

Community Involvement in the Design of Social Housing

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Community Involvement in the Design of Social Housing

D.A Price

The literature shows that there is much value placed in community involvement in the design of new social housing schemes, but little in the way of conclusive proof that it is effective. It was decided to establish the built effect of this involvement – *did it make a difference to the houses?*

The research incorporates both qualitative and quantitative elements. A questionnaire survey of all developing housing associations was used to establish the current situation and four case study developments were selected and investigated in detail. The case studies were similarly sized housing developments located in London, Birmingham, Sheffield and Sunderland

The survey shows that housing associations are involving tenants in a variety of ways. The predominant picture is one of participation in the latter stages of the design process, in the selection of the fixtures and fittings. There is also significant use of post occupancy surveys with results feeding into the housing associations' design briefs. There are no significant regional differences in approach but the size of association does appear to affect the community involvement techniques adopted, as does the procurement of the development site. Larger landlords use more involvement techniques and do so earlier in the process.

The four case study developments show similarities in the pattern of the community involvement. Two types of involvement were isolated, and these are termed *generic* and *specific*. The former being where representative tenants are used to develop design briefs that are used in the development of all schemes, and the latter where the community is involved in the design of its own built environment. Overall the effect of involvement on the houses produced is small, with other factors in the development process being more significant; yet the processes isolated are associated with some built changes and these are unlikely to have been made independently of tenants' views.



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1. Introduction

This introduction sets out initially to provide a biographical background to the original formulation of the research idea. Secondly, it defines the key terms used throughout the research. It then goes on to address the issue of why the subject area is important and why it is valuable to research within it. Finally, it describes the body of the research that follows and briefly explains why it has taken the form that it has. This is achieved by firstly describing the wide range of literature used and secondly by briefly outlining the research method. Each of these areas will obviously receive more in depth treatment later in the thesis.

Background

This background section strives to describe the origin of the research, the reasons why it was undertaken and the experience that has led to its formulation. The reasons for conducting the research are deeper than merely spotting a gap in knowledge base, deeper even than a profound interest in the plight of deprived urban communities. The research stems from experience of working in the inner city and a belief that the solution to the problems therein lies within the estates, it is in the knowledge and experience of the community.

The initial ideas for researching into community involvement in design stem back to around 1993 when I was completing a postgraduate architecture degree in Manchester. Alongside my studies I was involved in the massive redevelopment of the Hulme area of the city. Witnessing the strength of community in the, by then semi-derelict, estate and seeking an idea for my final year postgraduate project I decided to work on a design for a youth provision to be located in the centre of the city. The development of this idea was completed with the aid of a focus group of young people who had a significant input into what the building contained and how it functioned. The aim was for the architect to act as a facilitator. The process was a thoroughly enjoyable one and the solution, though with the benefit of hindsight in need of more detail work, was ultimately successful. This was a purely theoretical academic design project but the seed had been sown.

Upon completing my architectural studies a decision was made to move into a role involved more closely in the inner city communities of Manchester and I began a period of almost three years in the employ of Manchester City Council. The job involved working in some of the most deprived estates in the region. It was during this time that the importance of the role of housing was reaffirmed. The condition and design of the housing was poor and yet there remained the semblance of a strong community. The estates needed to be redeveloped more appropriately, many of the poor quality deck-access flats needed replacing and the community needed strengthening. The opportunity to complete both of these goals concurrently became apparent. Although this

researcher was aware of community participation in estate regeneration, through the previous involvement in Hulme, there was an uncertainty as to the success of such schemes. Many questions were unanswered. Following a newspaper advertisement an application was finally made to Sheffield University, and later to the Economic and Social Research Council, with a view to exploring some of these questions. This piece of research is the end result of those applications.

Terminology

After the decision had been made to look into the area amongst the first things to consider were definitions of the key terms that are used throughout this thesis. It must be pointed out that it is not the aim of this particular research to provide lengthy discourses on the terminology, it is however necessary to state an awareness of the contentious nature of some of the terms used. As a result the brief discussion that follows is merely intended to highlight the reasons for the selection of each term and the way in which they are used in the pages that follow.

The term *community* is used in the case of this research to refer to the group of people affected by a specific housing development. The word community was selected, despite it being a greatly contested term, primarily because of the limitations of the alternatives. The two main alternatives, *tenants* and *residents* are both used throughout but each of these has limitations. Tenants for instance is a tenure specific term, only referring in the case of this research to the tenants of the particular housing association in question. Residents, though better, still potentially excludes some key community players who may not be resident in the local area.

The second important term in need of definition is *involvement*. This was a carefully selected word to include all forms of interaction with the community, including the provision of information. To describe an act such as this as *participation* is contentious as merely providing information, telling the community what is going to happen, is essentially a one-way process. This

would certainly rank lowly on Arnstein's 'Ladder' (1969) but it is still of significance to the research carried out here and therefore warrants inclusion. The term *involvement* provides this inclusivity and was therefore considered appropriate.

The term *design* can simply be taken to mean the working out of the form of the housing, from the decision to develop and adopt a certain building type through to the final choices over internal fixtures and decoration. This can be seen as the tasks that would traditionally be the preserve of the architect, along of course with managing the contract and ensuring. Finally *social housing* can be taken to mean new-build housing for social renting. This effectively means new housing association rental provision - for reasons that are the subject of discussion later in this thesis. The term Registered Social Landlord (RSL) is also used throughout the thesis and refers to those housing associations registered with the Housing Corporation.

Why Is Community Involvement In Design Important?

This question can be dealt with in two ways and these are discussed in turn. Firstly, the study of the subject is important because evidence suggests that social housing providers are spending valuable resources on attempting to involve communities in design. It is suggested that this is the case because there is an assumption that this has long-term benefits in terms of housing management costs and is also useful in the reduction of void properties. It is also the case that there is a great deal of encouragement to work in a more inclusive way across all aspects of policy. If community involvement is happening in the design of social housing, then it would seem appropriate to find out how much and what form it takes and to describe and analyse the current situation. Initially this research sets out to do this.

Secondly if these social housing providers are investing in the involvement of the communities in which they work - both in terms of money and time - does this have any real effect? Do the houses that are built with the involvement of tenants in their design show any evidence of this added input, or is the house-

building industry immune to such influence? By investigating these issues it would also be possible to assess what specific design features are changed and at what particular stage of the development process the involvement is most effective. Ultimately, this might lead to better targeting of resources and more meaningful involvement. Involvement and participation in any decision-making process is only of any value if those taking part can see the results of their effort. It is put forward that a tokenistic gesture towards involvement serves no one at all, neither the housing authority nor, ultimately, the community.

The Shape Of The Thesis

When the area of investigation had been established the next consideration was to carefully review the literature in the area. It must be noted that this review by no means includes all of the subsidiary reading undertaken during the course of this study. The existing literature that is discussed has a direct relevance to the investigation that follows and was fundamental in the construction of the research hypothesis and the resultant methodology. The literature reviewed here can be seen to be responsible for transforming a loose set of ideas, as discussed earlier in this introduction, into the organised, cohesive research that follows it.

The review is divided into two chapters, the first of these being a discussion on housing and participation. This chapter initially looks at the development of the social housing sector and the many changes that have shaped it in recent years. This is followed by a look at the development of housing associations and the factors that affect this, including the role played by the Housing Corporation. The focus of this chapter is a look at public participation in general and then specifically in social housing. The second literature review chapter begins with an investigation into the design process in general and then looks more specifically at housing design. This chapter concludes with an in-depth review of the literature surrounding the involvement of communities in the design of social housing. Overall, it can be seen that these opening chapters begin more broadly before focusing on the key issues. The

relevance of the work therein is initially highlighted at the start of each section, then discussed in detail and finally summarised in an *Overview* that concludes each chapter. These overviews also serve to highlight the development of the main themes of the research and act as a narrative of the research process.

Chapter four begins with a brief statement of the Research Questions, with an accompanying narrative that addresses the emergence of each thread. This is followed by a discussion about the research design and a description of the research method adopted. This consists of a description of the design and administration of the postal questionnaire survey and the selection and design of the case studies. Throughout care is taken to explain the reasoning behind each decision taken and how theory was useful in the process.

The second half of the thesis, consists of the research fieldwork and begins with a description and analysis of the questionnaire survey. This is followed by detailed reports of the four case study developments. The schemes investigated are initially described on an individual basis before being compared and analysed in detail with reference to key aspects of the theory literature discussed earlier. The thesis ends with the conclusions where the research findings are further analysed, the wider implications of the research discussed and potential avenues for future research put forward. Throughout the course of this research programme a concerted effort has been made to communicate ideas clearly and effectively, without the use of excessive jargon and this thesis hopefully conveys this approach.

2. Social Housing and Participation

As the research is an investigation into community involvement in the design of social housing it is necessary to look at both the social housing sector (in this chapter), and the design process (in the following chapter). In both chapters the role of public participation is investigated after a discussion of the general subject area.

This chapter begins with a brief discussion on social housing followed by a look at housing associations and the major changes that have shaped the sector in recent years. These brief opening discussions provide a useful context to the research presented later. Following this, some of the key areas of housing association policy and practice, that directly affect the design and development of new-build dwellings are discussed, including the allocations procedures and funding regimes. The chapter then looks at the literature surrounding community participation in general and then, more specifically, in the management of social housing. Finally, an overview section summarises the work that precedes it and sets out to highlight the relevance of this to the research programme. In addition it serves to illustrate the origin of the analytical framework utilised later.

2.1 The Social Housing Sector

As described in the introduction each section begins with a summary of the contents, this section covers the following areas:

- ***Social housing and major changes that have affected the sector.***
- ***A comparison of socially-rented housing types.***
- ***Housing tenure and social exclusion.***

It is first necessary to provide a definition of the term ‘*Social Housing*’ and for the purposes of the research carried out here the Housing Corporation have produced the most suitable:

“Homes for letting (except ‘tied’ accommodation) and associated amenities and services, for people whose personal circumstances make it difficult for them to meet their housing needs in the open market.”

(Housing Corporation 1999a, p.5)

This definition is broad but it covers the fundamental difference between socially-rented housing and general privately rented housing, this being the element of subsidy in the former that ensures that rents are set at affordable levels. There follows a brief discussion on the characteristics of the social renting sector and this is followed by a review of the major changes that have affected it. The research presented later in this thesis is conducted within the RSL sector as this is the major provider of new-build social housing; it is however desirable to explain why this is so before looking further at the bodies themselves, how they are organised, funded and affected by external bodies.

Historically, at least since the early decades of the 20th Century, the majority of socially rented housing was provided by local authorities. In more recent years however there has been a concerted attempt to change this situation and expand the housing association sector. This can be seen as an example of central government’s overall approach to local government since the early 1980s (Cairncross et al 1997). The approach, with regard to housing, can be seen to be threefold (Department of the Environment 1987):

- *The expansion of owner-occupation,*
- *The reduction of public expenditure on housing, and*
- *Limiting the role of local housing authorities to that of 'enablers' as opposed to providers or managers*

(with reference to: DoE 1987)

In order to meet these three objectives the major mechanisms that have been employed have been the Right To Buy initiative, the restructuring of council housing, the encouragement of better management and the expansion of the housing association sector. These are briefly discussed in turn.

Right To Buy And Associated Initiatives

This, as stated earlier, was one of the first major policies implemented after the 1979 General Election and has been seen by some commentators as the defining piece of legislation of that administration. Hutton (1996) discusses the Right To Buy (RTB) policy of the Thatcher administration initially drawing attention to the political expediency of the initiative:

"A majority of home owners are Conservative voters; a majority of those who rent public housing vote Labour. This makes for a neat conjunction of political and economic objectives. By reducing the public housing stock and increasing private ownership the Conservative government hoped both to reduce public expenditure on housing investment, encourage 'self-reliance' and enlarge its own political constituency."

(Hutton 1996, p.203)

Statutory Right To Buy legislation was part of the 1980 Housing Act and incorporated substantial discounts based on length of residence (Forrest and Murie 1983, 1988). The take-up rate was high and the numbers of dwellings sold rose in successive years from 1980 to 1984 when the one-millionth council house was sold under the scheme (Forrest and Murie 1988, Cole and Furbey 1994). This accounted for approximately 20% of the entire stock. The sales still continued but the rate slowed down after this time, with the exception of 1987 when there was a sharp increase as a result of uncertainty about the 1987 White Paper (Malpass and Murie 1993). Right To Buy epitomised the radical '*New Right*' government agenda and was accompanied by other policies which effectively restricted new building by local authorities.

The first restrictions placed on local authorities developing housing were introduced, albeit reluctantly, by the Labour Government in 1977 as they sought to control spiralling public expenditure. By the 1980s the incumbent Thatcher government expanded these restrictions with an ideological zeal. The effect was drastic, for example in 1975 there were 173,800 new council housing starts. By 1979 there were only 80,100, which then was the lowest post-war level but more swingeing cuts were to come. In 1982 it was less than 40,000 and by 1990 it had dropped to 8,600 (Cole and Furbey 1994). The high levels of sales through Right To Buy were shadowed by exceptionally low rates of development by local authorities. (For a review of the early years of the RTB see Forrest and Murie, 1988.)

There were also a number of other effects of the Right To Buy legislation. Perhaps most significantly, the average quality of the local authority housing stock was also affected (Cole and Furbey 1994). Unsurprisingly the highest take-up of property was in the three-bedroom semi-detached sector in the more attractive areas. This had the effect of increasing the proportion of flats, maisonettes and generally less desirable properties. Local authorities therefore lost their best quality stock and were unable to replace it. The effect was that good estates became better by personal investment and the poorer ones, which had not been subject to much privatisation, became worse as a result of the reduced capital expenditure forced on the local authorities. Many of these council estates, with the dwellings in a poor state of repair, have been subject to systematic demolition, with the housing association sector developing on the resultant sites. Crook et al (1996 p.6) states that approximately 20% of Housing Association Grant was spent on local authority estates and that this figure was increasing. (For a further discussion about RSL development on local authority estates see Crook et al, 1996).

The council housing sector was becoming residualised to a large extent. Council estates were becoming places of last resort, able only to attract people from the most marginalised social groups (Cole and Furbey 1994). Murie (1998) points out that social exclusion was becoming increasingly

concentrated on these council estates and they faced problems of unemployment and crime as well as those of poor quality housing and disrepair. Right To Buy legislation can be seen to have greatly diminished the role of councils in rented housing provision and marginalised the sector as a housing provider to all but the most needy (Cole and Furbey 1994).

Restructuring Of Council Housing

As the council housing sector is not the main focus of the research carried out here this section is brief. Clapham et al (1997) points out that the Right To Buy initiative provided a carrot, in the form of discounts to potential purchasers, but also a stick. This stick was the systematic process of making council housing a less attractive option. Various changes were made to the Housing Revenue Account that resulted in great pressure on revenue expenditure. Research shows that councils already spent substantially less on housing management than housing associations - £205 per dwelling compared to £278 in 1990-91 (DoE 1993, p.29). Most importantly there were severe restrictions placed on local housing authorities that resulted in:

“...the virtual cessation of council house-building and the restriction of funds available to spend on modernising the existing housing stock and keeping it in good repair.”

(Clapham et al 1997, p.15)

The Increased Role Of The Housing Association Sector

Since 1979 the RSL sector has been pushed forward by successive governments as the major provider of new socially rented housing (Cole and Furbey 1994, Power 1997 etc.). This move gathered pace after the 1985 Housing Bill signalled the intention to restructure social housing management. It was at this point that the first legislation was drafted to allow for the transfer of council housing stock to the voluntary sector (Lusk 1997, Pearl 1997 etc). This Bill also enabled councils to transfer management of estates (not ownership) to bodies such as Tenant Management Organisations (TMOs).

The reasons behind these changes were connected with a wider government agenda to curb the powers of local authorities and the reforms were designed

to create a 'quasi-market' in socially rented housing outside of the council sector (Clapham et al 1997, p.13). The funding system for housing associations was changed, with the risk element being transferred away from the Housing Corporation and to the individual housing association. This had a major affect on the development of new-dwellings with RSLs taking a more cautious approach and adopting 'design and build' contracts to deflect risk. This is discussed in more detail later.

Furthermore, the Housing Association Grant (HAG) was reduced gradually over time forcing associations to seek private investment via mortgages. Clapham et al (1997) points out that at the same time that RSLs are being encouraged to act in a more entrepreneurial way, in a competitive market place, they are also being closely monitored and controlled by the Housing Association. The fact that the Housing Corporation is a central government quango gives rise to concern over the accountability of the sector. Clapham et al describes this problem:

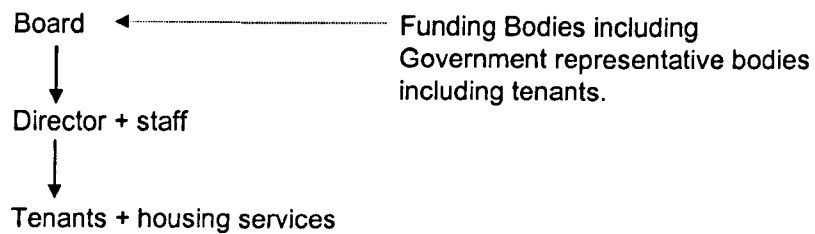
"While central government has strengthened its control of the housing association movement through the Housing Corporation, Scottish Homes and Tai Cymru, downward accountability remains weak. In many associations, accountability to the local communities in which they co-operate and to their own tenants is limited."

(Clapham et al 1997, p.14)

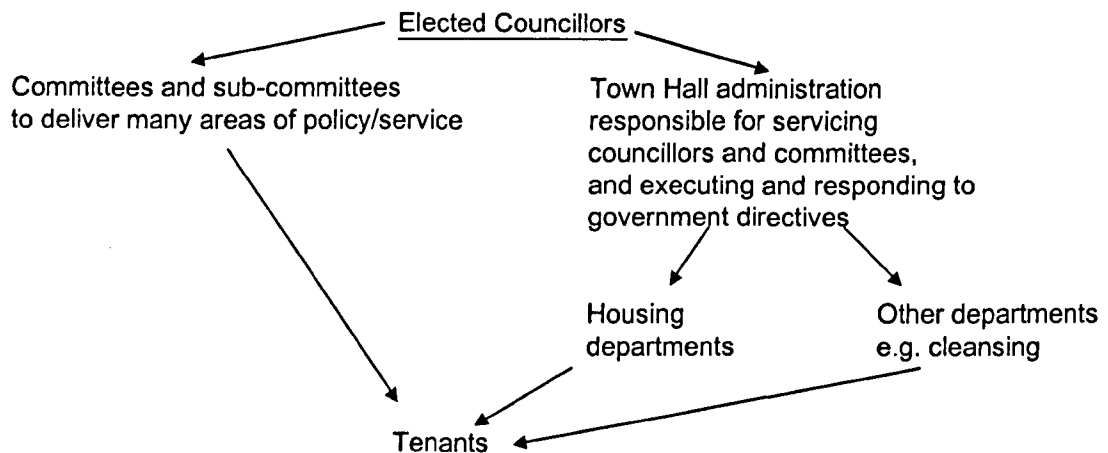
The issue of the accountability of the RSL sector is of direct relevance to the research undertaken here. This could help to explain the importance placed on community involvement in housing design by the sector. It could be argued that the commitment to community participation in design, in spite of a paucity of evidence to support the benefits of such an approach, may be a reflection of a concern about a lack of public accountability.

Power (1997) discusses the different control systems of social landlords and compares the housing association sector with both local authorities and private landlords. The simple structure diagrams, used by Power and reproduced overleaf, are useful in contrasting the differences in the tenures and in showing where public/community influence may be felt most effectively.

I. Non-Profit Housing Association



II. Local Authorities



III. Private Landlords

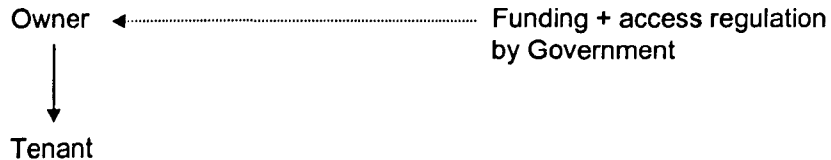


Figure 2.1: Simple Structure Diagrams Of Social Housing Landlords

(From: Power 1997, p.42)

Power (1997) states that RSLs, despite offering better service, are less accountable:

“Non-profit bodies offer much stronger and more viable management structures but less direct public answerability. Many would argue that the lack of answerability and public control of non-profit housing is too high a price to pay for greater efficiency.”

(Power 1997, p.43)

Power (1997) develops this comparison between the two main social housing tenures by producing a table describing the advantages and disadvantages of each, this is reproduced overleaf:

	<i>Advantages</i>	<i>Disadvantages</i>
Council Landlords	Strong welfare role Re-housing of homeless	Weak management Strong bureaucracy
	Electoral pressure to: Build Houses Stop high-rise	Strong bureaucracy Inadequate front-line services
	Participation	Very large scale urban landlords
	Inner city rebuilding	Early stigmatisation and strong polarisation
	Racial mixture	Political conflict
	Planning role	Vote catching policies and short term investment strategies
	Early shift to renovation	Diffuse landlord functions
	Non-profit Landlords	Single purpose functions
Legal autonomy		Weak welfare commitment
Balanced budgets		Stronger attempts at exclusion
Strong front-line services		Conflicts with local authorities where a local authority fails to deliver a service e.g. street cleaning, social amenities.
Business-like approach		
Efficiency goals		Nomination system can concentrate the disadvantaged in difficult estates
Aim of broad social mix		
Strong national bodies		

Figure 2.2: Comparison Of Local Authorities With RSLs

(From: Power 1997 p.43)

The table (Power 1997, p.43) highlights the key differences between the two tenures and makes reference to the differing levels of accountability as discussed earlier. The table also refers to the difficulties that occur in the RSL sector as a result of the nominations system and this is discussed later in the section dedicated to housing associations. Firstly, there follows a brief review of the work conducted in the field of housing and social exclusion.

Housing Tenure And Social Exclusion

It is put forward by a number of commentators (Forest and Murie 1983, Page 1993, Lee and Murie 1997, Power 1997 etc.) that social housing estates are increasingly areas of what can be termed 'social exclusion'. There are many

reasons for the emergence of social exclusion and the subsequent debate. What becomes apparent is the grouping of the socially excluded in such a way as to form socially excluded communities, a sort of ghetto of those detached from the machinery of society. There are undoubted relationships between the housing system and social exclusion (Lee and Murie 1997, Power 1997). The question that must be asked is how does this system, or exclusion from certain parts of the system, add to the problems of deprivation and social exclusion. There is a question as to whether exclusion occurs as a result of living in a certain type of environment or whether these 'excluded estates' arise as a result of the processes associated with social exclusion. The work completed in this area is far from conclusive but it appears that the truth lies between the two extremes (Lee and Murie 1997). Areas where there are high concentrations of social exclusion probably do increase the likelihood of new tenants becoming excluded, embroiled in the environment within which they live. However, the areas are likely to have become such hotbeds of exclusion as a result of needs-based allocations policies which cause concentrations of unemployed people and those not in the labour market.

The role of the state in housing is an area that has been discussed with increasing frequency in light of the major changes made in this area in recent years. Cole and Furbey (1994) analyse the changes in the nature of the state role in social housing in their text 'The Eclipse Of Council Housing.'. The nature of existing council house provision, the move towards selling off the council housing stock via Right To Buy policies and the introduction of housing associations into the provision of mass social housing are discussed. Home ownership became an option for more and more people and the net result is that many people left in social housing are those who are unemployed or in poorly paid jobs. Coupled with the previously mentioned increase in income differentials, the gap widened and the social mix on these estates diminished. Other factors are at play also; changes in housing finance have led to increased rents (Cole and Furbey 1994, Sibley 1995) and coupled with means tested benefits many people have become enmeshed in the poverty trap,

whereby employment has almost ceased to become an option. A concentration of these people in the social rented sector estates has led to the development of estates where the problems of social exclusion are rife. These estates are most often those that remain within the council sector, although there are some notable exceptions to this trend (Lee et al 1995, Lee and Murie 1997). The move toward housing association transfers has resulted in the problem continuing, with the only difference being the ownership of the property. The point is made by Lee and Murie (1997) that social exclusion is not only found on socially rented estates and that there is a high proportion in private renting and an increasing number in owner occupation. This latter trend is the result of the owner occupation sector being expanded and therefore including those on the fringes of house purchase who would, in previous generations, not have considered entering this market. Fluctuations in employment status as well as in interest rates led to the position of many homeowners becoming increasingly tenuous, the result being a slip into poverty and exclusion. The very nature of this does not lend itself to the creation of enclaves of exclusion but highlights that although place is important it is not the sole cause of exclusion (Lee and Murie 1997).

Often the 'excluded estates' are viewed as areas of deprivation where opportunities are limited and life chances are damaged (Lee 1996). The emergence of this spatial dimension to poverty and social exclusion, as referred to by Green (1994), can be attributed to the effects of Thatcherite policies on housing and more broadly the strict adherence of the free-market. Atkinson (1996 a and b, with reference to Forest and Murie 1983) traces this back further to the Housing Finance Act of 1972 which had the effect of increasing council rents. The neglect of the social housing sector by the Conservative government during the 1980s and early 1990s is discussed by Page (1993). He concludes:

"Social housing now accommodates a very high proportion of people who are poor, unemployed or otherwise disadvantaged and this proportion is increasing."

(Page 1993, p.27)

The discourse based on the emergence of problem areas of housing is comprehensive and reflects the seriousness of the situation (Power 1997, Lee and Murie 1997 etc). There is not a clear delineation between tenures for the included and the excluded (Lee and Murie 1997), however tenure does seem to play a significant part in the location of areas where the conditions for social exclusion may be present; more pertinently 'place' seems an important factor. Exclusion occurs across the spectrum of housing tenure although more predominantly in the socially-rented sector; there are also geographical concentrations of isolation and deprivation. Those housing estates often termed 'problem estates' are where the issues are most visible and therefore have been viewed as most expedient to tackle. This accounts for the number of resident-focused initiatives in these areas, as attempts are made to address the effects of exclusion. The subject of this thesis is community involvement in the design of social housing, and it is concerned with the effectiveness of the participation strategies employed by social landlords. Participation and community involvement are put forward as ways of helping to tackle exclusion but the suitability of such strategies must surely be brought into question if their effectiveness is found to be limited.

The implications of the background research covered in this section are clear. It is vital to have an understanding of the social housing arena and the key changes that have taken place in recent years. The move from local authorities to housing associations as the main providers of social housing is fundamental to the research as the involvement of communities in the design of new-build housing is greatly affected by the ownership and management of these developments. The following section discusses the RSL sector in greater detail .

2.2 The Housing Association Sector

This section focuses on the Registered Social Landlord (RSL) sector and addresses the following points:

- *The RSL sector and the major changes that have affected it.*
- *The role of the Housing Corporation.*
- *The size and structure of RSLs.*
- *Relevant areas of RSL policy and practice, e.g. allocations.*
- *RSL housing development.*

The continuing process of transfers from local authority to RSL ownership means that the focus for the debate on social housing has shifted. No longer is this debate about new social housing centred on the council housing stock, as discussed earlier. New-build local authority housing development is virtually non-existent and development on local authority estates by housing associations is an increasing phenomena (Crook et al, 1996). There follows a brief description of the background and operation of housing associations.

The Background Of Housing Associations

Housing associations can be simply described as non-profit making organisations that form the basis of the voluntary housing movement (Cope 1990). The purpose of these organisations is to provide housing and other services to people on low incomes and those in housing need. Housing associations are the result of the work of volunteers, with an elected committee of management, the members of which receive no remuneration for their work. The smallest of housing associations often have no paid staff and as a result rely on the commitment of their members to manage the properties that they provide. Where paid staff are employed they work within their work of policies determined by the voluntary management committee. The ultimate responsibility for the association lies with the committee and as such the aims and policies should be determined by its members.

"Housing associations are expected to implement 'fair housing policies': that is, they should not discriminate against minority groups in either their housing or employment practices."

(Cope 1990, p.25)

The above quote serves to highlight some of the responsibilities of the housing association management boards. They are legally responsible for the management of the housing stock within their association at all levels.

The expansion of the housing association model in the mid-1970s led to the movement becoming known as '*housing's third arm*'. This definition was coined in the wake of the Skeffington report (1968) when in the early 1970s a rapid expansion in the sector meant that the voluntary housing 'arm' of the total provision became significant for the first time (Towers 1997). This '*third arm*' was given the task of providing an alternative to the housing sector's two major tenure types, namely owner occupation and local authority rented property. The distinction between housing associations and the private rented sector can be seen as simply the non-profit policy of the former. The voluntary structure also distinguishes them from the local authority rented provision despite the fact that the substantial majority of their funding comes from a combination of central and local government. It can be seen that the position occupied by the housing association movement is somewhere between those of private landlords and local authority and this is not by mistake. The strength of the sector is this very flexibility. This lack of clarity as to whether the voluntary housing sector lies in the public or private sector has not really hindered associations, as the independent status is valued highly. However, the 1988 Housing Act (as discussed in detail later in this chapter) placed the voluntary housing sector firmly in the private sector despite a great deal of lobbying from the representative body, the National Federation of Housing Associations (NFHA) (see Cope 1990). The argument put forward by the NFHA was that housing associations should be designated as social housing providers and not private landlords. This question of the terminology used may appear as a triviality but is at the centre of the discussion surrounding the role of housing associations.

RSLs are diverse in nature and as such escape easy definition. The legal definition below is an important aspect to the debate but it is the greatly different size, style and organisation of housing associations, which characterises the *'third arm'* of housing provision. The Housing Act of 1985 defines a housing association thus:

"Society, body of trustees or company, a) which is established for the purpose of, or amongst whose objects or powers are included those of providing, constructing, improving or managing or facilitating or encouraging the construction or improvement of, housing accommodation and, b) which does not trade for profit or whose constitution or rules prohibit the issue of capital with interest or dividend exceeding such rate as may be determined by the Treasury, whether with or without distinction between share and loan capital."

(Housing Act 1985, from Cope 1990)

The above passage illustrates the two major defining aspects common to all housing associations. A society does not have to be incorporated, it may be a mere contractual arrangement between individuals, but more typically in the case of housing associations refers to *'Industrial and Provident'* societies and are registered under the Industrial and Provident Societies Act of 1965. Some three-quarters of housing associations are registered as such and are commonly known as *'I and P Act societies'* (Cope 1990). A *'Housing Trust'* can be defined as an organisation, established by trust deed, that is required by its constitution to use most or all of its funds and surpluses to provide housing. An important distinction made by the above definition is that RSLs must not trade for profit, this does not mean that they cannot make a profit but that the pursuit of profit should not be their main goal. It is stipulated that profits should be ploughed back into the housing provision. To have a greater understanding of the current situation as regards housing associations, it is important to have a working knowledge of the effects and implications of the most influential piece of legislation of recent years: the 1988 Housing Act.

The 1988 Housing Act

The Housing Act of 1988 displayed the view of the then government that housing associations should become the major providers of new social rented

housing (NHFA 1991). The Act effectively put a stop to any further local authority social housing development and this alone explains the selection of the RSL sector for the purposes of this research. The way in which it wished to introduce this new direction was by introducing policies specifically targeting the development of housing associations by increasing funding opportunities. In keeping with the government's desire to gain more external finance, and coupled with the fear of tax rises and the distrust of local authority style public ownership, the policy advocated the involvement of private finance (Cope 1990, Malpass 2000 etc). The intention was to generate what the government termed '*value for money*' by requiring associations to take on a greater share of the risk; this would be a result of the involvement of private finance. The stated aim was to improve efficiency and target subsidy more precisely whilst taking account of scheme costs, (NHFA 1991). The notion of mixed finance (public and private) creating efficiency savings was the defining idea of the 1988 Act. Overall, the main themes can be summarised thus:

- *Marketisation of the HA sector to become the effective substitute for local authorities in the social rented sector;*
- *Development of mechanisms to transfer local authority stock to other landlords (i.e., private landlords and Housing Associations);*
- *Change from 'bricks and mortar' subsidies to housing providers to personal subsidies for occupants; and*
- *Efforts made to revitalise the private rented sector by reducing security of tenure and deregulating rent levels.*

In addition to Right To Buy, there were three other mechanisms for the transfer of local authority housing stock introduced. These were Tenants Choice, Housing Action Trusts and Voluntary Transfers. This was both radical and controversial but the effect was that almost all regeneration of council housing would be henceforth undertaken along with stock transfers. The extent of stock transfers from local authorities to RSLs has been growing fairly consistently, as illustrated by the table overleaf:

	Large Scale Voluntary Transfers(LSVTs)		Estate Renewal Challenge Fund (ERCF) Transfers	
	No. of transfers	No. of dwellings	No. of transfers	No. of dwellings
1988-89	2	11,176	-	-
1989-90	2	14,405	-	-
1990-91	11	45,552	-	-
1991-92	2	10,791	-	-
1992-93	4	26,325	-	-
1993-94	10	30,103	-	-
1994-95	13	40,510	-	-
1995-96	12	44,595	-	-
1996-97	5	22,248	-	-
1997-98	6	24,405	9	8,577
1998-99	12	56,072	12	17,828
Total	79	326,182		26,405

Figure 2.3: Local Authority Stock Transfers In England, 1988-99.

Source: DETR

(From: Malpass 2000, p.238)¹

Exactly how the government proposed attracting the required private finance was the cause for much disagreement at the time. The only way thought possible was to withdraw the existing *'fair rent'* agreements (Malpass 2000), the very mechanisms that were in place to keep rents down, and allow rents to rise approaching market value. The flexibility of rent levels made apparent by this policy was indeed attractive to potential funders who saw opportunity and scope to cope with ever-changing interest rates. The inevitable rapid hike of housing association rents that was the result of this policy can be seen as being both against the ethos of the sector and as negative in many other ways. Higher rents increase the pull of the benefit trap, making in some cases a life on benefit a more financially rewarding choice. Of course, for those on benefit the state foots the (greatly increased) housing benefit bill. The move however sat comfortably with the market-led political dogma so cherished by the Thatcher administration.

¹ Malpass (2000) also points out that in addition to the 325,000 properties already transferred up to 1999, the programme for 1999-2000 included more than 140,000 more.

The actual changes constituted a regime in which predetermined grant levels cover a fixed proportion of costs at the outset of the development, rather than at completion. This meant that a large part of cost over-runs would be borne by private finance and this made it necessary to raise rents (hence the abolition of the *'fair rent'* programme). The level at which the grant was set was supposed to be enough to ensure that the rents would remain *'affordable'* by those in low-paid employment. The problem of defining what exactly constitutes *'affordable'* rent is however a continuing point of contention and the net result of these changes was a rise in rents. Crook et al (1996) looked into the development of housing association dwellings on local authority estates and found substantial differentials in the rents between council and RSL property. For example, on one West Midlands estate RSL rent was 24% higher than that for an equivalent council property and in another example the differential was even greater.

It can be seen that the effects of the 1988 Housing Act also reached the design and development of new dwellings, and this is of specific relevance to the research programme described here. The greater risk that the legislation placed on RSLs led to a more cautious approach to development being adopted (Crook and Moroney 1994). A method of transferring this risk that has attracted much support has been a move towards *'design and build'*- style contracts that in effect shifts some of the risk burden onto the contractors, (Ball 1996, Goodchild et al 1996). The impact of this change is described in more detail in the following chapter.

Another way in which the 1988 Act has affected the involvement of tenants in the design process is in the way that it changed the allocation practices of the sector (Pawson et al 2000). As housing associations became almost the sole providers of social housing in England they began to undertake much of the development that would previously have been completed by local authorities (Page 1993, Malpass 2000 etc). In many cases the housing association would cede their right to select the tenant for any new properties developed, instead transferring this to the local authority who would nominate people from their

waiting list. The inclusion of a nomination agreement would often be completed in return for the development site. That is to say, the local authority may offer the site at only a nominal charge to a housing association in return for the right to select all, or a proportion of the tenants for the new houses. In many cases housing associations are happy to agree to this because they can be guaranteed tenants and therefore rental income. This process of housing allocation is important to the research undertaken here as it directly affects the availability of future tenants early in the design process². There follows a brief discussion on the effects of nominations agreements. For a more detailed look at allocations in the social housing field see the most comprehensive text in the area, Pawson et al (2000).

Nominations

It is put forward that a likely obstacle to close and effective tenant participation in the design of social housing is the way in which tenants are selected by housing associations. If new tenants are put forward by councils to move into RSL developed homes then this may be too late in the process to involve them in the design process in any meaningful way. It is therefore necessary to look at the ways in which housing associations allocate their properties.

Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) have a number of requirements to co-operate with and assist local authorities in relation to lettings and allocations (Pawson et al 2000). Most local authorities have written agreements with local housing associations that specify the proportion of new lettings that should be nominated by the council. Most RSLs comply with the Housing Corporation guidance which advises that at least 50% of voids are made available for local authority waiting list applicants. Much higher proportions, up to 100%, are however commonplace. Housing associations are often involved in high proportion nominations agreements in areas where there is a particularly high demand (e.g. London) or where the development was completed with council help. An example of such local authority assistance may be greatly reduced

² Interestingly, only one out of the case studies selected for this research was not affected by a nominations agreement and therefore had early knowledge of the prospective tenants.

purchase cost of land, or stock transfer properties. Pawson et al (2000) divide nominations procedures into three categories:

1. *Direct nominations: a single nominee is put forward for a specific vacancy.*
2. *Non-prioritised pool nominations: two or more nominees are put forward at a time, with the receiving RSL determining which will get priority.*
3. *Prioritised pool nominations: two or more nominees are put forward at a time, with the order of priority determined by the local authority.*

(Pawson et al 2000, p.39)

These nominations agreements generally specify reasons that the RSL can use to reject potential applicants, and this does mean that a small amount of influence can be exerted by the housing association. In addition to local authority nominations agreements housing associations are increasingly ascribing to a Common Housing Register (CHR) from which all local social landlords draw their tenant base. The benefits and drawbacks of such an approach are discussed by Pawson et al (2000).

The Housing Corporation

Since 1974 the Housing Corporation has been responsible for funding and regulating all registered housing associations in Great Britain, but since 1989 separate bodies have been set up for Scotland (Scottish Homes) and Wales (Tai Cymru). The corporation is headed by a board of 16 people appointed by the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions. These appointees are part-time and salaried and are selected for their knowledge and expertise in the field. The Housing Corporation has its headquarters in London and 8 regional offices spread across England.

The majority of housing associations are registered with the Housing Corporation under Section 5 of the 1985 Housing Associations Act (Cope 1990). The Corporation is charged with keeping a record of all registered associations, which is open to the public. Registration confers privileges, the most important of these being the access to Social Housing Grant (SHG)³ and as such there are a series of criteria that need to be met before registration

³ Social Housing Grant (SHG) was known as Housing Association Grant (HAG) until 1997.

can be made. These criteria hail from the aforementioned 1985 Act but have been amended since. The *'not trading for profit'* maxim is reiterated along with a requirement that an association has among its objectives, the provision, construction, improvement or management of:

- *Houses to be kept available for letting, or*
- *Houses for occupation by members of the association (i.e. co-operatives),*
- *Hostels.*

These above criteria are known as the main purposes. The individual association may also have additional purposes that could be one or more of the following.

- *Providing land or buildings for purposes connected with the requirements of the persons occupying the houses or hostels provided or managed by the association;*
- *Providing amenities or services for the benefits of those persons, either exclusively or together with other persons;*
- *Acquiring, or repairing and improving or creating by the conversion of houses to be disposed of on sale or on lease;*
- *Building houses to be disposed of on shared ownership leases;*
- *Providing services of any description for owners or occupiers of houses in arranging or carrying out works of maintenance, repair or improvement, or encouraging or facilitating the carrying out of such work;*
- *Managing houses that are held on leases or blocks of flats;*
- *Encouraging or giving advice on the formation of other housing associations which would be eligible for registration by the corporation;*
- *Providing services for and giving advice on the running of registered housing associations;*
- *Effecting transactions falling within section 45(1) of the 1985 Housing Associations Act (acquisition and disposal of house at discount to tenant of charitable body).*

(adapted from: DoE 1985)

There is also a requirement that the Board of Management of the housing association contains the requisite skills within its membership (DoE 1985). It must also be shown that the committee can demonstrate an independence from other organisations and that there is no duality or conflicts of interest between committee members and the aims and objectives of the RSL. This relates to the accountability of the association and is discussed later. Registration to the Housing Corporation also requires that the association

submit audited accounts on an annual basis for review by the Corporation. Registration is unlikely to be accepted for associations that duplicate the work of an existing member association. Once the criteria for registration have been met the benefits can be accessed. These include access to both capital funds in the way of loans and Housing Corporation Grants. The payback is that the association does lose some of its independence as the Corporation has wide-ranging powers to deal with errant associations and monitors the practices regularly (Cope 1990). The Corporation has the power to dissolve associations that are registered if it feels that it would be beneficial to the community to do so, although in practice this right is rarely exercised. Members are bound by the *'Tenants Guarantee'* published by the Corporation which safeguards the rights of assured tenants and gives advice to these tenants on how their associations should manage the stock.

The main function of the Housing Corporation is the allocation of Social Housing Grant (SHG) for the development of new properties and the refurbishment of existing stock. This money counts as public expenditure and is therefore subject to treasury control (Malpass 2000). Individual housing associations, or groups of housing associations acting as a consortium, apply to their relevant regional office for funding and these are judged in line with the priorities identified by the local authorities as a part of their local housing strategy. With regard to the regulatory function this is initially concerned with ensuring that the capital programme is delivered and so the regional offices monitor the developing RSLs. To this end the Housing Corporation regularly carry out performance reviews of all of their members and have a detailed list of performance standards (Housing Corporation 1997). Overall, the power and influence of the Housing Corporation should not be underestimated. Malpass (2000, p.16) states:

"It should also be remembered that in addition to the formal legal powers of the Corporation, it also has considerable influence over the way that associations behave because of its position as their main source of funds and future development."

(Malpass 2000, p.16)

A particularly relevant example of this influence is the Housing Corporation's offer of additional funding for specific projects. This funding is in the guise of Innovation and Good Practice (IGP) grants. These are awarded on the basis of the RSL's compliance with the themes of the Corporation. There are two key themes that relate to encouraging tenant involvement:

1. Participation And Accountability

This aims to support projects which develop new mechanisms and techniques for involving tenants and residents in the management of housing and in the organisation providing the housing. It covers projects that develop and pilot innovative models of participation and involvement in the implementation of investment projects. It also supports projects which involve residents in the housing aspects of maintaining or building sustainable communities and which produce good practice and replicable techniques. Finally it promotes new ways to enhance the relationships and accountability of housing associations and other organisations to the community.

2. Housing Plus

Formally launched in February 1995, Housing Plus (HP) is defined as:

"... an approach to management and development which consists of the creation and maintenance of sustainable social housing, obtaining added value from housing management and investment and building partnerships with stakeholders."

(Housing Corporation 1997, from: Evans 1998a, p.715)

Paterson and Macfarlane (1999) argue that in many areas where social exclusion exists there are few organisations that can act as social entrepreneurs. They put it forward that there is a case for RSLs getting even more involved and becoming community regeneration organisations, as they are often the largest financial stakeholders in poor communities and are in a position to work with local people to develop and manage regeneration. Recently the Labour Government has proposed extending the permissible powers of RSLs, widening the objectives set out in the Housing Act 1996 to include a range of non-housing activities (DETR 1999).

The Housing Corporation have adopted this idea and incorporated it into their stated themes. The intention is to encourage and assist in the development of housing associations' roles in building new approaches and patterns of working with others involved in housing, related policies and procedures (for an extensive review of the Housing Plus agenda as it relates to RSLs see Clapham et al 1997). Housing Plus covers projects that support innovation which develops partnerships between housing associations and other organisations to make regeneration initiatives effective. It also seeks to assist in the exploration of replicable models for housing associations and others to work with residents in regeneration initiatives and to produce good practice examples. Finally, it supports initiatives where IGP support would tie in with capital investment to sustain and/or develop sustainable communities. The Housing Plus initiative was initially launched in early 1995 and has been described (Clapham et al, 1997) as:

“The additional services provided by social landlords to meet social objectives.”

(Clapham et al 1997, p.2)

Page (1993) describes Housing Plus as non-housing activities undertaken by housing associations and puts its emergence down to problems of poverty and social exclusion becoming apparent on their estates, problems which had previously only been an issue on local authority estates. These problems emerged as a result of many factors but they are associated with the changes brought about in social housing ownership and the large scale transfers of the 1990s. As a response to this and with an eye on maintaining tenancies, RSLs began to undertake many roles other than those of their primary function as landlords. The reasons that housing associations undertook this role might also stem from their origin as charitable, community-based organisations. RSLs realised the importance of this and were encouraged in taking a Housing Plus approach. This issue is discussed at length by Clapham et al (1997). The report in question describes a number of Housing Plus initiatives, which based around and these are listed overleaf:

- **Employment and training;**
 - local labour,
 - skills training,
 - foyers,
 - community business support,
 - provision of managed workspaces.
- **Housing management and care;**
 - intensive management for new tenants,
 - training housing officers in community development,
 - employment of community development workers,
 - care for the elderly,
 - care for other vulnerable groups.
- **Play and youth facilities;**
 - playgroups and nurseries,
 - after school groups etc,
 - youth clubs,
 - playgrounds and facilities.
- **Social and mutual support;**
 - community halls,
 - social activities,
 - befriending schemes,
 - mutual support schemes for tenants.
- **Consultation and participation;**
 - community newsletters,
 - support for community tenants groups.
- **Budgeting and anti-poverty;**
 - budgeting advice
 - credit unions,
 - household contents insurance,
 - food co-operatives,
 - second-hand clothes schemes,
 - second-hand toys schemes,
 - local exchange and trading schemes.
- **Energy and water efficiency;**
 - advice to tenants on energy efficiency,
 - building of new properties to higher efficiency standards,
 - advice to tenants on water conservation.

(Clapham et al 1997, p.15)

The list above includes almost all things that come under the remit of Housing Plus. No single housing association is involved in all of these, indeed some of the associations do not become involved at all (Clapham et al 1997); it is important to note however that Housing Plus demonstrates the wider social role being assumed by some housing associations.

The Size, Geographical Spread And Structure Of Housing Associations

In order to fully understand the present housing association sector it is now necessary to describe the way in which English housing associations vary both in terms of size and geographical spread. It is also necessary to describe

the organisational structure of a medium-sized RSL. The sector is typified by its diversity and includes many very small associations.

Size of RSL	No. of RSLs
> 100 dwellings	1626
101-1000	236
1001-2500	100
Over 2500	122
Total	2084

Figure 2.4: Size Distribution Of Housing Associations, March 1998

(Source: Housing Corporation 1999, p.16)

This table reveals just how small the majority of English housing associations are. Over one-third of these have no more than 5 properties and over three-quarters have 100 or less. The variance in the sector is considerable and this is illustrated by the fact the 95% of the stock is owned by just 338 housing associations, with the largest 16 each having over 10,000 dwellings. In 1998 the largest housing association (North British) managed over 32,000 tenancies (Housing Corporation 1999a). This makes it a larger landlord than all but the largest of local authority housing departments (Malpass 2000).

As well as the considerable size differentials in the sector, there is also a great degree of variability in the geographical spread of the housing stock (Malpass 2000, Housing Corporation 1999b). The majority of RSLs (78%) operate solely in one local authority area, whilst by contrast the biggest associations operate in many areas and can be described as national organisations. It is interesting how this appears to be directly in opposition to one of the primary reasons given for the expansion of the sector, that of housing associations being smaller and more responsive 'local' organisations⁴.

The diagram below shows the staffing structure of a typical medium/large RSL. Although the sector is characterised by its diversity the diagram illustrates a typical organisation model adopted by many organisations.

⁴ The size of the RSL and the geographical spread of dwellings is an interesting variable when looking at the effectiveness of the participation in the design of new-build housing. Are smaller, more locally responsive RSLs more successful in engaging their tenants?

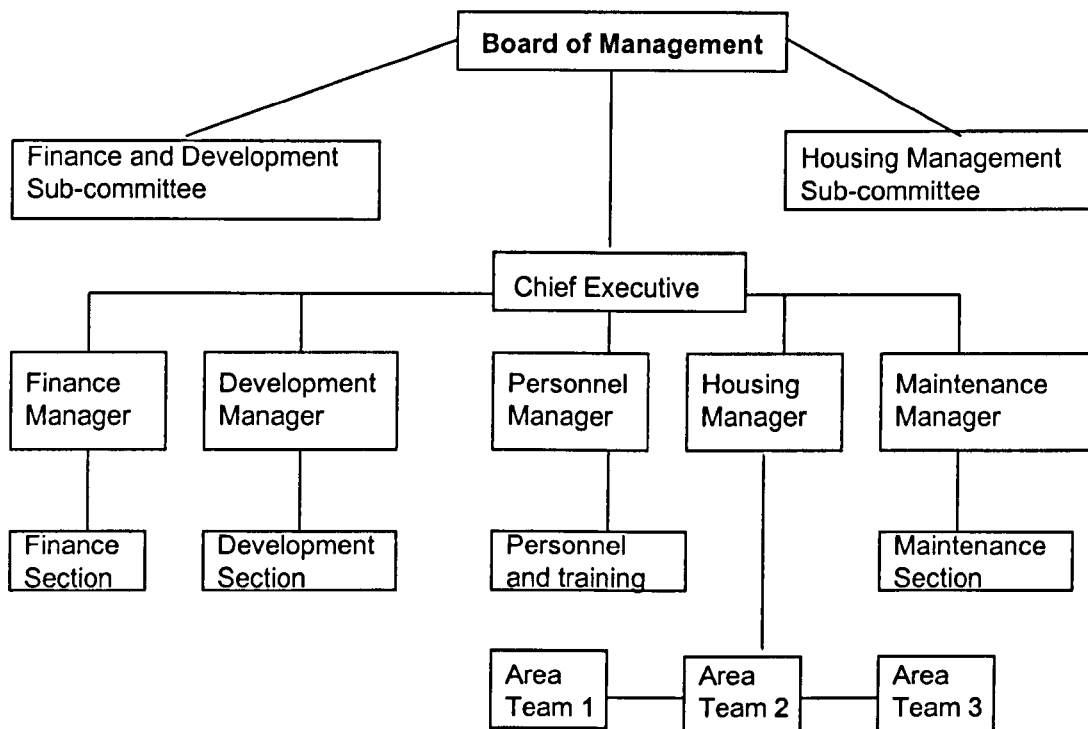


Figure 2.5: Structure Of A Modern Medium-Sized Housing Association
(after Cope 1990)

The above model of a typical medium-sized housing association's structure shows the different departments and the structural links between them. The idea of the local area teams is to provide a service nearer to the tenants, making it more accessible. The larger associations have adopted another layer to allow for a regional structure as they often have properties in different geographical regions. Another section, one of tenant participation, is often apparent in housing associations. This department often has the remit to act across all of the association, but most typically is involved with the departments of housing management and to a lesser extent development.

The development of the housing association sector in recent years, as discussed earlier, has led to many associations forming a Group Structure. Indeed, the Housing Corporation recommends the setting up of a group structure to manage the many different aspects of larger housing associations. Control in the instance of a group structure lies with the committee of management that operates in an overlooking role, acting as a parent body. The adoption of this type of group structure has become more common as

associations have sought to expand their roles, moving into different areas including such things as '*Housing Plus*' initiatives (for a discussion on the range of Housing Plus initiatives see Clapham et al 1997). Another aspect of this is the creation of some *mega-associations* that occur when smaller associations are subsumed into large group structures. This could be seen as contrary to the initial reasoning given for the encouragement of the '*third arm*', that of providing diversity and variance.

The net result of these changes, including the joining together of some housing associations, is the emergence of large organisations often with a geographically diverse property portfolio (Malpass 2000). It would appear on the surface that the local character of these large associations has been sacrificed. The majority of housing associations, however, still retain a strong connection to the local communities from which they originated. It does appear however that there is a trend towards consolidation in the sector, with partnerships and mergers becoming increasingly important.

Trying to describe the current situation as regards the RSL sector is difficult at present due to the major changes that are still taking place. Local authority stock transfers are continuing apace, existing housing associations are expanding to absorb the stock and new housing associations are being set up with the sole intention of taking over ex-local authority housing stock (Malpass 2000 etc). For example, the London Borough of Tower Hamlets has so far spawned Tower Hamlets Community Housing (THCH) and Poplar HARCA with plans for at least one more new RSL as a result of the current Housing Choice (stock transfer) initiative.

Housing Association Development

In addition to stock transfers, the housing association sector is expanding by new-build development. Between 1989 and 1998 the stock owned by Registered Social Landlords doubled from 519,000 to 1,048,500 (Housing Corporation 1990 and 1999b). Although these figures are considerably boosted by the large scale stock transfers described above they also show a

considerable amount of new-build development. It is necessary to describe the way in which this new-build development is brought into being and specifically how this process may affect the design of the new dwellings and the community involvement in this.

Housing Association funding and finance is not the subject of the research carried out here but it is however useful to point out that housing associations compete with each other within a well-structured quasi-market. For a further discussion about the housing quasi-market see Malpass (2000, p.219-222) and Le Grand and Bartlett (1993). The nature of this competition is complex and once again beyond the remit of the research carried out here; it is however essential that the competing RSLs abide by the wishes of the Corporation.

“The unequivocal message given out to RSLs competing in the quasi-market for ADP funding is that in order to stand any chance of success they must take full account of the prevailing priorities of the Corporation and the particular local authorities in whose areas they wish to build.”
(Malpass 2000, p.222)

The requirement of RSLs who wish to receive SHG to comply fully with the wishes of the Housing Corporation and the local authorities is evidence of the extent to which the previously independent voluntary sector is now enmeshed in the state. The housing associations, in order to obtain SHG, must comply with the demands of the Housing Corporation and, as stated earlier, two of the key criteria used are ‘Participation and Accountability’ and ‘Housing Plus’. Both of these themes explicitly encourage the involvement of tenants. It can therefore be assumed that propose housing developments incorporating an element of tenant involvement will be more likely to attract Housing Corporation funding. The research produced here sets out to see if the dwellings produced as a result of this (arguably forced) participation are affected by the involvement of the community.

Although the receipt of Social Housing Grant is of prime importance to the RSL sector the relative value of this has diminished over the years. This has

occurred since the effects of the 1988 Housing Act, which had the result of making private finance more attainable, became fully apparent in the early 1990s. Housing associations continued to be the favoured provider of new social rented housing but despite this the total funds available from the Housing Corporation to RSLs were consistently reduced, the intention being that the shortfall be made up from private sources. In 1992/3 the Housing Corporation's Approved Development Programme (ADP) peaked at £2,639 million. This had risen from £881 million in 1988/89 but fell again to £1,070 million in 1996/97 (Wilcox 1996, p.147).

Another major affect on RSL new-build development has been the Egan Report, *'Rethinking Construction'* (DETR 1998). The foundations of this originate in Sir Michael Latham's report, *'Constructing the Team,'* (1994). This changed the thinking behind the purchase of construction services by recommending that buyers should not necessarily select the cheapest constructors, but those who provided the best value for money. Sir John Egan expanded this idea. According to Egan, not only should construction services provide value for money, but the improvement in quality and performance should be measured. The Housing Corporation requires RSLs to comply with the recommendation of the Egan Report when applying for Innovation and Good Practice Grants (Housing Corporation 1999c).

The Egan report (DETR 1998) requires RSLs to reassess their approach to construction, whether in maintenance, refurbishment and regeneration or new-build projects. One of the key ideas of the report is *'Partnering'*. For RSLs, this means adopting a team approach to construction projects, where development and maintenance staff work closely with constructors to agree a methodology for completing the project. This requires the RSL to liaise constantly with the constructor from the project initiation, agree objectives, working methods and outcomes for the project with the constructor, pool its own resources with the constructor and constantly measure constructor performance and analyse costs. In order to meet compliance there has to be close monitoring of the construction process and reductions in construction

time, costs and defects. This is coupled with a requirement to increase predictability (certainty of outcomes) and productivity (DETR 1998). It is suggested that these difficult targets can be met by the standardisation of tasks (and buildings). The effect of Egan compliance is to encourage RSLs to adopt a safe and predictable development programme, cutting costs. This would appear to lessen the possibility of close community participation in the design and development of new-build homes..

The implications on the research of this aspect of the literature review are many and warrant re-stating at this point. The RSL sector is responsible for the development of virtually all new-build socially-rented housing in England, and was the only suitable tenure in which to conduct this research. The Housing Corporation oversees the practice of RSLs (as well as allocating money for new development) and the policies advocated by this body are therefore of great importance; specifically the promotion of community involvement. The great variance in the RSL sector, which includes a wide range of organisations of greatly differing sizes, was fundamental to the construction of the research programme. Another area which affected the construction of the research programme is the coverage of the allocations procedures as these greatly affect the identification of prospective tenants. Finally, RSL development (and the involvement of the public in the design of this) is shown to be greatly influenced by the Housing Corporation which despite explicitly encouraging participation also requires compliance with the Egan recommendations relating to 'Best Value'. This raises the issue of why this is so, if the benefits of tenant involvement in the design of new-build social housing cannot be proven.

2.3 Public Participation In Housing

This section addresses public participation in all aspects of housing, with the more specific field of participation in housing design being tackled in the following chapter. The implications of the work covered here are discussed throughout and are summarised at the end of the section.

- ***The rise of public participation in housing***
- ***Methods, processes and outcomes of participation***
- ***Tenant participation in housing management***
- ***Problems with public participation***

“...something is happening. There is a feeling - it cannot be measured - that what is fundamental to individual, community and planetary survival is being ignored by the economic forces shaping our societies; that our priorities are awry; and that people everywhere are being denied democracy, common-sense and generosity of spirit. There is a sense that politicians are not listening or are unable to act and that remote, unaccountable, globalised corporations are value-free... As governments absent themselves from social leadership and the power of the unaccountable increases, so civil society emerges from the bottom, hungry for social justice and radical social change.”

(Vidal 1996 from Cooper and Hawtin 1997, p.1)

Cooper and Hawtin (1997) quote Vidal and discuss the reasons for the re-emergence of community involvement in the 1990s. It is put forward that community involvement has become a fundamental component of social and economic regeneration strategies (see Craig and Mayo 1995 for further discussion).

The requirement for public participation in the drawing up of development plans entered the statute in the 1968 Town and Country Planning Act (Cullingworth and Nadin 1997). The legislation stated that local planning authorities should give due consideration to the views of third parties on planning matters. It can therefore be seen that the requirement to involve the public in the development process as far as planning is concerned is

enshrined in legislation, and the framework for public participation exists. The exact nature of the participation is not discussed and there are many interpretations of what the term actually means in practice. Although participation is part of planning law there is no compunction to involve tenants in the design of their homes and any such schemes are undertaken voluntarily. Cairncross et al (1997) provide an interesting discussion about the growth of public participation in housing and this is addressed later in this chapter (Section 2.3.2) where this issue re-emerges. The following section contains a summary of the methods employed and some brief analysis and evaluation of each.

2.3.1 Methods, Processes And Outcomes Of Participation

Tenant participation can be separated into methods, processes and outcomes (Cairncross et al 1997) and this section investigates each of these in turn. It can be seen that there are a large number of methods and techniques available that are intended to increase tenant participation. The Department of the Environment (1994) provides a useful classification of methods of participation; it establishes two main types. It must however be made clear that individual types of strategy can fall into both of these depending upon how they are carried out on the ground. There follows a description of the two types of method described therein.

One-Way Methods

This is where a group of professionals and elected members prepare information questions and arguments and present this to others, typically the people that the arguments presented will affect. The sort of participatory techniques that are essentially one-way in nature include:

- *Exhibitions*
- *Public meetings*
- *Leaflets*
- *Reports*
- *Newsletter; and*
- *Videos etc.*

The above techniques can be categorised as '*information giving*' whereas the following methods may be geared more towards 'information finding':

- *Questionnaires*
- *Interviews and*
- *Street surveys.*

Another group of methods that are essentially one-way can be termed '*campaigning*' and these include:

- *Letter writing*
- *Lobbying*
- *Action groups and*
- *Publicity seeking.*

It can be seen that if these methods were carried out in a more inclusive manner then they would become more interactive.

Interactive Methods

These are methods designed to stimulate a constructive debate and they allow for discussion, negotiation and active participation. There is another aspect to employing these more interactive methods, and that can be seen as the wider empowerment of communities. The very process of taking part, of being heard, may help in the long run to counter the effects of social exclusion as discussed in section 5 of this chapter. Interactive methods include the formation of focus groups, design workshops and Planning for Real (for a detailed discussion, see Gibson, 1981) exercises. These methods have their roots in the community architecture movement of the 1960s and '70s and a fuller appraisal of this can be found in the next section and a comprehensive analysis in Towers (1997). It does not seem appropriate at this juncture to produce a detailed description of the methods mentioned above; the table overleaf however illustrates the attributes of each type:

One-way Methods	Interactive Methods
<i>More familiar to participants</i>	<i>Less familiar to participants</i>
<i>More accessible</i>	<i>Require skilled and dedicated organisers</i>
<i>Demand less time skill and resources</i>	<i>Require more time skill and resources</i>
<i>Target groups or individuals</i>	<i>Target groups</i>
<i>More able to be occasional</i>	<i>Likely to be part of a planned programme</i>
<i>Focus on direct, product, concerns</i>	<i>Indirect and long-term concerns</i>
<i>Generates more quantitative outcomes</i>	<i>Generates more qualitative outcomes</i>

(After: DoE 1994)

Figure 2.6: Methods Of Participation

The table above illustrates the different methods that can be termed public participation. The body of work describing the methods of public participation is fairly substantial however, there is criticism of this 'method approach' and a counter-argument that real participation is a process (Goodey 1981, Kean 1992). DoE (1994) illustrates this point and provides some interview quotations to support this, these bear repetition:

"Participation is a process not a method or technique."

"Real participation is based on professional working relationships, not on techniques."

"Participation is an open collaborative process."

(DoE 1994, p.18)

This is not to down-play the importance of the methods employed, merely to highlight the fact that it is the process which governs the outcome and that good methods alone will not necessarily result in successful involvement. Cairncross et al (1997) also separate participation into methods and processes, but they also refer to outcomes. Three tables are produced highlighting the methods, processes and outcomes respectively, these bear reproduction:

<i>Written communication</i>	<i>Face to face communication</i>
Can take many forms of which the most common appear to be:	Can involve contact with one tenant, but usually involves greater numbers as at public meetings, or tenants' representatives, either from a tenants' group or specially selected/elected. Methods include:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Letters ▪ Leaflets ▪ Handbooks/information packs ▪ Advertisements ▪ Posters/notices ▪ Newsletters ▪ Questionnaire surveys ▪ Exhibitions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Tenant representation on housing/management committee ▪ Tenant representation on sub-committees ▪ Tenant representation on working parties or advisory committees (not part of the decision making apparatus) ▪ Meetings between housing authority/association representatives and tenants at regular intervals and irregular intervals.

Figure 2.7: Methods And Structures Of Tenant Participation

(From: Cairncross et al 1997, p.34)

There is evidence, discussed above, that points to the process, as opposed to the method employed, as the important factor in successful tenant participation (Goodey 1981, Kean 1992). Despite this, DoE (1994) states that few organisations have developed frameworks for community involvement which go beyond ad hoc, disorganised approaches. Although this situation can be seen to be improving, and there has certainly been a concerted effort since the DoE report was published in 1994, the situation is still far from perfect. Practice, it appears, still rarely considers the importance of the processes involved and almost never undertakes critical evaluation of strategies employed. The table produced by Cairncross et al (1997, p.36) distils the processes of tenant participation (in a style strongly reminiscent of Arnstein, 1969) and this too is worthy of inclusion here:

<i>Providing information</i>	Not a form of participation in itself but an essential prerequisite. Can be proactive or reactive. The written and spoken word are the major media for information provision.
<i>Seeking information</i>	Arguably also a prerequisite rather than participation itself. Here the landlord seeks information about facts and opinions, using methods such as surveys, meetings and letters.
<i>Listening</i>	Takes place if landlords listen to the views of tenants expressed verbally or in writing, and can take place at a distance and without the tenants knowing their views are being listened to.
<i>Consultation</i>	Overlaps with seeking information and listening. The emphasis is on asking for views in order to consider them before reaching decisions, with sufficient time for tenants to formulate their views and landlords to consider them. Face-to face contact is not necessary but may be desirable.
<i>Dialogue</i>	Involves all the previous forms or processes of participation, but unlike them is likely to involve only tenants' representatives and groups, rather than tenants individually. Most of the common structures intended to achieve dialogue are established for periods of months or years. Dialogue allows for negotiation to take place in relation to specific issues, and implies that both parties have an interest in reaching a mutually satisfactory conclusion. In other words the landlord must want the tenant(s) to accept the outcome and vice versa. This is more likely to be the case where the tenant (or landlord) has some sanction to use against the other in the event of an unsatisfactory conclusion.
<i>Joint management</i>	Provides tenants with a decision-taking role along with housing authority/association representatives.
<i>Choice</i>	Allows tenants to choose from alternatives agreed by the landlord and can be in an individual or collective capacity.
<i>Control</i>	Not the only 'real' form of participation, and arguably not a form of 'taking part' at all in that tenants are enabled to take over and directly run certain aspects of their housing services (within the law).

Figure 2.8: Processes Of Tenant Participation

(From: Cairncross et al 1997, p.36)

Other authors refer to different approaches and two of these are noted by DoE (1994). The first of these is 'Consensus Building' which originates in the USA and is concerned with conflict resolution in the field of environmental issues (for a further discussion see Acland 1992). The second is 'Community Technical Aid' which is from the UK and originated in the field of planning, design and development practice, although the RIBA also contributes in this field (for a further discussion see ACTAC 1991). Despite their different origins these two approaches share much common ground, developing work in the areas of management, creativity and process design (DoE 1994). The debate

on the process based approach seems to highlight four stages that should be involved in public participation, if it is to be successful.

- 1. Initiation -** *At the outset it is important to assess whether it is an appropriate time and context to start the involvement. At this stage it is also necessary to attempt an assessment of the likely commitment to involvement required of all of the participants.*
- 2. Preparation -** *At this point some form of induction should run to provide support and training for those to take part in the participation exercises; the level to which the exercise will effect the decisions made should be made clear at this time as well. Careful definition of the community to be involved also needs to be made at this juncture. A summary of the programme needs to be presented and agreed upon before commencement of the programme.*
- 3. Activity -** *Consideration needs to be made as to whether the methods are selected correctly, with thought as to whether the selected approaches can access the range within the community desired. Resources should be assembled at this point and their use agreed upon so as to avoid problems during the course of the programme. Perhaps most crucially there needs to be a process of resolution, assessing the inputs of involvement.*
- 4. Continuation -** *This is basically a process of evaluation, feedback and learning which can serve to increase the likelihood of improving subsequent projects.*

(adapted from: DoE 1994)

It should be noted that it is not the main aim of the research presented here to investigate the processes of participation, more to see if any change to the housing is apparent as a result of the involvement. The four stages suggested above (adapted from DoE 1994) however will prove useful in assessing where the participation was most/least effective. It can be seen that this process approach is similar to that which governs Quality Assurance legislation, specifically BS 5750 (for a further discussion of this see Mirams 1994). Finally, the outcomes of participation need to be considered. Cairncross et al (1997, p.35) again provide a useful summary table (reproduced overleaf).

Community development

Tenant participation plays a part in improving individual tenants' skills and capacities which in turn leads to a stronger sense of community and to a reduction in social problems. Tenants are enabled to play a greater part in determining the future of their area and to be more effective participants. Tenant participation is thus seen as a valuable activity in its own right.

Better housing and housing management

Tenant participation assists better decision-making by providing information which can be taken into account in service delivery and planning. This can lead to better decisions and more satisfied tenants. Participation is, therefore, a means to an end.

More choice or power to tenants

Participation can be seen as essentially bound up with the moral right of tenants to influence their own living conditions, either on the basis that the tenant pays or because of the implicit view about the nature of a democratic society.

Tenant satisfaction

Participation plays an important part in effective housing management, in which effectiveness is strongly associated with tenant satisfaction. Participation is, therefore a means to an end of achieving more satisfied tenants.

Helping councillors or committee members

Tenant participation can be seen as directly in conflict with the roles of councillors and committee members, but an increasingly common view is that participation of tenants can complement and supplement the role of policy makers. Tenants are seen as providing useful information to committee members who can assist the tenants to present their point of view, especially when something appears to have gone wrong with the system for handling complaints. Tenant participation can, therefore assist policy makers to be more effective.

Figure 2.9: Desired Outcomes Of Tenant Participation

(From: Cairncross et al 1997, p.35)

These desired outcomes are common to all tenant participation and it does refer to '*better-decisions*' being made as a result. This research sets out to establish whether the involvement of tenants (and the wider community) actually affects the design of new-build social housing at all. The vexed question as to what exactly constitutes *better-design* (better-decisions) is discussed, but it is not the focus of the research.

The previous pages have been concerned with establishing some of the methods, processes and outcomes of participation and it is now necessary to discuss some of the ways in which this is approached in practice by social housing providers.

2.3.2 Tenant Participation In Housing Management

The next chapter *The Design Process and Participation* specifically addresses the issues surrounding the involvement of tenants and residents in the design of new-build social housing, and this section therefore deals with participation in other aspects of social housing management practice. Cairncross et al (1997) deals specifically with the council housing sector and provides a detailed study of tenant participation in the management of council housing. The study is undoubtedly a well-developed academic analysis of participation in housing, but it is firmly rooted in the local government sector. It is therefore of only limited use in research into RSL design and development practices. However, Cairncross et al (1997) does provide an interesting summary of the growth of public participation in public housing. Tenant activity is shown to have been initially concerned with specific events; more accurately it can be seen as opposition to certain changes to housing provision. An example being the abolition of the 'fair rent' agreements in the early 1980s. This '*campaigning involvement*' often included direct action; Cairncross et al (1997) highlight:

"..great tenant activity does not necessarily mean that there is a growth in arrangements for tenant participation."

(Cairncross et al 1997, p.19)

The first survey of council participation was published by the Department of the Environment in 1977 (Richardson 1997) and this found only 12% of local authorities had formal schemes of tenant participation. These formal schemes included regular meetings between tenants, officers and members and also the inclusion of tenants on housing committees and the like. In 1980 local authorities in England and Wales were for the first time required by law to consult tenants on management issues that would substantially affect them. A later survey of authorities showed that this led to an increase in the proportion that had formal consultation arrangements (from 12% in 1975 to 44% in 1986-7). There was a similar rise in informal arrangements (from 44% in 1975 to 80% in 1986-7). Cairncross et al (1990) shows that this increase in tenant

participation activity was particularly apparent in the non-metropolitan boroughs. DoE (1993) shows that this increase continued beyond 1996-7 and all key indicators of tenant participation have shown rises.

The reasons for this increase are discussed by Cairncross et al (1997). It is put forward that the overall increase in tenant participation in local authorities is partly as a result of Government policy. As discussed earlier, the Housing Act of 1988 (DoE 1988a), was an important piece of legislation with regard to tenant participation and it can be seen to have enshrined participation in legislation in three ways; these are discussed in turn briefly.

Tenants Choice - gave approved landlords the Right To Buy estates unless more than 51% of tenants voted against it.

Housing Action Trusts - the government could transfer an estate to an unelected trust which would improve it and then pass it on to different landlords. Tenants won the right to be balloted before a HAT was imposed.

Voluntary Transfers - councils could transfer estates if tenants and the government agree.

So it can be seen that the political environment was encouraging closer tenant participation and that people's rights to this were being enshrined in legislation (DoE 1988a). The 1988 Housing Act, influential in so many other spheres, placed on the statute mechanisms to enable a greater tenant voice. It provided the opportunity for a greater degree of choice as regards who constitutes the landlord, and a greater influence over the management approach adopted. The management models recognise the need for tenants to be suitably trained and advised to enable them to handle the new responsibilities, and this added support is backed up by the availability of funding and organisations such as the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) and the Priority Estates Project (PEP). See Power (1987) for a review of the PEP and TPAS (1989b) for an overview of this organisation. It can be seen that no specific reference is made to design issues and tenant

participation, however the Estate Action Programme does stipulate that the criteria used to assess local authority funding bids include the presence of tenant involvement techniques in the preparation of plans (DoE 1988b). It can be seen that many of the initiatives that have arisen have been multi-disciplinary in nature, involving elements of management, plan development and design.

It was found that despite a general increase the promotion of tenant participation, it was still underdeveloped, in social landlord situations (DoE 1993). There was shown to be a pronounced relationship between the size of the social housing provider and the likelihood of tenant participation being on the agenda, with large urban housing providers being the most likely to embrace the idea. There is an argument that the smaller locally-based housing providers are more in touch with their client group and are therefore less in need of embracing tenant participation techniques. It will be interesting to see if there is a relationship between the size of the housing authority and effectiveness of the participation and this is investigated later.

Cairncross et al (1997) mention that participation has grown across a whole range of services, not just housing. It is put forward that this is because of the growth in consumerism in the private sector. The authors make reference to Richardson (1983) who suggests that participation arose as a result of a change in the nature of consumers. Moreover, it is argued that tenant participation has reached the level of being the accepted 'norm' and largely unchallenged:

"Participation has become fashionable and is perceived as professional good practice. In the context of party politics tenant participation has achieved all-party consensus as a good thing..."

(Cairncross et al 1997, p.21)

Tenant involvement in social housing occurs through a series of structures and mechanisms, organisations that are set up specifically to involve tenants. This section concludes with a description of some of the key involvement structures applicable to social housing.

Tenants' Associations – Tenants' associations are concerned with a wide range of community matters, including social issues. Tenants' associations are often the basic building block of participation strategies. Recognised groups (those with constitutions and elections) can elect representatives to other bodies and be consulted by the landlord directly (see TPAS 1988a on setting up a tenants' association and TPAS 1988b on running one).

Tenants' Federations - Umbrella bodies, federations that act as an independent support structure for member tenants' associations. Federations provide policy and strategic thinking for local tenants' movements and co-ordinate tenant participation with borough councils or regional RSLs.

Estate Agreement or Local Compact - Agreements specifying the quality of service from housing (and other services) to households on an estate. They can be useful for targeting local problems but are hard to enforce. (For a comprehensive review of tenant compacts see JRF 1999 and LGA 2000)

Estate Committees or Area Forums - These are informal structures involving local housing managers and tenants' associations. As more formal groups they can monitor the estate agreement and generally promote partnership between management and tenants. They act as multi-agency groups (involving residents and professionals) and they encourage joint working and shared targeting in regeneration areas. Estate committees can have delegated power over an estate management budget, with tenants taking minor spending decisions.

Consultative Committees or Tenant Panels - These act as sounding boards for the council cabinet or scrutiny board of council, or for a housing association management board. They can be a forum for consulting on strategies and best value plans. Consultative committees or panels have no executive power and do not give tenants participation rights.

Tenants on Housing Sub-Committees - These can include tenants on the Board of Management of a RSL. This is tenant involvement in decision

making, through membership of a formal committee structure or management board. Tenants make up a third of the management boards of many Registered Social Landlords, yet many RSLs seem to believe that electing tenants onto the board, or issuing shares to tenants so that they can vote, provides participation. To work well, tenants on decision-making boards need to be accountable to both their tenants' associations and individual tenants. An active grass-roots movement is needed to support the representative structure and there need to be clear benefits to tenant involvement.

Tenant Management Organisations - These include estate management boards, tenant management co-ops, and Borough-wide Tenant Management Organisations (TMOs). Local TMOs have a delegated budget and control over day-to-day management (DoE 1995). Estate Management Boards are run by an elected committee of tenants and manage the repairs budget through seconded staff, whereas tenant management co-operatives often employ their own staff and have some influence over local lettings. Overall this is still partnership with the landlord and gives tenants no control of planned maintenance or capital investment. (See Lusk 1997 for an interesting discourse on tenant management).

Borough-Wide Tenant Management Organisations - These are rare and Kensington and Chelsea is the only true example. These take over all housing management services. Some Registered Social Landlords are run by tenants (e.g. People First, Manchester) and some of the most successful RSLs were set up by community activists. Tenant ownership co-operatives like this have a long tradition and saw a boom in the 1970s.

2.3.3 Problems With Public Participation

The research reported in this thesis is concerned primarily with the built effects of the community involvement in the design of social housing. That is to say, what changes are made to the design of new socially-rented houses as a result of community participation. It is therefore not the main aim of this

research to address the sizeable debate on the value of public participation per se; it is however inevitable that this broader area is discussed and it is interesting to draw upon work carried out in different fields of study. The literature about community involvement in housing design is discussed in the next chapter but at this point it is valuable to look at some work drawn from other disciplines. This is necessary because of the paucity of work undertaken in the field of housing that is critical of participation.

Heeks (1999) discusses the role of participation in the development of information systems. This paper was produced in the wake of a symposium on *'Participation: The New Tyranny'* held at Manchester University in late 1998. It provides a useful critical view of participation and challenges the 'new orthodoxy' by questioning the value of participation. It is put forward that participation has become so wide a concept as to include many approaches and techniques. Heeks states:

"Participation can thus mean many things. For example one can participate in providing information; in decision making; in the implementation of decisions; and in the evaluation of those implemented decisions."

(Heeks 1999)⁵

This idea of participation being a broad term, covering many things has been discussed by many authors (Cairncross et al 1997, Cooper and Hawtin 1997 etc). What Heeks (1999) refers to that is more interesting in the context of the research presented here, is the almost universally held belief that participation is always good.

"Like 'motherhood and apple pie', participation defies tight definition, yet is regarded as a 'good thing'."

(Heeks 1999)

The idea that participation is always good is also mentioned by Cairncross et al (1997) and is discussed earlier. Heeks (1999) cites other contributors to the aforementioned conference including Cleaver (1998) who claims that

⁵ This paper was accessed from the WWW and therefore page numbers were not available for referencing quotations.

participation is the *'new mantra'* despite limited hard evidence of success. The suggestion is that the debate now centres around different participative techniques, as opposed to a questioning of the overall value of participation. In an effort to address this perceived gap in the debate, Heeks (1999) discussed a number of *'problematic aspects of participation.'* It must be remembered that this author is describing participation in a development of information systems context, and not in the field of domestic social housing, but many of the problems are relevant nonetheless and therefore warrant further discussion.

The first problem isolated by Heeks (1999) is termed *'Ignoring Context'* and occurs when participation is conducted without considering political and cultural context. This would appear to be less relevant in the case of housing development within the United Kingdom as a result of the degree of political and cultural heterogeneity present across the country. However, it is put forward that there are estates in the UK where the predominant culture is significantly different to that of the assumed 'norm'⁶. Heeks (ibid.) refers to the work of Gujit and Singh (1988) who claim that:

"Participatory processes have been increasingly approached as technical, management solutions to what are basically political issues"
(Gujit and Shah 1998)

The case is put that there are instances, in a development context, where participation is not effective because the culture and politics of an organisation prevent it from being so. Secondly, despite the previously mentioned lack of evidence to support the widespread use of participation, Heeks (1999) describes what he refers to as *'Veneered Participation'*. This is where an organisation feels compelled to create a 'veneer' of a participatory approach because they feel that is the orthodox approach, even though it is contextually non-viable (Heeks ibid.). They do this because it is a *'good thing'* and often to please those who are funding a project. In the field of social housing development the role of the Housing Corporation in funding schemes is crucial

⁶ Such estates contain a majority of residents from a single ethnic group, such as the 70-80% Bengali community in the Stepney area of East London that is well-known to this author.

and, as discussed earlier, does encourage the use of a participatory approach. There may be reference to participatory theories and models and yet no real evidence of these affecting the decision-making processes and practices. In such cases the participation can be described as token and may be more for external rather than internal consumption (Heeks 1999). Cleaver (1998) suggests that in examples such as these the 'obsession' will be with overt indicators such as committees and meetings, as opposed to the processes and outcomes of participation. Attendance at these meetings will be equated with successful participation. As Heeks (1999) states:

"Projects therefore claim to be successful by demonstrating an appearance of participation rather than by demonstrating achievement of participative outcomes."

(Heeks 1999)

This approach, one which appears to be mainly concerned with ensuring that participation is being seen to be used, is also described by Heeks (1999) as '*bureaucratic participation*'. The author cites an example where an organisation may seek representation from each grouping or structure, regardless of their validity or impact. It is suggested that this may create '*dysfunctional teams that are unable to produce the required decisions and outputs*' (Heeks 1999).

It is also suggested that the *veneer* of participation may be used as a cover for the '*attainment of personal objectives by one or two powerful actors*' (Heeks 1999). This is also referred to by (Mosse 1998) who states that those who introduce participation into their schemes often see an advance in their careers, or go on to act as consultants on similar schemes, regardless of the success of their initial involvement. The importance of '*scratching below the surface*' when attempting to investigate participatory projects is highlighted.

Interestingly, Heeks (1999) argues that top-down, bureaucratic participation may be counterproductive in imposing rigid participatory structures on top of the flexible informal structures that were there before. This is said to be especially important in cases where the participation techniques are

introduced from an outside agency. It is argued that this form of participation, rather than strengthening community links, may serve to erode them by breaking down relationships that had previously been developed. In addition to the problems posed by ignoring context and veneered participation, Heeks (1999) also puts forward the problems that arise as a result of inequalities:

“Outcomes of supposedly participative processes are frequently dominated by those individuals who are themselves powerful through position, knowledge etc, or who are representatives of powerful groups or who, more prosaically, have the power of being publicly articulate.”

(Heeks 1999)

Mohan (1998) makes reference specifically to the lack of input from women in participation-based development schemes, this too will be interesting to investigate during the research that follows. As well as the perceived lack of participation from certain sections of society, Heeks (1999) also mentions that the organisations responsible for the use of participation may skew the selection of participants towards those who are more powerful. This, it is argued, occurs when the representatives are selected by both nomination and self-selection methods.

The adoption of a participatory approach does not only have an effect on the relationships between the developers and the subjects, but also on the resources of the organisations and individuals concerned. Heeks (1999), with reference to Dockery (1998), points out that those instigating participation may mistakenly assume that those becoming involved are capable and resourced and that the process of participation will unearth these natural talents and abilities. Heeks (ibid.) suggests that this is not always the case and that the practitioners involved, as well as the community members, often have heavy existing workloads and do not have the time to ‘participate.’ In addition to this it is also mentioned that there may be a lack of motivation to participate.

“ This may be so even where the decision outcomes are of interest, if someone else will make and implement decisions that will be beneficial, or at least acceptable, to the individual without requiring them to invest time and effort. Even more, where the individual is not interested in the decision or outcome, it is rational not to participate.”

(Heeks 1999)

Heeks (1999) also addresses the fact that participation typically involves working in groups and the inherent problems with this. Cooke (1998) describes three possible negative outcomes of group work. Firstly, the author draws attention to the tendency of some groups to make more risky decisions than those that would have been taken by individuals. Secondly, the Abilene Paradox is quoted. This is that some groups reach a consensus that no member actually desired or supported, through misperception and a desire to agree to a solution that is acceptable to all (for a further discussion about the Abilene Paradox see, Harvey 1988). In effect the exact opposite may be the result. Finally, Cooke (1998), discusses 'Group-think' where a group becomes isolated and detached from reality. In such cases decisions can be taken that are unrealistic and do not take into account the outside world. Heeks (1999) concludes that there are two main types of problems with participation. These are described as:

*"a) Operational Constraints: that make participation hard to achieve in some, or most, situations, and
b) Inherent Problems: that emerge even when participation does take place."*

(From: Heeks 1999)

However, despite the reservations about participation discussed, Heeks (1999) states that it will remain an important tool in the information systems development toolkit, so long as refined techniques are used to counter the problems and constraints. Heeks (ibid.) goes on to suggest ways in which participation techniques can be better designed. The importance of the group formation stage is made clear with the assertion that "...good decision-making comes from mutual understanding and trust." The author recommends a 'walking and talking' approach, where the decision makers constantly mingle with the groups fostering a deeper empowerment, as opposed to merely bolting-on participation to existing projects.

Perhaps the key idea that can be gained by looking at this research in the information systems development arena is that participation must be viewed critically and not as a cure-all remedy that will by definition improve outcomes.

Heeks (1999) suggests that three questions need to be asked in cases where a participatory approach is being put forward.

1. *What is the political and cultural context?*
2. *Who wants to introduce participation, and why?*
3. *Who is participation sought from? Do they want to (can they) participate?*
(Heeks 1999)

These three questions obviously relate to the development of information systems, but they retain their relevance in the provision of new-build social housing in the UK. Overall, Heeks (1999) provides a useful critical framework for looking at the participation processes in the four case studies that form the qualitative element of this study. The work that follows was designed predominantly to uncover the effectiveness of community involvement in providing more appropriate built solutions and the questions described above will prove valuable in unlocking the participation that took place in each of the four.

The implications on the research programme of the literature reviewed in this section are considerable and these are discussed in detail in the overview that follows. However, before the whole chapter is considered it is necessary to summarise the effect of this section relating to public participation in housing. The reasons for the rise in public participation in housing are a constant theme and this serves to strengthen the main emerging question of this research – *does it make a difference to the design of houses?* In addition, the section discusses the methods, processes and outcomes of participation in a theoretical way and also with relation to housing management practice. This informs the research programme in a variety of ways and was especially valuable in the design and construction of the survey and case studies.

2.4 Overview

This investigation into social housing and participation has informed, and helped to justify, the direction of the research in a number of important ways. Aside from the obviously interesting background study, several themes emerged that were fundamental in the construction of the research questions and method that follow. This overview section sets out to summarise these key ideas and clarify how they were of value to the research.

The initial benefit of the investigation was in providing a definition of social housing. The one eventually settled on (Housing Corporation 1999) is inclusive and non-tenure specific. The reasons for the selection of the housing association sector to research within were purely practical in nature. Experience, supported by the literature, revealed that the RSL sector is now responsible for almost all new-build socially rented housing in England. In addition, the literature revealed that a significant proportion of socially rented housing was built on local authority estates, in the form of small-scale 'postage stamp' developments (Crook et al 1996).

The literature also revealed concerns about the accountability of the RSL sector (Clapham et al 1997, Power 1997), especially with regard to the role of the Housing Corporation. It is suggested that it is because of concerns about the accountability of RSLs that the Housing Corporation (and the constituent landlords) are keen to put forward a participatory agenda. This is further justification for investigation into tenant participation in the RSL sector. If the involvement of tenants in the decision-making process is important in providing accountability, then it is surely important that this involvement is effective. In a similar way the literature about social exclusion also proved valuable in shaping the research. Though the existence of social exclusion cannot be linked directly to tenure (Lee and Murie 1997), it is most likely to be found in the socially-rented sector and concentrated on 'problem estates'. It is therefore necessary to investigate the effectiveness of the participation that is often targeted at these estates in an attempt to promote inclusion.

The second section of this chapter looks at the housing association sector and its growth in recent years. This investigation was vital to the development of the research in a number of ways. Perhaps the most influential of these was the way in which housing associations have changed as a result of the 1988 Housing Act. The net result of this was to make the housing association sector the main provider of new-build socially rented housing in the country and therefore the only feasible tenure to work within. Other factors, such as the reduction of SHG and the increase in private finance, resulted in RSLs looking to transfer risk and adopting design and build development contracts. The use of this approach alters the traditional architect/client relationship and will undoubtedly affect the involvement of communities in the design process.

The literature also revealed the diversity within the housing association sector, with some RSLs being large organisations with almost national coverage and others being very small local landlords. This raises the question as to whether the size, or the degree of local 'connection', of the RSL affects any tenant involvement that might be employed. Despite this diversity RSLs can be seen to behave in similar ways; an example of this can be seen in their approach to allocations. The widespread use of 100% (or close to this) local authority nominations means that the landlord does not know who the tenants will be until very late in the development process, often until after the homes are completed. This inevitably has implications on the involvement of tenants in the design process.

The Housing Corporation is shown to have a major role in the policy and practice of its member RSLs. An example of this is their recommendation of at least 50% local authority nominations, as discussed above. Perhaps the main function of the Corporation is the allocation of SHG and this gives the organisation a large amount of leverage with the associations. The most obvious way in which this affects participation is by the administration of Innovation and Good Practice (IGP) grants. These are awarded to RSLs who, amongst other things, explicitly encourage tenant involvement. The regulatory body can therefore be seen to actively encourage tenant participation. Once

again, it is desirable to establish whether the methods employed in one aspect of this, new-build housing design, are effective. If they are not, then the way in which the Housing Corporation allocates (public) money is questionable.

The penultimate section of this chapter addresses a selection of the literature about public participation in housing, this proved fundamental in the construction of the research. Initially, it is useful to reinforce the fact that although public consultation is enshrined in law in the planning discipline, there is no such legislation with regard to housing design. The reasons for the adoption of such an approach are essentially voluntary and therefore compelling evidence, either way, as to the effectiveness of the participatory approaches will enable practitioners to make an informed decision, prior to development.

The work of Cairncross et al (1997) proved valuable in the way that it separates participation into methods, processes and outcomes. This will be a useful analytical tool when the case studies are being evaluated. Likewise, the distinction made between 'one-way' and 'interactive' methods (DoE 1994) and the 'written' and 'face-to-face' methods (Cairncross et al 1997) are also helpful in this regard. In addition, the classification of methods provided by the DoE (1994) was fundamental in the construction of the postal survey.

The work relating to participation processes has also proved both informative and potentially useful, with the table from Cairncross et al (1997) being of particular value. This work was not only useful in the construction of the questionnaire survey, but also in the analysis of the case study data. Likewise the four stages of the participation process, suggested by DoE (1994) – namely initiation, preparation, activity and continuation – were invaluable in both the construction of the research framework and in the analysis of all of the data. This classification proved especially useful in the analysis of the case study developments, when attempting to assess the stage at which participation was most effective. Cairncross et al (1997) also discuss the potential outcomes of participation and although this work is more connected

with housing management in the council sector, it nevertheless helped develop an understanding of the wider implications of tenant involvement.

The literature reveals that public participation in all aspects of housing management has been increasing since the 1970s, but there is also a suggestion that this rise has been largely unchallenged. It is a key aspect of the research carried out here to challenge the accepted benefits of tenant participation in one aspect of social housing practice, namely the design of new-build dwellings. There is also a suggested relationship between the size of the housing authority and the likelihood that they will use a participatory approach, and this idea was also incorporated into the research programme.

This chapter closes with an investigation into a variety of literature on public participation from the information systems field (predominantly, Heeks 1999). The fact that it was considered necessary to utilise work from another discipline only fuelled the (admittedly pre-conceived) notion that there is very little housing literature that is critical of public participation. It can be seen that the notion of participation always being a *'good thing'*, despite a lack of convincing evidence that it has any real effect, is of direct relevance to the research. In addition, the problems with participation that are highlighted by Heeks (1999) proved extremely an useful analytical tool when considering the case study developments.

Overall, the literature discussed in this chapter has helped to justify the research programme in many ways, in addition to this it has also served to inform and develop the initial ideas put forward. It has showed that there is great value placed on the concept of involvement for a host of reasons. It is therefore necessary to establish whether the involvement that does take place makes any difference to the buildings. If it doesn't, then the future of involving tenants in design should be reconsidered. It may be that the resources (both in terms of time and money) invested in the various participation processes may be better spent elsewhere, perhaps in better quality design and materials.

3. The Design Process And Participation

This chapter forms the second half of the literature review and addresses part of the area surrounding the research that follows. As the research is an investigation into community involvement in the design of social housing, it is necessary to look at both the social housing sector (in the previous chapter), and the design process (in this chapter). In both chapters the role of the public is investigated after a brief discussion of the general subject area.

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of community involvement in the design of social housing, it is essential to have an understanding of the design process and how non-designers can become involved in this. This chapter sets out to investigate this area by briefly looking at the origin of the design process and its subsequent development. There then follows a discussion on the actual processes involved in design which includes a look at the relationship between the client and designer and a brief discussion about general design procedures. After this there is a discourse on the design of housing, most specifically social housing. The chapter then focuses on a detailed investigation into the existing literature on community involvement in social housing design. Finally, an overview section summarises the work that precedes it and sets out to highlight the relevance of this to the research programme, in addition it serves to illustrate the origin of the analytical framework utilised later.

3.1 The Development Of The Design Process

This brief section addresses the origin of the design process and the way in which it has developed over time, becoming ever-more complex.

“One day the owner of a neighbouring garden brought a carpenter to the site and told him to build-up a house. They stopped on a spot where the ground sloped gently downwards. The carpenter had a look at the trees, the ground, the environments and the town in the valley. Then he proceeded to extract from his cummerbund some pegs, paced off the distances and marked them with pegs. He asked the owner which trees might be sacrificed, moved his pegs for a few feet, nodded and seemed satisfied. He found that the new house would not obscure the view from the neighbouring structures...”

(Grabrijan and Neidhardt 1957, from Akin 1986, p.1)

The above quotation highlights the practice of vernacular architecture and design. The simplicity of the process, unencumbered by restrictive regulation, is conveyed clearly, as is the fact that design, to the carpenter, is not a self-conscious process. It can be viewed instead as something that is as a result of the building. The carpenter is making design decisions, this is clear. Whether the carpenter considers himself a designer is however doubtful.

The very fact that the design process is being discussed as a process in its own right is a relatively recent phenomenon. Alexander (1964) discusses the inevitability of the old craft-based approach changing to accommodate an organised professional process when a society is subjected to a rapid and irreversible change. Developments in technology led to a need for greater levels of specialisation and design became a more self-conscious discipline as a result of this. The changes that led to the professionalisation of design, however, were as Alexander suggested the result of a rapid and irreversible change in society, in the Western world this could be described as the industrial revolution. Kühn (1996) would describe such a comprehensive change in attitude as a *'Paradigm Shift.'*

In a later work, Alexander (1983) discusses architecture in terms of paradigms. It is put forward that design is for and about the outside world and as such is completely affected by influences of science and technology. Alexander (ibid.) argues that architecture needs to enter a new paradigm in order to fully embrace the opportunities available. The shift from the mechanistic world into what has been described as a '*post industrial society*'⁷ should, in the view of the author, be accompanied by a change in the way that architecture, and in a wider context design, is carried out. The profession should re-invent itself and attempt to re-engage with the public once more, a public from which it has become increasingly detached. This detachment between designer and client is discussed later in this chapter.

Chermayeff and Alexander (1963) recognised early the changes required in the design profession if it was to continue to be relevant. It is referred to by the authors throughout as '*Designer Obsolescence*'. The problem is viewed as one of a failure by the profession to react to changes in society. As far back as the early 1960s the argument was put forward that the design schools were no longer relevant as:

"They try to perpetuate the traditional image of integrity and unique skill personified by the 'architect' guiding the 'cultured' and unique 'client.' In truth the client and his architect depend largely on the complex and diverse skills and information of many other specialists."

(Chermayeff and Alexander 1963, p.39)

Chermayeff and Alexander (1963) attempt to explain this standpoint by referring to the growing obsolescence of the architectural profession. The blame is attributed to the education process that, in the view of the authors, only serves to produce designers inadequately trained in the practical areas of the profession. The problems of architecture, it is argued, are associated with the reluctance of the profession to address the changes in society, changes which should necessitate an overhaul of the structure of both professional training and practice in the field.

⁷ The term '*Post-Industrial Society*' has been used by many authors since the late 1960s, although its exact origins are uncertain.

Teymur (1993) argues that not only does the profession produce inadequately trained practitioners but also that housing, as a discipline of architecture, is especially neglected. Teymur discusses the importance of housing to every member of society, citing four key facts; he goes on to state:

“One might think that even just one of these facts would be more than enough to make housing a most prominent research area and a popular design topic in schools of architecture and planning, but, alas, that is not the case. Neither its social and urban significance nor its sheer quantity is deemed sufficient to make housing more than a minor building type, and one that is not considered by educators and the educated alike to be the stuff of which ‘great architecture’ is made. It is therefore seen neither worthy of substantial study programmes nor of creative, innovative and challenging design exercises.”

(Teymur 1993, p.4)

Teymur (1993) goes on to provide an interesting discourse on the lack of connections between housing research and architectural education, but this is largely beyond the remit of the work conducted here. The perceived inadequacies of the architectural education are also taken up by Towers (1995) and these are discussed in the final section of this chapter.

Markus (1972) also recognised a change in the position of the designer in society; he suggests three basic views as to how designers can rediscover their role. Firstly he suggests that the professional organisations reaffirm their dominance. Secondly he suggests that we should seek to end professionalism by radically altering society in such a way as to associate the designer more directly with the user group. Markus accepts that the first two views are extremes that are both unattainable and undesirable. The compromise position, it is suggested, is for the designer to remain a qualified specialist but to act more in the role of an enabler, attempting to involve potential users more directly in the design process.

3.2 The Process Of Design

In order to begin to gain an understanding of the processes that operate in design there follows a brief discussion on the different methods adopted by designers in general and architects in particular. Lawson (1980) discusses the processes of design, specifically in the field of architecture. Through a series of interviews with architects Lawson (ibid.) attempts to extract the processes by which designers reach solutions. Many can be seen to follow the prescriptive route that emerged in the early 1960s and it was during this time that emphasis began to be placed on systematic design methods. Darke (1982) discusses this point and concludes that this arose as a result of the design problem becoming more complex with the advance of new technologies. The increasing complexity led to design necessarily being carried out by teams of specialists, working collaboratively. This coupled with the increase in the size of architectural practices during this time led to the need for more clearly defined methods.

These more clearly defined design methods can be seen to have arisen through necessity. Traditional methods of trial and error no longer sufficed in a world where the scale and complexity of building, coupled with the post war building boom and the need for quick and cost effective construction, meant that a more ordered, prescriptive design method was required (Jones 1970). The implication is that the specialists in the design process, such as structural and building services engineers, would be sceptical of decisions reached from the old process based on 'professional judgement' and would instead prefer a more logical, ordered decision making process. Jones (ibid.) also points to distinct changes in the architectural education process that led toward a more systematic approach to design. The drive for the organisation of the design process was led by architectural students, who as the British Architectural Students Association produced a report (1961) which called for a formalisation of design education and a more systematic, standardised design procedure. It could be put forward that this more formalised and specialised approach has served to further disconnect the end-user from the design process.

Schön (1983) uses the experiences of practitioners in a number of apparently unrelated fields to discuss the ways in which professionals *'think in action.'* The main way in which the author approaches this is by a process of examination of what he terms *'reflection-in-action.'* The argument is that the distinct boundaries between academia and practice are negative and that good practice benefits from a close relationship with academic institutions and *vice-versa*. The fact that the professions have become vital components to the function of society - and the importance that good practice prevails - forms the basis of the text. The counter to this has been a rise in the distrust of these professionals and the setting up of regulatory bodies, codes of conduct and appeals of recourse against perceived professional incompetence.

Schön (1983) discusses the similarities of two professions which are on the surface very different - architecture and psychotherapy. The former strives to produce good building and the latter to cure mental illness or provide coping mechanisms. Despite the differences and the fact that the two professions use different media to convey their skill, similarities are apparent. The author suggests it is the way in which each problem, whether it be a building or patient, is approached as a unique case. Prior knowledge and experience are drawn upon but each 'problem' demands an individual approach, tailored to its very specific demands. Schön (ibid.) adds that when difficulties arise then the conditions for *'reflection-in-action'* occur. As each case is unique then standard solutions and the application of standard practices to problems cannot be implemented. The process of reflection in practice can be similarly applied in both instances, this involves the treatment of each case as a separate entity, requiring an individual approach and this eschews the structured systematic approach discussed earlier. The relevance to the research carried out here is clear, each social housing problem is unique and therefore requires an individually tailored solution. However, it is suggested that the use of standardised plans and system build solutions is widespread in UK house-building and it will be interesting to see the effects of this.

Architecture, indeed design in general, in a broader sense involves ideas of complexity and synthesis. It could be argued that designers are engaged in the opposite task to that which employs critics and analysts, that is to say that designers bring new things into being (Schön 1983). The process of design is dealing with many variables and constraints, some known at the outset and others discovered during the programme. The design decisions made will almost certainly give rise to consequences and implications not initially forecasted. Schön (ibid.) describes it as a 'juggling process' whereby designers juggle a series of variables, reconcile conflicting values and attempt to manoeuvre around constraints. Design is an area where there are no correct solutions; some may be better than others but the definitive design does not exist. Dewey (1974) usefully puts forward a view of a designer as one who converts indeterminate situations into determinate ones. The design problem is at first ill-defined, uncertain and complex (Ackoff 1979 describes these as 'messes') and it is the role of the designer to construct a coherence of their own. Following this they should discover the consequences and implications of their constructs and use these to appreciate and evaluate their solutions. It can be seen that analysis and criticism provide vital roles in the design process. Schön (1987) describes the process of design as:

"A web of projected moves and discovered consequences and implications, sometimes leading to a reconstruction of the initial coherence `a reflective conversation with the materials of a situation."
Schön (1987, p.67)

Schön (1987) asserts that all professional practitioners to some extent design and build artefacts; lawyers build cases, doctors build diagnoses and so on. This argument is used to validate the oft-stated view that architecture is the epitome of the design profession. It is claimed that architecture exemplifies professional artistry and it is distinguished by a bimodality which means it is partly a utilitarian skill concerned with the construction of settings for human activity, and partly an art using the built form as a means of self expression. Architecture serves both functional and aesthetic values. To this end architectural education embraces a studio system, the education is based on

learning by doing and as such architecture, in its pure state, can be seen as perhaps the closest example of reflective practice.

Schön (1987) again uses the example of the architecture studio to explain the design process as being reflective. The key issues which support this notion are that design is a critical process, one undergoing constant review and re-evaluation. The areas of design can be referred to as '*domains*' (p.33) and each domain is 'weighted' in a different way by the designer, depending upon a number of factors. For example, a designer may focus more intently on the physical geometry of a site if that is of particular significance, and pay relatively less attention to structural innovation. The views of the community and the building users are an essential consideration in this process - they can be viewed as yet another ball in need of skilful juggling. Schön (ibid.) argues that the good designer is one who can successfully address each domain and give it adequate and justifiable consideration. Simply giving each domain adequate consideration will not result in a coherent design, the likely result is a situation of complexity and uncertainty with a series of conflicting requirements, and this demands the imposition of a structured order. A process of examination of all possible implications will need to be undertaken and priorities assessed - *this is the design process* (Schön 1983).

Designers will differ in the way in which they approach this complicated task and each practitioner will have his own strategy. This way of ordering the problem is personal to each designer, the result of a reflective practice; the individual may not even be aware of its existence, they may consider it as intuitive. The process is refined through experience and it is not by chance that the majority of artists and designers produce their definitive works later in life. The use of past experience however is more concerned with how the design solution is tackled and not about lifting ideas from previous schemes, as simply doing that ignores the uniqueness of the situation and undermines the design process. Simply using an idea that worked well previously, or sticking rigidly to a stylistic dogma does not result in good design. Once more the idea of designers using their experience in order to address the individual

needs and requirements of each development comes to the fore. This gives rise to the notion that a 'good designer' can therefore use his/her skills to solve any problem - and this questions the value of in-house architecture teams dedicated solely to producing social housing schemes.

Thus it can be put forward that design is a series of experiments. Reflection in practice (as discussed by Schön 1983 and 1987) is an experiment in re-framing problems where ideas are tested, evaluated and either developed, or occasionally discarded entirely. The process of design, on the surface shrouded in mystery and intrigue, is therefore open to examination and dissemination. The process however remains deeply personal and very difficult to uncover.

Despite the difficulty of uncovering the processes of design there have been some notable attempts to do so, and as a result some models of design have been created. Lawrence (1987) states that most of these models are prescriptive in nature. There have been attempts, in a similar vein to those of the Bauhaus, to provide design checklists (for example, Cooper 1975) and a notable, though widely criticised, attempt to describe a '*pattern language*' (Alexander et al 1977). The main criticism of the pattern language approach to model the design process is that different sets of patterns can be synthesised to create quite different designs (Juhasz 1981).

Mueller (1981) describes how two different representations of a design problem can be interpreted as being equally appropriate for the requirements of the client group. It is put forward that this is the case because the designer's representation of the lifestyle of the clients is vague and based on very variable data. This is particularly interesting in the case of social housing where prospective tenants are not usually known in advance due to the nominations procedures in place. Overall, Mueller's research indicates that there is no direct relationship between a design need and a design solution that can be prescribed by a checklist, guideline or pattern. However, the

author states that a design proposal can be interpreted in different ways by different groups of people. Lawrence (1987) states:

“...that an effective design process requires interpersonal communication between the architect, consultants and clients in order to define those parameters which are context-dependent and those which are not.”

(Lawrence 1987, p.211)

Another key factor in the process of design is the relationship between the client and the designer. As discussed earlier, the role of the designer has changed immeasurably with time (Alexander 1964, 1983, Chermayeff and Alexander 1963 etc.) and it can be seen that the role of the client has also changed. In the area of social housing the client is unlikely to be the future inhabitant of the dwelling, allocations procedures (as discussed in the previous chapter) do not enable this in the majority of cases. In the development of private housing the situation is similar and only in rare, almost certainly privileged, circumstances do the future residents employ and closely liaise with the architect who is working on the design of their house (Lawson 1994 looks at such schemes). The great majority of housing development in the United Kingdom is speculatively built by private developers, with a significant amount for housing associations and social renting. The question as to who acts as the client in these organisations is vexed. In the case of an RSL it is the Board of Management and the development team, on behalf of the as yet unknown tenant. The problems are further compounded in the case of socially rented housing because the future residents do not have the potential mobility of a home owner – they are *housed* as opposed to choosing a house.

In the rare circumstance, as described earlier, of the individual client employing an architect to design his/her house, the demarcation between designer and client is clear as the scale of the development allows this. In large scale housing developments however, the boundaries are often blurred. The ‘client’ could be a large housing association with thousands of properties across the country and the designers could be ‘in house,’ or perhaps more likely a large contractor operating a design and build contract. This is likely to

have a profound effect on any participation process undertaken and as such will be considered in the course of the research programme. It can be seen that the tripartite relationship operating in the small scale development, where there are distinct boundaries between client, designer and contractor - the client employs and pays the designer, who in turn employs and pays the contractor - is not at all apparent in the larger scale development. With the design and build contract the 'client,' is somewhat distanced from the designer/contractor and the building user has little or no opportunity to contribute to the process at all. It is in this situation where the role for effective community participation is most apparent.

In addition to the problems described above, that are created by the movement towards design and build as the preferred style of contract, there is also a more fundamental issue at play. This is connected with the different social backgrounds of the architects and the potential building users. For the purposes of this thesis this phenomena is termed '*social distance*' and its effects are discussed later in this chapter, when the question '*Why Involve Tenants in Design?*' is discussed.

3.3 Housing Design

It is now important to look at the literature surrounding the design of housing in general and social housing specifically. This section begins covers the following ground:

- *The stages of design - RIBA Plan of Work.*
- *The position of housing design in the architectural opus.*
- *The restrictions and regulations on housing design.*
- *The type of development contract employed by RSLs.*

This initial section discusses the stages of the design processes that are utilised later in the analysis of the research. The main framework used is the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) Plan of Work (from Thompson 1999). This plan of work is the logical organisation of the architect's programme of work and is published in the Architect's Job Book (Lupton 1995). The plan of work is comprehensive but is not prescriptive as it is flexible enough to suit the requirements of any project. The stages are detailed in the table shown below:

Stage A	Inception
Stage B	Feasibility
Stage C	Outline proposals
Stage D	Scheme design
Stage E	Detail Design
Stage F	Production information
Stage G	Bill of quantities
Stage H	Tender action
Stage J	Project planning
Stage K	Operations on-site
Stage L	Completion
Stage M	Feedback

(From: Thompson, 1999 p.35)

Figure 3.1: RIBA Plan Of Work

This twelve-stage process is not always clear cut, with some of the stages often overlapping. It is however too complex for use as an analytical tool for this research, as it would not be expected that tenants would be involved in many of the above stages. For this research, the stages in the design process described above can be greatly simplified, into just two stages.

The first of these stages can be described as the point prior to the design, prior even to the architect being engaged. This is when the design brief is constructed and the housing association, acting as the client, sets the parameters within which the architect is compelled to operate. The second stage that is relevant is a combination of the RIBA stages C to E in the above table. This is the period in which the design decisions are made and when the architect, in consultation with the client, produces a satisfactory solution. These two stages are when there is the opportunity to affect the design of the built product. To simplify, the earlier stage could be described as the setting of the rules and the later stage as working within them. Revisiting this Programme of Work may prove useful in addressing the times at which involvement takes place.

Addressing the design of housing in particular, it seems pertinent to return to the way that the design of housing is perceived, by looking at its position in architectural education. The work of Teymur (1993) has been discussed earlier but it warrants returning to at this point. The author puts it forward that architectural education largely ignores housing design and that it is not considered the “...stuff of which ‘great architecture’ is made.” (p.4). Cynics, it is suggested, might point to the results of the post-war architectural intervention into mass housing and:

“...say that it is not so bad if architects kept their skills to what they consider to be ‘Architecture’ and keep their hands off housing.”
(Teymur 1993, p.15)

Teymur (1993) goes on to disassociate himself from this viewpoint, preferring to look at the role that research and education can play in improving the situation:

“Absence of housing in design curriculum is not just a defect in meeting the pragmatic objectives of Architectural Education but has much wider consequences. Training good architects with the assumption either that they will seldom design housing or that housing is fairly easy to design, or worse, that housing is not ‘Architecture’ in the first place, is as theoretically and pedagogically untenable as it is morally indefensible.”

(Teymur 1993, p15)

This recognition that housing is often not considered ‘Architecture’ is borne out by the way in which housing developments are ‘designed’. Often standardised plans are used irrespective of local variations - both in terms of the community and the existing physical environment. The use of standardised house plans will be looked at in the research that follows, both in the quantitative survey and the case studies. Many housing developments do not receive even cursory attention from a qualified architect and merely ‘roll off the conveyor belt.’⁶ This is further compounded by the aforementioned gaps in the architectural education highlighted by Teymur (1993) thus:

“The problem is therefore manifold and many sided: in addition to the declarations that architects normally deal with ‘Architecture’ (hence, not with ordinary buildings), there is the problem that even when they decide to promote housing to the rank of ‘Architecture’ (as they occasionally did in recent decades), they may not be equipped to do justice to it.”

(Teymur 1993, p.16)

Teymur (1993) illustrates this point effectively with a reproduction of an article from Building Design (March 3rd 1989, p.5) detailing the vote to demolish the Runcorn housing development designed by the esteemed architect James Stirling. As mentioned earlier there have been some legitimate concerns about poor quality, unsuitable social housing built in the 1960s and 70s and there have been many attempts to prevent this from occurring again. Local Authorities have sought to prevent this in two ways (Sim 1994). Firstly by providing guidance in the form of Design Guides, and secondly by exercising strict development control planning policies, these are discussed in turn, beginning overleaf.

⁶ This description is attributed to a friend and previous colleague (a practising architect) in an informal discussion prior to the research beginning.

Design Guides

It is widely acknowledged that one of the first, and most influential, design guides was published by Essex County Council (1973); this is discussed in depth by many authors (Carmona 2002, Sim 1994, Colquhoun and Fauset 1992 etc.). Sim (1994) notes that this example was taken up by many other local authorities who developed similar guides based on the Essex model. The guide stipulated maximum population densities per acre and was generally prescriptive in the separation of people and cars. Perhaps the most important aspect of the guide is the requirement that new buildings *'fit with the existing urban fabric'* (Sim 1994, p.129). The guide states that new housing should:

"... employ external materials which are sympathetic in colour and texture to the vernacular range of Essex materials."

(Essex County Council 1973, p.72)

Interestingly, the guide recognises three distinct aspects to the design process of new housing. These can be summarised as the client's requirements, the impact on the site and finally the *'community brief'* (Essex 1973, p.83). The guide provoked two critical responses (Sim 1994). Firstly it angered architects who saw planners acting beyond their then traditional boundaries by commenting on aesthetic considerations. The argument was put forward that the design guide approach would *'stifle creativity'* (Sim 1994, p.130). The second criticism was that there were gaps in that it did not address refurbishment or redevelopment issues and dealt solely with new-build residential schemes. There were also criticisms that the design guide covered the whole county and therefore did not allow for local differences and variations. Criticisms were levelled that it created an *'Essex style'* (Sim 1994, p.131).

The effects of the first Essex design guide were far reaching and not entirely successful. There was much criticism of the housing produced as a result of the guidance: it was described as *'Noddyland-like'* (Edwards 1981, p.254-255). Some commentators however (e.g. Neale 1984) have demonstrated the

positive outcomes as a result of the implementation of the design guide. Regardless of the built-result many other councils adopted the approach and produced their own design guides. It has been argued that many of these often did not conduct adequate local research and therefore:

“..slightly modified variants of Essex vernacular were being promoted throughout the country.”

(Chapman and Larkham 1992, p.7)

Perhaps the most stinging criticism of the design guide approach is that it is too prescriptive, stifles creativity and produces housing of a bland uniformity. Murray (1989) describes the Northern Ireland Housing Executive Design Guide in an article entitled *‘Design by the Pattern Book’*, the title alone encapsulates the tone of his criticism.

The Planning System

The role of the planning system in the development of new-build social housing is essentially threefold. Firstly, it has aesthetic control as a part of the statutory development control system. Secondly, it publishes design guidance which often forms part of the development plan, and finally it influences design through the planning briefs for site development (Sim 1994). Each of these three roles is discussed below.

Aesthetic control has been exercised by planning authorities historically and dates back at least as far as the rebuilding of London in the wake of the Great Fire of 1666. This control was formalised in 1947 when the modern town planning system was established by the Town and Country Planning Act 1947 (Cullingworth and Nadin 1997). Sim (1994) notes that this aspect of planning was initially not a major issue as much of the housing development in the post-war years was by local authorities, and these were therefore able to exercise control throughout. The drive for lots of cheap and quickly built dwellings during the 1950s and early 1960s (discussed in the previous chapter) led many to believe that design considerations were being sidelined. Sim (1994) says that design control rose to prominence in the late 1960s and 1970s partly as a reaction to the high-rise developments and also as a result of the

clearance of many old housing developments. This was also a time when there was an increased awareness of the importance of maintaining elements of the existing townscape. As early as the late 1950s a vigorous debate over planning restrictions on aesthetic grounds was underway. Architects argued that their applications were being rejected purely on aesthetic grounds and that these decisions were beyond the skills, and the remit, of the planners. In an article in the *Architectural Journal* (Moro 1958) argued the case against such planning control. He stated nine reasons why it was wrong and as these points still appear relevant over forty years later, they bear repetition:

- *it stifles architectural expression;*
- *it encourages uniformity and discourages contrast;*
- *it usually discriminates against those who are exercising their traditional right of wanting to live in a house of their time;*
- *it gives undue power of judgement to officials without aesthetic training;*
- *it smacks of totalitarianism and is, in fact, a characteristic adjunct of such a form of government;*
- *it is humiliating to the architect and makes nonsense of his professional status;*
- *it puts those architects into an invidious position who lend themselves to the distasteful task of sitting in judgement over their colleagues;*
- *it rarely stops bad conventional building;*
- *it often stops good unconventional building.*

(Moro 1958, p.203)

This viewpoint was largely ignored, but Sim (1994) points out that during the 1980s there was a belief that planning was acting as a '*hindrance rather than a stimulus to development*' (p.134). This view is embodied in two important government pamphlets from the time (HMSO 1985 and 1988). There is a legitimate opinion that this government agenda was less concerned with producing well-designed buildings than it was with supporting developers and entrepreneurs. Sim (1994) points to a Department of the Environment Circular (22/80) which states that aesthetics are an extremely subjective matter and that planners were not to impose their views simply because they thought they were superior. It was put forward that '*...control of external appearance was only to be exercised when there were compelling reasons to do so*' (Sim 1994, p.134). This standpoint was seen by many as the government siding with

developers against the democratic accountability of Planning Committees, although this should be seen in the wider context of central governments relationship with local government. During this time many restrictions and were placed on councils and their powers were curtailed, for political reasons. This aside, the debate about the efficacy of Planning Committees in considering design matters needs coverage at this point. Sim (1994) states:

“In fact, though, Planning Committees do not have a good record in the area of aesthetic and design control. Committees are composed of lay people, who rarely have the detailed technical or aesthetic knowledge to make informed judgements about design principles.”

(Sim 1994, p.134)

This same point was made more colourfully by Ford (2000) in an article published in Building Design entitled ‘*Planning Chaos*’ (also referred to by Carmona, 2002). It reads:

“Our planning system is crucial in deciding what makes up our environment. Who studies and practises for decades, sincerely searching for, and understanding ‘good design’? Architects. Who makes the final judgement in planning committees? Dustmen, taxi-drivers, shopkeepers, retired W.I. types etc. - any pot-luck combination of people unqualified in the sphere of architecture.. In my opinion, if you are not innovative, but are conservative, conventional and pander to the average common denominator, i.e. don’t do anything really bad or really good, then you will get a quicker positive result... A better way than trying to explain design rules would be to have more informed judges.”

(Ford 2000, from Carmona 2002, p.316)

In addition to the control it exerts at committee stage the planning process also often provides design guidance at Development Plan and Local Plan stages (Sim 1994). This can be seen to be of particular importance in the case of infill sites, where the existing buildings need to be taken into careful consideration and this point is made by many authors (Carmona 2000, Crook et al 1996, Sim 1994 etc.). These recommendations can often be stringent and Sim (1994) refers to Liverpool City Council's dogmatic adherence to a policy of not allowing residential development over two stories in height. This somewhat reactionary approach was in vogue in the 1980s and has now largely been superseded by a generally more open-minded position.

The final area in which the planning profession attempts to encourage 'good design' is by the use of Design and Development Briefs. It can be seen that a local authority disposing of land for the provision of social housing often exercises a tight control over the proposed development (Sim 1994). A design brief is issued which:

"...acts as a checklist to ensure that, within the local authority, due consideration has been given to all development-related issues which might arise. Secondly, it sets the framework within which developers (both housing associations and house-builders) will be negotiating for the site."

(Dunmore 1992, p.19)

The sort of guidance given in these briefs includes information on the type of housing to be provided, the materials and form of construction, and the landscaping of the surrounding area. Sim (1994) notes that this guidance may be given even for land that does not belong to the council, for the purposes of meeting housing shortfall. Finally, it should be noted that there are some serious criticisms of the use of design and development briefs. The most important of these is the allegation that decisions are made on political grounds rather than for good design reasons (Aldous 1988, Carmona 2000, Sim 1994 etc.) Planners are more likely to welcome development with relatively little control in times of economic slump, and by contrast tighten-up during times of great competition for development opportunity.

In addition to the planners and their local authorities there are some other bodies that exert influence on the design of housing. Sim (1994) refers to the Royal Fine Art Commission, although this now operates under a different name, the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE). CABE, because of its limited size and funding, only intervenes in a small number of cases and provides design guidance via its Design Review Committee which is made up of architects, planners and associated experts in the field. It is the sole intention of CABE to encourage good, appropriate design, but it makes no specific reference to involving the public in this endeavour.

Housing Corporation Design Guidance.

It should also be noted that in the case of the development of social housing by RSLs the Housing Corporation issues its own guidance, listed in the procedure guide. Colquhoun and Fauset (1991) point out that this provides no mandatory standards in respect of floor area:

“As long as new housing has regard to the guidance criteria, housing associations and their architects have full freedom in the development of appropriate and economic design solutions.”

(Colquhoun and Fauset 1991, p.295)

Colquhoun and Fauset (1991) then go on to describe the principle criteria. It is sufficient to say at this point that the guidance laid out is not restrictive and has the basic purpose of ensuring that new dwellings provide a reasonable standard of accommodation. There are however no minimum space requirements (Colquhoun and Fauset 1991) and therefore the effect of the funding controls has been to reduce the provided space to the lowest permissible (Sim 1994, Karn 1992). Research by Walentowicz (1992) shows that new housing association dwellings reduced in size by ten percent in the space of two years, from 1987/8 to 1989/90⁹. It is also noted that many design and build packages, using standardised house plans, are offered by builders that are specifically costed to be in line with HAG (SHG) levels (Sim 1994). This cannot be seen as a direct regulation on design, but instead as a strong influence on developing associations. Earlier RSL development was characterised by individualism and local responsiveness:

“What essentially distinguished the housing produced by the voluntary housing movement was its small scale. The essentially incremental nature of the urban fabric was fully recognised and understood by designers, and the very nature of the voluntary movement, made up of a variety of small charitable and other groups without statutory powers, encouraged variety and innovation. The funding system, based on project-specific annual allocations of capital, discouraged thinking on a grand scale, and these constraints, applied both to small-scale infill schemes and to rehabilitation programmes in the inner city, contrasted vividly with the massive estates of municipal housing.”

(Moseley 1993, p.9)

⁹ Average floor space for a new housing association dwelling in 1987/8 was 62 sq m, by 1989/90 this had fallen to 56 sq m.

It appears that the funding restructuring, along with the radically altered voluntary housing sector, means that these characteristics have changed beyond recognition. Perhaps the biggest single change to housing association new-build design (brought about as a result of the 1988 Housing Act) is the emergence of design and build style contracts and these are discussed shortly.

Before this it is desirable to highlight a distinction in the design guidance relating to social housing. This can be described as the difference between guidance aimed at controlling the external aspect and external relationships (for example the Essex Design Guide) and the guidance that deals with internal spaces (for example, the Housing Corporation Design Guidance). This is a potentially interesting distinction because it is likely that tenants would react differently to discussions about communal and semi-communal space and the layout of their private environment. It may be that in a situation where a representative group of tenants is used, as a result of the nominations procedures described earlier, attempting to involve tenants in the design of the external aspect and areas may be a more appropriate approach. This question will be addressed during the course of the case studies.

The Type Of Contract

There are two main forms of contract in usage and the first of these can be described as the *traditional* contract. This is where the housing client produces detailed drawings, with the assistance of an independent architectural practice or an internal team, and then puts the construction work, out to tender. The second method is known as *design and build* contracting and this is where the builder designs the project, after consultation with the client, and then builds it (Ball 1996, Goodchild 1997).

There are key differences in the two basic approaches described above and these fundamentally affect the way in which the design is carried out. The separation of the design and build functions is characteristic of the traditional approach and this can be seen to be the most flexible when innovative design

is required. The client engages the architects and generally has a more significant impact on the outcome. The problems associated with this method are concerned with financial risk. It is not as easy to accurately predict the overall cost and as a result there is a potential for overspend.

With a design and build approach the client has a more restricted involvement. They do not have the control over the selection of the architects and nor do they have as direct an input into the design process, as the building contractors assume greater control (Ball 1996). This assumption of greater control is as a result of the taking on of the risk element. The final product can be more closely costed at the outset thus minimising the potential risk. However this has the effect of reducing the scope for innovative design and design and build schemes have a tendency to be repetitive, simple styles with only the facility for relatively minor variation in line with each particular client and site requirement. It can be shown however that design and build schemes are not greatly different in terms of expense (Audit Commission 1996, Goodchild 1997, Goodchild et al 1996).

It is put forward by Ball (1996) that in general there has been a shift towards the use of design and build contracts in recent years and this has been particularly noticeable across the house-building sector. Social housing providers have been especially likely to adopt the less risky approach. The reasons for housing associations' need to reduce risk are discussed shortly and their almost wholesale adoption of the design and build contract is testimony to this. At this stage this claim is purely speculative, the survey will address the extent of design and build in new-build social housing. However, there are other reasons for the attractiveness of the method to the sector.

It has been argued that the deciding reason for RSLs adopting the design and build approach was as a result of lessons learned from council development in the 1970s (Ball 1996). During this time councils, who were then the major developers of social housing, had suffered a number of problems as a result of substantial cost over runs and some poor quality building. Some of the

innovative building solutions put forward by local authority architects had been poorly designed and badly built, the projected costs had been greatly exceeded and the landlords had been left to pick up the pieces. Examples of these local authority developments are many and include the system-built Hulme estates in Manchester as referred to in the introduction. The emerging RSL sector had been chastened by this and sought a different, less risky, approach (Ball *ibid.*). Finally housing associations are typically far smaller organisations than the local authority housing departments from which they are taking on the mantle of developing social housing. As such they often did not have the internal structure to oversee contracts, they generally do not have internal architecture departments and would not typically employ staff to manage housing development. The adoption of a design and build approach reduces the need for the employment of such people (for detailed information about the size and characteristics of RSLs see Housing Corporation 1999b).

It can be seen that there are benefits of the design and build approach in the development of new-build housing. The reduction in financial risk and not having the requirement for as large a development team are the prime ones but landlords have also been able to benefit from economies of scale by adopting a more standardised approach. Some house builders have recognised the benefits of working in the social housing sector and have moved from speculative development to concentrate fully on working for RSLs.

There are however some concerns about the changes in the contracts used by housing associations. Karn and Sheridan (1994) argue that the move towards design and build has led to a sharp reduction in space and quality standards. It is put forward that this is not an inherent quality of the contractor-led design route but that design and build contracts have been encouraged by government directives on the tendering process, as discussed earlier. This has been accompanied by a relative decline in social housing grant and a desire to increase the number of units built. The ultimate result, say Karn and Sheridan (1994.), is the almost wholesale adoption of design and build contracts by registered social landlords and in general a poorer standard of

new-build social housing. It is claimed that there are two major areas in which the move towards use of the design and build contract has damaged social housing. These can be summarised thus (after Ball 1996):

- 1. **Training** – Traditionally social housing was used to train large numbers of skilled workers, this can be seen as a hidden subsidy to the construction industry. The opportunity for the use of training initiatives such as the use of local labour are therefore diminished with the rise of design and build contracts.*
- 2. **Innovation** – the building of social housing was often a test bed for new developments in the building industry. For example timber framed housing was developed in the sector and now is becoming widespread. Design and build contractors are unlikely to innovate in such a way as this involves too great an element of risk.*

Overall it can be seen that the move from a traditional to design and build approach has had a profound effect on the building of social housing. Whether this directly affects the opportunity for meaningful community involvement in design will be investigated later but the evidence would seem to imply that the links between the client (the housing association) and the designers are less robust in the more recently adopted model.

The implications of the literature covered in this section are far-reaching and this has informed the research in a number of ways. It has been shown that housing design is an often neglected area of architecture and is subject to many restrictions and regulations. It is put forward that as there are so many controls on the designers (planning restrictions, design guidance etc.) that architects would be reticent to cede any further ground and would therefore be unlikely to fully embrace community involvement in design. This view is strengthened by some work on architectural education (Towers 1995 and Teymur 1993). This implies that the training provided is not conducive to producing practitioners likely to embrace participatory design (this is discussed further in section 3.4.5). This, coupled with the adoption of the design and build style of contract, means that there are significant hurdles to overcome if effective involvement in design is to take place. These areas are of great relevance and interest to the research that follows and will be discussed at length later in the thesis.

3.4 Tenant Participation In Design

As it is the aim of the research presented here to look at the built effect of community involvement in the design of social housing it is essential that the existing body of literature in this field is addressed. As the broader area of community involvement in housing management is covered in the previous chapter this section sets out to provide a discussion about tenant involvement in the design and development process. This section addresses the following areas:

- *The reasons for involving tenants in social housing development.*
- *The growth in tenant participation in design.*
- *The problems associated with this sort of participation.*
- *The different stages that tenants become involved.*
- *The methods of involvement adopted by social housing providers.*
- *How tenant involvement in design can be made more effective.*

3.4.1 Why Involve Tenants in Design?

It is first necessary to discuss why housing providers have found it necessary, or desirable, to involve tenants in the design of new social housing and why this practice has become more widespread in the past twenty years. Although this is not the focus of the research it is an interesting and informative addition. It can be assumed that increased levels of involvement have been the result of either, real or perceived, benefits from community participation, or because of specific encouragement to do so, whether it be from government or other agencies. It would appear likely that the answer is a combination of the two and that housing providers have responded to calls to include potential users in the design process because there is a widely accepted benefit to be gained.

The literature supports this idea, with many authors (Duncan and Halsall 1994, Fraser 1991, Gibson 1986, IoH and RIBA 1988, NFHA 1990 and 1991 etc.) failing to adequately address the reasons why it is necessary to involve

tenants in design. They all however state the value of doing so. In the foreword to IoH and RIBA (1988) one of the pre-eminent community architects, Rod Hackney, writing with the then president of the Institute of Housing, Derek Waddington, states:

“One of the most important lessons to be learnt from the story of British public sector housing since 1945 is that users who have no say in the way their accommodation is designed or improved are more likely to be dissatisfied with it.”

(IoH and RIBA 1988, Foreword)

Duncan and Halsall (1994) refer to the need for a holistic approach, with wider issues such as future housing management being taken into consideration. They point out that tenants will often not consider the difference in the areas of activity of scheme design, project development and housing management. The design process is described as: *‘..a very valuable ‘vehicle’ for this process of project and community development’* (Duncan and Halsall 1994, p.2).

This view of tenant involvement in the design process being merely part of a wider participation strategy, across all aspects of practice, is also mentioned by other authors (Sharples 1991 and IoH and RIBA, 1988). It is, however, Duncan and Halsall (1994) who refer to the potential of tenant involvement in the design of social housing to provide a *‘vehicle’* for wider change. It is put forward that involvement in the design process produces tangible results - that tenants see the results of their endeavours and therefore become more likely to participate in other spheres. The idea that there are tangible returns from involvement in design - that tenants can physically see the changes made because of their input - is indeed compelling. This is directly relevant to the research programme followed here that sets out to investigate whether this involvement actually makes any difference to the built outcome.

Duncan, P and Halsall, B (1994) provide a useful summary of the growth of tenant involvement in design and development. They point out that it has been an essential feature of many housing and urban renewal projects since

the late 1970s. They argue that many of the examples from the housing co-operatives of the time:

“...demonstrated beyond question that such involvement could make a highly significant contribution to urban regeneration.”

(Duncan and Halsall 1994, p.2)

Duncan and Halsall (1994) is essentially a guidebook for housing associations about to embark on tenant involvement schemes in new developments and does not therefore question the basis for this involvement. They do however recognise that housing associations operate in a difficult environment with limited funding, over-prescriptive Housing Corporation guidelines and ever-tightening timetables. Consequently, effective participation is often overlooked as being too expensive and time-consuming. These obstacles to involvement are discussed in more detail later but the authors maintain that the end result is better if effective tenant involvement takes place.

“The answer is simple - it usually produced a better end product. Development projects with a high level of involvement are much more likely to meet tenants’ needs and aspirations, as well as those of the association.”

(Duncan and Halsall 1994, p.1)

Sanoff (2000) makes a further case for the involvement of the community in the design process. He states:

“Participation reduces the feeling of anonymity and communicates to the individual a greater degree of concern on the part of the management or administration. With participation, residents are actively involved in the development process; there will be a better-maintained physical environment, greater public spirit, more user satisfaction and significant financial savings.”

(Sanoff 2000, p.9)

Sanoff (2000) continues and identifies three main purposes of participation, these are:

- *To involve people in design decision-making processes and as a result, increase their trust and confidence in organisations, making it more likely that they will accept decisions and plans and work within that established system when seeking solutions to problems.*

- *To provide people with a voice in design and decision making in order to improve plans, decisions and service delivery.*
- *To promote a sense of community by bringing people together who share common goals.*

(Sanoff 2000, pp.9-10)

The first of these points alludes to the opening up of the complex processes of design and development and therefore making the public less sceptical about them. The second principle refers to the improved user satisfaction referred to by many other writers (IoH and RIBA 1988, Duncan and Halsall 1994 etc.). The third purpose however is related to the wider benefits of the participation process. These broader social gains form an important feature of the work conducted on the Liverpool Co-ops by MacDonald (1986) and although this does not form the basis of the research undertaken here, it is interesting to note nonetheless.

It is also suggested that tenant involvement in social housing design was, at least in part, politically motivated. IoH and RIBA (1988) puts it forward that this might have been the case, with the ideological Thatcher-led drive towards increasing the choice of the individual being suggested as the cause. Woolley (1985) notes that the increase in interest in community involvement in the early and mid-1980s was widely supported by the government. The author notes that the government merely saw it as an opportunity to shift responsibility for the emerging urban problems to a more localised level. This can be seen as another example of the general tendency of the Conservative administration to blame social housing for the problems of the inner-city estates. Councils were up until that point the major provider of new social housing and the areas of high socially rented provision were predominantly Labour controlled. By blaming local councils for the problems associated with inner city estates and encouraging the closer involvement of the local residents, it can be seen as another way of attacking the Labour-led authorities.

Duncan and Halsall (1994) also point out the differences of the views on participation between the housing association and the local government

sectors. Whereas housing associations can be seen as being sceptical about tenant participation, the government agenda was pushing the idea to the fore. Duncan and Halsall (ibid.) and Sharples (1991) state that the Estate Action programme promoted tenant involvement and as a result many local authorities placed more emphasis on involving communities. DoE (1989) outlines this change in direction well, detailing government support for such initiatives. For a further discussion on Estate Action see Pinto (1993). Nevin (1996) discusses the overall funding of the Estate Action Programme and points out that this was targeted to those areas that could demonstrate the following objectives:

- *physical improvements to housing;*
- *improving housing management (at local authority and at estate level);*
- *involving tenants in regeneration and long-term management of estate;*
- *diversifying tenure;*
- *attracting private sector resources; and*
- *establishing estate-based training and enterprise initiatives.*

(Nevin 1996, p.6)

Many authors (IoH and RIBA 1988, Duncan and Halsall 1994 and Sanoff 2000) describe the longer term benefits as a result of tenant involvement in design, but neither backs-up these claims with empirical evidence proving increased user satisfaction. Whether or not tenant involvement results in increased user satisfaction is not the focus of the work undertaken here - *that is to see if the involvement makes any difference to the actual buildings* - but it is both an interesting and informative diversion nonetheless. Interestingly earlier research, such as that undertaken by Woolley (1985), does not reveal any evidence for a significant increase in tenant satisfaction when they have been involved in the design of their homes. Woolley's study:

"...sets out to question whether 'user participation' is a magic formula for creating satisfactory buildings"

(Woolley 1985, p.85)

After an extensive study, Woolley (1985) concludes that it is difficult to argue that increasing participation results in greater tenant satisfaction. Woolley (ibid.) found that when the user satisfaction of the tenants of the three case

studies was compared to forty-two other public housing schemes there was no significant difference in the satisfaction levels. Overall the study concludes that it is difficult to argue that increasing participation results in greater tenant satisfaction. The author puts this point most succinctly in his executive summary:

“While high levels of satisfaction with the three case study projects were found, these were not higher than the more successful non-participatory schemes and, when combined with other data, it was concluded that not enough evidence to support the proposition had been found.”

(Woolley 1985, executive summary)

As discussed above the study undertaken by Woolley (1985) does not fully support the premise for tenant involvement in the design of social housing. Malpass (1979) in his reappraisal of Byker Wall, also adopts a sceptical tone and implies that one of the great flagships of tenant participation, the Ralph Erskine development at Byker in Newcastle, is perhaps not as participatory as may first be thought. Malpass (ibid.) claims that the housing design was not the result of Erskine and the residents sitting down together, but instead was based on some of the views of the residents later being interpreted by the architect. The difference here appears small but this could be considered as being fundamental. Architects have always interpreted the (perceived) views of their clients - this is nothing new. Participation in design implies something more; a greater connection with the community with tenants being involved in the making of design decisions. This area is again one that will be explored in more depth during the course of the case studies that follow. Overall however it must be noted that the body of work that questions the value of involvement in design is not large.

Much of the literature in the field (Duncan and Halsall 1994, IoH and RIBA 1988) is essentially supportive of tenant involvement in design and appears to set out to convince RSLs that it is a worthwhile endeavour. Likewise, NFHA (1990) attempts to convince potentially sceptical housing associations that tenant involvement in design will not significantly slow the development

process if it is organised properly. A more cautious note is sounded by Woolley (1985), who has the benefit of a comparative empirical study into user satisfaction to draw upon.

Some authors (Darke 1982, 1984a,b and c, Sim 1993) make a more fundamental claim for the importance of tenant involvement in design. Rather than making claims about the increased user satisfaction that will result, these authors instead refer to the gulf between the architects and the tenants in a number of areas and the need to bridge this. Darke (1984) interviewed six architects working in the public sector and revealed a very limited, stereotypical view of the households that they were designing for. The majority of these architects claimed to rely on personal experience when designing for clients but Sim (1993), in a discussion of the research undertaken by Darke, points out that this gives rise to an assumption by the architects that the end-users would be like themselves.

Darke (1982) discusses this point in greater depth, highlighting the gap between professional and tenant. Reference is made to the fact that architects hail most often from the middle classes. This assertion can be supported with reference to comparative earnings and the length of time spent in higher education in order to qualify as a practitioner. If a particular architect did not come from a middle class background, it is suggested that they become middle class by virtue of their professional status as well as their relatively high salary. Darke (ibid.) also highlights the social and cultural differences between the architectural and planning professions and many of the clients they seek to serve. For example, ethnic communities sometimes have different family structures and a different approach to family relationships. An architect or planner working in an area of ethnic diversity cannot be expected to have a deep understanding of these cultural variations. Black and minority ethnic (BME)-led architectural practices have increased in number since Darke was undertaking her study, but there is still a problem of under representation. The fact that architecture, as a profession, is still dominated by white middle-class males is recognised by the Royal Institute of

British Architects (RIBA). The recently elected president of the RIBA, Paul Hyett (2001) highlighted this:

"But, above all there are the issues of sustainability, against which so much progress is being made; wider accessibility for the ethnic minorities into our profession; the promotion of better career opportunities for women and better pay and conditions for younger staff during their professional training years."

(Hyett P 2001, p.1)

Darke (1982) argues that there are often occasions when problems resulting from what can be termed *social distance* are experienced. It is put forward that an architect designing for a largely ethnic minority neighbourhood cannot fully understand the situation in which he is working. That is to say a 'middle-class' architect cannot fully understand the problems of social exclusion experienced by the residents of a deprived inner city housing area. This problem is apparent not only with the architects and design professionals, but also with other players in the development programme, for example the housing association's development team which acts as the effective 'client' in standard development situations.

To support the claim that architects often consider design in a different way to the tenants that they are effectively designing *for* Sim (1993) recounts the work of Edwards (1974); this makes an important point. The study highlighted that when architects and tenants were asked to lay out the furniture in a room there were major discrepancies in the way that the furniture was set out. The tenants were largely consistent with each other but less than half of the architects predicted the arrangement. This example highlights a fundamental difference in the way that design professionals and tenants appreciate space. The trained eye would view a problem such as furniture arrangement in a logical way, whereas untrained tenants may opt for different arrangements for completely different reasons. This study, alongside the work of Darke, provides a compelling argument for the involvement of tenants in the design of their homes. Finally, Wates and Knevitt (1987, p.149) quote the architect Berthold Lubetkin in an address to the RIBA, he said:

“Architecture is too important to be left to architects alone. Like crime it is a problem for society as a whole.”

(Lubetkin, President’s Invitation Lecture, 1985)

Although this may at first seem flippant the essence of the remark is indisputable. Architects and the buildings they design affect the whole of society and therefore it would seem prudent to involve communities in their conception.

3.4.2 Factors Affecting Community Involvement In Design

Sim (1993) recognises the main problem in achieving effective participation is in involvement of tenants in a meaningful way:

“...the biggest problem for architects has been to structure the design process in such a way that users are able to take part. Most architects do not analyse the way in which they carry out that process and to do this, and then spread it out in an order that lay people can become involved, is difficult, expensive and time consuming.”

(Sim 1993, p.146)

Furthermore, Sim (1993) discusses the fundamental problems that are caused as a result of the limits on the design decisions that can be taken. These limitations on time, cost, building regulations, space standards, road layouts, access requirements and planning controls make the design process a complex one. It could be argued that the architect is better placed to make decisions in these areas than the tenants. The issue of exactly where tenant involvement can have an impact on the design process (at what stage) is fundamental to the research undertaken here and this shall receive further attention during the course of this thesis. Likewise the factors that place limitations on the designer, and therefore limit the potential areas for tenant input (as mentioned previously) also received appropriate consideration during the design and analysis of the case studies.

Duncan and Halsall (1994) discuss the implications to tenant participation in housing design of the 1988 Housing Act. The more general implications of the act on housing associations have been discussed earlier but there are some

specifically that have affected the involvement of tenants in development. Duncan and Halsall (ibid.) state these emphatically:

“Lower HAG rates, the introduction of private finance, the strong emphasis on value for money, the need for lower procurement costs, the growth of design and build contracts and standard house types and bulk tendering and competitive bidding all placed significant pressures on housing associations, particularly in terms of financial risk.”

(Duncan, P and Halsall, B, 1994 p.3)

It is put forward that these changes would have effectively meant that tenants would not be included in the design process - if it were not for the major policy changes which gave them a key role in estate regeneration programmes.

A number of authors (Duncan and Halsall 1994, Crook et al 1996) highlight that another change in policy direction, epitomised by the 1988 Housing Act (DoE 1988), led to an increasing amount of housing association development taking place on local authority estates. Duncan and Halsall (1994, p.3) say that RSLs were often faced with strong established tenants associations who were *“...determined to be fully involved in their projects.”* This, accompanied by the community focus of such initiatives as City Challenge and Housing Action Trusts (HATs), is put forward as being the reason for RSLs retaining an interest in tenant involvement in spite of the obstacles.

Sim (1993) argues that user participation in new-build housing is easier than in existing refurbishment as there is a 'clean sheet of paper'. Furthermore, this serves to make matters more complicated as the tenants will require greater professional support, as they have no existing building to act as a point of reference. He also notes the requirement for pre-allocation of the dwellings and that this is not standard practice in housing associations, which are often tied to local authority nominations agreements. The effect of local authority nominations on tenant involvement in design appears important and will be investigated during the course of the case studies that follow.

This difference - in the involvement of tenants in new-build housing and on existing estates - is also noted by IoH and RIBA (1988). As this research sets

out to look at new-build housing development, this is the area that will be concentrated upon here. Rather than address obstacles to participation loH and RIBA (ibid.) prefers to highlight the scope for involvement. The paper does however suggest five *"Pitfalls to be avoided"* (loH and RIBA, p.7):

1. *Landlords side-stepping management/maintenance responsibilities;*
2. *Difficulties arising in resolving conflicts, which tend to bring into question how much decision-making authority tenants are actually being allowed;*
3. *Long delays occurring because the design process becomes more involved or variations take a long time to work through;*
4. *Raised expectations that are later dashed, and*
5. *Considerable extra cost and effort required to develop alternative proposals.*

(From: loH and RIBA 1988, p.7)

One of the key obstacles to involvement that emerges, especially in the design of new-build properties, is the identification of the future tenants early enough in the development process to play a role in the design process. This point was raised earlier by Sim (1993) when referring to the need for pre-allocation of dwellings and is also discussed by Towers (1995) who refers to involvement by those other than the future tenants as *"participation without users"* (p.193). The same problem is also mentioned by other authors including Sanoff (1990, p.47) who refers to participatory design without the pre-allocated tenants as *"...designing for no-one in particular"*, whereas Wulz (1990, p.145) calls it *"anonymised participation"*.

Towers (1995) put forward that the community architecture movement only advocates small-scale local developments where users can be identified. However, the author also recognises that although it is not always possible to identify the potential users it is often possible to utilise a similar organisation or interest group. An example is cited where a local pensioners' group was involved in the design of the Palace Gates sheltered housing scheme in Harringay, North London (Towers 1995, pp143-144). It is put forward that the use of representative groups is acceptable where the end-users cannot be identified because participation is ingrained in the British planning system.

“...participation has now become the norm in the British planning system. Local residents are routinely invited to comment on planning applications, and this has given communities greater influence in their local environment. There is now considerable experience of neighbourhood planning, and its wider practice could positively involve local people in the overall nature and form of new developments.”

(Towers 1995, p.193)

Towers (ibid.) continues by stating that:

“...more contact with users and greater awareness of their needs will generate a user-orientated approach to the design of new buildings, even where the users are not directly involved.”

(Towers 1995, p.193)

A number of sources refer to the changes in role required by all of the actors in a participatory design programme (IoH and RIBA 1988, MacDonald 1986, Sanoff 1992 and 2000, Sim 1994 etc). IoH and RIBA (1988) describe the changes that are necessary in the roles of:

- (a) the tenant;*
- (b) the housing authority member;*
- (c) the housing officer;*
- (d) the architect;*
- (e) other professionals;*
- (f) the clerk of works;*
- (g) the contractor.*

(IoH and RIBA 1988, p.33)

IoH and RIBA (1988) points out that the role of the tenant must change to become more of *“...a consumer with a right to accept or reject the product.”* (p.33). The idea of the tenant as a consumer is one of the three models explored by Cairncross et al (1997) discussed in the previous chapter. The change in the role of the housing authority member can be seen as one of conceding a degree of decision-making power. IoH and RIBA (ibid.) point out that the elected (or nominated) members of these authorities, whether they be housing associations or local authorities, need to become enablers.

It is also necessary for the role of the housing authority officers to change (IoH and RIBA 1988). It is stated that the role will need to incorporate a change in the way that the development brief is written to take into account the views of the tenants. This will undoubtedly involve the collection of information from

the community in whichever way is deemed appropriate. IoH and RIBA (1988) also note the likelihood of the housing officers having responsibility for the allocation of resources set aside for tenant liaison. Whether these tasks are undertaken by specialist staff, or the general estate officers, is dependent upon the size and structure of the developing authority or RSL. It is also mentioned that a community development officer might make a valuable contribution in liaising with the community and acting as a conduit for ideas.

Perhaps the people required to make the most difficult changes to their typical work practices are the architects. The unsuitability of the architectural education for involvement in participatory design is noted by Towers (1995) and this is discussed at length later in this chapter. IoH and RIBA (1988) describe the role of the architect in a participation scheme as including:

- *developing the brief with the tenants;*
- *analysing the brief;*
- *exploring design possibilities with them and drawing out the tenants' views about them;*
- *agreeing design proposals with the tenants;*
- *involving them in presenting the design proposals to the design authority;*
- *co-ordinating the work of the design team and ensuring that all consultants, including structural and servicing engineers, landscape architects and quantity surveyors involve the tenants in their areas or work;*
- *involving tenants in matters of detailed design and specification;*
- *setting up a dialogue with tenants and the housing authority about alternative ways of executing the contract;*
- *involving tenants, both as individuals and as a co-ordinating group, in monitoring the progress of work on site;*
- *ensuring that tenants give their approval at handover stage;*
- *providing information to tenants on operating their dwellings.*

(IoH and RIBA 1988, pp.35-36)

The idea of the architect acting as a facilitator is discussed by many commentators (Sim 1994, Sanoff 1992 and 2000, MacDonald 1986, Towers 1995 etc). Employing an architect sympathetic to the cause of community involvement is therefore vital and this is noted with customary clarity by MacDonald (1986) in his description of the process undertaken in Liverpool. He states:

“One of the architects who came for interview...virtually ruled himself out by his interpretation of what it meant. Paul Lusk says, ‘They said, our idea is we design the houses and you hold the pen, he wasn’t happy with that.’ Kevin Byrne remembers him more sympathetically: ‘He wasn’t prepared to come to meetings. He’d have done a fucking brilliant job but he wasn’t prepared to come along to the people. He was a very shy feller. That doesn’t mean he was a bad person!’”

(MacDonald 1986, p.84)

The role of the architect should remain the same whether they be in-house or from an outside practice and the advantages of each of these is discussed by IoH and RIBA (1988). In-house architects have the advantage of knowing the policies and procedures of the developing authority whereas outside consultants are more likely to be perceived as neutral, especially in areas that have had housing management problems. The difference in the approaches adopted by in-house architects and outside consultants is interesting and played a role in the selection of the case studies that follow.

The necessary changes in the roles of the other professionals, the clerk of works and the contractors, are basically concerned with being more open in their general practice and accepting of tenant involvement (IoH and RIBA 1988). As well as the changes to the individual’s role it should also be recognised that there will be major differences in the relationships between the players in a participatory design scheme. This phenomenon is recognised by many commentators including IoH and RIBA (1988) and Towers (1995). The extent of this change is described as:

“The concept of professionals being ‘on tap’ rather than ‘on top’ crystallises the desired relationship. It means that the professionals should view themselves as facilitators whose expertise and experience are put at the disposal of tenants.”

(IoH and RIBA 1988, p.37)

Towers (1995) is convinced that the most problematic change in relationship is that between the designer and the tenant and he states:

“Successful participation requires a genuine commitment on the part of the designers to work with the users. ‘I have spent seven years training to be a designer and they think they know better’ is often said by architects, not just about users but about conventional clients.”

(Towers 1995, pp.171-172)

Towers (1995) is however careful to point out that the changes required in order to make the relationship more productive are not solely the responsibility of the professionals.

“For participation to be successful, users need to understand that design is a complex process involving difficult choices and resolving multiple contradictions.”

(Towers 1995, p.172)

These changes in roles and the relationships between the different players in the participation process form an integral part of the research programme set out here. Although the research sets out to evaluate the built-change because of community involvement in the design and development process, the roles of each of the actors is of vital importance; indeed it is proposed that each of the important players in a specific housing scheme will be interviewed during the course of the case studies. Having established that participatory design requires changes on behalf of those involved it is now necessary to look at the different methods and techniques that can be adopted.

3.4.3 Methods Of Tenant Involvement In Design

It is now necessary to look at some of the different methods used to involve tenants in the design of their homes. IoH and RIBA (1988) sets out to describe the issues, suggest options and recommend principles, and is therefore useful when looking at the range of methods available.

IoH and RIBA (1988) attempts to isolate key areas of the design process in which tenants can become involved. The first of these, and the earliest in the design process, is during site selection. It is recognised that for this to be undertaken the tenants need to be identified early enough and that this is not very often possible; the reasons for this were discussed earlier. The second area referred to is during the general layout of the site. During this design stage, IoH and RIBA (ibid.) suggest that prospective tenants could have an input in the siting of the dwellings, car parking, open spaces and play areas. Again, this is dependent upon the early identification of the tenant group.

The third area where there is scope for participation is perhaps the most interesting. IoH and RIBA (1998) suggest 17 areas where tenants can have an input in the design of the standards and choice of specification for their individual household. These 17 areas are:

- *General space standards*
- *Internal storage provision*
- *Kitchen storage and appliances*
- *Ventilation requirements*
- *Electrical provision*
- *Roof construction/attic space*
- *Drying facilities*
- *External materials/finishes*
- *Requirements of statutory authorities*
- *Standards for internal room layouts*
- *External storage provision*
- *Insulation levels*
- *Heating system types*
- *Bathroom equipment*
- *Garden size*
- *Refuse storage*
- *Car parking/garage provision*

(From: IoH and RIBA, p.12)

It can be seen that when the involvement is concerned with individually tailoring dwellings it is important that the tenants are selected early enough in the process. It also raises concerns about the future letting of properties that are designed around the original inhabitants, especially in a sector with high turnover rates and Sim (1993) discusses this point.

IoH and RIBA also mention the possibility of tenants being involved in the assessment of the financial options, for example whether more costly (higher specification) dwellings could be financed directly by an increased rental contribution. Finally, the report highlights the possibility of tenants being involved in the future housing management. This broader-based approach to involvement is discussed with regard to the Liverpool Co-operatives by MacDonald (1986).

The Context of Participation

It is argued by IoH and RIBA (1988) that the context of the participation should be agreed at the outset, this report highlights the four points that must be agreed at the at this point:

- (a) the objectives;*
- (b) the framework within which the project will be prepared;*
- (c) the level of participation;*
- (d) the resources that will be available for participation.*

(IoH and RIBA 1988, p.13)

IoH and RIBA (1988) state that these four points would usually be considered by the housing authority but suggests that it is important for the tenants to be given the opportunity to challenge them. It is also suggested that the issues might be considered first by a tenants' group seeking action in a specific area. The four are discussed below:

(a) The Objectives

Addressing each of the four points in turn, IoH and RIBA (1988) describe the objectives in general, broad-brushed terms. An example given is:

"...to involve users directly in the design of new dwellings to meet their requirements in a better way."

(IoH and RIBA 1988, p.13)

Sanoff (2000) also recognises the need to first establish the objectives and states that when sufficient time is spent planning for the participation at the outset the *"...chance of success is greatly enhanced"* (p.13).

(b) The Framework

IoH and RIBA (1988) recognise that any development will operate within existing frameworks and suggests that these are: statutory requirements and approvals, procedures, the financial programme and standards, policies and cost levels. IoH and RIBA (ibid.) discusses each of these in turn and this is summarised below:

Statutory Requirements and Approvals - This essentially refers to Building Regulations, planning consent, highway requirements and fire standards.

Procedures - Each developing housing authority will have its own formal procedures and these need to be understood by all involved. Consideration should be given as to whether these need amendment to take into account the tenant participation.

Financial Programme - The development will usually fit into a broader building programme across the remit of the housing authority. This needs to be understood by all involved parties, including tenants' groups.

Standards, Policies and Cost Levels - The housing authority will typically have in place a set of policies, cost levels and standards relating to developments. IoH and RIBA (1988) suggest that these should be made known to all involved parties and should be open to discussion and challenge at the outset of each development involving tenants.

(c) The Levels of Participation

IoH and RIBA (1988) suggest that the degree of tenants' power to make decisions needs to be established as well as the point at which the involvement begins. IoH and RIBA (ibid.) isolate three stages when participation can begin:

- 1. Before any decision has been made about what action should be taken on an existing estate or what site is to be selected for a new-build project; or*
- 2. When a decision has already been made about what general action should be taken with an existing estate or what site is to be used for a new-build project; or*
- 3. When the basis options for modernisation have already been prepared for an existing estate or when options for a range of house plans have been produced for a new-build project.*

(IoH and RIBA 1988, p.14)

It is put forward by IoH and RIBA (1988) that these different stages should be understood and considered by all participants so that what is achievable is established.

(d) Resources

IoH and RIBA (1988) point out that all involved parties should recognise that the stage at which participation begins, and the level of this participation will affect the amount of time volunteers will be needed to spend on the process. This also has resource implications to the housing authority and decisions have to be made as to whether the additional work can be managed in-house or whether consultants need to be employed. Additional temporary staff such as community development officers could have a crucial role to play in certain developments such as the Liverpool Co-operatives (Wates 1992, McDonald 1986, Architects Journal 1984).

Another resource decision that is referred to by loH and RIBA (1988) is whether to establish an office on site. The leading exponent of community architecture, Rod Hackney, espouses the setting up of small site offices (Hackney and Sweet 1990, Wates and Knevitt 1987 and Towers 1995). He claims that it is important for the community to be in touch with the whole process of design. loH and RIBA (1988) suggest that a show dwelling can serve the dual purpose of being a site base and help in the participation process by acting as a 1:1 scale model. The first recognised example of this approach was during Rod Hackney's development at Black Road, Macclesfield in 1972 when the architect set up practice in a nearby disused shop; for further details of this see Wates and Knevitt (1987).

Preparation for Participation

Once the context has been established, loH and RIBA (1988) outline the required preparation for a successful participation scheme. It is suggested that the scheme is more likely to be successful:

- 1. Where a truly representative tenants' group has been or can be formed;*
- 2. If training for all participants can be arranged;*
- 3. If good lines of communication are established between individual tenants, any tenants' group, the professionals and the housing authority*
(loH and RIBA 1988, p.14)

loH and RIBA (1988) goes on to discuss the three points above in detail, referring to the need for the process to be run in a professional manner. It is also noted that the community representatives would typically be volunteers and therefore concession needs to be made to fit in with working hours (evening meetings) and other requirements (such as the provision of a crèche). Finally reference is made to the possible need for training and this is discussed in more depth in the following section. Sanoff (2000) generally concurs with these points and suggests a series of questions that should be asked at the outset of any design participation programme. These warrant restating:

- *Who are the parties to be involved in the participation? Individuals or groups who will or should be involved in the participation activity being planned must be identified. Generally, people who will be affected by design and planning decisions should be involved in the process of making those decisions.*
- *What do we wish to have performed by the participation programme? For example, is the participation intended to generate ideas, to identify attitudes, to disseminate information, to resolve some identified conflict, to review a proposal, or merely to serve as a safety valve for pent-up emotions?*
- *Where do we wish the participation road to lead? What are the goals?*
- *How should people be involved? Appropriate participation methods have to be identified to achieve desired objectives. Methods such as community workshops and charrettes allow for diverse interests and promote human resource development. They may afford the opportunity for participants to have control over decisions. Public hearings, on the other hand, may provide information but may not promote community support.*
- *When in the planning process is participation needed or desired? It is necessary to decide where the participants should be involved, that is, in development, implementation, evaluation, or some combination thereof.*

(Sanoff 2000, p.9)

Sanoff (2000) states that although these are simple questions they are rarely asked before the development of a participation programme. He also reiterates the importance of the preparation and planning stages before the undertaking of any community involvement programme. Sanoff (ibid.) provides a lengthy discussion on the different methods and techniques of participation (pp.37-104) and the important areas of this are summarised below. Firstly, the author notes that if the participation is to be successful then results have to be visible to the participants:

“Participation can function if it is active and directed and if those who become involved experience a sense of achievement.”

(Sanoff 2000, p.37)

3.4.4 Models Of Tenant Participation In Design

A number of models of tenant involvement in design have been constructed and two very different ones are addressed in detail in this section. Firstly, an interesting model is put forward by the Swedish architect Fredrik Wulz (1990). The author discusses the basis of design participation by separating it into seven different forms:

1. *Representation;*
2. *Questionary*
3. *Regionalism*
4. *Dialogue*
5. *Alternative*
6. *Co-decision*
7. *Self-decision*

(from Wulz 1990, p.143)

Representation can be described as when the architect attempts to represent the wishes of the client. Wulz quite correctly points out that this is perhaps the very basis of the profession. The problems here are those as discussed in a previous chapter, namely those around the area of social distance and interpretation. The *Questionary*¹⁰ form of design participation is put forward as being a result of the development of the functional, scientific approach to architecture that arose during the inter-war years. This involves the use of pseudo-scientific data design by gathering data on the requirements of the population. It is useful to view this as *anonymised participation*. *Regionalism*, as its title suggests, takes into account regional differences and local population's preferences. These three forms would be places in a very low position on Arnstein's (1969) ladder.

Further up the ladder would lie what Wulz (1990) terms *Dialogue*. This is where informal conversations are held between the architect and the resident. This form is based on two-way communication but participation ends there: the last word in the design still lies with the architect. Further up the ladder lies what Wulz terms *Alternative* participation. This occurs when the resident is

¹⁰ In a later work, Sanoff (1992) refers to Wulz (1990) and the unusual term 'Questionary' is replaced with 'Questionnaires'.

presented with a series of alternatives; problems arise here with the presentation of these in a form that is understandable to the layman. Perhaps the ultimate result of the *Alternative* strategy is participation by voting, whereby the community selects an alternative by means of a democratic vote.

It can be seen that in all of the above forms of participation the architect has the final decision (Wulz 1990). The process termed *Co-decision* involves the community from the beginning of the design process and aims at the users' direct participation. There are a number of suppositions that have to be made if direct participation can be assumed. It has to be assumed that the individuals are interested in participating and are motivated to do so, that they have the time and that the extra costs and time are subsidised suitably. If these conditions are not apparent then the active nature of this participation will turn into a passive one. The question of community apathy is an interesting one and will be explored during the course of the research. The *Self-Decision* model moves the decision making power still further from the architect and requires the architect to inform the participants and leave the decision making to the residents themselves. The professional acts as an enabler: this is seen as the ultimate in participation and is rarely found.

Wulz (1990) asserts that the above classification can be used to produce a participation profile for each architect or each development, and as such this may prove useful in the analysis of the participation methods to be investigated. The author also discusses the different time-periods of the design process that affect the analysis of the involvement; he describes the programme as being three-part: design, construction and maintenance.

IoH and RIBA (1988) develop another interesting model of tenant participation in the design process. This is more descriptive than that of Wulz (1990); it addresses the key stages of the design process and suggests the points at which decisions are made. IoH and RIBA (1988) is essentially a guide for practitioners involved in participation initiatives and as such the emphasis is placed on the pragmatic. The summary table is reproduced overleaf.

3.4.5 Improving Tenant Involvement in Design

Many authors refer to ways in which tenant involvement in design could be improved. As mentioned earlier, Duncan and Halsall (1994) suggest that a holistic approach to tenant involvement is required and that all parties involved need to work closely together. IoH and RIBA (1988) also recognises the importance of the working relationships of all parties and puts forward that a change of role is required if participation is to be effective. This is discussed earlier in this chapter and at this point it is necessary to review the ways in which this can be brought about.

The need for appropriate training of those involved in design participation is stated by a number of commentators (IoH and RIBA 1988, Sim 1993, Towers 1995 etc.) Sim (1993) states:

“The key to meaningful participation in the design process must be training, because residents, professionals, councillors and committee members require skills and awareness not necessarily needed in the traditional design process.”

(Sim 1993, p.147)

Sim (1993) goes on to explain that the training offered must focus on residents. He argues that the professionals would be involved in many schemes and their skills would improve with experience, whereas the tenants would be likely to be involved only in the design of their own area. The four skill areas isolated by Sim (ibid.) are discussed below with reference to the work of others where appropriate:

Communication - initially written newsletters etc. but also incorporating drawings and plans. Canter (1974) is quoted by Sim and makes this point eloquently:

“Designers sometimes act as if the bird’s-eye view they have of a building from its plan is somehow transmitted to the users...”

(Canter 1974, p.41)

Sketches and perspectives are put forward as better tools than plans as they are less technical and more user-friendly. Computer Aided Design (CAD) is

also referred to as the 'way ahead' (Sim 1993, p.148)'. In the years since Sim (1993), great advances in CAD systems mean that the applications are more user-friendly, both for professionals and tenants. It will be interesting to see if the opportunities that this tool provides are being grasped by the housing association sector. The need for clear and effective communication throughout the participative design process is noted by IoH and RIBA (1988) which provides five rules to help engender closer communication. These are aimed at professionals involved in design participation initiatives, they are:

- *Define objectives - be clear about what you are trying to achieve.*
 - *Avoid ambiguities - express points simply and clearly.*
 - *Be friendly - personalise letters, use plain English and avoid jargon.*
 - *Present information clearly and attractively - use short sentences and paragraphs with diagrams and illustrations.*
 - *Be accessible - make it convenient for information to be exchanged.*
- (IoH and RIBA 1988, p.42)

Group-work - General group-working skills are required as well as basic skills like those needed for attending meetings and minute taking. The need for training in group working methods is also mentioned by others (IoH and RIBA 1988, Towers 1995). IoH and RIBA (1988) suggest training is required in:

- *Establishing a group,*
- *Building up confidence and cohesion,*
- *Establishing a common bond,*
- *Leading a group (spokesperson, motivator),*
- *Representing a group,*
- *Achieving a consensus and resolving conflicts and*
- *Managing a group.*

(IoH and RIBA 1988, p.42)

It can be seen that these seven points contain a degree of overlap but the overall view expressed is that training is required because both professionals and tenants are often unfamiliar with group working.

Decision-making and negotiating skills - Sim (1993) stresses the importance of these forming part of the training for tenants who are involved closely in participatory design initiatives. It is implied that the professional players are already experienced in this field. Towers (1995) recognises the

need for better training; in a particularly vitriolic appraisal of the architectural profession:

“The current system of professional education is based on narrow perceptions that largely ignore the primacy of utility and social service and the approaches necessary to achieve these aims. The system produces architects who are drawn from an exclusive social base, whose primary motivation is their desire to fulfil themselves by the creation of large new buildings that reflect their personal philosophy of design. Through the five long years that they have spent learning their art they have been trained to consider themselves superior to others who are untrained in design.”

(Towers 1995, p.195)

It is clear that Towers (1995) sees training, specifically that of the architects, as crucial to the successful involvement of tenants in the design of their housing. The author does not, however, reserve his criticism for the training provided for architects.

“What is true of architects is hardly less true of landscape architects or interior designers. Although these professions are less male-dominated, their training inculcates similarly grandiose ambitions and an exclusive view of their expertise in their chosen field of design. To these design elites, planners, engineers and surveyors who are untrained in the art of design have no worthwhile contribution to make; less still Joe Public, who has even less comprehension of the heady world of artistic creation.”

(Towers 1995, p.193)

Towers (1995) refers to the work of Avery (1992) who proposed reversing the priorities of architectural education. He suggests putting practice before theory, pragmatism before art, and completely redesigning the architectural degree course. Avery (ibid.) goes on to suggest that an architecture degree should be dedicated to good practice and provide a basis in sociology, urban history, town planning, landscape, interior design and the techniques of participation.

Duncan and Halsall (1994) refer to the importance of all professionals involved working closely together if the involvement is to be successful. Housing development officers, community workers, housing managers, architects, other

design professionals and the tenants need to operate as a team to make the participation effective. This is an important point and will be investigated during the case studies. The need for this inclusive type of practice is also discussed by IoH and RIBA (1988), with one of the recommendations being the need to adopt a teamwork approach. The other recommendations put forward by IoH and RIBA (ibid.) conclude the report and it is useful to restate these:

1. *Evolve a formal policy,*
2. *Define the aims of the participation,*
3. *Provide support for tenants groups,*
4. *Provide resources - for tenants and professionals,*
5. *Evaluate each project,*
6. *Redefine roles,*
7. *Adopt a teamwork approach,*
8. *Initiate training for new skills,*
9. *Respond to management issues,*
10. *Monitor and evaluate techniques.*

(IoH and RIBA 1988, p.43)

This checklist (IoH and RIBA 1988) is designed to act as an aid to practitioners who are considering the use of tenant involvement techniques in the design of a new housing scheme. Woolley (1985, p.258) produces seven summary conclusions to his PhD thesis. These raise several points that are pertinent and are therefore reproduced below:

1). That whatever is said in superficial accounts of user participation projects in the literature, the degree of participation, on closer examination, is quite limited. Architects and clients are dependent on relatively conventional procedures for finance, approvals development and design.

2) In no sense do the tenants design the schemes themselves. They are dependent on the professionals, who therefore retain a substantial amount of control over decision making, whether or not this is their intention.

3) Thus user participation in design is a process by which users are informed as to the nature of the building development process and are given limited opportunities to influence decisions, depending on their abilities to ask the right questions and press their own ideas and needs.

4) *The case for user participation in design, in light of the above, is therefore not a strong one. It is conceivable that many of the benefits of user control, management, education and interaction identified in this study, could have been achieved in other ways without participation in design. Participation in design was not necessarily a guarantee that users' ideas and needs could be fully met.*

5) *There was little evidence to show that user participation was a solution to the problems of designing for user requirements. Far from simplifying design, communication and methodological problems, it considerably added to them. Conventional design methods and architectural practice do not readily adapt to radical social experiments and the architects involved had many problems in dealing with all the conflicting demand placed upon them.*

6) *It would also be quite wrong to assume that, through user participation, ordinary people are able to gain some ascendancy over professionals. Instead it was clear that architects and others retained a strong position of influence as intermediaries between the client and the external agencies.*

7) *Finally, it was found that the projects were an important experience for some participants and did 'transform their lives' to a limited degree, but this was not due to the intervention of a community architect but a determination on the part of the tenants to improve their conditions. The presence of a sympathetic architect was only a minor contributory factor in this.*

(Woolley 1985, p.258)

Finally, Woolley (1985) concludes that there is a need for further research into development projects where tenants have been involved:

"There is an important need for more accounts, research and analysis into projects which examine process and product and reveal, honestly, the problems and achievements. Such needs to be published and circulated in a variety of forms, accessible to tenants, policy makers and professionals."

(Woolley 1985 p.258)

3.5 Overview

This investigation into design and participation has informed the research in a number of important ways. Aside from the obviously interesting background study, several important themes have emerged that proved to be fundamental in the construction of the research questions and research method. This overview section sets out to summarise these key ideas and clarify just how they were of value to the research.

The brief study into the development of the design process that begins this chapter served to inform the research in a variety of ways. It highlights the increased complexity of the design process and the resultant distancing from the end-client. Specifically, the work of Teymur (1993) helped to frame the research by discussing the neglect of the discipline of housing design by the architectural profession.¹¹ The reference to a lack of connections between the architectural profession and housing research are also directly relevant to the study conducted here, a study conducted in the hinterland between the two.

The work of Schön (1983 and 1987) dealing with 'reflective practice' proved illuminating in the way that it helps to uncover the elements of the design process and makes reference to the juggling of a set of variables. Taking the involvement of the public as being just another of these variables, whether it be via the feedback from a survey or a more hands-on exercise, proved useful in the analysis of the case studies. Schön's later work was equally helpful in the way that it defines the areas of design as 'domains' and the skill of the designer as being to weight each of these appropriately. There is great value placed on the experience of the designer. This provided further reason to select case study schemes designed by a selection of both in-house architecture teams, with presumably a great deal of social-housing design experience, and external practices, with considerably less in the field.

¹¹ In addition, this literature spec confirms this researcher's experience of the architectural profession, completing spec-build housing estates in the north-west.

The review of literature on housing design was undertaken in order to inform the work in a variety of different ways. The RIBA plan of work highlights the stages of the architectural process, as taught to student architects and largely followed in practice. This was too detailed to be of use directly, but helped to establish the need to look at the time of involvement, both for the questionnaire survey and in the case studies. This section of the chapter again refers to the neglect of housing as a discipline of architecture and mentions the lack of design carried out in housing, and the use of standardised plans for non-standard problems. This work, alongside personal experience, led to the decision to investigate the extent of the use of standard house plans (via the survey) and secondly to consider the effect of these on the community involvement (in the case studies).

The constraints placed on housing design by local authorities, in the guise of design guides and development control policy, informed the research greatly. The implication that innovation is stifled as a result and that aesthetic decisions are being made by people unqualified to do so is interesting in the context of the research. It is suspected that the selected piece of polemic from Ford (2000) encapsulates the views of many architects, especially in the design of new housing. Local authority 'blanket' design policies, such as the one limiting the number of stories in Liverpool 1980s, are admittedly less prevalent than they were, but the powers of the council are still largely intact. It is interesting to investigate the influence of the local authority and the role that they may play in the participation process.

In addition to the role played by local authorities, the Housing Corporation is shown to exert considerable influence over the developing RSL, mainly in the criteria used for the allocation of SHG. The very fact that many design and build packages, using standard layout plans, have been deliberately costed directly in line with SHG levels, acts as a major encouragement to follow this route. It is suspected that the majority of RSLs adopt a design and build approach, though this is not proven and the survey addresses this point. The idea that these non-traditional contract arrangements potentially hindered the

involvement of tenants in the design process, or at least limited the scope for such participation, emerged at this point. The evidence implies that the links between the client and the designers are less robust in the design and build model and this claim will be investigated. Finally, the stated concerns that the design and build approach affects overall design quality (Karn and Sheridan 1994) are noted with interest, and although this does not directly address the research undertaken here would form interesting supplementary research.

The question of why tenants should be involved in the design of new properties proved illuminating. It appears, from the investigation undertaken, that it is considered a 'good thing' despite the paucity of evidence to support its effectiveness. Much of the literature is committed to selling the concept of involvement in design, without actually providing evidence of the benefits that it provides. This research sets out to answer some of these questions, establishing how effective such schemes are by assessing what changes are made as a result of community involvement.

The review sets out to address the obstacles to participation in design and many are found. Issues about the complexity of the design process, as discussed earlier, arose and it will be enlightening to see how this issue is addressed in the case study schemes. Much of the literature points to tenant involvement being untenable in a social housing design scenario, with only legislation, Housing Corporation policy and the role of the local authority, ensuring that it is conducted at all. The other benefits are unclear and this research will address whether the participation that takes place does affect the houses that are produced.

The issue of identification of the future residents early enough in the process is raised once again. It is at this point that the use of representative groups of tenants must be considered, along with the implications of this. Issues arise in connection with the 'representativeness' of the groups and also in connection with apathy, as those participating will not see the benefits of their efforts.

theoretical and the latter being essentially descriptive, but they will be used in conjunction, to be helpful in understanding the complex series of events that unfolded in each of the case studies.

The suggested improvements to enable better participation are illuminating and valuable in the way that they highlight deficiencies that can be checked for during the course of the research. In particular the recommendations put forward by IoH and RIBA (1988) and Woolley (1985) are especially useful in establishing whether the RSLs (some ten years after their recommendations were published) have adapted their approach. In addition Wulz (1990), also provides a useful classification of tenant involvement in design and this too is discussed in relation to the case study developments, later in the thesis.

In general terms it can be seen that the body of literature on community involvement in design is not extensive, nor is it particularly recent. A great deal of this work was written in the late 1980s and early 1990s (eg. Woolley 1986, Wates and Knevitt 1987, IoH and RIBA 1988, NFHA 1990, Duncan and Halsall 1994, etc). The key exception to this being the later work of Sanoff (2000), written in the United States of America. The age of the material however should not detract from the relevance of the information that it provides. It should also be noted that one of the key things missing from the existing literature is any systematic evidence of the impact made by tenant involvement in design. The research undertaken here is a concerted attempt to fill this gap and see if it can be established how and when tenants have explicitly influenced outcomes.

The literature review also reveals that the housing/architecture/planning disciplines are generally not critical of the concept of involvement in design, with only Woolley (1986) really questioning the benefits of such an approach. It is for this reason that work from another discipline (predominantly Heeks 1999) was drawn upon. Many authors (IoH and RIBA 1988, NFHA 1990, Duncan and Halsall 1994 etc) do not set out to challenge the premise that public involvement in design is a 'good thing.' Instead, the works can be

These issues, though tangential to the main direction of the research, will prove interesting to observe during the case study investigations.

In addition to the role played by the residents, it is also put forward that there will necessarily be changes in the role of all of the actors in the development process. The interviewing of all of the major actors in each of the case study developments will uncover how (and if) the roles are changed as a result of the tenant involvement. IoH and RIBA (1984) lists seven professions that must adapt in order to better involve the tenants and this list acts as a loose interview checklist for each study. Particular interest is taken in the role of the architect as it is suggested that the changes required of this profession are the most wide-ranging and require the greatest amount of diversion from 'normal practice'. As a result, the importance of selecting an architect 'sympathetic to the cause of participation' is stated and this is an avenue that will be explored during the qualitative research process.

The literature review continues by looking at the variety of methods adopted to involve tenants in the design process, and IoH and RIBA (1988) proved especially valuable in this respect. This work further underlined the importance of looking at the stages of the process in which tenants could best be involved, and also of establishing the context of the participation at the outset. This was fundamental in the construction of both the survey and qualitative case study investigations. It is suggested that by looking at the individual stages of the design process it will be possible to establish when design decisions are made, and how (if at all) the input of the tenants played a role in these decisions. It is also necessary to find out whether good forward planning of the involvement process, by the developing housing association, pays dividend and results in more effective participation.

The models of tenant participation put forward by Wulz (1990) and IoH and RIBA (1988) are valuable in that they provide analytical frameworks which will be used in an attempt to unlock the case study design and development processes. These models are very different, with the former being more

viewed as guides for practitioners about to embark upon a design programme utilising community participation techniques.

The literature also brings other interesting questions to the fore. For example, Towers (1995) is particularly critical of architectural education, seeing this as an obstacle to real participation. There will be an opportunity to see if there is any evidence of the architects hindering the process of involvement in the four developments investigated. Sim (1993) mentions the possibilities brought about by new information and communication technologies, and asks how they could potentially aid participation. Again the effects of computer-aided design and the Internet will be assessed during the research.

Perhaps the key idea that emerges is raised by Duncan and Halsall (1994). They state that for community involvement to be successful there have to be tangible results, and this forms the very basis of the research programme described here. Woolley (1985 p.258) also requests that additional research is conducted into participation in the design process in order to establish whether it is effective. The research programme laid out in the following chapters could be viewed as a belated response to this request.

4. Research Method

It is the overarching aim of this chapter to explain the research method adopted and how and why this was decided upon. This chapter begins with a statement of the research questions. These are the main questions that emerged as a result of the review of the existing literature that preceded this chapter. There is then a description of the two inter-dependent strands of enquiry, the quantitative and the qualitative elements that combine to form the overall research programme. This is followed by a discussion about the design of the research tools, including the reasoning behind each decision that was taken. A brief section describing the overall approach to the research follows this and concludes this chapter.

4.1 Research Questions

The general area of research, the initial idea, is summed up by the title of this thesis, and the origin and early stages of development of this idea are described in the introduction. The research was honed as a result of the literature review and the key ideas that emerged from this are summarised at the end of chapters two and three in the overview sections. The statement of research questions that follows is the result of this process. The research programme can be seen to consist of two concomitant questions. These questions are stated and explained in turn below. Each of the two principal questions contain within them subsidiary lines of enquiry, and these too are discussed. The first research question that emerged is:

What is the current situation as regards community participation in the design of new-build social housing?

The literature review revealed a great deal about the various techniques and processes of tenant participation, both in general housing management and in new-build housing design. However, it did not really provide enough information as to the extent of the practice, or as to what exactly RSLs are doing by way of involving tenants in the design process. It is considered essential to understand exactly what the current situation is, before the effectiveness of the processes can be established. In order to answer this broad question satisfactorily it needs to be separated into its constituent parts, firstly:

How are RSLs involving both their tenants and the wider community?

This question is concerned with establishing exactly what mechanisms housing associations are using to involve residents across their practice. The literature review revealed a number of different structures used to involve tenants, including a strong tenant presence on the board of management, utilisation of existing tenants' associations and the establishment of tenant groups specifically to consult on key issues.

In addition to investigating the mechanisms of tenant involvement used by RSLs it is also desirable to look, in a more focused way, at the range of techniques used to involve communities in the design of new-build dwellings. Once again, the existing theory revealed many different methods and techniques that can be used to achieve this, but did not adequately address the issue of how many associations were using each type. As this research is concerned with the effectiveness of community involvement in the design of social housing, it is considered important to address this omission:

What tenant involvement techniques are being employed by RSLs in the design of new-build social housing?

The answer to this question will establish the range of techniques that are being used; it is also important to find out which of these is most widespread:

How many RSLs are employing each technique?

Once it has been established which methods and techniques are being used by housing associations to involve tenants, and by how many organisations, it would be useful to discover what the pattern of this usage is. The literature review revealed four stages of involvement, *initiation, preparation, activity and continuation* (DoE 1994) and it is essential to establish when the landlord seeks to include the community, by asking:

At what point in the programme is the community included in the design process and at what point does their involvement end?

The literature also reveals that the housing associations sector is very diverse in nature, with RSLs varying considerably both in terms of size and location of their homes. It is suspected that this will affect the ways in which involvement takes place and this therefore needs to be addressed in the design of the research programme. The following question needs to be answered:

Does the type and size of the RSL affect the way in which tenants and the wider community are involved in the design process?

For example, are larger and more geographically spread-out housing associations more likely to employ more participation techniques than smaller, more locally responsive organisations. Another consideration made apparent by theory is the location of the individual new-build housing development. It has been established that housing associations develop on a variety of sites, including those with a very specific local character and also within existing local authority estates. It is suspected that this greatly affects the way in which the involvement takes place and increases the likelihood of this changing the built-outcome. This suggests the question:

Is the approach to, and the outcome of, community involvement affected by the location of the development, and if so how?

The architect has, unsurprisingly, been isolated by some authors as being the most vital player in the involvement of communities in design of new housing, and it is therefore essential to investigate this role. Some housing associations have in-house architects and others appoint external practices, for a variety of different reasons. It is therefore important to establish both the extent of in-house architectural practices and the scope of their responsibility, by asking:

How many RSLs have in-house architecture departments and what is the extent of their role in developing new-build dwellings?

As mentioned at the start of this section, the research divides into two main areas of questioning. The first questions can be seen to be predominantly concerned with the existing situation as regards community involvement in design; these can be viewed as 'setting the scene' for the work that follows. It should also be recognised that these questions provide a valuable addition to the existing body of research in the field. It could be argued that the second group of questions addresses the main focus of the research, as they deal directly with the effectiveness of tenant involvement in providing better and more appropriate dwellings.

The investigation into the literature revealed that there was a significant gap in

the existing material with regard to the justification for involving tenants in the design process. Although many authors claim that participation is a worthwhile endeavour, there is little by way of conclusive evidence that public involvement is effective in producing better social housing. Duncan and Halsall (1994) recognise that it is essential for there to be tangible results if participation is to be successful and Woolley (1985) goes further, by requesting that research is conducted to establish whether this is the case. This is an important area of research and the next key question is designed to address this gap in the existing material:

Does tenant involvement in the design of social housing affect the eventual built product, and if so how?

This question is concerned with the way in which the involvement of tenants changes both the way in which houses are designed, and the houses that are built as a result of this involvement. The aim is to establish what differences are made to houses as a result of the input of tenants and how these differences are brought about. Although this is the overriding research question, it can best be addressed by looking at a series of more focused lines of enquiry.

As mentioned earlier, it is suggested by the literature that the stage in the design process at which the community becomes involved is of significance to the effectiveness of the participation. This shows that it is necessary to investigate when the involvement is most effective and therefore where the (often limited) resources are best targeted, and this raises the question:

At what stage in the design process does tenant involvement have the most impact?

Another important question that needs to be addressed is concerned with the effectiveness of the different involvement techniques that were identified by the literature survey. RSLs may use only one, or a combination of involvement techniques in the design of new housing, and this research sets out to assess the effectiveness of the adopted strategies by asking the

question:

Which tenant involvement techniques are the most effective in the design of new-build social housing?

These involvement techniques are appropriate for different stages in the design process and so the previous two questions must be addressed alongside each other. In addition, the size and geographical spread of the developing RSLs is also likely to affect the effectiveness of the participation and this is another area that needs investigation. It is expected that the tenant involvement will differ in style between larger and smaller landlords, but there is an associated issue as to whether one is more effective than the other and this gives rise to the question:

Is the effectiveness of the involvement in the design process affected by the size of the developing RSL, and if so how?

It was established that RSLs develop on a variety of sites, with different characteristics, and the location of the specific development emerged as a determining factor in the style of participation selected by the developing landlords. This gives rise to the research question:

Is the effectiveness of the involvement in the design process affected by the location of the site of the new development, and if so how?

Another factor in the involvement of the community is the role played by the architects, whether these be internal or external. As it is the architect who is generally responsible for the design decisions taken, they can be seen as being key figures in any design involvement process, and the role that they perform of vital importance to the outcome. The existing literature supports the notion that the design process is complex and difficult to unravel, and also that the architectural profession (as a result of the training provided) does not encourage participation (Towers 1995, Teymur 1993). This led to the question:

How is the effectiveness of community involvement in housing design influenced by the role of the architect?

The extent of the involvement of RSLs in nominations agreements with local authorities is another key finding of the literature survey. This means that often the landlord hands over control over its allocations and cannot identify future tenants prior to completion of new dwellings. It can be seen that this will greatly affect the way that participation is organised, using representative groups as opposed to future tenants of the new dwellings, in most instances. This forms the basis of the penultimate research question:

How does the late selection of future tenants alter the effectiveness of the involvement process?

The final research question is general in nature and encapsulates one of the main themes of the research that emerged during the course of the literature review, and also from architectural practice experience. There are a large number of external variables that affect the design process and the involvement of the community is only one of these. This gives rise to the question:

What importance is placed on the decisions made via design participation initiatives and how do they affect the design?

These research questions require a different approach to answer each one. The following section briefly describes the overall research strategy employed in order to answer these questions.

4.2 Research Strategy

This section discusses the strategy adopted to address the research questions as previously described. Throughout the process of designing the research strategy, careful consideration has been taken to keep the approach both as simple as possible, and appropriate to the questions that it sets out to answer. It should be stated that the research questions were the driving-force in the selection of an appropriate research strategy, which was developed without an adherence to dogma.

The research questions can be seen to fall into two distinct categories, as detailed in the previous chapter, and each of these requires a different style of enquiry. The first questions are essentially concerned with establishing exactly what RSLs are doing with regard to involving tenants in the design process. These questions lend themselves to a traditional quantitative research methods, using a postal questionnaire survey. The reasons for this are twofold: firstly in order to find out what the practices are of the RSL sector, it is desirable to ask as many individual associations as possible and the postal survey enables this. Secondly, the questions that this part of the research sets out to answer are clearly definable and the results are easily quantifiable.

The design and administration of the postal questionnaire survey is described in the following section of this chapter, but at this point it is necessary to discuss some of the general aims of this mode of enquiry. The survey was an opportunity to gain a wide range of information about the sector's development practice and the use of community involvement. It was also a consideration for the postal survey to assist in the selection of the case study developments that form the major part of the programme. As this part of the investigation was carried out necessarily at the start of the research period, it was important not to omit any questions that might prove useful later in the research. As a result of this the questionnaire is fairly comprehensive and covers some areas that were later found to be of little direct value to the research. Although much

of this has been omitted from the analysis that appears in chapter 5, some findings that were not directly linked to the research questions proved valuable in the construction of the case studies. An example of this are the questions relating to the perceived benefits and disadvantages of tenant involvement in design, located at the end of the survey; these provided an opportunity to see how developing RSLs view their attempts at participation. The national survey was an extremely good opportunity to gain information about the tenure and the results proved both interesting and useful in both the design and analysis of the case studies.

It should also be noted that although the initial questions are most suitably tackled by using an empirical tool, such as the survey, they are also addressed in more depth during the case studies. The second group of research questions are those adjudged to be best addressed by a qualitative, case study approach. In order to answer these questions it is not necessary to survey the whole sector, and a carefully selected sample of case study developments is appropriate. The selection of these schemes, and the criteria used to do this, is discussed later in this chapter.

Overall, it can be seen that the research questions are best addressed by using a combined research methodology, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative elements – so this was the strategy adopted. Robson (1993) set this out clearly:

“The general principle is that the research strategy or strategies employed must be appropriate for the questions you want to answer.”
(Robson 1993, p.3)

4.3 The Postal Questionnaire Survey

The research questions enquire about the current situation with respect to tenant involvement in the design of social housing. As the extensive literature review did not reveal any suitable data, the collection of this information forms part of this research programme. To obtain this data, from such a large sample group as English RSLs, a postal questionnaire survey was deemed the most suitable research tool and as such it was decided to adopt this approach. As discussed earlier, the second phase of the research involves case study investigations; the other key role of the survey is to assist in the selection of these housing developments. There follows a description of the design and administration process of the postal survey.

4.3.1 The Questionnaire Sample

Having decided to use a questionnaire survey it was initially necessary to establish whether it was necessary to use a sample of RSLs, or to survey the entire sector. It was decided not to sample all housing associations for two reasons; primarily, because the literature revealed that many are small and inactive in terms of new housing development - they are not regularly developing, or looking to develop, new housing. The secondary consideration is that a group comprising of all RSLs would be too large, taking into consideration the dual constraints of time and finance. It was therefore decided that the most sensible approach would be to survey only those associations that had recently been involved in building new social housing. It is put forward that the validity of the research does not suffer as a result of the omission of the smaller associations from the sample group.

In order to establish which housing associations were active in terms of development, information was sought from the Housing Corporation. The literature revealed that as the organisation responsible for the administration of Social Housing Grant (SHG), this would be the best source of information on new-build RSL dwellings. It was decided to sample the landlords that had

completed developments during a specific calendar year and the year, 1996-97 was selected. The questionnaire sample consists of all English housing associations that were successful with applications for SHG in that year. The year 1996-97 was selected because, as mentioned earlier, one of the functions of the survey was to play a role in the selection of the case study developments. As a result of this decision, the sampled housing associations needed to have completed the dwellings that they had gained the Social Housing Grant for in the sampled year. It was felt that by selecting the later year of 1997-8, for which the figures were available at the time, the developments might not have been completed prior to the outset of the case study investigations in the summer of 1999. The details about this group were received from the Housing Corporation on request. The sample initially numbered some 280 housing associations, though this number was later revised taking into account housing associations that had been subsumed into larger group structures in the intervening period. The eventual working sample size was 267 housing associations.

4.3.2 The Design Of The Questionnaire

Having established the sample group and the information that the survey was required to uncover, the next stage was to design the questionnaire. This involved both the selection and structure of the questions themselves, and the general design and layout of the document. The survey consists of a main body of questions separated into appropriate sections, and a RSL-specific appendix that contains a single question about each individual development. The main questionnaire was sent to all of the housing associations, whereas the appendix was different for each. The appendix is discussed in more detail in the following section and it is the design of the main body of the survey that is discussed here. An example of the questionnaire form can be found in appendix 1.

It was decided to separate the main body of the questionnaire into four sections. This decision was taken primarily to make the questionnaire more

clear and easier to complete for the sample housing associations. The organisation of the questions also enabled each of the sample RSLs to divide the completion of different parts of the survey among different departments. This helped to ensure that the survey was completed fully and accurately. Overall, the decision to organise the questionnaire in a clear and attractive manner was taken to improve the chances of a good useable response rate. Each of the four sections are discussed in turn below.

1. Your Housing Association

This section initially asks the name of the housing association and continues by asking for basic information about each organisation. Firstly, the survey enquires as to how many units are managed, whether dwellings are provided solely for a specific needs group in society, and where housing stock is located. The sample group were then asked about tenant representation on their Board of Management. The first section was designed to gain basic information about the housing associations and to ease the respondents into the main sections that follow.

2. Your Development Programme

The second section contains questions relating to the development programmes of the RSLs. It initially enquires as to the nature of the development programmes over a three-year period. This is followed by a question asking whether the association developed on local authority estates and whether they had been involved in consortia agreements with other landlords. The penultimate part of the section consists of a series of questions relating to the responsibility for the design of new property. The associations are then asked if they have an in-house architectural team and if so how this was made up. They were also asked how this team is used and which other outside consultants they use during the course of a housing development. The section concludes with questions about specific development policies, such as the use of standard house plans and the presence of any other design guidelines.

3. Your General Tenant Involvement Policy

This section deals with the tenant involvement policies of the housing association. It begins with an explanatory note, provided to make the questionnaire easier to complete and this is reprinted in Chapter 5. The questions in this section deal with the participation of tenants across the particular RSL in question, their representation and sphere of influence. The final question relates to the different techniques that have been used by the associations to foster closer tenant involvement across their practice.

4. Your Use Of Tenant Involvement In Design

The final section of the main part of the questionnaire is concerned with the housing association's use of tenant involvement in design, and as such can be considered the most important section. After initially asking whether the associations have a specific policy about involving tenants in the design of new homes, they are asked at what point this occurs during the development process. The RSLs are then asked to describe their approach to tenant involvement, with the help of the note printed at the beginning of the previous section. After being asked whether they have been involved in any 'Planning for Real' style workshops, the questionnaire ends with two open questions. These ask about the housing association's view on the benefits of involving tenants in the design of new houses and the major obstacles to this process. Finally the person completing the form was asked to enter their name and job title, to aid any potential further correspondence.

The main body of the questionnaire as described above also has a front cover, the reverse of which contains a variety of information to aid the officer completing the survey. It states that the questionnaire should take no more than fifteen minutes to complete, it guarantees confidentiality and it gives contact details should they encounter any problems. The inner cover also contains a brief contents table noting what lies within.

The RSL Specific Appendix

As mentioned earlier, the questionnaire also contains a case specific appendix

relating to each housing association. The information provided by the Housing Corporation also gave details of each of the five thousand plus developments that were awarded SHG in the sample year of 1996/7. These developments ranged from small estates of around fifty dwellings to phases comprising of a singular dwelling. It was decided to enquire about tenant involvement during the course of these specific developments. After initial examination of the data set, it was decided that although ideally each of the 5,620 developments would be surveyed, for the purposes of this research it was both impractical and undesirable to attempt this for the two reasons, one minor and one major, as stated below:

Researcher Workload - The minor reason for not using the whole sample was connected with the transferal of 5,620 separate development details onto 267 questionnaire appendices. This was considered to be prohibitively time-consuming, taking into account the constraints of the PhD process. The issue of processing a large amount of returned data was also considered at this juncture.

Expectations Of Respondent - The major reason for the decision not to use the whole sample of SHG developments was connected with the expectations placed on the person completing the questionnaire. For the larger RSLs, the ones with the bigger development programmes, the respondent would have had to recall (or check the records of) over 100 separate developments, each of which had been designed almost two years previously. This was considered to place an unfair burden on the respondent as it would take too much time and effort to complete. It was considered likely to increase the likelihood of the whole questionnaire being ignored, resulting in a significant decrease in the response rate and the subsequent validity of the entire data set.

It can be seen therefore that some form of sampling of the population, in order to reduce the size of the workload for both researcher and researched, was necessary. It was important that the type of sampling that was adopted was

representative of the population and would provide the breadth of coverage required. When designing any sampling framework the nature of the data needs to be carefully considered (for further information see, Dillman 1994). In the case of the developments receiving SHG in 1996-97 there was a great deal of variation between the size of these developments, and this was considered relevant to the research being carried out. Of the 5,620 schemes developed with the aid of SHG some 4,298 were developments of less than 10 units of accommodation and of these, over half were applications for only one property.

It was decided that a simple random sample would include too many of the small developments of less than 10 units and a large proportion of single dwellings. This would not provide the information required because, it was assumed, that housing associations would be less likely to involve tenants in the design when only developing one house, or for a small development. This section of the survey was also intended to assist in the selection of the case studies, and these would be required to be a more substantial development than one dwelling. It was also felt that many good larger developments, that may prove to be ideal case studies, might be bypassed as a result of using unweighted random sampling. It was therefore decided to undertake a stratified random sample of the 5,620 developments, weighting the sample in favour of the larger developments comprising more than 10 dwellings.

The method employed to achieve this was to select a 10% random sample of the smaller developments (under ten units) and a 50% random sample of the larger developments (over 10 units). This resulted in 430 developments comprising less than 10 units and 660 developments of more than 10 units. Therefore these 1,090 developments were isolated and the housing associations responsible for them were asked whether or not the involved tenants in their design. See section 4.3.5 Administration of the Survey, for a discussion on how this was achieved.

The response to the RSL-specific appendix was generally poor, with a number

of RSLs that had responded well to the other more general aspects of the survey leaving the appendix page blank. The pilot study, which had also contained the appendices, gave no hint to of this problem, with six of the seven responding associations completing the appendix fully. In the whole sample a number of respondents annotated the section with, '*This will take too long,*' or '*Not enough time to complete*'. Of the 138 responding housing associations, 112 at least partly completed the appendix. This response of over 81% would appear to be a reasonable return; closer inspection however revealed that many housing associations did not fully complete the section or added a variety of explanatory notes. Overall the data was considered to be potentially unreliable and was rejected on those grounds. It would appear that in many cases the request was too demanding of the housing associations. The time required of the respondents to find out the details of each of their recent schemes, especially for the larger and more development active associations, proved to be the downfall of the section. The poor level and quality of response to the appendix led to the eventual, extremely reluctant in view of the time invested, abandonment of this avenue of enquiry.

4.3.4 The Pilot Study

Prior to the posting of the full questionnaire a pilot study was undertaken. Ten housing associations were selected from across the spectrum, including very large national housing providers and smaller more local organisations. The response to the pilot study was encouraging, with 70% of the housing associations responding with a completed questionnaire at the first time of asking. These included small, medium and large RSLs. Careful examination of the completed questionnaires and a number of telephone enquiries led to a number of minor alterations to the final draft. Only one question was redrafted as a result of some confusion about the required response and the layout was adjusted to improve the overall clarity. The pilot study however did not result in any major alterations and it was not necessary to re-administer the altered draft to the pilot housing associations.

4.3.5 Administration Of The Survey

Once the final amendments had been made a database of the RSLs was developed and the questionnaires, along with a cover letter and a stamped addressed return envelope, were dispatched in mid-February 1999. It was decided that attempting to address the survey to an individual within the housing association would be extremely time consuming and probably inaccurate with the information available. All questionnaires were therefore addressed generically, to the *Director of Development*.

The initial response was good but it did tail off after the first two weeks. After a period of approximately eight weeks a reminder letter was sent to all of the RSLs yet to respond. A task made less onerous by the creation of the aforementioned address database. This letter asked for the questionnaire to be completed and returned, or if the original copy had been mislaid to contact the enclosed telephone number for another copy. Second copies were not sent out to all of the non-respondents in a bid to reduce research expenditure. A second reminder letter was sent six weeks later and a number of reminder telephone calls were made. The response rate data is detailed in Appendix 2

The responses were coded and entered into Microsoft Excel. The selection of Excel (as opposed to SPSS, which cannot handle large amounts of text) meant that the questionnaire returns could be entered into one database, as soon as they were received, simplifying the management of the data. When it came to analyse the responses another file was created in SPSS and the numeric information was transferred from the Excel file. This was conducted to utilise the superior statistical capabilities of the software. Once this analysis had been completed the resultant graphs and tables were reconstructed in Excel, making use of the superior graphical presentation capabilities of the package. This apparently complicated process, using two different spreadsheets, was conducted in order to use each of the applications in its area of strength. The results of the questionnaire survey are discussed in Chapter 5.

4.4 The Case Studies

The postal questionnaire described in the previous section can be seen to have formed the empirical strand of the enquiry and the more detailed investigation, in the form of the case studies, is described in the remainder of this chapter. Again, the selection of the case study as the research tool to investigate the issue of tenant involvement in the design of social housing was based on the simple principle of adopting a method appropriate to the question. Research in a field that involves contemporary issues is particularly suited to the case study methodology (Yin 1994). This is when events are recent and information is fresh and available, whether from a direct source such as interviews or from secondary recorded sources. Case studies are the most suitable tool when the full effects of the changes have not yet been felt, when they are still taking shape. The research undertaken here seeks to evaluate the process (and the outcomes) of tenant involvement in design and establish the built-impact of such practice. It seems therefore entirely appropriate to investigate a selection of housing association developments and analyse the information gained.

4.4.1 Selection Of The Case Studies

It was decided early in the research that there should be four case study developments; four housing developments built by English RSLs where tenants were involved to some extent in the design process. It was felt that this would be the highest number manageable in the time available, taking into account the postal questionnaire survey discussed earlier. However, the method of selecting these case studies changed during the course of the research programme. There follows a brief description of the original selection method, a discussion as to why it was changed and finally a full description of the selection method adopted.

The initial framework for selecting case studies was based on the '*level of involvement*'. This means, one case study would be selected where the

tenants had been closely involved throughout the design and development process, one case study where the involvement had been less intensive, another where there had been a lower degree of involvement still (perhaps only at key stages) and finally a 'control' case where there was no direct tenant involvement. It was felt that by conducting these case studies the involvement approaches and techniques could be investigated and their impact on the development assessed. The case studies would be selected from the developments detailed in the appendices of the questionnaires. The main problem with this selection method was only realised after the completion of the first case study in the West Midlands.

The West Midlands case study was initially selected as being an example of intensive tenant participation. This was based on information gained from the questionnaire and from a meeting with an officer from the RSL. However, as the case study progressed it became apparent that this was not really the case, and that the involvement was not as intensive as initially thought (see chapter 6). The unreliability of this aspect of the survey was perhaps the key factor in the abandonment of the RSL specific appendix as discussed earlier. It was realised that categorisation of the level of participation was unsatisfactory prior to the completion of the case studies, and therefore this could not be the method used to select the studies. It was decided that the level and extent of the tenant involvement could not be assessed until the case study had been completed and so another means of selecting the remaining case studies was required.

The case study selection method eventually adopted was based on a number of different factors that had assumed importance during the course of the literature review. Firstly, the type and scale of housing development, this is the constant factor in the selection of the different schemes. All of the case studies are general family housing developments, of more than 10 units and less than 30, carried out by a RSL in England, funded at least partly by SHG. The other factors used to select the developments are variable between the case studies. These include the location of the RSL's housing stock. The

literature review revealed a diverse sector, with associations ranging from large national, to very small localised, operators and the difference in approach of these vastly different organisations was considered an interesting selection criterion. Therefore, one very large, two medium-sized and one small housing association were selected. Two medium-sized RSLs were selected as they constitute the majority of the sector. The importance of the role of the architect was also highlighted by the theory investigation and as a result it was decided to select RSLs both with and without in-house architecture teams. The final selection criterion used was the location of the specific development to be investigated. The literature search showed that RSLs develop property in a variety of locations, including on existing local authority estates, and as a result it was decided to select developments in a variety of locations. Overall, the importance of the existing literature in the selection of the case study developments should not be understated. The table below illustrates the characteristics of the four case studies selected.

	Size of RSL	Location of RSL	In-house architects	Surrounding tenure
West Midlands	Medium	<i>Regional</i>	No	LA estate
South Yorkshire	Medium	Regional	Yes.	LA estate
North-east	Large	National	Yes	RSL estate
Greater London	Small	Local	No	Mixed

Figure 4.1: Characteristics Of The Case Study Developments

The questionnaire survey was not fully completed at the time of the selection and completion of the first case study, but sufficient returns had been received to choose the West Midlands development. Ideally this would have waited until the survey had been effectively closed but the time constraints on the study would not allow for this. The selection of the remaining case studies was completed after the questionnaire was closed and the information thereby gained was of great use in selecting the RSLs to be investigated.

As mentioned earlier, RSL-specific appendices were not satisfactorily

completed and were of little use in selecting the specific development. However the quality of the information from the main body of the survey meant that housing associations that met the selection criteria could be easily isolated. However, there were still many potential developments that would form suitable case studies, built by a variety of RSLs. It was at this point that it was decided that in order to reduce the number of potential case study developments an effort would be made to ensure a geographical spread. It was considered particularly important to have a development located in London, as the literature (and personal experience) revealed it to have a number of different social housing market characteristics. The South Yorkshire development is conveniently located close to the Department of Town and Regional Planning and the case study development in the north-east was a phase of a wider housing association regeneration of an entire estate that has been historically in voluntary sector management. The remaining case study housing associations were therefore selected by a process of filtering.

After the potential case studies were selected, letters were posted to the RSLs detailing some of the early questionnaire findings and expressing an interest in conducting further research. Initial meetings were arranged at which the nature of the research was explained and a suitable development established. It can be seen, therefore, that the actual case study developments were established in conjunction with the housing association. The importance of developing a good relationship with the development officer of the housing association was vital at this juncture, as was selecting a development where there was a likelihood of co-operation from all of the relevant players; this is discussed later.

4.4.2 Design Of The Case Studies

The case studies were designed in the period of time awaiting completion and return of the questionnaire survey. The main consideration during this process was keeping the enquiry focused on answering the research questions set out earlier in this chapter, and consequently filling the gap in the existing literature.

A two-strand case study research strategy was used, combining semi-structured interviews with analysis of documentary evidence, and this is described below.

Semi-structured interviews

These interviews form the main part of the research and all of the major players in the design and development were interviewed. These, it was realised at the outset, were likely to vary depending upon the structure of the organisations and the specific characteristics of the development investigated. However, at the initial stage they were expected to include at least:

- *The RSL development officer (or equivalent);*
- *The project architect;*
- *Local authority representative(s) – (possibly a planner);*
- *Key tenants and residents; and*
- *The RSL housing officer responsible for the area.*

The number of interviews was not prescribed at the outset and other players, as it became apparent that they would be useful, were approached for interview. The interviews were semi-structured in nature with the interviewer loosely following a topic guide. The advantage of the semi-structured approach was in the ability to draw on a specific area of interest without the constraint of a more rigid interview framework. They were better placed to cope with the differing situations that arose as a result of the varied backgrounds of the interviewees. Also, there was more of an opportunity to establish a rapport with the interviewee, and this led to a greater depth of information. The interviews were more of a two-way process, with the interviewees also helping to set the agenda, there was more scope for participation and this seemed particularly relevant to the area of research.

Documentary Evidence

The second strand of the case study research was comprised of an investigation into relevant documentary evidence. This included both written and graphic material relating to the developments investigated. The different forms of documentary evidence included:

- *Minutes of tenant/public meetings;*
- *Architectural drawings – house plans and site layouts;*
- *Planning applications;*
- *RSL reports – annual reports, policy documents etc;*
- *RSL/local authority design briefs, and*
- *Any relevant correspondence.*

Prior to the interviews as much relevant literature as possible was assembled. However much information, including that specific to the housing developments, was not available until requested - after the interviews. Wherever possible relevant information was photocopied and entered into a case study file, which also contained transcripts of the research interviews. Copies of the housing association's design brief were requested and received in all cases. Leaflets and newsletters circulated to, and by, tenants were collected, as were any local press cuttings concerning the developments. All information relating to the development was gathered and a valuable research resource was collated. It should be mentioned at this point that the amount of information forthcoming concerning each development differed, and the case study chapter that follows reflects this.

Conducting The Case Studies

At this point it is necessary to briefly discuss the research style adopted during the case study investigations. The initial contact, following the questionnaire survey, was made via a letter to the potential case study RSL. When this letter was responded to - after some time, telephone calls and convincing in some cases - a suitable time, location and date for an initial meeting was arranged. These meetings were not intended to be interviews and there was no attempt to collect data, but merely opportunities to discuss the nature of the research and meet the relevant officers. During the course of the meetings the research was explained, the development to be looked at was established and a list of potential interviewees was compiled. The exact nature of these initial meetings varied, but the intention and ultimately the results were the same. The meetings lasted for about an hour and often required a great deal of travelling, but the effect was worthwhile. Face to face contact was essential at this early stage in the research. As a result of these friendly introductory

meetings the research process that followed flowed more smoothly. In the case of three of the four case studies the officer who dealt with the request for research contacted the relevant development players and set up times and dates for the research interviews. This made the research process considerably easier, as any potential scepticism on behalf of the interviewees would be dispelled as a result of a known person (the RSL officer) making the initial contact. In the case of the three case studies located outside of the South Yorkshire region the interviews were timetabled for consecutive days, making the travel and accommodation arrangements easier.

The research interviews were carried out using a topic guide and were all recorded and fully transcribed, verbatim. This rigorous process was undertaken to ensure that all useful information was taken down and to enable the interviews to flow more easily. The topic guide was followed only loosely and this made possible attempts to make the interviewees feel at ease throughout the course of the interview. Contact telephone numbers were taken at the end to make any follow-up questions easier to ask should the need arise. Further contact, to clarify certain issues, was required on a few occasions. In summary, the case studies were efficiently conducted as a result of sufficient time being spent in preparation and careful timetabling. Full use was made of the researcher's experience of the architectural profession and of interviewing people from a range of backgrounds and the process was enjoyable as well as fruitful.

4.4.3 Analysis Of The Data

Once all available data had been collected the process of analysing the data began. The architectural drawings were initially intended to play a greater role in this process than they eventually did. Obtaining copies of all the drawings from each scheme proved impossible in all cases, despite strenuous attempts (and the status of this researcher as an architect). As a result, the idea of following the design process by seeing the development of the scheme from sketch proposal to working drawings was not possible and so an alternative strategy was developed. The interviews took on a greater significance and the topic guide was reinforced in the relevant areas. This was accompanied by a time-consuming process of sifting information from the documentary evidence and constructing the narrative of each of the case study developments.

Initially it was necessary to construct a time frame for the development. This was achieved using a combination of documentary evidence and the research interviews. Of particular value at this time were the minutes of community meetings; these were available for two of the case studies and partly available for a third. Once again it is important to highlight that there was a degree of variance in the level of the information that was available in each case and so a flexibility had to be maintained. For each study the veracity of the evidence was the main consideration. The aim was to construct the story of each development and as each was different in a variety of ways, they required an individually tailored approach.

The housing association design and development briefs, when used in conjunction with tenants' association meeting minutes and data from the various interviews, proved invaluable in highlighting the design changes made as a result of tenant involvement. Likewise, visits to the developments (in the three cases where these were possible) accompanied by tenants and housing association officers proved illuminating and useful in helping to ascertain the reasons behind design decisions. Overall it was necessary to adopt a structured yet flexible approach to the collection of research data; allowing for

the differences in the organisation and practice amongst the RSLs.

Once the research data had been collected and collated it was necessary to return to the literature in order to construct a suitable analytical framework. It can be seen that the theory has been invaluable throughout the research process, firstly in helping to focus the initial research idea, secondly in the design of the research programme and finally in the analysis of the data. As the first two stages of this have already been covered, it is now necessary to briefly discuss the method d(s) of analysis employed. The existing theory was fundamental in the analysis of the data obtained from both the quantitative and qualitative strands of enquiry and the exact nature of this relationship will become apparent during chapter 7, where the research is fully analysed.

This research does not seek to utilise a single large theoretical concept in an effort to unlock the case studies. Instead the analysis draws on a number of different sources, each selected as a result of the way in which they informed the process and for what they could add to the evaluation. The case study housing developments are tested using a variety of models that were originally constructed to describe tenant involvement in the design process. The main sources used are Woolley (1985), IoH and RIBA (1988) and Wulz (1990) and each of these provides a different perspective. In addition, other areas of theory (notably Heeks 1999, and associated others) are utilised in an effort to explain aspects of the research data. This data, from the postal survey and the case studies, is described and analysed in the following chapters.

5. Postal Survey of Housing Associations

The following sections deal with the results of the survey and follow the order set out in the questionnaire, a copy of which can be found in Appendix 1. In addition to this the survey response rates are also discussed in Appendix 2. The pages that follow look at each area covered by the survey in turn, with interim discussion where appropriate. The postal survey was sent to every Registered Social Landlord that developed new-build social housing, with the aid of Social Housing Grant in 1996/7. For a discussion about the design and administration of the survey see Chapter 4, Research Method, and for further analysis of the key points see Chapter 7, Comparative Analysis.

5.1 The Housing Associations

Of the 138 housing associations that responded to the survey 83% were general-needs housing providers. The other 17% claimed to provide solely for specific needs groups included RSLs which catered predominantly for groups such as the elderly or the disabled. The housing associations that responded to the questionnaire survey varied in size greatly. As the response rate data shows, the majority of respondents were from the medium and large categories; there is however some considerable variation within these sectors. Large RSLs vary from those with just over 2,500 to the largest housing association in the country with, at the time of the survey in excess of 40,000 dwellings. Another way of assessing the diversity of the responding associations is to look at the number of local authority districts in which they own stock. This also gives an indication of the spread of the RSL, that is to say how closely their properties are located to each other.

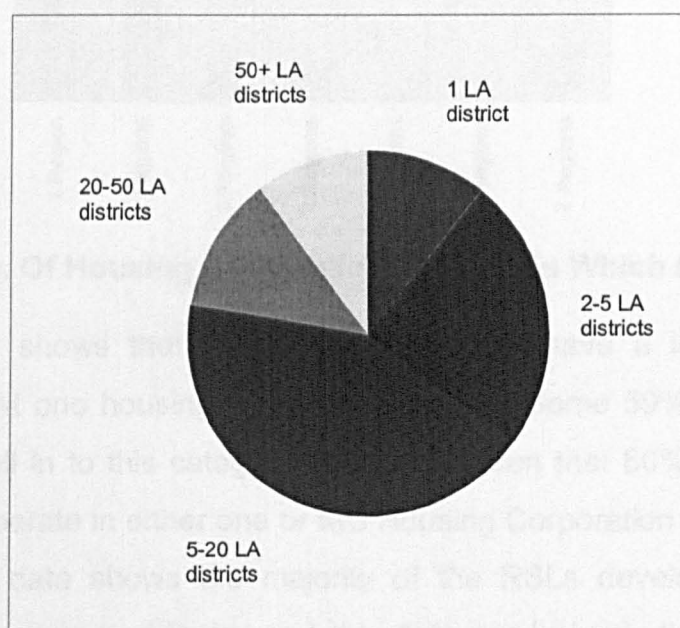


Figure 5.1: Number Of Local Authority Districts In Which RSLs Operate

Although the diagram above illustrates that around a third of the responding associations operate in five or less local authority districts and over three quarters operate in 20 or less, it does not on its own adequately describe the sample. The associations that operate in 50 or more local authority districts,

some 17 organisations, include 9 that have stock in over 100 and 3 with property sited in the areas of 200 or more councils. The pie chart also does not in any way attempt to illustrate the geographical distribution of the housing associations' property. A London-based RSL could theoretically operate in over 30 different local authority districts whilst being located solely in Greater London, whereas another landlord could operate in considerably fewer and have houses across the country. In order to address this the questionnaire enquired as to how many Housing Corporation regions the associations operated in.

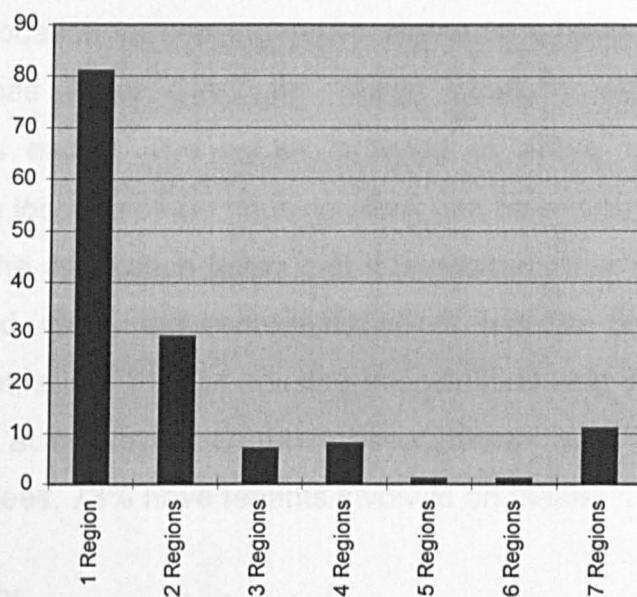


Figure 5.2: No. Of Housing Corporation Regions In Which RSLs Operate

The bar chart shows that the majority of RSLs have a localised profile, operating in just one housing corporation region. Some 59% of the housing associations fall in to this category. It can be seen that 80% of the housing associations operate in either one or two Housing Corporation regions. As the response rate data shows the majority of the RSLs developing new-build housing are medium and large, and this data would imply that a number of these larger associations hold their stock in just one or two regions. It must be noted however that an association may operate within a small geographical area located on the border of two or three Housing Corporation regions. The survey also reveals that 11 of the responding housing associations (8%) have property in all seven regions of the country, these unsurprisingly are all large

RSLs with over 2,500 units. Of these 11 'national' housing associations, 6 were providing housing predominantly for a specific needs group such as the disabled or the elderly. This is probably connected with the degree of specialisation inherent in the sector and the possible charitable history of the associations concerned. The remaining 5 landlords are amongst the largest, in terms of number of housing units managed.

The housing associations were asked where their housing was located, either in 'Inner City', 'Other Urban' or 'Rural' locations. Each association could select as many of these types of location as appropriate. 'Other Urban' was the most often cited location for housing stock. Some 83% have housing in this type of area whereas 'Inner City' and 'Rural' locations were cited by 64% of associations each. The higher instance of 'Other Urban' being used to describe the location of the housing stock can be explained by the definition of the terms, the implication being that if undecided, this sector would be used. When asked about the representation of tenants on the main board of management, some 71% of housing associations said that their tenants were represented at this level. Of those associations which have area or regional sub-committees, 73% have tenants involved on these.

Commentary

Overall the majority of housing associations can be shown to be based within one housing corporation region and can therefore be described as regionally-based organisations. This is in keeping with the idea that RSLs are responsive to local areas - a theme discussed in Chapter 2. There are however a number of very large national housing associations the largest of these manages in excess of 40,000 dwellings located in almost all areas across the country. In addition to this it has been shown that RSL stock is located in inner city areas, other urban areas and rural areas. This is admittedly not surprising but the sample group of housing associations that developed new housing in 1996/97 reinforces this point.

5.2 The Development Programmes And Policies

When asked if they had developed new housing on local authority estates in the three-year period prior to the questionnaire being administered, 65% of the housing associations had done so. When this question was asked about renovation only 33% of the RSLs had taken part in this on local authority estates. Of those associations that had worked on local authority estates, either building new housing or taking part in renovation, 62% had been involved in consortia during at least one of these developments. When asked whether information about the design and layout of the housing schemes formed part of the proposal to the council, some 75% of respondents claimed that it did, with 21% saying that it had not and 4% failing to answer the question. So it can be shown that on local authority estates design decisions, at least at an outline level, are made at the time of the decision to develop in the majority of cases. RSLs present design proposals to the local authorities in a bid to secure the development in three-quarters of all cases.

Having established that early design decisions about the type of housing and its layout are made in the majority of cases, the RSLs were asked where these designs originated. The associations were asked if the decisions originated from their own architects, from the architects of another landlord or from the architects of an already involved contractor. The term 'own architects' refers to either in-house architects or those employed by the housing association in question, whereas the term 'architects from other associations' refers to architects from other RSLs being involved in consortia-type developments.

	Never	Rarely	Usually	Always	No reply
Own architects	14.7%	2.1%	51.6%	25.3%	6.3%
From other RSLs	48.4%	20%	6.3%	0%	25.3%
Contractors architects	23.2%	38.9%	17.9%	2.1%	17.9%

Figure 5.3: Origin Of Design On LA Estate Development Proposals

The table illustrates that the design decisions at the proposal stage of development on local authority estates in the majority of cases originate with the architects of the housing association concerned, whether they are appointed or in-house. Over three-quarters of all housing associations claimed that this was usually or always the case. There were however some concerns about the validity of the responses as some housing associations claimed to 'always' have used their own architects whilst also claiming to sometimes using those from other RSLs or the contractors. This may mean that they used other architects in conjunction with their own, or it may be as a result of a misunderstanding.

Some RSLs employ architects on a permanent basis as opposed to bringing in private practices. The merits of this are debatable, with good arguments available for both approaches. The following case studies investigate this theme in greater detail. When asked whether they employed their own in-house architects 89% of the landlords surveyed did not have in-house architects. Only 15 of the 138 responding RSLs had any architectural departments at all and of these one third had departments that consisted of only member of staff. The largest department consists of twelve people. In order to establish the nature of these departments, the housing associations were also asked how many of these architectural staff members were fully RIBA qualified. Four of the housing associations had no qualified staff at all in their architectural teams and seven of the departments had only one fully qualified architect. The department with the most number of qualified architects had four members of staff who were RIBA qualified. Of these teams, none belonged to a small RSL (<500 units) and only three belonged to RSLs termed medium (500-2,500 units). Despite the fact that there were only 15 in-house architecture teams in the sample it is still interesting to investigate their role; the survey also looks at the responsibilities undertaken by them. The RSLs were initially asked what proportion of the new-build developments their in-house teams had full responsibility for, including all aspects of design and project management; the same question was asked about renovation.

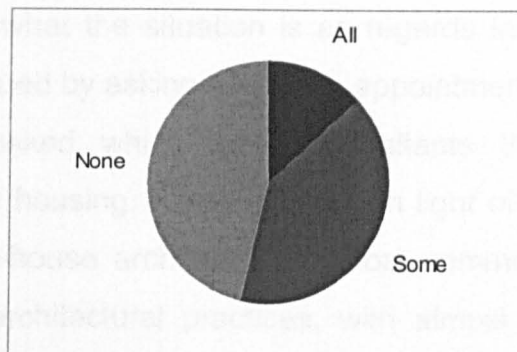


Figure 5.4: Proportion Of New-Build Developments Designed In-house

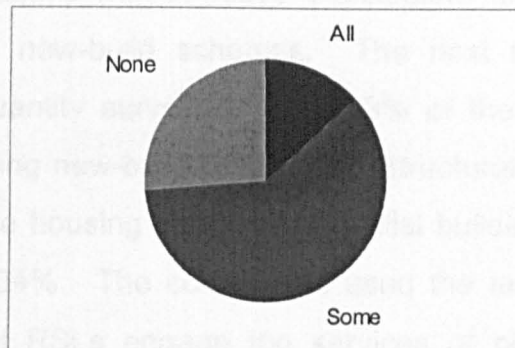


Figure 5.5: Proportion Of Renovation Developments Designed In-house

The charts above illustrate that the number of associations where in-house architecture teams are responsible for all new-build and renovation developments is small, with only two of RSLs claiming that this was the case. The relatively high number of housing associations where the in-house architecture teams never have full responsibility for the design and management of new-build developments is higher in the case of the new-build schemes and lower in the case of the renovation projects. This would imply that in-house architecture teams, small as they are, rarely have full responsibility for new-build housing developments, but are more likely to have control over renovation schemes.

The role of the in-house architectural practices can therefore be summarised as being, in the main, a peripheral one. They are typically small and are comprised of largely unqualified staff. They are unlikely to undertake the full design and management of developments but more likely to run renovation projects. However, two RSLs claim that all of their new-build and renovation development programme is undertaken by their own architects but these appear to be the exception.

Having established what the situation is as regards in-house architects, the questionnaire continued by asking about the appointment of other consultants. The RSLs were asked which other consultants they engaged in the development of new housing. Unsurprisingly in light of what was discovered about the role of in-house architects, the most commonly cited consultants were independent architectural practices, with almost 96% of the housing associations claiming that they engaged these. This supports the idea that some of the associations with in-house architecture teams still use external architects on some new-build schemes. The next most commonly cited consultants were quantity surveyors, over 73% of the respondents engage these when developing new-build properties. Structural engineers were used by almost 66% of the housing associations whilst building services engineers were cited by only 34%. The consultants used the least were for planning issues, only 19% of RSLs engage the services of planners. The overall picture is best illustrated by the table below:

Consultants Used	% of HAs
Architects	95.7
Quantity Surveyors	73.2
Structural Engineers	65.9
Services Engineers	34.1
Planners	18.8
Planning Supervisors	8.7
Building Surveyors	7.2
Employers Agents	5.8
Landscape Architects	4.3
Urban Designers	1.4

Figure 5.6: Consultants Engaged By RSLs

Along with the consultants mentioned above some more unusual ones were mentioned including acoustic consultants, energy consultants and contamination specialists who it can be assumed, were engaged on brownfield developments. It would be expected that these consultants would, in the future, play a bigger role in light of the policy to develop more on such sites. Many respondents referred to the design and build process citing “*design and build consultants*” and perhaps most pertinently, “*... the architects employed by the contractor as part of the D&B contract.*” This raises the issue of the

D&B form of contract: it was suspected that this was the most common form of contractual arrangement used by RSLs due to the effect of transferring risk to the contractors. The survey bears this out, showing that 77% of housing associations claim that in the previous 3 years they usually or always used design and build contracts. Only 22% claim to have used them only rarely, with just one landlord claiming never to use a design and build approach to development in the time period.

Commentary

The survey shows that almost two thirds of housing associations develop on local authority estates with almost the same percentage of these having been involved in consortia on these developments. In addition it shows that in-house architects are rare and where they do exist their powers are typically limited to renovation and maintenance work. The extent of the use of D&B style contracts was, as expected, considerable and the effects of this are addressed during the course of the case studies.

5.3 Design Policies

Firstly the housing associations were asked if they used standard specification house types. The responses indicate that 24% of RSLs never use such plans and 41% claim that they only use them rarely. One third (33%) of housing associations use these plans usually and a surprisingly low 2% use standard plans on all occasions. These figures are interesting when taken into consideration with the presence of an in-house architecture team. 46% of housing associations with an in-house architecture team use standard house plans '*usually*' with a similar figure claiming to use them rarely. Not one of the housing associations with an internal architects department claimed never to have used standard house plans. Of the RSLs without architects, however, a significant proportion do not produce a standard house plan (27%). There were also a higher proportion that claimed to only use them only rarely (41%) as opposed to usually (31%). These figures would imply that the likelihood of using standard house plans is increased in the housing associations that have an in-house architecture department.

The design policies of the RSLs were investigated further and they were asked if they had specific policies connected to four areas of design. Firstly they were asked if they had a policy regarding the number of stories of new housing, this for instance could be that they would not design above two stories. Secondly the range of materials used, this may be in the form of a commitment to traditional building materials; in the UK these are generally masonry, wood and tile. Thirdly they were asked if they had a policy to specify buildings with a pitched roof and finally there was an inquiry into the association's policies about general aesthetic considerations. The last of these questions refers to things such as a commitment to vernacular architecture and traditional construction techniques.

The survey shows that housing associations do indeed have specific policies in the four areas suggested. Over a third (34%) of RSLs have a policy relating

to the number of stories of a development. By contrast though almost three-quarters (73%) of these associations have specific reference to the type of building materials which they use in the construction of new developments. Reference to the provision of a pitched roof is present in 46% of housing associations design policies whilst 53% state that they have guidance in the area of general aesthetic quality. So as not to be prescriptive in the inquiry, the housing associations were asked if they had any other policies and given the opportunity to state these.

Of the responding housing associations some 86% have a policy, in addition to those mentioned above, relating to the design of new-build houses. This is not at all unexpected as the sample comprises of developing RSLs and it would be likely that these would have some form of comprehensive design brief. The responses from the associations bear this out and these will be discussed later. Firstly it is important to consider the 14% of associations which do not have specific design policies. This could be explained by a number of factors: aside from the possibility of incomplete questionnaires, it might be expected that the size of the association might affect the likelihood of having a design brief, with smaller associations not having such policies. However, examination of the 18 housing associations that do not have such a policy does not uncover any relationship, as 7 of the 18 associations would be categorised as large using the classification described earlier, 8 would be classified as medium and only 3 as small. This is equable to the sample as a whole¹².

The list of specified 'other' policies is characterised by reference to '*Comprehensive*', '*Full*' or '*Detailed*' design briefs - these are referred to by over half of the associations who completed this section. It however seems that these design brief vary both in their range and their detail. One association's response seems to typify that of many others, they state:

"We have a comprehensive design brief covering all design aspects."

¹². The responding housing associations were 13% small, 44% medium & 43% large. Whilst associations with no other design policies were 17% small, 44% medium & 39% large.

Another housing association more forcibly refers to (the capitals belong to the respondent's):

"A STRICT design brief."

Some RSLs describe what their design brief includes in more detail. The design elements mentioned include the positioning of the building on the site, the provision of car parking and the use or non-use of certain materials such as PVCu window frames. Others refer to their previously mentioned standard specification house types:

"The association has its own brief which describes the key criteria, specification requirements and good practice. It also includes a series of preferred house types."

Other associations expand upon the existence of a design brief and make reference to the role of the Housing Corporation standards, one such says:

"We have a detailed design brief which outlines our requirements and incorporates Housing Corporation scheme requirements."

Another association refers to the role of the Housing Corporation thus:

"The Housing Design Brief is regularly reviewed, this document is considered in parallel with Housing Corporation Scheme Development Standards."

This association, like many others, also referred to the process of the design brief being regularly reviewed; some went further and referred to the way in which this review takes place:

"Design working group manages design and generic specification briefs. The group consists of all staff and tenant representatives."

This reference to the role of tenants in the process of reviewing the design brief is one of a number. One association says that they have:

"(A) Design brief, completed with tenant input."

These references to tenant involvement in the construction of the design brief will be dealt with in more detail later when the associations were questioned

more directly about this. Other housing associations appear to adopt a more individual approach, dealing with each new development separately. One association says that their design brief:

"Varies with client group needs."

Some associations claim that they do not issue direct design guidance but instead insist that new developments adhere to a technical specification and/or the Housing Corporation design standards. One RSL stated that they do not have a full brief:

"(It is) noted that they operate to a technical brief and Housing Corporation design standards."

These references to the Housing Corporation design standards are not unexpected as compliance with these has significant funding implications. All housing associations applying for social housing grant via the corporation will insist that their developments meet these standards. A number of housing associations mention a desire to comply with other standards and recommendations such as Secure By Design and Lifetime Homes wherever possible.

Commentary

The data shows that standardised house types, though widespread, are by no means universal in the sector. Housing Associations do however appear to have a number of policies about certain aspects of design. There are also a series of recommendations and minimum standards laid down by the Housing Corporation which are adhered to strictly, as well as some other design standards which are also relevant in certain areas. Some housing associations adopt a more flexible approach, treating each development as an individual scheme and designing the brief appropriately; these however appear to be in the minority.

5.4 General Tenant Involvement Policy

The following section deals with the general tenant involvement policies of the housing associations across the range of their business. When asked if they supported a tenants' association (TA) 78% said that they did. Approximately 10% of these associations have all of their tenants as members. The size of the housing association appears to make a difference to the chances of it having a tenants' association. Only 39% of the landlords designated as being small (<500 properties) support a TA. This is compared with 66% of the medium associations (500-2500 properties) and 85% of the largest associations (2500+ properties). It would appear that the larger the association the more likely it would be to support a tenant group(s). Secondly, the housing associations with tenants on the main board of management were asked how these were selected. Many associations use more than one method to select tenants and the table reflects this as the number of responses for each of these is recorded in the table below.

Method of selection	% of HAs
Elected by tenants' association	40.2
Independent volunteers	22.0
Nominated by existing board member	13.4
Other methods	24.4

Figure 5.7: Methods Of Selecting Tenant Board Members

The table shows that tenants' representatives are most often elected by the tenants' association, although there is also evidence of a number of independent volunteers and those who have been nominated by existing board members. The other methods include a diverse range of selection techniques including advertising in newsletters, the housing association inviting tenants and selection at annual tenant forums.. Some RSLs claimed that places are reserved for tenants but that take up has been poor, this theme of tenant apathy is discussed later in the case study chapters.

The following data describes how the housing associations view their tenant involvement when compared to four definitions that were laid out in the questionnaire. The efficacy of this approach is discussed in Chapter 5 *Research Method*. The questionnaire note is reprinted below:

Notes to Section 3 & 4: As you are no doubt aware, the statutory requirement for the involvement of tenants in social housing is that tenants are consulted on matters of housing management that will affect them 'substantially.' This is taken to mean that issues around allocation policies, setting of rent levels etc. are published and made available to tenants. Tenant involvement however can mean far more than publication of policies, and can be seen as perhaps the most important means of improving accountability. Four levels of involvement can be established and these are described thus:

INFORMATION - Further than the statutory requirements information can include the production of regular newsletters. dissemination of information about the members of the committee of management and details about the association performance targets can be considered as involvement by information.

CONSULTATION - This may consist of appropriately scheduled and advertised public meetings or discussions with tenants' groups. Consultation can also include requesting comments on policy issues detailed in the newsletter. As opposed to providing information, consultation is when a response is sought.

ACTIVE PARTICIPATION - The active encouragement by the association of tenants' groups and extensive tenant membership of the committee of management. Provision of training and support, if required, to enable tenants who wish to be involved to contribute more successfully.

TENANT CONTROL - The most extensive form of tenant involvement which may result in the formation of a tenant management co-operative, whereby management of the property is transferred to the tenant whilst ownership remains with the landlord.

Figure 5.8: Explanation Note From The Questionnaire Survey

Officers completing the questionnaire were asked to put their organisations into one of the above categories of tenant involvement for three aspects of their practice. These three areas are housing management, setting of rent levels and allocating properties. Unsurprisingly there were no associations who categorised their practice as that of 'tenant control' in any of the areas - this merely shows that there are no true tenant co-operative housing associations amongst the sample. The three diagrams overleaf display the responses in these areas.

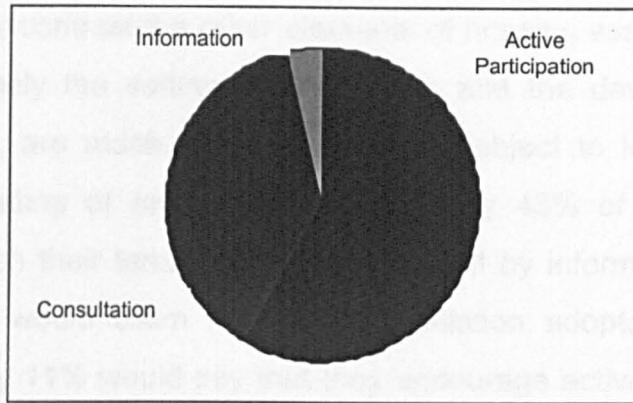


Figure 5.9: Views Of Tenant Involvement In Housing Management

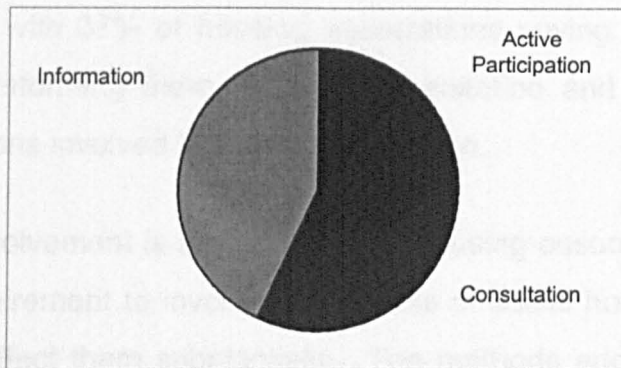


Figure 5.10: How Tenant Involvement Is Viewed In The Setting Of Rents

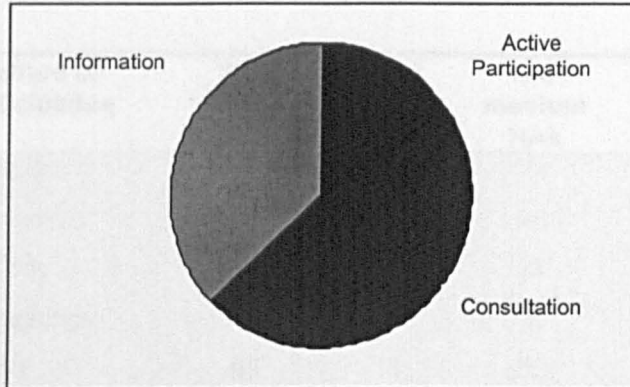


Figure 5.11: How Tenant Involvement Is Viewed In Housing Allocation

The responses here indicate that it is in the area of housing management that the more advanced levels of participation occur. Over half of the housing associations (58.5%) claim that they encourage 'active participation' in housing management, with a substantial 96% going further than merely providing information. The field of housing management is the one in which tenants are most actively involved. This aspect of housing association practice is the one where there is a direct interface between the tenants and the housing association and so it would seem obvious that this would be the

area where most effort is made to include tenants contributions; the survey bears this out. By contrast the other elements of housing association practice investigated, namely the setting of rent levels and the development of an allocations policy, are much more likely to be subject to less participatory practice. The setting of rent levels is viewed by 43% of associations as something in which their tenants are only involved by information. A similar proportion (46%) would claim that their association adopts a consultative approach and only 11% would say that they encourage active participation in this area. The making of decisions relating to the allocation of property follows a similar pattern, with 37% of housing associations saying that they involve their tenants by informing them, 47% by consultation and just 16% of the housing associations involved in active participation.

Greater tenant involvement is an aim of many housing associations and there is a statutory requirement to involve the tenants of social housing in decision making that will affect them substantially. The methods adopted by housing associations to encourage greater tenant involvement are investigated below:

Method of participation	% of large HAs	% of small HAs	% of medium HAs	% of all HAs
Newsletters	91	78	74	99
Questionnaires	96	83	90	93
Publications	91	77	74	82
Public meetings	95	44	75	80
Workshop	69	11	52	54
Interviews	62	17	43	50
Public exhibitions	62	17	30	42
Street surveys	38	17	28	31
Internet etc.	19	6	8	12
Video	17	6	7	11

Figure 5.12: Methods Of Tenant Participation Used

The table overleaf shows that newsletters are almost universally used by housing associations as a method of engendering participation amongst their tenants. All but two of the responding housing associations use this method of

communication. Newsletters are a one-way medium and are essentially a vehicle for the passing of information. They are however used to advertise other participation events such as public meetings and workshops. The next most commonly cited participation technique was the use of questionnaire surveys, with 93% of RSLs using these. These surveys are by definition a two-way mechanism, giving the tenants a chance to express opinions. The questionnaires vary in content and style, but they have an important part to play in new-build development in the form of tenant satisfaction surveys and, more directly, post-occupancy surveys of new dwellings. This process of asking tenants in new properties about the design and quality of the accommodation often feeds back into the design briefs alluded to earlier. It can be seen therefore that this is a significant method of tenant participation.

The survey shows events such as meetings, workshops and exhibitions are also widespread and are considered an effective way of communication with a number of people. One to one techniques such as the use of interviews and street surveys are less widely used, but this is probably as a result of their more labour intensive nature. The new information and communications technologies of the Internet are not widespread, with only 12% of housing associations claiming a 'web presence'. This figure however is expected to rise rapidly as public access to the Internet widens, as the technology is inherently two-way and suited to the task of stimulating participation. Such is the rapid rise of the new media that a survey conducted at the time of writing would expect a higher percentage of housing associations exploring this route. The questionnaire data also reveals that larger associations use more methods of tenant involvement than smaller ones. This is common across the options given, with higher percentages of the large associations using each method of participation.

Aside from the given options there were a number of other techniques used by housing associations to foster closer tenant involvement. These include annual *'tenant meetings'*, *'Planning For Real'* events and opportunities for *'tenant training'*. In keeping with the times *'focus groups'* were cited. Some

housing associations mentioned the use of *'mobile exhibitions'* and *'tenant roadshows'* - although the association in question also noted that the public response had been poor. Social events were cited by many associations as opportunities to foster closer participation with *'coffee mornings'* being mentioned. Overall the techniques adopted seem to be those where a number of tenants can be reached at one attempt.

At this juncture it is important to assess some of the differences between the size of the housing association and the number of tenant participation techniques that they employ. It is of course recognised that this cannot reflect the degree to which the methods are used, or even less their effectiveness, however the findings are interesting nonetheless. Small housing associations utilise on average three different methods of tenant participation, medium-sized associations five, and large associations approaching seven. This shows that the larger the housing association the more methods of tenant participation they are likely to employ.

Commentary

The picture that emerges from the survey is one of RSLs actively attempting to encourage tenants to participate in the general running and development of the organisation. There appears to be a range of interpretations of the requirement to involve tenants in decisions which will 'affect them substantially', with some associations displaying a greater commitment to tenant participation than others. The sheer number and diversity of techniques employed by RSLs to achieve more effective participation is considerable. It is also shown that some aspects of housing association practice are more likely to involve tenants than others. It is also proved that large housing associations use more methods of tenant involvement than smaller ones.

5.5 Tenant Involvement in Design

Housing associations were asked if they had a specific policy which states a commitment to tenant involvement in the design of their housing stock, and 40% claimed that they did. When asked directly if they had involved either existing or prospective tenants in the design of new build properties, in the three years immediately prior to the questionnaire being administered, 74% had. This question was deliberately open and allowed for a range of interpretations as to what constitutes involving tenants. Fundamentally it does however establish that almost three-quarters of housing associations are attempting to involve tenants in the design of their new properties.

The landlords with a specific policy relating to tenant involvement in design were asked to describe this policy. These definitions varied considerably but some consistent themes emerged. A number of associations stated a vague commitment to tenant involvement in the design process without detailing what this entails. One such association says:

"As part of the over all TP policy tenants and prospective tenants are encouraged to become involved in the design of new homes."

Whereas other housing associations were more specific, detailing the approval of the design brief by a body including tenants:

"The design brief is approved by the committee - this includes tenant board members."

This process of developments being approved by a design committee, or a similarly named group, with tenant representation, is the situation within many housing associations. Another association stated:

"Tenants are always involved in redevelopment decisions and design. We have a working party on development standards which involves a tenant representative and the tenant participation advisor."

Another association goes further, stating that a body solely comprising of tenants has an effective veto on the design of new developments:

"All designs must be approved by the Development Advisory Group (which comprises of) tenants only."

Despite the presence of a number of development committees with tenant representation, the most widespread policies about tenant involvement in design are based on feedback surveys. Many associations referred to such a post-occupancy survey. One association said:

"[We send] Questionnaires on satisfaction to each new development."

Another expanded on this explaining what happens to the data from the survey:

"All tenants in new or rehabilitated stock to be provided with a questionnaire covering all aspects of the design of their homes. The design brief to be reviewed annually taking into account the comments received."

One RSL describes the sort of areas that the tenant survey covers:

"We seek feedback from tenants of newly completed housing schemes re: design, layout, energy, security etc."

Another association highlights the use that their survey is put to and goes on to describe how their tenants forum selects from a 'pick list':

"Tenant surveys of completed dwellings taken into account in new schemes. Tenants' Forum involved in workshop choosing priorities from a 'pick list'."

This 'pick list' is not described further but it would seem to refer to a list of design features which may include the provision of burglar alarms and the type of fencing or kitchen units. Some associations highlighted problems in tenant involvement in design connected to the allocations procedures. One stated that tenant involvement was only possible:

"Where tenants are already identified (eg, in existing stock, tenanted acquired stock, co-ops etc.)."

Another association states a commitment to involving the prospective tenants but recognises the problems inherent in this. They state:

"Where possible tenants who will be living in the properties should be involved at the earliest possible stage (LAs nominations policy makes this hard)."

Alongside a commitment to post-occupancy surveys, a different RSL highlights a similar problem and suggests occasions where this is likely:

- "1) Where tenant identified in advance – e.g, Wheelchair units.*
- 2) Schemes adjoining existing units.*
- 3) Tenant feedback on design issues - sent forms to complete."*

Another housing association, recognising that the prospective tenants are rarely identified prior to design, advocates the participation of local residents:

"Where we control the design we send it to neighbours and similar-sized households asking for their help."

Identifying the future tenants of a prospective development early enough in the design and development process to be able to include their opinions appears to be a rare occurrence. Housing associations serving client groups with specific needs, such as the disabled or the elderly, often have the ability to do this, however. One association dealing solely with a special needs client base describes when the involvement takes place and the techniques used to enable it:

"At initial design and detailed design stages using pictorial symbols where appropriate."

Overall, there were a large number of housing associations which claim that work in this area was underway, under consideration or, in the words of more than one RSL, *"currently being developed."* In order to attempt to establish what this involvement consists of, the following set of questions concerned the stages in the design process at which tenants were involved. The housing

associations were asked how often tenants were involved at six key stages of the design and development programme, from inception through to evaluation and appraisal. The following charts detail the responses, illustrating how often tenants are involved a different key stages in the design process.

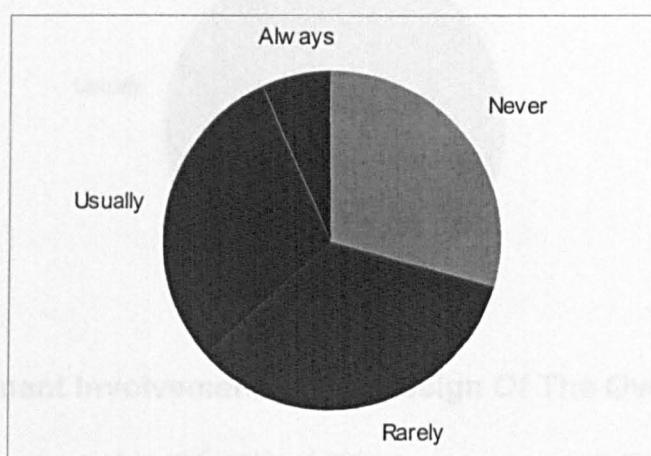


Figure 5.13: Tenant Involvement At The Inception Of Development

The above diagram describes how often tenants are involved at the time of the decision to develop. Over a quarter (29.4%) of housing associations never consult tenants about developments at this early stage, whilst over one third (33.6%) say that they do so only rarely. A similar proportion, (30.3%) claim to usually consult at this point, and only 6.7% claim that they always involve tenants at the outset.

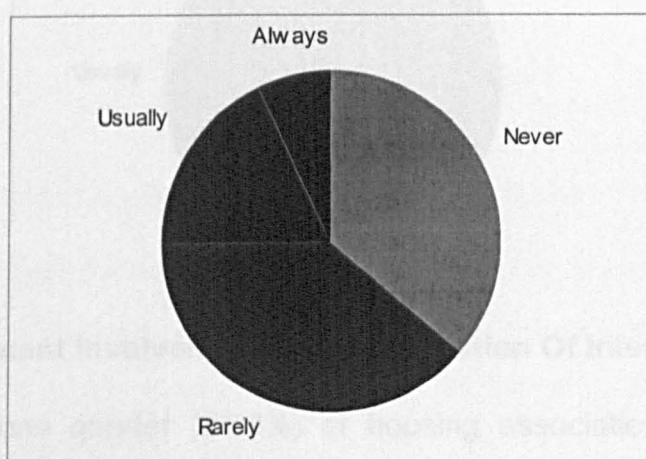


Figure 5.14: Tenant Involvement In The Selection Of House Types

Over one-third (36%) of housing associations never consult their tenants about the selection of house types. A similar proportion (38.6%) claim that they only rarely consult tenants at this juncture. The number of respondents who claim

to involve tenants usually (18.4%) or always (7%) is smaller at this point in the process than it was at the outset.

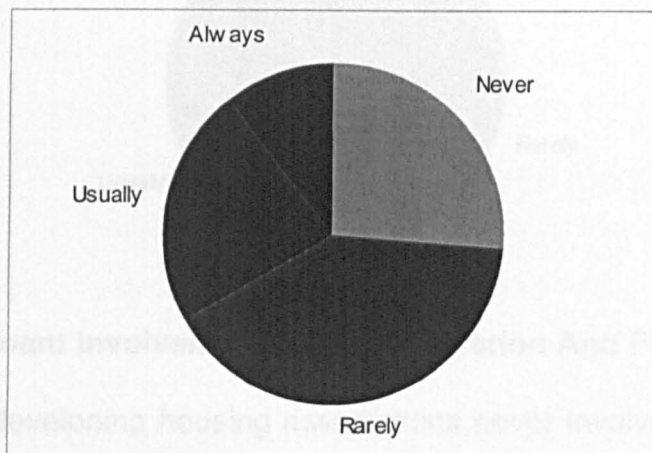


Figure 5.15: Tenant Involvement In The Design Of The Overall Aesthetic

Approximately one quarter (26.4%) of RSLs never consult their tenants at the stage, selecting an overall aesthetic for the development, whilst 39.9% claim to do so only rarely. Almost one quarter (23.1%) usually consult at this later stage and increased number (10.6%) always consult tenants at this point in the design programme.

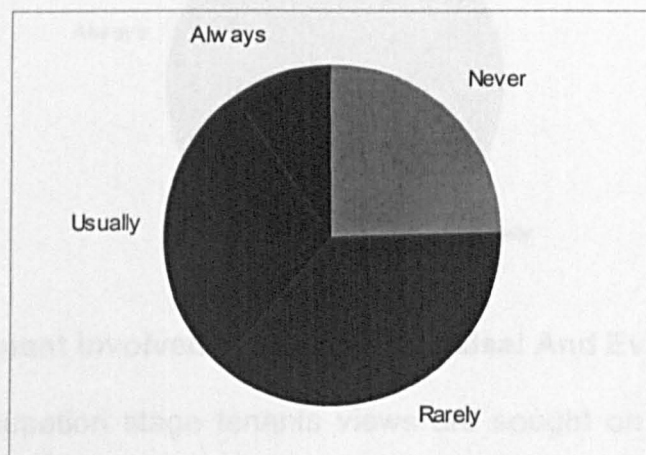


Figure 5.16: Tenant Involvement In The Allocation Of Internal Space

Again, around one quarter (24.6%) of housing associations never involve tenants in the allocation of internal space and 36.9% would rarely do so. However some 28.7% of housing associations claim to have some tenant involvement and only 9.8% say that they always do.

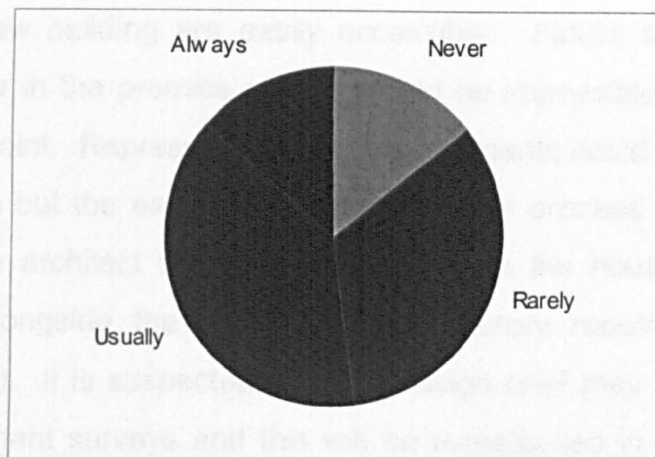


Figure 5.17: Tenant Involvement In The Decoration And Fittings

Only 14.5% of developing housing associations never involve their tenants at this late stage in the building programme and exactly one third claim to do so only rarely. A greater proportion (38.5%) say that they involve tenants as usual practice and 13.7% state that they always seek the opinions of the tenants at this juncture.

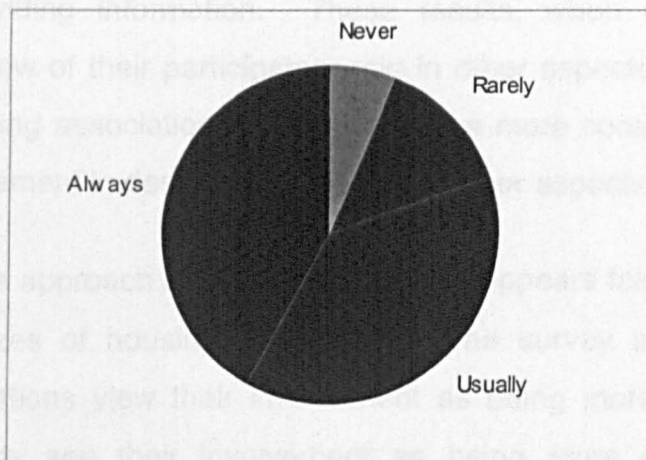


Figure 5.18: Tenant involvement In The Appraisal And Evaluation

At this post-occupation stage tenants views are sought on all occasions by 42.1% of associations, with a further 38.1% usually doing so. Less than 20% either rarely, (13.1%), or never, (6.3%), consult their tenants in an attempt to improve their future building product.

Overall it can be seen that tenants seem to be more involved in the design process in the later stages. The stage where this is most apparent is the final post-occupancy evaluation stage. This is not at all surprising, as the tenants

living in the new building are easily accessible. Future tenants are rarely identified earlier in the process and so would be impossible to include in the design at this point. Representative groups of tenants could be used (and are in some cases) but the early stages of the design process are generally the preserve of the architect following guidance from the housing association's design brief alongside the host of other statutory requirements (building regulations etc.). It is suspected that this design brief may be compiled with reference to tenant surveys and this will be investigated in the case studies that follow.

Following on from the definitions of levels of participation and again with reference to the questionnaire note (Figure 5.8) the RSLs were asked to describe the level of participation they employ when designing new houses. The results show that of 51.5% housing associations view their participation as amounting to enabling consultation, 25.4% promoting active participation and 23.1% as providing information. These results, when compared to the associations' view of their participatory role in other aspects of their practice, show that housing associations claim to adopt a more consultative approach to tenant involvement in design than they do to other aspects of their work.

Interestingly, the approach to tenant involvement appears fairly uniform across the different sizes of housing association. The survey shows that larger housing associations view their involvement as being more active and that smaller landlords see their involvement as being more one of providing information. However the majority of small, medium and large associations classify their involvement as being consultative in style. The table overleaf illustrates this point.

	Small (>500 units)	Medium (501-2500)	Large (2500+)
Information	27.5%	26.5%	18%
Consultation	56%	52.5%	51%
Active participation	16.5%	21%	31%

Figure 5.19: Views Of Tenant Involvement In Design

Methods to include communities in the design of their built environment have been developed, one of these is 'Planning For Real'. When asked if they had taken part in such workshops, 28% of the responding housing associations said that they had done so.

5.5.1 Reasons To Involve Tenants In Design

The final part of the questionnaire asked the housing associations what they thought were the most important reasons for involving tenants in the design of their houses, and secondly what the biggest obstacles to this were. The responses to the penultimate question - *'What do you consider to be the most important reasons for involving tenants in the design of their housing?'* were very different in style but a number of important themes emerged. Of the 138 housing associations that responded to the survey, all but 15 answered this question, with responses varying from just two words to some detailed answers.

Almost all of the respondents referred to, in a number of different ways, the idea that involving tenants in the design of their homes results in improved tenant satisfaction. This notion that the product would be better suited to the tenants' needs if they had taken part in the design was strong. One association put the reason for involvement in design succinctly as:

"Customer satisfaction."

Others echoed this sentiment, supplementing the word *customer* with *user*, *tenant* or *resident*. The use of the term *customer* is in itself interesting, as it shows the way that housing associations have changed their role and moved more towards the private sector. *Customer* it seems is increasingly being used in place of *tenant*. The satisfaction of tenants is obviously in the interests of both the tenants themselves and their landlords and one RSL development director says it creates:

"Greater tenant satisfaction and increased chances of success."

This individual does not explain how this may result but it would seem likely that the quotation from a fellow development director clarifies the intended meaning:

"To make sure that the properties being developed are designed for tenants' requirements which makes them easy to let and reduce voids."

The general feeling is that by involving tenants in the design of properties, the resultant dwellings are more suited to their needs. Tenants are likely to be more satisfied and therefore more likely to move in (and less likely to move out), thus reducing turnover and costs to the RSL. This is a common reason given and like the use of the term 'customer' it highlights the market-led realities faced by the sector in recent years. Housing associations are in effect competing for tenants in some parts of the country. One housing manager says that tenant involvement in design:

"Leads to a longer term commitment from tenants and reduces turnover."

Tenants moving house on a regular basis costs the landlords money in two main ways. Firstly, the vacated property will usually lie empty for a period of time and therefore they will receive no rent return, and secondly, they have to clean and repair the property before it is re-lettable. It is in the financial interest of housing associations to both attract and retain tenants. As one housing association chief executive states tenant involvement creates:

"More satisfied customers, provides better homes and also decreases our management costs!"

A tenant services manager from a large, north-western, housing association refers to the way in which involvement in design can avoid potential problems that may cause the association problems in the future.

"If housing is designed in accordance with residents' needs then the various housing management issues which emerge from inappropriate design will be more easily avoided."

This reference to design in accordance with residents' needs, and implication that tenant involvement can provide this highlights a key point that emerged from the responses. The idea that there is a '*social distance*' between designer and client in the design of social housing is explored in more detail in Chapter 3 of this thesis. Basically it refers to the differences in social background between (most) architects/designers and (most) social housing tenants. The idea that this gap can be bridged by tenant participation in the design process is a consistent theme in a number of responses:

"(Our aim is) to provide them with homes that they want, rather than homes which we think they want."

A development director from another housing association says much the same thing, with an added note of pragmatism:

"Tenants are direct beneficiaries of properties we build, we cannot possibly understand all requirements - we should not impose our views on our tenants. (Not withstanding constraints of land availability and finance)."

This tenant-centred viewpoint is espoused by a number of housing associations. An acceptance that tenants know more about local areas and therefore should have an important input is also mentioned. The '*Property Services Advisor*' of a very large RSL with property in over two hundred local authority areas states:

"As major investors in local communities it is important that we respond to the views and needs of our customers. We recognise that as occupiers they have a practical level of expertise and a great local knowledge."

This recognition of the local knowledge of tenants is of a greater importance in a large organisation such as the one from which the above statement emanates. The national nature of the association in question would mean that they are perhaps likely to be located further away from their properties, and therefore be more detached from communities in which they operate. The local knowledge of tenants is cited by other large RSLs. Another reason cited

for the importance of garnering tenants' views is where the landlord in question provides accommodation for a group in society with specific needs or requirements. One such BME housing association based in central London states that:

"By using tenants to help design properties we can avoid some of the problems and ensure properties are more suitable for the client group..."

This association recognises that the community that makes up the majority of its client base has specific religious/cultural needs (such as the need for separate male and female reception rooms) and therefore recognises the need to consult tenants on issues of design. Another housing association notes a similar point:

"To ensure that design incorporates tenants' needs which in our case may include special features related to ethnic minority needs."

Another housing association also recognises the benefits of using the experience of tenants to provide appropriate housing, and also uses a word that is mentioned by 23 of the respondents, 'ownership'.

"They use the property and can help identify design faults. To dispel the belief that 'we know what the tenants want'. (It creates) 'Ownership of design' of houses/flats/estates (it) creates potential long term benefits."

This concept of 'ownership' refers not to literal ownership of the property but more to a sense of ownership. Another housing director says that the most important reasons for involving tenants in the design of their housing is that:

"Residents take ownership of the designs and are therefore committed to long term success of the project, it provides them with greater pride."

This once again implies that the housing association, quite rightly, will benefit from this long-term view by maintaining the tenancy as discussed earlier. It also introduces another concept referred to in a number of responses, that of *pride*. The idea of tenants having pride in their homes and pride in the community, and the idea that this is increased by involving tenants in the design process, is again mentioned by an RSL:

"They live in the homes and know what works for them. If we impose on them they may not take pride in their community. It's about providing homes, not just houses: there is a distinctive difference."

It can be seen that the idea of involving tenants in the design of their houses is recognised by the vast majority of housing associations for a number of different reasons. The main themes that emerge, however, are that landlords want to improve overall tenant satisfaction by instilling the similar ideas of ownership and pride in their houses to their client groups. This would also have the desired effect of maintaining tenancies and increasing the profitability of the housing provider. Another stated reason for consulting tenants was the potential to tap local community knowledge, and therefore provide more appropriate housing. Despite these good business reasons for adopting a tenant-inclusive approach to housing design, one refreshingly honest, or depressingly cynical depending upon your viewpoint, housing manager states that the most important reason for involving tenants in the design of their houses is that:

"Tenant involvement seems to be the current flavour of the month."

5.5.2 Obstacles To Tenant Involvement In Design

The final question contained in the questionnaire was again open in design. It asked: *'What do you consider to be the biggest obstacles to the involvement of tenants in the design of their housing?'* This question elicited an even bigger response than the earlier one, with only 12 housing associations failing to respond; the answers given were on average longer and as with the previous question, the responses showed a great consistency. Several themes emerged as being important and each of these is dealt with below. Firstly the issue of allocations and nominations, which was highlighted by most of the responding associations. The problem is clearly outlined by one housing manager who states that the main problem is:

"Nomination agreements - identifying tenants early enough."

Nomination agreements, whereby local authorities nominate tenants to

housing association properties from a needs-based waiting list, are cited by many of the responding officers as a major problem in tenant involvement in design because they generally result in RSLs:

"Not knowing who will live there until just before hand-over."

A director of one large housing association clarifies this point further:

"Usually the tenants are not and cannot be identified at an early stage. Some LAs are unable to identify tenants early enough even for a choice of kitchen units, bathroom colours and carpet colours, which we offer."

The head of development at a medium sized housing association from the east of England illustrates the problems found by many in a clear and concise manner:

"Not being able to identify tenants until property is built. Allocations are made solely on the basis of need. Therefore participation is in general terms. Where tenants are known early they can be involved."

This reference to participation being in 'general terms' alludes to the use of representative tenant groups as opposed to the prospective tenants of the new dwellings in consideration. The development director of another housing association clarifies this:

"The tenants involved in design do not get the properties that they helped to create...."

The problems associated with using representative groups of tenants are put forward by a number of housing associations, but are represented by this statement from the chief executive of a small inner London association:

"Getting motivated to become involved in what will become other people's homes."

This problem of motivating tenants to spend time participating in the design of homes that they will not move into is apparent throughout the sector, but there are some cases where this is not necessary. The development director of one

housing association noted a scenario where the tenants could be identified at an early stage of the development programme.

"Difficulty to produce tenant involvement in design of new build housing unless in respect of a decant programme where tenants are to be re-housed in a new scheme."

This 'decant' model where tenants are temporarily housed whilst properties are being redeveloped is such an example where the tenants are identifiable at the outset, and can therefore be used to participate in the design of their own homes. An example of a decant scheme forms a case study in this thesis and will therefore be investigated in more detail later. Another example of a situation where the tenants are sometimes identified at an early stage, is in the provision of housing for tenants with special needs. One housing association development manager is mindful of the usual situation but highlights this point:

"Very rarely do we know who the tenants will be at the design stage (some special needs housing will be the exception)."

In the more typical situation, where tenants are not known to the association early enough in the development process to be able to be involved in the design, other methods of involving groups of tenants are used. These techniques themselves have their own problems and these were pointed out by a number of associations:

"Tenants not identified until scheme built so we rely on tenant membership of design panel and post occupancy surveys - it can be difficult to get people interested in these."

This idea that it is difficult to get tenants involved on a representative level when they are not seeing the benefits of their effort comes over strongly from a number of associations. Some landlords recognise that involvement of the prospective tenants in the design of their property is not only unlikely but also undesirable due to the transitory nature of their tenants:

"Many properties have a high turnover so we have to design for the majority rather than the individual."

However, a different issue regarding representative tenants is raised by a number of associations. One suggests that a problem is:

"The age of tenants - frequently the tenants who have the time/money (to become involved) are elderly."

Although this statement is not explained further, it appears to question the representative nature of the tenants who put themselves forward to take part in involvement exercises. It would appear that the director of development responsible for the statement was concerned about the predominantly elderly nature of the participating tenants and the way in which they are probably not representative of the RSL client-group as a whole. This point is mentioned by a respondent who considers the major hurdles to tenant involvement to be:

"Tenant apathy. Reps may be unrepresentative. Expectations of tenants not met."

This response highlights a number of related points: tenants may be apathetic in the main which leads to representative groups comprising of unrepresentative tenants (possibly elderly persons as mentioned above), and because of this the expectations of the wider tenant body may not be met. The development strategy manager of one of the country's largest housing associations says the biggest hurdle to involvement in design is:

"Lack of interest from tenants and some staff."

Tenant apathy is mentioned by numerous associations as a problem; less were inclined to mention a lack of commitment on behalf of their staff. However, a director of one housing association appeared to put the blame firmly at the door of his association claiming that the problem was a:

"Lack of interest in avoiding housing management problems. Lack of interest in, or respect for, views of customers."

This disarmingly honest appraisal is undoubtedly the most explicit condemnation of an association's staff team, but others do mention the role of the building professionals. A development director said the problem is a:

"Reluctance of professionals to actively espouse the concept."

Whilst a tenant participation officer from a large RSL claims that the architects are the main stumbling block, saying the prime reason was:

"Professionals' reluctance to change the plans..."

The issue of professional expertise and the lack of technical expertise of the tenants was a well documented hurdle to better tenant involvement. One officer claimed the problem centred on this issue:

"Communication between professionals and tenants."

The problems of communicating technically difficult information to a lay audience, often with no real experience of the development arena, was often cited. One director of development stated that the problem was twofold:

"Lack of time. Lack of ability to interpret plans."

These issues surrounding the technically exclusive nature of the architecture and development professions were mentioned by many, one tenant participation manager noting that the problem as being:

"Poor presentations, not recognised need for user friendly materials."

This appears to refer to a need to demystify the development process, to open it up to tenants and thus enable successful involvement. One director of a learning disability housing group has other issues other than just technical ignorance to overcome, he states that their biggest hurdle is:

"The level of learning disability, but pictorial symbols and CD-ROM can assist...."

Despite the greater difficulties inherent in communicating complex information to a client group with learning difficulties, the association in question still attempts to involve their clients whenever possible by adopting an innovative approach to communicating design ideas. A different housing association development officer mentions another stumbling block:

"Tenants do not appreciate the very tight financial constraints within which HAs have to work"

The gap in expertise is not just apparent in the case of the technical architectural information, but also in terms of the financial frameworks and constraints on development as well as the regulatory controls. One director mentions a:

"Need for education about the complicated funding and regulatory controls we are obliged to deal with."

The chief executive of a very small housing association concurs and states the problems as being a:

"Lack of understanding of the limits of finance and other matters associated with the development process. This can leave tenants dissatisfied that their points of view and requirements cannot be met."

This notion that a lack of expertise (amongst the tenant group) leads to a general dissatisfaction with the end product, because of an inadequate grasp of the myriad of constraints and controls, is interesting and is explored later. Another point that is raised by many of the respondents is the time and cost implications of tenant involvement in the design process. One development director forcibly claims the biggest obstacle to involvement is:

"TIME!"

This sentiment is echoed by many others, who explain the statement more fully. A director of one housing association puts it simply:

"Consultation delays the development process and increases costs."

This opinion is voiced by many more of the responding housing associations (approximately 50%) but interestingly, most still attempt to involve tenants. The benefits of tenant involvement, as discussed earlier, must be considered to outweigh the disadvantages of such an approach.