enabled it to thrive where other development trusts in Northumberland have failed. This illustrates that it requires a very particular 'mix of stuff' to ensure success for such bodies.

Other development trusts in Northumberland that have followed a parallel route to that of the GGT have demonstrated the range of possibilities that can be explored. Amble

Development Trust (ADT) was set up a few years earlier in 1994 and succeeded in completing major regeneration projects, including that of the formerly run-down area of derelict buildings in the Town Square and its high street. It has secured grants from the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE), the European Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), DEFRA and One North East. In 2008 funding of £25,000 was raised through the Big Lottery. In terms of governance, the ADT structure compares and contrasts with those of the GGT. The ADT, from the outset, drew on a wide membership base of local residents and currently has over 300 members involved in community projects.

The ability of the GGT to lever in funds has decreased over time however, as public sector grants and other financial support have been reduced or withdrawn. As the Chair of the Trust described the history of the Trust's funding from 1997 to 2012:

> '..we had a period which we refer to on reflection as a 'feast of funding' and all sorts of encouragement for all sorts of initiatives of all kinds between 1997 to 2008.. and then by 2010 it was a real clampdown. In Northumberland there is a Foundation of Northumberland Development Trusts (FoNDT) which evolved about 10 to 12 years ago. In 2008-9 it funded trusts to the tune of £100,000 which was spread around all the trusts. We got £10,000 and then £5,000 but 2012/2013 was the last time we got that.. The other side of the story - the RDA One North East and also Northumberland Strategic Partnership - all provided substantial amounts of funding. What we've got is the North East Rural Growth Network and in August 2013 we opened our business hub… but they do not have much funding and their focus on the rural areas is extremely shaky.'
> (GGT Chair)

The experience of reductions in resources and funding is echoed by other development trusts in Northumberland. With the reduction in public sector funding the ADT has turned to alternative sources. A proposed housing scheme for 250 houses by the developer Persimmons Homes will generate a financial contribution of £450,000 to the ADT for the upgrade of facilities at the Welfare Ground and to provide affordable properties in the town (O'Connell, 2014, 4).

The literature documenting the emergence of neighbourhood-based forums and structures through which communities have taken up regeneration initiatives is extensive (Lowndes and Sullivan, 2008; Taylor, 2003; Sorensen and Torfing, 2005).

The increasing growth in community governance, partnerships and networks has in turn led to a growing concern over the legitimacy of such community-based forms of governance (Connelly, 2009; Taylor, 2003; Beetham, 1991). While much of the research has centred on the urban context, issues of legitimacy have become equally relevant in rural areas. The activities of development trusts such as the GGT, in addressing local level planning and regeneration issues, have drawn increasing attention to the need to consider the grounds for their legitimacy. This is in contrast to the statutory channels such as parish councils through which neighbourhood planning is being conducted under government-sponsored programmes.

Connelly describes a range of different rules for membership and election of trustees, from those where all residents are eligible for board membership to those where board membership is limited to representatives of community groups, 'elected by their peers at an annual general meeting' (Connelly, 2011, 936). The GGT falls into the latter category, where for many years board membership has been limited to representatives of local groups, and the number of community representatives also limited to those representing certain public, private and third sector organisations. The processes through which Trustees are elected are formal. It is through nomination of those who are representatives of organisations, and selection by existing Trustees of new applicants. In other development trusts in Northumberland, more informal and inclusive mechanisms have been adopted.

Such differences in governance express the balance between formal democracy and achieving effectiveness (Connelly, 2011, 937). For the GGT, the effectiveness of the Trust is seen as a priority. The Director of the GGT noted that: 'we have been recognized as an organization that can think strategically' and this is seen as one of the keys to the Trust's success. The Board members of the Trust are drawn from local residents comprising landowners, academics, teachers, a BBC journalist and a church minister. That they are perceived as a group distinct and separate from other local residents has been expressed in the view of some Wooler Parish Councillors that they are 'the posh people' (GGT Trustee).The Chair of the Trust has set out the criteria for those local residents who want to be Board members. It is important for Trustees to have a diversity of skills and be well networked. They should also be:

> '..energetic and skilled but also committed to doing something for
> their community and for their place, who can see the broader picture
> and have a strategic understanding.' (GGT Chair).

But it was also acknowledged that it has been difficult at times to get 'deep enough networking' and achieve a match between the needs of the GGT and those who aspire to Board membership of the Trust. More recently the Trust has followed the example of other development trusts operating in Northumberland, and widened its governance. The GGT has recently offered local residents the opportunity to join the Trust as members, simply by downloading and completing an application form from its website. This entitles such members to attend Trust events and Board meetings and vote at the annual general meeting, which had formerly been restricted to elected Board members.

The GGT operates in parallel with, but also well beyond the geographical boundaries (and remit) of the local parish council. A community development officer with many years' experience of working in the public sector on policy issues in Northumberland noted that:

> 'There's general agreement...that development trusts are less
> successful in larger towns where you have town councils which are
> more capable of organising themselves. Having said that, I think they
> should be able to work together, but there tends to be tension
> between town councils and development trusts.' (NSP staff member)

The tension noted above applies also to relations between the local parish council and the Glendale Development Trust, at least until relatively recently. The Trustees acknowledge that they have 'less powers than the Parish Council and no statutory powers' (GGT Trustee). Until relatively recently, the level of consultation and communication between the two organisations was formal, distant and limited. This has since changed, as the Chair of the Trust noted:

> 'We've softened that boundary and come to think that actually we
> can work together. That's taken a long time to happen and the result
> is a team sense of a community of practice' (GGT Chair).

In practice, a review of the possible grounds for legitimacy for intermediate organisations such as development trusts that occupy and share governance space with statutory institutions such as parish councils indicates that there are different claims that can be considered. These can be styled as first, *associated* legitimacy, secondly as *procedural* legitimacy and thirdly as *substantive* legitimacy (Connelly, 2011). The first,

associated legitimacy, concerns the nature and purpose for which the community based organisation or development trust has been set up, and the linkages thereby created. In the case of the GGT, its social goal of local regeneration and its commitment expressed through its affiliation to the national Development Trust Association can be seen as one of the sources of its legitimacy. As studies of development trusts elsewhere have shown, legitimacy can also be derived from linkages and associations made between the governances of these trusts with external agencies (Connelly, 2011, 934). In the case of the GGT, its long history of over twenty years association with external statutory and non-statutory organisations, including the former Berwick Borough Council, the Northumberland Strategic Partnership, the Rural Community Council and One North East in drawing down funding for community projects and its role in other community governance activities has generated a type of derived legitimacy through these linkages. Secondly, supporting this is the formal governance framework of the GGT which provides a sound and transparent basis for its social enterprises, accountability and sustainability and provides it with 'procedural' legitimacy.

However, before considering the third claim to legitimacy, that of substantive representation, it is useful to consider and compare the findings of recent research on other governance bodies involved in activities similar to that of development trusts, such as neighbourhood forums (NF). An assessment conducted by Cowie and Davoudi on the legitimacy of NFs serves to highlight similar issues facing development trusts such as the GGT (Cowie and Davoudi, 2015). The criteria adopted, as for the two neighbourhood plan case studies in Chapters 5 and 6, are those of descriptive, symbolic and substantive representation (Cowie and Davoudi, 2015, 172).

The authors argue that, in a strictly formalistic sense, NFs are not representative, as they do not formally represent their constituencies; members are not formally elected, but instead are self-selected. This can also be said of development trusts, such as the GGT. NFs, like DTs, define the boundaries of the area to be planned and so 'define their own constitutency' (Cowie and Davoudi, 2015, 176). There is also not a formal direct mechanism of accountability (Cowie and Davoudi, 2015, 177). The parallels in terms of legitimacy between NFs and DTs when looked at in this way then become evident.

Since NFs (and DTs by implication) fail the test of formal representative democratic legitimacy, Cowie and Davoudi then invoke Pitkin's informal forms of representation

(Cowie and Davoudi, 2015, 177). These are symbolic, descriptive and substantive representation. As indicated previously, symbolic representation is defined as the extent to which representatives are accepted by the represented; for NFs this means the extent to which they are trusted to engage in drawing up the neighbourhood plan. For a development trust such as the GGT, the comparable activity would be that of the regeneration activities in Wooler. Preliminary research findings suggest that NFs are not widely accepted, based on the low turnout for referendums (Cowie and Davoudi, 2015, 178) and by extension, this might also apply to development trusts, where referendums are seldom, if ever, held.

Descriptive representation concerns the extent to which representatives resemble those who are being represented through a sharing of common interests (Cowie and Davoudi, 2015, 182). It is assessed by focussing on the accuracy of any resemblance. In the case of NFs, it is based on group types (businesses, developers, etc). For development trusts, such as the GGT, the resemblance between the representatives and residents of Wooler is not evident. The GGT Board members comprise a homogeneous group; the majority are from similar educational, ethnic, and class backgrounds, being white, middle class and professional. They also belong to a similar demographic cohort as most are retired. The question then becomes whether such a group can be considered representative of the diversity to be found in the population of Wooler.

The third claim to legitimacy, of substantive representation, is now considered. It is concerned with outcomes, such as 'whether a process delivers adequate, and adequately distributed, benefits (Connelly, 2011, 932) and beneficial outcomes (Cowie and Davoudi, 2015, 173). As Connelly and other contributors point out, development trusts are social enterprises, likely to be judged on their success in achieving broader aims (Peredo and McLean, 2006). In the case of the GGT, the tangible outputs have been addressed by the activities of the trust in meeting the social and economic needs of the community, such as a regenerated high street, provision of affordable housing, a regenerated community hub and a business complex. Any claim to 'substantive' or 'output' legitimacy, based on the outcomes of the governance activities of the GGT can therefore be seen to be justified, but need to be constantly worked at and maintained. When the outputs are no longer delivered, grounds for legitimacy fall away. While it is evident that each of the forms of 'associated', ' procedural' and 'substantive' legitimacy can be met by the GGT, research has pointed to the fragile nature of such legitimacy,

being essentially site-specific, negotiated and based as much on an 'absence of active, organised dissent' as on expressed consent (Connelly, 2011, 942). The criteria used by Cowie and Davoudi which provide a more nuanced assessment of claims to legitimacy of local governance bodies, demonstrate that the GGT cannot make claim to formalistic, symbolic or descriptive legitimacy.

The Trust's claim to substantive or output legitimacy can then be seen to be based on what it delivers. The cutbacks and reductions in funding of recent years have impacted on the Trust's capacity to deliver. There has been at times concern among the Trustees over the question of the accountability of the Trust:

> 'This is a very interesting paradoxical area which worries my GGT colleague Trustees quite a lot' (GGT Chair).

The legitimacy through which the activity of neighbourhood planning and regeneration is conducted has been defined by law and the extension of a new general power of competence to local authorities in England, including town and certain parish councils (Ricketts and Field, 2012, 33). However, that parish councils are lacking in the qualities needed is a commonly expressed view:

> '..the Coalition Government has put a lot of store in parish councils and a lot are so crap. There's no quality control, there's no compulsion to 'do', there's no national drive to do that. There's characters who have been there for years - how can you vest that responsibility in a parish council that doesn't think it should have its own Plan of Action or doesn't have elections, that doesn't behave, that doesn't have trained clerks? Some would argue that: 'We are too small, we've only got a precept of a few pounds'. Then I'd say: 'it's about time you thought about whether there is there any point in you being there!' It's about time there was an argument for Northumberland to redraw the boundaries. Some parishes only have about 100 people and what can you do with that?' (NSP staff member)

This makes the point that legitimacy is not an automatic given, and that even if it can be claimed through statutory channels, it may not be earned through delivering the goods, through outputs. Wooler Parish Council is represented on the Board of the Trust with two Parish Councillors acting as Representative Trustees (GGT website). The Parish Council has become increasingly active in housing and regeneration matters during 2013.

A newly elected Chair in December 2013 has resulted in an increased exchange of information and meetings between the Parish Council and the GGT on a monthly basis, particularly on affordable housing issues and recent GGT community initiatives. The new Parish Council Chair is very active in the community having recently initiated and completed the regeneration of one of the playgrounds which had fallen into disuse. Under his chairmanship, the first steps have been taken towards gauging the interest of surrounding parish councils in completing a neighbourhood plan for Glendale (Wooler Parish Council, 2014d). The Parish Council also recently embarked on a number of new activities, including strengthening links with NCC, the promotion of the Homefinder service, setting up a Food Bank and seeking 'Dark Sky' status.

The two bodies have thereby come to co-exist in a 'shared' community governance space. Over recent years there has been an increase in the substantive exchange of information (and a cross exchange of representation is in place). The Parish Council Chair considered that relations between the GGT and the Parish Council have improved compared to previous years. There is an ongoing and dynamic 'push-pull' process in terms of which it appears that the two bodies, the parish council and the GGT, are both seeking to be the 'governance site to which people turn' when they want something done.

The need for affordable housing in Glendale and Wooler is long-standing. The Community Action Plan drawn up in 2009 by the Glendale Community Forum identified affordable housing as one of the priorities for the area, endorsed by the Glendale Group of Parish Councils. As noted previously, during the 2000s an influx of in-migrants buying up properties either for own use or as second homes in the area increased house prices locally and put pressure on the existing housing supply, especially for affordable homes for those on low incomes (Johnston, 2013, 15).

The provision of affordable housing in Glendale, initially for the elderly but more recently for younger residents on low incomes, has been one of the long-standing aims of the GGT since its formation. The GGT has succeeded in this, as in its other aims, through its bold entrepreneurial approach. In its early days, the Trust had few assets. With a combination of asset transfer of old, empty local authority buildings and successful bids for EU LEADER funds, the Trust was able to provide two affordable housing units and the premises for the new Youth 'Drop-In' Centre. With a private loan

from a local landowner, it undertook the acquisition and subsequent sale of land left vacant behind the High Street, to a housing association, Home Housing, for a social housing project. The sale enabled the private loan to be paid off. The Trust has built up its asset base over the years, so that by 2009, when sources of public funding had begun to decrease, it stood at £1.5 m. with 75% of core costs met by self-generated income. By 2014 its asset base had risen to over £2.5 m. from which it has invested in further units of affordable housing with the support of the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA). The rental income from its properties provides it with a source of funds enabling it to continue operating independently of public funding (GGT, 2014b).

In April 2012 Berwick Borough Housing closed the Wooler Horsdonside sheltered housing unit for the elderly, resulting in further pressure on housing shortages and the need to identify alternative accommodation for 23 households. The GGT, after setting up a 'Housing Provision for the Elderly' Steering Group, provided affordable accommodation for three of the Horsdonside residents at that time (Keightley, 2012). Two units were made available in the Old Library building and a further two subsequently in 2013 (Johnston, 2013, 15). In April 2012, as a result of pressure from the GGT, a study of housing needs undertaken by DCA Associates, the Glendale Study Housing Assessment Final Report, confirmed the severe lack of affordable housing in Glendale, particularly in Wooler (Johnston, 2013, 16).

By early 2014, the GGT had 9 affordable homes and an increase in this stock to 19 was proceeding in the course of 2014 with the conversion of two further High Street properties, Mansfield House and the Wheatsheaf pub (Wooler Parish Council, 2014h). The Northumberland County Council Housing Strategy identified affordable housing as its top priority and set a target of 380 new affordable houses for the period 2013-2018 (NCC, 2013d, 15). While the NCC Housing Strategy proposed the option of working with Development Trusts, it points to this as a way of 'delivering small numbers of community owned affordable housing' (NCC, 2013d, 15). The NCC emerging Core Strategy anticipates a substantial increase in housing in the Wooler area by 2030 (Johnston et al, 2013, 16).

There has been private developer activity in the Wooler and Glendale area for a number of years, although on a limited scale. However, by late 2013, five planning applications by private developers had been submitted for locations in Wooler, with a total potential

provision of over 70 affordable units on greenfield land (Johnston, et al, 2013, 16). One of these, a proposed development located adjacent to the town's football pitch, was regarded as controversial and was reduced from 22 affordable properties to 9, due to the costs otherwise involved in moving the football club elsewhere. The Parish Council also voiced concerns on the need for a different mix of property types than those proposed by the developer and the ambitious demands in the short term of the development.

Since the appointment of its new Chair, the Parish Council has become increasingly active in planning and housing matters for the area, particularly affordable housing, through contact with NCC's Homefinder scheme and the Housing and Communities Agency (HCA) (Wooler Parish Council, 2013 and 2014). There has been an increased number of joint meetings and exchanges of information on housing issues between NCC, the GGT and Wooler Parish Council in the same period. Among the topics discussed at a meeting in February 2014 which the Chair of the Trust attended, was the possibility of a neighbourhood plan for Wooler and surrounding parishes in Glendale (Wooler Parish Council, 2014g).

The prospect of a neighbourhood plan for the area was considered unlikely when this research was first conducted in the area in late 2012. GGT Trustees considered that had there been any interest in the area from developers, the scope to follow the Trust's chosen approach for regeneration may not have been possible. But at the time this research was initially undertaken, this was not the case:

> 'If there were a lot of developers fighting to develop then we would
> want a neighbourhood plan, but at the moment that isn't an issue.'
> (GGT Chair)

In the space of a year, a number of pressures have combined to lead to a change in this perspective. In February 2014, the Chair of the GGT proposed at a meeting of the Wooler Parish Council that initial discussions be opened with NCC on the possibility of launching a neighbourhood plan for Wooler and the surrounding parishes of Glendale (Wooler Parish Council, 2014g). The issue of affordable housing has clearly brought about increasing collaboration and cooperation between the two main governance bodies, the GGT and Wooler Parish Council during 2013 and early 2014.

7.7 Conclusions

The regeneration activities undertaken by the GGT were begun some 15 years prior to the Localism Act. The aims and vision of the Trust however have achieved outcomes that reflect much of the Coalition government's possible intentions with localism and neighbourhood planning. As the Localism Act states, and also reiterated by planners and practitioners interviewed in the course of this research, a neighbourhood plan is not always appropriate for all cases and situations. The Trust has consciously followed an alternative route to rural regeneration which is different from the approaches being trialled within the government's pilot neighbourhood planning programme in Northumberland.

The Trust has followed a markedly different route to the challenge of regenerating a town centre such as Wooler located in a remote rural area. This has allowed it the scope to adopt an innovative, social entrepreneurial approach with which to pursue its aims. Some of its earlier successes were achieved through the use of networks and linkages, enabling access to funding available under the previous regional structures. Most of these networks have subsequently declined or disappeared leaving rural communities such as Glendale with new funding challenges in the current economic and political climate.

The Trust's model has been based on endogenous needs identified within the community, being regeneration and renewal of existing properties within Wooler. The wider Glendale area is being addressed through new projects such as the 'Stayin' Alive' youth project and seminars on community initiatives. The Trust has been able to demonstrate a sustainable model which can generate its own funding. The impact of localism, the climate of austerity and reductions in public funding have impacted on Trust activities as well as on other development trusts which were dependent on public sector funding for their survival. The Trust, through its substantial asset base built up over the years, provided itself with a 'buffer' to survive the years following 2010 due to the boost in tourism income from its refurbished Youth Hostel and other investments. The Trust now finds itself at a challenging juncture. It has launched new fundraising initiatives to finance two affordable housing projects in addition to its existing affordable housing stock, but is endeavouring to widen its activities beyond the provision of affordable housing to address the socio-economic and cultural needs of younger age groups.

The non-statutory basis of development trusts in general (in initiating regeneration activities) has given rise to a questioning of the legitimacy of the forms of governance emerging at community level. My research findings lead to the conclusion that while any claims to 'associated', 'procedural' and 'substantive' legitimacy made by the Trust can be justified, these claims rest on a tenuous basis. For the Trust to continue to justify its claim to these different forms of legitimacy requires a continuous engagement with the existing statutory structures with which it occupies 'governance space' and that it continues to consolidate its successes in terms of tangible regeneration and other outputs.

A closer relationship between the GGT and the NCC could have provided it with a greater claim to associated legitimacy. Its distant stance towards the NCC in previous years may have isolated it somewhat from government funding sources from which other development trusts such as the Amble Development Trust have benefitted. The Amble Development Trust is now seen to benefit financially from current government policy and developer activity, which the GGT has yet to do.

The policy context has changed since the late 1990s when the Trust was set up and the New Labour policy of community partnerships and public funding supported its aims. The watershed years of 2007/8 affected all development trusts. The further cutbacks in public funding under the Coalition government since 2010 have reduced the Trust's capacity to 'deliver' and thereby affected its output legitimacy; but its input legitimacy must be considered as more fragile. For many years the Trust operated from a limited community base compared with other development trusts in the county. It tended to bypass the Parish Council and other statutory bodies and it benefitted from major funding contributions from landowners which enabled it a degree of freedom to operate more or less autonomously.

Concern over the legitimacy and accountability of the GGT has been voiced recently by the Trustees themselves. This can be seen as associated with the decline in output legitimacy - with less funding, outputs are fewer. Alongside this, a parallel development has been the closer engagement of the Trust with the Parish Council and government agencies such as HCA, as well as undertaking projects which have a wider remit than entrepreneurial property buying and selling. The closer engagement with the Parish Council, it can be argued, may increase its input legitimacy or, at least, enable the GGT

to move from its position of operating in a parallel governance space with the Parish Council to a more comfortable sharing of the same governance space. The exploratory moves undertaken recently in connection with a neighbourhood plan for Glendale and Wooler bring these issues to the fore. While it was the initiative of the GGT to introduce the idea of neighbourhood planning and links with the NCC, it is the Parish Councils of Glendale that must take it forward. This would assure input and output legitimacy for further development, regeneration and neighbourhood planning activities; it would also create a new context for GGT in which to operate.

When comparing the three case studies, it becomes clear that in undertaking its regeneration and planning initiatives, the Trust has demonstrated a number of strengths and advantages over the two neighbourhood plans. Issues that were examined in the previous two case studies and which are critical to long-term sustainability and community cohesion relate to existing power relations and imbalances, development orientation and the capacity to 'future proof' plans. With regard to power relations, there is a particularly strong contrast between the ADNP and the Glendale case. Where the ADNP Steering Group experienced difficulties such as being continually out-manoevred and by-passed by stronger, dominant players in the process of neighbourhood formulation, the Trust has used its networks and strategic skills to gain the support of locally influential land-owners and funders. While the relations between the Trust and the local authority may have been difficult at times, the Trust's independent stance has enabled it to pursue its set goals and aims. With regard to development issues, in both neighbourhood plans, new development was regarded as controversial. The Trust has embraced the opportunities, however, to address new development as a social enterprise, providing much-needed affordable housing for residents. The capacity to 'future proof' neighbourhood plans continues to present challenges to the other two case studies, as noted in Chapters 5 and 6. In both cases, the capacity to address future planning and development needs was constrained by a more short-term outlook concerned with capping rather than promoting development. These points are addressed in more detail in the following chapter.

Chapter 8. Localism and Neighbourhood Planning in Northumberland

8.1 Introduction

This thesis set out to examine the Coalition government's emerging policy of localism and neighbourhood planning at a time of policy flux as the institutional infrastructures of 'regionalism' were being swiftly dismantled. In previous chapters of this thesis I have explored the current incarnation of localism and the contradictions inherent in a policy where the government is also seen to be re-centralising planning policy. This examination provides an original contribution to understanding the conditions and processes of neighbourhood planning in Northumberland and offers new insights to add to the growing literature on the processes and outcomes of neighbourhood planning in a rural context.

To further explore the experiences and perceptions of the new policy of localism as it is being implemented on the ground in Northumberland, this chapter takes up the themes raised in the preceding case studies for further discussion. To supplement these themes, the perspectives of practitioners interviewed for this research are presented in section 8.2 to provide a more three-dimensional and nuanced account of the ways localism and neighbourhood planning have been experienced in Northumberland. This includes practitioners' early experiences in implementing the policy and the interactions of local authority planners and community development staff with communities and stakeholders. It also reflects some of the reservations and uncertainties voiced at a time of extensive public spending cuts, rising unemployment and a curtailment of the state's role. This was taking place in parallel with a seemingly renewed centralisation of state authority over planning matters. This section concludes by discussing the continuingly contested role of planners and planning in the existing policy climate and raises the question of the shortcomings identified in planning practice and neighbourhood planning with regard to issues such as equity and resource allocation.

In Section 8.3 I discuss this question in the context of a growing critique of planning and its disconnect with principles of equity and social inclusion. The theoretical framework for this discussion I have adopted is a networked (or neo-endogenous) rural development approach to examine the processes of neighbourhood planning in Northumberland. The need for community-based planning to reach out to wider interests has been identified by planning academics as have the risks of isolation of the

neighbourhood planning effort and the need for wider networks (Parker and Brownill, 2010, Gallent and Ciaffi, 2014, Doak and Parker, 2005). The principles of networked or neo-endogenous rural development therefore can be readily allied with the theme of neighbourhood planning. From this viewpoint, neighbourhood planning is not only a planning project but might also be considered as a 'neo-endogenous' development project. The term 'development' in this sense is understood and used here in a broader sense than that used in government rhetoric where development for neighbourhood planning, as in 'neighbourhood development plan', implies neoliberal, commercial developer-driven development. Use is made of these approaches to attempt to identify and compare the legacies of neighbourhood planning and rural regeneration for the three cases. This is in terms of both tangible as well as intangible assets such as the capacity local areas have acquired in negotiating, and retaining the required resources.

The theme of local level governance is pursued in Section 8.4, which discusses the different collaborative planning and governance issues identified previously in the three case studies. In two of the case studies of neighbourhood planning being undertaken in Northumberland the new role of local authority planners, in particular in collaborative planning frameworks, was questioned and this is further discussed in this section. In the third case study, the re-negotiation of governance space being undertaken between the development trust and parish council is further explored. The power imbalances and the failure of collaborative governance in one of the cases are discussed. I argue that in cases of consensus failure, a new role is required for planners as power brokers in mediating between unequal stakeholders. This section ends with the consideration that as planners, communities and developers are brought together in the neighbourhood planning process, a new orientation and role for planners may be seen as starting to emerge in relation to local level planning.

The chapter concludes by questioning whether, in spite of achievements at the local level, social justice and deliberative democracy can be achieved. The current context in Northumberland of landownership patterns, associated power imbalances, neoliberal and centralised state power and planning control call into question whether such aspirations can be achieved.

8.2 Neighbourhood Planning - Experiences at the Ground Level

The notion and practice of local level planning is not new. Nearly 4,000 parish plans, visual appraisals and community-led plans were conducted across England under previous government administrations (Owen et al, 2007; Gallent and Robinson, 2013, 40). However, recent research conducted in the south of England indicates that in the case of neighbourhood planning, all stakeholders involved 'are stepping into new territory' (Browhill and Downing, 2013, 372). This was no less true in Northumberland at the time the research for this thesis was conducted.

For some community development practitioners in Northumberland, when recollecting the earlier days of parish planning and community-led planning, neighbourhood planning appeared to be less to do with innovation and more a case of 'reinventing the wheel' and moreover 'a very urban instrument in rural areas'. A planner involved in neighbourhood planning in Northumberland compared it to previous experiences with parish plans in years past:

> '..if you look back at what happened with parish plans, lots of parishes jumped on the bandwagon and at the end of the day…. they were just an audit of where the community was at and some of them stopped short of putting in any meaningful actions. To my mind, there's no point in doing it unless you're going to have an action plan attached to it.' (Planner)

A policy practitioner with many years' experience of working in Northumberland in the local authority considered that:

> 'if local authorities had supported communities and taken note of what was coming out of the community-led plans then we would have had a system whereby you feed issues up from the local level to the strategic - and then local authorities could then act by taking an overview, and then decide on how to manage their services and what sort of planning issues and what kind of planning continuations were required.' (Policy practitioner)

From this, we come to understand the sense of lost opportunities for those in local authorities where use could have been made of the information and connectivity to create a more integrated approach to addressing community development issues through planning at the local level. A variety of community-based plans conducted in the post-war years were intended to provide an evidence base for subsequent community action. Parish plans, or other approaches including parish mapping exercises, parish appraisals,

village design statements or local housing needs studies were marginal activities at best, conducted sporadically and unevenly across England (Gallent and Robinson, 2012, 40) and considered a 'niche activity' (Parker, 2014, 189). They drew criticism for being unrealistic, inflexible and methodologically inconsistent. Most were ignored by local authorities (Gallent and Robinson, 2013, 41). However, my findings from both the Alnwick and Tarset and Greystead cases (Chapters 5 and 6) show that Steering Groups have been able to draw on their earlier experiences of parish planning - these have served as a preparation and an experience on which to draw for neighbourhood plans. The validity of community-led plans has often been downplayed but as was noted above, they were sometimes more appropriate for communities than a neighbourhood plan. There is, however, awareness that neighbourhood plans now have a legal status and constitute part of the statutory planning process in a way that the parish and community-led plans of the past never did. The view of a policy practitioner was that:

> 'I think that a neighbourhood plan has merit in the sense that it actually does try do something in (planning) law; but I don't think it's very helpful to do one if you haven't done a community-led plan because…people focus on things to do with planning. You can't look at planning issues in isolation from the whole issue of service provision, which might have nothing to do with planning law and identifying sites for planning. So my view is you should do a community-led plan first, and then, emerging from that would be certain spatial planning issues which should then be enshrined in some sort of neighbourhood plan or a planning statement that is appended to a community-led plan.' (Policy practitioner)

We can understand the sense of dislocation that policy practitioners and planners might have experienced at a time of policy flux and the abrupt shift from regionalism to localism. The opinion of one planner involved in the preparation of a neighbourhood plan was that:

> 'The big difference...is that these ones (neighbourhood plans) this time have got teeth which the parish plans didn't. They might have things like Design Guides piggy-backed on to them, there may have been some policy advice within them that could be used from the planning point of view, but if a community wants to get more into the driving seat in terms of the planning process, then neighbourhood plans, it seems to me, are the vehicle to do it, because they do have teeth, and if they're done well they'll have some chance of being successful.' (Planner)

But even this more positive view on the potential of neighbourhood plans clearly contains caveats – '*if* they are done well' and '*some* chance of being successful'

expressing the reservations that many of the planners interviewed for this research appeared to have with regard to the neighbourhood planning process as a whole. One of the criticisms levelled at neighbourhood plans has been precisely their lack of 'teeth'. For example, they cannot be used to limit development despite the extensive media attention heralding neighbourhood plans as a 'nimbyist charter (Garlick, 2011).

In the interviews I conducted with planners in Northumberland, I found that attitudes towards community engagement tended to be half-hearted and levels of experience with this were limited. Local authority planners tended to hold somewhat negative attitudes on the difficulties and challenges involved in the community engagement process. One planning professional expressed it as: '..a fine principle, but difficult to do in practice'. This was accompanied by a concern among both planning and community development specialists that communities in Northumberland were not well equipped with the necessary experience, skills or resources with which to deal with the planning regulations and requirements involved. These were perspectives that viewed neighbourhood planning as an essentially 'planner-driven' process while at the same time undervaluing the skills and knowledge that communities can bring to the process.

Another planning professional considered that:

> '..giving communities more power and more responsibility with the intentions of creating more positive outcomes through the planning process …are obviously very ambitious aims and…they are a very big ask for neighbourhood planning.' (Local authority planner)

On the process of neighbourhood planning, one local authority planner even questioned whether the challenges involved could lead to successful outcomes:

> 'It's worth considering – does the process inhibit the aim at the outset, of the government wanting a light touch and flexible neighbourhood development plan?' (Local authority planner)

We can appreciate from this the sense that planners, particularly those working in local authorities, felt under pressure and not well positioned to deal with the new responsibilities that neighbourhood planning requires of all stakeholders. The attitudes to community engagement and consultation expressed by planners appears to reflect the general lack of skills, orientation and experience in this type of work, a gap which has been the subject of critique both from within and outside the profession (Vigar et al, 2013; Haughton, 2012; Simmons, 2012; Healey, 2011). Clifford and Tewdwr-Jones

refer to the wider debate in the planning literature where opinion is divided on whether there should be more participatory planning or whether this leads ultimately to a reinforcement of existing power structures (Clifford and Tewdwr-Jones, 2013, 151-152).

But as has been pointed out, this is a well-worn debate (Clifford and Tewdwr-Jones, 152). Of more immediate concern is that, missing in the research literature is an overview of planners' opinions on the new push to participation (Clifford and Tewdwr-Jones, 2013, 152). The views expressed above of planners in Northumberland support existing research literature and the assumption that planners hold somewhat negative views on participation.

In contrast, the views of those working in NGOs in support of the neighbourhood planning process reflect a more positive experience of the activities and the outcomes seen to be emerging for neighbourhoods and communities:

> 'I think the positives that will come out of the neighbourhood planning process is the fact it's all more through the process; I think it has allowed local people and neighbourhoods to re-engage with their planning officers and the planning departments in local authorities and start talking about neighbourhood level issues… So I think the key is the new relationship between planning departments and neighbourhoods and this discussion that is technically what the neighbourhood planning process is about -continually discussing, going back and forth with the local authority and developers about issues and producing this piece of work that is the neighbourhood plan. I think that's the positive part of what's emerging.' (NGO community planner)

Focussing on aspects such as 'process' and the collaborative mechanisms brought into play as communities engage with planning departments are essential components of neighbourhood planning. However, local authority planners are generally reluctant to acknowledge or deal with these. I consider that this perspective acknowledges the divide that for years has existed between planners, planning departments and communities. The difficulty for many on both sides is overcoming the perceived barriers that have been built up as a result of the adversarial climate surrounding planning activities.

The perceptions of local authority planners and community development practitioners concerning what communities could potentially achieve tended to be fairly similar.

Planners working alongside volunteers in a neighbourhood plan process did not hold very high opinions of volunteer contributions. They considered volunteers unpredictable and time-consuming. Local authority planners were also inclined to consider community members as unable to think strategically:

> 'Until you get to the point where it's actually affecting the plot of land next to their house they're not really engaged in thinking strategically at neighbourhood level.' (Local authority planner)

Similarly, another local authority planner thought that:

> 'A lot of communities don't want to be positive about local development strategic policies as set out in the Development Plan for the area..' (Local authority planner)

We can appreciate from this the sense of frustration that planners frequently find with the responses of the community to the process to be inadequate. But I also found that even practitioners qualified and experienced in community engagement had doubts about retaining the involvement of community members for the length of time needed to complete a neighbourhood plan. One community development practitioner commented on past experiences with earlier parish plans, noting how the large number of volunteers who were initially involved dwindled after a year or so to just a few:

> 'We're now talking about two years (to complete a neighbourhood plan) which is a long time for volunteers to stay engaged…I'm now more realistic than enthusiastic.' (Community development practitioner)

We can see how diminishing levels of enthusiasm and commitment within communities for voluntary projects can also have a similar impact on the level of commitment of local authority staff. My findings from the case of Tarset and Greystead, however, illustrate that there are community volunteers, even in remote rural areas, who not only 'stay the course' but also build up their capacity to deal with the challenges of neighbourhood planning. The experience in this case showed that as collaboration between the different stakeholders progressed, with sharing of planning advice, information and guidance, community opinion moved from a former anti-development stance to one more accommodating of new development, albeit under certain conditions.

Another difficulty with the recruitment of volunteers, particularly in rural areas, experienced by a community development practitioner was that:

'There isn't a band of folk ready to volunteer, because they're already doing it.' (Community development practitioner).

We can see that while it may be the case that there are a limited number of volunteers available at any time, once a goal is identified that is genuinely felt to be a benefit to the community, it can galvanise a community into action and become the focus of voluntary effort. For example, the deteriorating condition of the village halls in two villages in the Northumberland National Park have recently triggered community action for their regeneration in fund-raising and volunteering skills and expertise.

The opinions of planners, policy and community development practitioners in Northumberland on how and whether community empowerment could be achieved through neighbourhood planning ranged from tentatively optimistic to sceptical.

Those community development practitioners with many years' experience of working in Northumberland considered that neighbourhood planning offered the potential for community empowerment but that there were pressures at work that ultimately limited this. One thought that neighbourhood planning:

'..could be a really good empowerment tool, but if we're not careful.. in a couple of years we'll be doing something else…it becomes a fashionable thing to do; done the Parish Plan, now do the Neighbourhood Plan.' (Community development practitioner)

Another local authority planner considered that the definition of what constituted community empowerment was more about enhancing community skills:

'It shouldn't be local authorities writing the plans – you're not going along telling them what to do. Empowerment is giving them the skills.' (Local authority planner)

Enhancing the capacities of communities to do things for themselves, based on using endogenous knowledge but also linking to networks beyond is central to a networked development approach, discussed in the following section (8.3).

The concerns of local authority planners on the whole, however, appear to reflect a lack of conviction in both the outcomes of the neighbourhood planning process and in their potential to increase community empowerment. While as discussed above, the limits to community empowerment are a topic of continual debate, it raises the issue of the extent of planners' commitment to the process from the outset. There appears to be a role for

more collaborative or community planners who can be engaged in bridging the existing gap between planners and communities, as contributors such as Parker have continued to point out elsewhere in England over the years (Parker, 2014, 194).

During the course of this research, the divide between community and planners became increasingly apparent as I moved between the different case study areas. Research on the role of local authority planners in relation to neighbourhood planning suggests that there is likely to be a continuing role for the professional planner (Bishop, 2012, 332; Clifford and Tewdwr-Jones, 2013, 190). Local planning authorities are required to provide support in the production of neighbourhood plans which, it is suggested, is likely to lead to increased opportunities for planners to take on a mediating role (Clifford and Tewdwr-Jones, 2013, 190). The changes in the role that planners may be expected to play with regard to supporting the process of neighbourhood planning could help to modify some of the perceptions held by planners about community motivations and capabilities. However, it has been pointed out that this assertion is not supported by sufficient evidence. While this research has contributed to the existing research literature, it is clear that further research into this area would enable a more nuanced overview.

We can see that in the current policy culture of localism, the role of the 'community planner' is therefore significant and likely to become more so in the future. Planners working in the third sector in Northumberland held more favourable opinions in general on the capacities of community members and considered it problematic that planners on the whole do not automatically relate to, or understand neighbourhood issues. This group felt that neighbourhood planning required a particular combination of skills and expertise from professional planners but that it was becoming increasingly difficult to find an adequate number of 'community planners' who were prepared to 'get out from behind their desks' and become genuinely involved in community engagement. This was considered a major stumbling block to the neighbourhood planning process, a process which, to succeed, they felt, needed such community planners with the appropriate skill-set.

Local authorities are required by law to support the neighbourhood planning process but the amount of funding available is limited. Neighbourhood plans are therefore likely to be taken up in already advantaged areas with relatively more wealth and resources

(Vigar et al, 2012, 317). This concern was expressed by one local authority planner who anticipated the likelihood of an inequitable distribution of neighbourhood plans in Northumberland:

> 'It's fair to say that….in an area like Northumberland you're going to have plans in some areas and not in others and potentially are going to have them in the areas that don't need them.. and a lot has to do with capacity.' (Local authority planner)

The main government funding for the Front Runner programme delivered to date has been detailed previously in Chapter 4, Section 4.2.3. However, reservations have been expressed as to whether sufficient resources have been made available. As one planner commented, Northumberland is a very diverse county; there are areas with high levels of deprivation but equally areas with a range of different resources that communities can exploit. This has led to a concern expressed by a local authority planner that:

> 'Some of the more affluent areas will be able to get neighbourhood plans in place, but some of the areas that need them more just will not have the capacity and skills to do that.' (Local authority planner)

The remote rural town of Wooler, for example, as a gateway to the Northumberland National Park, has drawn on a range of resources and funding that demonstrate what can be achieved, but these resources are not typically available in many parts of the county. In the North East, another academic planner voiced similar concerns:

> 'Resource is an issue. £20,000 is not sufficient. I noticed it should be £30,000 from now on, that you get £5,000 to begin with for a neighbourhood plan…and the remainder will come after you've completed an independent examination and that means, if a neighbourhood plan has been successful…and you've done the sustainability appraisal, then when you go to examination and that is all seen to be ok and you pass, then you get the money. But the danger is - if you get the money upfront, if you get plans that get part-way through, then run out of money - that's a danger. That's probably why it's been positioned in that way, but the issue is, how do you fund to get the independent exam? Clearly it falls heavily on council resources; it also draws heavily on officer's time…so I think resource is a huge issue.' (Academic planner)

Local authority support for the pilot phase of neighbourhood planning has been made available to the Front Runners in Northumberland, but the level of support to each has varied. Support in the form of 'in kind' assistance from County Council staff has been skewed towards the first Front Runner, Allendale, and it is clear that this level of

support has drawn heavily on the Council's resources. As a local authority planner has commented:

> 'The second stage....ran from August to October 2011, it was all about starting the work on the plan itself. Again, the project (Allendale) was heavily supported by NCC at that stage. Two planning officers, a planning student, a county development planning officer and a development manager as well... set to work.' (Local authority planner)

Allendale, as the first Northumberland Front Runner, has attracted considerable academic, research and media interest and drawn extensively on the resources of the County's planning department. The lessons from this experience were summed up:

> 'If you want to do a neighbourhood plan, consider getting a paid, professional coordinator in place, because we, the NCC, cannot do that for every neighbourhood plan in Northumberland. We did it in Allendale but we can't do that in other communities; that's a testing ground and I suspect most other Local Authorities can't do that because they don't have the resources available.' (Local authority planner)

It was considered that there was a lack of resources generally to support the current programme of neighbourhood planning, accompanied by a degree of confusion among potential funders, with insufficient guidance available. It was thought that towns and larger parishes would find it somewhat easier to finance a neighbourhood plan, due to higher precept income, as in the case of Alnwick.

The views of planners, policy practitioners and others on localism and neighbourhood planning at the outset of this research shortly after the Localism Act had been introduced were tentative and most were unenthusiastic about the reforms to planning policy and likely future outcomes. Perhaps this was to be expected, given the policy flux and era of austerity ushered in by the Coalition government. For those who had worked during the New Labour administration, the concept of localism was not entirely new. Some policy practitioners considered that 'localism hasn't changed much we've been doing' (Policy practitioner).

Others, especially planners working for local authorities, considered the impact on their departments pragmatically in terms of limited resources at a time of steep cuts in public expenditure and reductions in staffing. It was thought that the new push to neighbourhood planning was putting a strain on local planning department resources as

well as probably demanding too much of communities. As time has passed, neighbourhood planning experience has increased and consolidated as more neighbourhood plans have been adopted. The tone appears to have changed to a more a positive one. It appears that some of the earlier scepticism and distrust has started to fade. In rural villages such as Tarset and Greystead, the process has appeared to strengthen the community capacity of those involved. While some LPA planners thought too much was expected of communities, the view was also expressed that it was too much to ask of planners as well, and local authority planners in particular. A number of planners were clearly not happy about the level of involvement with communities that the process would entail, but as is discussed below, it is likely that planners may be expected to move even more into 'collaborative mode' in the future. Neighbourhood plans, now embedded in the statutory planning process, are also likely to place yet more demands on the resources of local planning departments.

From the foregoing references to concerns over the frequently inequitable distribution and allocation of resources, it is clear that there is little being done by way of mediation at any scale; for the communities and individuals concerned, it is either 'win' or 'lose'. Planning can play a central role in either promoting or suppressing levels of equity and social justice (Ellis and Henderson, 2013, 6). But a growing disconnect between planning and meeting social objectives leaves communities no longer 'planned for' in an integrated way. In the next section, consideration is given to ways that could address this issue through the theoretical perspective of a networked or neo-endogenous rural development approach.

8.3 Neighbourhood Planning – a Neo-endogenous Endeavour?

As outlined in Chapter 3, the term 'networked' or 'neo-endogenous' development has emerged to counter previous endogenous and exogenous models of rural development (Ray, 2001). The neo-endogenous model serves as an alternative perspective through which to study development processes in rural areas (Lowe et al, 1995; Ray, 2001; Shucksmith, 2000). It is premised on the perspective that socio-economic development processes in any locality are the result of a combination of exogenous and endogenous forces. At the local level, actors, communities, networks and institutions that have the capacity to reach out and link up with external or 'extra-local' agencies are central to this principle. It is a normative and people-centred approach (Bosworth and Atterton, 2012). The focus is on local capacity-building with the objective of retaining as much of

the benefit as possible within the locality or area concerned (Shucksmith, 2012, 12; Ward et al, 2005, 5). It is also an empowering approach, as areas start to generate innovative processes and shape their own development and are no longer seen as passively dependent on external agencies (Shucksmith, 2012, 12). The neo-endogenous perspective also opens up a rationale for exploring concerns such as social inclusion and exclusion in a rural context, particularly with regard to housing issues (Gkartzios and Scott, 2014).

To this end, I have adopted a networked rural development approach in examining the processes (and outputs) of neighbourhood planning to provide a more integrated perspective on the processes involved. In the context of neighbourhood planning, Gallent and Robinson have pointed to the need for community-based planning to 'connect with broader interests' and that it 'may even need to seek external support' in order to flourish (Gallent and Robinson, 2013, 5). From another perspective, the scale of effort and work involved in the development of a neighbourhood plan can risk leading to isolation (Healey, 2011, 3). Healey argues the need to forge connections between these areas and wider networks to prevent these becoming more privileged locales designed for the use and convenience of the minority within them. The principles of networked or neo-endogenous rural development therefore are readily allied with the theme of neighbourhood planning.

The research conducted for this thesis demonstrates that the neighbourhood plan can be seen then as more than just a planning project – it has the potential to be a development project, although where the term 'development' is considered in a broader sense than that frequently used in government rhetoric. I use a 'networked development' lens to pose additional questions when reviewing the planning process at neighbourhood level; this then leads to the adoption of other criteria and different conclusions when assessing the relative outcomes. Such questions cover aspects such as have new linkages and networks been acquired? What capacity building at local level has been achieved? What innovative processes may have been taken up in shaping development and has this engendered increased self-reliance and a sense of independence? What resources/benefits have been acquired through them and are the resources/benefits retained locally as a result of the planning process? What is the 'legacy' for the community after the plan is adopted as part of the Local Plan – and can this address issues of social justice, social exclusion and inequitable distributional outcomes?

From a networked development perspective, the critical role played by in-migrants or incomers as entrepreneurs in setting up commercial enterprises in rural areas has been well documented (Woods, 2005; Bosworth, 2006; Atterton, 2007). In matters of rural regeneration and neighbourhood planning in the case study areas, the role of incomers operationalising their extra-local networks is a significant but under-researched and under-theorised topic. This thesis therefore offers a contribution to this theme by contending that it is these groups of incomers and their extra-local networks that have played a critical role in the neighbourhood planning activities in each of the case study areas. They have also set the agenda for the neighbourhood plans. This is particularly evident In Glendale where the trustees have used their extra-local networks with landowners and strategic level connections to open up access to substantial funds. This in turn has helped to provide the basis for the Trust's rural regeneration activities in Glendale. It was also evident that in institutional terms, vertical linkages to strategic and policy-making levels in the former regional infrastructure led to favourable funding decisions:

> 'I think it's only because we have the ear of people at the top who said: 'Just get on with it' - so I'm convinced it wouldn't have happened without that.' (Trustee)

In terms of horizontal linkages, the Glendale Gateway Trust has made connections with other development trusts under the umbrella organisation FoNDT which has been to mutual benefit:

> 'Good networking goes on between the Trusts…we do have a federation of development trusts and we find out what opportunities there are.' (Trustee)

In the case of Tarset and Greystead, the group of individuals that have mobilised neighbourhood planning efforts can be likened to 'social' entrepreneurs. They are also incomers, albeit the majority are long-term residents of the area. Most are either retired or close to retirement, this finding being in line with research literature that points to older rural in-migrants as especially active social entrepreneurs (Bosworth and Atterton, 2012, 272). These social entrepreneurs are also active in rural governance and from my observations, appear to provide the hub as well as the necessary stimulus for a neo-endogenous form of development based around neighbourhood planning.

The horizontal linkages identified in this community are well developed, as indicated in Chapter 6. These comprise the connections and communication between local residents

themselves as well as linkages between them and the institutions of local governance, such as the Parish Council and the Steering Group. Vertical strategic linkages with institutional partners such as the Northumberland National Park Authority and Northumberland County Council have been established and have clearly strengthened over the course of the planning process. Through these strategic linkages, the Steering Group has developed further networks enabling it to build on existing knowledge and skills to further the neighbourhood planning objectives.

In Alnwick, the key members of the ADNP Steering Committee are incomers, reflected in skill-sets, as well as political, social and cultural capital and outlook. They are also long-term residents, a finding reflected in the other two case studies. It tends to be those who originate from outside the area who have introduced different outlooks, ideas and perspectives on which initiatives are built up and developed. This reflects research on rural governance that finds the agency of community leaders to be the most significant influence on the practice of community governance (Woods et al, 214 in Cheshire et al, 2007). However, findings from my research show that tensions related to the complexity of the governance of Alnwick, as previously noted in Chapter 5, serve to limit the extent of the influence that such leaders can operate. The concept of 'embeddedness' has been adopted in studies of neo-endogenous economic development to account for the quality of social relations within communities (Jack and Anderson, 2002, 467). In this context it appears that 'over-embeddedness' may in fact be a contributory factor to the lack of effective neighbourhood governance. The existing 'cultural capacity' of rural communities, that is, local heritage as well as prevailing attitudes and values, can also be the keystone of progress or 'the elusive factor that inhibits that success' (Courtney and Moseley, 2008, 317).

As was illustrated in Chapter 5, extensive horizontal linkages were seen to be operating between the various governance sub-groups involved in the neighbourhood plan. Additional vertical linkages have been created through the neighbourhood planning process and some of these also pre-existed the neighbourhood planning process. Some of these linkages, I argue, have been created during the 'regionalism' era, before district local authorities were abolished. While the case studies in my research have revealed that a number of rural networks associated with the regional infrastructure have disappeared, connections in the planning world were retained over a longer period of time, as the local planning authority department was housed in Alnwick. The

coordinator of the ADNP was formerly Head of the Planning Department of NCC and has succeeded in achieving a number of important gains for the area in neighbourhood planning terms, including an early successful bid for Front Runner status and associated resources from NCC. This can be traced back to the vertical linkages in operation.

Central to the networked approach are the ways in which the capacity of local people can be enhanced (Shucksmith, 2012, 12; Ray, 2003; Murdoch, 2000). As was detailed in the case study chapters 5, 6 and 7, the endogenous capacity of the community to meet the challenges thrown up by neighbourhood planning was evident. In each case, the communities have a range of professional and business expertise, skills and networks on which to draw. My research established that in these communities the potential to generate different forms of development including those of neo-endogenous and networked rural development exists. In Northumberland, there is a firm belief in the resilience of rural communities in particular to deal with external threats and challenges. As one resident stated: '..when it gets bad, the whole village comes to life' and another commented that: '..in the rural areas they've never had handholding so they've had to do it themselves' (Northumberland resident).

The endogenous capacity within the community in and around Glendale and Wooler covers a wide range of professional and business experience and skills, especially those of the Trust members. Their capacity, expertise and commitment have been key to their achievements, as the Chair of the Trust explained:

> 'Our group of trustees were community-oriented, they were community entrepreneurs.. the trustees and other staff are very committed...it's the commitment of people prepared to make something work…We are committed to benefitting the community and it's a really strongly felt commitment.. it's fair to say (the Trust) has had significant local impact.' (GGT Chair)

The capacity of the Trust to lever in funding from a wide range of public and private sector sources is evident from its previous long and successful track record. In recognition of the need for further capacity building efforts within the community and neighbourhood, the Trust has initiated a programme of research activities (Healey, 2013; Johnston et al, 2013). This clearly demonstrates one of the principles of neo-endogenous rural development at work in a rural regeneration and local level planning context. The linkages and networks on which these initiatives are drawn - some of which are international in character - demonstrate the interconnectivities possible between a

remote rural market town and global institutions in UK and Europe, such as Newcastle University and European institutes, that draw together their human, financial and intellectual resources (Healey, 2013).

Capacity building efforts through the Trust in Glendale therefore continue through research activities and local need identification. This can be seen as a neo-endogenous development activity which is linked through to external places and agencies, funding and sponsoring bodies. But as the Trust is not a statutory body, further efforts in the pipeline for any neighbourhood planning will need to be channelled through the parish council and jointly addressed.

My research shows that in the case of the ADNP, the level of community capacity to conduct the various processes and procedures is growing. However, as previously indicated in Chapter 5, there remain challenges posed by the very nature of the leadership in place, constituted as a 'historically dominant elite' drawn from established institutions (Woods et al, 2007, 215). The leadership of the process is in the hands of a professional planning coordinator, in whom the Steering Group appear to have trust and confidence. Enhanced capacity is being achieved through training workshops organised for the Steering Group members by, for example, DCLG. It is evident from my research therefore that the capacity of the 'inner hub' of Alnwick's governance and therefore the neighbourhood plan governance is being enhanced. My research demonstrates, however, that the extent to which this enhanced capacity is contributing to a collective and successful outcome for the Alnwick and Denwick Neighbourhood Plan can be questioned. It may equally result in the enhanced capacity of only certain individuals who retain this new knowledge primarily for their own purposes, as evidenced by the anticipated further delays to the completion of the Alnwick and Denwick Neighbourhood Plan (ADNP, 2014a).

In the third case, the organisational capacity of the neighbourhood plan Steering Group in Tarset and Greystead strengthened rapidly once the initial governance issues with NNPA were resolved. As in the other two cases, the local level governance leadership was drawn from a similarly traditional elite group of the community, who proved their collective ability and capacity to garner resources from extra-local sources. This has included both financial and in-kind resources from the NNPA and supporting agencies which has enabled this group to fulfil their place-inspired aspirations. These aspirations

and visions for the neighbourhood have come to centre increasingly around a concern for 'preserving' and 'conserving' the surrounding landscape and vernacular architecture of the area. These are, however, the interests of the leadership.

Comparing the case studies, the area that has demonstrated the most effective ways to build on existing capacity through neo-endogenous networks and activities is an area where neighbourhood planning is being conducted in all but name, that of Glendale and Wooler. In contrast, in the cases of the two neighbourhood plans, capacity building has been contained and limited by the nature of their governance. These limitations underscore the missed opportunities to address social equity issues.

A concern voiced by a resident during the drafting of one of the case study neighbourhood plans was that all the work and effort that had gone into it might only result in yet another document on a shelf gathering dust. The legacies therefore of neighbourhood plans for the communities they concern are worth consideration from a neo-endogenous perspective that prompts questions such as what might the benefits and legacies be? Who is likely to benefit? What benefits and what resources are retained within the community? Such benefits or legacies could be tangible as well as intangible. As both the case study neighbourhood plans are still in draft form, it is only possible at this stage to draw out some of the benefits that may accrue as a result of the processes, interactions and connectivities forged throughout the course of planning. This also provides a basis on which to compare the three case studies.

Channelling of local resources such that benefits accrue to the neighbourhood is a central concern for neo-endogenous development. When assessing and comparing the two cases of neighbourhood plans with the third case of rural regeneration, it becomes clear that in terms of both tangible and intangible outcomes, the achievements are readily discernible in Glendale and Wooler.

In terms of tangible legacies, the rural town of Wooler and the catchment of Glendale has, by comparison with the neighbourhood plan cases appeared to have achieved the greatest benefit from its rural regeneration activities. Nearly two decades of social entrepreneurial activity by the Trust is reflected in an affordable housing stock of 18 units made available to low-income families and which will be further increased with additional affordable housing units arising from two new projects in the High Street. The

regeneration of the High Street has included the introduction of new commercial enterprises together with the creation of the new community hub, the Cheviot Centre. These have transformed the town, commercially and socially. The Cheviot Centre has extended existing facilities and provided a range of services previously unavailable to local residents. There is also the new 'drop-in' Youth Centre on the High Street, an expanded Youth Hostel, a renovated library with extended opening hours and the provision of new commercial accommodation for start-up ventures.

The area has gained most in the legacy from rural regeneration and planning, but notably this has been conducted for the most part outside the statutory planning system. Distinguishing it from the other two case studies, this is a series of neo-endogenous rural development ventures addressing wider social and economic needs and objectives for the area. Initiatives of the Trust, such as the research project 'Stayin' Alive' and a programme of seminars addressing youth out-migration, extend beyond the concern with the tangible to researching ways to meet other social and regeneration needs. For example, the Parish Council has taken up one of the recommendations of the 'Stayin' Alive' report whereby young people are introduced to the work of the Parish Council (Smyth, 2014; Johnston, et al, 2013, 26). The approach adopted closely conforms to an 'ideal' model proposed whereby 'outward-looking rural communities should not only facilitate the needs of the local population but also….develop entrepreneurial and risk-taking capacity critical for local economic development' (Courtney and Moseley, 2013, 18).

Alnwick, a historic market town with an abundance of both civic and financial resources as well as a long conservation and heritage history, might be expected to generate a substantial legacy for its residents through the neighbourhood planning process. The limits to this are operated through the complex web of exogenous forces and power plays at work, as was indicated in Chapter 5. In terms of tangible assets benefitting low income groups, the element of affordable housing incorporated in the neighbourhood plan would appear to offer the most potential for distributional equity. The potential for this, however, is limited by a range of factors which have capped the number of affordable homes that will be available. The neighbourhood planning process has appeared to have brought about a strengthening of horizontal linkages between those responsible for the governance aspects of the town (see Chapter 5). But as was noted in Chapter 5, the limits to the extension of distributional benefits to the wider community

are becoming clear. For example, as was noted in the ADNP Housing Issues and Options Paper, development options for housing are limited by historic landscape constraints to the south and east of the town (ADNP, 2014d). In addition, as has been pointed out:

> 'the limited strength of Alnwick as a housing market means that new housing may have to be phased in terms of its release onto the market.' (ADNP, 2014d).

One of the greatest challenges for Alnwick in achieving a legacy from the neighbourhood plan is the conflicts created by the existing legacy already inherited from its past. Increasing employment in the town is itself a challenge, as indicated by the ADNP Employment and Economic Issues Paper in para. 3.4:

> 'The capacity for the centre to provide for new employment opportunities is relatively limited, due to the historic layout of the town, the lack of the availability of larger sites and buildings and issues associated with transport and car-parking. Past policies have sought to protect the town centre from non-retail uses.' (ADNP, 2014j)

Nevertheless, the paper recommends that consideration could be given to encouraging a wider range of economic and employment uses within the town centre provided they attract customer footfall to the centre.

Other opportunities to address issues of social justice and social inclusion through the neighbourhood plan have been identified. The Community Facilities Issues and Options Paper identifies the issues as being a lack of services and facilities for both younger age groups and older residents in the town. The aim is to ensure that existing 'community buildings meet future demands by better use of redundant/underused buildings' (ADNP, 2014i). The constraints on meeting this aim however, as indicated in the paper, are a combination of lack of funds, the nature of the ownership of these buildings and the fact that a number are listed buildings. Added to this is the extent of under-used and redundant historic buildings in Alnwick. The historic character of the difficulties faced by Alnwick and Denwick's neighbourhood planners means that they could not start with a blank slate; finding solutions has clearly not been easy, as illustrated by the fact that the topic paper was still incomplete, after nearly two years. How such issues are to be addressed in the neighbourhood plan had still to be identified when this research was being conducted. It is not clear as yet therefore how the opportunities offered in the

neighbourhood plan of Alnwick and Denwick to address social justice and issues of distributional equity are to be taken up.

The legacy of the neighbourhood planning process for Tarset and Greystead is set to yield a number of tangible benefits, although as yet these are comparatively few compared to the case of Glendale and Wooler. Some of these benefits have been financial, derived from grants and funds made available through support networks, NGOs and the NNPA. Some of these funds have been used by the Steering Group to commission services with which to pursue neighbourhood planning goals, such as hiring a firm of architects to assist with the Design Guide and a local landscape architect to provide guidance. As noted above, in terms of intangible benefits, local level capacity building has resulted in strengthened community governance and an enhanced ability of the local groups to engage with powerful stakeholders such as the NNPA. Limits to this however emerge when identifying who in the community actually benefits. A diffused benefit, or set of benefits, is of course available to all local residents as a result of the activities and efforts of the members of the community groups and the neighbourhood plan Steering Group who have volunteered their time. However, only a small minority of the residents of Tarset and Greystead are involved in the Steering Group. New members have been appointed to refresh the membership which serves to enhance the networks and consequently the outreach to the wider community. The objectives of the neighbourhood plan as originally presented in the draft have yet, however, to be translated into policies.

The policies for the neighbourhood plan in Tarset and Greystead have yet to be completed by the Steering Group. With regard to the social objectives that emerged as themes from the community consultation, a number of these are judged to be already in place in the NNPA Core Strategy. Much of the neighbourhood planning effort in more recent months has become concentrated on the new Design Guide and technical issues relating to the surrounding landscape and its conservation. There appears to have developed a division of the Steering Group into two 'camps'; one camp that is keen to revive discussions on community issues and how these should be addressed in neighbourhood plan policies, while the other camp is focussed on the Design Guide and landscape issues (TGNDP, 2014a). Discussions over the Design Guide have tended to dominate the agenda of Steering Committee meetings in more recent months. The priority attached to the Design Guide reflects the format of the previous Parish Plan with

which some of the Steering Group members were involved. Addressing social and distributional benefits for the wider community as part of the neighbourhood planning process appears to attract less of the Steering Group's attention and opportunities to do so are decreasing as the draft plan moves towards finalisation.

The relative lack of focus on social objectives and how these should be translated into policies in draft plans is a theme emerging from both of the neighbourhood plan case studies. This contrasts with the outcomes of the rural regeneration activities conducted in the third case study in Glendale, where a high priority has been attached to social outcomes and goals (GGT, 2014).

These developments chime with patterns noted elsewhere. Since the reform of the planning system in England in 2011, neighbourhood plans are now situated within the statutory planning system, but a planning system in which social objectives and concerns have become demoted to the extent that some commentators have questioned whether planning any longer has an explicit social purpose (Henderson and Ellis, 2013, 9). The possibility of planning as an integrated function for communities has given way to a preoccupation with the process of decision-making (Henderson and Ellis, 2013, 36).

8.4 Neighbourhood Planning, Collaborative Planning and Governance

As previously indicated in Chapter 3, collaborative planning and governance have attracted numerous academic studies over the past two decades. Further impetus has been provided by the Coalition government's emphasis on local level decision making and public participation in neighbourhood planning. The collaborative approach embodies the principles of participation, empowerment, partnership working and networked action (Gallent and Robinson, 2013, 13). In contrast to traditional forms of government, the aim is to include stakeholders in the decision-making process and to transform 'adversarial relationships into cooperative ones' (Gallent and Robinson, 2013, 13).

The criteria for successful collaborative processes have been identified as being the need for face-to-face dialogue, building trust and developing commitment and shared understanding (Ansell and Gash, 2007, 543). By implication, collaboration is a process of two-way communication and influence between the stakeholders involved (Ansell and Gash, 2007, 543). An orientation towards reaching consensus has also been

identified as being endemic to the collaborative process (Ansell and Gash, 2007, 43; Connick and Innes, 2003; Seidenfeld, 2000).

The conditions at the outset of collaboration are seen as critical in affecting the likely outcome of the process (Ansell and Gash, 2007, 551). Factors that are considered to perform a significant part in influencing these conditions have been identified as i) imbalances of resources/power between the different stakeholders, ii) the incentives of stakeholders to collaborate and iii) previous histories of conflict or cooperation among stakeholders (Ansell and Gash, 2007, 551). The unequal distribution of power between stakeholders in collaborative governance is a common issue (Healey, 2003, 113; Ansell and Gash, 2007, 551; Susskind and Cruikshank, 1987). Healey refers to 'the typically unequal power distributions of most governance contexts of today' (Healey, 2003, 113) and Gallent and Robinson have questioned whether 'the emergent apparatus of collaborative governance is designed simply to appease local populations without bringing any genuine change' (Gallent and Robinson, 2013, 10).

As was previously outlined in the preceding case study chapters, one of the challenges most frequently identified in relation to power imbalances relates to the domination and/or manipulation of the collaborative planning process by stronger, more powerful actors. Both of the neighbourhood plan case studies of Alnwick and Tarset/Greystead reveal the power imbalances between the different stakeholders in the process of neighbourhood plan formulation. The governance relations between the members of the ADNP Steering Group provide an example of an imbalance of power where 'unequal power distribution' derives at least in part from the very specific rural and historic context in which it is embedded. This is demonstrated for example by the ambivalent role played by the representative of the powerful property development company, Northumberland Estates. The role of its representative (a planner) ostensibly is to feed back the views of the Steering Group to Northumberland Estates (and thence to the Duke of Northumberland); likewise Northumberland Estates is expected to reciprocate by providing information on any relevant proposals and developments in which it is involved. The opportunity for consultation and discussion over its plans and proposals is avoided by Northumberland Estates through its adoption of a simple mechanism: the withholding of key documents and information. A continuing challenge and source of frustration experienced by the Steering Group is the way that this 'feedback loop' does not operate as was originally agreed. There is a sense of frustration and powerlessness

evident from discussions with some of the Steering Group members who consider they are often being bypassed by the (usually) controversial development proposals of the Duke. The Duke's development activities continue to be conducted without reference to the neighbourhood plan. In that sense, however unified the Steering Group members may be, they are not sufficiently empowered to challenge a major player such as Northumberland Estates or the Duke himself.

Tewdwr-Jones and Allmendinger in their paper on the failures of collaborative planning theory to effectively challenge planning practices have pointed to what is perceived as a fundamental weakness in collaborative planning theory. That is, by changing the institutional framework of governance, a more open discursive style of governance can develop (Tewdwr-Jones and Allmendinger, 1998, 1980). But the authors argue that this only addresses the institutional aspects of power structures and denies the existence of power inherent within the individual (Tewdwr-Jones and Allmendinger, 1998, 1980). This is particularly relevant in the case of an individual such as the Duke of Northumberland, or even his representative on the ADNP Steering Group. It is evident that no amount of tinkering with institutional governance frameworks in the case of the ADNP would automatically result in new relations of collaboration and trust and even less likely to be sufficiently effective in shifting such entrenched power bases as those that exist in Alnwick.

Tewdwr-Jones and Allmendinger argue that while there is a possibility that individuals do not wish to build trust or understanding and build new relations of power among participants then it is unlikely that a communicative action process is achievable or realistic, as 'power and political action will remain dominant determinants' (Tewdwr-Jones and Allmendinger, 1998, 1981). This is clear from the tactics and pattern of behaviour of Northumberland Estates, where the dominant determinant is clearly the power vested in the Duke and which his representative on the Steering Group is able to use.

As Tewdwr-Jones and Allmendinger aver and is evident from the foregoing account of neighbourhood planning in the ADNP, the 'discourse concerning planning can never be divorced from questions of dominatory principles: who controls what, how is an agenda set, who benefits from the consensual position, does everyone accept the 'agreed' position?'. A further point made by Tewdwr-Jones and Allmendinger which finds an

echo in the ADNP neighbourhood planning process is the assumption of communicative rationality that all individual stakeholders possess either the same knowledge about issues to be discussed, or perfect knowledge to enable an honest debate. The partial supply of information from Northumberland Estates, through their representative, is a clear example of this. The imbalance between stakeholders in terms of debating and interpersonal skills is also underlined by Tewdr-Jones and Allmendinger:

> 'Imagine representatives of a large powerful property company being prepared to back down in the face of residents' concerns within this form, without first attempting to enact hardware political and planning lobbying (such as quasi-legal argumentation) to secure their multimillion pound property deal.' (Tewdwr-Jones and Allmendinger, 1998, 1986).

This stands in contrast to the conditions of local level planning and regeneration activities in the Glendale area, where the Development Trust has succeeded in getting local (but large-scale) landowners 'on side' through skilful networking and strategic decision-making. These landowners, who arguably could otherwise be seen as holding the balance of power, have contributed generously in terms of funding to a range of local level planning initiatives conducted by the Trust in Glendale. The Trust has succeeded therefore in harnessing the power that could have otherwise resulted in the types of contested activities noted in both neighbourhood plans.

The limits to collaborative planning appear to have been reached in the case of Alnwick where two-way communication is limited between the players and the dominant stakeholder sees no reason to seek consensus. The above demonstrates how one powerful actor is able to pursue his own agenda in parallel with, but also in conflict with, the agendas of other stakeholders. Other collaborative planning challenges (although perhaps of a lesser order) that remain for the Steering Group include the finalising of the Neighbourhood Plan. This requires that each Steering Group representative prepares an agreed section of the plan. Here there is a need for consensus to be reached over the content of the final document. The Steering Group members have found it increasingly difficult to achieve agreement on the specific section contributed by the Northumberland Estates representative, given the disregard habitually accorded to their comments on previous drafts.

In the case of the other neighbourhood plan, Tarset and Greystead, similar power imbalances between the stakeholders were evident, as illustrated in Chapter 6. However,

while differences between the NNPA and the Steering Group arose from time to time, communication channels between the parties remained open throughout. The NNPA did, on occasion, apply the sanctions within its power (see Chapter 6) which in turn resulted in temporary breakdowns in communication and collaboration between the parties. In such scenarios, it is easy to see how consensus failure could have also have been an outcome. The institutional framing of collaboration in the case of Tarset and Greystead, however, may have contributed to a different and more positive outcome. The NNPA may be the dominant player among the stakeholders in Tarset and Greystead, but it is also accountable as an institutional agent in the planning process in a way that the Duke of Northumberland is not.

The issue of consensus failure has been addressed in recent research (Mantysalo and Jarenko, 2014). The development in collaborative planning theory offers a more pragmatic outlook. This takes the perspective that unlike earlier 'generations' of deliberative democracy theory, consensus is no longer considered a realistic aim. In the paper 'Communicative Planning Theory following Deliberative Democracy Theory', Mantysalo and Jarenko present a review of deliberative democracy theory. Here they have identified three generations of contributors with the first generation originating with Habermas and Rawls, through the second generation championed by Gutman and Thompson to the current third generation defended by Baber, Bartlett, O'Flynn and Hendrikson (Mantysalo and Jarenko, 2014, 4). The concern among communicative planning theorists appears to be focussed on pragmatic outcomes; for the 'third generation' this signifies a move to dealing with situated agreement between groups in intense negotiations. The question this then raises is what this can offer as a coordinating role for local planning practice to take up.

In their paper 'Why Bother with Good Works: The Relevance of Public Participation(s) in Planning in a Post-Collaborative Era', Parker and Brownill suggest that possibly an end to debates on the limits of collaborative planning is in sight (Brownill and Parker, 2010, 276). In their place the authors have heralded the dawn of a new paradigm where emerging research is starting to address the 'dynamics and contradictions often found at the micro-level...' (Brownill and Parker, 2010, 276). In observing the continuing gap between the rhetoric that surrounds participation and on-the-ground experience, Brownill and Parker refer to a 'post-collaborative phase' where participation in all its varied modes is viewed from different angles (Brownill and Parker, 2010, 276). Here,

the reference to 'post', as the authors explain, is a focus on the less evident and discernible problems arising from the range of efforts at collaboration. Brownill and Parker endorse such an approach that:

> 'emphasises the complexity and difference engendered in and through participation as it happens and looks toward conflict as an important feature of local governance and engagement, rather than seeking out or fixating on consensus.' (Brownill and Parker, 2010, 279).

As Parker has indicated in subsequent work, it is the very culture of planning along with the capabilities of people to engage with local and strategic planning that are required to change (Parker, 2014, 180). Parker invokes the approach of 'transactive planning' identified in the 1970s by John Friedmann, who distinguished between the mindsets of planner and client – the one 'typified as abstract and informed by theory and underpinned by evidence, the other by partial and less generalizable experiential knowledge' (Parker, 2014, 181). Parker uses this approach to frame anew the question of how to reconcile these two different mindsets and 'retain the strengths or benefits of both knowledge fields' (Parker, 2014, 181). This topic is further discussed in Chapter 9, Section 9.3.

Returning to the context of local planning in Alnwick, the power of the Duke as a major landowner is seen to derive from embeddedness in the local economy, expressed for example, through direct and indirect employment of a high proportion of the area's local workforce (Murdoch et al, 2003, 118). As Murdoch et al point out: 'The fortunes of the locality and the Northumberland Estate are thus entwined' (Murdoch et al, 2003, 118). The Duke's power, while drawing on this local embeddedness, remains essentially informal in character.

> 'The Duke – or at least his agents – must nowadays work through local planning and development networks to promote the interests of the estate. The estate's land agents are in frequent contact and discussions with local planners in the district and county councils, not only over the development of particular pieces of land but also over forward planning.' (Murdoch et al, 2003, 119).

The interplay of existing forces such as these with the governance of an emergent neighbourhood plan in a rural market town creates a very specific, if not unique, context for local level planning. The Duke, through Northumberland Estates, can then be seen as a major player in determining the new 'virtual boundaries' of the Alnwick and

Denwick Neighbourhood Plan. Much of the development pressure for housing and other development emanates from the Duke under the umbrella of Northumberland Estates. The Duke owns much of the land in and around Alnwick and as a developer he has interests in applications for housing developments that lie both within and on the boundaries of the ADNP. By submitting a separate planning proposal to the local authority, Northumberland Estates is effectively eclipsing the powers of the ADNP Steering Group and negating the democratic element of local level planning. Whether Alnwick's community favours the new development or not, Northumberland Estates is playing its part in a highly political project, that of meeting (or exceeding) government housing targets and supporting economic growth.

The land ownership pattern in Northumberland is distinct when compared to other counties in England. Much of Northumberland is under the ownership of a small number of landed estates, giving rise to its description of a 'feudal' system still in operation. As one local authority community development practitioner expressed it:

> 'There's very little (in Northumberland) that's council owned land. The difference in the rural areas is that it is still feudal in that most of the land is owned by huge estates – there's Northumberland Estates, Lilburn and Holy Island.' (Community development practitioner).

In planning terms this is reflected by the recent successful, but controversial applications by Northumberland Estates to construct a new housing complex both within and adjacent to the boundaries of the Alnwick and Denwick Neighbourhood Plan. Since the land on which the complex is to be built is owned by the Duke, it contributes to the five year housing land supply that is required by the LPA for the Local Plan. The details of privately owned land and land banking practices are topics on which information is either scarce or inaccessible and therefore under-researched (Layard, 2014). However the extent of privately owned land in this case can be seen to contribute to the reasons why planning applications and appeals by Northumberland Estates are rarely refused by the local planning authority.

The land ownership pattern in Northumberland can be compared to that in Scotland up until 2003, which was acknowledged as having the most concentrated pattern of private ownership in Europe (Glass et al, 2013, 65). The justification frequently made in favour of private ownership by landowners is the long-term perspective and stewardship that

such ownership can confer (Glass et al, 2013, 65). However, historically, the power accruing to landowners in Scotland has increasingly been seen as an obstruction to rural development and fostering a 'sense of powerlessness' among communities (Glass et al, 2013, 68).

While some comparisons and similarities in landownership patterns can be made between Scotland and the county of Northumberland, the singular difference is the change in legislation in Scotland in 2003. The 'feudal' character of landownership in Northumberland was for centuries a feature of Scottish history (Wightman, 1996). Feudalism was abolished in England in the twelfth century. In Scotland this did not take place until the twenty-first century in the form of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act, 2003 (McKee, 2013, 26). The provisions of the Land Reform Act include rights of responsible access to the Scottish countryside, pre-emption rights for communities to purchase land and the right to compulsory purchase of land by crofting communities (Sellar, 2006; Munton 2009; Warren, 2009). Land reform in Scotland is seen to have 'fundamentally altered the power structures of landowner and tenant' and through reducing the power of private landowners a process of empowering communities has been set in motion (McKee, 2013, 26; Home, 2009). However, the relationship of landowners with communities in this context remains 'contested and complex' (McKee 108, in Glass et al, 2013).

The question of housing and lack of affordable housing among landowners in Scotland remains a contested issue. The responsibilities of landed estates to provide affordable housing for communities in Scotland is sometimes expressed as a form of paternalism, where rents are low, but the condition of housing is poor. The availability of affordable housing in some areas is limited by a lack of land due to estate objectives; in others by the attitude of landowners who consider affordable housing to be 'economic suicide' (McKee, 2013, 17). Landowners in Scotland are seen as having a 'closed' approach regarding their plans or ambitions for development and property sales and reluctance to involve other parties in planning and decision-making. This reluctance is attributed to uncertainty over current or potential planning requirements in the Scottish case. It is reinforced by the sense of 'disconnection' of community members from the estate encountered in the research conducted (McKee, 2013, 128). In the Scottish case, the perception among community residents was that landowners avoid community engagement as a means of retaining control and as a reaction to perceived threats to

private property rights and any agendas that might imply community empowerment (McKee, 2013, 129).

There are similarities with the situation in Northumberland. The Duke has made similar claims to justify the ownership of his vast estates, with his historic obligations to maintain the long term prosperity of the estate as well as Alnwick Castle. He maintains that it is 'engrained in us to take the long view' (Murdoch et al, 2003, 118). In the matter of housing, particularly affordable housing, the Duke often plays a dual role, as a pre-eminent landowner and as a developer. As a landowner, he employs many who are dependent on the estate for their livelihoods but who are also dependent as tenants, housed on the estate in tied accommodation (Murdoch et al, 2003, 118). As a developer, he is frequently engaged in the 'numbers game' when making planning applications, negotiating the proportion of affordable housing (usually downwards) through S106 agreements with the local planning authority (Burnham, 2009).

Over the question of consultation with stakeholders on development plans and proposed development applications, the Duke, like landowners in Scotland, is similarly disinclined to 'share' information on his development plans and decision-making. This was demonstrated in Chapter 5 through the experiences of neighbourhood planning in Alnwick where a similar sense of 'disconnection' has been demonstrated by the Steering Group members when dealing with the Duke and his development company (ADNP Steering Group member, personal communication).

This brings the discussion back to the issue of ways in which such disassociation and disconnection between stakeholders involved in a collaborative planning activity can be reconciled. Not all large-scale landowners in Northumberland adopt the semi-feudal style of the Duke in dealing with local residents. The case of the Glendale Trust yet again demonstrates the potential to build fruitful collaborative working relationships between landed estates and local residents concerned to regenerate a rural area. One of the most generous benefactors to the Trust has been Lord Vinson, who while adopting a traditional landowner lifestyle (Murdoch et al, 2003, 123) has also contributed significantly to the Trust's civic projects and ensured continuity of local planning developments especially when public sources of funding were beginning to diminish. This has been due to the intense networking efforts of the Trustees, among them a resident who has a long track record of professional and academic planning experience.

In such cases, the role of 'community planners' would appear to be central, but may also require other stakeholders, such as local authority planners, taking up a more active role in mediating such collaborative arrangements.

One of the outcomes of power and resource imbalance is the resulting influence on incentives for collaboration in general (Ansell and Gash, 2007, 552). In collaboration for neighbourhood planning, I have shown that particularly in the Alnwick case study, power and resource imbalances are clearly evident. In addition to such power differentials are also associated levels of willingness to even 'come to the table'; those with the upper hand have less to gain by collaboration (Ansell and Gash, 2007, 552). The stakeholder with the least to gain, and arguably the most to lose, the Duke of Northumberland, is highly unlikely to ever 'come to the table' himself. His representative attends meetings on behalf of Northumberland Estates, but any incentives for the representative's participation are likely to be provided by the employer and therefore unlikely to be comparable with other stakeholders' incentives.

Another incentive is stakeholder expectation of outcomes and whether such outcomes will generate meaningful results when set against the opportunity costs of collaboration (Ansell and Gash 2007, 552). In the case of Tarset and Greystead, the opportunities to be gained for the community formed sufficient incentive for initial steps towards collaboration to be taken with the Northumberland National Park Authority. The opportunities were a combination of financial and policy gains. In this case, the financial incentive offered was funding, which the community was able to retain. This served to incentivise the Steering Group to become further involved in policy discussions and to take part in the neighbourhood plan governance.

A pre-history of either conflict or cooperation between stakeholders is seen as likely to influence the collaboration process (Ansell and Gash, 2007, 553). It has been noted that where there is a high level of interaction between stakeholders, that this in itself can act as an incentive for collaborative governance (Ansell and Gash, 2007, 553; Futrell, 2003). The case of Alnwick, however, resembles far more the dynamics of 'us versus them', derived from a long history in which a 'social psychology of antagonism' has become institutionalised (Ansell and Gash, 2007, 553). Members of the ADNP Steering Group, as previously indicated, have a number of overlapping governance roles, any of which are likely to include dealing with the Duke's various controversial planning

applications. Over the years, these have included developments in a number of villages near Alnwick as well as further afield, which have generated considerable opposition from local residents involving the Local Government Ombudsman, appeals, inquiries and petitions on different occasions (Burnham, 2009). The years of dispute that have characterised the Duke's development proposals signify that negotiations conducted in neighbourhood planning governance do not take place in a 'neutral' zone. The consequences of this have become evident in the poor collaboration outcomes previously noted.

The opposite could be argued in the case of Tarset and Greystead. Here a previous history of cooperation may have served to influence the collaboration process. While it has perhaps not always been an easy alliance of stakeholders, nevertheless there has been a willingness to come to the table and attempt to resolve difficulties as they arose. Institutionalised conflict, as illustrated in the case of Alnwick does not appear to have gained ground and imprinted attitudes and opinions in the same way. The consequence is that the collaboration process between the various stakeholders involved, such as the Steering Group, Parish Council and the NNPA although not starting from a blank slate, has resulted in an accommodation of different perspectives. In the remainder of this section, I argue that through localism, neighbourhood plans have opened up new spaces of governance at the local level and introduced opportunities for a re-negotiation of that space of governance. This has resulted in different outcomes in each of the case study areas. On the basis of my research findings, I argue that a re-negotiation of power relations within these new governance spaces is taking place.

The decentralising of powers to the neighbourhood level through localism has led to a devolving of rights and responsibilities from local councils to the neighbourhood level. In planning terms, it has led to the lowest tier of government, the parish council, being brought centre stage in the process of preparing the neighbourhood plan. As indicated in Chapters 3 and 4, rural governance in England was re-structured during the 1990s as part of New Labour's project, introducing the concept of 'governing through communities' ((Murdoch, 1997, 112).

The main types of local institutions that contribute to the functioning of rural community governance are governmental, civic and quasi-civic institutions (Woods et al, 2007, 213). Rural community governance comprises elected local government

institutions such as town and parish councils, as well as others such as development trusts, chambers of trade and commerce in towns, residents' associations and civic societies. Other organisations, such as social and cultural groups, while not formally part of the political or governmental infrastructure, can be involved in partnerships formed around specific community goals or projects.

In Northumberland the types of rural governance reflect the diversity of the county; there is a wide variance in the institutional infrastructure of its towns and villages, and similarly a wide variance in capacity between rural communities. A common assumption is that a linear relationship exists between institutional presence in a community and the capacity to act; the more institutions in a locality, and the more embedded and established these are, the greater the gains, economic and political (Woods et al, 2007, 213). But this linear relationship does not always hold and the influence of local institutions on the functioning of rural community governance is complex (Woods, 2007, 213). Long established and well-embedded institutions can also hinder as much as help community action (Woods et al, 2007, 213). This can be said to be the case in Alnwick.

The new governance space opened up by neighbourhood planning has resulted in different outcomes in each of the three case studies. The town of Alnwick has a number of civic organisations, of which the Alnwick Civic Society is one of the groups represented on the Steering Committee of the Alnwick and Denwick Neighbourhood Plan. Alnwick has a Town Council and formerly had a development trust which was dissolved in 2011 due to insolvency and poor financial management. There are a wide range of social and cultural groups also represented on the Steering Committee.

It could be expected that the ADNP, with its vertical linkages to the local authority through its planning coordinator, would lead to potentially positive outcomes such as good horizontal linkages with the wider community and consequently a well-executed preparation for the neighbourhood plan. Alnwick's Town council forms the nucleus of the ADNP Steering Group; as I demonstrated previously in Chapter 5, the opportunities opened up by the governance of neighbourhood planning and the accompanying governance space have appeared to achieve less than could be expected, given the range of resources available to a town such as Alnwick. Alnwick has a rich well embedded rural governance infrastructure, but I argue that this very embeddedness serves to limit

the potential gains in governance opened up by neighbourhood planning activities. I referred previously to the governance character of the ADNP Steering Group, in that it is made up of a small elite group wearing 'two or three hats' and therefore a tightly-knit group of individuals involved in almost all of the town's strategic decision-making bodies. This includes the governance of the neighbourhood plan. My research demonstrates that it is this overlap of membership that has contributed to the inertia, elitism and general lack of momentum in the management of the neighbourhood plan. I have argued in Chapter 5 that the limited opportunities for recruiting new membership has contributed to a lack of innovative approaches, slow progress in plan development and limited connectivity between the core group and wider community. The role of a powerful stakeholder such as the Duke, noted above, has also played a part.

Turning to the case study of Glendale and Wooler, this has demonstrated how the loss of regional level networks has impacted on the regeneration projects spearheaded by the local development trust. It showed how the successes realised during the 'feast of funding' years could be traced back (at least in part) to the networks and vertical linkages of the Glendale Gateway Trust. However, with the disruption of these networks consequent upon the shift from regionalism to localism, it is argued that a process of re-negotiation of local level governance space is taking place. Prior to the policy shift to localism and neighbourhood planning, the local level governance space that the GGT had occupied was defined by its 'outputs' - its regeneration projects. This almost sole occupation of governance space has been contested more recently by the activities of a revitalised local Parish Council with a 'rapprochement' becoming increasingly evident. It is now becoming a 'shared' governance space in which the local Parish Council is becoming more active through the medium of neighbourhood planning. Where formerly an almost impermeable boundary between the two local institutions existed, this has changed. Possible contributory factors include the change of leadership in both the Trust and the Parish Council. A new Chair of the Trust was elected towards the end of 2012 (GGT, 2014b) while a new Chair of the Parish Council was elected in December 2013 (Wooler Parish Council, 2013) and re-elected in May 2014 (Wooler Parish Council, 2014b). Since that time, the new leadership of each institution has adopted a broader, more inclusive and more pro-active approach to networking. Links with more local groups and have led to the adoption of new initiatives which have brought the activities of the two organisations into closer alignment, as well as more regular and closer contact. For example, the new Parish

Council Chairman invited the new Chair of the Trust to speak at Parish Council meetings on matters related to the neighbourhood planning initiative, as well as social concerns. This was reciprocated by the Trust, where the Parish Council Chair was invited to meet with GGT on 20th August 2014 on the matter of neighbourhood planning (Wooler Parish Council, 2014c). The Trust has also undertaken initial meetings with NCC to discuss a neighbourhood plan for the Glendale area, an initiative subsequently followed up by the Parish Council Chairman with other Parish Councils in Glendale. As was reported in the Parish Council meeting minutes:

> 'Cllr. Burn reported on the joint meeting of parish councils on 7 July to discuss formulating a Neighbourhood Plan for Glendale. Several parishes have expressed an interest. The next meeting will be planned for September to allow all parishes to reconvene individually first and decide whether they would like to go ahead with a Neighbourhood Plan.' (Wooler Parish Council, 2014d).

A number of local social issues were highlighted in the 'Stayin' Alive' report drawn up by the Trust in early 2013. The Parish Council Chairman has sought ways to support the work of the GGT in this area through discussions held in Parish Council meetings. As a result, issues seen as a priority are being addressed by the Parish Council, such as apprenticeships and training for young people in Glendale, increased recreational and sport opportunities and improved accessible transport links (Wooler Parish Council, 2014f). For older people, isolation in rural areas has been identified as a problem and social events have been arranged by, for example, the 'The Man in the Workshop' Group, coordinated by the Royal Voluntary Service (Wooler Parish Council, 2013). At nearly every Parish Council meeting held during 2014, the theme of neighbourhood planning has been included on the agenda (Wooler Parish Council, 2014a-h).

An increase in the frequency of contact and exchange of information is evident between the Trust and the Parish Council, from a review of the Wooler Parish Council meeting minutes over the course of 2014 (Wooler Parish Council, 2014a-h). The two Chairs of the Parish Council and Development Trust are on first-name terms, demonstrating the closer social and working relationships which have developed, an occurrence that would have been highly unlikely under the previous 'culture' of both institutions. As a consequence, it is argued, a new democratic energy is seen to be emerging from the new spaces of governance opened up by the localism legislation. The earlier governance legitimacy of the Trust as 'the only show in town' for local level planning and

regeneration activities has changed to a more equitable and balanced outcome where the site of local governance has become a more integrated one.

In the early stages of establishing the governance of the Tarset and Greystead Neighbourhood Plan, there was initially a degree of overlap of Parish Council with Steering Group membership. A commonly held view of Parish Councils and Councillors mentioned during the research by one of the NNPA staff was that many Parish Councillors have little contact with those they are supposed to represent. This seems to have characterised the governance of Tarset and Greystead Parish prior to the events and changes set in motion by the neighbourhood planning process in 2012. With the change in Parish Council leadership and subsequent improvement in interconnections with the Steering Group, a new infusion of energy has appeared to turn around Parish Council attitudes towards the activity of neighbourhood planning. The Parish Council, over time, has successfully delegated the management of the planning process to the Steering Group. The Parish Council itself has also been re-vitalised. The emergence of new leadership resolved the initial governance challenges facing the community and Parish Council. In terms of networked and community governance, the 'hub' of planning activities is an active Steering Group that has close linkages to the Parish Council and good onward linkages to the wider community.

The governance culture embraced however is reminiscent of the more 'traditional' approach adopted by parish councils, with a small group of active residents who are prepared to volunteer their time and energies for planning purposes gathering at regular, 'closed' meetings to which only councillors and those invited are admitted. Horizontal linkages are evident with the outcomes of Steering Group meetings being then relayed to the Parish Council and the wider community by way of regular leafleting, monthly newsletters (such as the Tarset News) and consultation events. Vertical linkages have also strengthened with policy actors and agencies, such as the NNPA. The Steering Group (and by association the Parish Council) has sharpened its negotiating skills and capacity in dealing frequently and regularly with this powerful stakeholder. Relations with the NNPA had been distant, and at times, difficult, but as a group it has been able to use the new governance space as a means to accessing resources for community use in terms of grants and other funding. Compared to the Parish Council's previous experiences of community led planning, the neighbourhood planning experience is providing a more grounded opportunity to achieve an aspirational agenda.

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There are evidently close linkages between the tightly-knit networks of the Steering Group and Parish Councillors; the frequent communication and liaison between these two 'hubs' with the wider community also demonstrates close, if not as strongly developed, linkages. In the early stages of plan preparation, linkages between the community, its representatives and external policy actors, such as the NNPA were created as a matter of necessity while the Parish Council and community leadership attempted to resolve their differences. The reservations which some Steering Group members held about the role of the NNPA have been noted above. This may reflect some of the uneasiness felt in the early days that the NNPA had dominated the proceedings through staff involvement in the preparation of the plan.

8.5 Conclusions

This chapter has aimed to provide further insights into the experiences of localism in Northumberland in the years immediately following the publication of the Localism Act in 2011. In Northumberland, the experiences of neighbourhood planning, both on the ground and at policy level for those policy practitioners and others involved appeared to be a mix of the familiar with the unfamiliar. For some, it brought back memories of the old parish plans with the associated frustrations and limitations. For others, it has presented a new set of challenges including those of finance and resources. Many of the doubts and scepticism that characterised earlier attitudes to neighbourhood planning, however, have since given way to a more positive outlook as experience has increased. Overall one of the challenges to be overcome is the 'divide' that still exists between communities and planners.

We can see that the divide exemplified between planners and communities of previous years grew out of a planning system that treated community efforts at planning (parish plans, community-led plans, visual design statements, etc.) as being 'below the radar', in statutory planning terms. Local authority planners, faced increasingly with the challenges of supporting neighbourhood plans, have begun to acknowledge that there might be a middle ground to meet with communities where professional planners can share their technical expertise and provide guidance to those interested and motivated to take up neighbourhood planning. As more local authority planners identify what is perceived as a 'passion for planning' among communities, the possibilities for bridging the divide may increase. In the North East, there are signs that a mutual recognition of the skills needed is beginning to grow from both sides in completing the project that is

the neighbourhood plan. This could happen as more opportunities arise for both sides to meet through planning seminars and workshops and more neighbourhood plans are initiated. This is needed if issues of social equity and resource allocation are to be addressed adequately. As was noted earlier, planning can play a central role in either promoting or suppressing levels of equity and social justice, but a growing disconnect between planning and meeting social objectives leaves communities no longer 'planned for' in an integrated way.

However, the example of the innovative social entrepreneurial approaches adopted by the Glendale Gateway Trust demonstrates the extent to which the disconnect between planning and meeting social objectives can be overcome. Innovative fund-raising activities by the Trust have ensured sufficient resources that were then be deployed for the identification of the area's social and economic priorities. From this basis, addressing these needs was then integrated into on-going regeneration and planning activities. The growing alignment between the Trust and the Parish Council has served to strengthen and consolidate the 'joined-up' governance through which these initiatives have been conducted. But beyond this is a significant capacity that distinguishes the Glendale case from the two neighbourhood plans. This is the recognition of the need for such research activities to draw out local issues and challenges faced by all age groups and demographics, from the youngest school-goers to the oldest retirees. The lessons from these endeavours would serve to shorten the steep learning curve of many future neighbourhood plans.

In Section 8.3, the theoretical perspective of networked or neo-endogenous rural development was drawn on to show how the neighbourhood planning process can be better conceived as a development process. The aim has been to illustrate the existing shortfalls in the nature of neighbourhood planning and the current limits to collaborative planning but also to show that it can be more than a simply a planning exercise for communities. The adoption of a neo-endogenous perspective illustrates the existing capacities of communities and neighbourhoods that can be built on to create 'neighbourhood *community* development plans'. The potential for this has been demonstrated by the case study of Wooler and Glendale, albeit outside the statutory planning system.

In Section 8.4, two main outcomes are seen to have emerged from the case studies on collaborative planning governance. The case studies demonstrated that firstly, the processes and practices of neighbourhood planning have opened up new governance spaces at the local level. This has had consequences in each of the case study areas. On the basis of my research findings, I argue that a re-negotiation of power relations within these new governance spaces is seen to be taking place. In one case it has taken the form of an implicit questioning of the legitimacy of a local development trust involved in rural regeneration. Secondly, following an examination of the power balance between stakeholders in one case study, I argue that the role of developers and landowners along with patterns of land ownership (and land banking practices) are coming increasingly under scrutiny as a consequence of neighbourhood planning activities. Based on my findings, I also contend that the power relations deriving from patterns of land ownership in this most northerly of English counties create a tension with the newly opened governance spaces and with the deliberative democratic principles underpinning neighbourhood planning. The power relations are comparable with those in Scotland prior to the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003. Scotland's form of localism demonstrates the extent of change for rural communities that can be achieved through legislation targeted at land reform and land ownership patterns. To conclude, an equivalent radical approach through land reform would be required to achieve such a fundamental shift in power relations in England and particularly Northumberland. Until that is achieved, and the kinds of 'disconnect' between stakeholders and major landowners adequately addressed (as noted in page 19 of this chapter and in Chapter 5), my research indicates that it is unlikely that the level of community empowerment envisaged in the Coalition government's legislation on localism can be realised through neighbourhood planning.

Finally, in spite of achievements at the local level of neighbourhood planning, there is a risk that the wider aims of localism in terms of social justice and deliberative democracy may be bypassed or overlooked in the statutory planning process as neighbourhood plans are adopted. In both of the cases of formal neighbourhood planning policies are yet to be finalised. It is more likely that these plans would be rejected on the grounds of lack of housing development than a lack of attention to social justice issues. The case of informal neighbourhood planning and rural regeneration in Wooler and Glendale, in contrast, would appear to offer a good example of focus on equity issues and social

justice, providing a model which could be adopted within the statutory planning processes.

Chapter 9. Conclusions

9.1 Introduction

This thesis is entitled 'Rural regeneration and Localism: A case study of Northumberland' and the aim of the research was to examine the extent to which the neighbourhood planning process is bringing about the changes vaunted by the Coalition government. The research focus was an examination of how the localism agenda was being pursued at the community level, with reference to local development need, institutional development, community engagement and governance in Northumberland.

In the early days following the publication of the Localism Act in 2011, initial reactions and concerns expressed by academics and critical observers focussed on its democratic and governance aspects, especially in relation to neighbourhood planning: was it 'democracy in action' or 'just a sham' were critiques echoed in a number of publications by academics and observers. The concerns raised in connection with the democratic aspects of neighbourhood planning were accompanied by concerns over the levels of community empowerment that it could achieve, as well as by the emphasis on collaborative planning by the Coalition government referred to previously in Chapter 3 (3.4.1). Initial reactions and responses to localism and neighbourhood planning in the policy practitioner and planning communities in Northumberland were found to be unenthusiastic and indifferent; over time during the research this changed to more concerned and engaged attitudes.

In order to address the democratic, community empowerment and collaborative planning problematics identified above, the thesis research focussed on the following research questions:

- How is the localism agenda being interpreted at the policy level and by academic researchers?
- How is the localism agenda practised at the community level in Northumberland?
- In what ways are the power relations amongst local and extra-local actors playing out in localism?
- What are the implications of localism for the governance of rural communities?

At the time the research was undertaken for this thesis, the 'practice' of neighbourhood planning was still in its infancy. The legislation had only entered the statute books a few months prior to the start of the research fieldwork. There was therefore a gap in the available and contemporary research literature on neighbourhood plan experiences both on the ground, as well as on aspects such as governance. To my knowledge, research on neighbourhood planning by communities in Northumberland is limited (see for exception student consultation project in Allendale, (Allendale, 2011, 4). Hence this research makes an original contribution to the literature, by providing an in-depth case study based study of the practice of neighbourhood planning in Northumberland.

An increasing number of research publications have started to address gaps in the literature on neighbourhood planning (Gallent and Robinson, 2013; Great Britain, DEFRA, 2013a; RTPI, 2013; Vigar et al, 2013; Sturzaker, 2013). The geographic focus of the majority of these studies, however, has been the south and south-east of England. This thesis is one of the first research studies on Front Runner experiences in a remote rural area. It draws on the emerging literature of the changing planning system to place the Northumberland experience in context. While localism runs as a thread through England's political history, the Coalition government's publication of the Localism Act 2011 marked the first occasion on which the principle of localism had been enshrined in legislation. It was intended to bring about radical decentralisation as well as encompassing major reforms to the planning system to make it clearer, more democratic and effective. A key plank of the legislation, neighbourhood planning, was introduced to address the democratic deficit said to be experienced by communities under previous governments. Neighbourhood plans, intended as a robust addition to the statutory planning hierarchy, were envisaged as empowering and enabling communities to control the type of development in their area.

Community empowerment therefore was a key principle much emphasised by the Coalition government and included in the range of opportunities offered by the Localism Act especially in the realm of governance. Great emphasis was placed on the decentralisation that would enable more community empowerment. Eric Pickles, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, was clear on the role the Localism Act would have in ending the 'command and control apparatus of England's over-centralized state' and this was endorsed by the Conservative Party's commitment in its 2009 Green Paper to a 'control shift' from the centre to local communities

(Conservative Party, 2009; Shaw and Robinson, 2011, 233). In the Policy Green Paper 'Control: Shift: Returning Power to Local Communities', it states:

> 'To foster a new spirit of local enterprise and local social responsibility, we need to decentralise power and control... Only through such thoroughgoing localisation of power can we create a new era of civic responsibility, in which local communities have – and use – real power over local spending, local services, local planning and the local environment… Our vision of localism is one where power is decentralised to the lowest possible level.' (DCLG, 2009, 8)

This raises one of the questions noted above that this thesis aimed to answer - the extent to which local communities have and use real power in local planning. The other main research questions, of how the localism agenda is interpreted at policy level and the power relations involved in localism are addressed in section 9.2.

9.2 Key empirical findings

Research Question 1: How Localism Agenda interpreted at Policy Level

In examining the first research question of how the localism agenda was being interpreted at the policy level, the views of policy practitioners, planners and academics were sought. To understand the theoretical context and background, a review of the academic research literature **r**evealed the discourses and debates revolving around localism. Much of the literature immediately preceding and following the publication of the Localism Act revolved around the abrupt shift in policy from regionalism to localism (Shaw and Robinson, 2012; Pugalis, 2012; Bentley et al, 2010). The swift dismantling of the regional infrastructure and changes in rural development policy were experienced as a particular loss in one of the case study areas, Glendale. Along with the reductions in public spending that heralded 'austerity localism', rural areas lost valuable rural networks that had served to support local regeneration projects.

While the policy and associated debates surrounding regionalism may have since waned, the tensions between the discourses surrounding localism and centralism have continued to generate much research interest, where centralism is seen by many to represent the 'other face' of localism (Davies, 2009; Pratchett, 2004; Duncan and Goodwin, 1988). The reform of the planning system and introduction of neighbourhood planning by the Coalition government has re-awakened a debate over what is seen as a return to centralist control in the tug-of-war characterising central-local relations (Clifford and Tewdwr-Jones, 2013; Bentley, 2013; Pugalis, 2012).

In tracing the history of localism, Chapter 3 showed that localism, far from being newly devised by the Coalition government, has a long history. The chapter noted that as a political doctrine, centralism also has an equally long history and demonstrated how much of the Coalition government's early responses to neighbourhood planning activities reflected an overriding concern to rein in local level planning initiatives and curb community level endeavour. This was partly reflected in the low level of central government funding committed to the neighbourhood planning pilot programme and partly in central government retention of control over the process, despite government rhetoric to the contrary. In subsequent years, the Secretary of State has appeared to loosen the reins but this could also be regarded simply as political opportunism.

To explore the research question further 'on the ground', it was necessary to understand what localism meant to respondents. The views of planners, policy practitioners and others interviewed in the county of Northumberland on localism and neighbourhood planning shortly after the Localism Act had been introduced were therefore examined in Chapter 8. Most appeared to be cautious, tentative or just unenthusiastic about the reforms to planning policy and any likely future outcomes. For those with experience of working during the New Labour administration, the concept of localism was not entirely new: 'localism hasn't changed much we've been doing' was the opinion of a number of policy practitioners. Others, especially planners working for local authorities, considered the impact on their departments pragmatically in terms of limited resources at a time of steep cuts in public expenditure and reductions in staffing. It was thought that the new push to neighbourhood planning was putting a strain on local planning department resources as well as probably demanding too much of communities.

It was not then unexpected that the conservative reactions of that time then fed into similar opinions on the opportunities for community empowerment in neighbourhood planning, where the views expressed ranged from cautiously optimistic to sceptical. This may partly be a reflection of the lack of guidance from central government at that time, particularly in the early years following the new localism legislation. The ways in which the new localism agenda was to achieve community empowerment was left largely unspecified in the legislation at that time. The second research question then led to a further exploration of the practice of localism and the challenges this posed for communities.

Research Question 2: the practice of localism and its outcomes in Northumberland

This thesis sought to investigate the level of community empowerment achieved through neighbourhood planning in the case studies.

Chapter 5 showed the extent to which the Steering Group of the ADNP took up these opportunities, manifested in an initial increase in capacity building and community empowerment. As the neighbourhood planning process continued, however, the initial momentum slowed over time, with a corresponding diminishing of interest and motivation from the wider community becoming evident after a year. Contributing to this outcome, the research pointed to the significance of the concept of 'elite capture' whereby funds and other resources transferred from one level of government only actually reach and benefit a small proportion of the intended recipients.

A critical element also identified was a lack of forward momentum at times within the Steering Group and a corresponding decrease in community outreach activities. Studies of social capital have aimed to account for the quality of social relations within communities and entrepreneurial networks (Jack and Anderson, 2002). Social capital is seen: 'as embedded within networks of mutual acquaintances and based on mutual recognition. It may take the form of …obtaining resources through the contacts within a network..' (Jack and Anderson, 2002, 5). The concept of 'embeddedness' has been adopted to account for the ways that individuals become part of the social structure. But social embeddedness, as has been pointed out, while it provides the 'glue' that cements social ties, may also have negative outcomes because of different group expectations (Jack and Anderson, 2002, 8). Embeddedness within networks may serve as an exclusionary as much as an inclusionary vehicle. In this context it appears that 'over-embeddedness' may in fact be a contributory factor to the lack of effective neighbourhood governance. The dense network relationships that operate for the ADNP Steering Group members serve to 'bind' them together but at the same time work to exclude those who are not part of this exclusive (and excluding) network. The existing 'cultural capacity' of rural communities, that is, local heritage as well as prevailing attitudes and values, can also be the keystone of progress 'or the elusive factor that inhibits that success' (Courtney and Moseley, 2008, 317).

The role of local authority planners in mediating the outcomes of the neighbourhood planning process still appeared to be evolving while the research was being undertaken.

While the experience that has been built up in this case would be valuable for future community level plans, for planners involved it was a 'steep learning curve'. The role of planners vis a vis neighbourhood planning may be changing. Deeper involvement could assist and modify some of the preconceptions and perspectives of planners about the motivation and capabilities of communities. It has been observed that relations between community activities and planners have improved in areas where community led planning has 'settled in' (Parker, 2014, 194).

Similarly, Chapter 6 showed how the Steering Group of the TGNDP, once established, mobilised and strengthened community motivation and engagement in the process of preparing the neighbourhood plan during its early stages. Over time, the momentum slowed with a corresponding drop in the earlier interest shown by the wider community. A small group within the Steering Group subsequently focussed on the opportunity to preserve and conserve the vernacular housing and landscape features of the area, to the exclusion of wider neighbourhood planning aims and social justice issues. In this endeavour, it has failed to engage the wider community, demonstrating yet another example of 'elite capture' as shown by the ADNP. For the ADNP, other forces such as developer ambitions, central government control and the constraints operated by current local authority planning have appeared to work against the fulfilment of the expectations of community level planning to shape and influence the neighbourhood.

Both Front Runners were faced with similar challenges identified in Chapters 5 and 6, revolving around the difficulty of 'future proofing' neighbourhood plans and issues of prematurity where the Local Plan is still to emerge. These challenges however can be seen as part of a wider issue, that of the limits to neighbourhood plans set by a planning system which like localism, operates in the 'shadow of centralism' (Holman and Rydin, 2012, 5; Brownill and Carpenter, 2009).

Chapter 7 showed how the progress of local level planning and regeneration activities under the Glendale Gateway Trust contrasted with that of the Front Runners in Northumberland. The regeneration activities undertaken by the GGT have achieved outcomes that reflect much of the Coalition government's possible intentions with localism and neighbourhood planning. For many years the Trust operated from a limited community base and stakeholder involvement compared with other development trusts in the county. It tended to bypass the Parish Council and other statutory bodies and it

benefitted from major funding contributions from landowners which enabled it a degree of freedom to operate more or less autonomously.

The wider Glendale area is now being addressed through new projects such as the 'Stayin' Alive' youth project and seminars on community initiatives and the Glendale GatewayTrust is endeavouring to widen its activities beyond the provision of affordable housing to address the needs of younger age groups. The Trust's model has been based on endogenous needs identified within the community, being regeneration and renewal of existing properties within Wooler. The exploratory moves undertaken recently in connection with a neighbourhood plan for Glendale and Wooler brings these issues to the fore. While it was the initiative of the GGT to introduce the idea of neighbourhood planning and links with the NCC, it is the Parish Councils of Glendale that must take it forward.

As the Localism Act states and is also reiterated by planners and practitioners interviewed in the course of this research, a neighbourhood plan is not always appropriate for all cases and situations. There exist alternative routes to rural regeneration other than the approaches being trialled in the government's pilot neighbourhood planning programme in Northumberland.

Research Question 3: Power Relations and Localism

The third research question concerned the ways in which the power relations amongst local and extra-local actors were playing out in localism. The findings from the three case studies showed that one of the most frequently identified challenges in relation to the distribution of power and power imbalances concerned the domination and/or manipulation of the collaborative planning process by stronger, more powerful actors.

The collaborative approach embodies the principles of participation, empowerment, partnership working and networked action (Gallent and Robinson, 2012, 13). In contrast to traditional forms of government, the aim is to include stakeholders in the decision-making process and to transform 'adversarial relationships into cooperative ones' (Gallent and Robinson, 2012, 13). Drawing on the theoretical approaches of collaborative and communicative planning theory, Chapter 8 focussed on those conditions seen as critical at the outset of collaboration in affecting the likely outcome of the process (Ansell and Gash, 2007). The chapter then highlighted the factors

considered significant in influencing these conditions, identifying for example imbalances of resources/power between the different stakeholders, the incentives of stakeholders to collaborate and any previous histories of conflict or cooperation among stakeholders (Ansell and Gash, 2007).

The unequal distribution of power between stakeholders in collaborative governance has been identified as a common issue (Healey, 2003; Ansell and Gash, 2007; Susskind and Cruikshank, 1987). Healey refers to 'the typically unequal power distributions of most governance contexts of today' (Healey, 2003) and Gallent and Robinson have questioned whether 'the emergent apparatus of collaborative governance is designed simply to appease local populations without bringing any genuine change' (Gallent and Robinson, 2012, 10).

Both neighbourhood plan cases revealed the power imbalances between the different stakeholders in the process of neighbourhood plan formulation which changed little throughout the plan-making process. In contrast, the third case study demonstrated how through collaborative governance, power shifts and dynamics have affected the balance of power. This led on to the identification in the research of the pivotal role and involvement of local authority planners in the neighbourhood planning process in Northumberland. These reactions and opinions appear to have spilled over into the arena of neighbourhood planning, with a consequent divide found to exist between communities and planners in the areas researched. This was particularly marked in the case of the Alnwick and Denwick Neighbourhood Plan. The failure of local authority planners to effectively mediate or to act as power-brokers is ultimately expressed in the neighbourhood plan.

However, the insights offered by Abrams on the role of local authority planners, a case study drawn on experiences of planners and public servants in a Norwegian town, assist in understanding this 'failure'. The range of contradictory demands made on planners is examined and analysed in her study of a municipal council in eastern Norway and goes some way to illuminating the maze of conflicting pressures which planners and other public service agents must negotiate on a daily basis (Abrams, 2004). As she explains:

> 'such public servants are constantly required to balance different
> kinds of interests and make meaning out of contradictory demands.
> They must create arguments based on their professional knowledge
> and opinions, and on their knowledge of the political conditions

within the municipality, they must bear in mind the interests of local residents, and consider carefully how they represent the organization within which they work.' (Abrams, 2004, 22).

Abrams observes that there is a structural dilemma in the constitution of government bodies which creates a 'fault line' in the practice of government. This in turn puts pressure on public servants to exhibit appropriate forms of loyalty. She also points to the somewhat obscure and fuzzy decision-making processes involved when those in public service must 'switch' loyalties from those 'aligned to the interests of the public or the citizens towards obedience to the council' (Abrams, 2004, 22). Here parallels can be seen with the observed practices of local authority planners in the case of the ADNP.

A further issue that came into play was that of 'professionalism', professional knowledge and ways that these were interpreted by municipality staff. For one public sector employee, for example, 'professionalism is the act of distancing oneself from the consequences of political decisions' (Abrams, 2004, 31). This can result in silence, the silence that is reflected in Tewdwr-Jones' assertion that 'seeking consensus will silence rather than give voice' (Tewdwr-Jones, 1998, 1979). Abrams demonstrates the particular ways in which a convergence of opinions takes place in the context of Norwegian public service. From discussions with public service employees, it becomes clear that maintaining a neutral stance, unaffected by political choices, requires a great deal of reflection and being on constant guard against stating personal preferences.

In the case of the ADNP, unresolved issues remained from this lack of capacity of local authority planners to assist in identifying solutions to a complex set of power relations between the ADNP Steering Group and a major landowner/developer. In Tarset and Greystead, the ongoing power-play between unequal stakeholders was shifting in character, although it appeared that the local authority planners involved were partly responsible for instigating some of the tensions.

The limits to collaborative/communicative planning in the neighbourhood plan case studies in Northumberland have therefore been demonstrated in these two cases. The theoretical implications of these findings are taken up in the following section. The outcomes in the two neighbourhood plan cases contrast with that of the third case. In the socio-political context of this most northern part of Northumberland, dominated by land-owning elites, the ADNP case was shown to be circumscribed (both socio-

economically, politically and geographically) by traditional land-owning influences whose commercial interests often co-exist (or compete with) those of non-traditional commercial housing and property developers. In contrast, the case of the GGT demonstrated how by virtue of context-specific extra-local linkages and networks, the resources of such landowning interests were harnessed to provide finance and funding for the Trust's initiatives.

But, as time has passed, and experiences of neighbourhood planning consolidated with more neighbourhood plans taken up by communities, the attitudes and opinions of planners and others involved appear to have moved in a more positive direction. It appears that some of the earlier scepticism and distrust has started to fade. In rural villages such as Tarset and Greystead, the process has appeared to strengthen the community capacity of those involved. While some LPA planners thought too much was expected of communities and a 'big ask' for neighbourhood planning, the feeling was also expressed that it was too much to ask of planners as well, and local authority planners in particular. As Chapter 8 indicated, a number of planners were clearly not happy about the level of involvement with communities that the process would entail, but as is discussed below, it is likely that planners may be expected to move even more into 'collaborative mode' in the future. Neighbourhood plans, now embedded in the statutory planning process, are also likely to place yet more demands on the resources of local planning departments.

Research Question 4: Implications of Localism for Governance of Rural Communities

The fourth research question concerned the examination of the implications of localism for the governance of rural communities. As Chapter 8 showed from the three cases researched, the process of neighbourhood planning and rural regeneration activities has opened up new spaces of governance at the local level and introduced opportunities for a re-negotiation of that space of governance. The opening up these new governance spaces, however, has resulted in different outcomes in each of the three case-studies. The chapter noted the opportunities arising from the opening up of this new governance space but the limitations have also become evident.

While the neighbourhood planning process can be seen from the case studies to have shed more light on previously unremarked, even enigmatic governance activities, the

most successful use of new governance space has occurred in the third case study, discussed below.

The significance of the concept of legitimacy in connection with collaborative planning and the extensive discussion it has engendered in previous chapters is derived from the Coalition Government's localism agenda in England and its calls for the 'rebalancing of power…back into the hands of local people'(Conservative Party, 2010, 2). As Parker has noted:

> 'moving community action .. from non-statutory status into the statutory system is forcing LPAs and the wider culture of planning to confront the challenges of the collaborative planning paradigm more squarely.' (Parker, 2014, 193).

To be successful, as previously noted by Ansell and Gash, collaboration needs to be inclusive of all stakeholders, even the difficult ones (Ansell and Gash, 2007, 556). Even the most forceful proponents of the need for collaborative planning processes, however, acknowledge the challenges involved, resulting in instances 'where participants end up frustrated and more mistrustful of each other than before (Healey, 2006, 331). But the opportunity for all stakeholders to deliberate and discuss with others lies at the heart of a process of legitimation, a process which requires clear ground rules and transparency (Ansell and Gash, 2007, 556). As Ansell and Gash have pointed out:

> '..stakeholders often enter into the process in a skeptical (sic) frame of mind. The legitimacy of the process depends, in part, upon stakeholders' perceptions that they have gotten a "fair hearing".

Clearly, the presence of clear ground rules and transparency is ideal, and can support the feeling among stakeholders that the legitimacy of the process is sound. But it is also clear from the case studies of the two neighbourhood plans that these two essential criteria may not always be present, and are likely to be in a state of continual 'negotiation' especially by the more dominant players. Legitimacy of the process may then be seen as a much more fragile element, subject to negotiation by the most dominant players with a fluctuating rather than a permanent character.

The democratic legitimacy of neighbourhood planning, discussed in Chapters 5 and 6, as yet an under-researched area, has still to be tested. The Coalition Government's claim that localism has ushered in a new wave of democratisation of decision-making at the local level is yet to be achieved. The new governance bodies for neighbourhood plans,

such as Steering Groups and Neighbourhood Forums have had relatively little time in which to demonstrate their capacities for transparency and democratic legitimacy and this new governance infrastructure is therefore still untested. However, research conducted by Cowie and Davoudi has revealed some early warning signs that indicate that 'legitimacy is not a given within localism' (Cowie and Davoudi, 2015, 186).

The Steering Groups of both case study neighbourhood plans, the ADNP and the TGNDP reveal the shortcomings of these bodies in terms of their democratic legitimacy when viewed from broader conceptual perspective (Cowie and Davoudi, 2015, 176). As unelected, self-selected groups of volunteers, the members of these Steering Groups are seen as broadly unrepresentative of the residents on whose behalf they manage the neighbourhood plan. The lack of connectivity with the wider community that was noted from research findings in both cases is seen to suppress the voices of marginalised groups.

Chapter 7 showed how the Glendale Gateway Trust, operating outside the government's sponsored neighbourhood planning system, in its re-negotiation of the new 'shared' governance space with the local parish council has also raised issues of legitimacy. The non-statutory basis of development trusts in general (in initiating regeneration activities) has given rise to a questioning of the legitimacy of the forms of governance emerging at community level. Research findings of this thesis led to the conclusion that while any claims to 'associated', 'procedural' and 'substantive' legitimacy made by the Trust could be justified, these claims rest on a tenuous basis. For the Trust to continue to justify its claim to these different forms of legitimacy requires a continuous engagement with the existing statutory structures with which it occupies 'governance space' and that it continues to consolidate its successes in terms of tangible regeneration and other outputs.

Concern over the legitimacy and accountability of the GGT has also been expressed by the Trustees themselves during the course of 2013. This can be seen as associated with the decline in output legitimacy - with less funding, outputs are fewer. Alongside this, a parallel development was the closer engagement of the Trust with the Parish Council and government agencies such as HCA, as well as undertaking projects which have a wider remit than entrepreneurial property buying and selling. The closer engagement with the Parish Council, it can be argued, may increase its input legitimacy and enable

the GGT to move from its former position of operating in a parallel governance space to a more comfortable 'sharing' of the same governance space with the Parish Council.

As a somewhat unexpected outcome, the negotiation of this newly opened up shared governance space between the two local level institutions in turn launched the start of a neighbourhood planning initiative in the Glendale area. This is one of the clearest consequences of the new localism legislation but an outcome that had not been anticipated in the area at the outset of this research.

The example of the regeneration initiatives successfully carried out in the market town of Wooler indicates the potential scope for community led planning initiatives, even in remote rural locations. Through the Glendale Gateway Trust, set up and operated predominantly outside the government-sponsored programmes to regenerate its town centre and generate community benefits, provides a model that could be followed by other areas interested in taking up neighbourhood planning. The case of the GGDT provides a clear example of successful community endeavour, but one that for many years elected to pursue its regeneration strategy independently of government support.

In all three cases, Chapter 8 showed how in terms of community outreach, horizontal linkages were weaker than vertical linkages. Chapter 8 demonstrated how in the case of the two Front Runners, this led to a gradual diminishing of community involvement over the duration of the neighbourhood planning process. In governance terms, this contrasted with the close ties evident between the members of the governance groups. Only the third case showed that, as a result of certain interactions and dynamics, the horizontal ties strengthened. The result was improved links with the wider community. Horizontal linkages such as between the GGT and the Parish Council appear to be strengthening.

This leads into the next point made in this section, the consequences and outcomes of neighbourhood planning. Chapter 8 went on to identify both the tangible and intangible legacies of neighbourhood planning and rural regeneration activities for the three case studies. When comparing the three case studies, the chapter noted that, despite the loss of significant rural networks, the broadest range of achievements and benefits fell to the Wooler and Glendale Gateway Trust. In particular, the extra-local linkages of GGT were seen to have assisted in the building up of capacity and community empowerment as well as being instrumental in institutional strengthening. The dynamic nature of

relations between horizontal and vertical linkages was identified in each of the cases in Chapters 5, 6 and 7. However, as the chapter showed, the vertical linkages were found to be stronger than horizontal linkages in the early years of activities, reflected in the limited degree of community outreach. The need for strengthened horizontal linkages can be seen with regard to activities such as community outreach. The case of the ADNP showed how weaker horizontal linkages tend to limit the effectiveness of local governance.

9.3 Academic Implications

In tracing the history of localism, Chapter 3 showed that the 'new localism' of the Coalition government, while seen from a contemporary perspective as the obverse of the policy of 'regionalism' that it displaced, has a long history. The chapter also noted that the political doctrine of centralism has an equally long history and demonstrated how much of the Coalition government's early responses to neighbourhood planning activities reflected an overriding concern to rein in local level planning initiatives and curb community level endeavour. This thesis has therefore examined the idea of 'localism is centralism' which was seen to be partly reflected in the low level of central government funding committed to the neighbourhood planning pilot programme and partly in central government retention of control over the process.

However, this thesis has also shown from the research findings that at the local level, new spaces of governance are being opened up. This would appear to counter the centralist argument noted above, but it was shown that in the case of the two neighbourhood plans, through the operation of power relations and processes of 'elite capture' and 'over-embeddedness' further constraints limit the extent to which these new spaces of governance can be fully utilised.

The constraints set on the powers of communities to take decisions by higher level strategic planning priorities have become more evident as the Front Runners have progressed through the neighbourhood planning process. As a genuine expression of local aspirations, any neighbourhood plan is already challenged at the outset by the limits imposed by higher level policies and strategic planning matters. Institutional constraints operate to limit what ultimately may be achieved under the localism banner in neighbourhood planning, regardless of the capacity of communities. As indicated in Chapter 4, these limits are imposed by the prevailing and powerful centralist tendencies

of government in England, regardless of which party is in power. Conclusions similar to this can be found in a comparative research study conducted on new governance structures in Alabama, in the US and in Derry, Northern Ireland where:

> 'Within both study areas the influencing role of the state was evident: it is in a position to exert considerable influence on creating conditions that may stimulate or indeed dampen endogenous development activities.' (Swindel and McAreavey, 2012, 284).

It is evident that from the experiences in Northumberland the neighbourhood plan is a very blunt instrument being used to achieve the Coalition government's aims of economic growth and development. As Parker observes:

> '..neighbourhood planning is attempting to circumvent the necessarily longer-term commitment to community development that localism requires … key areas where action could be taken lie in the creation of support networks and in ensuring that relevant actors are committed to involvement.' (Parker and Woodend, 2014, 193).

The empirical findings from the three case studies also demonstrate the need to review the theoretical positions presented by recent collaborative/communicative planning theory. The recent developments in collaborative planning theory take the perspective that unlike earlier 'generations' of deliberative democracy theory, the 'utopian ideal' of consensus can no longer be considered a realistic aim, moving towards the incorporation of more pragmatic and context-related issues (Mantysalo and Jarenko, 2014). For the current 'third generation' of deliberative democracy theorists, this has signified the acceptance of a 'situated agreement' between groups in intense negotiations where the focus becomes that of managing the interdependence of the stakeholders involved in order to reach specific planning decisions (Mantysalo and Jarenko, 2014; Forester, 2009; O'Flynn, 2006; Baber and Bartlett, 2005).

But this theoretical position does not succeed in addressing the pragmatic issues of consensus failure, combined with the disassociation and disconnection between stakeholders found in one of the neighbourhood plan case studies. This thesis therefore demonstrates the limits in practice to collaborative planning and deliberative democracy theory with the poor collaboration outcomes characterising what could be considered the 'extreme' case of the ADNP. Consensus failure was all that could be achieved at different stages in the negotiation process in the ADNP. The years of dispute in the ADNP case study over development proposals signify that negotiations conducted in neighbourhood planning governance do not take place in a 'neutral' zone. The

consequences of this have become evident through the way that collaboration has been undermined by the complexities of power networks and linkages.

As was previously noted in Chapter 8, Section 8.4, however, alternative perspectives have begun to emerge that treat the site of the 'dynamics of participation' at the neighbourhood level as the more appropriate locus on which to 'micro-focus' attention (Brownill and Parker, 2010, 278). The outcomes of the above case studies can therefore perhaps be better considered in this light, using a micro-focus to draw attention precisely to those 'dynamics and contradictions' of participation that the authors see as a critically required new perspective. This perspective also regards conflict 'as an important feature of local governance and engagement' in preference to 'seeking out or fixating on consensus' (Parker and Brownill, 2010, 279). Such an approach therefore recognises that a lack of consensus does not necessarily imply disengagement; on the contrary it reflects 'the contradictory and essentially political processes at the heart of most examples of participation' and helps to build up deeper understandings of participation (Parker and Brownill, 2010, 279).

A further valuable contribution of this new theoretical perspective is that, as Brownill and Parker point out, it enables insights to be generated that are often 'underexplored by a focus on a 'bigger picture' (Brownill and Parker, 2010, 278). For example, the role of planners becomes increasingly visible under this new spotlight where they 'can be viewed as 'situated agents' between broader structures of governance and practice on the ground..' (Brownill and Parker, 2010, 278). Parker also draws attention to the challenges faced by professional planners in working with 'the wider community' and emphasises that both planners and community activities need resources to continue the process of 'mutual learning' that is already underway (Parker, 2014, 193). This theme is taken up again later in Section 9.5 of this chapter in discussing the role of the 'community planner'.

In addition to collaborative planning theory, the theoretical perspective of neo-endogenous or networked rural development made possible an alternative framing of the research questions, enabling an identification of the driving forces and power networks in each of the three case studies in local level planning and regeneration in rural areas. The neo-endogenous rural development perspective has been linked with research into the rural economy (Bosworth and Atterton, 2012), the housing sector in

Ireland (Gkartzios and Scott, 2014) and planning (Shucksmith, 2010). From a neo-endogenous rural perspective, the existing literature underlines the key role played by in-migrants or incomers in rural areas in setting up commercial enterprises (Woods, 2005; Bosworth, 2006; Atterton, 2007). This thesis supports this literature and also casts the net wider to show how the role of incomers in each of the case studies, seen from a networked development perspective, can impact on the dynamics released through planning at the local level. Extending the neo-endogenous approach, it was shown how this could encapsulate the particular conditions and forces emanating from neighbourhood planning and regeneration activities. Linking the local level activity of neighbourhood planning with the neo-endogenous rural development perspective in this way has provided new insights where such research has been conducted (see Shucksmith, 2010) but there is little in the way of a body of research on which to draw. This thesis therefore makes claim to an original contribution to the existing literature, offering new insights into the critical role played by such incomers in using their 'extra-local' skills and knowledge resources to open up opportunities in neighbourhood planning and rural regeneration activities. The chapter also argued further that in such cases, these groups played a primary role in setting the agenda for local level planning activities.

Based on the foregoing findings from the research, the key contributions made by this thesis to the three main conceptual components discussed in Chapter 3, the neo-endogenous rural development literature, the localism literature and the collaborative planning literature are presented below.

Neo-endogenous Rural Development

With regard to the existing neo-endogenous literature, the research for this thesis has built on this work to demonstrate that not only have incomers to the area played an important role in the setting up of the governance of neighbourhood plan initiatives but have provided the core expertise required to carry the plan to its finalisation. Use of neo-endogenous rural development theory enabled an identification of those individuals seen as driving forwards rural regeneration activities in all three case studies, even though the framework for the two neighbourhood plans differed from the rural regeneration case. Different as the two neighbourhood plan case studies were from the third case study, the research has demonstrated that a common denominator in driving forward planning in each case has been an identified extra local group. In the third case,

that of the Glendale area, rural regeneration activities undertaken by the GGDT were managed by a board of trustees comprising professional planning expertise, etc. The majority of the trustees were originally from outside the area but with their combined skills and extra local expertise, introduced a range of initiatives. Using the neo-endogenous theory and approach has theorised and illuminated the identity of those who can be seen as driving forward rural regeneration activities.

Localism

The theoretical implications of the new localism agenda identified in Chapter 3 are drawn together, and the key contributions made by this research to the localism literature are presented. Previously in Chapter 3, the forms of emergent localisms were defined theoretically, adopting Hildreth's theoretical framework and then interpreted in their different chronological phases. The key features were outlined and a range of models adopted to capture the way localism was interpreted by each political administration. The models included the hierarchical 'Thatcherite/Competitive' model, the 'Conditional' model adopted by the Labour government, the Community model adopted by the Coalition government, the Representative model, the Austerity model, the Progressive model and the Neoliberal model.

The 'Community' model was characterised as 'devolving responsibility from centre to local'. However, from my foregoing research findings from experiences of those employed in the public, private and third sectors, a more nuanced interpretation can be made to capture the experiences of localism in England under the Coalition Government. There are inherent contradictions in this model that have been revealed by this research. While there is a strong focus on 'community' through the localism legislation and an emphasis on decentralising power to local communities and neighbourhoods, echoes of the earlier Conservative Government localism model are also evident, expressed through the top-down mechanisms employed by the Coalition Government to launch localism and neighbourhood planning. In addition, elements of the 'Austerity' model of localism have been evident, where the centre's priorities define localism in practice (Featherstone and McKinnon, 2012, 179) and where government resources have been diminished, as illustrated in Chapter 3. The Community model of localism is therefore a hybrid model, which when translated into the neighbourhood planning experiences documented in the two case studies, reveals an unbalanced model, of community empowerment for some, but not for others and an asymmetric balance of

power. This is far from the rhetoric that accompanied the launch of the Localism Act in 2011. The model of localism being pursued by the Coalition Government can be seen then as perhaps less a distinctly separate model, but more a composite of Conservative Government ideologies and practices, revamped and recycled for the current political context, but clearly reminiscent of the Thatcherite years.

Collaborative planning theory

With regard to the theoretical approaches of collaborative planning, networked governance and communicative action, my research findings from the three case studies in neighbourhood planning and local rural regeneration have revealed the inherent limitations of these approaches. The emphasis on reaching consensus in much of the earlier collaborative planning literature has since given way to more nuanced interpretations. In the case of Alnwick, the experiences of those involved in the network and collaborative governance activities of neighbourhood planning demonstrated the asymmetric balance of power which undermines attempts to reach a workable consensus on community led planning activities. But seeking consensus was also noted by contributors to the earlier literature, as a process that could silence, rather than give voice (Tewdwr-Jones and Allmendinger, 1998, 1979). As in the case in Alnwick, while it may be more straightforward to assume that a lack of voice implies assent, it is more likely to conceal undercurrents of opposition and dissatisfaction with planning outcomes. The outcomes may ostensibly be the result of local level planning by empowered communities, but in reality, the real decision-making on neighbourhood planning issues is taking place in other forums. The mediation of these impasses, as was made evident by the thesis findings, points to a new role for local authority planners in the future.

The second case study of TGNDP demonstrated the different collaborative planning challenges faced by community members in dealing with a major institutional player, the NNPA. Risks to the collaborative planning activities between stakeholders with differential access to resources, such as the NNPA and the Steering Group of the TGNDP were identified, that found expression in a strategic withdrawal of resources from time to time by the more powerful institutional player. But while this demonstrated the asymmetric relations of power found to exist between institutional stakeholders, further asymmetries also became evident *within* the newly formed governance body tasked with managing the neighbourhood planning process, the

Steering Group. The research revealed the extent to which such a group was able to effectively marginalise and silence the voices of smaller groups in the community which did not subscribe to the proposed agenda.

Finally, the research findings of this thesis on neighbourhood planning may have a wider relevance that extends beyond the borders of Northumberland. While the neighbourhood planning experiences have tended to reflect the rural character of the case study areas, a number of the findings nevertheless may be drawn on for other urban initiatives. The key points to emerge from the neighbourhood planning experiences can be summarised as first, procedural and/or process issues, secondly, the role of the local planning authority and other public/private development institutions and thirdly communicative planning and governance issues.

From the procedural and process perspective, one of the key lessons learned from the case study of Tarset and Greystead was the value of previous experience gained from Visual Appraisals and parish plans that provided a level of confidence in the early stages of neighbourhood plan preparations. Such evidence could be of use in identifying where neighbourhood plans are likely to succeed or fail as well as monitoring progress and could be used as a basis for assessing resource allocation.

However, the indications of the way in which the neighbourhood planning process can be 'captured' by factions within the Steering Group, as occurred in Tarset and Greystead, open up questions of the levels of guidance available to 'neighbourhood planners'. This suggests the need for independent advice and guidance and perhaps closer involvement of the local authority planner or local planning NGO as 'critical friend' to assist in ensuring that all voices in the community are heard and to prevent a consequent diminishing level of engagement from the wider community.

The case of Glendale provided a contrasting example of community led planning and rural regeneration which originated many years before the inclusion of neighbourhood planning within the statutory planning framework. It demonstrated the ways in which a development trust, as a non-statutory body, could 'lead the way' in planning terms, in meeting community needs for affordable housing and other priorities. This case also demonstrated the value of identifying a partnership between the two very different governance institutions in the area, bringing the strategic skills, expertise and networks

of the development trust into a cooperative partnership with the parish council to further the development interests of the area.

9.4 Policy Implications

The policy of localism introduced by the Coalition government in 2011 was proclaimed as an intention to decentralise power to the local level, empower communities and re-engage local people in the process of local level planning. Even in the early years it was considered by many as 'a centrally initiated and led reform' (Clifford and Tewdwr-Jones, 2013, 15). Its implementation provided yet further evidence of these tensions. Local government continues to be closely managed by central government by virtue of its control over resources, funding and legislative powers (Clifford and Tewdwr-Jones, 2013; Rydin, 2007; Davies, 1998).

This thesis contributes to the literature which points to the way that 'localism' continues to be undermined by centralist policies. Chapter 3 noted the inherent contradictions of a government policy which heralded a decentralisation of powers from central to local government, but which took place against a backdrop of austerity, reductions in public spending and financial retrenchment. The implementation of the 'new localism' in this context had particular implications for the planning reforms and the new neighbourhood planning system. The findings of this thesis support yet other studies and academic literature that reveal the uneven development in rural areas which occurs when resources are limited with the consequence of favouring those already advantaged.

The findings from the neighbourhood plan case studies have shown in detail how such a consolidation of resources accrues to the better off. The research throws light on remote rural areas that have not generally been subject to this kind of investigation, particularly given the recent nature of the localism legislation. The documenting of these initial experiences which are taking place at a time of major reductions in funding for rural development has a significance that reaches beyond the 'have's and have-nots' debate. More broadly, being geographically located in remote rural areas in the North East there is the double disadvantage of the so-called 'Two Speed England' divide. There is, therefore, a need for further evidence that supports the case for addressing these 'knock-on' disadvantages likely to be generated by a policy too hastily implemented. In relation to this, two specific areas can be identified for further research.

9.5 Implications for Further Research

a) A new role for planners: the community planner

An enhanced role for 'community planners' can be seen to be emerging with possibilities to create a new, possibly hybrid identities for the diverse roles that are involved in community planning. For example, there are already a number of professional planners who act on a voluntary basis in their own communities, combining their professional experience with their role as a resident. To these can be added those planners who specialise in the role of 'community planner' in their day-to-day working lives, perhaps employed by NGOs or local planning authorities and who may have followed training courses and acquired skills specific to the requirements of mediation and negotiating with the wide range of stakeholders involved in neighbourhood planning. But just as important are those existing residents in communities who may not have a planning background but who already have a fund of local knowledge about their neighbourhood or community and are keen to acquire the necessary skills needed for planning and shaping their communities. These can also be regarded as the new 'community planners' to accompany the 'new localism' and have already begun to emerge, for example in South West England, in the form of Neighbourhood Planning Networks (The Localism Network, 2013). However, this category of neighbourhood or community planner may often operate 'below the radar' but their contributions need to be more widely acknowledged and their training needs addressed more specifically. Further research would therefore be of benefit to explore these emergent roles which could be addressed in future policy making.

b) Governmentalities and the role of neighbourhood planning

In terms of community governance, the terms on which neighbourhood planning is set can also be framed within the governmentality approach (Ward, Murdoch, 1997, Cheshire, 2006). This approach, as was noted previously in Chapter 4, considers the ways in which non-state actors become involved in state activities. Activities conducted at the local level in rural areas are linked to political authority at the national level. This thesis has supported the literature that maintains the state has stepped back from its former role. However, evidence from this thesis shows that the state is still able to harness the energies and capacities at the local level to perpetuate a self-governing 'arms- length' style of governing. (This has evolved since New Labour's administration, where principles of community development gave way to the rise of active citizens, self-help and community action.) We can see these principles at work as the Coalition

Government set out its localism agenda, especially in the early days when David Cameron launched the notion of a 'Big Society' in contrast to New Labour's 'Big State'. Underpinning the Big Society was the emphasis on citizens making voluntary contributions and assumptions that communities and neighbourhoods were inclusive, united and homogeneous entities which could identify priorities for action, as with neighbourhood planning. These cohesive neighbourhoods are still being encouraged to draw on their own endogenous resources, as well as to 'play the game' in accordance with the state's logic. For neighbourhood planning, drawing on endogenous resources also involves the community in mobilising its social capital, organising itself, providing leadership and links on which further action depends. While this thesis has not adopted a governmentality perspective, nevertheless this would provide a potentially rich seam of research to mine in future.

9.6 Conclusions

The aim of the research for this thesis was to examine the extent to which the neighbourhood planning process, as part of the policy of new localism introduced by the Coalition government in 2011 has brought about the changes vaunted by the Coalition government in rural areas in Northumberland. The research focus was an examination of how the localism agenda was being pursued at the community level, with reference to local development need, institutional development, community engagement and governance in Northumberland.

The launch of the Localism Act in 2011 witnessed a surge of interest from communities and neighbourhoods in England in neighbourhood plan preparation. While not all areas have subsequently continued with local level planning, each week that passes sees more neighbourhood plans being 'made' and subsequently adopted into their respective Local Plans. The majority of these have been in the south east and west of the country, while numbers have tended to decrease towards the north. Studies of the processes of neighbourhood planning in the county of Northumberland are few and therefore the research for this thesis represents a meaningful contribution to the existing literature. While there can be no guarantee of the future of localism as a government policy, or of neighbourhood planning as a political and planning innovation, nevertheless it remains vital to capture the experiences of local level planning, particularly in the context of a northern rural county such as Northumberland, from which to generate insights and lessons for future practice both at the community and planning level.

This research has pointed to the risks that can attach to the neighbourhood planning process, as while some level of community empowerment can be seen to have taken place, this has tended to accrue only to certain groups or cliques within the community, leaving other groups disempowered. The research has added to existing literature on the existing uneven pattern of rural development and has focussed on areas that have previously been little researched. It has drawn attention to the markedly distinct landholding patterns in the county that distinguish it from the majority of other English counties but which also contribute to uneven patterns of rural development. This requires and deserves policy attention; the example offered by the neighbouring country of Scotland with its legislation addressing the undemocratic pattern of landholding rights of hill farmers and crofters testifies to this. There is therefore a need for further research such as this to prevent further uneven rural development and address existing inequalities that may only be furthered by future neighbourhood planning initiatives.

The example of the regeneration initiatives successfully carried out in the market town of Wooler indicate the scope of what is possible through community-led planning initiatives, even in remote rural locations. While these achievements were initiated years before the planning reforms and introduction of neighbourhood planning, nevertheless this example of a rural community that has worked predominantly outside the local government arena to regenerate its town centre and generate community benefits provides a model that could be followed by others. The case of the Glendale Development Trust provides a clear example of successful community endeavour, but one that has elected to pursue its regeneration strategy independently of government support.

Research into neighbourhood planning/localism has been advanced through the insights generated into the processes of local level planning and the kinds of outcomes that are generated. With the use of different theoretical perspectives, the challenges, opportunities and benefits of neighbourhood planning have been demonstrated in one of the most northern counties in England. This has opened up the hitherto relatively 'closed' arenas of local level governance and provided a detailed study into the negotiation of networks, power and alignments involved in planning and regeneration. With respect to rural development policy, this thesis has drawn attention to the need for 'join-up' between LEPs, RGNs and neighbourhood plans.

In such a case, the policy of localism and the practice of neighbourhood planning can move forward from what policy practitioners and planners believed 'hasn't changed much that we were already doing' to a policy that does just that, alongside a re-discovering of a 'passion for planning' among both communities and planners at the local level.

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Annex A

Semi-Structured Interview Checklist

Questions - Policy level/Academic Researchers

Interviewee's background (brief)

- professional history of working as a policy practitioner

- specific role as policy practitioner

- role in build-up to localism/present

Role of interviewee/organisation

- What do you understand by localism? What in your vision can localism achieve? What would be a working definition of localism you could use when preparing papers for meetings and discussion; what potential is there to improve things?

- What do you understand the localism agenda to encompass? What are its main components however broadly defined?

- What is the role of your organisation in relation to the localism agenda? Have there been any changes in the broad remit of your organisation to include localism goals?

- What is your responsibility (and limits to it) in relation to the localism agenda? What have been identified in your job description as tasks associated with localism; have there been changes in your job description to accommodate localism activities/tasks?

- Which partners do/will you work with in working out the localism agenda? Will you have partners? Have partners been identified? Who? When? Do you use social networks to link up with them such as Linkedin? Networks

- What is their expected contribution? What will they do? Has this been agreed? When?

- What methods of consultation do/will you expect to use? Have you meet agreed to meet regularly? When? How often? What kind of forums?)

Network questions

Horizontal and vertical linkages – have these become strengthened or weakened since localism?

(Horizontal = partnerships; vertical = funding sources)

Extra-local and local power

The Localism Act is intended to open up new freedoms, extend more powers to local government as well as to communities by :

Granting more power to local authorities to respond to what local people want

Allowing more freedom to local authorities to generate new partnerships

Granting more freedom and rights to communities to run services

Reforms to the planning system to make it simpler, more democratic

Introduces neighbourhood planning where communities will be able to draw up their own neighbourhood development plan

The Localism Act is intended to devolve power from government to local communities and empowering local people to take decisions over their own local areas.

In your opinion, **who** and **what** will localism empower?

(Who is likely to gain from localism and how? What institutions or other bodies will benefit from localism and how?)

Questions - Community level

Interviewee's background (brief)

- Resident of Northumberland? No. of years?

- Employed/unemployed?

- Type employment – sector/full/part-time

- Experience of local government/planning/

Experience of interviewee of localism and rural regeneration

- What do you understand by localism?

- Your experience/involvement n localism (personal/second-hand)

- How important is rural regeneration? What do you think needs to be done?

- Your opinion of localism? Good, bad, indifferent?

- What are your views and expectations of localism?

- What can localism do for you (personally/collectively)?

- In your opinion, Is localism good or bad or neutral for Northumberland? In what ways?

Questions – Staff in Rural Institutions

Interviewee's background (brief)

- professional history of working in rural institution

- specific role within rural institution

- role in build-up to localism/present

Role of interviewee/institution

- What do you understand by localism?

- What has changed/do you expect will change in your specific role with the introduction of the localism agenda?

- What changes would you like to see in your specific role?

- What changes have you experienced in your rural institution since localism was introduced?

- What do you think needs to be changed within your rural institution to make it work more effectively under the localism agenda?

ANNEX B
Events attended and papers presented

No	Date	Events / Papers presented	Organisation	Location
1	10.11.10	'How brands are capturing the power of place and why it matters' Prof. Andy Pike	CURDS	Newcastle University
2	17- 20 April 2011	'Regional Development and Policy Development: Choices & Recipients' RSA Annual International Conference	Regional Studies Association	Newcastle University
3	03.11.11	'Localism: sufficient and fit for purpose?' Regional Studies Association Conference	RSA	University of Manchester
4	28.02.12	'Changing Gear – Is Localism the new Regionalism?' Seminar/Panel Discussion	Smith Institute/ RSA	Parliament London
5	21.03.12	'Literacy Localism: Narrative, Myth and Politics' Seminar	Durham University, Geography Department of	Durham University
6	17- 20 April 2012	AESOP YA Workshop L.J. Paper: 'A Neo-endogenous approach to Rural Development Policy in the NE of England'	AESOP YA	Reading University
7	17.04.12	Northern Rural Network Seminar: 'Rural Development and Social Renewal'	NRNS	Newcastle University
8	20-21 April 2012	RGS-IBG Postgraduate Forum Mid Term Conference. L.J. presented paper 'A Neo-endogenous approach to Rural Development Policy in the NE of England'	RGS	University of Nottingham
9	12.06.12	Rural Services Network Localism Seminar RSN seminar on Localism	Rural Services Network /NRN	Newcastle University
10	17.10.12	APL R&D Seminar: L.J. presented paper 'Localism Act, Rural Regeneration and Neighbourhood Planning: What's in it for Northumberland?'	APL	Newcastle University APL
11	18.10.12	Seminar: 'Two speed England: Creating a more balanced country'	TCPA /NISR	Newcastle University
12	3-5 April 2013	BSA Annual Conference: 'Work, Employment and Society'	BSA	London
13	5-8 May 2013	RSA Conference: 'Shape and Be Shaped: The Future Dynamics of Regional Development' L.J. Paper presented: 'From Regionalism to Localism in the UK: What does the future hold for Northumberland' L.J. Chaired session	RSA	Tampere University, Finland
14	20.05.13	North East and Yorkshire Farming Network Workshop: 'Rural Development: Ensuring Success' L.J. Rapporteur Round table discussions	Tees Valley RCC/ DEFRA	Scotch Corner, Holiday Inn
15	25.09.13	'Civil society initiative and its transformative potential, discussed through the experience of GGT', Prof. P. Healy	APL GURU	Newcastle University
16	02.07.14	TPCA Conference: 'Planning out Poverty'	TPCA	Coin St. London

No	Date	Events /Community Consultations	Organisation	Location
17	28.06.11	Glendale Community Action Plan Turnout approx. 50 community members. (FGD 6 community members)	GGT	Cheviot Centre, Wooler
18	03.05.12	NE Centre for Lifelong Learning Paper presented: 'Localism and Community-led Planning in Northumberland'	NE Centre for Lifelong Learning	University of Sunderland
19	27.09.12	Tarset & Greystead Focus Group Discussion (FGD 4 community members)	Tarset PC	Tarset
20	27.01.14	Glendale Wooler PC Meeting (L.J. observer)	Wooler PC	Cheviot Centre, Wooler
21	18.06.13	Alnwick Community Partnership Event Topic : Development Proposals for the Neighbourhood. Turnout approx. 60 community members	ANDP Steering Committee	St James Church, Alnwick
22	16.10.13	ADNP Steering Group and Focus Group Discussion (FGD 4 community members)	Steering Group	Clayport, Alnwick
23	05.06.14	'Big Chat' Consultation Event Turnout approx. 50 residents	NULAG /LEADER	Rothbury Jubilee Hall
24	09.10.14	AGM Community Action Northumberland Turnout of members approx. 40	CAN	Longhorsley

No	Interviewee Job Title	Organisation	Location	Date interview
1	Planner	Lincolnshire CC	Lincoln	30.05.12
2	Professor Planning APL	Newcastle University	Newcastle	10.07.12
3	Policy Practitioner	Northumberland County Council – Northumberland Strategic Partnership	Morpeth	28.08.12
4	Localities Development Officer	Newcastle University	Newcastle	03.09.12
5	Planner	Northumberland County Council	Morpeth	21.09.12
6	Local Authority Planner	Northumberland County Council	Morpeth	03.04.14
7	Coordinator Alnwick NP	Alnwick Town Council	Alnwick	19.10.12
8	Professor Planning	Newcastle University /GGT	Wooler	30.10.12/1:00
9	Communities Officer	Northumberland National Park Authority	Hexam	02.10.12
10	Ex NNPA chairperson	Northumberland National Park Authority	Hexam	25.10.12
11	Director	Glendale Gateway Trust	Wooler	30.10.12/1:00
12	Local Authority Planner	Northumberland County Council	Morpeth	26.09.12
13	Director	Community Action Northumberland	Morpeth	01.10.12
14	Vice Chair	Parish Council/ TGNDP Steering Group	Tarset	15.11.12
15	Wooler Resident	Interview on Weetwood Ave	Wooler/	18.07.14
16	Member Steering Committee ADNP	Gallery Youth Project	Alnwick	31.10.13
17	Community Planner	Planning NGO	Newcastle	13.11.12
18	Professor /localism	Northumbria University	Newcastle	12.03.13
19	Academic Planner	Newcastle University	Newcastle	26.09.12
20	Developer	Bellway Homes (NE)	Gateshead	26.10.12
21	Academic /regionalism	Twente University	Enschede Netherlands	16.11.12