

6. The Case Studies

The following four sections constitute the second phase of research. They are accounts of the design and development process in the four case study areas investigated during the course of this research. The following sections detail these housing developments are located in:

The West Midlands;

South Yorkshire;

The North-east; and

Greater London.

The criteria used for the selection of these is discussed in detail in Chapter 4, Research Design. Although the four case studies are written up in the same format there are variations to allow for the different scenarios in each instance. The following sections are essentially descriptive in nature and the key themes that emerge are discussed in the comparative analysis found in Chapter 7.

6.1 West Midlands Case Study

The first case study was conducted in the West Midlands, more specifically in the city of Birmingham. This section will begin by briefly describing the local area, its history and characteristics, before looking at the developing housing association, its background, organisation and general development practices. There then follows a description of the other players involved in the regeneration of the Pool Farm estate, the tenants and residents groups and supporting agencies. After this context is established, there follows a more detailed investigation into one of the phases of new build housing development carried out by the housing association on the estate. At all times, in the interests of confidentiality real names have been omitted. The development that has been studied will be known simply as *'the development'* and the interviewees who helped with the research will be referred to by their job title or position in the process, for example *'the architect'* or *'an estate resident.'* During the course of the research the following people were interviewed:

The Project Architect;
Housing Association Development Officer;
Development Officer, Birmingham City Council;
Head of the HA Communities First Unit;
HA Tenant Board Member - a tenant in one of the new houses;
Local Resident - a long-term community representative; and
Housing association, Area Housing Officer.

As well as the above interviews, there were also telephone enquiries made to Birmingham City Council Planning Department. Alongside the interviews there was access granted to the project file and any relevant supporting documentation, including reports, drawings, meeting minutes and a variety of leaflets and newsletters aimed at the community. A number of these proved useful in the compilation of this case study report. There follows a summary timetable for the housing development and the community involvement on Pool Farm. The table sets out to describe the community involvement throughout the development process investigated, at key stages from the

decision to redevelop the area in question until the completion of the particular phase looked at in detail. It must be noted that each stage is described in greater detail later in the section. The table is split into two stages denoted by the shading, before the specific phase investigated was begun and after.

Date	Stage	Community Involvement
June 1990	Formation of the Community Partnership Initiative.	<i>Community groups consulted the decision to redevelop the area. EDG formed with community representation.</i>
May 1992	Successful bid for Estate Action funding.	<i>Tenant pressure led to the existing houses being included for refurbishment as well as the flats and maisonettes.</i>
March 1993	Two housing associations selected to develop on the estate.	<i>Decision made by council with a public meeting where the community was informed.</i>
May 1994	Open Day held to discuss the HA development on the estate.	<i>Three Key Design Principles agreed for future HA development.</i>
June 1994	Architects engaged and work began on the design of the first phase of development.	<i>Architects selected by HA from approved list, no involvement of community in this decision.</i>
April 1996	Successful Social Housing Grant application - work began on Phase Three.	<i>EDG meeting discusses the specific requirements of this 12 unit phase.</i>
Summer 1997	The 12 units were completed throughout the summer.	<i>The tenants of the new properties, if known early enough, were given a variety of choices about the fixtures, fittings and internal decoration.</i>
1997 onwards	Post Occupancy Survey completed by all tenants of the new houses.	<i>Results feed back into the Comprehensive Design and Development Brief used for all new schemes.</i>

Figure 6.1: Involvement At The Key Stages In The Development Process

6.1.1 The Area

This section provides a description of the area in which the development is located. It initially sets out to briefly describe the location of the estate within the city of Birmingham, and then moves on to discuss the existing house types and conditions in the Pool Farm locality. The previous regeneration initiatives on the estates are discussed and finally the process by which the housing associations were selected is explained.

Background

The development is located on Pool Farm, a local authority rented estate in the King's Norton area of Birmingham. The local authority is the biggest housing provider in England and Wales, managing around 94,000 rented properties (Source: Birmingham City Council website). There have however been recent moves to separate this into seven more manageable sectors with a possible move towards large scale transfers. The estate lies on the edge of the city, adjacent to the neighbouring local authority of Bromsgrove, approximately 6 miles from the city centre, and is bordered partly by agricultural land that forms part of the city's green belt. The site is steeply sloping.

Pool Farm is one of three similar estates in the vicinity, the others being Primrose and Hawksley, and all three are often referred to collectively as the '*Three Estates*'. Pool Farm alone has approximately 1,000 local authority managed properties and the three estates combined contain 3,350 units. The estates of Pool Farm and Primrose are also referred to as '*The Fold*'. The terms '*Three Estates*' and '*The Fold*' may be used throughout this chapter.

Existing Housing Types And Condition

Pool Farm, which dates from the early 1960s, comprises of mixed building types with the bulk of the stock being two and three bedroomed family houses, two storey flats, three storey maisonette blocks and four storey blocks of flats. The estate also contains multi-storey tower blocks, although it was revealed during a preliminary interview that one of these, Cavendish Tower, was demolished in the early 1990s as a result of serious structural damage. The construction of the lower-rise property is based on the '*Laing Easy-Form*' in-situ concrete system build method and the high-rise development is of reinforced concrete column and beam construction with brickwork infill cladding.

Of the existing housing, the maisonette and flat blocks are the most unpopular dwellings and therefore it is these that are being replaced first, along with

some of the houses that are in poorer condition. The major problems associated with the two and three storey flat blocks are typical of their type, and include damp and a lack of adequate heating and insulation. The blocks also have security problems and are subject to high levels of vandalism (source: tenant information leaflet). Many of the problems associated with poor housing condition were dealt with as part of the Estate Action programme which ran from 1993-1998, and this is discussed in more detail below.

Previous Regeneration Initiatives On The Estate

Pool Farm estate has been subjected to large-scale redevelopment since the early 1990s, with the new-build houses constructed by the RSLs being only a part of a larger process of estate regeneration. The Pool Farm Community Partnerships Initiative (CPI) was established in 1990 by the local authority with a view to establishing a more consolidated partnership approach. The CPI comprised of representation from Birmingham City Council, all local community organisations and a number of tenant groups including the Fold Housing Liaison Board (HLB) and the Estate Development Group (EDG) which are discussed later in this chapter. The Tenant Participatory Advice Service (TPAS) provided independent support and advice throughout. The CPI was instigated by Birmingham City Council's Housing Department and was, according to a leaflet distributed at the time:

“Committed to a future plan for change, based on honesty, sharing and resolving all issues to enable Community Management through all levels of service.”

Leaflet: The Fold Housing Team, Birmingham City Council 1994

The CPI took part in an unsuccessful Estates Action funding bid to the Department of the Environment in 1990-91. This was followed by a successful bid after a period of further consultation. The Estates Action approved bid enabled the problem low-rise flat developments to be improved in a number of ways as part of Phase 1. Despite initial intentions to not improve the housing as part of the first phase, there was considerable tenant pressure and the works were increased to include a number of the houses.

Improvements to the high-rise blocks included the provision of gas central heating and increased fire safety. The low-rise flats and some of the houses had roof repairs, PVCu replacement windows, new secure front doors, gas central heating, PVCu guttering installed, canopy replacements, external redecoration and enhanced lighting. The work on the low-rise developments was undertaken in an attempt to attain Secure By Design accreditation from the West Midlands Police Force. During the Phase 1 development a further successful bid was lodged with the DoE for Phase 2 funding. Phase 2 work was completed in 1994-96 and consisted of extensive works to the high-rise and low-rise developments; these included kitchen and bathroom modernisations, the installation of remote entry systems to the three storey blocks and a variety of environmental works to a number of sites on the estate. The high-rise developments were structurally improved, had improved insulation, new PVCu windows and roof repairs undertaken. As well as the housing improvements a traffic management scheme was introduced, with the main aim of improving parking. The combined value of the Estates Action funding was £13 million. This information was provided by a Birmingham City Council Officer during the course of a telephone interview.

It is during these periods of estate action work that developing housing associations with a potential interest in the Pool Farm estate were approached by the local authority about developing new houses on the estate, initially on the sites created by demolition of poor quality provision. This enabled Housing Corporation money and private finance to be attracted to the estate. Estate Action, which was essentially a mechanism for modernisation of local authority estates funded directly by central government, can be seen to have led to widespread investment on local authority estates. It was during the period of the early and mid 1990s - in the period of Estate Action - that the housing association began its programme of development on Pool Farm. More recently, indeed after the case studies were completed, the 'Three-Estates' have become a New Deal For Communities investment area.

During the Estate Action period of redevelopment there were a number of small 'postage stamp' development sites evenly split between two selected RSLs. Of these, the housing association responsible for the development discussed below developed 76 dwellings on a number of small sites within the estate. The first phase of development began in 1994 and the last was completed in 1999. The development selected is a phase that was completed in 1997.

Selection Of The Housing Associations

The council contacted a number of housing associations after deciding to encourage development on the estate. It can be seen therefore that the local authority was the instigator of development in this instance. The development officer for the area, during a research interview, explained this:

"We were involved from the very outset, we would need to facilitate that development, in other words we would need to make some land available for the development to take place. So we are involved in the process very, very early on in a sense that we have identified, given the various criteria, properties that are perhaps no longer economic to us. They may be unpopular and than we have to take steps to clear and demolish properties and of course re-house residents."

Development Officer, Birmingham City Council

After the initial approach to a number of housing associations that were potential developers on the estate, the process of selection took place. The representative from the local authority stated that in the case of Pool Farm no formal consortia were set up but that there was a rigorous selection procedure that involved a series of meetings with the housing associations. The selection criteria were numerous, and included the track record of the RSL, their ability to manage the development and the local profile of the organisation. The views of the local residents were also sought at this early stage and there were public meetings attended by representatives from both the housing associations and the local authority. The system for selection has undergone some changes in Birmingham since the start of the development on Pool Farm in 1993, but the essential premise of housing associations competing to develop remains. When asked how the process would be

completed now, in the light of the new changes, the development officer for the local authority stated:

“We are in the process of undergoing again a ‘choosing partners’ process within the city so it would be a number of associations, probably two or three, or a consortia of housing associations; again this would probably number three. They would be expected to [...] compete is the right term, to develop. Part of that competition would undoubtedly involve meeting with and giving presentations to residents.”

Development Officer, Birmingham City Council

This process seems to be a formalisation of the method adopted in the selection of the housing associations invited to develop on Pool Farm. As a result of the selection process two housing associations were selected to develop on the estate and the available sites were allocated to each of these. The case for the housing association that developed the housing investigated here was strong, as they already owned 24 flats on the estate prior to the beginning of the new-build housing association developments in 1993. This pre-existing presence in the community would undoubtedly have been a factor in the selection of the landlord as one of those asked to develop.

6.1.2 The Housing Association

The developing housing association is a general needs housing provider founded in the early 1960s, with at present in excess of 3,000 properties all located within the West Midlands region. The RSL operates within a total of nine local authority districts and their housing stock is found in a range of locations from the inner city, to other urban areas and also includes a small proportion of stock in rural areas (source: postal questionnaire survey – see chapter 6). The housing association have a policy of developing strong local links and this is displayed in their profile in the communities in which they own stock. They have a positive involvement with a variety of community organisations, including local hospitals and schools. In the case of the Pool Farm estate the housing association have had close links with the local school over a number of years, taking part in fund raising events and sponsoring the school football team (source: ‘The Advertiser’ local newspaper). They

managed a number of flats on the estate prior to the phases of new-build development began in the early 1990s.

The Communities First Unit

The housing association have attempted to foster strong links with the communities in which they work and have attempted to focus their input at this level by the setting up of the Communities First Unit (CFU) in the summer of 1999. The formation of the CFU was an evolution of the existing tenant participation strategy. The head of the new unit stated during a research interview that the aim behind this was to:

“Not only consider the involvement of the association’s own tenants but also to look at wider community initiatives, (it is) a diversification of what we do and how we do it.”

Head of the CFU

The interview clarified the role of the CFU further: its aim is to identify projects and ideas working with both housing association tenants and other residents as well as the broader community, other agencies and partners to explore new aspects of the role of the housing association. The CFU operates in all aspects of the association’s practice, from housing management, to Housing Plus initiatives through to new development. The CFU did not come into being until the summer of 1999, however the setting up of such a unit to specifically deal with the issues surrounding the Housing Plus agenda and *diversification* was the result of the increasing emphasis placed on the broader remit of the RSL. This had been apparent in the housing association for a significantly longer period of time. As the CFU head recalled during a research interview:

“The setting up of the CFU was really just formalising what we had begun to do anyway...”

Head of the CFU

General Development Practice

The housing association has a general policy of only developing on local authority estates when they have been invited to work in partnership with the local authority (source: interview with development officer). They do not put

forward speculative proposals to local authorities or private landowners. The opportunity to develop property on local authority estates has been in evidence in the West Midlands region and the association has had *'one of the largest development programmes in the region during the 1990s'* (source: interview with head of CFU). As a result the housing association has grown rapidly in that period. This development on local authority estates will be discussed at more length later.

Selection And Appointment Of Architects

The housing association does not have any in-house architects, and instead they use local practices from an approved list (source: interview with architect). The architectural practices typically engaged have specific experience in the housing field. The architect interviewed in connection with the development discussed later in this chapter was from a practice that has conducted a number of developments for the association. He claimed:

"75% of our work is for housing associations, so I would say that we specialise in all types of social housing. This includes all work that could come under the umbrella of social housing - community based schemes, sheltered housing, special needs housing - basically anything that you could term social housing. We do both new-build and refurb'."

Project Architect

The architectural practice in question has in the region of fifty housing association clients in the Midlands, of which they are actively engaged with about fifteen during any one year. It is acknowledged however that they are often engaged on a design and build contract and, as this is essentially contractor driven some of these close links are eroded. The other practices used by the housing association also have strong backgrounds in housing and close links with the voluntary sector (source: interview with architect).

The association felt that using experienced architectural practices with a broad range of relevant experience was beneficial. They also claimed that the nature of their development programme would not allow for the employment of in-house architects, as there are some times when several developments are under way and others when there are none. Using external architects allows

for the retention of more than one practice, or indeed none at all at any one time (source: interview with head of CFU). It can therefore be seen that the potential risk to the RSL is far less, as they would not be in a position of employing an architectural team during periods of development inactivity. The use of external architects allows for greater flexibility. Moreover it was felt that the level of experience available in a large practice of architects would potentially lead to better quality design. Specific practices with specific experience could be brought in on developments that would be geared to their area of expertise. The housing association development officer voiced this:

"We select the architects very carefully; we have a list of practices which we use and have worked with in the past and we look at the job and decide which would be the most suitable ones to approach."

Housing Association Development Officer

The opinion that the system of using external architects was beneficial to the housing association was, unsurprisingly, reinforced by the architect:

"So my opinion on in-house architects is that with the diverse range of developments, external consultants are probably better."

Project Architect, Pool Farm

He went on to clarify thus:

"I think that there is a cross fertilisation, no question, between information, experience and research which we gain from working with the likes of (the RSL) and also from other associations and vice-versa and I feel that this is important. This could not occur if there were in-house architects working within one housing association."

Project Architect

The RSL has also embarked on a new venture called 'Re-inventing The Home' which is a collaboration between themselves and their three main consultant architects. The aim of this is to pool experience for the benefit of all parties. Although only at an early stage during the period of the case study investigation, the remit is to develop innovative ideas and not to be constrained by traditional ideas of the house (source: interview with the head of the CFU). The basic premise is to establish how people live, what they need and how they use spaces. Monitoring of this process would be an interesting endeavour but the timescale of this research does not permit this.

7.1.3 The Tenant Involvement Mechanism

We have already discussed the housing association and their appointed architects as well as the role of the local authority in regeneration on the estate. There was however a number of other parties involved in the developments on Pool Farm. These include the committees established to monitor and evaluate the process and existing tenants' and residents' groups. Before discussing these, however, it is important to mention the tenant feedback surveys, the results of which fed into the design of all new properties built by the RSL.

Tenant Feedback Surveys

The housing association operates a system of gathering tenant feedback information via a regularly administered questionnaire survey. This is sent to all tenants and covers the full range of the service provided. Tenants are given the opportunity to comment on all aspects of the association's practice (source: tenant feedback survey). There is another questionnaire administered to the tenants of properties developed or extensively renovated by the association. This is a tenant satisfaction survey and it enquires about the quality of the new dwelling, asking the tenants what they like about the property and equally as importantly what they dislike (source: tenant satisfaction survey). The results of these surveys feed into the housing association's standard specification design guide. This document details the features common to all housing developments completed by the association and is itself under a process of constant review. The feedback from the tenant satisfaction survey forms part of this process. More specific design principles are established for each development and those concerning the Pool Farm development are discussed later. It can be seen that these surveys affect all new properties developed (source: housing association standard specification design guide). It is now necessary to investigate the tenant involvement structures utilised in the specific developments investigated.

The Three Estates Tenants' And Residents' Group

The Three Estates Tenants' and Residents Group (TETRG) was established in the mid-1980s with assistance from the Tenants Participation Advisory Service (TPAS). It emerged out of the Tenants Liaison Group (TLG) an organisation formed and run by council tenants from the three estates of Pool Farm, Primrose and Hawksley. This liaison group ran advice centres and other community resources from the local Family Services Unit (FSU). At a time when it was threatened with closure, as a local authority cost cutting exercise, in the early 1980s the TETRG emerged as an organisation set up to try to prevent this. The Three Estates Tenants and Residents Group has developed a track record of community activism and has played a part in local action over a number of issues (source: interview with the chair of TETRG).

“Our group has been fighting things for years, we had to fight to keep the doctor’s surgery twice. We have had midnight vigils with candles outside the surgery. We do a lot and keep our eyes open to see if something needs doing...”

Chair of the Three Estates Tenants and Residents Group

The TETRG is made up of local residents, both council and housing association tenants and owner-occupiers, and is concerned with a number of important issues in the area (source: TETRG minutes). There are also a number of other residents and tenants' groups operating in the area. These typically concern smaller areas such as individual flat blocks or particular streets and these are generally represented on the TETRG. It can be seen that there is a network of tenant and resident organisations on the estates, and that a connection between these separate agencies is apparent.

The Pool Farm Tenant Federation

This is an organisation that includes representatives from all of the smaller tenant and resident associations on the Pool Farm Estate. Unlike the TETRG its scope is limited to the estate of Pool Farm, but the regular meetings provide an opportunity for estate-wide issues to be discussed (source: interview with tenant representative).

The Estate Development Group

The Estate Development Group (EDG) on the Pool Farm estate was initiated with the aim of providing a forum for to discuss the extensive programme of redevelopment and regeneration occurring on the estate throughout the 1990s. The EDG met on a regular basis, at approximately six-week intervals, in a local community building. The meetings were typically chaired by the development officer from Birmingham City Council and were attended by a number of representatives from the community, the Fold Housing Team (local authority) and the locally active housing associations. At key times in the stages of development the meetings were also attended by the relevant project architects, building contractors and planning officers from the local authority (source: minutes of EDG). During the seven years of the redevelopment programme the number of separate developments has been such that each meeting would typically have a number of these other parties involved.

The remit of the EDG was to provide a forum for discussion of all of the issues surrounding development on the estate, and an emphasis is placed on informing and consulting tenants. The EDG was attended by some tenants' representatives, indeed the chair of the Three Estates Tenants and Residents Board was a member, but despite it being open to the public, like the TETRG, it did not attract as many local residents. Information from the EDG did however filter down to the TETRG, the Tenants Federation and in turn to the local tenants' and residents' associations, via dissemination of the information by the people who were involved with both committees. One such person further qualifies this:

"It is at those meetings (of the EDG) that we get all of the information back, not really at the Three Estates ones, but I will bring things up there from the EDG if it is needed to let people know."

Local resident, Chair of TETRG and member of the EDG

So it can be seen that the general pattern was for the development, throughout its course, to be discussed at the Estate Development Group meeting. Then the relevant information and decisions made were taken to the

Three Estates Tenants and Residents Group and Tenants Federation for further consideration, with any comments and suggestions being taken back to the EDG in due course. The Tenants Federation in a newsletter sent to all residents of the estate described the role of the EDG as providing:

“Increased awareness of what’s happening. Knowing faces from different departments and organisations. Direct communication, not having to chase around. Seeing the different interests of members. First hand experience of the differences between agencies.”

From Pool Farm Tenants Federation newsletter

The Tenants Federation was however critical of the EDG, saying that it did not ask tenants about their views enough and that training was not provided in order for the tenants to be more effective. The EDG was involved in the setting out of the key design principles at the outset of the development (source minutes of EDG meeting). These will be discussed later but it can be seen that the EDG is the forum most connected to the new development and its design and progress.

The Tenant Participation Advisory Service

The Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) has been active in the area in particular since the early 1990s when the series of developments on Pool Farm was initially mooted. They provided a supporting role, giving independent advice on how to provide more structured tenant involvement - building bridges between the tenants and professionals. Their input was wide reaching and included the organisation of site visits, the production of regular newsletters and the staging of consultation days. A TPAS worker was appointed to cover the area and he was involved on the three estates on a daily basis, being located within the area. TPAS played a role in informing tenants about the EDG and encouraging the involvement of tenants and residents (source: interview with the chair of the TETRAG). It was unfortunately not possible during the course of this research to trace and subsequently interview the TPAS officer involved.

7.1.4 The Development

The development investigated for the purposes of this research comprises 12 dwellings that were completed as a phase of the overall development on the Pool Farm Estate. These 12 dwellings are predominantly three-bedroomed family houses. All of the property is for social renting and all is currently occupied. Of the 54 other dwellings built on the estate by the housing association, the majority are two and three-bedroomed houses with some four-bedroomed houses and a house designed to cater for a specific disabled tenant. The RSL already owned some flats and extensively converted some previously deck access flat blocks as another phase of their involvement on the estate. The construction type of the new build housing can be described as traditional, consisting as it does of brick and timber built houses with pan tile roofs and a vernacular style design.

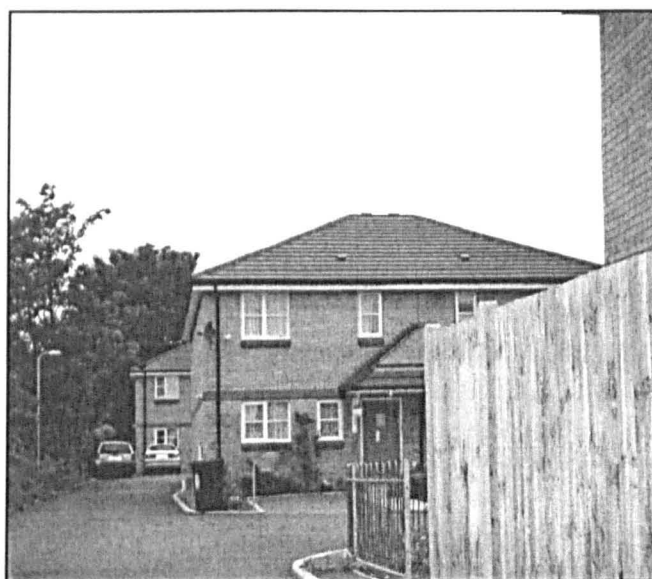


Figure 6.2: The West Midlands Housing Development

The Phases Of Development

This section deals with the single phase investigated for the purposes of the case study in its context as one of the numerous phases of development undertaken by the housing association on the estate. The development of the 12 houses was the third phase on the third site of Pool Farm undertaken by the housing association. Consequently the selection of the housing association had been completed some three to four years prior to the

development of the site in question, when the decision was made by the local authority to encourage housing association development on the Pool Farm estate. Likewise, the architectural practice involved in the previous developments that was retained to work on the scheme had already completed work on Pool Farm.

It was decided to develop the site at the outset of the programme, but work did not commence on it until other development phases had been completed. This was not until 1996. A successful application was made for Social Housing Grant (SHG) in the financial year 1996-7; in anticipation of this sketch proposals were drawn up by the architects incorporating the information gained from earlier developments and from the agreed design principles which will be discussed later (source: interview architect). The development of the 12 units was very much the next stage in the housing association's involvement on Pool Farm. It can be seen that it is difficult to separate the design process undertaken in the case of the 12 unit phase from that which informed the whole series of developments. This point was illustrated by the project architect when he was asked about the design of phase three:

"Well I must say that it is almost impossible to look at the one phase in isolation, we had already completed some other sites by then and I am sure that the experience from that fed through. I do not remember many, if any differences in the way that we approached those houses; the site was different obviously but the principles that we used were fairly constant."

Project Architect, Pool Farm

This was substantiated by the development officer at the housing association, who when questioned about the specific phase of development said:

"You can't really isolate this scheme very well, or any other one there for that matter; it was one part of a whole lot of development that we were doing on the estate at the time and the design issues sort of melded together. The developments were separated for financial, funding, reasons...."

Housing Association Development Officer

This raises the issue of when the tenant involvement took place. Whether the important decisions were made during the initial discussions, when the programme was set out and the design principles were established, or whether the continued programme of consultation meetings had significant impact. These questions are investigated below.

Tenant and Resident Participation

The regular meetings of the Estate Development Group continued throughout the development programme of the RSLs on Pool Farm, as indeed they continue at the time of writing. These can be seen to be the major mechanism by which consultation and involvement has taken place. As mentioned earlier the EDG was formed to better disseminate information and to act as a forum for consultation, a *'bridge between tenants and professionals'* (source: EDG explanatory leaflet). It was, however at a meeting of the Three Estates Tenants and Residents Group in early 1993 that the proposals for the housing association development on the Pool Farm estate were first put to the community. At this stage there was simply a plan of the estate illustrating the pockets of land to be developed, and further discussions about development were more typically undertaken at the EDG. Tenants can be seen to have been consulted at a very early stage in the process, indeed before any design had been carried out. The first meeting was concerned with what sort of development should take place, the type of housing provided, what was needed, what was wanted and what would fit in with wider planning requirements (source: minutes of EDG). The architect attended these meetings from the outset and seemed particularly concerned with courting the views of residents at as early as possible. During an interview he stated:

"On Pool Farm for instance and now with (the same RSL) again on another estate, we are actively involved in courting the tenants from a very early stage and getting their views because it is housing for them. It is their community: it is not for us, it is not for the association to an extent. We need to get as a starting point a wealth of information from the tenants about what they actually want, because quite often the 'we know best' mentality prevails and that is not always the right way."

Project Architect

The housing association also place great emphasis on consulting tenants early in the process. The questionnaire response sums up their approach thus:

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

In the case of the series of developments on Pool Farm the methods of fostering tenant involvement were described by the head of the Communities First Unit as:

"In terms of Pool Farm it was a very simplistic approach. We sat with a group of residents and the architects and plans and we talked through what and how we were going to do."

Head of the CFU

This alludes to the meetings of the EDG that occurred throughout the development programme on a regular basis. These meetings were chaired by the development officer from the local authority and were centred on discussing the latest developments on the estate. These included the extensive renovations of the council owned stock that occurred during the 1990s, as well as the new-build housing constructed by the RSLs. The EDG was not a forum solely for discussing the design of the new properties. An association tenant (an occupier of one of the new houses) described the content of the EDG meetings thus:

"We see the plans at EDGs, we meet the architects, we see what the type of houses are going to be - two or three bedroomed - and that and we get a chance to comment."

HA Tenant Board Member, a tenant in one of the new houses.

The tenant in question was not a resident of Pool Farm at the outset of the redevelopment programme in the early 1990s, but was a council tenant in another area of Birmingham. The tenant was not informed of her successful transfer request to move into a housing association property on the estate until the house that she was offered was already under construction and near completion. As a result of this opportunities for significant participation in the

design of the property were small. This raises some interesting questions about the allocations procedure and the issue of participation by prospective tenants or representative tenants or residents which will be addressed later.

Throughout the development of housing association properties on the Pool Farm estate there have been regular meetings of the EDG where the latest developments have been discussed. After the initial raising of the issue at the TETRG meeting the EDG has been the forum for discussion. These have been augmented by a number of one-off events surrounding certain issues about the overall regeneration programme on the estate. One of these was held in May 1994 and was led by the Fold Housing Team (local authority housing department), the Pool Farm Tenants Federation and the Fold Housing Liaison Board. The event was supported by TPAS and the two developing housing associations, and was advertised as an 'information seminar'. There were a number of participants from tenants' and residents' groups as well as many officers from the council, including those from the housing management, planning and architecture and regeneration departments. The RSLs were well represented with people from both of these giving presentations about their own, at this time still only proposed, development. As well as these professionals directly involved there were a number of other interested parties in attendance, including the local Member of Parliament, a local councillor and representatives of the local clergy (source: leaflet advertising the information seminar).

The seminar was held in a community hall on the adjoining estate of Primrose and was concerned primarily with the progress of the Community Partnership Initiative works on the estate. The meeting, like others that followed, was set to provide an opportunity to update the community on the latest stage of development and to provide a chance, as described by a resident of the estate:

"To put a face to these people whose names we kept hearing at the Estate Development Group meetings and to catch up on what was going on."

Local resident, Chair of the TETRG and member of the EDG

So it can be seen that the main framework for tenant involvement in the design, and regeneration of the estate in general, was via EDG meetings - supplemented by occasional events such as the one described above. Further tenant discussions occurred at the meetings of the various resident groups, and their umbrella groups of the TETRG and the Fold Tenants Federation. These meeting would typically feed their comments and concerns back to the EDG for further discussion (source: minutes of a variety of tenants' and residents' meetings). The EDG meetings were held in the evenings and were open so any tenant with a specific concern could attend and raise it for debate. There follows a run through of the key stages of decision making in the design of the new housing, with specific reference to the phase of development in question when appropriate.

The Agreed Set Of Design Principles

At a number of Estate Development Group meetings early in the programme of regeneration there were a number of key design principles established, to which new RSL dwellings would have to comply. These principles would be in addition to the standard specification design guide used by the housing association for the design of all new properties. The landlord's own design guide is a large volume detailing the specification of materials, finishes and minimum standards for room sizes. It states a number of features that are common to all of the association's new houses, such as the specification of hardwood window frames as opposed to PVCu. A development officer from the housing association describes it thus:

"We have an overall design brief which we have developed as a housing association, based on the (housing) corporation guidelines and Building Reg's etc. It a pooling together of all of those things, it covers a range of different things from what the externals, environmentals and all of those sort of things are to what our wish list is and we have nailed it down from there."

HA Development Officer

As an expanding RSL involved in a lot of new-build development this was considered the best way to proceed efficiently whilst maintaining a degree of consistency and quality of product (source: RSL design brief). When

questioned whether tenants had input into the design brief the development officer explained:

“Yes, they do. The tenant survey results feed into our review of the design guide. It is difficult to say what specific things have changed as a result of this; I think that we made some changes to our security provision as a result of concerns raised by tenants.”

HA Development Officer

There was no indication on copies of the design brief where the amended recommendations had originated, and so it was not possible to decipher which had been as a result of tenant involvement. As a result the documentation was not of any direct use in establishing the extent of the tenant feedback and its effect on the design brief. The RSL however does not use standardised house plans; this was stated in their questionnaire response and the reason for this was given in an interview:

“Schemes and sites are different - standardised plans do not reflect this”

HA Development Officer

The housing associations design brief along with the statutory controls and regulations such as planning consent and building regulations would typically form the basis from which the architects would try to provide a solution. The architect, during a research interview described the process:

“The government issues guidelines to the Housing Corporation and the Local Authorities. The Housing Corporation then produces fairly stringent standards that are sometimes at odds to the local authority but sometimes mesh quite well. Those are then given to the association, who put their layer of information on top of that and pass it to us; we then have to put our layer of information on and so on. It gets to be quite a convoluted process and by the time that we actually sit down to start designing we have got a bookcase with 30 or 40 documents, each of which has to be complied with in some form or another”

Project Architect

The layer of information that the architect talks about adding is the planning and building regulations information as well as the implicit design work concerned with aesthetics and functionality. The agreed design principles

which were reached as a result of tenant consultation at the outset of the housing association's building programme on the Pool Farm estate can be seen as another of these layers of information for the architect to incorporate into the solution. The scope for radical, innovative design solutions is therefore small, the architect continues:

"There are an awful lot of criteria that you have to adhere to which unfortunately the flexibility for choice of anybody, even our choice as designers, it is becoming much more limited. We are having to comply with so many criteria that if you actually take all of the little bits of the criteria you end up with a very small area in which to move this thing about."

Project Architect

This lack of room for manoeuvre means that the scope for any form of resident involvement was limited from the outset. The architect, when asked about the impact of public involvement, replied:

"To an extent it quite often is the detail and this is the area where the tenants have quite a strong input, in terms of what you do in the back gardens and how you separate the properties and now what you do with the parking and what the internal features are."

Project Architect

The agreed design principles which were established with tenant input reflect this limited scope for influence, they were:

*Burglar Alarms - fitted to all new-build properties,
Steel Rail Fencing - to divide plots and surround gardens and
On-Plot Car Parking - at least one space provided on the plot.*

(source: minutes of EDG)

These factors were established at the outset of the building programme and were adhered to throughout. Each of the new houses has a burglar alarm, steel rail fencing (as opposed to the cheaper wooden 'trip' fencing) and at least one on-plot car parking space. So it can be seen that the tenant and resident involvement on the development of phase three of the RSL's development programme was largely confined to the development and implementation of these decisions. Decisions that were made at the start of the entire programme, some three years plus before the foundations were

dug. These design principles, though agreed at the outset of the programme, were subject to further discussion throughout the phases of development and the issues came up at many meetings of the EDG. There were, however, no substantial design changes made to the basic principles during the design of phase three.

Obstacles To Resident And Tenant Involvement

During the course of each phase of development the EDG meetings continued to show the rate of progress to the public members. These meetings often involved visits to other developments owned by the housing association on other estates in the region. These were regularly organised, with transport provided, so that a better picture of similar completed houses could be conveyed (source: interview with chair of TETRG). Individual tenants could not influence the design of their own future property, as tenants at this point had not been selected. The RSL was tied to a local authority nominations agreement and as such the tenants in the main were from the council waiting-list. When the tenants were selected, if in time, they would get a number of choices about fixtures and decoration (source: questionnaire response). These individual choices were limited to those that could be incorporated at a late stage of the construction programme, for the small number of tenants who knew of their moves prior to completion and hand-over. A housing association tenant of one of the new houses on phase-three of the development describes her experience thus:

“The house was built when I was told that it was going to be mine, I moved in a couple of weeks later. They did give me a choice about the decorating; they showed me some samples and I chose from them...”

HA Tenant Board Member, a tenant in one of the new houses

This experience is typical due to the nature of the housing association's allocations policy on such developments. Unlike large scale estate regeneration with decant programmes, such piecemeal development on local authority estates means that tenants are generally not identified until a late stage in the process. Often the involvement of the RSL is reliant upon a nominations agreement with the local authority and this was the case in Pool

Farm. The involvement can be seen to be more from a representative group of residents of the estate than from prospective tenants. However, people like the tenant quoted above later became involved in the development of later phases. The one exception to this was in the design of the house with disabled provision, where the tenant was identified and the house designed to cater for their specific needs. This involvement of residents, as opposed to prospective tenants, raises issues about the representative nature of groups such as the Estate Development Group.

6.1.5 Overview

Tenant involvement in the design of the houses on the Pool Farm estate is shown to have been conducted in two ways. Firstly there was a process of continual tenant feedback within the housing association. A regular series of surveys canvassed the opinions of the tenants, and the findings from these fed into the policies and practices of the RSL. In the realm of new housing development the tenant satisfaction survey, administered to all new tenants, provided an opportunity for them to comment on their new home. The information collated from these sources helped to shape the standard specification design brief, which in turn affected the design of all new properties.

The second way in which the tenants of the housing association had input into the design of the new houses was more specific to Pool Farm. Housing association tenants, along with other estate residents and members of the wider community, had the opportunity to become involved via the series of public meetings held throughout the development process. At these meetings a number of agreed design principles were established. These agreed principles were applicable only to the housing association's housing on the Pool Farm estate and not to other developments. This involvement was concerned with more specific, local issues and the results would not generally feed into wider development practice. Although not the intention, it would be expected that the experiences of the practitioners involved would alter later developments, and so it can be said to have fed back via an experiential loop.

Overall it can be seen that the point of maximum community impact on the design of the new-build housing association houses on Pool Farm was at the outset of the development process, prior to the building starting on-site, when the design principles were being set out. The effects of the association-wide design brief and the estate-specific agreed design principles were in place before the phase considered here had even been timetabled, in 1994. It can be seen that even though the agreed design principles were established for the series of developments on the estate, they were not established specifically for the 12 dwellings. Later in the process, during the numerous phases of the programme, progress was reported through the Estate Development Group meetings and occasional seminars and public meetings, but substantive design changes were not made as a result of these meetings. The tenant involvement in design after the start of the development programme on the estate was limited to those tenants selected early enough having a choice of internal decoration.

6.2 South Yorkshire Case Study

The second case study was conducted in the South Yorkshire region. This section will begin by briefly describing the local history and characteristics before looking at the housing association, its background, organisation and general development practices. There then follows a description of the other players involved in the regeneration of the estate, the architectural practice and the community groups and supporting agencies. After the context is established, there follows a more detailed investigation into one of the phases of new build housing development on the estate. At all times, in the interests of confidentiality real names have been omitted. The development that has been studied will be known simply as *'the development'* and the interviewees who helped with the research will be referred to by their job title or position in the process, for example *'the architect'* or *'an estate resident.'* During the course of the research the following people were interviewed:

*The Project Architect;
Senior Practice Partner - from the selected architects;
Project Manager NWICA, SRB
Housing Association, Development Officer;
Housing Association, Principal Architect;
Local Resident - involved in the Housing Development Forum;
Two Local Residents - both volunteer community workers and
Housing Association, Area Housing Officer.*

As well as the above interviews, there were also telephone enquiries made to the development officer responsible for the properties of the other association on the site and Sheffield City Council Planning Department. Alongside the interviews there was limited access granted to the project file and a selection of supporting documentation including reports, meeting minutes and a variety of leaflets and newsletters aimed at the community.

The table overleaf is designed to act as a quick reference and each stage therein is described in greater detail later in the section. The table sets out to describe the community involvement throughout the development process,

using key stages from the decision to redevelop the area in question until the completion of the phase. The table is split into two stages denoted by the shading, before the specific phase investigated was begun and after.

Date	Stage	Community Involvement
April 1995	Estates designated as North West Inner City Area SRB.	<i>Housing Development Forum established as a community body to discuss redevelopment programme.</i>
May 1995	Work began on the first phase of redevelopment	<i>Redevelopment Working Party established to run alongside the first phase.</i>
Late 1996	Phase one completed, RWP disbanded.	<i>Post Occupancy survey conducted and information fed into Development Briefs of HAs.</i>
June 1997	Phase two of the redevelopment announced to the community representatives at a HDF meeting.	<i>Community representatives on HDF notified of details of next phase of development and given the opportunity to comment on proposals.</i>
July 1997	Developer approached and architects for phase two selected by them and the two HAs.	<i>Selection discussed at HDF but there was no opportunity to affect the decision at this point.</i>
August 1997	Redevelopment Working Party established for phase two.	<i>Key design decisions for this phase established by RWP.</i>
Spring 1999	All 125 units completed, including the 27 units for the HA investigated.	<i>The tenants of the new properties, if known early enough, were given a variety of choices about the fixtures, fittings and internal decoration.</i>
1999 onwards	Post Occupancy Survey completed by all tenants of the new houses.	<i>Results feed back into the HAs Comprehensive Design and Development Brief used for all new schemes.</i>

Figure 6.3: Involvement At The Key Stages In The Development Process

6.2.1 The Area

This section provides a description of the area in which the development is located. It initially sets out to describe the location of the estate within the city of Sheffield and then moves on to discuss the existing house types and conditions in the Upperthorpe and Netherthorpe estates. The previous regeneration initiatives on the estates are discussed and the process by which the Housing Associations were selected is explained.

Background

The development is located in an area of Sheffield to the North-west of the city centre. Sheffield is the fourth biggest city in the UK with a population of over 500,000 and it is the regional capital of South Yorkshire. The local authority manages 69,000 dwellings making it one of the largest housing providers in the country. The development described in this chapter is on the Netherthorpe estate that lies just over a mile from the centre of the city and is well served by bus and tram routes. The estate lies on very steeply sloping land typical of the west of Sheffield. Netherthorpe is adjacent to Upperthorpe and the two areas are often discussed together. Both districts form part of the Northwest Inner City Action Area (NWICA) which is a Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) area.

Existing Housing, Type and Condition

The housing in Netherthorpe and Upperthorpe was built predominantly in the 1960s and 1970s by the local authority for social renting, and consisted in the main of high-rise tower blocks and deck-access, system-build, flats and maisonettes. The tower blocks, which number four in Netherthorpe and seven in Upperthorpe, have recently undergone extensive remodeling. The towers consist of one and two bedroom flats and since the remodeling they have been popular with tenants. The remodeling consisted of the inclusion of the balcony into the interior, the addition of improved heating and insulation and the addition of colourful anodised aluminium cladding (source: interview with officer from local authority housing department). The estates also contained another area of high-rise housing known as the Kelvin Estate; this was the most unpopular estate and was the first to be demolished and replaced. The Kelvin development is referred to throughout this chapter as many of the consultation frameworks set up during this development continue to be in effect on later phases.

The deck access maisonettes and flats which make up the majority of the housing provision in Netherthorpe are in the process of being replaced, indeed the development discussed in-depth later is located on a site which previously contained this type of accommodation. The Upperthorpe and Netherthorpe

area has been a SRB area since April 1995 and the project manager responsible for this, who is responsible for overseeing all of the housing developments, provided a great deal of information at this juncture. One deck-access block has been extensively remodeled by way of a pilot, but there are no plans to continue this as demolition and replacement is seen as the best solution. The problems associated with the housing type in the area are those generally associated with flat-roofed, deck-access buildings. They are prone to damp and lack adequate heating and insulation. To compound this, the blocks were considered unattractive by local residents and they posed security concerns to the tenants; both concerns about personal safety in the stairwells and corridors and also about the general security of the property. Many of these issues have been addressed in the extensive remodeling by the addition of a pitched roof, the provision of insulation, the addition of security doors and windows, and the introduction of intercom access phones (source: interview with Project Manager NWICA, SRB and various site visits).

Previous Regeneration Initiatives On The Estate

Prior to 1995 there had been a number of regeneration initiatives in the vicinity, but in April of that year Upperthorpe and Netherthorpe was designated as a Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) area and development after this was completed within this framework. The area covered by the SRB is known as the North-West Inner City Action Area (NWICA). The management of the SRB was responsible for all housing development in NWICA, as the project manager stated:

"I am responsible for overseeing all of the housing developments that have been carried out since the (SRB) project started in April 1995."

Project Manager NWICA, SRB

The structures and committees set up as part of the SRB programme remain, and form the basis for the tenant participation on each phase of development. As mentioned earlier, the first development completed in the area was the demolition and building of new houses on what was previously known as the Kelvin estate. It can be demonstrated that the model for tenant involvement

adopted during the Kelvin phase of development has been the prevalent one across NWICA. As the SRB project manager stated during an interview:

“The model, the redevelopment working party as it is called, has worked extremely successfully on Kelvin and has been passed on to the other developments. This includes our involvement with RSLs and with spec contractors and builders as well as the way in which we consulted the residents. So a similar model of practice was used on the later phase.”

Project Manager NWICA, SRB

The tenants involved in the process also recognised the development’s place in the overall scheme of regeneration on the estate. One resident, who was involved prior to the SRB designation, stated during the course of an interview:

“The development was just the next bit following on from the new houses which had been built on the Kelvin estate before, we are on to discussing the next phase now.”

Resident, Netherthorpe

So it can be seen that the consultation structures set up for the first phase of development were maintained and adapted for use on later phases. The organisational structure of the committees will be discussed later, but at this juncture it is necessary to note the impact of the first phase of housing which took place on what was the Kelvin estate, and the effect that the development there had on the subsequent schemes. It is not the purpose of this research to evaluate the structure or the success of the SRB programme. It is, however, important to note that during the development of the houses in question, the tenant consultation committees were a continuation and development of those set up at the outset of the SRB redevelopment in NWICA. It can therefore be seen that the development investigated here must be seen in context of the preceding developments and within the SRB programme as a whole.

Selection Of The Housing Associations And Contractors

There were two RSLs involved in the development of new housing in the NWICA SRB1 area in Sheffield. Housing associations are typically encouraged to develop in conjunction with local authorities, as the RSL development officer responsible for the phase looked at here stated:

“We find it quite difficult to work outside of the LA priority areas. That is basically because the Housing Corporation puts so much emphasis on needing to work in partnership with local authorities and because we get support from them. That is obviously the first and most important consideration, it has funding implications.”

Housing Association Development Officer

This necessity of the RSL to work in partnership with the council was coupled with the effect of the structure of the SRB, the development officer explains:

“Because of the structure of the SRB we have tended to work alongside the council in the SRB areas that they have worked in and to a lesser extent the areas are actually zoned in that it tends to be (the RSL) and (the other RSL) who have worked on Netherthorpe and Upperthorpe, and equally there are areas that we had nothing to do with it.”

Housing Association Development Officer

The SRB project manager for NWICA clarified this point when asked about the selection of RSLs:

“The two associations in the NWICA area were selected because they had a profile in the area already; in other parts of the city we work alongside other housing associations. The aim is to work with partners who we feel are suited to a particular opportunity.”

Project Manager NWICA, SRB

So it can be seen that the housing association, along with the other developing RSL in the SRB area, were selected as potential developers by the local authority. This decision was made at the outset of the programme of redevelopment, prior to the Kelvin demolition and subsequent redevelopment that began in 1995. By the time that the development phase investigated here was begun, the choice of housing associations had already been made. Alongside the selection of the RSL, another important decision made at this juncture was the involvement of the contractors. The selected contractor constructed the housing for both RSLs as well as a substantial number of dwellings built speculatively for owner-occupation. The exact split of the development site between the two housing associations and the contractors is discussed later in this chapter, but at this point it is necessary to note the relationship between the three organisations. The contractors built all of the dwellings that formed the phase of redevelopment, the units for the RSLs

being under a Design and Build contractual arrangement. The involvement of the contractors and RSLs began early in the process, at the outset when the decision was made to redevelop the site. The SRB project manager stated:

“We were involved from an early stage with the associations and with the contractors, well in advance of work starting. We had a separate meeting with representatives from each of those bodies and that was facilitated through our special tasks section in the department which deals with housing associations developments.”

Project Manager NWICA, SRB

The decision to work with two RSLs was made early in the programme of redevelopment, prior to the start of the first phase of house-building. The contractors used for each phase however have changed, with a different company being used on the later phase discussed in this chapter than was used on the earlier Kelvin redevelopment.

6.2.2 The Housing Association

The housing association responsible for the development of the 27 houses investigated here own over 2,000 properties in the South Yorkshire region; they provide both general needs family housing and a range of supported housing schemes. The postal survey indicates that they operate in six different local authority districts, all of which lie in the South Yorkshire conurbation. All of their housing stock is located in areas described as ‘inner city’ or ‘other urban.’ The RSL has a strong local profile and sees itself as a key community player in the areas where it has property. The housing association’s own literature reveals that it is amongst their aims to involve communities in decision making, and it has pioneered estate management agreements in some areas. All tenants are offered a tenant involvement option and the association actively supports new and existing tenant groups.

The Community Initiatives Training Unit

The Community Initiatives Training Unit (CITU) is fundamentally the tenant participation department of the RSL. It has a broad remit and basically seeks to encourage tenant involvement in a range of issues (source: housing

association literature). The association provides financial support to tenants associations as well as support and training. The TAs are encouraged to become involved in deciding the RSLs investment priorities in their area and in other things such as tackling specific issues like crime prevention, local employment and youth provision (source: telephone interview with RSL officer).

Alongside the tenants' associations, CITU also run a number of focus groups; these centre on a particular aspect of the RSL's work, from housing design to the organisation of the reception service at the head office. To cater for tenants who live in areas where there are few properties owed by the association, there are regular community panels where specific issues can be discussed. Every month there is a Tenants' Consultative Committee where representatives from each tenants' association and the consumer panels meet with senior housing association staff to debate key policy issues such as the setting of rent levels. The results of this are fed back via the RSL management committee. The housing association has also enabled tenants to buy a share of the organisation for one pound, thus entitling them to vote in the AGM and attend meetings of the management committee (source: a variety of housing association literature).

General Development Practice

The RSL will generally bid to develop new housing after being approached by the local authority. The Housing Corporations policy of encouraging partnerships between the RSL sector and local authorities in effect precludes development that is not undertaken in this way, as funding is more readily available to those schemes in which the council is a partner. The housing association's principal architect described the relationship thus during a research interview:

"We are guided by the LA, we do whatever the LA wants us to do, we follow their lead..."

Housing Association Principal Architect

Selection And Appointment Of Architects

The RSL has a well-established in-house architecture department that typically undertakes the design of all new-build housing. The department consists of a principal architect, another architect, two senior technicians, a building technician, a trainee technician and an administration assistant. As well as this they employ two consultant technicians who are employed as required (source: interview with principal architect). The development officer interviewed estimated that the in-house architecture team undertakes 95% of all of the RSL's building work. An exception to this, and therefore amongst the remaining 5%, is the development investigated here. The reasons for this and the implications are discussed later. The reasons for maintaining a strong in-house architecture team were provided by the development officer and the principal architect. The idea of the principal architect having a broader remit than one of a purely architectural role was strongly expressed by both parties:

"The principal architect has a big input into how we bid for schemes and which schemes we pursue anyway. [the architect] has worked for the HA for a number of years and although the architects are kind of a separate entity, there is an important role for him there to make sure that they are schemes that they can deal with that fit in with their programme."

Housing Association Development Officer

The principal architect assessed his contribution to the RSL during interview:

"I think that as in-house architects we can offer something that an architect who is doing lots of other things will not be used to and that is where we have a strength. What gets us the brownie points here is that we deal with defects and that is one thing, we deal with the calls that come into the freephone, we take a load off the rest of the HA with that because we know what the property is - it helps. The things that we do on that side of things make it easier for the HA and we feel that we have some sort of feel for the tenants because we are close to development and housing management. They just come up and give us a kicking if there is anything wrong; they can get us to do things that outside architects would just laugh at. They wouldn't dream of doing a lot of the stuff that we do."

Housing Association Principal Architect

The architect clarified this broad role in the housing association, he continued:

"We are part of the culture of the RSL, often job descriptions are blurred...."

Housing Association Principal Architect

The presence of a strong in-house architecture team can be shown to be responsible for the adherence by the RSL to traditional forms of building contract, and a marked reluctance to entertain the design and build approach. The usual argument put forward in support of the design and build route is that the risk is transferred from the RSL to the contractor. The development officer argues that their risks are reduced because of the experienced in-house team:

"In our case we have our own in-house team that is very established and very good at what they do. We can limit the problems from that point of view as they know what budget we are working to on a scheme, they know what our constraints are so it reduces the risk element to us."

Housing Association Development Officer

Another argument is put forward by the principal architect as to why they continue to use the traditional style building contract:

"We tend to use traditional contracts because we have our own architects there and also because a lot of the new schemes that we do are special needs schemes and we feel that we have better control over the design of these."

Housing Association Principal Architect

Despite the policy of the RSL to maintain a strong in-house architecture team and to continue with the traditional form of contract, the development investigated here uses external architects and a design and build approach for reasons which will become apparent. These external architects, who from herein will be described as *'the architects'*, were responsible for the design of all of the houses built during the phase of development on the Netherthorpe estate. In effect they were working for the contractors on the design of the direct to market housing as well as (indirectly) the two RSLs. The reasons for the use of an external architectural practice, as opposed to the in-house team, are related to this arrangement. The second RSL objected to the use of the internal architects from the first, the exact reasons for this were difficult to ascertain but the principal architect explained:

"I don't know, they don't even know us here, I presume that it is because we are another association and we are rivals - it is political. There was no point in fighting the point really. If we are seen to be fighting amongst ourselves then the council might take the whole allocation away so we just accepted their decision."

Housing Association Principal Architect

With the internal architects out of the equation, another independent practice was sought. The contractors, who selected a local architectural practice who had worked with them on a regular basis over a number of years, made this decision, although the RSLs were consulted.

The Selected External Architects

The selected architectural practice is based in Sheffield and was formed in 1991 by three architects who had previously worked for the in-house team of a major bank. Their practice statement reads:

"(The architects) are an innovative and broad-based design company with wide experience in housing, educational, medical and commercial developments throughout the UK."

RIBA Directory of Professional Practices 2000

However, an interview with a senior partner revealed a possibly more accurate picture of the experience of the practice. The practice had come from the specialised financial sector and initially continued to work in the area, however as one of the senior partners put it:

"The nature of private practice is that you very quickly start to pick up non-speciality type work - you cannot afford to be tied to just one area because financial institutions come and go. So we spread out and we picked up a lot of industrial-type 'shed' work and we have only recently moved into the residential field. This is the current hot favourite because there is very little in Sheffield in the way of speculative, commercial-type architecture. Meadowhall has pretty well stopped all of the available retail architecture in the area, it has left the demand in Sheffield city centre flat and so we work with (the contractors) on a really wide range of stuff."

Senior partner from the project architects

This shows the broad base of the practice and displays the lack of a substantial experience base in the field of housing design. When questioned

further about the housing workload of the partnership, the senior partner stated that it was:

“Mainly at the top end of the market it has to be said, not because (the contractors) have any great desire to just do that, but because the top end tends to be bespoke and tends to be different. The (development) is unusual for us as it’s relatively low cost.”

Senior Partner from the project Architects

So it can be seen that the architects did not only have a relatively limited experience of designing housing, they also tended to operate at the more expensive end of the market. The plans for waterside warehouse conversion schemes that lined the office walls of the practice supported this. It can be seen that the practice did not have a great deal of experience in the social housing field. The practice can be described as being design-led, and the contractors who were principally responsible for their selection had stated that they wanted a fresh approach to the housing. It is likely that this is the reason for the selection of the practice. The architects do, however, have a close relationship with the contractors, and the practice is located less than two miles from the development site in central Sheffield. The practice used two architects on the project, with the early part of the involvement by a senior founding partner of the practice (who is described here as a ‘*senior partner from the project architects*’), and the later work being carried out by another, more junior, architect (referred to simply as the ‘*project architect*’). Both had an involvement with the design of the scheme.

6.2.3 The Tenant Involvement Mechanism

We have already discussed the RSL and their appointed architects, as well as the role of the council in regeneration on the estate. There were also a number of groups and committees, involving tenants and residents, which played a part in the redevelopment on the Uppertorpe and Netherthorpe estates. These include the committees established to monitor and evaluate the process as well as existing tenants’ and residents’ groups. These are described below.

The Housing Development Forum

The Housing Development Forum (HDF) was established at the outset of the programme of regeneration on the Uppertorpe and Netherthorpe estates in 1995. The Project Manager of the North-West Inner City Area SRB, when asked to explain the role of the HDF during the course of an interview, stated:

“Any decisions which are taken over development of the sites have to go through this body. An estate resident chairs the forum and other residents sit on the committee and my team service the group. We get other agencies such as the housing associations involved, and planners and that to come along and sit in on the group when it is necessary.

Project Manager NWICA, SRB

The Housing Development Forum can be seen to be the major structure set up to provide the residents of the estates, from all tenures, with information about forthcoming development. It is also the role of the monthly HDF meetings to provide an opportunity for the local residents to voice their opinions on any development-related issue. The meetings were held in the evenings in a community hall on the estate. It was in a HDF meeting that the plans to begin redevelopment were first mentioned to the residents, prior to the work beginning on the earlier Kelvin phase. The HDF can be described as an area wide meeting where all aspects of development are discussed; for each specific phase of development there is another committee set up. In the case of the Kelvin redevelopment, this group was called the Kelvin Redevelopment Working Party. As this model of public consultation was transposed on to the later phases of development, a Redevelopment Working Party was established for the later development and this is discussed below.

The Redevelopment Working Party

The Redevelopment Working Parties (RWPs) are set up to deal specifically with the issues relating to each phase of the NWICA redevelopment. The one relating to the second phase of 125 new build units, of which the 27 looked at here are a part, was based closely on the earlier Kelvin Redevelopment Working Party. Indeed the chair of the earlier RWP, an estate resident, continued to chair the phase two equivalent, and a number of the committee

members remained (source: interview with chair of RWP). Like the HDF the RWP meet on a monthly basis in the same community facility but their remit is limited to issues relating to the progress of the respective phase of redevelopment. It was during these meetings that the design of the new properties was discussed. The Project Manager of the NWICA SRB when describing the role of the RWP said:

“That body oversaw the complete demolition of the Kelvin site and they were involved in the design of the properties which were going to be placed on the site, the layout of these and the road layout, junctions and the selection of the type of houses.”

Project Manager NWICA, SRB

So it can be seen that the framework of committees is that the whole area of the estates of Upperthorpe and Netherthorpe has a Housing Development Forum which was set up by the local authority prior to the extensive redevelopment beginning on the estate in the mid-1990s. Each subsequent phase of redevelopment had a Redevelopment Working Party that is concerned solely with the completion of the phase in question. Although initially set up and funded by the council the committees (HDF and RWP) were both chaired by residents and had a substantial tenant and resident voice. They were attended regularly by representatives of all of the relevant organisations, such as the developing RSLs and the contractors as well as representatives from a number of local authority departments such as housing, planning and environmental services.

Various Local Tenants Associations

Alongside the above committees there are a number of more localised tenants' associations often dealing with just one block of dwellings. These TA's often have representatives at both the HDF and the RWP, specifically when there are issues that may affect their area directly. An example of this was described during an interview with a local resident. She described an occasion when there was an issue about the conduct of the contractor whilst on-site. The representatives of the adjoining tenants' associations attended the RWP to raise the issue of child safety during the building work

6.2.4 The Development

As mentioned earlier the phase of development investigated is separated into three parts. Of the 125 units built, each RSL had 27 homes whilst the majority of the units, including a number of flats, were kept by the contractor for direct to market owner-occupation. These 27 units, provided for the housing association looked at here, comprise of a mixture of two, three and four-bedroom semi-detached properties for general family use.



Figure 6.4: The South Yorkshire Housing Development

The Relationship Between The Actors In The Development

The relationship between the two RSLs and the contractors needs further explanation. The development officer from the housing association looked at here stated that there was no formal consortium approach adopted during the development of the houses on the Netherthorpe estate. She said that in the case of the phase two housing development:

“It was kind of a loose joint working model. (the contractors) would do the housing-for-sale element, and we would then use them for our development and (the other RSL) would as well. There was no binding agreement between ourselves and (the other RSL), it was just the contract with (the contractor). It was an informal sort of arrangement.”

Housing Association Development Officer

The development officer from the other housing association confirmed this. She said in the course of a telephone conversation:

“There was no formal consortium with (the other RSL) on (the development). It was more of an informal agreement with us both working alongside each other and alongside (the contractor).”

Development Officer from the other Housing Association

During the design phase of the development the architects were liaising with both housing associations as well as the contractors; in effect they had three different clients for what was one phase of development. It was always the joint aim to provide a degree of consistency across the 125 units, despite the different developers. Indeed the reasoning behind the use of just one architectural practice – and the subsequent non-use of the in-house team – was because of this. The development shows a great deal of consistency, with it being difficult to establish between the properties of each housing association and also between the properties now in owner occupation and those which are socially rented. It was made clear by the architects that their primary clients were the contractors.

The role of the local authority can be seen to be essentially a facilitating one. Prior to the development they selected the RSLs and the contractor and instigated a series of meetings with the relevant representatives of these organisations. These meetings were facilitated by the special tasks section of the housing department, and included the architects as well as the relevant council planning officers. The chair of these meetings described them thus:

“We had monthly meetings, went through all of the issues about design, about the layout, about the number of properties, the density and the views of the residents. We said that we wanted predominantly family housing in the area and also we discussed the problems which we have in that area with car parking.”

Project Manager NWICA, SRB

The residents, although not represented at these meetings, were kept informed throughout via the Housing Development Forum and the Redevelopment Working Party. The nature of this involvement is discussed in the following section. During the course of these development meetings, the brief for the development was being established and the architects would be producing sketch proposals in the intervening period; these would be

discussed at the subsequent meeting. This familiar process resulted in the 'firming-up' of the design to the satisfaction of all of the parties. This process took several months and the required demolition and site preparation was taking place during this time (source: various minutes of HDF and RWP meetings). The development officer from the housing association who was present at these meetings said:

"Essentially the architects were given a brief – they went away knowing how many units were required, of what type and size and also with an idea of the layout. They took part in the discussions which in effect developed this brief..."

Housing Association Development Officer

These meetings continued throughout the development programme until completion and hand-over and also served as medium to give progress updates. This essentially took the form of a standard site meeting, with occasional visits to the site by the committee during the construction period. The development followed a typical programme, the only difference being the presence of two representations from different RSLs. The community took no direct role in this aspect of the development.

The Selection of the House Types

The prospective tenants had not been established prior to the completion, or near completion, of the dwellings, and so the community involvement in the design process consisted of the input of a representative group of tenants and residents from the area. This was largely via the Housing Development Forum and more specifically the Redevelopment Working Party as described earlier. This section deals with the involvement of the tenants and residents in the design of the new dwellings - from the point of decision to develop until the completion and hand over. It begins with a discussion about the selection of the type of development to take place on the site, and continues with an investigation into the more detailed design process.

As mentioned earlier, the Housing Development Forum and its sub-group the Redevelopment Working Party (for phase two) provided the main opportunities

for community involvement. Both of these continued to run on a monthly basis throughout the programme, with the latter only being disbanded after the hand over date. The HDF continues and is at the time of writing considering phases three and four of the redevelopment. The structure of the HDF and the RWP is discussed earlier so this section sets out to describe what was considered in these meetings throughout the design process.

The plan to redevelop the site was initially put forward to the tenants at a regular meeting of the Housing Development Forum in 1997. This was prior to the decisions being made about what was going to be developed on the soon to be cleared site. The residents were asked what sort of housing they would like to see on the site. Representatives of the RSLs were present, along with planning and housing officers from the local authority and a representative of the contractor. The meeting reiterated the general view held by the local residents about redevelopment at the outset of the SRB programme, to reduce density and move away from one-bedroom flats towards family houses. The development officer from the RSL said when asked about the resident input:

“At the start of the SRB plan tenants had quite a big input. They were asked about what they wanted to see in terms of (housing) mix. There were concerns about density, there were concerns about the fact that there was a big concentration of one-bedroom flats. As a result a lot of the tower blocks were either remodelled or demolished. Generally they wanted to put lots more emphasis on getting rid of the density and putting back family housing. That was always the kind of brief that we were given from the local community and that was certainly what fed into Kelvin, which was the original scheme that we did.”

Housing Association Development Officer

So it can be seen that the resident involvement can be traced back to the start of the redevelopment programme in the North-West Inner City Area. The views of residents were canvassed early in the SRB programme, before any specific sites for redevelopment had been established. The involvement at this point was non-specific, with the emphasis being placed on general approaches to the redevelopment of the area as a whole. Again the first redevelopment site in the area, that of the Kelvin estate, proved to be the test-bed for the later schemes. Although the residents were consulted throughout,

the desire to replace the one-bed flats with larger semi-detached dwellings remained during the work on phase two and is still in place as phases three and four are being completed.

The decision to build semi-detached family housing on the site of phase two was not originally agreed upon by all parties. The local residents had made their opinions clear at the start of the SRB that they wanted a solution comprising of small houses (source: HDF minutes). The RSLs concurred with this view, as did the contractor. The local authorities planning department, however, wanted to maintain density on the estate and initially requested the development of more flats and higher-storey blocks (source: telephone interview with city council planning officer). The development officer said:

“They (the residents) originally wanted to see 2, 3 and 4 bed houses so after having done Kelvin and moving on to (the development) we checked with the local community that it was still the feeling, and we also checked with our housing management that they would be happy with that.”

Housing Association Development Officer

The issue of the type of housing was raised at the Housing Development Forum, where the issue of providing some special needs housing was also discussed. The steeply sloping site was not considered suitable for wheelchair access, as the development officer put it:

“...4x4 wheelchairs required!”

Housing Association Development Officer

So with the views of the local residents considered, and with fundamental business decisions made by the RSL the decision was made to press for houses as opposed to flats. The development officer clarified this during interview:

“As a result of that resident consultation and the internal consultation with our housing management team - saying that we definitely have a demand for it – and also the local area housing office saying that they wanted more of the same, this all fed into the mix and we decided that 2,3 and 4 bed family houses was what we would provide.”

Housing Association Development Officer

As mentioned earlier the planning department, more specifically the urban designer, did not initially agree with this. Their preference was to maintain the density in the area that had previously contained four-storey deck-access flats and maisonettes. The project architect said:

“They (the planners) wanted 3-4 storey high rise high-density buildings on the site, they didn’t want small houses, this was the urban designer. Our first battle was to hammer the urban design brief in a way, there you had a local authority urban designer who wanted, rightly or wrongly, a high density scheme. A high-density scheme was the total opposite to the feedback which we were getting from the RSLs and the contractors - it was not what they wanted. They wanted tenant-friendly self-contained houses, linked together to provide people with maximum private space.”

The Project Architect

The local authority planners altered their position as a result of the pressure exerted by the other parties, and the programme to build small self-contained houses was embarked upon. It was the view of the community that eventually prevailed. The strength of feeling in the local community was such that a number of involved residents conducted their own door-to-door survey to canvass local views on the issue. This was conducted alongside a local authority organised survey. As one resident described it during an interview:

“It is just that the council will do a survey, and we will do a survey, and I guarantee you that our survey is completely different from what they would do. I think that most tenants did not put what they really felt on the council survey but they did on ours.”

Resident and member of the HDF and RWP

Both surveys concluded that the local residents wanted the existing blocks cleared and self-contained houses replacing them. The residents' apparent distrust of their local authority is not the subject of this thesis, but the energy and commitment required to conduct an independent door-to-door survey reveals the importance that was placed on this decision by the community activists involved. So it was established that the new development would primarily consist of two, three and four bedroom semi-detached houses. The RSL investigated here typically use standardised house plans as designed by their in-house team; however the external architects used on this development

decided not to use these. Likewise they did not use the standardised plans often used by the other RSL. They instead opted to design the houses from scratch. This decision was reinforced by the view of the contractors. The project architect puts it thus:

“The site is a very steep site and it came within the area which (the contractors) don’t feel comfortable about as regards standard house types. I don’t think (the contractors) as a company tend to churn out large sites covered in standardised house types.”

Senior partner from the project architects

The decision of the contractors not to use a standard house plan appears to be two-fold, firstly because of the potential problems of the steeply sloping site and secondly because of a desire to develop tailor-made solutions for each site. The net result was that the use of standard house plans was rejected at an early stage. The architects prepared a sketch proposal placing the required number of units on the site and this was put forward at the regular development meeting. The plans were also taken to the RWP meeting at the local community hall where the residents had the opportunity to comment upon them (source: minutes of RWP meeting). The next section deals with the design process undertaken by the architects and with the input of the other parties – the contractors, the housing associations and the community.

The Design Process

It can be seen that the architects set about designing the scheme knowing that it was to comprise of 125 units of predominantly two, three and four bedroom houses. Other key design issues had been established early in the process. One of these was for the provision of at least one on-plot parking space for each dwelling. The area is in close proximity to the University of Sheffield and on-street parking is extremely difficult. The residents, at the outset of the SRB programme, considered this issue of prime importance. Another design decision made at this early stage was to provide a private garden for each house. These decisions were reached during the course of HDF meetings early in the development process on the estate. Other than these basic requirements, the architects were provided with copies of each housing

association's standard house plans and current development brief, as well as the relevant information from the Housing Corporation as regards compliance with minimum standards. The research interviews revealed that the development brief of the RSL is a regularly amended document based around the standard house types that were not used for this development (source: housing association development brief). The brief is drafted by the principal architect and includes changes made as a result of the tenant feedback surveys undertaken by the association. The contractor's instructions were not restrictive but concerned the general aesthetic approach to be adopted. As the project architect describes:

"We started off with a very 'brief' brief from (the contractors) - from their director of housing, and he said what we would like to see is a fresher look to the scheme without the twiddly barge boards and the like. They wanted to keep it as a sort of buff brick, light, airy development - not trying to be a Victorian cottage."

The Project Architect

These general design points were what the initial sketch proposals were based upon, and it can be seen are what the final houses were to echo. There were however a number of issues concerning the design that did not run smoothly and these are discussed briefly here. The reason for the brief discussion of these problematic areas is that they do not involve the residents' opinions but seem to result in the difference of opinion between the RSL and the architects. This is not completely within the remit of this thesis but the implications are interesting and it therefore warrants further discussion.

There were a number of issues where the housing association objected to what the architects put forward, but these can be broadly described as a difference in approach. The housing associations appeared to make objections to light and airy, more modern approach described by the contractors housing director. The architect describes the problem thus:

"The reality was that we didn't fit the brief of the housing associations. They would have gone for the more traditional pastiche style. The housing associations choked too much about the designs put forward."

Senior Partner from the project Architects

The conflict between the parties was no more vehement than is typically found in such architect-client relationships. The project architect noted that the scheme is well liked now that it is completed but recalled some of the disputes, predominantly with the housing association representatives:

“All the way through the job, I mean they all liked it when it was done, but all of the bloody brick samples which we put forward - they wanted red bricks. They wanted them to be more like down the bottom (the Kelvin development). We did compromise a lot and made a number of changes from what we originally started with. We wanted a render panel; it looked good but there was some kind of opposition from a maintenance guy or something. We were also going to have grey windows but they weren't up for that because you paint window frames white you see...they are either mahogany stained or they are white....it is just how things are.”

The Project Architect

The development officer from the RSL mentioned this dispute as well noting that compromises were made on both sides but despite the claimed satisfaction of all parties she denied her views had changed upon completion.

“There were compromises on both sides, the architects wanted more control. I couldn't bear the brick, when we looked at the types. The architect presented them and I couldn't see the difference between the three types of brick that they wanted to use. They made a panel up and I still couldn't see it. Now it's been built I still can't see it... architects!”

Housing Association Development Officer

The dispute about the colour of the brickwork and the use or non-use of rendered panels seems to have been solely between the building professionals. The development officer noted that amongst the residents:

“It seems to have gone down quite well; they seem to like it which I have been quite surprised by really. It is more the professionals who don't like it as much, our employers agents don't like it, the tenants like it though. We have done some work across the Ponderosa (at the bottom of the hill upon which the development sits) and when you look across the park and see the development on the hill it does look quite striking”

Housing Association Development Officer

The residents of the area appear to support this view, as one put it succinctly when asked about the more modern styling of the houses:

“No they are all right, we had no qualms over the style... they’re nice.”

Resident and member of the HDF and RWP

Two of the estate residents who were interviewed simultaneously were asked about the specific issue of the brick colour, and one replied:

“Oh yes, I remember, but none of that was ever an issue to us, was it (gesture to the other resident, who takes this point up). No. We didn’t have many problems at all, it was mainly an update of progress, they just ran things past us. We had a bit of trouble when they were on-site, men with dumper-trucks and that; there still is some problems round the corner with that, but the designs were fine.”

Residents of Netherthorpe

So it can be seen that the design issues which were raised were between the architects and the other professionals involved. The residents appeared to have no real problems with the solution put forward by the architects. Their initial requests for semi-detached family housing with private gardens and on-plot car parking spaces were complied with, and they appeared to appreciate the less conventional aesthetic put forward by the architects. A design issue in which the tenants were involved was the attempt to attain Secure By Design accreditation. Representatives of the local police force attended a meeting of the HDF and the RWP. The project manager of the NWICA SRB stated:

“The tenants were involved in the issues about security with Secure By Design, we had police officers from the safety unit who came along and talked with the residents about the layout and how a good one could aid them and reduce robbery and burglary with escape routes etc. We changed the layout with regard to this, getting rid of the pathway, which was to run straight through. The police advised us on these issues.”

Project Manager NWICA, SRB

The recommendations of the police safety unit were adhered to and the development is built to Secure By Design standards. An important issue that needs addressing at this juncture is the communication between the residents and the professionals during the involvement process.

Communication And Professional Distance

During the involvement process, which it has been shown was mainly via the channels of the HDF and the RWP, the issue of how the professional actors

communicated ideas with the 'lay' residents arises. Each of the interviewees was asked about this and the responses do show a degree of consistency. The residents involved in this research were satisfied with their involvement and pleased with the commitment to hear their views displayed by all other parties. They reserved special mention for the housing associations:

"Oh no, they - the housing association didn't just say that's what were going to do, they involved us right from the start. They asked us what we felt about it, it was good really. Then they would go away and come to a later meeting with some plans of what they had said and we get a chance to look at these. If we don't agree with them plans they will say well...we can alter this and alter that, and they will go away and alter the plans and then bring the plans back and so on, we didn't alter anything really though."

Resident and member of the RWP

When asked about the involvement of the involvement of the housing associations one resident said:

"Oh yes they are more in tune with local areas, but the council do now they have to...the housing associations are always involved, even though they do not have that many houses here. The local authority never used to listen at all, they never even used to ask."

Resident and member of the RWP

Another local resident backed this up emphatically during a research interview held at a local community hall:

"The housing association have been really good in supporting this. They are very good at listening to us. There have been no real problems at all, we all worked together and if any did arise then we got them sorted out."

Resident and member of the HDF and RWP

So it can be seen that the housing associations appear to have a reputation for listening to the voice of the community in Netherthorpe and Upperthorpe. Residents, when asked about whether they felt that their opinions were being listened to, unanimously thought that they were. Another issue is raised however. The residents interviewed as a part of this research were those who were involved: by definition, the representative nature of these people is up for question. The senior architect had some forthright views on this subject:

"It incorporated occasionally people who were interested in the Don Valley walk, which is quite a way down the hill, obviously as the development there affects the valley to a certain extent you find that you will sit in a meeting with some quite unusual pressure groups. Ones who, whilst you are waiting to do your thing are talking about the standard of the water in the Don and is there ever going to be a return of newts in the river. You can sit and listen to this for a while and think oh, this is fascinating - it is like watching Horizon - but it didn't really do a great deal of good from our point of view. We just sort of listened in and people were talking about cycle routes and noisy dogs and why you only got one plastic bin when as the council only came round once as week you needed two. There was a superficial level of discussion at the early meetings."

Senior partner from the project architects

The architects, in the guise of the senior partner, did attend all of the early meetings of the RWP, he commented further on the make-up of the committees:

"They were existing residents of that area, and I would guess from other parts of the city in some cases, but most of them were involved in the redevelopment of the Kelvin flats area which happened before. With all due respect to those members of the public who came along - and I respect those who take the time to get involved - you get people who are almost professionally involved in things like that."

Senior partner from the project architects

This commitment to attending the resident meetings was not wholly taken up by the project architect who took the development into the later stages, when asked about the RWP he replied:

"Ah well, actually I didn't go to any of the tenants' meetings I avoided them like the plague. I got asked but couldn't make it. I mean I am the architect, I am the one trained to design buildings"

Project Architect

Problems were aired about the evening timing of the meetings, with council and local authority employees being contracted to attend such events and claiming back the time owed in lieu. The architects claimed that this was not the case in their position. There was a distinct reluctance by this architect to attend evening meetings. The senior partner who was still involved in the project did, however, attend some of the later meetings when it was felt

necessary. The design alterations and amendments were discussed at the regular professionals' meetings and raised by the attendees of that at the following RWP for discussion with the tenants. Copies of the latest plans were brought along to each of these evening meetings.

The point raised about the *'people who are almost professionally involved'* really deals with the predicted issue of the difficulty in communication of complex ideas. The residents interviewed had been involved in similar housing redevelopment projects in the past, notably the Kelvin scheme, and as such they were reasonably conversant in the media used by the architects and planners. As one resident said when asked about any problems:

"Not really: the people were there and we asked questions. Everything was explained and when we got to the (development) scheme we had been involved for donkey's years so we knew what we were talking about."

Resident and member of the HDF and RWP

6.2.5 Overview

So it can be seen that there were few major difficulties in the tenant participation process adopted. The potential problem of a distance in understanding between the professionals and the tenants was avoided by the involvement of experienced members of the local community. This raises a different set of issues about who is representing the community, but as was claimed by one of the more active local residents:

"Everyone round here was invited to these meetings (the HDF and the RWP). We leafleted all of the houses and flats and it took some doing, with all of those stairs and the slope!"

Resident and member of the HDF and RWP

So, with the unpaid work of a few community activists, the development was completed in time and within budget. There were no real problems with the requirements of the residents and all of those stated at the outset were met. The issues about the design lay elsewhere – in the relationship between the architects and the other development professionals. It is the inertia in the house building RSL sectors that lead the project architect to state:

“Yes, most social housing stuff is design and build, whether it is appropriate or not. Estimate and build as is more appropriate. I’d like to know where the design comes in! Please scrub out the cynicism if you like but houses are generally all the same because that is how houses are, I just try to cling to each and every last bit of design!”

Project Architect

This, it could be argued, down plays the role of the architect in the case of the development investigated here. The houses are different, only subtly; they have banished the vernacular aesthetic which was adopted on the earlier Kelvin scheme, and are liked by almost all concerned – with the possible exception of the housing association. The architects still maintain that the render panel and grey window frames would be better and the RSL would still have preferred red brick instead of the buff that was used. Most importantly, the residents of the estates are pleased with the redevelopment; they like the houses.

Again, the actual involvement of the community in the design can be seen to have occurred at key stages in the development. Initially the residents’ views contributed to the housing association’s development brief that was given to the architects for information. Secondly at the outset of the RSL’s involvement on the estates the local residents, in the guise of the Housing Development Forum, were consulted as to what the overall approach to the redevelopment on the estate should be. It was at this juncture that the major decisions to provide semi-detached housing with private gardens and at least one on-plot car parking space was made. These were the major design decisions and they have been shown to have been made with some involvement from the community. Later, when designing phase two of the redevelopment programme, the local resident group was involved in the bid to attain Secure By Design accreditation, and at regular intervals throughout the phase design they were consulted on the progress of the solution. The actual tenants were not identified prior to the scheme completion and so the involvement was a representative one, with the HDF and RWP performing this function.

6.3 The North-East Case Study

The penultimate case study was conducted in the north-east of England. This section will begin by briefly describing the history and characteristics of the local area before looking at the background, organisation and general development practices of the developing housing association. There then follows a description of the other players involved in the regeneration of an area of Sunderland, the architectural practice, the tenants' and residents' groups and supporting agencies. After this context is established, there follows a more detailed investigation into one of the phases of new build housing development carried out by the housing association on the estate. At all times, in the interests of confidentiality real names have been omitted. The development that has been studied will be known simply as *'the development'* and the interviewees who helped with the research will be referred to by their job title or position in the process, for example *'the architect'* or *'an estate resident.'*.. The following people were interviewed:

*The In-house Project Architect;
Housing Association Community Development Officer;
Housing Association Development Officer;
Housing Association, Area Housing Officer;
Housing Association Tenant Representative; and
Housing Association Tenant (of new development).*

As well as the above interviews, there were also telephone enquiries made to Sunderland City Council Planning Department. Alongside the interviews there was some access granted to the project file and a selection of supporting documentation including reports, minutes and a variety of leaflets and newsletters aimed at the community; this proved extremely valuable

The table overleaf sets out to describe the community involvement throughout the development process, at key stages from the decision to redevelop the area in question until the completion of the particular phase looked at in detail. The table is split into two stages, denoted by the shading, before the specific phase investigated was begun and after.

Date	Stage	Community Involvement
Summer 1991	Murder of local girl on the estate led to the galvanisation of the local community.	<i>Community pressure acted as a catalyst for change and led the HA to look into redevelopment of the estate.</i>
Summer 1992	Large community meeting in local school with redevelopment of the estate on the agenda.	<i>Options for the redevelopment discussed – residents opted for complete housing renewal.</i>
Late 1992	Decision made to use in-house architects and standardised plans.	<i>No community input in this decision, made at board level in HA.</i>
June 1993	Housing needs assessment undertaken by HA.	<i>Tenants reassessed for housing need, information fed into outline proposal.</i>
August 1993	Large community meetings again at local school ran on five consecutive nights. Housing association's proposals put to the residents.	<i>All estate residents were invited and given the opportunity to view the housing association's proposals for redevelopment and comment.</i>
January 1994	Community Development Officer employed for the duration of the redevelopment programme.	<i>CDO given an office on the estate in a vacant flat, remit to act as a conduit between the community and the HA.</i>
January 1994	Work began on the first phase of development.	<i>Tenants due to be re-housed in the first phase were invited to regular meetings about their particular phase.</i>
November 1996	Work began on phase of development consisting of the 12 family houses looked at here. On-site Feb 1997.	<i>Tenants for the 12 units were invited to attend regular meetings on their phase. Key design decisions made.</i>
October 1997	Houses completed.	<i>During the building stage the future tenants were given a range of options relating to fixtures and fittings.</i>
1997 onwards	Post Occupancy Survey completed by all tenants of the new houses.	<i>Results feed back into the Design and Development Brief used for all new schemes.</i>

Figure 6.5: Involvement At The Key Stages In The Development Process

6.3.1 The Area

This section provides a description of the area in which the development is located and then moves on to discuss the previous house types and the general condition of the estate. The entire estate was demolished to make way for the new housing, one phase of which is under investigation here, so the reasons for that decision are also discussed.

Background

The area investigated here lies less than a mile from the centre of Sunderland to the east and it is surrounded on three sides by the River Wear and the extensive complex of docks that are now largely derelict. The area lays claim to being the first part of Sunderland to be settled and has been an area of working class housing since the industrial revolution. The area is called Hendon but is often referred to as the 'east-end' or the 'town-end' by local residents. The area had been prosperous during the peak times of shipbuilding and its many associated trades, but has suffered disproportionately at the loss of these industries especially in the 1970s and 1980s (source: Sunderland City Council Website).

The housing blocks replaced by the development being investigated here were known as the Garths. These were a series of seven four-storey, courtyard blocks of flats and maisonettes housing, at their peak, in excess of 1,000 people in total in 520 flats. Unlike many similar developments completed at the time, the Garths were built by the voluntary sector, indeed the same housing association which still owns the estate today¹³. The Garths were completed and opened just one month before the outbreak of the Second World War in August of 1939. The Garths were of a radical design for the time and were designed after the architects visited recently completed flats in Liverpool, Manchester and London in a bid to reach a suitable solution. Prior to their development, the area contained some of the worst slum dwellings in the north-east but the new flats had spacious rooms, running water and indoor sanitation. They provided good quality housing for many years and the design was liked by the tenants and a strong local community developed.

¹³ The housing association has undergone some major changes since, including a change of name, but it is essentially the same one responsible for the Garths in the 1930s.



Figure 6.6: The Existing Housing Prior To Redevelopment

By the late 1980s, however, the area had declined markedly, the buildings were becoming run down and the estate had become stigmatised. The properties were difficult to let and during the 1970s many had been converted into smaller flats and bedsits as families could not be attracted to the estate. According to the RSL's own figures, turnover increased by almost 10% in just one year in the early 1990s (source: housing association annual report). There was, however, a strong core community remaining, alongside some of the more recent tenants in the smaller flats and bedsits. This core community was targeted as being one that the RSL wanted to retain and involve in the redevelopment process (source: interview with housing officer).

As mentioned earlier, the RSL converted a substantial number of the 'family' two and three bedroom flats into smaller dwellings, for single people, during the late 1970s. This was completed in response to the social housing market changes that took place at that time. This is however seen by the local community, and indeed by representatives from the RSL, as being the key change which led to the estate's decline. As the community development officer working on the Garths estate at the time of the redevelopment stated:

"In the late 1970s and early 1980s, I think, a lot of the flats and maisonettes were split into bedsits. This caused a lot of problems for the long-standing tenants. It was where people who were ex-offenders, especially sex offenders, were re-housed."

Community Development Officer, the Garths

The estate had become difficult to let, and as a result the RSL responded by altering the stock to accommodate the only tenants who were willing to move to the area. The spiral of decline, which had begun with the decimation of local industries, speeded up. The long-term community of the Garths, the families and elderly people who had been resident for generations, did not like the changes taking place. Many families left to be replaced by more of the often single ex-offenders mentioned by the community development officer. The housing association describes it thus, in an explanatory leaflet about the redevelopment programme:

“Over time the Garths had become more unpopular with tenants and a reputation for crime and vandalism developed. Between 1990 and 1991, turnover increased from 33.75% to 42.6%. There was a strong core community who did what they could to make the most of their circumstances – but many of the tenants believe that after the redevelopments during the 1970s, when some of the flats were converted into smaller units, the problems first started.”

“The Garths, Sunderland...the story so far.”

It can be seen that by the early 1990s, the estate that had once been the flagship of the housing association had become untenable. The same housing association publication describes it thus:

“By the early 1990s the Garths had become socially stigmatised. The scheme that had attracted so much attention when it was built 50 years before had become obsolete. Many of the other showpiece schemes that the Garths had been designed to rival had already been demolished or improved.”

“The Garths, Sunderland...the story so far.”

Tenants living there at the time also noted the decline in the condition of the estate. One such tenant, who now is involved in paid community work on the estate, remembered the situation during the course of a research interview:

“It used to be a nice estate to live on when I was young, in the 1960s, but it really started to go downhill when they converted those flats into bedsits. We got all sorts moving here then and it got to the point when I didn’t want to let the kiddies out on their own.”

Housing Association Tenant, The Garths

Other tenants interviewed during the course of the research echoed this

sentiment. The situation can be seen to have been in decline as described, with the long term tenants feeling isolated and the RSL having difficulty in letting the properties. This situation was being repeated across the country as many similar developments, usually owned by councils, were being demolished or extensively refurbished. There was however a key incident which occurred on the estate in 1991, which can be seen to have been a catalyst for change in the area. A young girl was murdered on the estate and the response of the local community was to organise and demand change. As mentioned earlier, the core community on the estate had been strong for a number of years, with the estate being dominated by a number of large extended families. One of the effects of the murder was to galvanise this community. As the Development Officer said during the course of a research interview:

“There was a specific incident where a young girl was murdered near to the estate which I believe sparked off the development. It focussed the tenants and they believed that better housing was part of the problem. It was a catalyst for change. The housing association and Sunderland City Council decided to do something about it.”

Housing Association Development Officer

The local community made the link between the influx of single people, many of whom were ex-offenders and sex offenders, with the occurrence of the murder. This view was strongly expressed in the community and the community development officer who was based on the estate, in a converted flat, expressed the view of the community during an interview:

“The incident was a murder of a little girl and it was key. People (ex-offenders) were desperate for housing but the place was starting to get saturated. The area was getting full of a lot of people who were in a lot of need, not necessarily money need although that was part of it, but in need of support. The incident happened and I think that it was almost inevitable.”

Community Development Officer, the Garths

The community officer expresses an opinion which was also reiterated during the interviews with tenants from the estate. The common feeling at the time appears to have been that the murder was a catalyst for change and that the

estate had been in decline for some time. There was a growing recognition that the housing was inadequate and was in need of replacement. The community development officer again expresses this clearly:

“Me, personally, I think it was going down that track in any case. The Garth had outlived its usefulness, it needed replacing. The recognition of this was catapulted to us as a result of this murder.”

Community Development Officer, the Garths

The estate was identified as inappropriate accommodation, and the housing association entered talks with Sunderland City Council and the Housing Corporation with a view to redeveloping the area. The redevelopment programme as a whole as well as the specific phase investigated here will be discussed later, first there is a brief description of the RSL.

Selection Of The Housing Association

As mentioned earlier the Garths estate was developed by the housing association in the 1930s, and as such the selection of a RSL to complete the redevelopment was not an issue. However, the housing association sought (and received) the support of the local authority in their planned rebuilding of the estate. . As the RSLs development officer, responsible for the development investigated, stated:

“It was ours to develop, we weren't approached by the council about this one. We (the housing association) built the estate years ago and it was us, as I recall, who said to the council that we were going to knock it down and put up some new houses. We asked for their support.”

Housing Association Development Officer

6.3.2 The Housing Association

The RSL, and its parent group, responsible for the development investigated here is, by the terms set out in the questionnaire survey, defined as large. It manages in excess of 30,000 properties located within 200 local authority districts. The new-build development programme of the association is consistently in excess of 500 units per annum, with their renovation programme exceeding 3,000 units per year. Unsurprisingly they hold stock in a variety of locations, from the inner cities to rural areas. Despite the national

profile of the group - it has dwellings in each of the seven housing corporation districts (source: questionnaire survey results).

As mentioned earlier, the housing association now operates as part of a group structure consisting of a number of once independent associations in England and Scotland. In all the group comprises five RSLs and a profit making commercial arm. The different associations remain separate entities within the group as they provide housing in different regions or for different needs groups. The development investigated here was completed prior to the reorganisation by the general needs housing association which operates predominantly in the north of England. This arm of the group remains by far the largest, with over two thirds of the group's stock.

Tenant Participation Within The Housing Association

The housing association in question displays a commitment to tenant participation across the breadth of its practice. The questionnaire survey response indicates that they have tenant representation at all levels of the association and that they support tenants' groups and events across the region. Further to this the housing association's annual review describes moves being made into the provision of training for tenant representatives, and gives the example of a tenant who has been supported by the association in gaining a National Vocational Qualification in Tenant Involvement after an 18 month course. There are now regular '*Tenant Days*' hosted by the RSL, where representatives from tenants associations across the country are in attendance as well as Board members and staff from across the association. These one-day events can be seen to deal with general issues that affect all tenants. These are not the forums for specific issues concerning individual estates. The annual review describes the latest such day:

*"The day enabled all of us to take part in an invaluable exchange of views on a number of important issues:
Demand for our properties and marketing them.
Tenant participation within the housing association.
The Tenancy Enforcement Service.
Community Development."*

Housing Association Annual Review 1998/99.

The report goes on to describe the success of the tenant day and states that as a result, the days have since become a regular fixture occurring three times a year. Tenant involvement does occur on a more localised basis as well, but this move towards a national forum to discuss broad issues, such as those given above, is relatively new. A Garths tenant interviewed had attended the initial Tenant Day, she stated:

"It was a good day, I enjoyed meeting other representatives from all over and I think that it was good that we had some of the really senior people there from the association. We were all sort of on a level."

Tenant Representative, The Garths

This positive view of the event was held not only by the tenant but also by the community development officer employed by the housing association. The Tenant Days are one expression of a wider Housing Plus agenda adopted by the RSL. The group sees itself as more than a social housing landlord, but rather as an agency for wider regeneration. The chairman of the housing association points to a partnership approach to regeneration in his annual statement:

"We are putting great efforts into building the partnerships, first and foremost with our tenants, but also with other organisations who share our aims, which are central to lasting regeneration."

RSL Chairman's Statement – Annual Review 1998/99

The 1998/99 Housing Group Annual Review recognises the ability of the group to 'make a strategic contribution to the Government's national and regional objectives.' It goes on to set out eight priority areas:

*Working for social inclusion,
Improving older housing
Reducing rents to improve local affordability,
Investing in additional services,
Developing in areas of high demand,
Managing change in a changing organisation,
Involving tenants and
Adding value to investment.*

Housing Group Annual Review 1998/99

The housing association's parent group clearly sees itself as a vehicle for

community regeneration and 'Involving Tenants' is listed as a key point in that strategy. The RSL has a well-established tenant consultation system that is based on tenants' associations, regional representatives' meetings and an elected tenants' forum. This format for tenant involvement is being utilised by the new associations within the group, who are developing similar structures. It can be seen therefore that the housing association responsible for the redevelopment on the Garths estate has a long track record of tenant involvement in decision making throughout the organisation.

General Development Policy

As stated earlier the postal questionnaire survey shows that the housing group as a whole has developed in excess of 500 new-build units per year from 1995/96 to 1997/98. The group annual review indicates that at the time of publication the group had had almost 4,000 properties 'in development', with the RSL in question accounting for over half of these. Whether this figure includes some of those mentioned in the earlier years figure's (but not yet completed) or not is unclear. Suffice it to say that the group has a large development programme and that a substantial part of this is by the housing association responsible for the Garths redevelopment. The questionnaire response also indicates that the housing association has undertaken a number of developments without the benefit of financial support from the Housing Corporation or the local authority. They have funded significant development programmes from private sources as well as by the more usual Social Housing Grant routes. The housing group's large development programme would imply that the Garths redevelopment, although comprising of some 220 homes in total over the course of the whole redevelopment programme, is not the only new building that they were involved in at the time. They are a housing association with extensive experience of new housing development over a number of years – dating back to the original development of the Garths in the 1930s.

Appointment Of Architects

The housing association have an in-house architecture department numbering

seven in total, with four of these being fully qualified architects. They are located in one of the regional offices of the association and are responsible for a variable proportion of the redevelopment work undertaken by the association. This proportion varies depending upon the weight of the overall development programme at the time. The development officer states:

“Each region has a development manager and in discussion with the director they decide how much of the work that they want to give in-house. If they don’t think that they would get the right service in-house then they may go externally. Maybe there is a specialist area that an architect has, conservation or something, that is needed on a particular development.”

Housing Association, Development Officer

This would imply that the housing association would typically use the internal architects on new-build developments but would use an external practice only for schemes that required a specific input. The question of the current workload of the internal architects is also taken into account, as one stated:

“We do tend to have a full workload; we work on a selection of the new developments but we are aware that there are some that are carried out by other practices. The decisions are made at board level as to who is used for each scheme and I am sure that their decision is made taking into account the opinions of any other partners in the development as well as looking at our capabilities and workload.”

Housing Association, In-house Architect.

So it can be seen that the decision either to use the in-house team or not is taken at a senior level within the housing association. The development officer, when pressed on this point during a research interview, continued:

“I would suggest that there is a bit of networking involved – favours and that. On consortia developments there would be good reason to use an external firm or if we were on-board with another developer as opposed to a housing association and if you were tied into their deals. D and B stuff.”

Housing Association, Development Officer

The in-house architects are used for many of the housing association’s developments but they are often bypassed in favour of external architectural practices for a number of reasons. The development officer appeared to be

unsure about the role of the in-house team and the quality of service that they provided. It should be pointed out that the officer in question, though responsible for the development considered in this case study, is no longer with the RSL and had to be traced to his new employers, a national house builder. When asked about the client-designer relationship, he said:

“In theory the project controller is the client – so I was the client for (the development) – and the architect works for them. They have control over the architect. BUT being honest with you the in-house architects, they don’t treat you as a client in the same way as an external consultant might. They are more bullish with their own ideas and feel maybe in a stronger position to be able to voice these. They may disagree but that is the way that I feel about the way that it worked.”

Housing Association Housing Officer, Hendon

This apparent difference in the way that the in-house team responds to the in-house client is interesting and will be explored later when the differing roles of internal and external architects are discussed. The architect when asked about this same point did not agree, claiming that the project controller would be treated in the same manner regardless of who they were employed by.

6.3.3 The Tenant Involvement Mechanism

The general tenant Involvement mechanism employed by the housing association is well established and is based on the network of tenants’ associations that are supported by the landlord. It is described in general terms earlier in this section. The Garths redevelopment utilised this structure of tenants’ associations and took into account the size of the redevelopment programme as a whole, and also involved a number of ‘extra’ initiatives. The detailed story of the phase investigated here appears later in this case study, but before this is described it is necessary to discuss the consultation that occurred prior to the beginning of the development on-site, indeed before it was established what was to be developed.

The Initial Public Meetings

Firstly we must consider the initial meeting, conducted in the wake of the murder incident in the summer of 1991. The community was consulted about

the demolition of the estate and the complete redevelopment of the area. This occurred as a result of the special circumstances at that time and the very apparent public unrest. This can be seen as the initial act of consultation in the redevelopment of the estate. The meeting was called by the housing association in conjunction with the council and was held in a local school. The clear message was that the estate should be redeveloped and the Garths should be largely replaced with new family housing. The Housing Officer responsible for the Garths was present at this meeting and he recalled:

"We had this meeting and the room was full, everyone came just about. It was quite tense. We (the RSL) had I think already decided to do something with the estate as it had been getting worse for a while, but we left that meeting in no doubt that we should redevelop it completely."

Housing Association Housing Officer, Hendon

The RSL left the meeting with a clear mandate for redevelopment. The next months were spent conducting a feasibility study, working out a timetable and arranging sources for the estimated £20 million funding required. In the words of a development officer who would later manage the phase discussed later:

"We just had to find out how we were going to go about it, I think the decision had been made that we were going to go ahead but we had to work out how. It was a big task"

Housing Association, Development Officer

The first of a series of public meetings to discuss the proposed redevelopment of the Garths was held in August of 1993, again in the local school. Every resident of the estate was invited. These meetings were very well attended and they provided an opportunity for the RSL to present their proposals for the estate, and for the tenants to comment upon them; the housing officer stated:

"When we first announced the decision every tenant was invited to a meeting in the school, 5 nights, 5 consecutive nights we were there so that more people could come. We explained what the plans were and how we intended to do it. We asked for any suggestions which might make it easier. Basically the meetings were to point out that this was our intention, and when we would start, when we would finish, how much it would cost. They were the first of many meetings which would go on throughout the development and these are still on-going."

Housing Association Housing Officer, Hendon

The housing officer, the community development officer and a representative from the development team all attended each of these five consecutive meetings, as well as officers from the local authority planning and housing teams. Tenant turnout was good on all nights, with many people attending on more than one night. A tenant recalled during interview:

"I went to a couple of them, I would have gone to them all but I couldn't get the kids watched. People round here aren't backward in coming forward, if we have something to say we will say it and this was a good opportunity to be heard."

Housing Association Tenant, the Garths

Design issues were not high on the agenda of the community in these early meetings. Issues such as entitlement to the new properties, where they would be decanted and 'will the rent increase' appear to have been more pressing at this point. Some design comments were made but there appears to have been no fundamental issues raised (source: interviews with tenants and housing association officers). The meetings raised a great deal of excitement, as the same tenant quoted above remembered:

"There was a general feeling of excitement amongst us (the tenants). I had never lived in a house before and I know that my mum hadn't. People were looking forward to having a garden for the kiddies, I was, but there were some that were not so sure. The layout was explained to us and anything we asked was answered."

Housing Association Tenant, the Garths

Like the above tenant many residents had never lived in a house, having spent their lives in the flats, and the prospect of this was generally welcomed. Some of the more elderly tenants raised concerns about security, as a retired tenant recalled during the course of an interview:

"A lot of people were saying that they might not be as safe, security wise. We had all lived on top of each other and we knew our neighbours and that, it would have been difficult to burgle one of the old flats. Houses were new to most of us, some folk were even frightened to sleep in the house on their own."

Housing Association Tenant, the Garths

These fears were assuaged by the promise to fit proper security locks on

windows and doors, and by the invitation of the Police safety officer to a later meeting. It can be seen that aside from general comments about the change in dwelling type, the design of the properties was not discussed in depth at these five early meetings (source: minutes of meetings).

The Assessment Of Housing Need

As mentioned earlier, the number of dwellings on the Garths estate would be likely to be reduced by the demolition of the multi-storey flat blocks and their replacement with standard two-storey housing. The density of accommodation was certain to fall. The method by which the association reduced the number of tenants resident of the Garths to accommodate for the reduced density was by way of offering a 'Home Loss' payment of £1,500 to each tenant who did not want to be re-housed on the redeveloped estate (source: interview with housing officer). The rationale behind this decision was based on the previously discussed problems that had occurred on the estate. These were perceived to be as a result of the influx of single people and ex-offenders on the estate since the division of a number of flats into bedsits in the early 1980s. It was decided that the core community of long term 'eastenders' was strong and wanted to remain, while these more recent residents may be tempted by the home loss payments on offer. The housing officer who is now responsible for the redeveloped estate, and who is himself a lifetime resident of the 'east-end' of Sunderland put it directly:

"We had 520 tenancies on the estate initially, and to put it bluntly we could not build 520 houses. We had some tenants that we wanted and some that we were not so keen to hang on to; we didn't encourage them to stay, put it that way. Over the period of the years as the redevelopment wore on a lot of these opted for their Home Loss payment and made their own arrangements. We were left with the nucleus of the people who really wanted to stay in the area, the real east-end people. It made our job that much easier."

Housing Association Housing Officer, Hendon

It can be seen that the RSL wanted to maintain some of the tenancies and appeared less concerned about others. The overall aim was to re-establish the strong community that had been the main characteristic of the area since

the initial development in 1939 and before that. This was achieved by reassessing the housing need of the tenants. Each household was required to reapply and complete a housing needs form. This process began in the summer of 1993 and went on for some months until each tenant had been considered. The Community Development Officer said:

“At the start of the process every single tenant filled in a housing application form which explained how that family stood, what they needed. It helped to reallocate the properties better. They were visited to fill in these forms, not just left to do them, every tenant was asked what they needed. The mix of housing to develop was established by this, it informed the architects what to provide.”

Community Development Officer, the Garths

All of the flats were visited and the forms completed alongside the housing officer. This was conducted partly to establish the validity of the claims and also to ensure quick and accurate completion. This process can be described as the first stage of the tenant involvement. As the housing officer responsible for interviewing each of the households recalled:

“This is really the first stage of the involvement. We went out there and all of my tenants were interviewed personally and the application forms were filled in with them. So we had an update, and they again had the chance to tell us how their household was made up because it could have changed. They might require more or less space, there are divorces, deaths and children born and some are leaving home.”

Housing Association Housing Officer, Hendon

So the RSL collated detailed and up-to-date information about the tenants living in the Garths, how their households were made up and what their housing needs were. This information fed into the original proposals for the redevelopment. At this stage a number of tenants opted to be re-housed elsewhere and took their ‘home loss’ payment as compensation. After the information had been compiled a list of required properties was drawn up. In order to reach a decision as to how this would work, there was a meeting attended by the interested parties. The housing officer described this process during interview:

“When we got the forms back we went through every one with the development officer and with the community development officer and we put them into categories as to who needed what. Then we told development that this is what we need, can you do it.”

Housing Association Housing Officer, Hendon

A list of the types and sizes of properties that were required was established. This initial list comprised of the number of two-bedroom houses and the number of three-bedroom houses, as well as any special needs provision for elderly or disabled tenants. The community development officer recalled a specific case that was accommodated as a result of this initial consultation.

“For me the best thing that happened was that there were bungalows built for those who needed them. There is a four-bedroom bungalow there as we have a lady with heart problems who has four sons – there was some one-on-one work done to provide the right accommodation for the tenants. Four-bedroom bungalows are not one of our standard house types but in this case it was the right provision.”

Community Development Officer, the Garths

So it can be seen that the housing needs of the tenants were established by the completion of application forms. This is the first stage of the consultation process. This occurred prior to the establishment of a programme for the redevelopment of the entire estate. The aim of the housing association was to conduct this with minimal disruption to the residents. It was a stated aim that the redevelopment should involve only one house move per household (source: interview with development officer). The idea of temporary decants was eschewed at an early stage.

The Decant And The Reduction In Density

The estate contained one piece of undeveloped land that was the first to be built upon as a phase of the redevelopment in 1994. This was populated with the people from one Garth, the first to be demolished. When this block had been cleared the site was developed, tenants from the next block were moved in and so on. This method necessitated each household to move only once and over a very short distance. This was seen as important by the RSL, as they understood the strong local attachments of the residents of the estate. As the development officer stated during a research interview:

"It was phased in such a way that we could construct one area, decant tenants over and move on to the area which had just been made vacant. So we moved through the Garths and the majority of people stayed here and pretty close to where they lived previously."

Housing Association, Development Officer

The importance of keeping tenants close to where they had lived before was clarified by the housing officer, who recalled that there were some people who had to be decanted temporarily in order to be housed in a suitable property. In the course of a research interview he recalled:

"We did have to temporarily decant, not a lot of people but so many, just to get the ball rolling. We kept people within a matter of yards. We didn't want to move people twice, and we didn't want to move them far."

Housing Association Housing Officer, Hendon

This temporary decant was problematic in some instances, as the local community were not keen on moving even a couple of streets from where they had lived previously. The community development officer, who had been based on the estate for some time prior to the redevelopment, understood the issues:

"Oh yes, there was an issue as to where they were decanted. People moving from one Garth to a new development - it had to be in the same area. Very few people moved from the bottom end to the top end, very few. Very few moved from one Garth to another: even though the old block had gone they wanted to stay on the same plot of land."

Community Development Officer, the Garths

This issue of not wanting to move far was apparent during the redevelopment and can be explained by the closeness of the community on the Garths. The idea of people not wanting to move far in the north-east is discussed by Richardson and Corbishley (1999). The extended family networks present on the estate were seen as a key element to maintain, and the housing association attempted to keep the tenants in their close knit groups. As the community development officer put it in an explanatory leaflet about the redevelopment programme:

"Sometimes it is difficult to know who is related to who!"

Community Development Officer, from The Garths, Sunderland...the story so far'

The importance placed on maintaining these family connections was taken very seriously when allocating the new properties. Almost all of the new properties were allocated prior to their being built, and wherever possible the tenants were able to choose their location and their neighbours. Most tenants have the same neighbours today as they had prior to the demolition of the old blocks. This can be seen as a vital part of the consultation exercise: people were not only consulted about what sort of house they wanted/needed, but also about where it should be and who they should be next to. The aim was to retain the strong community that had developed in the Garths.

The Decision To Use Standard House Types

The housing association investigated here uses standardised house plans for almost all of their new-build housing development. The exceptions to this occur when bespoke design is used to cater for tenants with disabilities or to deal with difficult sites. The redevelopment of the Garths was completed mainly with the use of the standard plans, as explained by the development officer during interview:

"They have a range called 'The Generic Dwelling Types' and that was a comprehensive range right through from the small flats to the large four-bed houses. These were used on the Garths redevelopment"

Housing Association, Development Officer

There are some three-storey, four-bedroom houses on the Garths but they are not in the phase investigated here. The vast majority of the 220 houses built, however, were of the standard plan.

Selection Of Properties

When it was established, as a result of the assessment of needs exercise described earlier, who was to be allocated what sort of property, the tenants were sent a copy of the proposed plans showing the new houses and asked to select one of the correct size and type. If for instance a family had been assessed as needing a three-bedroom house, they could select one and return the plan (source: interview with housing officer). The houses were similar, as the housing association uses a range of standardised plans,

discussed later, but the important issue here is the location of the property. The importance of maintaining strong family links once again was the driving force behind this decision. As the housing manager remembered:

“Well it went from there (the five public meetings) to sending the tenants a plan of the area with the locations of where the 2, 3, 4 bed houses etc. were situated. We asked them to pick which one they would like, according to whether we allocated a 2, 3 or 4 bed house. So they could chose to be near people that they wanted to be near.”

Housing Association Housing Officer, Hendon

This process, like the assessment process which preceded it, was time consuming, as not surprisingly, different tenants selected the same houses. The housing management team and the community development officer negotiated the changes and as the housing officer continued:

“We replied to these and re-housed about 90% of the people where they wanted to be. It was bloody hard work but we got the majority of them where they wanted to be with the neighbours that they picked. It worked very well.”

Housing Association Housing Officer, Hendon

The housing officer's rough assessment that 90% of the tenants were moved to houses where they wanted to be has not been investigated, but the tenants interviewed had both been re-housed in the location that they had requested. The redevelopment continued in phases until it was completed in late 1997. The following section deals with the final phase of redevelopment, and looks at the involvement of the tenants throughout the design process.

6.3.4 The Development

This section deals with the penultimate phase of development in the 1990s. It should be understood that the development looked at here was the final piece of an extensive estate regeneration programme, and as such it should be seen in this context. The initial consultation concerning issues such as the type of dwellings and the allocation of the houses had been dealt previously and is described earlier. This section deals solely with the more specific involvement of the tenants moving from their Garth to this development phase in 1998.

The initial series of five public meetings, held at the outset of the proposed redevelopment in 1993, set out the phases of development and allowed for a period of consultation on estate wide issues. Following that, each phase was dealt with individually via the established regular tenants' association meetings. As mentioned earlier, tenants for each new house had been established prior to the building beginning and so using a representative group of tenants was not necessary. Before even the planning application had been submitted the housing association knew who was moving in to the development and even knew which house they were going into.

The phase of development, which will from now be referred to as simply *'the development'*, consists of 12 family houses. Of these 12, 6 have 2 bedrooms, 5 have 3 bedrooms and one has 4 bedrooms (source: various building plans). They are all based on the standardised generic house types adopted by the RSL. The development reached the drawing board late in 1996, and the houses were handed over to the tenants in the autumn of the following year. The architectural services were provided in-house from the RSL, and the contractors had been responsible for all of the previous development.



Figure 6.7 The Housing Development In The North East

As mentioned earlier the scheme's detailed layout was completed towards the end of 1996, and full planning approval was sought and achieved after this. The development went on-site in February of 1997. In this period prior to the building work commencing, the tenants due to move to the new dwellings were

invited to attend the tenants' association meetings, held as before in the local school. These meetings continued on a monthly basis throughout the entire redevelopment programme but with a focus on the new housing. The issues dealt with at each tenants' association were often the same but the tenant group involved changed from phase to phase. As the development officer responsible for the phase looked at here recalled:

"I was the project controller on two of the phases in Hendon and I attended two series of tenant meetings when they were asked about the new houses. Many of the concerns were the same the second time round, although we did learn from the earlier phases and adapted the properties where we could."

Housing Association, Development Officer

The idea of the later phases benefiting from the experience of the earlier schemes was also recognised by the community development officer who was involved in all of the different phases of redevelopment. She stated during an interview:

"Oh yes, it was noticeably easier in the later stages, maybe because I was a bit more experienced and I had picked up a bit of building knowledge and understanding of the development process. However it was also because the development team had responded to the concerns on the earlier phases. The tenants in the later schemes were annoyed about being left to last, having to live on what amounted to a building site for almost 5 years before they got their home, but the process of giving them what they wanted was easier and less painful."

Community Development Officer, the Garths

However, despite the information that had fed-back into the process from the earlier phases, there were still some important decisions which were made relating to the 12 units and in which the tenants had a key input. There was one major tenant-led design decision on this phase of development. This is discussed below and this is followed by a description of the other design decisions in which the community had input.

The Planning Of The Ground Floor

The key evidence of community pressure altering the design of the new houses relates to the planning of the downstairs rooms. As stated earlier the

Garths redevelopment programme consists of the standardised generic house plans used by the housing association. During the initial tenants' association meeting when the design of the final phase was raised, the tenants in attendance were unhappy with the layout of the downstairs rooms. The standard house plan has the kitchen at the front and the lounge at the rear opening onto the garden with patio-doors. The tenants did not like this, they instead preferred the lounge at the front, with an entry porch and the kitchen at the rear. The reasons for this were related to the design of the Garths that preceded the new houses. The blocks of flats looked over the central courtyard and the residents preferred the living space to overlook the other houses rather than a private garden (source: interviews with both tenants and housing association officers). The development officer said:

"We had a large range of house types and one fundamental aspect is whether or not you have the living room to the front or whether it is to the back. As I recall, the preferred option for the association as a whole – from the architects and the development team - was to have a living space at the rear and all of the plumbing, kitchen and that at the front. This cuts the costs as the plumbing etc. was easier to achieve and the idea would be that the living space would be quieter. As I recall on (the development) the tenants disagreed with that completely and they were successful in overturning our proposed plans and getting us to use alternative types, with the living space at the front.

Housing Association, Development Officer

The costs of the servicing would be less with the housing association preferred plan, as the bathroom is located above the kitchen and the front of the house would be closer to the main sewer. Despite the financial implications, however, the decision was made to cede to the tenants' views. The residents were given an option as to where their kitchen and lounge would be located prior to the building work going on-site. On the development of the 12 houses, 10 have a front lounge and 2 have a front kitchen. The reasons for this difference caused problems. One interviewed tenant, an active community worker, failed to notify the housing association of her desire to have a front lounge and as a result was provided with a house conforming to the standard plan. The tenant recalled:

“There was an issue about the kitchen and the lounge. What it was, and I was a regular visitor, I think that they were sick of us by the finish, I thought that the front would have the lounge everyone else’s has but my house for some reason is of the old plan with the lounge at the back. I don’t know why because there was a big issue about it at the time. We were shown the plans and others must have commented but I didn’t see it and nor did my neighbour in the semi as our two are the only two out of the 12 on (the development) that are that way around.”

Tenant Representative, The Garths

This situation could be viewed as a failure of the consultation process. The tenant concerned did not realise the difference until she moved in, and it was too late to rectify. This seems to be as a result of a communication problem, she continued:

“I was consulted on it but I don’t think that it was made clear enough. I looked at the plans and they said there are your stairs there and, you know, it was hard to visualise. In the end when I moved in I thought that it was wrong; I wasn’t happy that my house was different to most of the others on the estate. They had changed those round when people had asked but I wasn’t quite sure what was going on so they didn’t change it for me.”

Tenant Representative, The Garths

Why only the semi-detached block is built to the standard plan appears to be because the alteration was only made for those tenants who asked for it. As the project architect stated:

“We changed the plan when people asked us to, when they did not express a preference we reverted to the standard layout.”

In-house Project Architect, the Garths

This relatively minor problem aside, the design decision made by the tenants was heeded and the process of involvement can be seen to have been effective in this instance. The decision can be seen to be connected with the special circumstances of the Garths and the strength of community on the estate as described earlier. This community decision was voiced at the regular development meetings and these are described below.

Garth Tenants’ Association Meetings

As mentioned earlier the main consultation forum were the regular tenants’

association meetings. These associations had been established for some time and each of the Garths had one. They were supported by the RSL which helped with the production of leaflets and posters and the hiring of a venue. The community development officer had been instrumental in the running of all of these associations. During the redevelopment the meetings were concerned with the new housing and the implications of the redevelopment. The phase being investigated here was the penultimate one on the estate and as such the meetings had been primarily concerned with the effects of the building work on the residents of the existing Garth. From the autumn of 1996 this changed as the new houses were discussed individually. The attendance at these meetings had always been good, as the community was strong and vociferous, but the meetings about the new housing were busier than usual (source: various interviews).

“Ah yes, early on the housing association would turn up at the tenants’ meeting with drawings of the regular two-bedroom and three-bedroom houses. We were given the options to have various bits, front door types, porches. Where they could accommodate the things that we wanted they were really good. They knew who was moving to each house’ see.”

Housing Association Tenant, The Garths

Once again, the issue of the housing association being aware of the future tenant group arises. The fact that they could consult the people who were going to move into the specific houses meant that individual tastes and preferences could be catered for. These ‘secondary’ design decisions are discussed below.

Secondary Design Decisions

It is first necessary to define the term ‘*secondary design decisions*’. This fundamentally refers to the minor, essentially cosmetic, design choices and would not incorporate fundamental design decisions such as the internal layout issue discussed above. The housing association used standardised house plans for the redevelopment of the Garths and so the decisions relating to layout and planning were not there to be made, aside from the aforementioned downstairs planning issue. A strict design guide was followed

detailing the specification of building parts. As such the general aesthetic considerations, including the choice of brick and window frames were again not offered to the tenants. The tenants were however given a series of choices on a number of fixtures and fittings. In addition to the type and colour of the front door and the provision of a porch as mentioned by the tenant above there were other options. The bathroom suite and the kitchen units were selected from a range of choices, as the development officer said during an interview:

“They had the usual choices: kitchen units, bathroom suites front door colour and style. The usual choice list stuff. It is what you would expect, secondary design decisions. But as I mentioned earlier they did have the opportunity to get involved in the more fundamental design decisions. Okay, they could not influence a bespoke design but they had a great deal of influence over the choice of the standard plan. The tenants had us change the standard plan that we were going to use and if I am not mistaken that cost us some extra money.”

Housing Association, Development Officer

Samples were brought into the tenants’ meetings and they could be taken home before a decision was made. Aside from these usual options, the tenants were offered a choice of a landscape pack. These consisted of a variety of plants and shrubs and were delivered to the estate after the tenants had moved in. The development officer remembered this fondly:

“We also had a variety of landscape packs available to the tenants. They could choose either a set of fruits, a set of roses, a set of whatever shrubs. I remember standing in the car park there with a huge wagon with all of these planting packs on the back with the guy handing them out. I’m not sure how many of them were sold down the pub before they got anywhere near the garden though.”

Housing Association, Development Officer

One of the tenants was also present; she remembered during the interview:

“I had never had a garden before, I wasn’t sure what to do with the bloody things at the time. They do look lovely now though.”

Housing Association Tenant, The Garths

During this period of tenant involvement the community development officer played a key role, this is discussed below.

The Role Of The Community Development Officer

The Community Development Officer played a facilitating role in the involvement of the tenants during the redevelopment of the Garths. Employed by the housing association at the outset of the redevelopment, in response to the mounting problems on the estate discussed earlier, and involved throughout the process, she provided a vital link in the consultation process. The RSL converted a flat to be used as a site office until it was demolished as part of the programme. Despite the landlords regional office it was decided that the officer would be better located within the complex of Garths. As the Community Development Officer recalled:

"I was based in the Garth, (address) was my office. I shared it with the estate caretakers. I was not based here (RSL office) despite the fact that I was employed by (the RSL), they gave me the flat so that I was part of the community, I was there and it was important that I was in the community. Although I didn't live there, I was a real part of the community and I became accepted."

Community Development Officer, the Garths

6.3.5 Overview

The redevelopment of the Garths is viewed as successful by all of those interviewed in the course of this research. The particular circumstances that brought about the re-building of the estate, and the historic housing association link, meant that the development was of the whole estate of originally over 500 flats. It was not a small piecemeal development on a local authority estate, like many developments undertaken by the sector, but instead the wider view that could be taken meant that there could be more direct tenant input. With all of the residents of the new houses coming from the original Garths, the actual prospective tenants were consulted about their own future homes.

Tenant involvement can be seen to have occurred in four main ways in the design and development of the housing looked at here. Firstly, through the decision to use standardised house types. Although this limited the options for the tenants, these were originally developed using tenant feedback from

previous RSL developments (source: interview with development officer). Secondly, the decisions made about the redevelopment of the estate made at the outset were in consultation with the tenants. The public meeting held in the summer of 1992 was where the decisions to completely redevelop the estate were made. It was at this meeting that the tenants in attendance put forward their ideas to reduce the density on the estate, get rid of the deck-access flats and replace them with new family housing. This close consultation continued throughout the time taken to complete the many phases of redevelopment that were necessary to reduce the problems associated with temporary decants. The existing structure of the tenants' associations was utilised to keep people informed throughout, and the community development officer located on the estate played a vital role in answering the questions of the residents about the development.

The extensive reassessment of housing needs undertaken by the association can be seen as being another method of involving tenants in the development process. This was conducted face to face and many concerns were raised at this point. The information gained allowed for tenants to select where they would live and who their neighbours would be. The exceptionally close community on the estate, noted by all interviewees, meant that these issues were considered to be of prime importance in the long-term success of the redevelopment. The final stage of tenant involvement occurred during the development of each phase. Ten of the twelve houses looked at during the course of the research were modified versions of the standardised house plan, with the living room at the front. This major design change was carried out as a result of tenant pressure. Again it can be seen to be a result of the closeness of community, in that the tenants wanted their houses to be overlooked by their neighbours as they strove to maintain the feeling of safety and security proffered by the Garths. Aside from this major design decision, there were also a number of secondary decisions made with the help of the tenants. A choice of internal fixtures and fittings was given and there was also an innovative offer of a selection of garden landscape packs.

The overall situation was one of early and continued tenant consultation. The luxury of having the new tenants available, and willing, was grasped by the housing association and there was more specific tenant involvement as a result. The employment of the community development officer, and her subsequent relocation to the converted flat, meant that the process ran more smoothly. The work of certain key staff members with close ties to the area was of paramount importance. The housing officer for the estate, himself a resident of the east-end for over 50 years, was a driving force in the redevelopment: he remembered the replacement of the Garths fondly. When asked to comment on the process at the end of a research interview he proudly recalled:

“The buildings have gone but the people and the community remain. Us at (the housing association) did this, they did it in the 1930s when they demolished the tenements and built the state of the art flats which were the Garths. We have just done the same.”

Housing Association Housing Officer, Hendon

The tenant involvement did however have its limitations: despite the possibilities offered by the nature and scale of the redevelopment, the choices offered to the community were limited.

6.4 Greater London Case Study

The final case study was conducted in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. This section will begin by briefly describing the local area's history and characteristics before looking at the housing association, its background, organisation and general development practices. There then follows a description of the other players involved in the regeneration of the Spitalfields area of the borough, the architectural practice, the tenants and residents groups and supporting agencies. After this context is established, there follows a more detailed investigation into a new build housing development carried out by the housing association in the area. At all times, in the interests of confidentiality real names have been omitted. The development that has been studied will be known simply as '*the development*' and the interviewees who helped with the research will be referred to by their job title or position in the process, for example '*the architect*' or '*an estate resident.*' During the course of the research the following people were interviewed:

Housing Association Chief Executive;
Housing Association Tenant and Founder Board Member;
Housing Association Tenant and Current Board Member; and
Planning Officer Tower Hamlets Borough Council.

As well as the above face-to-face interviews there was also a telephone interview with the project architect. In an organisation of the size of the housing association the Chief Executive proved invaluable and was interviewed twice, as well as being helpful in a number of additional enquiries made on the telephone. Alongside the interviews there was access granted to the project file and any relevant supporting documentation including reports, meeting minutes and a variety of leaflets and newsletters aimed at the community. A number of these proved useful in the compilation of this case study report.

The table overleaf sets out to describe the community involvement throughout the scheme investigated and looks at the key stages from the decision to

redevelop the area in question until the completion of the flats and houses. These stages are described in more detail later in this section.

Date	Stage	Community Involvement
March 1994	Housing association approached local authority about developing on a vacant plot of land. Site purchased for just £1 later in the year.	<i>None, other than that by the strong community representation on the board of management.</i>
Early 1995	Decision made to enter into a partnership arrangement with a larger neighbouring HA.	<i>As above.</i>
March 1996	Architectural practice engaged from HA approved list. Began work on proposal for development.	<i>As above.</i>
Summer 1996	Series of focus groups held on housing design.	<i>Variety of local residents from the Bengali community involved in focus groups on the design of housing. Results fed into HA Design Brief.</i>
November 1996	After granting of planning applications etc. work began on-site.	<i>As above.</i>
December 1997	Flats element of the development completed.	<i>The tenants of the new flats, if known early enough, were given a variety of choices about the fixtures, fittings and internal decoration.</i>
August 1998	Housing and commercial elements of scheme completed.	<i>The tenants of the new houses, if known early enough, were given a variety of choices about the fixtures, fittings and internal decoration.</i>
1998 onwards	Post-occupancy survey completed by all tenants of the new houses.	<i>Results feed back into the Design and Development Brief used for all new schemes.</i>

Figure 6.8: Involvement At The Key Stages In The Development Process

6.4.1 The Area

This section provides a description of the area in which the development is located. It initially sets out to briefly describe the history of the borough and its main features. Secondly, it describes the location of the estate within Greater London and within the borough of Tower Hamlets. It then moves on to discuss the previous use of the site and the general condition of the area.

Background

The development investigated here is in the Brick Lane area of Spitalfields, which lies in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. The borough is bordered to the south by the bend of the River Thames and houses over 160,000 people. This very central location and the existence of good public transport links, means that the area is popular with private development and there is growing evidence of gentrification. Overall the London Borough of Tower Hamlets is, however, amongst the poorest local authority districts in the country, albeit one with distinct pockets of gentrification.

The borough is steeped in history, with evidence of settlement dating back to prehistoric times. Tower Hamlets lies just outside of the old city walls of London and historically was home to the trades of metalworking, brick making, tanning and brewing, the trades that were not allowed in the city because of the noise or smell that they created. Throughout the industrial late 18th and 19th Centuries the borough became a centre for shipbuilding and other trades related to the docks. The area was the heaviest hit during the bombing raids of World War Two, with over 24,000 properties being destroyed. During the 1960s and 70s the main industries closed and the area went into decline. The Docklands development in the 1980s in the Isle of Dogs, which also lies in the borough, was an attempt to stem this decline (source: London Borough of Tower Hamlets website).

Tower Hamlets has always been a home for ethnic minorities, often fleeing violence and persecution. During the 17th century the Huguenots came to Spitalfields and nearly two centuries later a Chinese community was established in Limehouse as a result of merchant trading. During this period Jews from Eastern Europe, also fleeing persecution, settled in Stepney and Whitechapel. The latest newcomers are from Bangladesh and they have settled across the borough, particularly around Brick Lane, since the 1960s. There are also emerging communities consisting of both Somali and Vietnamese refugees. The borough has altered greatly as a result of the influx of different people and the decline of its industries but much of the character

survives today, the original street patterns, place names, its architectural heritage and the absorption of people from many different backgrounds into today's community. It has an increasing population, unlike London as a whole, and is a major focus for regeneration and redevelopment.

Brick Lane is an area of the borough most noted for its commercial activity and one of its most well known features is the Brick Lane market which developed during the 18th century and remains today. As its name suggest, Brick Lane once ran through a mass of Brickfields in medieval times when it was a main road; the relevance of this to the case study will become apparent later. Another major feature of the Brick Lane area is the number and variety of restaurants. Although these represent many different cuisines the focus is on Bangladeshi food, indeed the area has recently been unofficially renamed '*Bangla Town*'. The area surrounding Brick Lane is home to the largest Bangladeshi community in the United Kingdom (source: London Borough of Tower Hamlets website). The area surrounding Brick retains a medieval character with narrow streets and the buildings encroaching upon each other.

The area as mentioned earlier has been the home to immigrants and refugees for centuries, and the accommodation available has often been poor and overcrowded. Despite various attempts at slum clearance the issue of overcrowding remains, especially in light of the large families of the Bangladeshi community which make up the majority of population. A report from the Policy Studies Institute entitled '*Overcrowding In Bangaldeshi Households*' (Kempson, 1999) examines this issue with specific reference to Tower Hamlets. The report concludes that there is a lack of suitably-sized properties in the borough and as a result there is severe overcrowding amongst the Bangladeshi residents. The RSL responsible for the development was established by local Bangladeshi people in an attempt to counter this problem.

The housing association development discussed in more detail later is situated on Brick Lane and it lies less than two miles from the City of London. The site

has been developed land for many centuries and had been housing as recently as the 1980s. The site contained Great Eastern Buildings, a large tenement in the ownership of the local authority at the time of demolition, although a private landlord had previously owned it. The building was demolished due to its poor condition and the site was not returned to housing until the intervention of the housing association in the early 1990s. Since the demolition of the previous housing the site had been home to a technical training college bricklaying school, where in the words of the chief executive of the RSL:

“Basically, kids used to build walls and then knock them down. It is a real pity that we couldn’t have used some of them, it would have really reduced our costs!”

Housing Association Chief Executive

The following section addresses the origin, structure, practice and policy of the developing housing association.

6.4.2 The Housing Association

Members of the local Bangladeshi community formed the housing association in the late 1970s. This was as a direct response to poor housing conditions in the Spitalfields area, most pressingly the overcrowding brought about by the lack of property of a sufficient size to accommodate the large families of the community. The RSL was set up with a remit to provide large family houses for the Bangladeshi community, and set about an extensive programme of redeveloping and refurbishing the existing properties in the area. The association was initially a co-operative but this status was abandoned in the late 1980s and it is now a registered Friendly Society operating under the model rules of the Housing Corporation. This decision was made as a result of recognising the need to change the structure, expand the association and develop more new properties. The annual report from 1998-99 states that the RSL, at that time, managed almost 400 properties, providing homes for over 1,500 people.

The postal questionnaire survey reveals that all of the properties managed by the housing association lie within just two London boroughs, the neighbouring authorities of Tower Hamlets and Hackney. The majority of these dwellings are in the Spitalfields area of Tower Hamlets, with a great proportion being in the Brick Lane area in close proximity to the RSL office. The Annual report states:

"The majority of the association's properties are within a two mile radius of the office."

Housing Association Annual Report 1998-99

The founders of the association live on and around Brick Lane, and over 20 years after it was established the founders remain closely involved and sit on the board of management. One of these, who was interviewed during the course of the research, recalled his association with the area:

"I have lived here since I came to Britain in 1967. Straight from the airport I came to Brick Lane. So for over 30 years, since I was only about 9 years old. Some of my family were here before."

Housing Association Tenant and Founder Board
Member

According to this tenant, who also acts as the RSL's joint treasurer, the founder members all have lived in the area since their arrival in England in the 1960s. These people still play a large part in the running of the housing association.

Structure And Organisation

The RSL is small and as such the staff team is limited, comprising as it does of only seven officers excluding secretarial support. The management team comprises of three people: the chief executive, a finance manager and a new initiatives and development manager. The size of the association means that the roles of these three overlap to a degree. The elected board members, who are not paid staff, play an important part in the association on a number of levels. The elected board of management comprises of 14 local people. Of these 11 are members of the Bangladeshi community, all are male and many have been involved with the association since its beginning in 1979. Of the

elected members, six are tenants of the RSL. There are also three co-opted members drawn from the wider community, these are people who make a specialist contribution and include a representative from the race equality council and from the Bangladeshi Welfare association. The chief executive of the housing association was aware of the gender bias on the board of management and is attempting to include more women; he stated:

“All eleven of our elected members are men. Yes, it is a problem. It is purely down to the cultural issues in the area. There are attempts to involve women. We are about to co-opt members each year and we will co-opt two women and two men. The current board will be up for re-election soon and we will try to get some women on board but we’re not sure how.”

Housing Association Chief Executive

Other attempts have been made to counter the lack of female representation within the housing association. These include the setting up of issue-based focus groups and these are discussed in more detail later. Overall, the board of management plays a vital role in the running of the housing association and this was recognised by both the chief executive and a tenant Board member. Firstly the tenant recalled:

“We meet here regularly and we do really run the organisation: we have a say on everything. (the chief executive) operates an open-door type policy and we call in regularly. My uncle was one that started this association and it is a part of the community. “

Tenant and board of management member

The chief executive backed this up during a research interview:

“I have worked for a number of larger housing associations before I came here and there really is nothing quite like it in my experience. The board here is very active and they see the association very much as theirs, they are very proud of what they have achieved. I see most of them regularly in-between board meetings, some of them almost on a daily basis.”

Housing Association Chief Executive

This demonstrates the closeness to the community that is so apparent in the case of this small London housing association. This is a key theme and will be examined later.

General Development Policy

The questionnaire survey reveals that the RSL has developed in the region of 20 new-build properties per year, on average, since the mid-1990s. This relatively small development programme is a considerable undertaking for an organisation of their size; there is however a commitment to continue developing new property in order to tackle the overcrowding issues discussed earlier. The Chair's Report from the annual report of 1998-99 states:

"The association needs to develop new housing, particularly in Tower Hamlets. Earlier this year we published research on levels of overcrowding in the borough – it clearly showed the continuing need for large family homes, particularly for our community."

Housing Association Annual Report 1998-99,

As stated earlier, the housing association was established to tackle the dearth of large family housing in the area and the drive to continue building new properties to address this remains as long as the problem does. A key problem with this in the borough is the lack of suitable sites for development. The gentrification described earlier means that land is sought after and the location, close to the City of London, means that it is almost all developed. The chief executive described the development opportunities available to the RSL as:

"They are very limited, the area of Tower Hamlets where we work is bang next to the city. It has changed tremendously over the last four years since I have worked here, it has become a very gentrified area and I think that it might have been going that way for some time. It is now changing at an alarming rate. There are very few large sites available, if any I can only think of one left in the borough. We tend to concentrate on small in-fill sites on land given to us at a discount by the local authority. We also do quite a bit of work through Planning Gain. Those are the main sources of opportunity nowadays."

Housing Association Chief Executive

This small-scale piecemeal development programme, building houses on the postage stamp sites that are available in the borough, has also had the effect of preventing the association from developing standard house plans. When asked, during a research interview, whether the association used such plans, the chief executive was unequivocal in his response:

“No, we don’t use standard house plans. We don’t find standard sized plots in standard type areas with standard type tenants.”

Housing Association Chief Executive

The chief executive continued with a brief description of a typical development programme at the housing association:

“The way it usually works, is for example – say the bidding now has just finished, the LA brought us a small site and said would you like to acquire this. We immediately get our architect on it, he does a draft scheme and puts what we would like to see on it in view of the councils preferences and of course ours. So the architect is involved at the very first stage in the completion of sketch feasibility drawings. We have a chat with the planners, we do not use planning consultants as we have not really needed to. We involve the architect from day one. If we are then successful with the bid, we don’t really use a great deal of other consultants until we are on site. We do use some to do the tendering process and to do the spec, we would use an employer’s agent and where necessary we have used a clerk of works. It is predominantly left to the architect, he leads the programme. We are small and we don’t have a dedicated development department; we have to sort of farm out most of those services.”

Housing Association Chief Executive

This lack of a dedicated development team, coupled with the small size of the association and the high costs of developing in an area which is in close proximity to the centre of London, means that the RSL typically enters into partnership arrangements in order to complete new developments. These partnerships take different forms, from schemes where they develop alongside another housing association, to others where they simply use the infrastructure of the other association to manage the development process, maintaining ownership of the new properties. The nature of these arrangements is often complex and each one is different; it is however important to note that the size of the RSL necessitates involvement with others. The chief executive describes the necessity to embark upon partnership arrangements during a research interview:

“We really have to be in partnership with another housing association in order to develop new housing. We have this strong remit from the community to develop large family houses and the only way that we can really do that is in partnership with others.”

Housing Association Chief Executive

The development investigated during the course of this case study was itself the product of a partnership and this is discussed in detail later in this section.

Appointment Of Architects

The housing that constitutes the development programme are designed by just two architectural practices appointed by the association. Of these two practices one conducts approximately 80% of all of the work and is the practice contacted to be involved initially. Only if this practice cannot complete the work in the time scale, or if there is any objection from the other partners, is another practice approached. The RSL chief executive explained this situation thus:

"We use two architects (practices), we use one for about 80% of our developments who is someone that we have used for 5-6 years. I have no idea how they were initially selected but they are a local practice and the architect (name) is from this area. They are a black-led architects firm and that would have been a key item in the selection process as we are very much about trying to involve black contractors and black architects all the way through the process. We want architects who are from and understand the community that they are designing for."

Housing Association Chief Executive

The other architectural practice, the one responsible for the remaining 20% of the workload, is also a local firm. This practice is extremely small and they have been working for the housing association since the beginning in 1979 (source: interview with founder board member). Like the larger architects they are a BME practice. The larger of the two practices, the one responsible for the housing development investigated here, describes itself thus:

"This practice is involved in social/private housing schemes and commercial projects. We seek to be responsive to clients needs."

RIBA Directory of Professional Practices 2000

The practice operates predominantly in the housing field and they have experience in the provision of social housing, working for RSLs as well as local authorities. The architects were unavailable for a face-to-face interview, despite numerous requests, but they did confirm this during the course of a telephone conversation.

6.4.3 The Tenant Involvement Mechanisms

This section sets out to describe the tenant involvement mechanisms in place across the housing association. It covers involvement in all aspects of practice but with a specific reference to the development arena. As mentioned earlier, the housing association is small and very connected to the local community. It was established by and for the local Bangladeshi population, and the representation of community members at all levels of the organisation remains considerable. This should be taken into account when assessing the tenant involvement mechanisms in place. The board of management, as discussed in more detail earlier in this section, has considerable tenant representation. In an organisation of the size of the housing association in question this is the main decision making body, because unlike larger organisations there are not the levels of committees and sub-committees alongside the regular board meeting. There are however a number of other tenant involvement mechanisms used by the association in order to reach more of their tenant base. The main mechanism for tenant involvement across the association is via their numerous tenants' organisations. These are supported by the RSL in a number of ways. The Chief Executive describes the tenant participation strategy thus:

"We do have a Tenant Participation policy, not specifically about development but across the housing association. We actively encourage tenant associations and two thirds of our tenants are in associations, some of which are more active than others. In terms of the impact on the design and development process, the tenants' associations really do not have great deal of say or influence in it."

Housing Association Chief Executive

As stated by the chief executive, the tenants' associations do not play a significant part in the design and development process. There are however other mechanisms for tenant involvement, as discussed below.

The Tenant Survey

Firstly, the association conducts a comprehensive tenant satisfaction survey every two years. When asked about this the chief executive explained:

“Every 2 years we do a tenant survey and one section of this is about the property that they live in. We ask them about our service and other bits and pieces and we ask 8,9,10 maybe more questions about what they think about their property. We ask them about the design of it in terms of the size of the bedrooms, the number of rooms, the standard of the kitchens and what they like and dislike about the properties in general.”

Housing Association Chief Executive

This survey is sent to all tenants and is concerned with all aspects of the RSL practice. The questionnaire is issued in both English and Bengali and is designed by the management team of the housing association including the board of management. It can be seen therefore that the tenants, or at least their representatives on the board, have had an input throughout the course of the survey. The wider tenant body has the opportunity to reply in the usual manner. A founder member of the RSL, who is also a current member of the board and a tenant of the housing association, recalled during a research interview:

“Every other year we do the survey to find out how the tenants feel about the work that the association does. This survey is changed each time by (the chief executive) and the others here and it is discussed at the board meeting before it is sent out. Members of the board translate it because there are many people here who do not read English well.”

Housing Association Tenant and Founder Board Member

Overall the tenant survey deals with all aspects of the practice of the housing association, new development being just one. The most recent survey prior to the research was completed in 1998 and showed a broad satisfaction with the new properties. There were however some issues which were raised, and these led to alterations to the design brief which are discussed later.

The Focus Groups

Alongside the questionnaire survey, the housing association has also recently started to conduct a series of focus groups in order to reach more tenants. As mentioned earlier, one of the key reasons for the setting up of the focus groups was as an attempt to reach particular groups of tenants who may not take part in the tenant satisfaction survey. In the case of the Islamic

Bangladeshi community of Spitalfields this was considered to be women. The board of management described earlier does not have any female representation from the local community. The reasons for this were described as being cultural by both the chief executive and the tenants:

"We do not really get an equal representation from women and it is them who generally have to deal with the homes; the kitchens for instance are solely the preserve of the women in a Bangladeshi household."

Housing Association Chief Executive

One of the tenants interviewed put forward a reason for the lack of female representation on the board:

"My wife could not come (to a board Meeting) she would not understand and she has the children to be with."

Tenant and board of management member

It is not the remit of this research to understand, or investigate this; it is sufficient to record that the focus groups were set up in order to counter the effects of this lack of representation. The focus groups were set up to target Bangladeshi women in an effort to seek their views and opinions. The focus groups are held irregularly and each one deals with a specific issue. One aspect of RSL practice that has been the subject of a focus group was the design of new houses. This focus group took place in the summer of 1996. At one series of focus group meetings, the tenants from some of the association's new houses were asked to attend and the discussion was centred on the design and suitability of their homes. Issues that were raised included the design of the kitchens, bathrooms and the general house layout. From these focus groups, and from the responses to the survey, there were several additions made to the design brief (source: interview with Chief Executive and RSL design brief). Focus group meetings are not a regularly held but are instead held on a more sporadic basis. They have particularly been organised for the period after the tenant satisfaction survey, so as to provide the opportunity to further investigate issues that become apparent as a result of the questionnaire responses. The chief executive commented:

“The focus groups are a good idea and one that we have been pleased by the results of, they are great for dealing with specific issues and reaching specific audiences. They do however take a lot of time and we just haven’t had that recently. We definitely will look at them again though.”

Housing Association Chief Executive

The focus groups were used to discuss issues raised by the satisfaction survey. The problems highlighted by the questionnaire were described and the tenants asked for their opinions. They can be seen to be a more detailed method of enquiry, opening up the areas initially pointed out by the survey.

The Housing Association Design Brief

Although not in itself a mechanism for tenant involvement, it is important at this juncture to describe the housing association standard design brief, as all new properties are developed to its guidelines. The tenant feedback gained from the surveys and the focus groups as well as the less quantifiable feedback from the board of management feed into the design brief, which is reviewed constantly and re-written every four years; as described by the executive:

“The previous brief was about four years old but had been altered throughout. It is under continual review but about every four years we throw it out and start again.”

Housing Association Chief Executive

The formulation of the brief was essentially carried out by the management team of the housing association, most specifically the chief executive, in consultation with the architects used most frequently by the housing association. There is, however, a process of ratification by the board of management throughout the drafting of the brief. Upon taking over at the association the chief executive instigated a new design brief for new-build properties and he describes this process during a research interview thus:

“We had an away day to talk about some of the basics around the design brief and when we had a weekend away board training we had a morning where we firmed up some of the ideas. Then we went back to the board for approval, after I had put it together, and for final tinkering.”

Housing Association Chief Executive

Overall, this process of writing and review took approximately six months. The design brief is not a full, technical specification but rather a guide to minimum design standards for new-build and rehabilitated housing. The introduction to the brief sets this out:

“The purpose of this document is to set the minimum standards for design of newly built and rehabilitated properties. This document is intended as a guide for our partner housing associations to set out our requirement when developing together. The guide concentrates on culturally sensitive design and minimising future maintenance requirements. It is not intended to be a comprehensive guide to contractors. The association expects its development partners to involve (the RSL) at the earliest stage of the design process.”

Housing Association Design Brief August 1999

The introduction refers to the partnership approach to development adopted by the association, as described earlier. The brief sets out to describe the building components, from substructure to the perimeter fences and walls. This section of the design brief is fairly typical and outlines the general building specification. Following these descriptions of the minimum standards for each building component, the Design Brief sets out some ‘*additional design considerations*’. The tenant involvement can be seen to have had a direct impact on a number of these additional considerations. There are seven such sections in the brief these are:

*General House Layout
Kitchens
Bathrooms and WC
Electrical Installations
Circulation and Storage Space
Laundry and Washing Facilities
Ventilation*

Housing Association Design Brief August 1999

Of these seven additional design considerations, the input of tenant involvement can be seen most directly in the guidelines relating to the general house layout, the kitchen, the bathroom and the laundry and washing facilities. Firstly, the design of the kitchens in the new houses was mentioned by a number of the tenants on their satisfaction questionnaire returns. The size of

the Bangladeshi families, with often in excess of ten people in the same household, along with the cultural importance of the family meal, means that large kitchens are required. The chief executive pointed to this during a research interview:

“We request large kitchens as many of our tenants have large families and prepare meals for everyone each day. Often all of the women in the house help and space is needed for this.”

Housing Association Chief Executive

Alongside this consideration there is a request to use only factory-mitred joints on all work surfaces. This stems from an increase in maintenance resulting from water seepage through the joints in work surfaces. Some tenants on their questionnaire return raised this issue. The bathroom design was another area which tenant involvement resulted in changes being made to the design brief. There was a clear request to provide separate bathroom and WC facilities on the larger properties, in order to cater more suitably for the larger families. There is also a stipulation to provide entrance level WCs in the four-bedroom houses where possible. Again there are a number of design issues referred to in the brief that are a result of maintenance considerations. The provision of draining floors is perhaps the biggest of these. Damage caused by damp in the bathrooms had been responsible for a number of complaints and subsequent repairs and this resulted in the specification of draining floors in each new property. This decision can be seen to have been the result of tenant involvement as well as the desire to reduce long term repair costs (source: tenant satisfaction questionnaire returns).

The final area in which tenant involvement has had a direct effect on the design brief is in the provision of separate laundry and washing facilities. The problems of doing the laundry for a large family were noted on many of the questionnaire returns, and the provision of a separate laundry area is now a requirement for the larger dwellings. This design decision in particular was made as a direct result of the tenant input. The chief executive described it:

“I suppose that providing a laundry, a separate laundry for the larger family houses – the three and four-bedroom ones - was the key thing that came back from the last survey. The tenants all wanted to have a separate utility room even when that was at the expense of a small bedroom. We have tried to provide these ever since and they have gone down very well. We really hadn’t considered that as being something that people would want, but that is what the survey is for.”

Housing Association Chief Executive

So it can be seen that the views of the tenants have found expression in the RSL design brief. Both the survey and the focus groups have helped to uncover these opinions. The surveys have usually highlighted a problem and the focus groups have isolated more precisely the issues and put forward suggestions. The approach to tenant involvement is based around the satisfaction survey, supplemented by the occasional focus groups held to discuss specific issues. These two mechanisms are themselves to be seen in the context of the strong community connection of RSL, as discussed earlier.

6.4.4 The Development

The development looked at in detail is mixed, consisting of houses, flats, and commercial retail units and it represents the biggest single development carried out by the RSL since its formation in 1979. This section will start with a brief description of the procurement of the site and follows with the story of the development noting when, and how, tenant involvement affected the design process. The development is not part of any larger scheme by the RSL and it is not a phase of any wider estate regeneration.

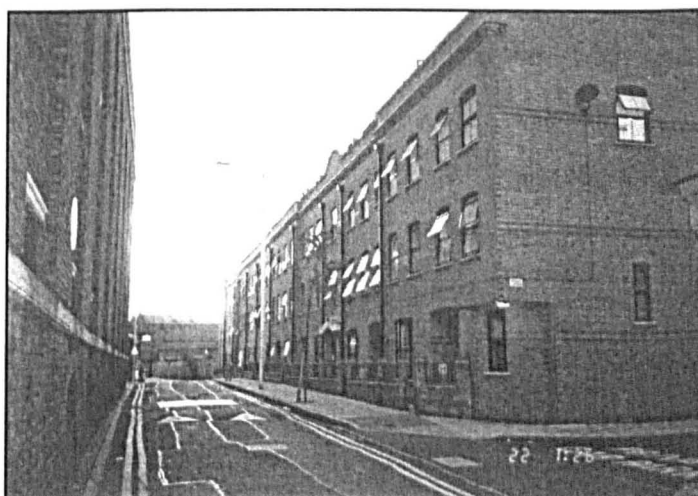


Figure 6.9: The Housing Development In London



Figure 6.10: The Rear Of The Flat Development In London

Unusually for this sort of development the local authority did not approach the housing association, instead these roles were reversed. As mentioned earlier the development lies in an inner London borough where land is at a premium. As the chief executive explained during interview:

“We (the association) spotted the site and saw the potential, we are looking to build more large family houses and the site offered a great opportunity. We approached the local authority, actually before I arrived here, and entered into a dialogue with a view to procuring it.”

Housing Association Chief Executive

The strongly stated desire of the association to provide large family houses to relieve the overcrowding in the Bangladeshi community means that they actively seek to develop any suitable site. The location of the site developed here meant that it was high on the priority list, despite it being larger than anything developed by the landlord before. The chief executive continued:

“It was about five years ago that we started to negotiate with the council to acquire the site and in the end we did so for one pound, to cut a long story short. We then went into partnership with (another RSL) as it was just too big for us to manage. We couldn’t get the finance. So ourselves and (the other RSL) got the bid through.”

Housing Association Chief Executive

So it can be seen that the housing association entered into a partnership agreement with another, considerably larger, RSL in order to develop the site.

This deal involved the smaller association utilising the development team and the experience of the larger partner, with the properties all reverting to the ownership of the smaller association upon completion. The details of this arrangement were not forthcoming during the research interviews and are not necessary to investigate in detail at this juncture. The smaller association, however, retained full control of what was developed; the arrangement undertaken was arranged solely for financial reasons. The chief executive continued to explain:

“There were times that we felt that we had bitten off more than we could chew, it was a bit tight. We couldn’t raise enough housing corporation money to do what we wanted so we tapped into some English Partnerships money towards the office and commercial units, we also brought in some Bethnal Green City Challenge money.”

Housing Association Chief Executive

The partnership arrangement resulted in the transfer of five of the houses to the larger association in lieu of payment; however this was not intended at the outset. The housing association chief executive explained during interview:

“(the other RSL) were brought in to help finance the scheme, it was far too big for us to contemplate. All of the properties were to have transferred to us since that date. We often do that; we use the larger associations to do the development for us. It ended up as a consortia as they did end up with 5 houses in lieu of payment of development amounts! To help keep the costs down at this end, we had to come to a deal with some of the properties. We may get them back in the future.”

Housing Association Chief Executive

However, the architects closely connected to the association were used and the development is built to the design standards of the smaller association looked at here. The development comprises of twelve one-bedroom flats, twelve two-bedroom flats, and twelve houses from three to five beds, including some disabled provision. There is also an office block, which the housing association uses, and four commercial shop units at street level. The flats were completed by the end of 1997 and the offices and the housing were finished the following summer. The properties had been let for approximately one year at the time of the research.

Selection of House Types

The RSL was established to provide large family houses for the Bangladeshi community. However, the rent returns from such enterprise are insufficient alone, and in an area that can attract high commercial rents this option was taken. A founder member of the association, who is a member of the board of management, recalled during a research interview:

“We want to provide large houses but we have to build some flats as well because it is not viable to just provide houses. The planners also want to have mixed development round here with offices and shops.”

RSL Tenant and Founder Board Member

During the negotiations to procure the site, the housing association entered a protracted dialogue with the planning department at Tower Hamlets Council. There was an initial conflict over the type of development proposed. The planners required mixed development, including commercial units and office development. As mentioned earlier the area surrounding Brick Lane is characterised by the commercial activity and the planning department sought to maintain this. The housing association chief executive recalled during interview:

“We hadn’t really considered developing commercial units and offices, but the planners wanted that to be part of the scheme. We had really out grown our old offices so we decided to build new offices for the association as part of the scheme, and that is where we are!”

Housing Association Chief Executive

The planner from the London Borough of Tower Hamlets further explained the situation during a research interview:

“There was a problem as regards the site off Brick Lane. The housing association basically did not want to develop commercial units on that site at all. We eventually managed to reach an acceptable position, I think that they moved into the office development.”

Planning Officer, Tower Hamlets

The Planning Officer was not forthcoming about the specific reasons behind the desire to retain mixed development on the site, but this raises an interesting point about the consultative element of the planning process.

Community views would have been sought as a statutory part of the plan development and also as part of the neighbourhood notification about the then-proposed development. It can be seen that the community at least had the opportunity to affect the stance taken by the planning department.

The Design Of The Development

The housing association approached the architects and requested a sketch proposal for the site at the outset of the process, when they first considered developing the site. This feasibility study was to investigate the possible solutions for the site. The negotiations with the planners and the considerations about funding altered the initial requirements, and only when the type and number of properties was established did the design process enter the next stage (source: interview with housing association chief executive). At this point the architects were asked to produce design proposals incorporating the mixed development elements agreed upon by the housing association and the planners. The architects produced sketch proposals incorporating houses, flats, shops and offices, and these were given to the RSL. As the chief executive recalled:

“We asked them (the architects) to go and show us how they could put all of the elements on the site. They did and brought along the drawings for a meeting with me initially and then with the full board of management.”

Housing Association Chief Executive

The design can be seen to be in the hands of the architects initially, with the board of management being consulted throughout the process and the points raised at this forum feeding back into the process. The architect clarified this:

“We were given the specification, how many houses and flats etc, and the number of shops and offices, and we prepared a sketch proposal which we took to the board. They then came back to us asking for some changes. As I recall there were no major alterations to the outline plan. However they did want us to put laundry rooms on the houses and that meant that we had to get rid of the small bedrooms.”

Project Architect

The architects developed the proposal, paying attention to the request of the

board, who in effect acted as the client. In the absence of the full board the chief executive, who as described earlier has a very hands-on approach, dealt with the design along with the development officer from the partner RSL. The board, however had the final say and major decisions were passed at the monthly meeting. When asked about the design the chief executive stated:

"It is predominantly left up to the architect, he leads the programme. We are small and we don't have a dedicated development department we have to sort of farm out most of those services."

Housing Association Chief Executive

The chief executive was then asked if this meant a more traditional role for the architect, with them taking a more managerial role; he stated

"Yes completely a traditional role for the architects, managing, co-ordinating and dealing with the external contractors and everything. It is the same process as if you got an architect to your house for an extension. It may be a much bigger project but they take it all through the stages. This is different from the larger associations who take a lot of this in-house and have separate departments in their association to deal with these things. We are not large enough."

Housing Association Chief Executive

This situation, with the architects playing a larger role in the development programme than would be the case with a larger housing association, means that the selection of the architectural practice is of greater importance. As discussed earlier, the RSL use a locally based black-led practice who have a great deal of experience in the area, and who also have an understanding of the specific needs of the client group. The association feels confident in the architect's ability to design housing that is suitably designed. This view was put forward by both the chief executive and one of the board members during their research interviews:

"We know the practice and we have complete trust in them to produce suitable housing. They are from the community and they know the needs of the Bangladeshi families here."

Housing Association Chief Executive

A tenant, who is also a member of the board of management, repeated this point:

“The Board has respect for the architects, we know them and they always do good work for us. It is all to do with having architects who are from our community and understand what we need.”

Tenant and board of management member

This reliance on the local knowledge and experience of the architects would imply that tenant involvement in the design process is essentially via a process of continual feedback. The tenant involvement during the design and development period was limited to the influence of the representation of the five tenants on the board of management. There were no tenant meetings organised to discuss the development in question, nor have there been for subsequent developments. Instead the housing association relies on the feedback process of the tenant survey and the single-issue focus groups to alter the design brief, and also on the heavy representation of tenants on the board of management.

Another point that mitigates against tenant involvement during the design process is the nature of the development programme undertaken by the association. As mentioned earlier, the association usually develop at the request of the local authority and they procure sites at a nominal charge. This situation comes with the added restriction of being tied to an almost 100% nominations agreement. That is to say that the local authority retain the right to nominate the tenants from their waiting list, as the chief executive pointed out:

“Unfortunately it was one of the sites sold by the LA for just one pound. This has its benefits in terms of finances but we don’t get the call on the tenants. First let is 100% nominations. We were able to come to some reciprocal arrangements and we were able to transfer a couple of our tenants into the properties but it meant that we then gave the LA nominations on other of our properties elsewhere. We were basically operating at 100% nominations – that is what you get when a largish site near central London is sold to you for a quid!”

Housing Association Chief Executive

This situation, where the local authority nominate the tenants for the new properties, means that the tenants were not known before the dwellings were completed. There was one exception to this however. The nominations for

the flats adapted for disabled residents were given to the housing association earlier in the process. The chief executive explained this during the interview:

"We did know who the wheelchair tenants were about 9 months before completion, the borough put forward the tenants so that we could make the properties for these tenants more appropriate to their disabilities – this was in terms of the fittings basically.

Housing Association Chief Executive

So aside from the disabled provision the tenants were not involved directly in the design of the development looked at here.

"The designs were made with the experience and understanding of our architects and the scope of our design brief. We could not involve the tenants directly at all. The Board, which as I mentioned earlier has a strong tenant and community body on it, gets the plans and the opportunity to contribute to the design is there."

Housing Association Chief Executive

Tenant involvement, via the satisfaction questionnaire and the focus groups, can however, be seen to have had an impact on the dwellings. The laundry rooms as discussed earlier, were provided for the first time on the larger houses and all of the properties had draining floors in the bathrooms.

"We put in laundry rooms in all of the big four-bedroom houses. That had fed back to us through our consultations. With the big families that may live in these houses it was felt to be essential. We made the properties bigger but effectively sacrificed a bedroom to a laundry room. The tenants wanted this but it did have some rent implications for us. We do listen - even when it costs us money!"

Housing Association Chief Executive

The housing association, being small and very much part of the community, do not actively seek tenant involvement in the development of specific schemes. Instead they use the joint approach of the tenant satisfaction survey and focus groups, coupled with the high degree of tenant influence in the association, to formulate the housing association design brief in such a way that it responds to the needs of the community.

6.4.5 Overview

It has been demonstrated that the tenant involvement in the London case

study was essentially carried out prior to the outset of the development investigated here. The prime input would appear to have been via the tenant satisfaction survey and the subsequent focus groups feeding into the design brief. However, if the involvement of the tenants on the board of management is taken into account, then the situation appears to be different. The feature of this case study is the general organisation and style of the association, specifically the degree of tenant representation on the Board and its proactive role within the housing association.

The tenants who have moved into the new houses were not identified until the development was either near to completion, or already completed, as a result of the 100% local authority nomination agreement. This, coupled with the partnership arrangement entered into to complete the development and the protracted negotiations with the borough planning department, led to the housing association opting against involving tenants in the specific scheme. The small size of the housing association and the small number of staff employed, along with the small development programme, also meant that the structures for intensive tenant involvement were not in place. The association has neither a tenant involvement nor a development department, however it is extremely well-connected to the community.

The housing association has considerable tenant and wider community representation on the board, and at all stages of the development process the board discussed the progress and suggested changes. Excluding the role of the board of management, however, the main vehicles for tenant involvement were the tenant satisfaction survey and the subsequent issue-based focus groups. The results of these modes of enquiry fed directly to the regularly amended design brief. Issues such as the provision of a laundry room were initially raised in a tenants' questionnaire response and later discussed in a focus group, before they were adopted by the association and added to the design brief. The input of the tenants can be seen to have been effective in this instance.

7. Comparative and Theoretical Analysis

This chapter sets out to provide an analysis of the four case studies, conducted in the West Midlands, South Yorkshire, the North-east and London, and in doing so address the research objectives set out in chapter four. To this end, there is also reference to the findings of the postal survey. The structure for this analysis follows the themes discussed in the case study descriptions in the previous chapter, comparing and contrasting the differences between the four developments and analysing these differences with reference to the relevant appropriate theory. However, before the analysis, it is useful to briefly restate the key themes of the research, the ideas that emerged prior to the outset of the study and were honed during the preparation of the literature review. It is these ideas that informed the development of the research questions and that, with the help of the existing theory, will be addressed here.

Housing associations are making an effort to involve tenants in the design of their properties in a variety of ways. This is supported by both the empirical work carried out during the research and by the existing literature. It is put forward that this is as a result of two main factors. Firstly, tenant involvement in all aspects of social housing (including the design of new homes) is considered a '*good thing*'. This is clear, both from the literature (Duncan and Halsall 1994, Fraser 1991, Gibson 1986, IoH and RIBA 1988, NFHA 1990 and 1991 etc.) and the questionnaire findings, specifically from the last two open-questions of the survey (see chapter 5.5.1 and 5.5.2). In addition to this there is strong evidence that RSLs are encouraged to involve tenants by the Housing Corporation and the respective local authority. However, despite these two factors encouraging RSLs to involve communities in design decisions it has been demonstrated that there is little evidence to support the claim that this involvement actually affects the built-outcome. In addition, if it does have an effect on the dwellings produced, how and at what stage in the design process is this most effective: this is the aim of the evaluation and analysis that follows.

In order to address these questions, the first section compares the areas in which the developments took place and the RSLs responsible for the new houses, these can be viewed as the contextual factors. The second section contrasts the different approaches to tenant involvement employed by the four RSLs. These two sections are generally descriptive in nature and are dealt with only briefly. It is during the third section that the differences in the progress and outcomes of the specific development processes are analysed; this forms the main part of the analysis. During this section the differences highlighted in the first two sections are again discussed with regard to how they have affected the developments. It is here that the existing theory is drawn upon in an effort to explain the differences and ultimately establish whether the involvement was successful in changing the design of the houses. Three main sources are utilised (IoH and RIBA 1988, Wulz 1990 and Woolley 1985) each selected for the different approaches that they adopt.

7.1 The Context Of The Developments

This section is concerned with the context within which each of the four developments was built, both physical and organisational. It is argued in this thesis that the location of the housing and the size and profile of the housing association are determinant factors in the style of participation programme adopted, and that this will also affect the success of the community involvement. There follows a brief comparison of the four RSLs responsible for the case study housing developments. This is followed by an equally brief analysis of the four areas in which they were built.

The Housing Associations

The four housing associations all develop new general family housing for social renting. Despite this there are some important differences and the RSLs were selected in part because of these. The size of the four landlords varies considerably and there is also a great difference in their local profile; the largest operates nationally, whilst the smallest only within one London borough. Two of the four have in-house architectural departments and two of the developments were located within existing local authority estates. These differences were the variables used in the selection of suitable organisations for case study and are best summarised in chapter 4: Figure, Table 4.1. Aside from these selection criteria there are also some other key differences that became apparent during the investigation of the case studies and these are discussed below.

The Development Programmes And Policies

The development programmes and policies of the RSLs vary considerably but there are some key similarities. The housing association in the North-east has a development programme in excess of 500 new-build units per year. This contrasts with programmes of approximately 100 per annum for the South Yorkshire association and a similar amount for the Midlands based landlord. The London association develops only sporadically, averaging about 20 new

properties each year. Despite these large differences in the size of development programme, all of the RSLs develop predominantly at the request of local authorities. The largest landlord is the only organisation of sufficient size to develop on a large-scale without this being instigated by the local authority. Despite this, the vast majority of their developments are, however, in close association with the respective council. The two medium-sized RSLs conduct most of their developments with the local authorities in their regions, working largely on council estates. By contrast the small landlord is more of a specialist housing provider, building houses as it does for the typically large families of the local Bengali community. This organisation appears to operate in more of an ideological manner, with a driving commitment to relieve the chronic overcrowding present amongst their primary client group. The size of the association however means that they often have to operate in consortia with other larger associations in order to be able to complete the developments, both in terms of finance and development expertise. The expansion of this RSL is typically by obtaining property or development sites from the local authority for nominal fees, with reciprocal arrangements often including 100% nominations agreements.

Use Of Standard House Types And Design Briefs

Of the four RSLs looked at as part of this research, two typically use standardised house plans when building new homes. This is in-line with the survey results which show that approximately one third of housing associations usually use the standardised plans and a similar proportion use them rarely (see chapter 5). The two RSLs that always use standardised house plans are the RSLs operating in the North-east and in South Yorkshire. Interestingly, both of these organisations have in-house architecture teams that are responsible for the design and revision of the standard plans. The remaining two RSLs do not use standard house plans and give broadly the same reasons for this. They both claim that their development sites are not standard and they each require a different housing solution. By contrast, the housing associations that use the standardised plans claim that they are

carefully developed taking into account tenant feedback and are constantly under revision. The adherents of these plans state that they help to maintain quality and speed-up the development process, whilst those opposed claim they stifle innovation.

All of the housing associations investigated use a standard specification design brief that details their new development standards. The survey reveals that a majority (86%) of RSLs use a document of this type. The briefs are under constant review and each association stated that the information from the tenant surveys fed back into this document. The four standard specification design briefs were similar in style, detailing minimum size standards, along with a number of materials and features that must be included in each new design. The RSLs using the standardised house plans can be seen to have gone one stage further by incorporating these standards into the specification of the standardised plans.

Appointment Of Architects

As mentioned earlier, two of the four developing housing associations have in-house architectural departments. The in-house teams are of a similar size with the North-east associations numbering eleven people and the South Yorkshire association's ten. This similarity in size of the architecture teams is despite the great difference in the size of the two organisations. This is accounted for by the fact that whereas the South Yorkshire association uses their in-house team for almost all of their development work, including renovation work, the North-east RSL only uses their in-house team on a relatively small proportion of their developments. Misleadingly in the case of the developments selected here, it is the larger association that uses their in-house team and the medium-sized Yorkshire association who, for the reasons explained earlier, engaged an external architectural practice.

The remaining two RSLs do not have in-house architecture teams. The survey shows this to be by far the more typical scenario as only around 11% of the surveyed landlords have in-house architects. Both of the RSLs without

internal teams use architects off an approved list for all of their developments. The London association uses one local architect predominantly, with another used for a smaller proportion of their schemes. The Midlands housing association select their architect from larger list of suitable practices and this is reviewed regularly. Despite both of these RSLs lack of in-house teams of architects they have built stable long-term relationships with their selected practices. The smallest association understandably claims that their limited development programme could not justify the appointment of an architect on a full-time basis. The considerably larger Midlands-based association, however, claim that by using an external practice they benefit from the broader experience they have gained. The large North-east association strengthened this notion as the development officer criticised the role of their in-house architecture team, claiming that they had a better relationship with outside practices. By contrast, the Yorkshire-based association only use outside architects when it is a condition of the development; they would much rather use their in-house team. They claim that the in-house team's familiarity with the working practices of the association makes the development programme run more smoothly and that there is a blurring of roles that benefits the development process.

The use of in-house architectural teams is an avenue open only to RSLs with a development programme large enough to justify the appointment of a specialist team. When the development programme is sufficiently large, as with the two, similarly sized, 'medium' associations investigated here, the decision whether to go down the in-house route is a matter of conjecture. Each of these landlords put forward a convincing case for the adoption of their approach. Interestingly the large association, with a development programme of a size sufficient to employ more architects, seems to be steering clear of this route. The expansion of the RSL in recent years has not led to an expansion of the architecture team and more work is therefore going to outside practices.

The Development Sites

The four areas where the case study developments are located vary considerably and yet still have some common features. All four areas are relatively poor and have problems connected with substandard housing - hence the involvement of the housing associations. The developments in both Birmingham and Sheffield are located within local authority estates and are phases of a larger housing replacement programme. There are close similarities in the origin of these two developments as the respective local authorities instigated both and remained involved throughout. In each of the cases the small pockets of housing association development replaced the poorest local authority housing and are surrounded by the remainder of the local authority stock. The areas containing the remaining case study developments are very different however. The Sunderland development is a phase of a large RSL development in a poor and deprived area of the city. By contrast, the London housing, though located in a poor inner London borough, lies in a commercial area experiencing rapid gentrification. Whereas the land values in the North-east example would be low, the London site would be extremely attractive and expensive.

In each of the four housing developments the RSLs became involved in different ways. In the case of the North-east development the association had owned the land for about seventy years and the development was, as mentioned before, part of a phased replacement of their own flats. With the London development, the RSL approached the local authority about a piece of undeveloped land and was therefore self-selecting. The situation is somewhat different in the other two cases however. In both the West Midlands and South Yorkshire examples the housing associations were approached by the respective local authorities and asked if they should like to develop on their estates. In each of the cases the council decided to work with two different RSLs and divided up the in-fill development sites between them.

7.2 The Tenant Involvement Mechanisms

Each of the four housing associations displayed a commitment to involving tenants across the range of their activity. The survey reveals that this is typical of the sector. The exact manner of this commitment however varied, with the four organisations looked at adopting different styles of community involvement. The following section compares these different styles of tenant involvement and seeks to explain the reasons behind their adoption. For the purposes of the analysis, two distinct types of involvement have been devised: these are termed *generic* and *specific* and were inspired by a combination of the RIBA Plan of Work (Thompson 1999) and IoH and RIBA (1988). These are explained below:

Generic Involvement

This includes things such as tenant feedback. Here information gained from tenants is used to tailor the policies and practice of the RSL. For example, the information gained from a questionnaire survey may result in a change of policy or practice. Other examples include the organisation of issue-based focus groups or the general support of tenants' associations. These generic forms of tenant involvement are apparent in the design of new-build housing as they help to formulate the design briefs and where used they are influential in the design of the standardised house plans. Generic involvement takes place before stages A of the RIBA Plan of Work, prior to inception, indeed before the engagement of the architects or even the selection of the development site. Generic involvement serves to inform all design undertaken by the RSL and is not aimed at individual schemes.

Specific Involvement

This is where tenants participate in relation to particular issues that affect them in their locality and not the overall policy of the RSL. An example of this type of involvement is the setting up of a working group to monitor a particular development. There is a good possibility that the issues that arise during the

course of such a programme may well feed back and alter general housing association policy, but this is not a prerequisite. The aim of the involvement is primarily to address the issues apparent in a particular area. The summary table produced in IoH and RIBA (1988, p.44 and reproduced in chapter 3) addresses mainly specific involvement and was valuable in designing both the survey and the case studies.

It can be seen that the involvement approaches adopted by the four landlords consist, to differing extents, of both of these styles – the generic and the specific - and the implications of this are discussed later. There follows a discussion about the general tenant involvement strategies of the four RSLs. Initially the strategy is briefly described and then each method of involving tenants is discussed with reference to the individual approaches adopted. They are compared and contrasted and reasons for the adoption of the selected approach are suggested, with reference to the existing theory where appropriate..

General Tenant Involvement Strategies

The large North-eastern RSL, supports a well-established network of tenants' associations and these form the basic structure of their tenant involvement strategy. The size of the association means that they have a large specialist tenant participation department spread across their many area offices, and they use a number of different methods of tenant involvement. This would appear to be as a result of the size and geographical spread of the RSL. The two medium-sized associations, once again in a similar manner, have recently established departments with the aim of co-ordinating tenant involvement across the associations. In the West Midlands this is called the *Communities First Unit* and in South Yorkshire it is named the *Community Initiatives Training Unit*. The parallels between these are again strong. The London-based RSL does not have a specific tenant involvement department They were however established only in 1979 by current tenants, who still have a major influence as part of the very strong tenant representation on their board of management.

The research reveals that there is a direct link between the size of the housing association and the size of their tenant involvement departments. The questionnaire survey data supports this assertion by showing that smaller RSLs use fewer involvement techniques and are less likely to support a tenants' association. This is not just because of the increased numbers of tenants managed by the larger organisations, but it is put forward that it is also due to the increased *distance* from the communities in which they operate. This is discussed in more detail later, in relation to the specific housing development. At this point it is necessary to look at the different methods of encouraging tenant participation adopted by the four case study associations.

Tenants' Associations - The four RSLs investigated do have some similar policies in the area of participation. They each support tenants' associations by providing meeting spaces (or paying for the rental of local community spaces) and contributing towards the cost of photocopying leaflets and posters advertising events. This is unsurprising, as the questionnaire survey reveals that 78% of RSLs actively support such groups. The survey also reveals that although smaller landlords are less likely to support such organisations, a significant proportion of these (39%) still do; the small London-based association falls into this category. The largest RSL investigated, also supports a number of regional tenant days, set up to help deal with the considerable distances between RSLs housing stock. In the West Midlands example the housing association does not have enough properties in the area of the development looked at here to have a tenure specific tenants association. They do however support the estate residents associations that include local authority tenants and owner-occupiers. A similar situation occurred during the course of the development on the estates in Sheffield. However, in South Yorkshire all housing association tenants are invited to regular *Tenants Consultative Committees*, where they discussed specific issues. In all of the four case study housing associations there was a concerted effort to support tenants and residents associations and these can be seen to be prime channels for community participation.

User Feedback Surveys - Another technique of tenant participation adopted by all of the housing associations was the user feedback survey. According to the questionnaire response, such surveys are employed by some 93 % of RSLs. The manner in which they are used appears similar across the four landlords, with a regular survey about all aspects of practice. Questionnaires are viewed as an easy way to reach a high number of tenants, gaining a great deal of quantifiable information quickly and relatively inexpensively when compared to individual interviews. The association operating in the West Midlands also administers satisfaction survey specifically to tenants of new houses. The information gained from this survey feeds directly into the design brief.

Focus Groups - Two RSLs (London and the West Midlands) organise a series of issue-based focus groups. These are held at a venue supplied by the association and a representative group of tenants are invited. Each focus group has a theme, such as the design of kitchens or housing maintenance procedures. As mentioned earlier, the large North-eastern RSL has instigated a series of regional tenant days and these, like the focus groups, address specific issues. However, the focus groups and the regional tenant days do not deal with specific locations. They would therefore be categorised as generic forms of involvement as they add to the overall policy and practice of the association.

Development Specific Involvement

The tenants' associations, questionnaire surveys and focus groups, instrumental as they are in terms of general participation, are in the case of the majority of the RSLs looked at here, not the only methods of participation used. Three of the landlords also adopt more specific types of tenant involvement, relating directly to particular new-build housing developments. Before these are described it is first necessary to explain the reasons why the fourth RSL did not adopt such a strategy

The small London-based RSL did not adopt a specific involvement policy for the housing development in question for a number of reasons. Firstly, the procurement of the site from the local authority, eventually for just one pound,

was tied directly to a 100% nominations policy. The result of this was that the RSL did not know the prospective tenants until the development was almost complete and all of the major design decisions had been made. Secondly, unlike the other developments looked at here that were phases of a larger redevelopment programme, the Spitalfields development was essentially a one-off scheme. There were no existing tenant participation structures for it to fit into. Thirdly, the London-based housing association is very small and enmeshed in the community. The office provision that formed part of the development was indeed taken over by the RSL, and the board of management has a very vociferous tenant representation. It was felt that the association, being a part of the community, knew what that community wanted. Finally, the small nature of the association and the limited staff roster meant that there were simply not enough people to organise such a process.

The remaining RSLs either set up procedures for tenant involvement, or became involved in existing frameworks; these are described below. As mentioned previously, the Sunderland development was a single phase of an whole-estate renewal programme. At the outset the RSL employed a community development worker who was based in a converted a flat, this acted a temporary estate base. The association used the existing tenants' associations that they had been supporting for many years, along with a series of public meetings, to both inform and involve the tenants from the outset. The reasons for the adoption of such an approach are many. Firstly, and most importantly, unlike the other developments investigated here the Sunderland housing was developed on a site already owned by the RSL and was intended to re-house a known existing community. The RSL knew from the start the individual tenants that would be moving into each dwelling. This, along with the murder that acted as a catalyst for the redevelopment of the estate, led to the decision to take a proactive stance in involving the community. Another subsidiary reason was the strength of the existing community and the desire of the RSL to maintain this. Finally, the size and resources of the landlord, along with the overall size of the commitment to the estate, meant that they could

afford to invest in a time-consuming and expensive tenant involvement strategy. The emphasis placed on specific involvement in the North-east was high.

The remaining developments (South Yorkshire and the West Midlands) display similarities. Each of the schemes was a single phase of redevelopment on a local authority estate. In each of the examples the framework for tenant involvement had already been established. The RSL became involved in these groups and attended the regular meetings – predominantly of the Estate Development Group in Birmingham and the Redevelopment Working Party in Sheffield. These meetings in both cases acted as the major conduit for community involvement. In the case of the two medium-sized associations it is the similarity of the developments, the existing conditions and the size/structure of the RSLs that led to the adoption of the similar approaches to tenant involvement. Likewise it is the different situations proffered by the other case studies in London and the North-east that led to their adoption of markedly different strategies. What is interesting, and will be addressed in the following section, is the effect of these different strategies on the involvement and the housing developed.

7.3 The Housing Developments

What this section addresses is the development of the four housing schemes, the differences in the approaches to community involvement, and the opportunities offered to the tenants to influence the design. This is followed by an analysis of what specific design changes can be seen to have resulted from this. This in turn is followed by a series of suggestions as to why this may have occurred. Throughout the following sections, the existing theory is reflected upon in an effort to explain the research findings.

7.3.1 Opportunities For Tenant–Led Design Changes

In each of the developments there were a series of opportunities for the community to make decisions relating to the design. At this point it is necessary to once again distinguish between the gentle ‘*drip-drip*’ of community feedback into the standard specification design briefs, from such organs as tenant satisfaction surveys, and the direct design decisions made during the course of a specific scheme. The existing literature does not generally differentiate between the generic and specific involvement types as this research sets out to do. However, separating the involvement stages informs the process in a number of ways. The distinction is useful in the analysis of the processes of participation and the built-effect of the involvement, and as a result the opportunities offered by the *generic* and the *specific* are discussed in turn.

Generic Involvement

In each of the case studies, it has been shown that the housing design was fundamentally affected by the respective RSL’s design brief; as this is the primary function of the brief this is to be expected. In all cases these were developed taking into account feedback from tenant groups. In some cases there are specific issues that can be seen to have been raised by tenants, adopted by the RSL and added to the design brief, and then finally built into the new houses. The RSLs all claim that they feed information from their

satisfaction surveys into the design brief, but there was no way to irrefutably confirm this via the documentary evidence. That is not to say that tenant feedback was not used, it was claimed to have been by different people in confidential interviews and there is no reason to disbelieve this. It only means that the documentary chain could not support this further. It can therefore only be suspected which particular amendments to the design briefs were made as a direct result of tenant input, in most cases.

Aside from direct tenant feedback, from tenant satisfaction surveys and focus groups, there were also more informal feedback networks in operation. These networks were apparent in all of the case study developments to differing extents. In the North-east the employment of the community development worker, and the key decision made to accommodate her office within the estate, created an environment that was conducive to tenant involvement and informal feedback. The officer built up relationships in the community, learning of the concerns of the tenants and these were reported to the development team at regular meetings. In a similar way the housing officer was a local man and this too was useful in breaking down barriers.

The tenant involvement in the Birmingham development was carried out in a more structured way, with the Estate Development Group and the various tenants' and residents' associations being the main conduit. This would appear to place the responsibility for representing the community's views on the shoulders of those residents that were actively involved. Although it was only possible to interview those residents that were actively involved, for obvious reasons, it was made clear that these representatives did canvas opinion from the wider community. The development was discussed whilst in the supermarket or whilst walking the children to school, and the points raised were brought up at the relevant meeting. The case study carried out in South Yorkshire revealed a similar situation, with the key members of the community representing the views of the whole. The issue of the *representativeness* of the representatives arises, and although this is beyond the remit of this research it would be an interesting area for future study.

It has been shown that the informal tenant feedback networks in the London case study were the only channel of tenant involvement, aside from the aforementioned survey and focus groups. There were no public meetings during the course of the development. After the tenant input into the design brief there were no more formal avenues of involvement. The strong tenant and wider community representation on the board of management provided the only opportunity for further involvement, with the board acting as the conduit to the community. This appears to be as a result of the small size of the RSL and the close connections that it has to the community in which it operates.

Specific Involvement

There is also an opportunity to involve tenants at the point of the decision to go ahead with a specific development, prior to the design beginning, prior even to the appointment of architects. At this point, key decisions are made about the type of development to be built and the defining features of this. These are decisions that are specific to the developments but they do not necessarily require the involvement of the prospective tenants, typically the wider community is involved at this juncture. The existing literature and the questionnaire data shows that it is unlikely that RSLs will be able to identify the future tenants at this stage and with the exception of the North-east development the case studies concur with this.

The final opportunity for tenant-led design decisions is shown to occur at, or near to, the end of the development process, when the houses had been built and were being internally fitted and decorated. This option was only available to those tenants who had been selected for the new properties at or prior to this point. As mentioned earlier, the allocation policies of many RSLs are tied to nominations agreements that prevent early identification of tenants for specific new dwellings. This situation was apparent to differing extents in three of the case study developments. In London there was a 100% nominations agreement in place, so no tenants were identified until just prior to completion. The allocations agreements in Sheffield and Birmingham were

not quite as restrictive, but in both cases tenants were not identified early enough to become involved in design.

The circumstances present in North-east development, where all of the tenants were identified prior to their future homes being built, were different to the other investigations. This led to a situation where they had the opportunity to involve tenants throughout the development programme. The survey reveals that this situation is not commonplace as a result of the widespread adoption of local authority nominations agreements. The allocations procedure to be used by the developing RSL is of paramount importance in the involvement of tenants in housing design. If the landlord is tied to a local authority nominations agreement then they concede the right to select the tenants from their own list. This typically results in the association receiving late notification of who is nominated, often when the building is almost completed, and therefore with no opportunity for the specific tenants to contribute. With the research examples this was the case with three of the case study developments. If this situation could be rectified, either by a reduction in local authority nominations, or by earlier notification of prospective tenants then a further avenue for closer tenant involvement could be opened up. The next section addresses the actual evidence of tenant involvement affecting the building design.

7.3.2 The Built Effects Of Community Involvement

It is at this point that the influence of the community involvement on the completed dwellings is assessed. This is achieved by categorising the changes made during the course of the design process. The categories devised for this purpose are those described in the previous section. Using this construct, design changes are separated into those carried out as a result of tenant involvement in the development of the design brief (via *generic* involvement) and those directed at the particular scheme investigated, by the actual community (via a *specific* involvement).

Changes Made Via Generic Involvement

The design changes made as a result of tenant involvement in the formulation of the RSL design brief are difficult to assess. The major problem is in the isolation of the elements of the design brief and the subsequent tracing of the origin of each constituent; this is discussed in the previous section. During the research one clear example of how generic involvement affected the design of the housing, emerged. In London, tenants raised the issue of providing a separate laundry/utility room in the larger houses, to cater for the large families that the houses were designed for. This issue was initially raised via the tenant satisfaction survey, and then discussed at a subsequent focus group arranged by the RSL. It was agreed to amend the design brief to incorporate the requirement of a separate laundry/utility room wherever possible in new houses. The case study development shows the result of this tenant action, with the larger four-bedroom family houses incorporating this additional room.

With the exception of the London example described above, it cannot be categorically stated that specific items in the design brief were added as a result of tenant feedback. It is however possible to say that it is strongly suspected that this is the case, and that the brief of each RSL was in some way altered as a result of tenant views. These views may be from the formal source of the satisfaction survey, or via a less structured on-going experiential feedback loop, with the practitioners learning from experience. The research interviews revealed evidence of this reflective practice in each of the case studies, with representatives of each of the RSLs claiming that the design briefs (or the standardised plans) were regularly updated. In addition, many interviewees intimated that earlier schemes affected the development.

This experiential feedback loop can be seen to operate in all aspects of the development process and communities are also influencing design over the long run, through their influence on architects during earlier schemes. It is put forward that this then changes architects approach to the next design, as it changes their appreciation of the issues - hence the social distance (as discussed in chapter 3) diminishes.

Changes Made Via Specific Involvement

The changes made via specific involvement are far easier to distinguish than those made as a result of a generic input. These can be described as changes to the design that occurred as a result of community involvement during the course of the development programme. This may mean at the outset of the development programme on an estate, when the ground rules are being laid down for the future phased building, or actually during the design of the houses. Specific community involvement can be seen to have made some key changes in each of the four developments, and these are discussed in turn.

In South Yorkshire, a tenant survey administered by the local authority at the outset of the development on the estates overwhelmingly requested that the existing flats be replaced with family houses. The survey returns stated that these dwellings would ideally have private gardens and at least one on-site car parking space. These findings were bolstered by an independent tenant survey carried out by concerned local people. The requests were adopted by the RSL and eventually accepted by the local authority, despite the fact that they were in contravention of the initial urban design ideas for the area. So it can be seen that the family dwellings that were developed were built in line with the findings from the tenant surveys conducted at the outset of the design process. In addition to the request for family houses, the RSL, during the course of a number of Housing Development Forum meetings, adjusted the design brief. The HDF was open to the public and was used to ask the community members present about the features they wanted the new houses to have. At this stage it was decided that each dwelling should have at least one on-plot car parking space and a private garden. Importantly, it must be taken into consideration that the developer responsible for the construction of the socially-rented property, as well as the direct to market units that formed part of the scheme, also wanted a development of individual family houses. It is therefore difficult to extricate the driving reason for the adoption of this style of development.

In a similar vein, the West Midlands RSL established a set of key design principles at the outset of their involvement on the estate. These three key principles were supplementary to the standard requirements laid out in the design brief. These were the provision of burglar alarms, providing at least one on-site car parking space and the use of steel-rail fencing. All of these principles were adhered to and the completed properties bear this out. In this instance there was no prior declaration of interest from the developer, nor any associated private development, so the design stipulations described can reasonably be assumed to have been implemented as a direct result of community participation.

The situation in London was somewhat different. Whereas the other cases had tenant involvement during the actual design, community involvement in the design of the dwellings in Spitalfields was limited to the community representatives on the board of management. The large community representation on the board is discussed in the case study write-up. To refresh, of the fourteen board members, eleven are local Bengali people and six of these are tenants of the RSL. This strong community presence on the board had the opportunity to see the housing plans throughout the design and development process, and make comments on the progress. Although there was a great deal of discussion about the scheme as it was the largest new-build development undertaken by the landlord, there were no specific alterations made as a result of community input.

The Sunderland development is different in many ways and it can be seen that the opportunities for direct tenant involvement were far greater. However, there were similarities at the start of the process, when the decision was made to redevelop the entire estate. At the outset, key decisions were made that were to shape the whole development programme and these were made after consultation with the tenants. It was decided at the initial meetings that the only viable solution was to demolish the deck-access flats and build family housing. This key design decision was made alongside the tenant group. The RSL concerned generally uses standard house plans and an outline proposal

using these was drawn up. The tenant body had the opportunity to comment on these proposals and they were then re-assessed in terms of their individual housing need. Using the results of this survey each family was given the opportunity to select their prospective house and this was allocated where possible. So, not only were the tenants involved in the decision to build houses they had the chance to select the location of their particular home.

Although the opportunity to involve the future residents in the design of their homes was not fully taken (the use of standardised house plans precluded this) the design decisions affected were not limited to those made at the outset. As the prospective tenant group was identified early in the process the tenant involvement did continue throughout. It was as a direct result of the tenant influence that the standard house plan was altered, placing the lounge at the front and the kitchen at the rear; tenant opinion caused the RSL to make a significant internal planning alteration. In addition to this, each tenant was given a series of options with regard to fixtures and fittings. Kitchen units, bathroom suites, front door colours, internal decoration and the innovative garden landscape packs were all areas in which the tenants could be involved.

Overall, across all four case study developments there can be seen to have been a number of design decisions made as a result of community involvement. These decisions range from the major, such as the decision to demolish the flats and build houses in the North-east, to the relatively minor, such as the opportunity to select the colour of the front door offered in all areas where the tenants had been selected early enough. Although there is evidence of tenant and community involvement affecting the designs in all of the developments, it can be seen that the extent of this influence varies considerably. The following section utilises existing models of participation to describe the levels of involvement in the four case studies. This is followed by a discussion on the likely reasons for the apparent differences.

7.3.3 An Assessment Of The Level Of Involvement

In order to analyse the four separate participation process that were

undertaken in the case studies, they are tested against three existing theoretical frameworks. These ideas, loH and RIBA (1988), Wulz (1990) and Woolley (1985), were selected because they prove useful in different ways. The first, loH and RIBA (1988) is a check-list for practitioners, with the aim of ensuring more effective participation. The second, (Wulz 1990), is a model of tenant participation in design, and the case study developments are compared to the seven categories put forward. Finally, the case study developments are discussed in light of the summary conclusions raised by Woolley (1985). The loH and RIBA (1988) suggest a ten point check-list for effective tenant participation in design. This research sets out to evaluate the participation processes undertaken, establishing whether it is effective in changing the design. The check-list is useful in analysing each of the case study developments and is summarised in the table below:

	West Midlands	South Yorkshire	North-east	London
<i>Evolve a formal policy?</i>	Yes - general participation	Yes - general participation	Yes - general participation	Yes - general participation
<i>Define the aims of the participation?</i>	Yes - prior to specific phase	Yes - prior to specific phase	Yes - aims clear at outset	No
<i>Provide support for tenants groups?</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes – national network	No
<i>Extra resources?</i>	Yes - limited	Yes - limited	Yes	No
<i>Evaluate each project?</i>	Yes - via survey	Yes - via survey	Yes - via survey	Yes - via survey
<i>Redefine roles?</i>	No - roles well-defined	No - roles well-defined	Yes - and new staff	Yes - roles flexible
<i>Adopt a teamwork approach?</i>	Yes - all partners	No - difficulty in relationships	Yes	Yes - including whole RSL
<i>Training for new skills?</i>	Yes - available for tenants	Yes - available for tenants	Yes - available for tenants	Yes - available for tenants
<i>Respond to management issues?</i>	No	No	Yes	No
<i>Monitor and evaluate techniques?</i>	No – not formal	No – not formal	No – not formal	No – not formal

Figure 7.1: Summary Table Of The Case Studies - loH and RIBA (1988)

Each of the four RSLs looked at can be seen to have evolved a formal policy with regard to tenant involvement, but not a policy specifically concerned with the design of new housing. This is supported by the postal survey findings and it is expected that this is due, at least in part, to the influence of the Housing Corporation. There is evidence of three of the RSLs defining the aims of the participation at the outset, the London association provided no evidence of this. The aims were most defined in the Sunderland example, where the future residents were identified at the outset and earlier involvement was therefore possible. The same RSLs supported tenants' groups, with the London landlord not doing so. This pattern, of the larger RSLs complying with the checklist, continues when the allocation of additional resources are considered. The largest RSL provided more additional resources, for both tenants and professionals, and this included employing a dedicated community development worker.

There is little evidence to suggest that there was a major redefinition of roles in the two medium-sized RSLs. In Sunderland the housing officer responsible undertook a far broader role during the redevelopment. The employment of the community development worker in this case was also fundamental and affected the role of each player to differing extents. It is also put forward that there is a constant redefinition of roles in smaller RSLs, as staff members have to adapt to different roles to make-up for the small staff team. The London RSL does not have a dedicated development team and although the scheme investigated was in conjunction with a larger RSL, existing staff had to be flexible in their outlook. Only in Sheffield was the adoption of a 'teamwork approach' not evident; this would appear to be as a result of the engagement of an architectural practice not experienced in the social housing field.

Only in the North-east did the scale of the estate redevelopment undertaken provide the opportunity for the involvement processes to address a broader housing management agenda. The process responded to wider issues, such as allocations and rent arrears. Finally all of the developing RSLs used a

post-occupancy survey that was being continually monitored and amended accordingly; this was the only evidence of evaluation.

Overall the analysis of the case study developments, utilising the ten-point checklist provided by IoH and RIBA (1988), reveals that the case study developments have all adopted a selection of the recommendations put forward. In general it seems that the larger associations comply more often, with the North-eastern development having met all but one of the ten points. By contrast the small London RSL complies with only five of the recommendations, and often to a lesser extent. The questionnaire survey supports these findings by showing that larger RSLs are more likely to use a greater number of participation techniques.

Both of these research findings (from the case studies and the survey) can be explained by the suggestion made earlier that smaller RSLs are more connected to their communities, and therefore less in need of specific community participation. It is further suggested that the participation processes adopted by these localised landlords are more difficult to unravel, as they do not involve explicit techniques. The London RSL is a good example of this with the participation being predominantly through strong tenant representation on the board of management.

In addition to the check-list approach adopted above, it is also desirable to utilise the model of design participation put forward by Wulz (1990) to assess the level of involvement in each case study. Wulz suggests seven stages of participation in design, each getting progressively more tenant-focussed. The debt to Arnstein's *Ladder* (1969) is apparent and Wulz's classification can be seen as an inverse ladder of design participation. Each of the classifications are described in chapter three. Again a summary table (overleaf) is used in the first instance, followed by a general discussion about the key points.

Figure 7.2: Summary Table Of The Case Studies - Wulz (1990)

	West Midlands	South Yorkshire	North-east	London
Representation	Yes - Fundamental to this development.	Yes - Fundamental in this development, tenant views represented throughout.	Yes - Fundamental in this development, tenant views represented throughout.	Yes - Fundamental in this development, tenant views represented throughout.
Questionary	Yes - Via the use of surveys to feed into the design briefs.	Yes - Via the use of surveys to feed into the design briefs.	Yes - Via the use of surveys to feed into the design briefs.	Yes - Via the use of surveys to feed into the design briefs.
Regionalism	Yes - RSL are a regional operator with a high local profile.	Yes - RSL are a regional operator with a high local profile.	No - Size of RSL inhibits connection to community, but strong historical links to estate.	Yes - Very close connection to the local community and strong resident input at the RSL.
Dialogue	Yes - Experience of architect and continual presence throughout design process.	No - Very limited during design due to architect's reticence to engage with the community.	Yes - Close links enabled by the employment of the community development worker.	Yes - The dialogue is maintained through the representation on the board of management.
Alternative Participation	Yes - Limited. available only when the tenants were selected early enough in the process.	Yes - Limited, available only when the tenants were selected early enough in the process.	Yes - Available to all across a range of areas, due to the early selection of the tenants.	No - Available only if the tenants were selected early enough in the process.
Co-Decision and Self-Decision	No - RSL and architect retained decision-making power throughout.	No - RSL and architect retained decision-making power throughout.	No - RSL and architect retained decision-making power throughout.	No - RSL and architect retained decision-making power throughout.

As it is the basic role of the architect to represent the client it can safely be stated that this is present throughout all of the developments; representation can be seen as the very basis of the architectural profession. Again, all of the RSLs provided an opportunity for tenants to contribute to the design of future houses through the use of post-occupancy surveys. When the regional aspect is raised however there is a variation in the four schemes. It is argued that these discrepancies occur as a result of the different sizes and profile of the RSLs. The small London landlord displays very close connection to the community, because the RSL is enmeshed within it. By contrast, the large RSL in the North-east is not as connected to the community in which they operate as a result of the size and structure of the organisation.

The issue of a dialogue between the communities and the professionals raises an interesting point. The two RSLs that maintained the greatest dialogue were the largest (in Sunderland) and the smallest (in London), but as a result of very different reasons. In London this dialogue was apparent because of the very closeness of the RSL to the community; via the strong resident representation on the board of management. By contrast, in the North-east a community development worker was employed to help bridge the gaps between the residents and the practitioners. The two medium-sized RSLs undertook similar developments on council estates and yet the level of dialogue differed. This can be seen to be as a result of the role played by the architect in each case.

As there was no evidence of the RSLs relinquishing decision-making power, the final category of interest is the provision of alternative participation. Alternatives were offered to future residents in all cases where they were identified early enough. There were no such opportunities in London and only limited opportunities in the Midlands and Yorkshire. In the North-east, where the nature of the development allowed the early notification of all of the future residents, the range of choices were the greatest. Despite this opportunity, the range of choices were limited to selection of the fixtures and fittings; this is in part due to the RSLs adherence to the standardised house plan.

The third piece of work used to help analyse the information gained during the case study investigations was produced by Woolley (1985). The author produces seven summary conclusions to his PhD thesis, and these raise some points that are pertinent to this research; these are discussed below. In general the points raised by Woolley are supported by the research undertaken here, a number of years later. It is put forward that the degree of participation is, as Woolley asserts, *'quite limited'* in all of the four developments investigated, and furthermore that this is as a result of the *'conventional procedures for finance, approvals development and design'* (Woolley 1985, p.258). The author also notes that this is despite the impression given that the involvement is more fundamental; again this research supports this conclusion. For example, the Birmingham case study was initially selected as an example of intensive participation, only for this to be found to be somewhat exaggerated on *'closer examination'* (Woolley *ibid.*).

Woolley (1985, p.258) also states that *'in no sense do the tenants design the schemes themselves,'* and this too is wholly supported by this research. This is reinforced by pointing out that the professionals *'retain a substantial amount of control over decision making, whether or not this is their intention'*. The case studies reveal that it was the intention of the professionals involved in each development to retain control over decision-making, and this was universally accomplished. Woolley (*ibid.*) also states that users are only given limited opportunities to influence decisions, and the research again supports this.

Woolley (1985) states that the case for user participation in design is not a strong one and the research undertaken here only serves to strengthen this standpoint. The claim is made that participation served to complicate *'design, communication and methodological problems'* (Woolley 1985, p.258), and the case study developments contain clear examples of this. For example, one particular statement by the architect involved in the Birmingham development highlights the complexity of the design problem and the number of external constraints placed upon architects. Community involvement can be seen as

merely another layer of information, a further constraint on the designer, and the reticence of the Sheffield architects to engage with this is further evidence of this. Woolley (ibid.) mentions that *'Conventional design methods and architectural practice do not readily adapt to radical social experiments...'* (p.258) and this too is borne out by the research. It should be noted that some commentators (most notably Towers 1995, but also, Teymur 1993) have called for a change in the architectural education and methods of practice in general. This call is however as yet unheeded, and the architectural profession, as it exists today, is not comprised of architects trained in such a way.

Woolley's final conclusion is that more work is needed in order to examine the process and product of tenant involvement schemes; as mentioned earlier this research is a belated response to his request. The research serves to strengthen the claims made by Woolley (1985) that the case for involvement is not strong, and proves that the impact of tenant involvement on the design of houses is limited. What the final section addresses is why this is the case and why there is variance between the three case studies. Before this, however, it is both interesting and informative to briefly test the case study participation processes against the *'problematic aspects of participation'* highlighted by Heeks (1999) and associated others.

Heeks (1999) states that often participation is carried out merely because it is the accepted practice, despite limited hard evidence of success and the research would support this. Many of the survey respondents and case study interviewees appeared to carry out participation because it was the 'right thing' to do. There was little or no questioning as to the suitability of the approach. With the exception of the sceptical line followed by the Sheffield architect all of the professionals interviewed accepted that involving communities in design was the only way to proceed. This is referred to be Heeks (ibid.) as *'veneered participation'*, where the impression of participation is created despite the actual effectiveness of this being limited. Heeks' assertion that schemes can be adjudged as being *'successful by demonstrating an appearance of*

participation rather than by demonstrating achievement of participative outcomes', is again supported by the research. The Birmingham case study, originally selected as a participatory design scheme, showed little evidence of this when investigated.

Heeks (1999) works in the field of information systems and this must be considered; however many of his concerns about public participation are relevant to the social housing sector. One such concern relates to the nature of the community representatives, whether elected, selected or indeed self-selected. It is put forward that these people are typically more powerful individuals and this is not unexpected. The research shows that this problematic aspect of participation has some validity. The typical allocations procedures in the RSL sector necessitates the use of representative groups in most cases. The community representatives interviewed were all impressively knowledgeable and it could be argued this supports Heeks' concern. Another point raised was the impact that involvement has on the participants, and that these pressures often mean that those with the time and energy are not working and do not have young families. Of the community representatives interviewed, there was a disproportionate number of elderly people and not one was in full-time employment.

Heeks (1999) separates the problems with participation into two, firstly '*operational constraints*' that limit the opportunities for participation, and secondly '*inherent problems*' that reduce the effectiveness of the participation when it does take place. The participation processes adopted in the case study developments all show examples of both of these problems. For example, an operational constraint is created by the aforementioned allocations procedures, which make early identification of the future tenants impossible. The inherent problems are also apparent, with an example being the selection of suitable representatives. Overall, the work of Heeks is extremely useful in highlighting some of the problems with the participatory processes, and although this is tangential to the main direction of the research it is interesting in helping to explain some of the processes. The final section

of this chapter suggests reasons for the different degrees of involvement in the four case study developments.

7.3.4 Reasons For The Different Degrees Of Involvement

To assess the reasons for the differences in the participation processes adopted by the housing associations the four variables, isolated for the case study selection, are utilised. For the purposes of this analysis the first two of these, the size of the RSL and the geographical spread of their housing stock, are combined. The other two variables were the location of the developments and the role played by the architects in the process. The following analysis is based around these three areas, each of which is addressed in turn.

The Size And Local Profile Of The RSLs

The four case study RSLs vary considerably in size and geographical profile and the influence of this on the course of the community involvement needs addressing. The London landlord is small and is closely linked to the community, with all but two members of the board of management living in the area. The other RSLs are larger, with a wider spread of property, and they are therefore not as closely connected to the communities in which they work. It is not implied that these organisations do not make every effort to be involved in the community, just that this is made more difficult by the spread of their housing stock. It is argued that the more an RSL expands, the more divorced it becomes from its tenant groups. In an effort to address this, the housing associations set up departments designed to involve tenants in decision-making (for example, the CFU in Birmingham and the CITU in Sheffield). The London RSL, being so close to its tenants, does not need to adopt such an approach. By contrast the largest landlord, operating in the North-east, has a series of regional offices, with each of these adopting a variety of strategies based on the network of tenants associations that they support. This issue raises big questions about the role of housing associations as a providers of socially rented housing. These questions are far beyond the remit of this thesis but are an interesting diversion nonetheless and warrant discussion.

Housing's *Third Arm* has been put forward as the new mass provider of social housing since the 1980s, in effect replacing local authorities. A number of reasons were put forward to support this move. Foremost amongst these was the ability of the voluntary sector to attract private finance, but another often stated benefit was the scale of operation and the closeness to the communities that this would allow; the smaller landlord providing a better service. The expansion of the sector has resulted in some RSLs managing more houses than many local authorities, and as if to compound the difficulties of this, over a far greater geographical area. Councils are by definition limited to the extent of their political boundaries, whereas RSLs have no such restriction. It could be argued that they have become as isolated from their client groups as the councils that they have been encouraged to supercede. The emergence of RSL departments dedicated to *'listening to tenants'* could be seen as an attempt to counter this distancing.

The argument is often put forward that the major strength of the RSL sector is in the variety of the landlords that it incorporates, and the case study RSLs were selected in an effort to reflect this variety. However, recent legislation such as the Housing Plus initiative or the New Deal For Communities encourages housing associations to act as wider regeneration agencies. The pressure to expand, or be consumed, grows. Small RSLs are finding it increasingly difficult to operate in this sort of environment, with many of them either working in partnership with larger organisations or seeking solace as part of a group structure. As the sector continues to consolidate and RSLs move further from the communities in which they operate the structures in place to keep in touch with the tenants become ever more important.

The survey results also support this idea of a link between size of RSL and the style of participation adopted. For example, the survey results reveal a definite relationship between the size of the landlord and the chances of it supporting a tenants' association. Smaller housing associations are less likely to support such organisations (39%) than the medium sized associations (66%) and large (85%). It is put forward that this is not only an issue of

resources, but that local associations are closer to the community and do not need to canvas tenants' opinions. To further support this, the survey also shows that despite the marked difference in the support of tenants' associations, small, medium and large associations all claim to be involving tenants to a similar extent. Smaller RSLs recognise that they do this largely via informal feedback networks, which are only possible because of their closeness to the community. They see themselves as involving the community without explicitly setting out to do so.

The Location Of The Housing Developments

The location of the development refers to the type of area where the housing was developed, the surrounding tenure and the procurement of the site. The research shows that the location of the development also affects the approach to community involvement adopted. For example, the Birmingham housing consists of just 12 dwellings on a small site in a council estate, it is one phase of a series of developments by two RSLs, over a seven to eight year period. These circumstances can be seen to have shaped the tenant involvement strategy used by the housing association. The history of previous housing-led regeneration initiatives on the estate had led to the formation of a council-organised public forum, established to discuss the redevelopment in the area. This forum was used as the basic structure for community involvement by the RSL during the design of each phase of development. Similarly, the Yorkshire housing is also located on a local authority estate which forms part of an SRB area, and the consultation structures set up as a part of the SRB programme were utilised by the RSLs brought in to develop the new property.

The other two housing developments, in Sunderland and London, were not located on local authority estates. The Sunderland site has been historically owned by the housing association and as such the structures for tenant involvement, notably the strong tenants' associations, were in place. These tenant groupings, based upon the old deck access blocks, were used as the main point of connection with the community. By contrast, the London development is located in an area of mixed tenure, surrounded by commercial

property as well as council and private housing. The development investigated also includes a number of commercial units. There were no existing structures in place in Spitalfields; tenants housing groups were not in existence and the small nature of the RSL, without a tenant participation department, precluded the setting up of such a forum. Also with reference to the ideas mentioned earlier, the closeness of the landlord to the Bangladeshi community, for which it was providing the homes, meant that this was not seen as a necessary departure.

Overall, it is demonstrated that the location of the housing development greatly affects the way in which the involvement strategy is approached by the housing association. Primarily this is as a result of the structures that may already be in existence on estates that have had experience of earlier systematic regeneration. In all of the case studies, the RSLs utilised existing structures where possible. When these structures do not exist (as in the Spitalfields example), other factors determine whether the housing association instigates them.

The Role Of The Architect

It was initially put forward that the choice of the architect, whether in-house or external, may be important to the way that community involvement was approached. During the course of the research it became apparent that it is not just the distinction between architects from within the RSL and those from outside that is important, but also the particular characteristics and approach of the particular practice in question. To recap, of the developments looked at here, in-house architects were used only in Sunderland, the Yorkshire RSL, however, typically uses an in-house architectural team. The other two landlords do not have in-house architects and both regularly use local practices with experience in the social housing field, selected from an approved list.

Firstly, the stage of the design process when the architect is engaged must be considered. In the case of the RSLs with in-house teams, this can be seen to

be prior to the outset of the particular design programme, as the internal architectural teams from both of the RSLs investigated took part in the development of the standard design briefs and the standardised plans. It is interesting that the two housing associations with in-house architects also typically use standard plans, this however may be purely coincidental. The questionnaire data reveals that the use of such standard house layouts is common across the sector. The RSLs without in-house architecture departments, both developed the standard design briefs using their development teams and a regularly used architect.

In Sunderland, the in-house architects can be seen to have played a role similar to that of an external practice. The architect was not in attendance during the protracted consultation meetings and was largely informed of the outcome by the RSL development team or the community development officer. The architects retained the control of the design, but the use of the RSL standard house plans and the extensive input of tenant ideas limited the scope for design innovation. The South Yorkshire association, although they did not use the in-house team on the development looked at here, claim to typically use their architects in a far broader role. The architects (mainly the principal architect) are involved in the wider development practice and often liaise directly with the tenant group. This contrasting role of the in-house architecture team cannot be fully explained with just the two examples available here but the larger North-eastern landlord, with a far larger development programme, uses external architects for a significant proportion of its developments. The Yorkshire RSL, however, sees the architects as much more of an integral part of the organisation. This may also be affected by the fact that the larger association has a number of regional offices and the architecture team is located at just one of them, whereas the smaller association has the architecture team housed in the centrally located head office.

In South Yorkshire, despite the RSL typically using the internal architectural team, an external practice was engaged for reasons discussed earlier. The

architect had far more control over the design and was more vocal in defending the overall approach. This caused a degree of friction between the RSL and the architects, but interestingly the community representatives interviewed during the course of the research approved of the more modern approach. The inexperience of the architectural practice in the field of social housing led to the existence of a certain distance from the community: for example the project architect resisted invitations to attend public meetings. This idea of social distance is discussed in this thesis, but does not in this instance appear to have resulted in an inappropriate building solution.

By contrast, the external architectural practice used by the Birmingham-based RSL have a wealth of social housing experience. The architects were also employed by the other housing association developing on the estate. The approach to both the housing design and the community involvement in this case was affected greatly by this experience. The architect provided a solution that was a result of his involvement on many similar schemes in the past, and was generally open and accepting of the need to involve the community. The project architect was regularly in attendance at the local estate development meetings and was comfortable in such situations; the houses are traditional in appearance and there was no conflict.

Finally, the architecture practice in the London case study is used by the housing association wherever possible. They were initially selected because they were from the area and are themselves a Bengali-led practice. The small size of the RSL and the lack of a dedicated development team, meant that the architect had a greater role in the development process than would typically be the case. The practice essentially performed a project management role as well as retaining responsibility for the design. This situation worked well due to the closeness of the relationship between the architectural practice, the housing association and the local Bengali community. The architects designed the housing in accordance with the design brief that was compiled with tenant involvement, and presented their work regularly to the board of management for discussion. The design solution is a result of the architect's

experience and understanding of the particular requirements of the local community.

In general it can be seen that the role of the architect in each scheme was similar. They all retained control of the design, but were subject to checking by both the RSLs and, to differing extents, the community. The use of a non-specialist practice in Sheffield resulted in the most visually different housing, despite the efforts of the RSL to water this down, but whether this is as a result of the architect's reluctance to fully engage with the community, and therefore retain a greater design input, is debatable. It would appear more likely that the influence of the contractor and the different experience of the architects was responsible. These themes will be discussed at more length in the conclusions that follow.

8. Conclusions

It is the aim of this final chapter to address the main objectives of the research and place the findings in a wider context. In order to achieve this the chapter is organised in two sections. The first of these is concerned with how the research answers the objectives (as set out in chapter 4) and the second addresses wider issues, highlights future research areas and suggests improvements to the design and development of social housing that would enable more effective community involvement.

8.1 The Research Objectives

The first of the research objectives was to establish the current situation as regards community involvement in the design of social housing – what exactly RSLs are doing to involve tenants in the design of new housing. The research tool used to tackle this was primarily the postal questionnaire survey, although the case studies were also of value in some aspects. The overall picture of community involvement in the design of social housing that the survey helps to clarify, is one of RSLs involving tenants in a wide variety of ways and to differing extents across their practice. Some methods of involvement that are almost universally adopted, and these include the use of newsletters and tenant satisfaction surveys. Others, such as the organisation of public meetings and the publication of reports detailing the development, are used by a majority of social landlords. The more modern communication technologies of the Internet are not yet used by many housing associations, although with Internet access still widening it would be expected that this might become increasingly important in the future. The Internet potentially provides a platform for real two-way participation but the key stumbling block at present is its availability, especially amongst the socially rented housing target group.

Interestingly, the literature points to the RSL sector being encouraged to increase in size through successive changes to legislation such as the Housing Acts of 1988 and 1985. One of the key reasons put forward for the change in emphasis, from the local authority to the voluntary sector, was that the latter was generally made up of smaller, more locally responsive organisations. It was argued that these registered social landlords would be more able to communicate effectively with the communities and therefore be better placed to provide appropriate housing. The results from postal survey appear to bear this out, at least in part. The local authority sector was not surveyed and so no direct comparison can be made, but the extent of the tenant involvement techniques employed by RSLs implies that the sector is making a concerted effort to encourage participation.

When it comes to assessing the level of participation in RSLs of different sizes, the survey results are once more supported by the literature. The DoE (1993) states that participation was '*relatively underdeveloped, in social landlord situations*' and further, that large urban housing providers were the most likely to embrace the idea. The research generally concurs with this viewpoint, with larger housing associations utilising more tenant involvement techniques. The questionnaire reveals that large RSLs use an average of seven different involvement techniques, medium-sized associations five and smaller landlords only three. It is conceded that the number of techniques adopted by each RSL in no way provides a measure for the effectiveness of the participation, but it does help to create a picture of the importance placed on involvement by the social landlords. Larger associations clearly see it as more important to utilise a variety of techniques to involve the communities in which they work. It should also be noted that these RSLs have large enough staff teams to allow them to undertake more complex participation techniques.

The case studies provide further explanation of why different levels of participation are apparent between associations of different size. For example, the London-based landlord is enmeshed in the community in which it operates and therefore the need for explicit tenant involvement is diminished. In addition, the number of staff typically employed by smaller RSLs would make the use of intensive tenant involvement a non-viable option. The London case study association did not employ anyone in a specific participation role, and anecdotal evidence suggests that the very small staff team were already over-stretched. A picture of the small RSL relying on its connection to the community in which it operated emerged. Informal feedback networks and a high degree of tenant and wider-community representation on the board of management were seen to be the main methods of involvement adopted. The large RSL (in the north-east) used a number of other methods including the use of a community development officer to help to enable the tenant involvement. The nature of the development and the resources of the landlord were the primary reasons for such an approach. The two medium-

sized, regional organisations (Birmingham and Sheffield) developed housing on local authority estates, and these two examples displayed many similarities in their approaches, utilising the existing structures available as a result of longer-term housing-led regeneration.

An important point that emerged during the course of the research is that the apparent lack of explicit tenant participation from the smaller RSLs does not necessarily mean that there is less community influence. The aforementioned proximity of the housing association to the community that it serves, with strong tenant representation on the board of management and a very 'open-door' style approach, lessens the need to consult the public - as the organisation is an integral part of that local community. The larger RSLs investigated were more detached from the areas in which they operated and therefore the need to establish the views of the communities, via an explicit participation strategy, were more apparent. It is put forward that community involvement is used to cover-up the deficiencies in the originally intended housing association model of small local housing providers operating closely within communities.

Another objective of the research was to establish if there is any relationship between the way in which a site was procured and the style of community involvement that was undertaken. As this question relates to specific developments - and not general policies - the case studies provided the answer. The four social housing schemes were developed in three different types of location, with three different procurement methods; the sites in Birmingham and Sheffield being similar in both regards. The housing development in the north-east benefited from being a phase of an entire estate renewal carried out by a single housing association. The fact that the previous deck-access estate was owned by the RSL also helped in the early identification of tenants for the new dwellings and the subsequent early 'specific' involvement. All of the other developments were affected by the fact that they were located on land that had previously been owned by the local authority and that a condition of sale or transfer was a nomination agreement.

The presence of these agreements affected the early identification of tenants, and therefore limited the specific involvement of prospective tenants. In the case of the two regional housing associations, the developments were located on local authority estates that were undergoing long-term phased renewal. As a result of this representative community bodies were already in place at the outset of the housing association development on the estates, and these were used to agree the main principles for design. In the London case study no such forums existed and therefore the association relied on the informal networks discussed earlier.

When addressing the point in the design process that tenants and wider communities become involved, the survey's limited depth of enquiry is again augmented by the case study data. The survey reveals that tenants are most likely to be directly involved towards the end of the design process, selecting such things as kitchen units and bathroom suites. The reasons for this were very clearly given and were connected to the identification of prospective tenants early enough in the development process. However, the four case studies revealed a slightly different picture. Housing associations were involving their tenants early in the design process by means of tenant satisfaction surveys that fed back into the overall design brief. This design brief would then form the basis for all new developments. It was at this point that the idea of classifying the participation into *Generic* and *Specific* involvement arose (as discussed in the previous chapter). This highlights the importance of the decision to utilise a combined quantitative and qualitative research strategy. The survey did not fully reveal the picture of tenant involvement and it was only after the completion of the case studies that the importance of the feedback loop could be established.

This feedback should be considered on two levels, firstly via the direct tenant satisfaction surveys, which fed back specific data into the design and development briefs, and secondly via the experience of the architects. The first of these has been discussed earlier; the second is also of major importance, though it is extremely difficult to quantify. The value of this

experiential feedback was observed in the case studies that utilised in-house or specialised architectural practices. Experience in the design of social housing equips the architect with an understanding of the problems, and the required skills to engage fully with the participation process. In the one case where the architect was not experienced in the field (Sheffield), there was a marked reluctance on his behalf to engage at all with the wider public. The architect in question also had little previous experience of designing houses for social renting and was therefore unable to draw upon this resource.

Accepting that architecture is a reflective practice (Schön 1983 and 1987), it would seem likely that tenants make a significant impact through the architects acting on reflections on their practice. This is to say architects respond to feedback on previous schemes, remember earlier problems and solutions and incorporate this into their practice. This is not unexpected but it has implications, both on tenant involvement and on the overall quality of housing design. Tenants may profoundly affect the design of housing schemes built many years after their particular consultation, in a location far removed from their own home, simply by the architect reflecting on earlier schemes and previous community involvement. This response to perceived requirements can be seen as fundamental to the architectural design process and it is often described as intuitive. It can however be seen that the public has a role in design, however removed, via this route.

With regard to the effect on design quality, it could be put forward however that this is likely to stifle creativity and would help to produce a range of similar solutions to what may be very different problems. In the case of the South Yorkshire development an outside architectural practice, with no previous social housing experience, was engaged with the expressed intention of avoiding this problem and adopting a 'fresh' approach. Despite a continued uncertainty about the non-traditional design from the RSL, the houses were noticeably different from the others looked at during the course of the research. The different, more modern style of the Sheffield houses would appear to be directly attributable to the use of a practice inexperienced in the

design of social housing, a practice that addressed the design problem with the benefit of a fresh perspective.

To augment the notion that more innovative approaches to design are more likely to be found outside the sphere of 'social-housing architecture' (whether this be from an in-house or a specialist practice), the survey results prove useful. There is a clear indication that RSLs with in-house architecture teams are more likely to regularly use standardised house plans than those that employ external architects. The case studies support this finding, as the two RSLs with in-house architectural departments typically use a standard house plan, whilst the others do not. This may imply that far from showing a commitment to good design, the employment of an in-house architecture team is more connected to a desire to make the development process run more smoothly and reduce risks.

Sanoff (1990), whose work is discussed in greater detail earlier in this thesis, warns against the '*over-romanticised view of design*' that relies on individual genius. The idea that this view of architects occupying a lofty position and being the arbiters of good design is dominant in the profession, is also referred to by Towers (1995) and is supported by the Sheffield case study. As mentioned earlier, the project architect in this example eschewed attendance at public meetings and consultative forums, intimating that this would not help him to produce a better solution. Sanoff (1990) also states that the role of the architect is to act as the expert, expanding the horizons of the community, as these horizons are inevitably limited by their own experience. He continues by stating that the designers often view the aspirations of clients as being mundane and lacking in innovation; again the Sheffield-based architect voiced these opinions. However, this was the only case where there was such a stance taken. In each of the other case studies there was an assumption on the behalf of the architects that they would be involved with the community (to differing extents) in establishing the design brief. They then would be left alone to complete the design, presenting the scheme at regular progress meetings for comments and approval. The relevance of this is clear; effective

participation in design is only possible with receptive designers willing to listen to the demands of the public.

It is important at this stage to point out that this is not intended to imply that the involvement undertaken in the four case studies was of no value and had no impact. The architects were, to differing degrees, receptive to the voice of their respective communities. They each operated within the constraints of the RSL design and development briefs that were themselves written with the involvement of tenants. What should be noted is that the participation largely took place prior to the involvement of the designer. This was followed by a period in which the architect took responsibility for the sketch design proposals that were then, in each of the four cases investigated, shown to a representative community group (through formal community structures in three cases and via the board of management in London). This consultative process did lead to some significant changes being made, specifically in Sunderland. In the case of the other three developments, the schemes appeared to have been merely 'rubber stamped' by the community groups. The difference in the case of the north-eastern development is discussed in the previous chapter, and this is as a result of the captive future tenant group and the specific circumstances of the redevelopment.

As mentioned earlier, it has been argued that the role of the expert is to broaden the horizons of the community (Sanoff 1990) and this is accepted. What, however, the writer neglected to mention is the need for the horizons of the other professional players in the development process to be expanded as well. The conservatism of the actors in the English house building process (this includes the RSLs, contractors and many architects specialising in housing) means that radical design solutions are not often placed on the agenda. Non-traditional, approaches are not discussed and are not therefore brought to the attention of the community representative groups. The community's involvement in the design process is therefore limited to the narrow range of options put before it. It would appear that this acceptance of the status quo, as regards the notion of a house, is common across almost the

entire house-building field and is not just a recognisable phenomenon in social housing; this is discussed further in the next section.

The main objective of the research was to establish whether community involvement actually changed the design of the new houses and it has already been shown that tenant and community involvement does appear to change the design of social housing, to differing extents dependant upon a number of factors. However, the case study developments displayed many similarities in design features that were changed as a result of the involvement processes. In all of the developments the option was available to select fixtures and fittings, from a selection provided by the RSL. Another common request from the community, except in London, was for the provision of at least one on-plot car parking space. These were provided in both Birmingham and Sheffield as a direct result of community pressure. There were also a variety of other requests across the four developments that were met by the housing associations, and these are described in the preceding chapter. Interestingly in Sunderland, where the housing association used standard house plans, the tenant involvement was responsible for a major alteration to that plan. This would imply that the design decisions made by tenant groups are considered as important by the developing RSL. It must be pointed out once again that that it is difficult to claim that the participation did actually change the design in any of the four developments, as the counterfactual case has not been fully explored. It can however be stated that the tenant involvement processes that led to the design decisions mentioned above were unlikely to have been made without the input of the community.

8.2 Wider Implications Of The Research

Although the research programme was designed to deal specifically with the issues surrounding community involvement in the design process, the findings have served to open up the debate in other associated areas. For example, the work on the general tenant involvement processes adopted by housing associations revealed that larger RSLs adopt a wider range of tenant involvement techniques and the implications of this warrant further discussion.

It is argued that larger RSLs are more disconnected from the communities that they serve and therefore need to work harder, using a variety of participation techniques, to reflect the views of the communities in which they work. By contrast, smaller landlords are enmeshed in the communities in which they operate and therefore they do not need to consult and involve residents using the participation techniques described earlier. This does not, however, mean that the smaller associations reflect the views of their clients in any lesser way; there is a strong argument to support the role of small local housing providers. The literature suggests the expansion of housing's 'third arm' was promoted to replace the large impersonal local authorities with smaller, more localised, registered social landlords. The expansion in the sector in recent years with the increasing size of the large RSLs via rapid development, large scale stock transfers, acquisitions and the formation of group structures, has led to the emergence of RSLs that are larger than all but the largest of local authority housing departments. In addition, the nature of the expansion has led to a far wider geographical spread of property: the survey revealed some landlords with property in over 200 local authority districts. It could be put forward that the emphasis placed upon tenant participation placed by these 'mega-associations' is as a result of a need to justify this expansion and retain a degree of accountability. To put it simply, this is to ensure that the RSLs do not become as unresponsive as the council housing departments they are set to replace.

So it can be seen that the research adds to the wider debate about the growth of the RSL sector. However, the issue of the number of ways that housing associations attempt to involve the community, irrespective of the reasons behind this, raises the question of the effectiveness of tenant participation in general and the range of techniques used specifically. The research deals only with the effectiveness of the participation in the design of new housing and the findings of this are revealed earlier in this thesis, but the wider implications of participation also warrant discussion. The literature about social exclusion reveals that all definitions of this refer to a disconnection of communities and individuals from the decision-making process. It can therefore be put forward that by involving communities in the design of their estates, social exclusion is being addressed. The debate surrounding the effectiveness of participation in tackling social exclusion is beyond the remit of this thesis but it should be considered. The research shows the limited effect that community involvement has on the design of new-build social housing in terms of actual built change, but this is not to dismiss the process. The wider benefits of involvement, in terms of a community building and tackling social exclusion agenda, provide another justification for embarking on what can be an expensive and time-consuming route.

The reasons for the relative ineffectiveness of community participation in housing design (in terms of actual built-change) have been discussed at length earlier in this thesis. The ceding of control (and risk) by the use of design and build contracts, alongside the conservatism of the British house building industry and the tight regulatory framework in place, are all in part responsible. Designers have an increasingly limited opportunity for creative input and adding community opinion to the design process reduces the scope still further. The research unearthed a marked reluctance on the behalf of architects to listen too closely to the views of the community. It is put forward that the profession already feels over-regulated, especially when designing homes, and any move toward reducing the role of the architect by restricting the scope for creativity will meet considerable resistance. This is not to say

that community involvement in design does not have a future. The case studies revealed small but significant changes made as a result of community involvement, and it would appear that this is the most that can be hoped for in the current house-building environment.

The search for a new urban housing type has been largely on-hold since the 1970s, as a reaction to some of the poor housing solutions built in post-war Britain. The failures, both actual and perceived, of the radical housing solutions put forward in the post-war years are not the subject of this thesis. However, the negative reaction to these high-rise, deck access flats is and it should be recognised that the social housing market today has been greatly affected by this. The resultant conservatism and safety first approach has led to an almost universal adherence to traditional building methods and faux vernacular design. As mentioned earlier, this has been augmented by the move towards 'Design and Build' contracts that tend to stifle innovation in favour of more formulaised solutions. This said, the malaise in British housing design cannot be attributed to the RSL sector. On the contrary, social housing has recently provided some of the more innovative and challenging solutions, such as Preston Point in Liverpool and The Point in Bristol. Some key RSLs, such as Peabody, Ujima, Maritime and Joseph Rowntree are taking a lead in promoting new design. It is put forward that parts of the RSL sector are already providing a lead to the rest of the house-building industry in this regard.

It is suggested that tenant involvement in the design of social housing is unlikely to affect the fundamental issue of providing innovative housing solutions; the role it plays is far more limited. The four case studies investigated here show that the communities did not really have a chance to influence the primary design decisions. Even when they were consulted at an early stage, as in the South Yorkshire example, the developers had already decided to proceed only if their preferred traditional family housing solution was adopted. Furthermore, when the nature of the development permitted very close involvement of known future residents, as in Sunderland, full

advantage was not taken and the RSL continued in using standardised house plans. Although community involvement at this stage is widely considered to be a good thing, empowering the local residents, it is not likely that it has any great effect on the decision-making process. In this way this research relates well to the work of Heeks (1999), who in the field of information systems suggested that participation is perceived as a 'good thing' without proof of its effectiveness and Cleaver (1998) who calls it the '*new-mantra*'.

It is put forward that the move towards RSLs as the primary providers of social housing and the accompanying adoption of Design and Build contracts, accompanied by the reaction against modern innovative building solutions, is a hindrance to effective community involvement in design. The involvement that can be shown to have had an effect on the design of the houses is largely cosmetic, affecting the colours of the front doors and the style of the kitchen fittings. This is undoubtedly important, as the tenants interviewed made clear, but the overall impact is limited. Whether the extra time and resources put into tenant involvement (in its current guise) are worth it, is still a matter of conjecture - albeit one that this research has hopefully helped to decide.

Increasing The Effectiveness Of Involvement

This thesis is concluded by a number of suggestions as to how community involvement in the design of social housing can be made more effective. The following six points are not fully realised, nor are they in any particular order of significance; they do however begin to form a manifesto for change.

1. Professional Education

This refers also to the education and training of all of the key players in the building arena. It is put forward that the training should reflect more the changing role of the profession, as discussed earlier in the section, relating to the design process, with the designer becoming more of an enabler. It is also important that all players in the development process are trained to operate in more of a reflective way and understand the specific roles of their colleagues more closely. Towers (1995) and Teymur (1993) make this point effectively.

2. Changes To Housing Allocations Process

In order to be able to identify prospective tenants early enough in the development process to affect the design markedly, it is necessary to reconsider the allocation policies of the housing providers. The presence of local authority nominations agreements typically preclude the early identification of the future tenants, and therefore the opportunity to involve them *specifically* in the design of their future home is lost. The introduction of a system whereby potential tenants are identified at the outset would enable a more intensive (and effective) involvement to take place. It is accepted that the social housing market could not incorporate such a major change instantly, and so it is proposed that early tenant selection is sought for key developments in areas with particular problems.

3. A Reduction In Regulation

A familiar complaint during the course of the research (from the architects interviewed) was that the social house building arena was subject to considerable regulation and control. Some of this is statutory and some has direct funding implications, but it all serves to limit the scope for innovative design and also reduces the number of potential areas for community impact. A loosening of this regulatory framework would allow designers to increase the range of options put forward to the community so that a more suitable solution could be reached.

4. A Return To Traditional Contracts

Design and Build contracts take away an element of the financial risk from the client, but they also serve to cede substantial control over the end product. The buildings produced are typically mass produced 'template design', and as a result the scope for meaningful community involvement is diminished. By returning to more traditional forms of building contract the developing RSL, working with a sympathetic architect, can encourage greater involvement from the community and develop more appropriate houses.

5. A Rejection Of Standardised House Plans

Admittedly the use of these is not new, but with the stated aim of increasing the effectiveness of community involvement the future role of the standardised plan must be minimal. The response given by the chief executive of the London housing association sums this up and bears restating:

“No we don’t use standard house plans. We don’t find standard-sized plots in standard-type areas with standard-type tenants.”

Chief Executive, London RSL

6. The Procurement Process

Finally, the issue of how RSLs become involved in the development of housing needs consideration. The common pattern of associations being invited by the council to develop on postage stamp sites within existing estates (as occurred in two of the case studies) means that the small developments are often seen as almost insignificant. Larger scale RSL developments, where an estate-wide approach can be taken, create opportunities for more effective involvement.

It is accepted that the outline suggestions discussed above require major structural changes and would therefore be unlikely to be implemented. It is, however, put forward that if increasing the effectiveness of community involvement in the design of social housing is the goal, then these points do need to be addressed. As it stands, community involvement does have an impact on the design of new build social housing but the built effect is limited and whether this justifies the additional time and money invested on such schemes remains debatable.

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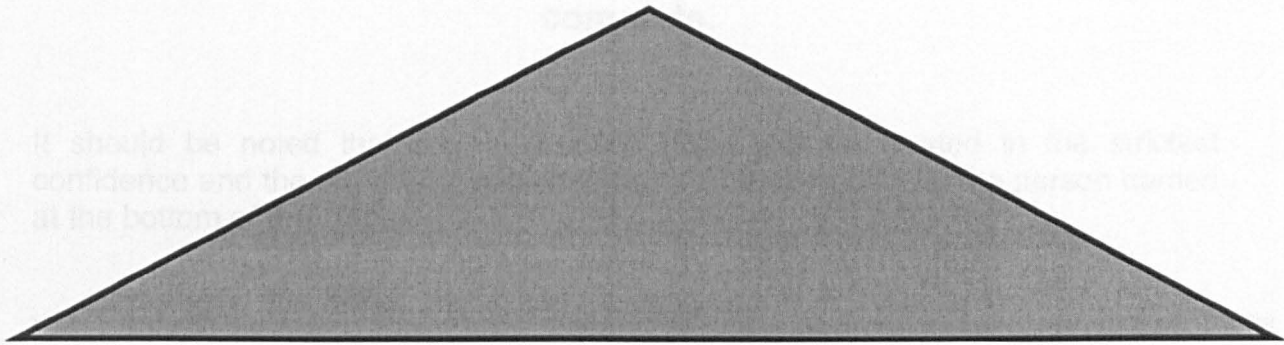
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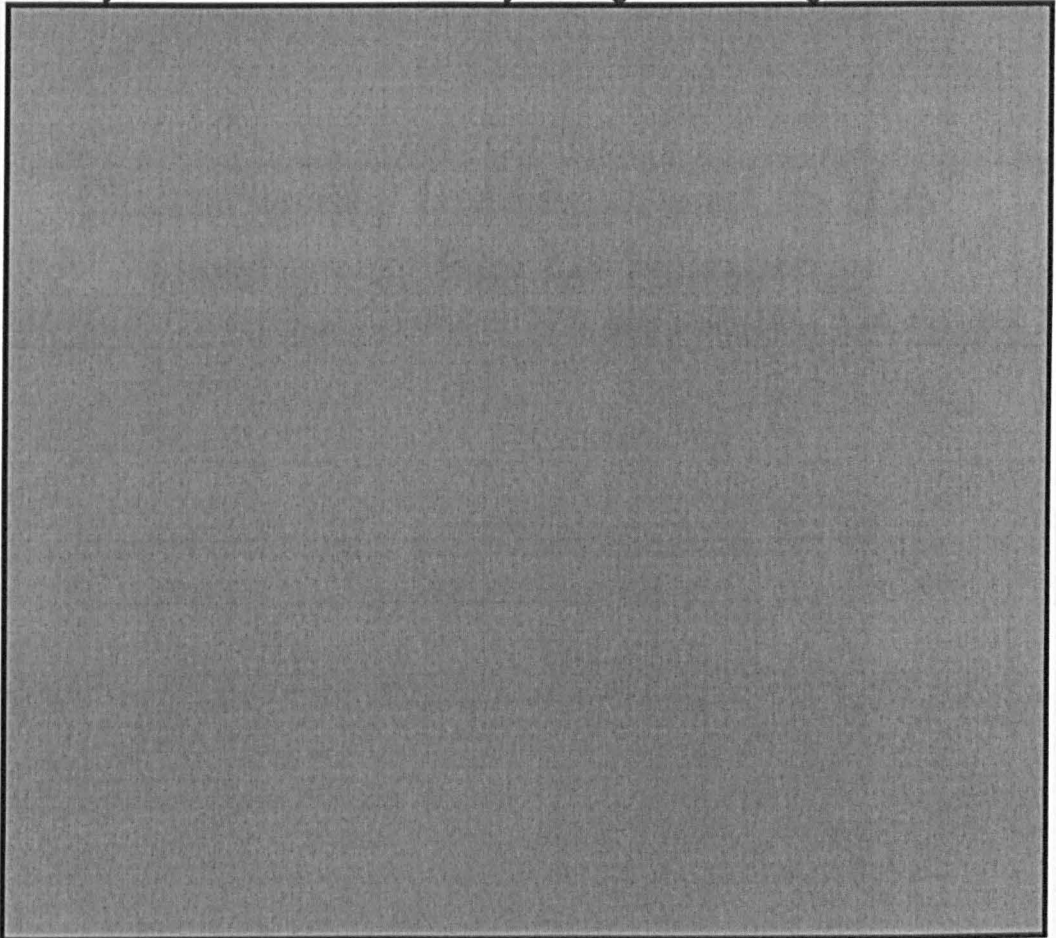
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Appendix 1: The Questionnaire



Community Involvement in the Design of Social Housing

A Survey of the Practice and Policy of English Housing Associations



A Postal Survey of Housing Associations

Department of Town and Regional Planning
University of Sheffield

Strictly Confidential

This questionnaire should take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

It should be noted that any information given will be treated in the strictest confidence and the returned questionnaires will be seen only by the person named at the bottom of this page.

This questionnaire consists of four short sections:

1. About your Association

This section deals with general information about your housing association. This is to gain an impression about your associations' size, locational spread and general make-up.

2. Your Development Programme.

This section deals with information about the size and nature of your development programme.

3. Your General Tenant Involvement Policy.

This section deals with your policies and practice in the area of tenant or resident involvement generally.

4. Your Use of Tenant Involvement in Design.

This section deals with your specific policy and practice in the area of tenant involvement in the design of their housing.

*Please write only in the **shaded** spaces.*

If you encounter any problems with this questionnaire please do not hesitate to contact:

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1. Your Housing Association

Please state the name of your Association:

The following questions are concerned with general information about your housing association.

1. How many units does your housing association currently manage?

(write a number in each box)

Dwellings (not including
hostels or care homes)

Bed Spaces (rooms in hostels
or care homes)

2. Does your association provide accommodation solely for a specific needs group in the community, for example the elderly or those with disabilities?

(tick where appropriate)

Yes

No

3. In which of the following Housing Corporation regions does your association manage accommodation:

(tick where appropriate)

London

South West

South East

North East

East

West Midlands

North West & Merseyside

4. In approximately how many local authority districts does your association own accommodation?

(write number in box)

5. In what type of area is your housing stock located? (tick as many as apply)

Inner City

Other Urban

Rural

6. Are any of your tenants represented on either:

(tick where applicable)

(i) The Main Board of Management

Yes

No

(ii) Area or Regional Sub-Committees

Yes

No

2. Your Development Programme _____

The following questions are concerned with your development programme. Any questions relating to your development programme are concerned with the period 1995-98 unless stated otherwise.

7. How many units of new build housing has your association completed in the following years and with what funding? (write numbers in the boxes)

Year of completion	Partly Funded by Housing Corporation Social Housing Grant (inc. private element)	Partly Funded by Local Authority Social Housing Grant	Funded from other sources (not including social housing grant)
1995/96			
1996/97			
1997/98			

8. How many units managed by your association have been extensively renovated i.e. have undergone capital repairs and improvements?

(write numbers in the boxes)

Year of renovation	Existing Housing Association Stock	Housing new to the Association
1995/96		
1996/97		
1997/98		

9. In the three year period 1995-98 has you association been involved in development on local authority estates? (tick where appropriate)

- (a) New Build Yes No
- (b) Renovation Yes No (if no to both go to Q. 13)

10. For these developments on local authority estates were you involved in any consortia with other housing associations, building contractors etc.?

(tick where appropriate)

- Yes No

11. When presenting proposals for developments on these estates to Local Authorities did information about the design and layout of the scheme form part of the submission ? (tick where appropriate)

- Yes No

12. Where did the design ideas for your proposal originate?

(tick where appropriate)

	Never	Rarely	Usually	Always
Your own architects	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Architects from other associations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
From the contractors	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

13. Do you have any in house architects? *(tick where appropriate)*

Yes

No
(if no go to Q 18)

14. How many staff make up your in house architecture team?

(write number in box)

15. How many of these staff are fully qualified and registered architects?

(write number in box)

16. For what proportion of your schemes do your architects have full responsibility for the design and project management of the development?

(tick where appropriate)

Development	All	Some	None
New Build	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Renovation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

17. At what point in the development programme are you in house architects typically responsible for the building or renovation of your housing stock?

(tick where appropriate)

Development	From inception to completion	Only at key approval stages
New Build	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Renovations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

18. Do you use any outside consultants in the design of new build housing, if so please state which of the below. *(tick where appropriate)*

Other Architects

Quantity Surveyors

Consultant Planners

Structural Engineers

Building Services Engineers

Other, please state below

--	--

19. In the development of new housing does your association use standard specification house types? *(tick where appropriate)*

Never Rarely Usually Always

20. Does your association have specific design related policies concerned with any of the following areas? *(tick as many boxes as appropriate)*

No. of stories of development Specification of a pitched roof
 Use/non-use of specific materials considerations General aesthetic considerations

21. Does your association have any further policies about housing design? *(tick where appropriate)*

Yes No
(Please specify below)

22. Has your association used 'Design and Build' type contracts when developing new housing in the period 1995-98? *(tick where appropriate)*

Never Rarely Usually Always

3. Your General Tenant Involvement Policy _____

This section is concerned with your associations general policies and practice in the area of tenant involvement. Please read the brief notes below before completing this section.

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.

23. Do you have a tenants' association? (tick where appropriate)

Yes

No (if no go to Q.25)

24. Are all of your tenants members? (tick where appropriate)

Yes

No

25. If your association has tenant members on the Board of management how are they elected/selected? (tick where appropriate)

Elected by Tenants Association

Nominated by existing board member

Independent volunteers

Other, please specify below

26. Do you have a tenant involvement or tenant liaison sub-committee?
(tick where appropriate)

Yes No *(if no go to Q.28)*

27. Does this cover all of your areas of housing stock?
(tick where appropriate)

All areas Most areas Some areas

28. Considering the classification of tenant involvement described in the notes at the beginning of this section, which is the approach to tenant involvement that you would consider is adopted by your association in the following aspects of decision making? *(tick whichever applies most)*

	Information	Consultation	Active Participation	Tenant Control
Housing Management	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Setting Rent Levels	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Allocations Policies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

29. Could you please indicate what techniques are employed by your association in order to foster closer tenant involvement?
(tick as many as apply)

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Public exhibitions | <input type="checkbox"/> Questionnaires |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Interviews | <input type="checkbox"/> Street surveys |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Public meetings | <input type="checkbox"/> Newsletters |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Internet, via websites etc. | <input type="checkbox"/> Video |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Publication of reports | <input type="checkbox"/> Workshop events etc. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other, please specify below | |

<input type="checkbox"/> Information	<input type="checkbox"/> Consultation
<input type="checkbox"/> Active Participation	<input type="checkbox"/> Tenant Control

4. Your Use of Tenant Involvement in Design _____

This section deals more specifically in the policies and practice of your association in the field of tenant design involvement.

30. Do you have a policy which states a commitment to tenant involvement in the design of your housing stock? (tick where appropriate)

Yes

No

(If so briefly describe it below)

31. Has your association in the period 1995-98 involved either existing or potential tenants in the design of new build properties? (tick where appropriate)

Yes

No

32. At what stage in the design process do potential or existing tenants typically become involved in the design of new property?

(tick boxes as appropriate)

Stage of the Design Process	Never	Rarely	Usually	Always
At the point of the decision to (re)develop.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
During the selection of the house type(s).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
In the design of the overall aesthetic approach, including estate layout.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
In the allocation of space within the properties.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
In the interior decoration and fittings & furnishings (if appropriate).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
In the ongoing appraisal and evaluation process.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

33. Using the notes from the beginning of section 3 of this questionnaire, what would you consider is the approach to tenant involvement in the process of design adopted by your association? (tick whichever applies most)

Information

Consultation

Active Participation

Tenant Control

34. Has your association ever utilised any 'Planning for Real' style design workshops? *(tick where appropriate)*

Yes

No

35. What do you consider to be the most important reasons for involving tenants in the design of their housing? *(please write in the space provided)*

36. What do you consider to be the biggest obstacles to the involvement of tenants in the design of their housing? *(please write in the space provided)*

37. Could you please write your name and position within the association in the spaces provided.

Name

Position

***Thank you for completing this questionnaire
Please continue to complete the appendix section if one is attached.***

Appendix 2: Response Rate Data

The response rate is calculated firstly overall, secondly on a regional basis and thirdly based on the size of the housing association. As discussed earlier the questionnaire was sent to all housing associations who successfully applied for social housing grant in the year 1996/7. This number was eventually settled at 267. Of these 267 questionnaires 151 responded meaning that the overall response rate was 57%. However of these some 13 were either uncompleted or sufficiently poorly completed so as to render them unusable, the useable response rate is therefore 52%. The reasons, when given, for the incomplete nature of the questionnaires were almost universally connected with insufficient time and resources.

It was necessary to check the distribution of these 52% of associations geographically, to see if there was an adequate spread across the country. For this purpose the seven Housing Corporation regions were used. Figure 4.1 illustrates the number of surveyed housing associations compared with the number of respondents from each of these regions. The table shows that the response rate in each region did not deviate considerably from that across the country. It can be seen therefore that the respondents were representative of the sample group. Some small variation does occur however with the South West region being the one with the poorest response rate at only 48% whilst the North East had 59%.

Regions	HAs in Sample	Useable Responses	% Response
London	70	34	49%
South East	48	25	52%
East	34	17	50%
North West	39	21	54%
South West	21	10	48%
North East	29	17	59%
West Mids	26	14	54%
OVERALL	267	138	52%

Figure A4.1: Response Rates across the Housing Corporation Regions

The discrepancies in the response rates across the country were not of major significance in this research however and the table shows that each of the regions provided an adequate response so as not to leave regions underrepresented. As well looking at the response rates across the regions of England it was also necessary to check that each size of housing association was represented. The housing associations were categorised into small, medium and large for this purpose. Small associations being those with less than 500 dwellings, medium associations being those with 501-2500 dwellings and large being those with over 2500 units. Figure 4.2 shows the response rates achieved across these size categories when compared to the overall sample.

Size of HA	Overall Sample	Responding HAs
Small >500 units	19.1%	13.0%
Medium 500-2500	41.2%	44.2%
Large 2500+ units	39.7%	42.8%

Figure A4.2: Response Rates of Housing Associations by Size

This shows that the housing associations that made up the sample were predominantly medium and large in size. This pattern was largely echoed in the response rates. Smaller associations were however less likely to respond to the survey than the medium and large associations. Small associations accounted for 19.1% of the sample group but only 13% of the responses. This may be

attributable to the structure of these small associations or the more sporadic development programmes undertaken by them. Smaller associations are less likely to develop new housing regularly and therefore less likely to have a specific policy in the area of tenant involvement. This coupled with the fact that they employ a smaller staff team, and would therefore be less likely to have the resources to complete the questionnaire, might explain this difference in response rates. Cross tabulating the data shows the number of associations firstly in the sample group (Figure 5.3) and then in the responding group (Figure 5.4) from each of the Regions and in each of the size categories.

Regions	Small (>500 units)	Medium (501-2500)	Large (2500+)	Total
London	16	26	28	70
South East	9	19	20	48
East	5	14	15	34
North West	6	18	15	39
South West	8	6	7	21
North East	5	15	9	29
West Mids	2	12	12	26
OVERALL	51	110	106	267

Figure A4.3: Size and Location of Sampled Housing Associations

Regions	Small (>500 units)	Medium (501-2500)	Large (2500+ units)	Total
London	6	17	11	34
South East	4	9	12	25
East	2	5	10	17
North West	2	11	8	21
South West	1	5	4	10
North East	2	9	6	17
West Mids	1	5	8	14
OVERALL	18	61	59	138

Figure A4.4: Size and Location of Responding Housing Associations

Regions	Small (>500 units)	Medium (501-2500)	Large (2500+)
London	38%	65%	39%
South East	44%	47%	60%
East	40%	36%	67%
North West	33%	61%	53%
South West	13%	83%	57%
North East	40%	60%	67%
West Mids	50%	42%	67%

Figure A4.5: Response Rates for Regions and Sizes of HA

This table illustrates the variations in the response rates with the South West region having the most marked variations. This was not unexpected as the sample of housing associations from the region was the smallest with only 21 being sent the questionnaire and only 10 replying with a useable response. Each individual case therefore has a bigger effect on the percentage response rate figures.

Despite some variations overall the responding housing associations seemed to adequately reflect the sample group. There were no major discrepancies in the size and geographical location of the associations that responded when compared to those that made up the sample. Each area and size of association was represented. During the course of the thesis the survey results discussed are those obtained from the 138 housing associations who responded to the questionnaire.