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Muslims' participation in regeneration projects in Britain: A case study of Ellesmere Green, Burngreave, Sheffield

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Abstract

Community participation has been at the centre of British urban planning since its recognition in the late 1960s (the Town and Country Planning Act (1968) and the Skeffington Report People and Planning (1969) promoted as a means of democratising decision-making. Despite its institutionalisation through planning legislation and policy frameworks, participation remains limited in practice and continues to exclude community groups. Communities differentiated by ethnicity, socio-economic status, culture, and religion often experience limited influence over regeneration projects. Muslim communities embody characteristics and are frequently positioned within cohesion and integration policy as challenging to engage. Yet, Muslims are often treated through ethnic or minority categories, with insufficient attention to how lived religious, cultural, and social practices shape their participation.

This thesis examines this gap by investigating Muslims participation in the Ellesmere Green regeneration project in Burngreave, Sheffield, through a qualitative case-study approach. The case study was selected due to the high concentration of Muslim residents in the area. The research combines semi-structured interviews, mapping workshops, observation, and grey literature analysis to examine Muslims participation from community, institutional, and policy perspectives.

The findings show that Muslim participation in the Ellesmere Green project was limited in both extent and influence. Although participation processes were undertaken, many Muslims did not engage in them and did not perceive them as meaningful routes to shape decision-making. Participation was constrained by limited awareness, weak communication, distrust of authorities, language barriers, power imbalances, and representational weaknesses. The thesis argues that meaningful Muslim participation cannot be achieved through standardised participation models alone. Instead, it requires context-sensitive and culturally responsive approaches rooted in everyday community life. This study contributes to knowledge by reconceptualising Muslims participation through lived religious-cultural practice, advancing a more meaningful framework for policy and practice, and demonstrating a reflexive methodological approach to researching and engaging Muslims in regeneration.

Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted for a degree at this, or any other university. All sources of information have been acknowledged.

I also declare that I used generative AI tools during the preparation of this thesis for language support, including improving clarity of expression and grammar. All arguments, analysis, interpretations, and conclusions are my own, and I take full responsibility for the final submitted text.

Farouq Tahar
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Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to the memory of my late father, Mohammed Tahar, whose love, guidance, and values continue to inspire me every day. His wisdom and belief in determination have remained a constant source of strength throughout this journey. Although he is no longer here to witness this achievement, his presence has lived on in my thoughts and in every step of this work. I am certain he would have been proud of this accomplishment, and I hope this thesis stands as a tribute to his lasting influence on my life.

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1. CHAPTER One: Introduction

This opening chapter introduces the thesis by establishing the personal, theoretical, and empirical foundations of the research. It begins by reflecting on the researcher's identity, explaining how being a Muslim of Algerian background with architectural training later shaped the motivation for the study, the approach to fieldwork, and the interpretation of Muslim participation in regeneration. The chapter then sets out the wider research background, locating the study within debates on community participation, urban regeneration, Muslim communities in Britain, and community cohesion and integration agendas. Building on this context, the chapter identifies the key theoretical, practice, and policy gaps addressed by the thesis, before outlining its contribution to knowledge. It then presents the research questions, aim, objectives, and rationale for selecting the Ellesmere Green project in Burngreave, Sheffield, as the case-study site. The chapter concludes by outlining the thesis structure and showing how each chapter supports the argument that Muslim participation in regeneration is constrained by engagement policies and practices, while cohesion and integration frameworks are inadequately incorporated into the process.

1.1. Researcher's Identity

As a Muslim from Algeria with an architectural background studying Muslims participation in Britain, I consider it necessary to begin by reflecting on my identity and how it has been shaped over time, before arriving in Britain, since my arrival in 2010, and after more than fifteen years of living here (including twelve years as a British national). This reflection matters because it has enabled me to recognise and interpret many everyday experiences and emotions that Muslim communities in Britain describe. While my core identity has not changed, political and social conditions have influenced both how I perceive myself in Britain and how I feel Britain has perceived me at different points in time. Locating myself within this timeline helps clarify how my research was motivated and how it was navigated throughout the fieldwork and writing process.

Before moving to Britain, I lived in Algeria for longer than I have lived in Britain so far. In Algeria, my religious and cultural traditions aligned with the mainstream society and never had felt the need to identify as Muslim. I was born there, went to school and university there, and worked

there for three years. I had a clear understanding of how Algerian society functioned and what the moral and legal boundaries were. Daily life was familiar and socially comfortable, and my everyday practices were not positioned as "different" or "problematic" in public space.

When I moved to Britain in 2010, it was a new social and cultural setting. My image of Britain of today (and of the West more broadly) was associated with justice, humanity, tolerance, and robust public systems. During my first years, I experienced Britain (and Sheffield in particular) as relatively receptive. Unconsciously, I began to see myself more explicitly through the label "Muslim", a category that felt newly assigned to me in Britain, and I embraced it with pride. At that stage, I felt that I belonged to British society and followed the societal customs of the country without compromising who I am, alongside other Muslims, including communities with much longer settlement histories, such as South Asian Muslims who have been in Britain for multiple generations. I identified confidently as a British Muslim of Algerian background, and I often explained my attachment to Algeria and Britain by comparing it to my mother and my wife, I love both, but differently. Algeria cared for me and brought me up to be who I am, and Britain embraced and supported me to better myself.

Over time, however, I became more aware that being a visibly Muslim person in Britain can involve an added layer of scrutiny and misrecognition. I initially assumed that misunderstandings and misrepresentations of Islam were limited or would gradually fade. Later, I recognised that repeated terrorist attacks committed in the name of Islam have had wider backlash effects, contributing to a social climate in which Muslims can be positioned, implicitly or explicitly, in a defensive and justificatory posture. In formal terms, Britain's equality framework provides legal protection against discrimination on grounds including "religion or belief" (Equality Act, 2010a). However, legal protection does not automatically translate into everyday social acceptance, and my experience of belonging has fluctuated across political moments and wider public discourse.

Brexit was a further turning point in how I experienced belonging. Although the referendum concerned EU membership, research on the Leave vote consistently identifies immigration as a key driver shaping public attitudes and voting behaviour (Goodwin & Milazzo, 2017). During the campaign, anti-immigration messaging was highly visible, including imagery and narratives about refugees and migration that were widely criticised as inflammatory (Elgot, 2016). In addition, analyses of online discourse during the referendum period documented Islamophobic and xenophobic content and the reporting of hateful incidents in connection with the campaign climate (Miller et al., 2016). The period after the referendum also saw documented spikes in hate incidents, for example, post-referendum reporting highlighted increased racially and religiously

motivated hate crime, and specialist monitoring found that abuse directed at South Asian communities included an explicitly Islamophobic element (Komaromi & Singh, 2016).

These developments pushed me to reconsider how I was perceived in Britain as a Muslim and to question the stability of the idea that one can be both British and Muslim without that identity being contested. This was not a simple linear movement from "belonging" to "not belonging"; rather, it became a repeated process of adjustment and re-evaluation depending on political events, public debate, and everyday interactions.

In the last few years, my sense that anti-Muslim hostility has become more visible, and has been reinforced by national evidence on anti-Muslim hatred and related disorder. The Home Office's hate crime bulletin for the year ending March 2025 reports an increase in religious hate crimes and notes a 19% increase in religious hate crimes targeted at Muslims (excluding the Metropolitan Police Service from trend comparisons), with spikes linked to specific events and subsequent disorder (Home Office, 2025). Parliamentary evidence has also noted that Tell MAMA (Measuring Anti-Muslim Attacks) recorded over 6,000 anti-Muslim hate incidents in 2024, the highest in its history, alongside increased aggression and a greater focus on "*visible Muslims*" (House of Commons, 2026). The link between misinformation, far-right mobilisation, and the targeting of Muslims has been visible in specific incidents too; for example, reporting on the Southport case described how misinformation circulated online, followed by protests in which a local mosque was attacked (Quinn, 2024).

The purpose of narrating this journey is not autobiographical for its own sake. It is to clarify how my identity has motivated the research and informed it throughout, both as a resource and as a challenge. First, it shaped the origin of the research problem. As an Algerian architect[1], I was already attentive to how built environments communicate whose needs are anticipated and whose are treated as exceptions. As a Muslim living in Britain, I increasingly questioned why Muslim presence appears so often to be seen only through limited typologies (such as mosques and halal commerce), and why everyday practices that matter to many Muslims can remain unrecognised in mainstream design and planning (See Section 1.2 for more details).

Second, my identity shaped the fieldwork relationship with participants. When Muslim participants expressed frustrations, hopes, or hesitations about participation, I was often able to understand the logic behind their incentives through shared reference points (such as their

[1] I am a qualified Architect in Algeria, and part of the Algerian National Board of Architects, number 10633-02-10L

frustration with some local authority's dealing with Muslims complains). This did not mean speaking on behalf of participants, but it supported rapport, reduced social distance, and helped me recognise the significance of everyday neighbourhood infrastructures, such as mosques, cafés and restaurants functioning as community hubs and routine place-based interactions (See Chapter Three, Section 3.2).

At the same time, this created methodological and emotional challenges that required constant reflexivity. The most obvious risks were over-identification (assuming I already understand what participants mean) and selective attention (noticing evidence that confirms my concerns). These risks were managed through systematic documentation, triangulation across methods and participant groups (community members and officials), and careful separation of participants' explanations from my own emotional and political timeline (See Chapter Three, Section 3.2).

Finally, this identity journey has shaped the writing process itself. Conducting and writing research about Muslim inclusion while simultaneously negotiating uncertainty about my own belonging has added an emotional layer to the research. As participants' experiences of exclusion, recognition and marginalisation often resonated with my own experiences as a Muslim living in Britain.

This thesis began with a strong sense of hope that research could contribute to fairer participation practices and better engagement with Muslim communities. Writing it, however, has at times taken place under significant anxiety, mostly because the wider environment in which the research sits, has felt increasingly tense and politically charged, evidenced not only in my personal experience but also in rising recorded anti-Muslim hostility and the social impacts of misinformation and disorder (Home Office, 2025). Nonetheless, the hope that this thesis might contribute to improving Muslims lives in Britain sustained me, grounded in the belief that more just and inclusive future remain possible.

To summarise, the researcher's identity journey has motivated the research and shaped how I approached access, engagement, and interpretation of data. It has helped me see why everyday religious-cultural practices and neighbourhood infrastructures matter for participation, while also requiring me to remain reflexive about bias, assumptions, and emotional influence. For this reason, identity is not a separate personal note in the thesis, it is part of the methodological foundation for how the research was designed, conducted, and written. As it shaped my interest in Muslim participation, helped me recognise the importance of religious and cultural practices, supported access and rapport with participants, and informed how I interpreted their accounts.

1.2. Research motivation

Since my arrival in Britain in 2010, as someone who is a Muslim and studied architecture, I have been reflecting on how the presence of Muslims in Britain is expressed in the built environment. My observations suggested that such presence is limited to mosques, Islamic centres, halal shops, and restaurants. While these spaces respond to Muslims religious practices and everyday needs, they do not necessarily address wider cultural, and social requirements of Muslim communities at both private and public levels.

Existing scholarship has shown that minority religious groups often become visible in cities primarily through places of worship and business clusters, which can function as markers of identity (Gale, 2004; Peach & Gale, 2003). In the British context, the growth of mosques since the mid-twentieth century has been widely documented (Gilliat-Ray, 2010; McLoughlin, 2005). However, far less attention has been paid to how everyday housing design, neighbourhood planning, and public infrastructure reflect (or fail to reflect) the lived religious and cultural practices of Muslim communities.

For example, housing design standards in Britain typically assume nuclear family structures and patterns of domestic life that may not align with the larger or extended family arrangements that are common among some Muslim households (Alonso Aranda, 2024; Cheesman, 2007). Spatial configurations such as limited room numbers, and open-plan layouts may not easily accommodate gendered practices of privacy observed in certain Islamic traditions. Similarly, the design of sanitary facilities in both private dwellings and public buildings (particularly the absence of water provision in toilet cubicles) can conflict with Islamic hygiene practices (Hamid et al., 2016). While these design issues are not unique to Muslims, they demonstrate how dominant planning, and architectural norms can unintentionally marginalise minority practices when the needs and lived realities of such communities are not actively considered within participation processes in regeneration projects. As such projects are intended to deliver substantial social, economic, and environmental changes within communities. Their potential to reshape neighbourhood spaces, and everyday life makes it particularly important to examine whether the needs and experiences of the Muslim community are meaningfully considered. Thus, examining Muslims participation is central to regeneration, as it allows an understanding of members ability to influence decisions that affect their neighbourhoods, helps determine whether interventions respond to local needs and lived experiences.

During a field trip to Heeley City Farm in Sheffield as part of my Master's degree, I conducted a small empirical study on Muslim participation in local community initiatives. I found limited evidence of Muslim involvement in the planning processes of local projects such as the Millennium Park and SUM Studios[2] (Heely, Sheffield). This experience deepened my enquiry into the extent and nature of Muslim participation in regeneration projects in Britain.

The constraints of the Master's course, such as the limited timeframe and the relatively small Muslim community in the study area (Heeley), did not allow for solid conclusions regarding the causes and consequences of limited Muslims participation. Nevertheless, the experience raised important questions aligned with broader academic debates on community participation, such as power, and representation in planning. Since Arnstein's (1969) seminal "ladder of citizen participation," scholars have critically examined the extent to which participation processes genuinely redistribute power or provide inclusion (Arnstein, 1969; Cooke & Kothari, 2001). More recent literature has emphasised how ethnic and religious minorities may face structural, cultural, and institutional barriers to meaningful participation (Modood, 2005; Sandercock & Lyssiotis, 2003).

These theoretical debates and my empirical experience encouraged me to undertake an in-depth investigation of Muslim participation in regeneration within an area where Muslim presence is considerably higher and more embedded. By completing a PhD research project focused on this topic, I aimed to generate robust empirical evidence that contributes to ongoing debates around participation and informs planners and local authorities for future practices and policies involving Muslims and their participation in regeneration projects.

My research therefore sought not only to understand whether British Muslim communities participate in regeneration projects, but also how, and with what implications.

1.3. Research background and context

Community participation in regeneration projects has been a sustained topic of academic and professional debate since at least the 1960s, when critiques of technocratic and expert-led planning prompted calls for more democratic and pluralistic decision-making (Arnstein, 1969; Davidoff, 1965). Since then, participation has often been promoted as desirable,

[2] SUM Studios is "*the revival of three beautiful Grade II listed Victorian School Board buildings into a dynamic mix of arts, business and community spaces. The team behind the development, Heeley Trust, had a vision – to transform this local landmark and a gem of Victorian architecture into the heart of a community in Heeley. And so following years of negotiations, work started in 2009 to bring this place back from the brink of dereliction and to make it the hive of activity it is fast becoming.*" sumstudios.co.uk

yet its value and effectiveness have remained challenged across both scholarship and practice. Contemporary debates continue to revolve around what meaningful participation involves, especially questions of power, inclusivity, and public attitudes towards participation (Brownill & Inch, 2019).

In Britain, the statutory and policy foundations for participation have evolved through successive planning reforms. The Town and Country Planning Act (1968) established statutory requirements for publicity and participation, and the Skeffington Committee's report *People and Planning* (1969) sought to translate these statutory requirements into practical approaches for engaging the public in planning. These reforms helped legitimise participation as a core component of planning rather than an optional phase.

Subsequent amendments have continued to formalise community participation. For example, the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 introduced the requirement for local planning authorities to prepare a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI), setting out how communities will be involved in design and planning decisions. More recently, the Localism Act 2011 introduced *Neighbourhood Planning*, providing new ways for communities (through parish councils or neighbourhood forums) to shape development proposals in their areas.

However, within the context of diverse communities in Britain, participation has been repeatedly critiqued for failing to include all community groups in ways that are inclusive, representative, or influential (Beebeejaun, 2006). Exclusion can emerge through multiple and overlapping dimensions, including socio-economic class, ethnicity, age, religion, gender, and disability, as well as through the intersection of these factors. Muslim communities are characterised by an overlapping of these factors and have frequently been discussed within academia and policies through the lenses of disadvantage communities and ethnic minorities, whereas less attention was given to internal diversity or the religious and cultural specificities.

This is partly because the characteristics associated with many British Muslim communities are the same factors that planning scholarship identifies as shaping ineffective participation, such as their ethnic minority status and higher exposure to socio-economic disadvantage and racism (Beebeejaun, 2006). Additionally, cultural and religious practices may not be recognised within standardised participation formats (one-size-fits-all), so, participation risks overlooking some voices (Creasy et al., 2008).

Moreover, Muslims have been at the centre of community cohesion and integration discourse in policies (Cantle, 2001; Casey, 2016; Commission on Integration and Cohesion, 2007) and academia (Alam & Husband, 2013; Samad, 2013) during the last few decades.

Muslims are also often problematised for their social and spatial segregation in particular neighbourhoods, especially in inner-city areas, which are usually explained through their historical settlement patterns, experiences of racism, and the practical value of living near co-ethnic and co-religious networks and services (Phillips, 2006). Yet, their participation in shaping their build environment, such as regeneration projects, is less focused on, particularly in the context of cohesion and integration.

Examining how Muslims participate in regeneration projects, and how that participation is structured by professionals and authorities, is crucial for understanding the extent to which Muslims are recognised within these projects and wider debates on community participation. It is also important for assessing whether existing participation frameworks are capable of responding to the social, cultural, and religious realities of Muslim communities, and how the design of participation shapes the outcomes of regeneration projects, including their implications for community cohesion and integration.

This research therefore brings together different strands of literature in order to examine Muslim participation in regeneration projects not only as a planning issue, but also as a social and political process. While planning scholarship helps explain frameworks of participation, wider debates on identity, inequality, and community relations are needed to understand how participation is shaped in practice.

1.4. Research gaps and Contribution to knowledge

1.4.1. Research gaps

The literature and policies reviewed in the subsequent Chapter (Literature review) broadly endorse community participation in regeneration, yet repeatedly show that it is challenging when realised in practice. Persistent participation problems, such as limited power transfer, weak representation, capacity constraints, mistrust, and tokenism, are most acute in deprived neighbourhoods where minority groups are concentrated. Within these debates, Muslims are frequently present in regeneration, cohesion, and integration discussions, but they are most often approached either through organisational lenses (for example, mosques as representative bodies) or through broad structural categories such as race/ethnicity and socio-economic disadvantage. This means there is limited attention to how everyday religious and cultural practices shape motivations, preferred participation methods, and what their participation entails.

A first gap is theoretical in nature. Participation theories provide strong resources for understanding how power shapes engagement and for distinguishing between "voice" and "influence" (Arnstein, 1969; Davidson, 1998; Gaventa, 2006; Cornwall, 2008; Brownill & Inch, 2019). However, when applied in British regeneration research, Muslim communities are absorbed into categories such as BAME, faith communities, or deprived residents. This research has produced important findings on discrimination, deprivation, and representation deficits but obscures what is distinctive about participation when religion is treated as a lived everyday practice rather than an organisational label. Where Muslim (dis)engagement is explained, it is often framed as either a generic participation problem, such as tokenism, weak power transfer, and reliance on few non-representative members (Blakeley & Evans, 2009); or as a generic minority problem, racism, discrimination, and socio-economic exclusion (Heath & Cheung, 2007). What remains underdeveloped is an integrated account linking lived religious-cultural practices to participation processes and outcomes in regeneration projects.

A second practice gap concerns the ways in which participation is approached and recognised. In practice, engagement with Muslim communities often depends on formal, institutionally legible bodies, such as representative organisations (mosques), recognised leaders, or groups classified under broader ethnic minority or faith categories (Cornwall, 2008; Farnell et al., 2003; Mansuri & Rao, 2013). However, participation may also be mediated through informal neighbourhood infrastructures and everyday routines that do not appear as participation hubs in official terms. The practice gap, therefore, lies in the tendency to search for participation where institutions expect to find it, rather than where it is actually generated and mediated in everyday community life. This is important as capacity, trust, and representation are not fixed attributes of communities, but are shaped through institutional arrangements, social infrastructures, and repeated interaction under conditions of recognition and safety (Cornwall, 2008; Fung & Wright, 2003; Lowndes & Wilson, 2001; Mansuri & Rao, 2013). Furthermore, participation often fails due to reoccurring shortcomings that theory would predict, including limited time participation within prearranged settings, weak evaluation feedback, limited resourcing and funding, and limited routes from input to influence, leading to power imbalances and tokenistic approaches (Arnstein, 1969; Cooke & Kothari, 2001; Cornwall, 2008).

In Muslim-concentrated neighbourhoods, these patterns are often intensified by problems of recognition and accessibility. This can be seen in the tendency to engage through a narrow set of representatives despite the internal diversity of the community, and in the reliance on generic minority-barriers models that do not adequately address culturally and religiously shaped

conditions of access, such as appropriate and inclusive routes for Muslim women's participation.

As a result, participation strategies to engage Muslims that rely primarily on formal or recognised intermediaries risk overlooking the everyday practices and spaces through which Muslim participation is enabled, negotiated, or constrained.

A third gap is related to the policy level. Participation has been institutionalised in different ways, procedural obligations with limited redistribution of power (e.g. Cantle, 2001; Casey, 2016; UK Government, 2018; Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004; Duty to Involve, 2009), more intensive models that were time-limited and funding-dependent (e.g., New Deal for Communities), and formally empowering instruments that remain capacity-dependent in practice (e.g., Localism Act 2011 and Neighbourhood Planning initiatives).

Meanwhile, cohesion and integration agendas have frequently positioned Muslims at the centre of diagnoses of segregation, yet participation recommendations tend to remain generic and place-based rather than calibrated to the socio-spatial and realities shaping Muslims' everyday lives (Amin, 2002; Phillips, 2006; Phillips et al., 2007). The policy gap, therefore, lies in the disparity between the prominence of participation in policy discourse and the weak specification of how it should be organised in relation to Muslim communities.

1.4.2. Thesis contribution

This thesis addresses these gaps by aligning its contributions directly to the literature, practice, and policy limitations identified above. First, it contributes to the literature by arguing for an ethnographically informed approach to Muslim participation in regeneration, one that examines how everyday religious and cultural practices shape experiences of participation while retaining participation theories' central concern with power and influence (Arnstein, 1969; Cornwall, 2008; Fung & Wright, 2003; Gaventa, 2006; Pretty, 1995). Rather than treating Muslims primarily as an organisational category or a segment within broader minority/deprivation classifications, the thesis develops an integrated account of how everyday religious-cultural practices condition motivations, trust relations, and participation preferences, and how these translate into influence in regeneration decision-making.

Second, it provides a policy and practice contribution by showing that meaningful Muslim participation depends on the policy frameworks and practical arrangements through which participation is structured and enabled. At the policy level, it makes a contribution by examining

participation within its policy framework, showing how cohesion and integration agendas (Cantle, 2001; Casey, 2016; UK Government, 2018), and the other structures of participation policy instruments (Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004; New Deal for Communities; Localism Act 2011) shape local expectations, partnership arrangements, and the practical scope of influence. This directly addresses the gap between policy endorsement of participation and the limited clarity on how such endorsement becomes operational in regeneration affecting Muslim communities from a community cohesion and integration lens.

At the practice level, the thesis contributes to knowledge by shifting analytical attention to not just *whether* Muslims participate, but to *how* participation is constructed by planners and local authorities. In doing so, it addresses directly the predictable patterns of tokenism, inadequate representativeness and weak power transfer identified in both theory and practice, as discussed above.

Beyond the gaps identifies above, the thesis makes a methodological contribution by demonstrating how research on Muslim participation in regeneration can be conducted in a context-sensitive, culturally responsive, and reflexive way. Through a qualitative case-study approach combining interviews, mapping workshops, observation, and grey literature analysis, the study shows that researching Muslim communities requires methodological flexibility, sustained engagement, and sensitivity to the social realities of the fieldwork. The research also demonstrates the value of navigating a Muslim-concentrated neighbourhood such as Burngreave through a reflexive insider-outsider position, adaptive methods, and trusted local networks. In doing so, the thesis contributes to how Muslim communities can be researched and engaged with more effectively in similar urban and social contexts.

1.5. Research questions, site, aim and objectives.

1.5.1. Research questions

In light of the knowledge gaps identified above, this research focuses on three interconnected parts that reflect the scope of the study. The first concerns the nature of Muslim community participation in regeneration projects in a Muslim-concentrated area, including issues of diversity, representation, and attitudes towards participation. The second examines the procedures and practices followed by stakeholders other than Muslims, including planners, and local government officials/officers, in engaging Muslim communities in participation processes. The final part investigates the impact of governmental community cohesion and integration

agendas on Muslim participation in regeneration at the local level. Accordingly, the research questions are:

- **To what extent and in what ways do Muslims participate in local regeneration projects?**
- **How do local authorities approach, and engage with, Muslim communities in local regeneration processes, and what challenges do they face?**
- **How are the community cohesion and integration concepts understood and operationalised by Muslim residents and local authorities, and how are national and local policy frameworks considered in local regeneration projects?**

1.5.2. Research Site

In order to address the research questions empirically, I have chosen to carry out a fieldwork in the area of Burngreave in Sheffield to explore Muslims participation in the development of Ellesmere Green project (see Figure 1.1), for the following reasons. Sheffield is a multi-ethnic city in which Muslims form the largest non-Christian religious group. According to the 2021 Census, 10.3% of Sheffield's population identified as Muslim, compared with 7.7% in 2011 (ONS, 2023). This indicates both the significance and the growing presence of Muslim communities in the city. At the same time, although Muslims in northern England have received considerable attention in policy and academic debates since the 2001 disturbances, Sheffield has received far less attention than cities such as Bradford, Oldham, or Burnley. Focusing on Sheffield therefore provides evidence from an important but relatively underexamined urban context.

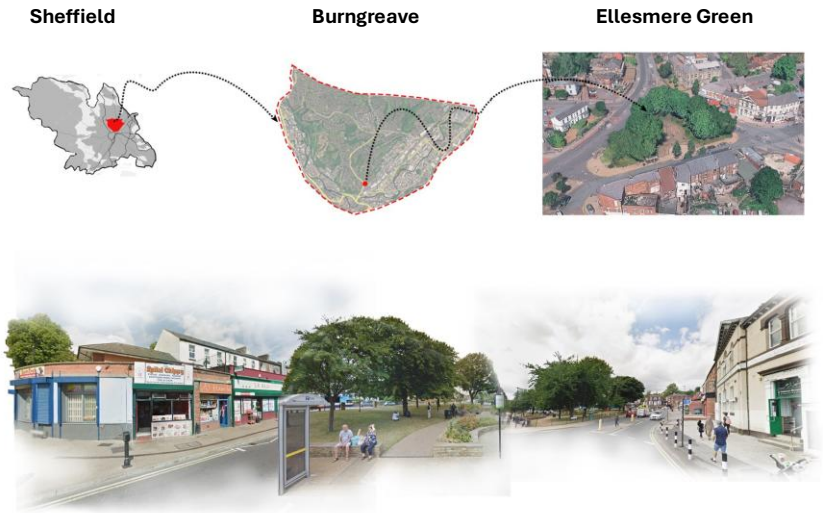


Figure 1.1: The area, and site of research

Source: Illustrated by the author based on Google Earth imagery

Within Sheffield, Burngreave provides a particularly relevant setting in which to examine Muslim participation in regeneration, as it is one of the city's most deprived areas and has one of the highest concentrations of Muslim residents in Sheffield. Available 2021 ward-level population data indicate that Muslims form the largest religious group in Burngreave, accounting for around 46.5% of residents (ONS, 2021). This makes the area especially suitable for exploring how issues of diversity and representativeness operate in relation to participation within a locally concentrated yet internally diverse Muslim community. In addition, my regular visits to Burngreave for Friday prayers and shopping, together with existing social connections in the area, helped facilitate access to community members and leaders.

At an early stage, I considered selecting the Tesco Extra on Savile Street as the case study. The store appeared relevant as it attracted shoppers from beyond the immediate neighbourhood, and I was interested in examining whether and how the local Muslim community had been involved in its design and implementation, as well as its wider social and economic effects on the area and on the Muslim community in particular. However, since the development was primarily a private commercial investment, it did not constitute a regeneration project in the fuller sense of an intervention intended to improve an area socially, economically, physically and environmentally.

The Ellesmere Green project was therefore selected because it offered a stronger opportunity to investigate Muslims participation through a visible regeneration project that was not limited to a minor physical alteration but formed part of a broader public space improvement scheme intended to deliver social, environmental, and economic benefits to the surrounding area (Sheffield City Council, 2007a). These overreaching intended goals qualify the project to be considered as a regeneration project, as per the Communities and Local Government Committee definition in 2011: *"Regeneration is a long-term, comprehensive process which aims to tackle social, economic, physical and environmental issues in places where the market has failed."* (House of Commons Communities and Local Government Committee, 2011)(see more details in Chapter Tow, Section 2.3.1). This project also had a documented participation history. Earlier stages of consultation were undertaken in the mid-2000s, and revised proposals were consulted upon again in 2012, before implementation was expected to begin in 2013 (Haimeed, 2012), and was completed by the summer of the same year. This made the project especially useful for examining how participation was organised and whether community input appeared to shape the final outcomes.

A further reason for selecting Ellesmere Green was that it had already been completed just under a decade before the time the fieldwork was undertaken. This allowed the research to move beyond the study of participation procedures alone and to consider the relationship between participation, the completed design, and the later social condition and use of the space. In this way, the project enabled an assessment not only of how local authorities attempted to engage the local Muslim community, but also of whether the outcomes reflected local needs and wider cohesion and integration concerns. The case was therefore well suited to the thesis's qualitative case-study approach, which brought together semi-structured interviews, mapping workshops, observation, and grey literature analysis in order to examine participation from community, institutional, and policy perspectives (For methodology, see Chapter Three). Chapter Four provides further details about Sheffield, Burngreave and Ellesmere Green project.

1.5.3. Research aim

To address these questions, and through conducting the research in the setting of the Ellesmere Green project in Burngreave, this study aims **to explore Muslims participation in local regeneration projects and to investigate the community cohesion and integration policies considerations in that process.**

1.5.4. Research objectives

To achieve this aim, the research has three objectives:

- **To demonstrate the Muslims' perceptions on their participation in local regeneration projects, and the local dynamics that shape these perceptions.**

- **To examine local authorities' approaches to engaging Muslim communities in local regeneration processes, and to identify the challenges influencing that engagement.**

- **To analyse the Muslims and local authorities conceptualisation and operationalisation of cohesion and integration in light of policy framework, and its influence in shaping Muslims participation in local regeneration projects.**

1.6. Thesis structure

This thesis is organised into eight chapters that progress from the broader theoretical and policy context of Muslim participation in regeneration projects to the detailed empirical investigation of the Ellesmere Green project in Burngreave, and finally to the wider implications of the findings for theory, policy, practice, and future research.

This Chapter (One) introduced the thesis by outlining the researcher's identity, the background and rationale for the study, the main knowledge gaps, and the ways in which the research contribute to existing knowledge. It also set out the research aim, objectives, and questions that guide the thesis. In addition, the chapter explained the significance of Burngreave and the Ellesmere Green project as the case study through which these issues are examined. The following section outlines the structure of the remaining chapters and briefly explains what each chapter covers.

Chapter Two provides the literature review and establishes the conceptual and policy foundations of the research. It begins by reviewing the main theories of community participation, particularly in relation to power, representation, influence, and institutional design. It then examines literature on regeneration, minority communities, and the position of Muslim communities in Britain, showing that Muslims are often approached either through broad minority categories or through narrow organisational lenses. The chapter also reviews policy frameworks on community participation, community cohesion, and integration, paying particular attention to how Muslims have been positioned within these agendas. It concludes by identifying the central research gaps that the thesis addresses.

Chapter Three sets out the methodological framework of the study. It explains and justifies the use of a qualitative case-study approach grounded in an interpretivist perspective. The chapter reflects on the researcher's positionality and its significance for access, trust, and interpretation of data, in a Muslim-concentrated neighbourhood. It then discusses the ethical considerations that shaped the research and outlines the multi-method strategy used for data collection, including semi-structured interviews, mapping workshops, observation, and grey literature analysis. Finally, the chapter explains how the data were organised, analysed, and triangulated through a reflexive thematic approach in order to generate the main empirical themes of the thesis.

Chapter Four presents the case study context in detail and examines the Ellesmere Green project within its wider Burngreave neighbourhood setting. It situates the project within the

social, spatial, and historical realities of Burngreave, including its deprivation, ethnic and religious diversity, and wider urban conditions. The chapter also considers the intended aims of the project, the physical changes made to the site, and the later condition of the space after completion. In doing so, it begins to show the disconnect between physical regeneration objectives and the longer-term social sustainability of the project (in another word, the failure of the project).

Chapter Five presents and examines the perceptions of the local Muslim community on how participation in the Ellesmere Green project was experienced from within the neighbourhood. It explores local awareness of the project, perceptions of the process, issues of trust, and the extent to which community members felt their views were recognised or acted upon. The chapter also discusses questions of representation, accessibility, gender, and the role of everyday local spaces such as mosques, shops, cafés, and other social settings in shaping participation. In doing so, Chapter Five addresses the first research question by showing to what extent and in what ways local Muslims participated, and by identifying the gap between formal participation and meaningful community influence.

Chapter Six shifts attention to the institutional side of the participation process. It examines how planners, council officers, and other local officials engaged with the Muslim community in relation to the Ellesmere Green project, and how participation was shaped by official procedures. The chapter analyses the role of local participation policy frameworks and considers the extent to which these frameworks translated into meaningful participation on the ground. It also explores how local council officials understood the local Muslim community in Burngreave, its representation in the process, and the difficulties faced throughout the project. In addition, the chapter extends this exploration beyond the council to discuss the relationship between the community and other local authorities including the local police and NHS (National Health Service). In doing so, the chapter addresses the second research question by showing how participation was constructed from the perspective of local authorities, and their efforts into engaging the local Muslims.

Chapter Seven examines the role of community cohesion and integration policy frameworks, in shaping Muslim participation in regeneration projects. The chapter analyses how cohesion and integration national and local policy discourses framed issues such as segregation, belonging, equality, and inter-community relations, and considers how these wider agendas influenced expectations around regeneration projects. It reflects on the implications of cohesion and integration on the Ellesmere Green case, particularly in relation to the limits of physical

improvement alone and the need to consider the social (and by extension, economic and environmental) aspect of place. By linking local findings to community cohesion and integration policies, the chapter addresses the third research question and shows that Muslims participation in regeneration is interconnected (and sometimes shaped by) to the broader cohesion and integration policy context.

Chapter Eight brings the thesis together and presents its overall conclusions. It begins by developing a more meaningful approach to engaging Muslim communities in local regeneration projects, then revisiting the main findings in relation to the research questions. The chapter then sets out the key contributions of the thesis to the literature, to policy and practice, and to methodology. Finally, it reflects on the limitations of the research and identifies directions for future research.

2. CHAPTER Two: Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

This chapter establishes the conceptual, empirical, and policy foundations for analysing Muslim participation in urban regeneration in Britain. It begins by setting out the theoretical debates of community participation, clarifying how participation has been defined, its typologies, and how it has been evaluated in planning and regeneration scholarship, with particular attention to questions of power, legitimacy, community representation and capacity (Arnstein, 1969; Fung & Wright, 2003; Cornwall, 2008; Mansuri & Rao, 2013). It then situates these debates within the evolution of British regeneration policy, tracing how participation has moved from procedural consultation toward more institutionalised forms of involvement across planning and area-based regeneration initiatives.

The chapter subsequently turns to minority participation, examining how ethnic (and faith) communities have been included in regeneration agendas and equalities frameworks since the 1990s. For the sake of this research, it focuses specifically on Muslims in Britain, outlining the historical, demographic, socio-economic, and spatial conditions that shape their presence in the British context. By examining both the manifestation of Muslim presence in the built environment and the policy framing of cohesion and integration, the chapter highlights how Muslims have been positioned within regeneration and participation discourses.

Bringing these strands together, the chapter concludes by identifying interrelated literature, practice, and policy gaps, that question how participation is conceptualised for, and understood by Muslim communities, how the process of participation is delivered in practice by planners and authority, and how national and local policy frameworks shape the conditions under which Muslims participation in regeneration is approached.

Thus, the literature review is organised in a funnel-like structure, progressing from broad conceptual and theoretical debates to the more specific bodies of literature most directly relevant to the study, thereby highlighting the key theory, practice, and policy gaps (see Figure 2.1)

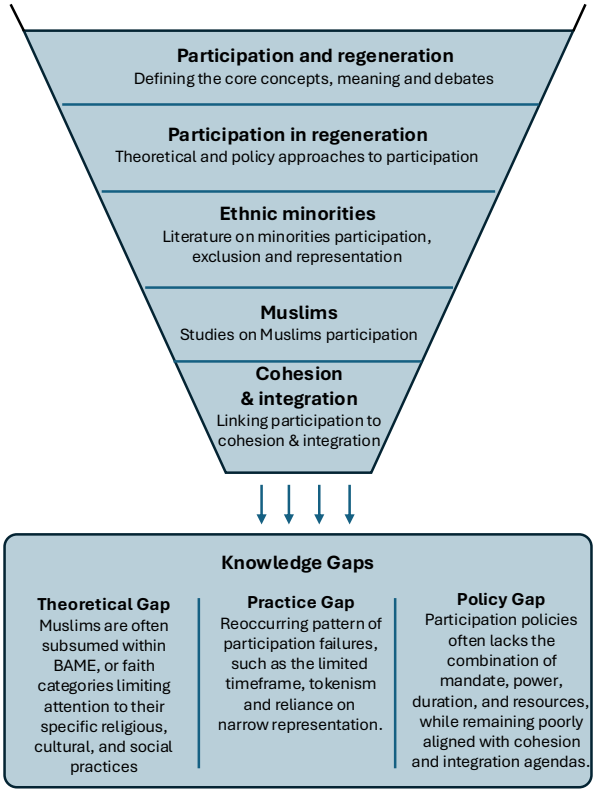


Figure 2.1: Literature review approach

Source: Author

2.2. Community Participation (Definitions, Benefits, and Limitations)

As the focus of this thesis is community participation in regeneration projects, this section establishes the conceptual and analytical foundations needed to evaluate participation. It begins by clarifying what is meant by urban regeneration and how regeneration in Britain has evolved from largely physical redevelopment towards more integrated approaches that combine economic, social, and environmental objectives. It then turns to *community participation*, reviewing how it is defined and conceptualised in the literature and showing that participation is best understood as a spectrum of arrangements that vary by purpose, process, and the distribution of power between communities and institutions. Participation typologies and levels are used to differentiate between approaches that primarily inform or consult and those that enable partnership or empowerment, providing a framework for assessing whether communities can genuinely shape decisions. On this basis, the section synthesises the main benefits associated with meaningful participation alongside the key limitations and critiques that can prevent these outcomes.

2.2.1. What is regeneration?

Urban regeneration has become a central theme in contemporary urban planning, policy, and academic discourse, as cities worldwide grapple with the challenges of urban decay, economic decline, and social inequality. The concept of urban regeneration has evolved in Britain over time to encompass a range of meanings, strategies, and outcomes. Although different terminologies were used such as urban renewal in the 1960s -following the WWII for slum clearance, and urban renaissance in the mid-2000s -to align with the sustainable community agendas, urban regeneration remains the most commonly used term by professional, academic and policy makers (Tallon, 2013).

Early interventions focused primarily on physical redevelopment, such as slum clearance, new housing estates, and infrastructure improvements, driven by a welfare state ideology that prioritised state-led solutions (Beswick & Tsenkova, 2002).

By the late 20th century, urban policy had shifted. The 1980s saw the rise of property-led regeneration, with government initiatives designed to attract private investment into declining areas, such as the creation of Urban Development Corporations (UDCs) and Enterprise Zones, which sought to stimulate economic growth and physical renewal through deregulation (Lawless, 1988).

However, this 1980s model was criticised for neglecting social and environmental concerns, often resulting in the displacement of existing communities, whilst the 1990s and 2000s regeneration projects brought a more holistic approach, integrating economic, social, and environmental objectives. Since then, urban regenerations became a multi-dimensional process, involving not just physical improvements but also efforts to tackle social exclusion, improve public services, and enhance environmental sustainability (Tallon, 2020).

This includes a comprehensive process that involves physical renewal (upgrading infrastructure, public spaces, and the built environment), economic revitalisation (attracting investment, creating jobs, and supporting local businesses), social regeneration (enhancing community life, health, education, and social inclusion), and environmental sustainability (redeveloping brownfield sites, creating green spaces, and reducing environmental impact) (Roberts et al., 2017). Roberts et al (2017) summarised the definition of urban regeneration as *"a comprehensive and integrated vision and action which seeks to resolve urban problems and bring about a lasting improvement in the economic, physical, social and environmental condition of an area that has been subject to change or offers opportunities for improvement."* (Roberts et al., 2017, p.18). This definition is echoed across many sources, which emphasise that urban

regeneration is not a singular intervention but a multifaceted approach addressing physical, economic, social, and environmental challenges (Altrock, 2022; Couch et al., 2011; Gökşin & Müderrisoğlu, 2005). Furthermore, at the policy level, this orientation was reflected in a clear parliamentary definition of regeneration projects from the House of Commons Communities and Local Government Committee in 2011:

"Regeneration is a long-term, comprehensive process which aims to tackle social, economic, physical and environmental issues in places where the market has failed." (House of Commons Communities and Local Government Committee, 2011, p. 3) However, an important dimension of urban regeneration is its context-specific nature. There is no universal recipe for regeneration; successful projects are tailored to the unique history, culture, demographics, and economic structure of each locality (Couch et al., 2011). This requires extensive stakeholder engagement, including residents, businesses, and public authorities in the planning, decision-making, and implementation processes, to ensure that interventions are responsive to local needs and aspirations (Lawless & Pearson, 2012).

Thus, community participation is not just part of urban regeneration, but it is a central part to ensure that projects are responsive to local needs, enhance legitimacy, and foster a sense of ownership among affected communities. The following section will discuss community participation, its typologies, benefits and limitations.

2.2.2. Participation Definitions & Typologies

Community participation in its broad definition, reflects the involvement of local community members in the decision-making process on issues that influence their wellbeing (Adjei Mensah et al., 2017). Academic definitions and typologies of community participation often centre on the involvement of individuals and groups in processes that affect their lives, however, they differ on the core aspect that conceptualise participation, including power, process and outcomes. Arnstein's seminal "*ladder of citizen participation*" conceptualises participation as a spectrum, ranging from manipulation and tokenism to genuine citizen power, thereby emphasising the degree of influence (power) communities have over decision-making processes (Arnstein, 1969) (see Figure 2.2).

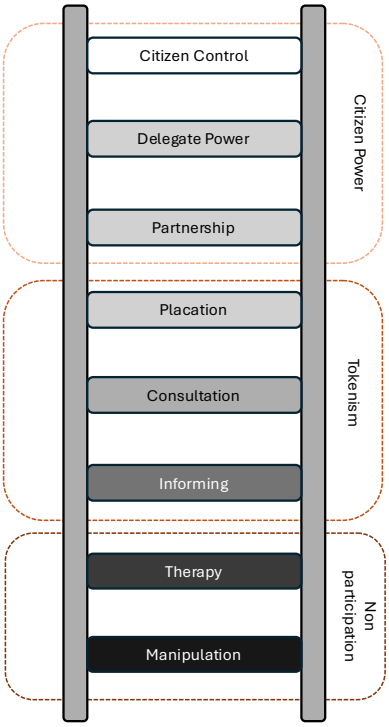


Figure 2.2: Arnstein Participation Lader, 1969

Source: Arnstein (1969), edited by the author

Similarly, Corburn (2016) argues that community participation is about balancing power between authorities and community members, in order to generate trust and social justice (Corburn, 2003). This framework highlights the importance of power dynamics and the potential for participation to be either substantive or merely symbolic. Other scholars adopt a more process-oriented perspective, as they emphasise how participation is organised, mediated, and experienced in practice. White (1996), for example, distinguishes between nominal, instrumental, representative, and transformative participation, showing that participation can serve different functions depending on how and why it is mobilised (White, 1996). Similarly, Cornwall (2008) shifts attention to the spaces and practices of participation, arguing that participation should be understood through questions such as who creates the space, who is invited, who is excluded, and how rules and agendas are set (Cornwall, 2008)(see Figure 2.3). From this perspective, participation is not only about whether communities are present, but also about the conditions under which their participation becomes meaningful.

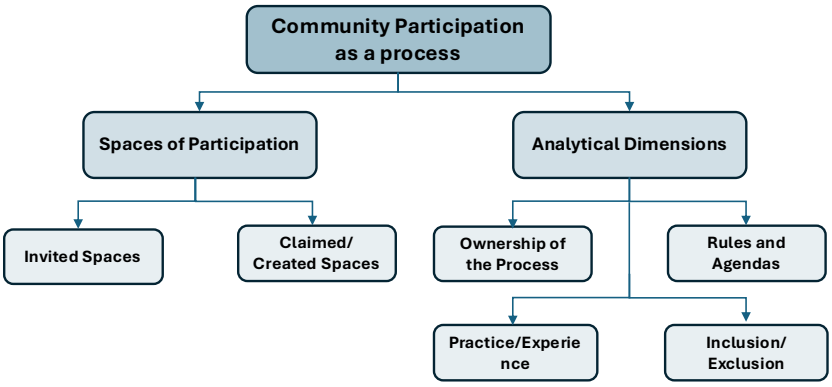


Figure 2.3: Community Participation as a process, Cornwall, 2008

Source: Author, adopted from Cornwall (2008)

In contrast, some definitions stress the outcomes of participation as the core defining element of community participation. Harvey et al. (2002) describe community participation as "*the involvement of people in the community in projects to solve their own problems*," with an emphasis on the tangible benefits and improvements resulting from participatory processes (Harvey et al., 2002, p. 177). This outcome-oriented view is echoed in the World Health Organisation's (WHO) definition, which frames participation as "*a process by which people are enabled to become actively and genuinely involved in defining the issues of concern to them, in making decisions about factors that affect their lives, in formulating and implementing policies, in planning, developing and delivering services and in taking action to achieve change*"(World Health Organization. Regional Office for Europe, 2002, p. 10).

However, participation also takes different shapes, horizontal (people working with one another in communities) versus vertical (people engaging with state institutions), and top-down (invited by authorities) versus bottom-up (initiated by communities) (J.-A. Atkinson et al., 2011).

Furthermore, definitions of community participation cannot be separated from its typologies, as the extent and the weight of each aspect constituting the concept determines the level and even the name of each participation. For example, in Arnstein's ladder of participation, the degree of citizen power determines the type and the name of that process, such as the *Tokenism* being a reflection of a limited community power (see Figure 2.2). Another participation wheel was developed by Davidson's Participation Wheel (1998) includes four principal steps, inform the community members, consult them, enable them to participate and empower them (Davidson, 1998) (See Figure 2.4.).

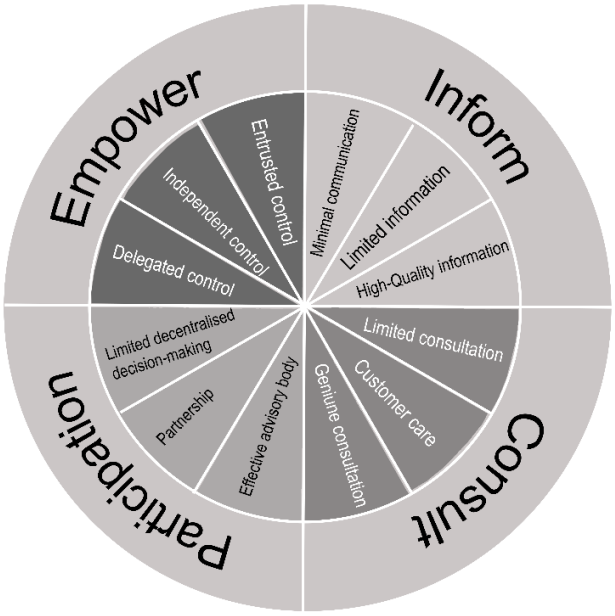


Figure 2.4: Davidson's Participation Wheel, 1998

Source: Davidson's Participation Wheel (1998) edited by the author

More recently, Brownill & Inch (2019) categorises community participation based on four aspects that describe the push and pull combat between planner and local government on one side and community members on the other side. First, the purpose of it as whether it is a manipulation or an empowerment tool for communities; second, the mode of which is performed either through representation or participatory exercises; third, the degree of the participants representativeness within diverse community groups; fourth, the community power versus the authorities and experts bureaucratic means to lead the entire process of planning from owning the land to building it and using it (Brownill & Inch, 2019) (see Figure 2.5).

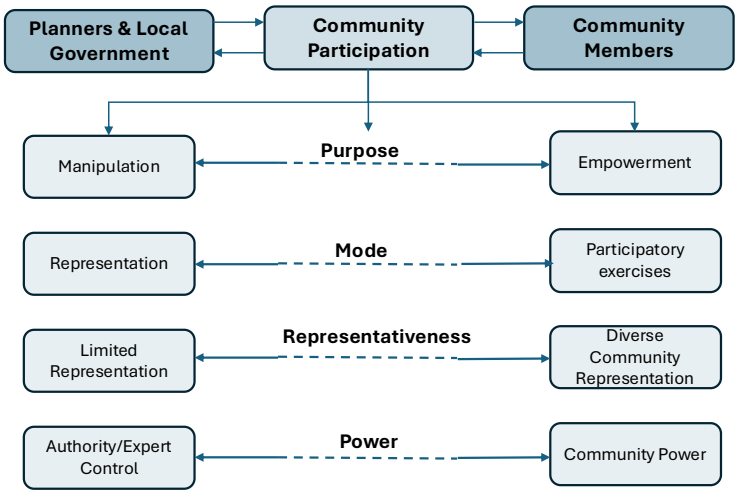


Figure 2.5: Four aspects of Community Participation, Brownill & Inch (2019)

Source: Author, based on Brownill & Inch (2019)

Therefore, despite some differences in the above conceptualisations of participation, there are common levels that reflect various degrees of engaging communities. These can be summarised as follow; the lowest level is to inform community members about any development projects that are taking place in their area (information); then, the next level is to allow them to take part in some form of consultation meetings during the design and planning process (consultation); and the highest extent is to enable communities to take control in the planning, design and implementation processes of the projects (empowerment).

Furthermore, these perspectives show that participation should not be understood simply as a set of levels, but as a configuration of power, process, and outcomes. In other words, this research takes into account the extent of influence communities have, how participation is organised and experienced in practice, and whether it produces meaningful improvements in the everyday life of the community.

With this conceptual grounding established, the next step is to examine the benefits that constitute meaningful participation in regeneration, including its contribution to project design, legitimacy, community capacity, and wider outcomes.

2.2.3. Benefits of Participation

In theory, meaningful community participation is widely documented to generate multiple positive outcomes, including effective design, enhanced legitimacy through public support, and skill- and capacity-building (Beierle & Cayford, 2002; Mansuri & Rao, 2013a) (See Figure 2.6)

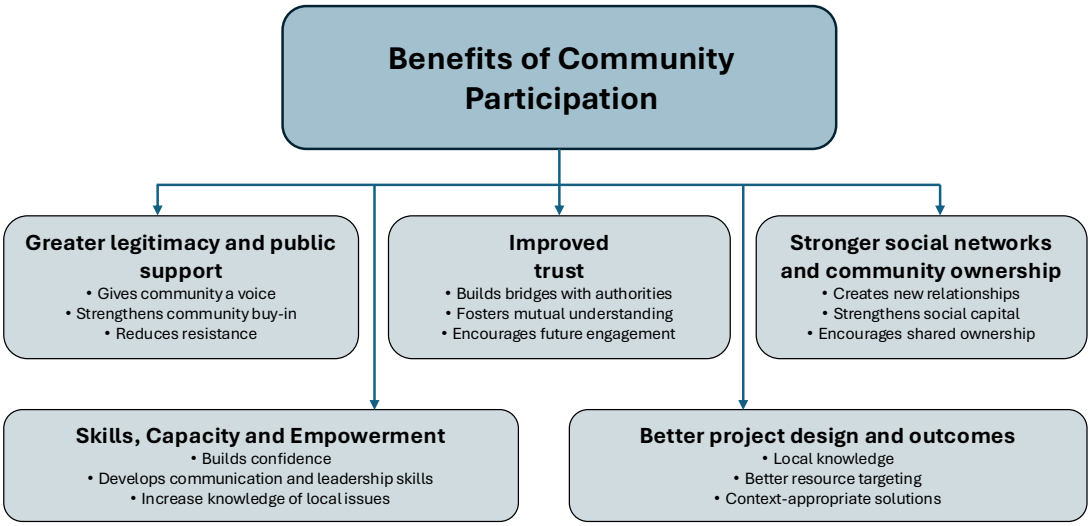


Figure 2.6: Benefits of Community participation in regeneration projects

Source: Author, adapted from the literature (Beierle & Cayford, 2002; Mansuri & Rao, 2013a)

Researchers have noted that involving community members in decision-making can improve project design and effectiveness by incorporating local knowledge and needs into solutions. For example, studies of regeneration have found that greater beneficiary participation is associated with better project outcomes and more pro-poor targeting of resources (Gonçalves, 2014; Lawless & Pearson, 2012; Touchton & Wampler, 2014). Community input often uncovers insights and innovative ideas that outside experts might overlook, leading to more context-appropriate and sustainable interventions (Beierle & Cayford, 2002; Mansuri & Rao, 2013a).

Another key benefit is enhanced legitimacy and public support for initiatives. Decisions developed through participatory processes are seen as more legitimate, as affected people have had a voice in them. This often translates into greater community buy-in and reduced opposition (Charnley & Engelbert, 2005). Community participation, thus, builds a sense of ownership over projects, making residents more likely to support and cooperate with authorities (Irvin & Stansbury, 2004).

Community participation also contributes to skill and capacity-building and empowerment at the individual and community level. Through taking part in committees, workshops, or public meetings, residents develop new skills (e.g. communication and planning) and gain knowledge about the issues at hand (Swart et al., 2023). Studies such as Ohmer (2007) have shown that active participants often report increased self-confidence and a sense of efficacy in influencing local matters (Ohmer, 2007). They may also acquire leadership experience and strengthen their social networks, forming new relationships and social connectedness with neighbours (Swart et al., 2023).

Moreover, community participation can build bridges and trust between communities and authorities, particularly in contexts where there is historical mistrust. When officials genuinely listen to and respect local input, it demonstrates a commitment to the community's well-being, which can gradually improve relationships. Cargo & Mercer (2008) suggest that collaborative decision-making processes foster mutual understanding and reduce suspicion, as residents see that their perspectives are valued (Cargo & Mercer, 2008). Over time, this can enhance trust in institutions and encourage more community engagement. However, it is important to note that these positive effects depend on participation being genuine, as if communities feel the process is tokenistic or manipulative, it can backfire and deepen mistrust (Cooke & Kothari, 2001). But when done with inclusive approach, cultural sensitivity, and power is shared, participation can improve relations, especially in low-income or minority communities that have historically been excluded. So, involving them as equal partners in projects helps validate their experiences and

demonstrates that authorities can be responsive, thereby laying the groundwork for further cooperation. This will be further expanded in Section 2.5.

In short, meaningful community participation leads to a range of benefits documented in the literature such as (Beierle & Cayford, 2002; Cargo & Mercer, 2008; Mansuri & Rao, 2013a), as it can improve the quality and effectiveness of projects through local perceptions, increase the legitimacy and public acceptance of decisions, build individual and collective capacity (confidence, skills, social capital), and promote greater trust in society and institutions. However, these community participation benefits are constantly challenged with limitations that prevent it from achieving better outcomes.

2.2.4. Limitations and Critiques

Community participation in regeneration, while often promoted as an essential ingredient for successful projects as explained above, faces a range of challenges and limitations. The literature reviewed in this section demonstrates that participation does not automatically deliver the above benefits, because it is shaped by the institutional and socio-political conditions in which regeneration occurs. In particular, the core problems identified by scholars concern the persistence of power imbalance and the risk of tokenistic engagement (Arnstein, 1969; Cooke & Kothari, 2001; Cornwall, 2008), enduring representation deficits (Dargan, 2009; Lowndes & Wilson, 2001; Zakhour, 2020), capacity constraints on both community and institutional sides (Barnes et al., 2007; Farnell et al., 2003), and the ways cultural norms and ethnic/racial dynamics can exclude certain groups or oversimplify internal diversity (Beebeejaun, 2006; Johnson & Miles, 2014; Perrin et al., 2016) (see Figure 2.7)

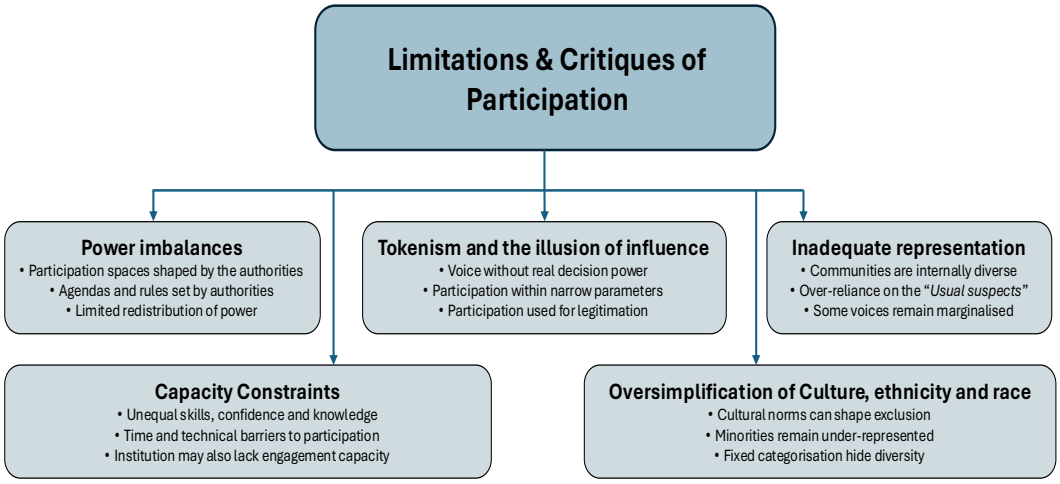


Figure 2.7: Limitations and Critiques of Participation

Source: Author, based on the participation literature (Arnstein, 1969; Cooke & Kothari, 2001; Lowndes & Wilson, 2001; Beebeejaun, 2006; Barnes et al., 2007)

2.2.4.1. Power Imbalances

Creating, organising and facilitating a participation forum, does not by itself erase the underlying power imbalance between local authorities and residents. Arnstein noted that at the lowest rungs of her ladder, participation is essentially a "*therapeutic*" diversion, which is a tactic for powerholders to educate participants rather than empower them (Arnstein, 1969). More recent, Cornwall (2008) described participation in regeneration projects arenas as *"invited spaces"*, which are set up by authorities, with agendas, rules, and scope defined from above (Cornwall, 2008). Similarly, Fung & Wright (2003) caution, these spaces tend to be constrained by the framework set by those in power, and decisions about what can be discussed or how far community input can influence outcomes are frequently bounded by officials or funding criteria (Fung & Wright, 2003).

In British regeneration programs, funding streams and government targets inherently shape the process, with local councils hold significant power, while residents can rarely dictate terms beyond what funders allow (Hastings, 1996; Imrie & Raco, 2003; Lawless et al., 2010). This can dilute the transformative potential of participation, as if allocation of resources and/or changes to power structures are out of discussion, community input risks being manipulated (Cornwall, 2004). As Fung and Wright (2003) note, without institutional designs that devolve real authority, participation serves more as consultative legitimation than shared governance (Fung & Wright, 2003). In short, when power imbalances are left intact, participation may function more as public relations and interactions than community empowerment.

2.2.4.2. Tokenism and the Illusion of Influence

One of the most frequent critiques is that participation can be tokenistic as Sherry Arnstein (1969) famously described middle-rung participation (e.g. being *informed* or *consulted*) as allowing the "*have-nots to hear and have a voice"* without assurance that their input will change outcomes (Arnstein, 1969). In British regeneration, partnership and empowerment discourses can hide arrangements in which the core agenda is determined by public agencies, funders, and private partners, while communities are consulted within narrow, pre-defined parameters (R. Atkinson, 1999). As a result, consultation can function as a mechanism of legitimation, by demonstrating that communities were engaged without materially redistributing authority over decisions, budgets, or outcomes (Cooke & Kothari, 2001). Over time, these risks generating disengagement, as residents learn that participation may not translate into decision-shaping power.

2.2.4.3. Inadequate Representation

Another limitation is the issue of representation. The community is rarely a homogeneous, single voice, and neighbourhoods are diverse in class, ethnicity, age, and religion. Yet, in many regeneration projects, only a small section of residents participates, often those who are older, better educated, or simply the most outspoken. When participation relies on a small set of accessible or institutionally legible representatives, it can reproduce exclusions, marginalising quieter groups and those with less social capital, and raising problems legitimacy (Dargan, 2009; Zakhour, 2020). Regeneration processes often assume a coherent community interest, yet neighbourhoods are socially and politically heterogeneous, and participatory arenas therefore become sites of contestation over whose voices are authorised and whose needs are prioritised (Atkinson & Cope, 1997). In other words, a few community representatives end up as token figures rather than conduits for wider engagement, and they often referred to as the "*usual suspects*", which lead to over-reliance on a small group to provide the community's voice (Lowndes & Wilson, 2001; Taylor, 2007). While these individuals may be well-intentioned, it is unrealistic to expect them to reflect the full diversity of opinions, as in the worst case, such dynamics open the door to local well-connected figures to use participation to advance their own agendas while marginalising less-vocal groups (Mansuri & Rao, 2013a). Thus, meaningful participation must be structured in ways that allow engagement with various sections of the community including their different viewpoints.

2.2.4.4. Capacity Constraints in disadvantaged communities

Effective participation requires certain capacities such as knowledge of issues, organisational skills, confidence in dealing with officials, which are often unevenly distributed amongst community members. Residents may lack experience navigating bureaucratic processes or may feel disempowered in formal settings, especially from those with lower socio-economic characteristics. As technical terminology in planning documents or meetings scheduled at inconvenient times (time poverty) can obstruct genuine involvement. Studies of regeneration partnerships highlight that communities are commonly structurally disadvantaged relative to professional and institutional actors, limiting their ability to scrutinise proposals, sustain engagement over project cycles, or influence setting the agenda (O'Malley, 2004). This may also be the case institutionally amongst public bodies and professionals on the other side, public agencies and professionals may also have capacity deficits in working with communities. Many officials lack training in community development and understanding how to engage different groups, and professional cultures in planning and regeneration tend to be technocratic and

target-driven, not always inclined to inclusive facilitation (Barnes et al., 2007). Farnell et al, 2003 summarised this double-sided capacity constraint when the study mentioned that *"Particular concerns have been the perceived deficit in the 'social capital' of poor districts, difficulties in building the capacity of communities to participate, deficits in the capacity of official organisations in community engagement"* (Farnell et al., 2003).

Therefore, without investments in building both community and institutional capacity, participation efforts often fall short and creates a vicious cycle of poorly supported engagement leads to limited community input, which then reinforces officials' perceptions that communities lack capacity or interest.

2.2.4.5. Oversimplification of culture, ethnicity and race

Culture is also considered as a factor that shapes how people relate to the built environment and to participation processes, influencing whether communities feel able, or obliged, to engage (Perrin et al., 2016). For instance, Nahak et al. (2019) argue that some community groups view regeneration projects as the responsibility of local government and therefore see no need to participate (Li et al., 2025). Cultural norms can also reproduce gendered exclusions, as in some contexts women's voices are less likely to be heard because they are culturally discouraged or prevented from accessing public spaces and community activities where participation occurs (Johnson & Miles, 2014). In such cases, culture can intensify marginalisation by reinforcing gender hierarchies. Ethnicity is likewise identified as a factor shaping exclusion within participatory settings. Beebeejaun (2006) argues that ethnic and racial minorities may remain under-represented despite formal commitments to fair participation (Beebeejaun, 2006). By using race and ethnicity as fixed identifiers, the planning process often obscures the true heterogeneity of a population and contestation within it. For example, in the Burch Village case, planners initially approached African-American residents as a coherent community, only to be surprised by deep internal distrust and class-based divisions between long-term residents and newcomers from Chicago (Beebeejaun, 2006). These dynamics are often obscured by treating communities as homogeneous, whilst groups that appear unified may in fact be internally diverse, such as the Muslim community in Britain, which includes multiple ethnic, cultural, and linguistic background. However, it is important to note that these critiques and limitations are not arguments against community participation per se but rather calls to do participation better. These critiques highlight why participation in regeneration can sometimes function more as legitimation than empowerment, particularly when it is organised through "*invited spaces*", constrained by funding targets, dominated by "*usual suspects*," or shaped by unequal capacities

and exclusionary cultural norms. However, these critiques should be read less as reasons to abandon participation and more as diagnostic warnings about how participation can be poorly designed or constrained in practice. If participation is planned with explicit attention to power-sharing, inclusive representation, accessible processes, and capacity-building on both community and institutional sides, while recognising internal diversity within communities, then these limitations do not discredit the benefits of participation.

In summary, the review of definitions and typologies demonstrates that participation is not a single technique, but a graded set of practices differentiated by the extent of influence communities have. This typological framing helps explain why the literature associates participation with significant benefits while also documenting serious limitations when participation is poorly designed or structurally constrained. However, the critique does not negate participation's value, but clarifies the conditions under which participation is likely to succeed, emphasising the need for inclusive representation, accessibility, capacity-building, and credible pathways for community input to shape decisions. For planners and public authorities, these insights should be carried forward as core principles of regeneration practice, not as optional additions. Reflecting this, participation has increasingly been embedded in policy and procedural frameworks in the expectation that formalising participation will contribute to more accountable processes and more durable regeneration outcomes. Thus, the following section traces the evolution of policy requirements for participation and considers how these mandates aim to secure more accountable and effective practice.

2.3. Evolution of policy mandate for participation

This section traces the evolution of the policy mandate for community participation in Britain, showing how participation moved from limited procedural consultation to a more explicit requirement within planning, regeneration, and local governance. It examines this development alongside the academic narrative, highlighting both areas of alignment and continuing critique. The section then compares participation policies in terms of their scale, mandate, degree of control, and duration, before considering the main shortcomings that have emerged in practice.

2.3.1. Policy evolution and the academic narrative

In mid-20th century Britain, urban planning and governance in general were largely top-down, with little formal provision for public involvement. By the late 1960s, however, growing democratic and social movements prompted calls for citizen participation. A landmark moment came with the amended Town and Planning Act of 1968, which was the first systematic British

policy effort to promote community participation in planning (Lawson et al., 2022). This was later followed by the Skeffington Report (*People and Planning*) in1969, in which the central government commissioned a committee to develop a strategy to promote community participation in development projects (Committee on Public Participation in Planning, 1969). The report positioned community participation as inherently "*a good thing*" with a limited reference to power imbalance between communities and authorities in such aspect. It mainly embedded the principle that people should have a say in decisions affecting their communities (Lawson et al., 2022) Around the same time, academic discourse on participation was emerging internationally. As discussed previously, Sherry Arnstein's 1969 *"Ladder of Citizen Participation"* critiqued superficial involvement as *tokenism*, illustrating early on the risk that public input could be merely symbolic rather than empowering. British scholars and practitioners echoed these concerns at the time. For example, Damer and Hague (1971) examined how Skeffington's standards played out in practice and found that simply granting a right to be heard did not automatically resolve questions of how to ensure inclusive and effective participation (Damer & Hague, 1971).

In the 1970s, Skeffington's influence led to new legal requirements for participation in planning. Communities gained formal rights to be notified of plans and to submit their views in development plans or planning applications. The Town and Country Planning Act of 1968 protected public participation as part of plan-making procedures across Britain. However, this often amounted to one-way consultation (e.g. public meetings or comment periods) rather than genuine collaboration between communities, authorities, and developers. Thus, academics in the 1970s and 1980s were sceptical of how much power the public was given, and many noted that the participation of this era was largely procedural, with authorities retaining control (Damer & Hague, 1971; Hague & McCourt, 1974; Healey, 1983).

During the 1980s, the policy momentum for community participation slowed under a political climate favouring market forces and central governmental control over social and economic agendas (Parkinson, 1989). While local activism continued in some areas, there were few new government initiatives to promote participation (such as, *Development Corporations*), which bypassed local community input (Deas et al., 2000). Academic thoughts during this period continued to critique the tokenistic nature of many public participation exercises, keeping the argument, that true participation required shifting power, not just ticking a consultation box (Brownill & Inch, 2019)

The 1990s brought a revival of interest in community participation, influenced by both international and domestic forces. At the international level, the 1992 Rio *Earth Summit* promoted *Local Agenda 21*, in which it urged local governments to work with communities for sustainable development (United Nations, 1992). In Britain, this agenda was in parallel with a policy turn toward community partnership and empowerment, especially under the late-1990s Labour government. A series of area-based regeneration programs, such as the Single Regeneration Budget and New Deal for Communities, which explicitly required community input and even representation in decision-making bodies (Batty et al., 2010). These initiatives targeted disadvantaged urban neighbourhoods, aiming to pair government with local residents in tackling deprivation. At the same time, local authorities experimented with new participation methods, where many councils created forums, citizen panels and partnership boards to involve residents and the voluntary sector in shaping strategies (Batty et al., 2010; Raco et al., 2006). Notably, the Local Government Act 2000 mandated each council to develop a *Community Strategy* in collaboration with local stakeholders (Local Government Act, 2000), as a recognition that planning for social, economic, and environmental well-being required community partnership. Academic writers in the 1990s were actively informing and evaluating these trends. For example, Healey (1997) advocated for *collaborative planning*, arguing that inclusive, consensus-building processes could produce more legitimate and creative outcomes for regeneration projects (Healey, 1997). Other scholars examined the new partnership models, often applauding the rhetoric of empowerment but questioning how much influence residents truly had (Healey, 1997). Thus, by the end of the 20th century, there was a broad alignment in principle between policymakers and academics that community participation was vital, yet debate persisted on how to make it meaningful.

In the 2000s, community participation became further embedded (at least on paper) in Britain's governance frameworks. Major planning reforms solidified statutory requirements for participation. The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 in England and Wales, for instance, introduced Statements of Community Involvement (SCI), where each planning authority had to publish a policy on how it would consult and involve the public in plan-making (Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act, 2004). This move aimed to embed community participation practice across all areas of local planning. Likewise, the *Duty to Involve* that was introduced by the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act in 2007, required councils in England and Wales to actively seek participation of local communities in designing and delivering services (Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act, 2007). In parallel, bottom-up initiatives flourished, especially in rural areas, where communities were

encouraged to produce *Parish Plans* or village design statements to articulate local needs with government support (Owen, 2002). However, although academic evaluations in the 2000s often highlighted these innovations, they also cautioned about their execution. Researchers noted that many authorities still relied on traditional consultation methods and that deeper participation practices, such as citizen juries and assemblies, were used only occasionally conducted (Lawson et al., 2022; Barnes et al., 2007).

By mid-2000s, discussions in policy circles turned to further moving the power beyond town halls down to neighbourhoods, as mentioned by the local government minister at the time, David Miliband "..... *the double devolution of power from the central government to local government, and from local government to citizens and communities* ....." ('Full Text of David Miliband's Speech', 2006). This set the stage for a dramatic policy shift in the next decade.

The early 2010s witnessed a peak of these efforts to embed community participation into law. In England, the Localism Act 2011 launched a range of measures under the banner of the *Big Society*, explicitly aimed at putting communities in control. The most important approach was *Neighbourhood Planning*, which allowed local groups to develop statutory land-use plans for their area (Localism Act, 2011). For the first time, volunteer-led neighbourhood forums could draft plans determining where development should go, which, if approved by a local referendum, became legally binding on councils. This policy embodied academic calls for greater community control, effectively operationalising what Arnstein would term a higher stage of *citizen power*. Still, scholars quickly scrutinised who was actually benefiting from these rights. Early evaluations indicated that neighbourhood planning was taken up disproportionately by relatively affluent, often rural areas, prompting concern that the initiative risked becoming the territory of the middle classes (Wargent & Parker, 2018). Meanwhile, Scotland pursued its own empowerment agenda through the *Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015,* which strengthened community rights across a broad range of public decisions. It gave local groups the ability to initiate participation requests to influence service delivery and to take ownership of local assets, aiming *"to empower communities by strengthening their voices in decisions about public services"* and making it easier for them to own and manage local assets (Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act, 2015). In Wales, the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 introduced an "*involvement*" principle, obligating public bodies to work with communities in planning for long-term social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being (Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act, 2025). These decentralised policies reflected a shared realisation that sustainable development and effective public services require community participation at all levels. Academically, the 2010s were marked by rich debates assessing these new models. Some researchers were

optimistic that mechanisms, such as neighbourhood forums or participation requests could transform local democracy (Bennett et al., 2022). Others remained sceptical, pointing out issues such as low participation in disadvantaged areas (Brookfield, 2017), the technical complexity of processes (Parker et al., 2017), and the potential for localism to devolve responsibilities without the resources, and sustained support needed to exercise them effectively (Rees & Rose, 2015).

From the late 2010s into the 2020s, reviews of these empowerment reforms reported uneven impacts. In England, neighbourhood planning has expanded and improved participation and place-making, but studies also highlighted biased toward more affluent areas, complexity and capacity demands on volunteers, and variable influence over regeneration outcomes (Parker et al., 2017, 2020; Wargent & Parker, 2018). At the same time, austerity constrained local authorities and civil societies capacity to support deeper community participation, limiting the reach of its potential (Hastings et al., 2015; Lowndes & Gardner, 2016).

In short, the British trajectory of participation policy reveals a shift from minimal statutory consultation toward increasingly ambitious efforts to institutionalise involvement and, at points, community control. Yet the academic narrative has remained a consistent critical counterpart, repeatedly showing that formal rights to participate do not automatically translate into meaningful influence, and that outcomes depend on who participates, what powers are devolved, and what resources and support are available to exercise those powers. The more recent period also underlines a critical tension, as at the time when participation mandates have expanded, austerity has constrained the capacity of local authorities and communities to enact them effectively. Taken together, this evolution suggests that participation policy has widened the space for community voice, but the depth, inclusivity, and transformative potential of that voice remained variable and contingent on policy design (see Figure2.8).

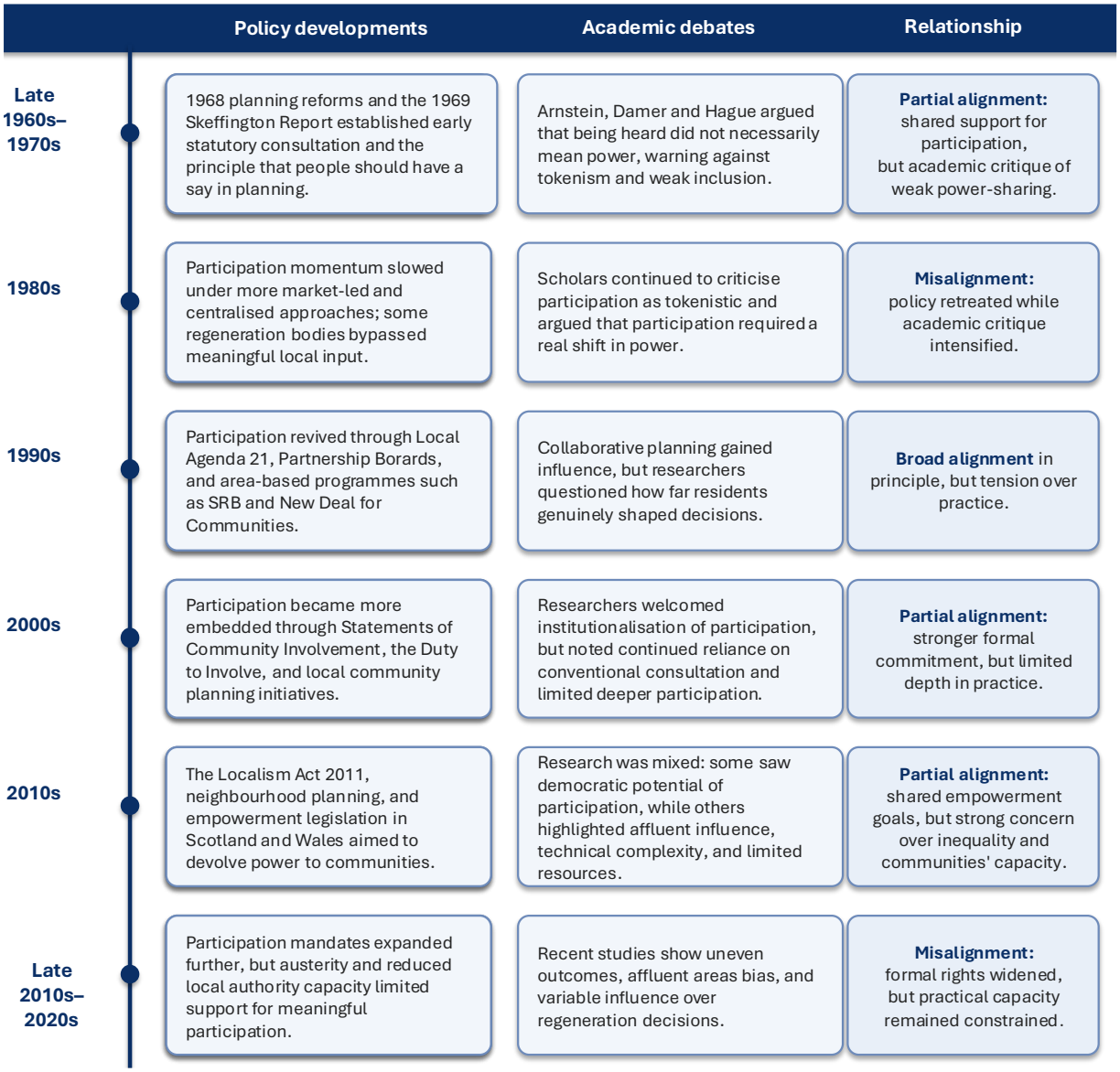


Figure 2.8: Policy developments and academic debates over time

Source: Author, based on the literature

2.3.2. Differences in Policies

Before concluding the limitations of community participation policies, it is important to compare these policies, as community participation is not a single model but a set of design choices about scale (national frameworks vs neighbourhood schemes), mandate (statutory duties vs voluntary opportunities), degree of control (consultation through to co-decision), and duration (one-off initiatives vs institutionalised roles).These choices strongly condition who participates, how far communities can shape outcomes, and whether benefits are achieved, and therefore the different experiences reported across planning policies (e.g., Statements of Community

Involvement), area-based regeneration (e.g., New Deal for Communities), and newer empowerment instruments in England, Scotland and Wales (Lawless & Pearson, 2012; Lawson et al., 2022; Parker et al., 2015). Thus, despite a common push toward greater community participation outcomes, British policies and initiatives have differed in a number of aspects.

National vs Local Scope

Some frameworks applied nationally or across large regions, whereas others operated at the neighbourhood level. For instance, the Local Government Act 2000's Community Strategies covered entire local authority areas (strategic scale), while Neighbourhood Plans (Localism Act 2011**)** focus on small localities (often one or a few urban wards). In contrast, programs such as New Deal for Communities (1998–2000s) targeted selected neighbourhoods with intensive, place-specific intervention (Lawless, 2012). Thus, participation frameworks targeted different geographic scales, as they range from broad frameworks to specific local projects, with significant implications for who participates and how far communities can influence outcomes.

Statutory Mandates, and level of influence

Policies also differ in how strongly they require community participation. Some are legal obligations, such as planning law changes in the 1970s and 2000s, which made public consultation a mandatory step in plan-making and significant development applications. Every English planning authority must prepare a *Statement of Community Involvement* and follow minimum consultation procedures by law (Lawson et al., 2022). On the other hand, many participation opportunities are voluntary or at the community's choice. Neighbourhood Planning, while powerful, is not compulsory, as it is up to local volunteers to initiate a plan, and many areas have not done so, as explained above in Section 2.4.1. Likewise, 1990s initiatives such a *Parish Plans* or the *Local Agenda 21* process were encouraged by government with guidance and funding but not mandated by law. The degree of legal obligation also varies for developers versus authorities. For example, under the Planning Act 2008 (England), developers of major infrastructure projects are legally required to consult local communities before submitting applications (a mandatory pre-application consultation) (Natarajan et al., 2018). In contrast, the Big Society concept (2010) relied on encouragement and volunteering rather than any formal requirement, as it asked communities to step forward in service delivery, without legal power or guaranteed support (Baggott & Jones, 2015). The degree of mandate can therefore range from hard legal requirements with less focus on communities, to soft policy encouragement where participation depends on local residents' initiatives. So, an elevated degree of mandate has more potential if applied at all stages of projects and extends to reach all parties involved. Meaningful

participation then requires redistributing authority, not just inviting communities to participate (Fung & Wright, 2003). As a stronger, statutory mandate applied at scoping, design, delivery and evaluation, and adjusting co-decision powers alongside adequate resourcing, is most likely to equalise power between communities, councils and developers to secure better outcomes.

Duration and Intensity

Beyond how strongly participation is mandated, policies also differ in how long participation is expected to last and how intensive it is. For example, at the national level, the NSIP regime introduced a mandatory pre-application community consultation requirement, under which applicants had to prepare a Statement of Community Consultation and consult the local community before submitting an application (The Planning Act, 2008), although intensive, yet non-continuous. Government and academic reviews have questioned the influence and representativeness of this model, and their finding demonstrated that participation can be uneven, shaped by underlying inequalities, and perceived as offering limited scope to alter proposals once they reach examination (Parker & Salter, 2017). In the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (modified by the Levelling-Up and Regeneration Act 2023), participation was structured as a continuous task across plan-making, which local planning authorities must set out. This included publishing and keeping under review a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) and hold public engagement at multiple plan stages, with the National Planning Policy Framework stressing early and meaningful involvement (Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act, 2004). Neighbourhood planning guidance of Localism Act (2011) also committed to an ongoing local role of local forums to monitor and review their neighbourhood plans, rather than treating participation as a one-off event (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2014). However, while these frameworks created a recurring duty to involve communities, research finds that recurrence does not automatically creates depth or influence. For example, reviews of Statements of Community Involvement (SCIs) show practice remains largely procedural (less intense), with limited use of purposeful participation methods (Baker et al., 2010; Lawson et al., 2022). Neighbourhood planning also shows that ongoing community roles requires a balanced effort with other stakeholders, as stronger outcomes are achieved where local forums have resources and support, and weaker impacts in less advantaged areas (Parker et al., 2020). Thus, making participation continuous is necessary but not sufficient, as community capabilities, inclusivity and decision authority are the critical determinants of whether continuous engagement shapes outcomes rather than just meeting statutory milestones. On the other hand, many area-based initiatives were time-limited. For example, the New Deal for Communities concentrated on intense community involvement, through

Partnership Boards, and significant local budgets, within designated neighbourhoods, but participation structures typically slow down as programme funding ended. However, at a national level, the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) created a mandatory but one-stage pre-application community consultation task (Planning Act 2008, s.47), where applicants must prepare and publicise a Community Consultation Statement and then report on it at submission. This manifests an intensive community participation duty, but a non-continuous process (The Planning Act, 2008). Nonetheless, area-based, and time-limited regeneration projects concentrated on participation intensely but struggled to sustain it once funding ended. National evaluations of New Deal for Communities initiatives (NDC) reported strong residents' involvement through partnership boards supported with local budgets yet raise challenges and concerns about the durability of community structures beyond the programme lifespan (Batty et al., 2010; Lawless, 2011).

To conclude, Britain's community participation policies differ in where they operate, how binding they are, how much control they promote, and how long they last. A balanced framework needs both, long term engagement, with an approach that distributes efforts and decision power evenly amongst different local stakeholders.

This may be achieved through setting a statutory core that requires early-to-evaluation community participation, clear local decision levers, such as shared powers between local community and authorities, and dedicated capacity-building funding for under-represented groups, so participation survives programme cycles and beyond. However, even where policies look strong on paper, practice presents its own difficulties. The next part will discuss different challenges faced when implementing community participation policies in practice.

2.3.3. Shortcomings in Practice

Although British policy has covered multiple approaches for community participation, the quality of participation in practice often faces some challenges. Reviews and case studies point to recurring procedural and institutional weaknesses that limit who participates, how far views and voices influence decisions, and whether the participation continues beyond project lifespan. The main critiques and the evidence behind them, drawing on literature and wider participation theory, are demonstrated below.

2.3.3.1. Tokenism

A persistent criticism is that although statutory requirements are met in terms of procedures, including publishing notices and hosting public consultations, participation often fails to create

atmospheres where residents can explore different planning options, negotiate adjustments, or see their influence on outcomes (Lawson et al., 2022). Many studies describe community participation as a practice that remains consultation-focused, with weak feedback loops and limited use of creative engagement methods. For example, Baker et al (2010) noted that Statements of Community Involvement (SCIs) enable local authorities to fulfil their statutory obligations, but the processes they prescribe frequently fail to deliver meaningful participation or genuine community empowerment (Baker et al., 2010).

These processes usually involve traditional methods such as surveys, exhibitions, and public meeting that involve mainly local partnership boards or elected members. Such methods frequently relegate the local community to reactive roles, such as expressing opposition via informal movements (protests) rather than acting as collaborative partners, which can lead to outcomes that are largely cosmetic (Baker et al., 2010)

Lawson et al.'s (2022) review also shows how many participatory moments are designed as "*invited*," time-bound spaces where authorities meet minimum legal process, but public influence remains limited (Lawson et al., 2022). They note, for example, that pre-application consultation in Scotland has often "*become a 'tick-box' exercise*," prompting regulatory changes to require more meaningful, continuous events with feedback to communities. In addition, under the NSIPs (Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects) regime, participation is further narrowed by a heavy reliance on written representations, which prioritises technical information over thoughts and discussions, which can reduce opportunities for dialogue. More broadly, the process legitimates compliance, through publishing notices and taking comments, without guaranteeing that local knowledge is treated as material or that participants see how their input shaped outcomes, therefore, reinforcing perceptions of consultation as tokenistic rather than empowering.

2.3.3.2. Limited transfer of power

Despite a rhetorical commitment to community participation, power transfer in regeneration projects remains limited, as strategies are frequently imposed from the top down by bureaucrats and business interests (Foley & Martin, 2000). While *invited spaces* for participation exist, communities are often granted a *mere presence rather than a voice* (Foley & Martin, 2000), as they are typically consulted at a late stage on a narrow range of options already formulated by more powerful partners (local authorities and developers) (Baker et al., 2010). This imbalance of power is further embedded by the widespread use of delegated powers, which enable planning officers to determine the vast majority of applications themselves, often bypassing both the

public and elected representatives (Lawson et al., 2022). Furthermore, even community-led initiatives like Neighbourhood Plans are secondary to higher-tier policies and must pass through technical filters where traditional, professional norms frequently override the local community knowledge. Ultimately, the absence of a third-party right of appeal for the public means that communities have no legal mechanism to challenge the planning merits of a decision, leaving final authority almost exclusively in the hands of the local authorities and developers (Lawson et al., 2022).

2.3.3.3. Selective engagement

Community participation in regeneration is frequently a "*minority sport*" rather than a broad democratic effort, as the vast majority of community members typically fail to engage actively in formal processes (Blakeley & Evans, 2009). Research in an East Manchester regeneration project, for example, found that participation clustered around a small group recruited via formal networks, while broader community concerns are absent, which is an indication that formal channels can privilege established insiders over wider publics (Blakeley & Evans, 2009). Similarly, New Deal for Communities (NDC)- which placed greater focus on community participation- evaluations noted that these initiatives built a dense structure of community boards and forums, yet day-to-day engagement frequently relied on a small cohort of repeat activists who claimed to speak for the community, making it hard to show plural local viewpoints (N. Bailey, 2010).

Thus, in these settings, the loudest voices, and most powerful tend to dominate, resulting in a distorted view of community interests that may not reflect the needs of a fragmented and heterogeneous community (Lawson et al., 2022). Empirical work on participation stresses that without explicit strategies to mitigate the loud-voices and enable less-heard voices, community participation remains partial (N. Bailey, 2010).

2.3.3.4. Lack of capacity, skills, cost and resources.

A recurring finding from policy evaluations is that participation duties often collide with practical constraints, such as communities and local authorities lacking the time, skills, funding, and organisational capacity needed to engage meaningfully, particularly where participation relies on volunteering and technical plan-making. This is visible in neighbourhood planning, where outcomes are shaped by the availability of local capability and support, with more advantaged areas better able to bear the workload and technical demands (Parker et al., 2023; Wargent & Parker, 2018). In area-based regeneration, the national evaluation of the New Deal for

Communities similarly shows that meaningful participation required sustained investment in community capacity and support structures, with durability problems once programme resources ended (Batty et al., 2010). For major infrastructure under the NSIPs regime, Natarajan et al (2018) found that procedural participation opportunities can still be experienced as burdensome, with participation shaped by resource and knowledge inequalities and limited scope to influence proposals once processes advance (Natarajan et al., 2018).

Generally, the shortcomings observed in the practical application of participation policies closely mirror the core critiques identified in participation theory. The "*tokenism*" documented in policy reviews, where authorities comply with consultation procedures without creating genuine deliberation or demonstrable influence, aligns directly with longstanding theoretical warnings that participation can become symbolic and legitimating rather than empowering (Arnstein, 1969; Cooke & Kothari, 2001). Similarly, evidence of limited transfer of power in regeneration governance reflects the theoretical argument that invited participation spaces remain bounded by institutional agendas and decision rules, leaving control with authorities and developers even when participation is formally present (Cornwall, 2008; Fung & Wright, 2003).

The pattern of selective engagement, where participation is dominated by a small cohort of repeat actors, corresponds to critiques about representation deficits and the tendency for participation processes to privilege the "*usual suspects*" while marginalising less-heard groups (Blakeley & Evans, 2009). Finally, the repeated finding that policies rely on volunteers and technical engagement without adequate support, in which resource constraints, skill gaps and institutional limitations systematically shape who can participate and with what effect. Thus, the limitations theorised in the literature are not abstract concerns but are reproduced in the everyday implementation of participation policies, reinforcing the need for policy designs that explicitly address power-sharing, inclusivity, and resourcing if participation is to realise its promised benefits in regeneration.

To conclude this section, the evolution of participation policy in Britain shows a clear shift towards embedding community participation more firmly within planning and regeneration frameworks. However, the review also demonstrates that stronger policy mandates do not necessarily secure meaningful participation in practice. While policies differ in their scope, degree of obligation, and level of influence, their effectiveness continues to depend on how far they address issues of power, inclusivity, continuity, and capacity.

2.4. Minorities' Participation in Regeneration

Minorities' participation in regeneration refers to the involvement of Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities, in shaping and implementing urban regeneration projects. In Britain, efforts to involve ethnic minority communities in urban regeneration have grown over recent decades, as policymakers recognise that inclusive processes can enhance project legitimacy and outcomes (Lawson et al., 2022). However, despite official commitments to community participation, the involvement of BAME groups often remains limited in practice. Research indicates that, despite official commitments to bottom-up approaches, many regeneration efforts continue to be dominated by a narrow section of the community, with minority voices barely represented.

This section provides a comprehensive overview of minorities' participation in urban regeneration, focusing on the British context with comparative insights from other places around the world. It examines historical and policy developments in Britain, identifies key barriers that obstruct genuine participation by minorities, discusses enabling strategies and good practices, and critically addresses issues of consultation fatigue. Throughout, a mix of academic studies and grey literature are used to substantiate each point.

2.4.1. Policy Background

Following the second Word War, most urban renewal and redevelopment schemes proceeded with top-down decision-making that overlooked the voices of immigrant and minority communities. Many early regeneration projects in the 1960s–1980s, such as slum clearance and inner-city redevelopment, led to the displacement of minority residents without meaningful participation (Hilliard, 2025). By the 1990s, critiques of these approaches and a broader commitment to inclusive community participation led to policy reforms. Researchers note a "*pluralistic turn*" in British urban regeneration policy by the late 1990s, wherein local communities, including BAME communities, were increasingly seen as partners in regeneration rather than passive recipients (Maginn, 2017). This shift was evident under the Labour government (1997–2010), which launched area-based initiatives explicitly requiring community involvement. Programs such as the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB), Neighbourhood Renewal Fund, and New Deal for Communities (NDC), all emphasised community participation and social inclusion as core principles (Farnell et al., 2003).

In areas with significant minority populations, targets and mechanisms were introduced to ensure representation of BAME residents on regeneration partnership boards and in consultation

exercises (Local Government Association, 2008). At the same time, race equality legislation strengthened the mandate for inclusion, as the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 imposed a duty on public bodies to promote race equality and engage with minority communities, while the Equality Act 2010 consolidated equalities duties (race, religion, and other characteristics.) and reinforced the obligation to involve protected groups in public decision-making (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2014). So, these policies created a more favourable formal framework for minority participation in regeneration, from a planning strategy, as well as an equality point view. However, this framework was noticeably declining when the conservative government took power throughout the 2010s and early 2020s and the decline continued under the current Labour government.

2.4.1.1. Equalities legislation

The evolution of equalities law in Britain has steadily strengthened the expectation that minority communities must be included in public decision-making, including urban regeneration projects. The Race Relations Acts of 1965 and 1976 established a baseline of non-discrimination, but it was the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, which was passed in the wake of *The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry*[3], imposed a proactive duty on public authorities to promote race equality and good race relations. This meant councils and regeneration agencies had to actively consider how policies would affect BAME groups and to engage with those groups to address disadvantages. A decade later, the broader Equality Act 2010 unified these principles across all protected characteristics (including race and religion) and introduced the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). Under the PSED, any public body involved in urban regeneration must "*have due regard*" to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between people of different backgrounds (Equality Act, 2010b)

In addition, successive national community cohesion and integration reviews and policies have reinforced that minority participation in different processes is vital for cohesive and integrated communities, as they stressed empowering minority voices as a means to counter exclusion and build trust in institutions (this will be further detailed in Section 2.7). While enforcement of these duties varies, these policies mandated and acknowledged minorities representativeness as a vital and a standard requirement when involving communities. This was further reflected in

[3] The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry was the 1999 public inquiry into the police investigation of the racist murder of Stephen Lawrence. It is particularly significant for its finding that the Metropolitan Police was institutionally racist, a conclusion that had major implications for race relations and public institutions in Britain.

various policies related to urban regeneration initiatives over the recent decades, on a national and local level.

2.4.1.2. Regeneration programs and minorities participation agendas

Major British urban regeneration initiatives since the 1990s have increasingly aimed to include minorities in the participation process, at least in principle. The SRB programs (mid-1990s) and the NDC program (2000s), both required evidence of community involvement in governance structures (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2014). Each SRB or NDC partnership in a local area had to have boards that included community representatives, and in areas with substantial minority populations this meant recruiting BAME community members onto boards and consultative panels. In fact, guidance for NDCs explicitly identified the need to engage "*hard-to-reach*" groups and to ensure the board reflected the area's demographic makeup (Batty et al., 2010). Many NDC areas (e.g. Tower Hamlets, Birmingham, Bradford, and Sheffield), were populated by predominantly ethnic minority groups, forcing the local authorities into partnerships with these communities, at least in theory (Batty et al., 2010)

However, evaluations of these programmes showed mixed success, as some NDCs achieved active minority participation through resident forums and partnership boards, while many others struggled with low turnout from minority groups. As the Department for Communities and Local Government (2010) reflected on the Community Partnership Survey (2008),

> The 2008 NDC Partnership survey showed that black and minority ethnic residents were underrepresented on the majority of NDC boards. The survey of resident board members also suggests that white residents are slightly overrepresented compared with the aggregate NDC population, while Asian residents are underrepresented (Batty et al., 2010, p.14).

Nonetheless, the principle that minorities should have a seat at the table was established. For example, a statutory Duty to Involve (2009) required local authorities to actively involve representatives of local persons, including minority groups, in policy decisions. Although this specific duty was later scrapped in 2010, it reflected the broader policy drive towards bottom-up engagement (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2011).

Moreover, the paradigm shift culminated in the Localism Act (2011), which introduced new rights and opportunities for community participation in planning, most notably Neighbourhood Planning in England (2012). Neighbourhood planning allows communities to form forums and create Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs) for their area, which have legal force. In theory, this opened a significant new avenue for minority participation, especially in diverse

urban neighbourhoods, by letting local people directly shape land-use and development priorities (Parker et al., 2023b). Since then, the encouragement for this trend (promoting minorities participation in regeneration projects), tended to decline, and community participation began to be addressed at its general terms with limited focus on minorities in relevant programmes (Ware, 2013).

Evidence of this shift can be also seen in the Towns Fund Prospectus (2019) and the Levelling Up and Community Investment agenda (2021). In 2025, the current Labour government announced the consolidation of these programmes under the *Local Growth Funds* (2025). In their content, there was significantly limited mentioning of Black and Ethnic Minority groups, but instead used notions such as, "*all communities" and* "*under-represented groups"* in a context of equality. This may indicate a shift away from approaches that explicitly emphasised BAME communities' participation towards a broader strategy. Such a shift may also be reinforced by the move in social policy framing from community cohesion to integration. This is discussed later in this chapter, Section 2.7. However, it may also reflect a perception that earlier efforts to target Black and minority ethnic communities were ineffective, considering the gap between policy intent and on-the-ground reality, particularly given the limited funding available for such initiatives under prolonged austerity during successive Coalition and Conservative governments (Ware, 2018).

In short, the policy trajectory since the 1990s shows an initial upward shift toward explicitly promoting minority inclusion in regeneration, through partnership-based programmes, equalities duties, and participation requirements that, at least in principle, sought to secure minority representation and voice. Over time, however, the framing has tended to move away from naming BAME communities explicitly toward more generalised language. The result is a policy landscape in which minority participation remains formally nested within broader equality commitments but is less consistently foregrounded as a distinct priority than it was during the height of area-based initiatives and the early equalities-duty era. The next section therefore turns from policy intent to practice by examining the key barriers that restrict, and the enablers that support, meaningful participation by minority communities in regeneration projects.

2.4.2. Barriers and enablers of minority participation

Although policy frameworks increasingly endorse inclusion, the extent to which minority communities can engage meaningfully is shaped by uneven power relations, differential access to resources, and the cultural and institutional conditions under which participation is organised. This section reviews the main barriers that restrict, and the enablers that support, minority

participation in regeneration linking them to wider participation theory and to evidence on how participation policies operate in practice (see Figure 2.9).

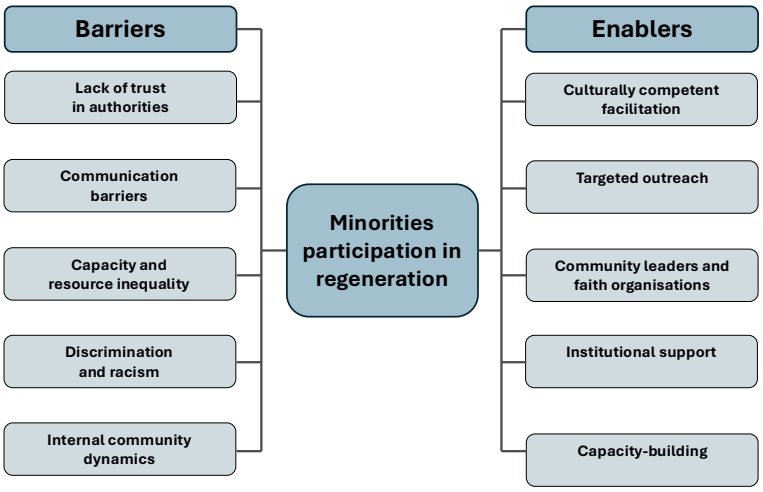


Figure 2.9: Barriers and enablers of minorities participation

Source: Author, based on the literature

2.4.2.1. Barriers

Multiple barriers have been identified from the literature, which limit minority groups from fully participating in regeneration projects, including lack of trust in authorities, communication barriers, and capacity and resource inequality. The lack of trust between ethnic communities and authorities, relate mainly to past injustices and exclusionary practices that have created scepticism among some minority groups about whether their input will be valued or acted upon. For example, in a study of housing-related regeneration, local practitioners noted that Black and Asian community members often doubt the "system" will treat them fairly or take their input seriously (Ijasan & Ahmed, 2010). Contributing factors include a history of top-down planning decisions that ignored community needs and broader experiences of discrimination in dealings with government. Ijasan & Ahmed (2010) identified lack of trust in the system as a major barrier, alongside "*consultation fatigue*" from repeated fruitless consultations (Cole et al., 2004). Consultation fatigue occurs when communities feel exhausted of giving feedback with little visible impact, leading to active mistrust of new initiatives. Farnell et al. (2003), in their study of faith communities in regeneration, similarly report that many minority residents perceive official consultations as insincere (Farnell et al., 2003). Such experiences reinforce a belief that participation is pointless, unless trust can be rebuilt through more inclusive and responsive practices, as distrust makes it difficult to involve these groups in neighbourhood regeneration projects and participation efforts.

In addition, communication barriers are a common issue, as minority groups members may face language difficulties or be alienated by technical terminologies used in planning meetings.

Many first-generation immigrants and some long-term minority residents are not fully fluent in English, yet regeneration communications often remain heavily technical. Farnell et al, (2003) found that "*English is a second language for many members of faith communities*" in deprived urban areas, and simply providing a few translated materials is "*insufficient compensation*" (Farnell et al, 2003). Even proficient English speakers can be alienated by the technical terminology and bureaucratic language in regeneration documents and meetings (Farnell et al., 2003). This communication gap can also be widened by the cultural and religious illiteracy of the personal engaging with minority groups. Qadeer (1997) explanation of pluralistic planning frames multiculturalism as generating unique planning issues that require institutional adaptation rather than expecting minorities to conform to a single cultural template (Qadeer, 1997). Similarly, Sandercock (2004) argues that planning in diverse areas requires new forms of listening, storytelling, and intercultural engagement, and not simply more meetings (Sandercock, 2004).

Without sufficient interpretation/translation, plain-language communication, and cultural awareness, many minority community members are effectively excluded from voicing their views.

Another major barrier is capacity and resource inequality. Minority communities often lack the organisational resources and experience to engage on an equal basis, as minority-led community organisations are typically under-funded (Ware, 2018).

A study of BAME voluntary groups found that funding cuts (especially post-2010 austerity) and the withdrawal of local government support have hit these groups hard, leaving many surviving on very small grants, with little time or staff to attend partnership meetings or respond to complex funding bids (Ware, 2018). Also, discrimination and racism (individual and institutional) remain a fundamental obstacle to minorities participation, as minority community members may feel unwelcome in regeneration forums dominated by white British voices, and some may experience discriminatory attitudes that discourage their engagement (Ware, 2018)

Moreover, internal dynamics within minority communities can pose challenges such as gender and generational barriers often mean women and youth from certain cultures are less likely to take public roles. It has been observed that in some BAME groups, "*lack of involvement of women and young people*" is an issue, owing to cultural norms or marginalisation within their own communities (Ware, 2018).

2.4.2.2. Enablers

Despite these challenges, there are important enablers that can facilitate greater minority engagement. One important factor is culturally competent facilitation, as effective community participation requires skilled facilitators who appreciate cultural differences and can tailor approaches accordingly. Lightbody (2017) emphasises the value of participation practitioners with a flexible toolkit for inclusion, such as arranging meetings at venues and times convenient to minority residents, providing materials in relevant languages, and using culturally familiar communication styles (Lightbody, 2017). Culturally sensitive facilitation helps build trust and ensures that minority participants feel respected and heard. This can be achieved through targeted outreach, when organisers actively going out to engage minority communities on their own place (e.g. ethnic community centres, worship places, and minority-led media) rather than expecting them to come to official meetings. One example was the *Be STRONG* project in Birmingham, which specifically reached out to small BAME community groups by bringing the participation to them. Project staff met groups in their own venues rather than expecting them to come to unfamiliar meetings, overcoming a major barrier and significantly improving participation rates among those communities (Ware, 2018).

The role of community leaders and faith organisations is especially significant in many minority communities. Faith-based institutions (churches, mosques, gurdwaras, temples) often command trust and have existing networks among ethnic minority residents. The British government itself came to recognise faith communities as a "*neglected resource*" in urban regeneration policy, seeing their potential to mobilise and unify local efforts (Furbey & Macey, 2005). Thus, involving respected religious and community leaders in regeneration consultations can greatly improve minority turnout and confidence.

Other enabling factors also include institutional support for the participation to be more inclusive. Providing translation and interpretation services, childcare, or even small financial incentives (e.g. reimbursements, meeting stipends) can lower the practical barriers for low-income and break the time-poverty barrier discussed earlier amongst minority groups (Lightbody, 2017). The capacity building includes training minority community members in participation skills and supporting community groups to create a stronger autonomous foundation for sustained involvement. However, this can narrow expectations if privileging only formal organisations, and informal community networks are undervalued (Fallov, 2010). A practical example provided in the Fallov (2010) research, is helping a local resident move from a

simple idea for a social group to "*setting up a group properly*" with a constitution and a bank account, which are necessary to access funding and influence (Fallov, 2010).

In summary, the barriers and enablers identified above show that minorities lack of participation in regeneration is not a separate issue from mainstream participation debates, but it is where the classic limitations of participation are most sharply exposed. The core theoretical critiques reappear in policy implementation evidence, but they are experienced most intensely by minority communities. Consequently, strengthening the enablers of minority participation should be understood not only as an equality measure but as a route to improving participation itself, because addressing what most limits minorities participation also addresses the structural weaknesses that undermine community participation as a whole.

Muslim communities are part of these minorities and, because many live in urban areas that have been repeatedly targeted for regeneration, they encounter many of the same structural barriers identified above, particularly where participation processes intersect with racialisation, faith-based identities, migration histories, and uneven community infrastructure. The next section situates Muslim participation within these wider debates around community participation in regeneration projects and establishes the demographic and socio-spatial context needed to understand patterns of their participation in regeneration.

2.5. Situating Muslims in Britain within the Participation Discussions

Having reviewed general aspects of community participation in regeneration and issues around minorities inclusion, this section focuses on Muslim communities in particular, as per the research aim. Muslims constitute the largest minority faith group in Britain and are heavily concentrated in many urban areas targeted by regeneration projects. In addition, in the policy discourse of the past two decades, Muslims have often been at the centre (directly and indirectly) of debates on community participation, as well as other community cohesion and integration policies (this will be addressed separately later in this chapter, Section 2.7). Before diving into Muslims participation in urban regeneration projects, it is necessary to establish the context around their demographic profile, through providing a background on the identity and socio-economic status of Muslims in Britain. Then, an examination of how the growing Muslim presence has manifested in Britain's urban landscape, through the building of mosques and the development of cultural territories, and how these spatial expressions have sometimes been contested. Finally, studies that have specifically looked at Muslim participation in regeneration

or similar projects, will be explored in order to conclude the Muslims position within the participation discourse.

2.5.1. The Muslim Identity and status in Britain

Muslims in Britain should be understood not as a recent or homogeneous community, but as a long-established and internally diverse community shaped by migration, religious identification, and changing forms of recognition and exclusion. This helps to situate Muslims within participation discourse more effectively, as it highlights that their participation in regeneration is shaped by, marginalisation, socio-economic disadvantage, and the complex ways in which Muslim identities are recognised and negotiated within British society.

2.5.1.1. Historical background of Muslims in Britain

Muslims in Britain have gone through successive stages of contact, migration, settlement, and institutional development that have shaped their presence over time (see Figure 2.10). Muslims and British interactions predate modern imperial and post-war waves of migration and should be understood as part of longer histories of trade, diplomacy, travel, and (later) empire. Evidence of contact between Muslim societies and Britain is commonly traced back at least to the eighth century, including material and documentary traces linked to exchange networks and elite diplomatic relations, even if such interactions did not initially translate into sustained settlement (Gilliat-Ray, 2010). Over centuries, Britain's relationship with Muslim-majority regions deepened through maritime and military trade, scholarship and writings. Crucially, from the eighteenth century onwards, imperial expansion and colonial governance, which produced new forms of encounter, racialisation, and categorisation of Muslims within British political and cultural life (Ansari, 2004).

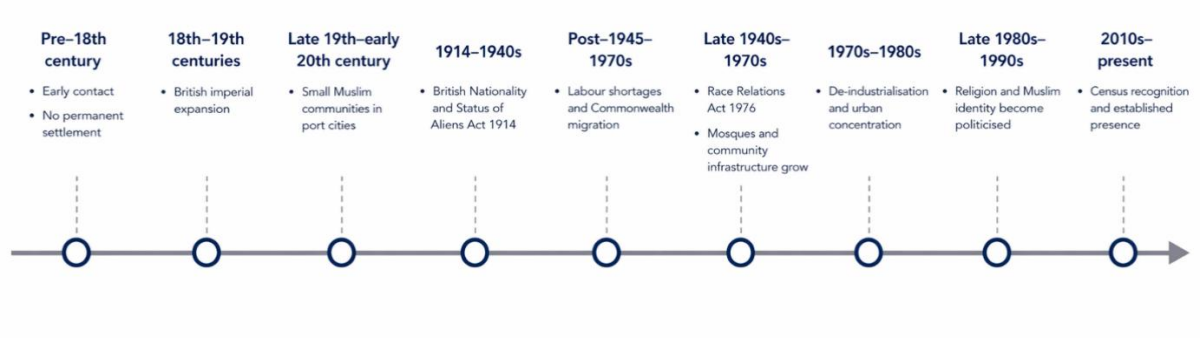


Figure 2.10: Historical timeline of Muslims in Britain

Source: Author, based on the literature (Ansari, 2004; Gilliat-Ray, 2010; Modood, 2005; Peach, 2006)

By the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, small but visible Muslim presence had become established in Britain, particularly in connection with imperial labour, maritime employment, and port economies. Scholars consistently highlights the role of lascars (South Asian seamen) employed in the British merchant navy, alongside smaller numbers of students, traders, and political visitors, in forming early, locally rooted Muslim communities in cities such as Cardiff, Liverpool, London, South Shields and Glasgow (Gilliat-Ray, 2010). These early settlements were typically male dominated, and spatially concentrated around docks and industrial areas, and were often marked by economic uncertainty and social marginality. Nevertheless, they contributed to the gradual emergence of religious and social infrastructures, including informal prayer spaces, burial arrangements, and mutual aid networks, which laid important foundations for later community establishment (Ansari, 2004).

The historical geography of Muslim settlement in Britain prior to the Second World War was therefore limited in scale, dispersed in form, and strongly shaped by patterns of labour mobility rather than permanent migration. More durable clusters developed primarily in port cities where employment opportunities, affordable housing, and imperial labour recruitment intersected, allowing informal networks of support to stabilise into community life (Gilliat-Ray, 2010)

Legal status and belonging during this period were mediated through Britain's evolving nationality regime and the politics of imperial citizenship. The British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act 1914 codified the status of "*British subject*" across the United Kingdom and the wider Empire, formalising acquisition through birth within imperial territories, descent, or naturalisation, and grounding subjecthood in the principle of allegiance to the Crown (British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act, 1914). While this framework theoretically encompassed many colonial subjects, its application was shaped by racialised assumptions, particularly in relation to mobility, settlement, and access to rights. In practice, the legal status of "*British subject*" under the British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act 1914 did not translate into equal treatment for colonial subjects, including Muslims, because its implementation was mediated by racialised administrative practices. For example, South Asian seamen (lascars), despite being British subjects, were frequently denied the right to settle permanently, restricted to segregated lodging houses, and subject to deportation or repatriation schemes once their labour contracts ended (Waters, 1996). Similarly, colonial subjects entering Britain often faced informal barriers at ports and through local policing, where decisions about employment and housing were shaped by assumptions about race and loyalty, and fitness for settlement (Waters, 1996). These practices revealed a gap between the formal inclusivity of imperial subjecthood and the lived realities of minorities, including Muslims. These institutional arrangements, and their realities in practice

are important for understanding later Muslim migration trajectories, as they structured both the routes through which migrants arrived in Britain and the conditions under which they could remain, work, reunite families, and negotiate claims to belonging.

After the Second World War, Muslim settlement expanded rapidly and took on more permanent forms. Britain's labour shortages, especially in manufacturing, transport, and public services, coincided with continuing Commonwealth connections and recruitment channels, facilitating substantial migration from South Asia (particularly Pakistan, Bangladesh, and India), alongside smaller but important flows from the Middle East, Africa, and later from conflict-affected regions (Gilliat-Ray, 2010). While early post-World War Two migration was often imagined by migrants and state actors as temporary, family reunification, labour-market incorporation, and the schooling of children progressively attached communities in place. This period was also decisive for the creation of formal religious institutions and other facilities, including prayer spaces, halal food businesses, burial arrangements, and mosque-building projects became key mechanisms through which Muslim life was more durable, visible, and locally embedded (Gilliat-Ray, 2010).

From the 1970s onwards, Muslim communities increasingly navigated the tensions of racialised urban change, deindustrialisation, and shifting state approaches to minorities. In many cities, industrial decline and housing-market separation reinforced socio-spatial concentration, while local authorities and national government experimented with varying models of "*race relations*" through Race Relation Act (1976), multicultural adaptation, and community participation (Phillips & Harrison, 2010; Modood, 2007). At the same time, Muslims were not simply passive recipients of policy, but they developed diverse civic, educational, and political organisations, sometimes along ethnic lines, sometimes explicitly Islamic, and often in hybrid forms (Meer & Modood, 2009). Through these organisational developments, Muslims were seeking recognition, resources, and protections within local and national governance arenas, which later helped constitute the institutional landscape through which they used to participate in regeneration projects and neighbourhood governance.

The late 1980s and 1990s are frequently treated as a turning point in public discourse and policy concerning Muslims in Britain, as questions of religion, cultural difference, and national belonging became increasingly politicised. Events such as the Rushdie Affair intensified public debates around free speech and minority accommodation, while also contributing to the growing visibility of Muslims as a distinct social and political category rather than solely an ethnic or migrant group (Ansari, 2004). During this period, Muslim organisations expanded their institutional presence through mosques, charities, and representative bodies, engaging more

directly with local authorities and national government in debates around equality, faith recognition, and public service provision (Gilliat-Ray, 2010).

From the early twenty-first century onwards, the Muslim population in Britain continued to grow and diversify through a combination of natural increase, ongoing migration, and refugees' settlement, alongside long-established family networks. Migration pathways during this period included labour migration, higher education, family reunion, and asylum linked to conflicts in regions such as the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia, further diversifying the ethnic, linguistic, and national backgrounds of Muslims living in Britain (Gilliat-Ray, 2010). This diversification contributed to increasingly complex local Muslim geographies, with concentrations in major urban areas alongside growing Muslim populations in smaller cities and towns.

By the 2010s and into the present day, Muslims in Britain can be understood as a long-established population characterised by multi-generational continuity, diverse nationalities and different ethnicities. According to the 2021 Census, Muslims represent 6.5 per cent of the population of England and Wales (approximately 3.9 million), plus 2.2 per cent of Scotland's population as per the Scotland's Census 2022 (119,878) 022). However, the historical trajectory from early contact and limited settlement, through post-war consolidation, to contemporary institutional maturity, situates Muslim presence as diverse and complex in terms of its demographic compositions. The next part will elaborate further on this, and provide more details on the different, generational, ethnic, nationality, and religious affiliations of different members continuing the Muslim community in Britain. As this understanding provides essential context for later analysis of Muslim participation in local initiatives and neighbourhood-level projects, such as regeneration projects.

2.5.1.2. Demographic overview

Islam is the second largest religion in Britain and represents the largest religious minority. As mentioned previously, approximately 3.9 million people identified as Muslim according to the 2021 Census for England and Wales (6.5 per cent of the population), compared with 4.8 per cent in 2011, confirming a substantial increase over the past decade (ONS, 2023) (see Figure 2.11).

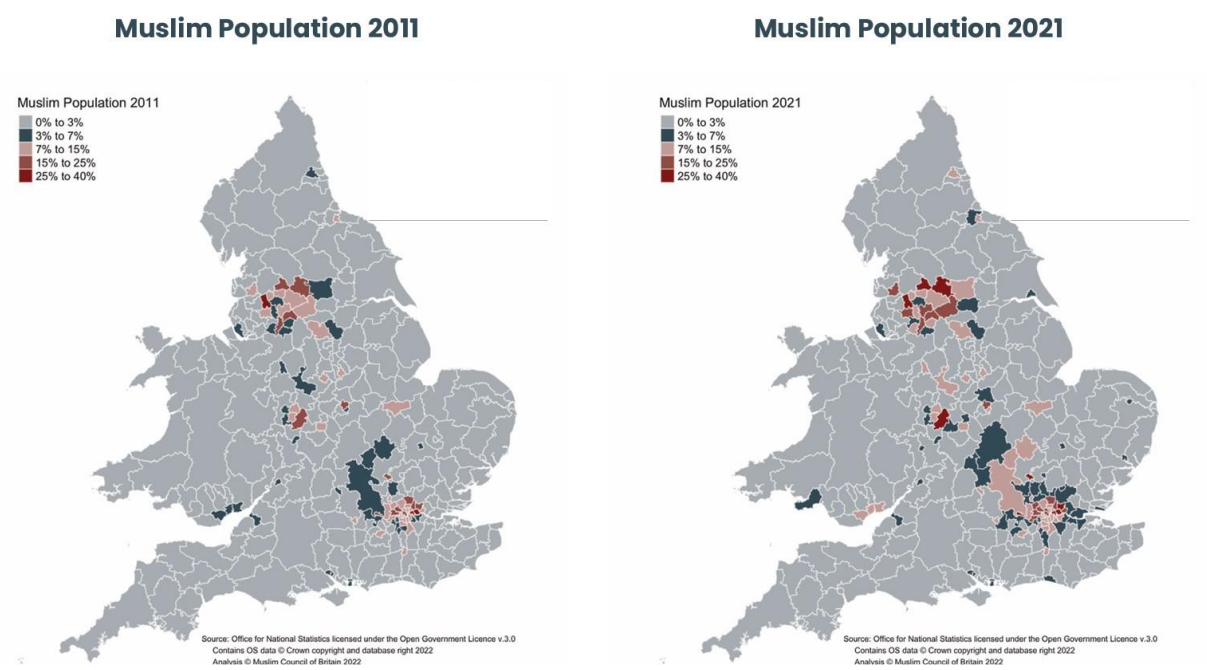


Figure 2.11: Muslim Population in England and Wales

Source: Muslim Council of Britain, based on the 2021 Census

While census data capture self-identified religious affiliation rather than practice, they remain the most reliable source for analysing population size and composition over time.

The Muslim population in Britain is internally diverse in terms of ethnicity, nationality, migration history, and generational status. The 2021Census data show that people of South Asian heritage continue to constitute the largest proportion of Muslims, with those of Pakistani, Bangladeshi, and Indian backgrounds forming the majority accounting for approximately 2.63 million people (around 66 per cent), though their overall share has declined slightly as Muslim populations from other regions have grown (ONS, 2023). Alongside South Asian Muslims, there are well-established and growing populations of Black African/Caribbean/ Black British Muslims, particularly of Somali, Sudanese, Nigerian, and other African origins, as well as Muslims from the Middle East, North Africa, Eastern Europe, and Southeast Asia (ONS, 2023). In addition, a smaller but significant proportion of Muslims identify as White British, White Irish (approximately 234,000), or from mixed ethnic backgrounds, reflecting both long-term settlement and religious conversion (ONS, 2023) (see Figure 2.12).

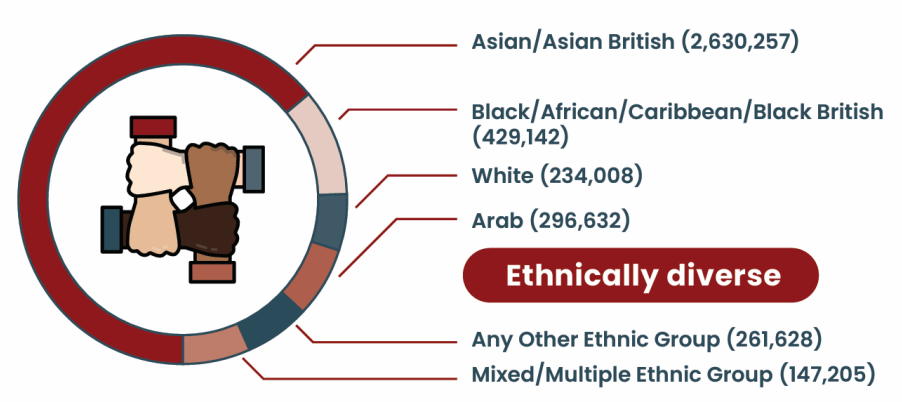


Figure 2.12: Muslims ethnicities in Britain

Source: Muslim Council of Britain, based on the 2021 Census

In religious terms, Sunni Islam represents the largest denominational grouping among Muslims in Britain, alongside smaller but established communities of Shia, Sufi groups, and Ahmadis, the latter of whom self-identify as Muslim despite being regarded as outside Islam by many other Muslim groups (Gilliat-Ray, 2010). This denominational diversity intersects with ethnicity, locality, and migration history, further complicating any notion of a homogeneous Muslim population.

British Muslims also differ in terms of place of birth and religious biography. Census 2021 confirms that a substantial and growing proportion of Muslims are UK-born, reflecting multi-generational settlement, while others are migrants who arrived at different historical moments and through varied migration channels (ONS, 2023). In addition, a minority of Muslims in Britain are converts to Islam, most commonly from White British or Black Caribbean backgrounds. Although conversion is not captured directly in census data, academic estimates suggest that by the 2010s the number of converts was likely around100,000, a figure that has since been treated as indicative rather than definitive due to the absence of systematic official data (Brice, 2011).

Moreover, one of the most distinctive demographic characteristics of Muslims in Britain is their relatively youthful age profile. The 2021Census data confirm that Muslims are, on average, younger than the population as a whole, reflecting both higher fertility rates and the legacy of post-war and later migration patterns (ONS, 2023). According to the Muslim Council of Britain (2025) Muslims have a median age of 29, compared with 44 for the population overall, and 46 per cent are under the age of 24, reflecting a youthful demographic profile (Muslim Council of Britain, 2025).

These demographic characteristics indicate that Muslims in Britain constitute a large, diverse, and multi-generational population, shaped by different migration histories, ethnic backgrounds, and religious traditions. Census and academic evidence consistently demonstrate that there is no single "Muslim community" in Britain, but rather a plurality of Muslim communities whose shared religious identification intersects with varied social, cultural, and demographic profiles. However, despite them being from different ethnicities and nationalities, with various cultural backgrounds, the common tie that links these different Muslims is their religious identity, as most Muslims in Britain refer to their religion when they identify individually or as a group, some may mention other characteristics such as ethnicity and nationality (Mcloughlin, 2002). Likewise, wider community identifies people from certain ethnicity categories are used inter-changeably with *Muslims* in the British *s*, particularly people from South Asia, Africa and Middle east (Baker et al., 2013)

2.5.1.3. Muslims' Identity

Despite their diverse ethnic, national, and cultural backgrounds, a key unifying feature among Muslims in Britain is religious identification, which frequently operates as a primary marker of both individual and collective identity. Therefore, it is necessary to understand the meaning of being Muslim and how Muslim community identifies and being identified.

Scholars analysing Muslim identity have drawn an important distinction between *self-identification* and *other-identification*, emphasising that identity is produced both through internal processes of self-understanding and through external categorisation by wider society (see Figure 2.13).

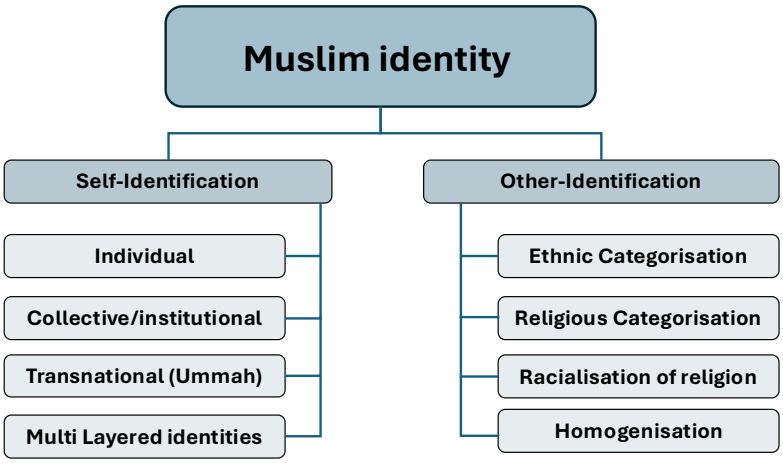


Figure 2.13: Muslim identity in Britain

Source: Author, based on the literature

Brubaker (2013) conceptualises this distinction by defining self-identification as the ways Muslims (individuals or groups) define themselves, while other-identification refers to how Muslims identified by others (Brubaker, 2013). This is particularly useful for understanding Muslim identity in Britain, where religious identification operates alongside ethnic, national, and cultural identities, and where external categorisation has played a significant role in shaping public perceptions of Muslims.

Muslim self-identification can be understood at both individual and collective levels. At an individual level, religious self-identification is often linked to personal belief and practice, including core elements of Islam such as the declaration of faith, prayer, fasting, charity, and pilgrimage, which together form an ethical and spiritual framework for everyday life (Waines, 2003). At a collective or institutional level, self-identification extends beyond ritual practice to include social, educational, and welfare activities organised through mosques, charities, and community organisations, producing a shared sense of group identity grounded in both religion and social engagement. In addition, Muslim self-identification often operates across national boundaries through reference to the *Ummah* (Arabic word for Muslim nation), a transnational notion of belonging that connects Muslims globally and may be invoked particularly in moments of collective mobilisation around issues perceived to affect Muslims worldwide (Meer & Modood, 2013). Importantly, religious self-identification does not eliminate other forms of identification, as Muslims may highlight ethnicity, culture, nationality, or race depending on context, demonstrating the situational and layered nature of identity (Fuad, 2012).

Other-identification, by contrast, refers to the external labelling of Muslims by the wider society, often in ways that simplify or homogenise complex identities. In Britain, this process has evolved historically. During the 1980s and 1990s, people of South Asian origin were commonly categorised using ethnic labels such as “Asian” or “South Asian”. Over time, these classifications increasingly gave way to religious categorisation, with “Muslim” becoming a dominant identifier applied to people from particular ethnic or regional backgrounds, especially those associated with South Asia, the Middle East, and parts of Africa (A. Hussain & Redclift, 2013). This shift represents a movement away from explicitly racial or ethnic labels towards religious categorisation, a process described by Mac an Ghaill & Haywood (2015) as the *racialisation of religion*, whereby religious identity becomes a proxy for racialised difference. (Mac an Ghaill & Haywood, 2015).

Hussain & Redclift (2013) suggests that such forms of other-identification are often selective and partial, emphasising certain visible aspects of Muslim identity while overlooking internal diversity

and everyday lived experiences (A. Hussain & Redclift, 2013). Other-identification frequently focus on a narrow set of themes, such as religio-cultural difference, loyalty dispute, and fear, which usually lead Muslims to be represented in link to terrorism and grooming affairs, oppression, Hijab and forced marriage (A. Hussain & Redclift, 2013). Nonetheless, most Muslims in Britain do not experience religious identity as incompatible with national belonging, rather, being Muslim and being British are commonly articulated as overlapping and mutually reinforcing identities (Modood, 2007). As a result, other-identification tends to reduce a heterogeneous community to a single, simplified category, obscuring differences of ethnicity, class, gender, generation, and religious interpretation. Thus, the interaction between self-identification and other-identification highlights the complex and dynamic nature of Muslim identity in Britain.

Thus, regardless of differences in nationality, ethnicity, or place of birth, religious identification remains a significant reference point through which many Muslims identify and are identified by others. However, the tension between internally defined identities and externally imposed categorisations, continues to shape how Muslims are positioned within British society.

2.5.1.4. Socio-economic status

Muslims in Britain experience persistent socio-economic disadvantage across several key domains, including neighbourhood deprivation, employment, housing, and health. Census-based analysis shows that approximately 40 per cent of Muslims in England have lived in the most deprived 10 per cent of neighbourhoods consistently across 2001, 2011, and 2021, indicating continued rather than temporary deprivation (ONS, 2023). By contrast, only 6 per cent of Muslims reside in the most affluent neighbourhoods, highlighting the uneven socio-economic geography in which many Muslim communities are embedded (Muslim Council of Britain, 2025) (see Figure 2.14).

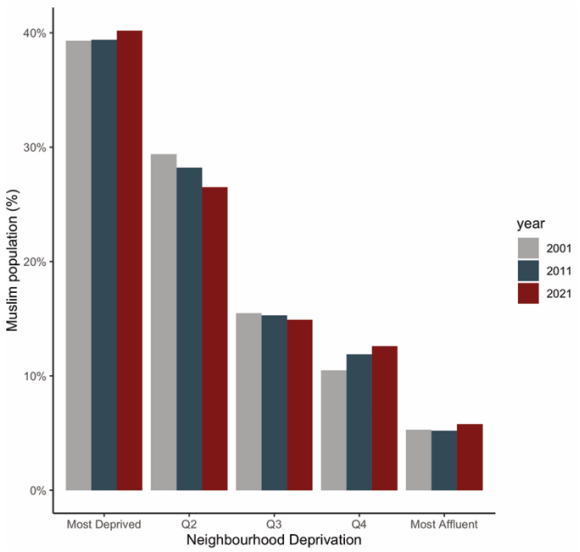


Figure 2.14: Muslim population by neighbourhood deprivation

Source: Muslim Council of Britain, based on the 2021 Census

Labour-market outcomes further illustrate this pattern, as research has identified an "*ethnic penalty*" affecting those of Pakistani and Bangladeshi heritage in many Western countries including Britain (Heath & Cheung, 2007).

Housing conditions constitute another significant dimension of socio-economic inequality. Earlier studies have documented overcrowding and tenure insecurity among Muslim-majority ethnic groups, particularly Pakistani and Bangladeshi households (Shankley & Finney, 2020). The 2021 Census evidence confirms the persistence of these patterns, as one in four Muslim households in England and Wales live in overcrowded accommodation, compared with one in fifteen households nationally (ONS, 2023).

Although educational attainment among British Muslims has improved markedly in recent years, there remains a generational and gendered dimension to these changes. 25.3 per cent of people identifying as Muslim in England and Wales had no formal qualifications in 2021, notably higher than the 18.2 per cent of the overall population, suggesting that older members, particularly women who migrated earlier in the post-war period, continue to exhibit lower levels of formal educational participation, while younger Muslims are increasingly likely to attain higher qualifications and enter further education pathways (ONS, 2023).

These indicators show that although Muslims in Britain are increasingly present across educational and occupational fields, socio-economic disadvantage remains a defining condition for a substantial proportion of the community. This disadvantage also has a spatial dimension, as Muslims are disproportionately concentrated in socio-economically deprived urban areas.

The following section examines this pattern in detail through the lens of of the built environment, considering both its spatial and social dimensions in order to understand how, and through which processes, Muslim settlement patterns have taken shape.

Overall, Muslims in Britain should be understood as a long-established yet continually evolving community whose presence has been shaped by historical encounters, migration, settlement, and the gradual development of community organisations. Nonetheless, the contemporary position of Muslims is marked by a persistent marginalisation, as despite multi-generational continuity and increasing institutional visibility, many Muslims remain disproportionately concentrated in deprived urban areas and continue to experience socio-economic disadvantage. This ongoing inequality is crucial for interpreting Muslim participation in regeneration, because it helps explain why participation is shaped not only by identity and representation but also by long-standing and multi-faceted patterns of exclusion.

2.5.2. Manifestation of Muslims' presence in Britain on the built-environment

While prior sections outlined the historical, demographic and socio-economic profile of Muslims in Britain, this section turns to the spatial dimensions of their presence. It examines how Muslim communities have reshaped elements of the urban landscape through the development of religious, commercial, and domestic spaces adapted to their cultural and religious needs. In doing so, it highlights how these spatial adaptations, centred around mosques, halal businesses, and informal infrastructures for prayer and ritual, which often compensate for gaps in mainstream built environments that do not adequately include Muslims needs and practices. However, the focus here remains on the influence of the Muslims identity on the build-environment, and the underlying causes and broader social dynamics that inform these practices, will be examined in detail below in Section 2.7.

2.5.2.1. Mosques and Halal Businesses as Community hubs

Muslims in Britain have built religious and community spaces that visibly mark their presence in the urban landscape. In many cities and towns, mosques (often created through the adaptation of existing buildings, including houses, pubs, and churches, have become focal points of Muslims neighbourhood life (Gilliat-Ray, 2010). However, purpose-built mosques have been present in Britain for well over a century, with the Shah Jahan Mosque in Woking (1889) widely recognised as the earliest purpose-built mosque in Britain, illustrating that mosques'

architecture has long existed alongside the more common pattern of building conversion (Gilliat-Ray, 2010). While purpose-built mosques may incorporate architectural elements associated with Islamic identity (for example domes and minarets), both converted and purpose-built mosques typically function as multiuse community centres, hosting education, welfare, and social activities alongside worship, highlighting their practical role in anchoring Muslim social infrastructure within British urban life (McLoughlin, 1998).

Moreover, alongside places of worship, Muslim communities have created shops and restaurants catering to their needs in many inner-city areas, including halal butcheries, take aways, restaurants, and desert bars, as well as ethnic grocery stores and bakeries. These businesses fulfil religious requirements and provide familiar cultural goods and activities. For example, a family seeking meat will often turn to a nearby halal butcher rather than a generic supermarket, though mainstream supermarkets may carry some halal products, but dedicated shops ensure authenticity and community trust (Ahmed, 2008). Over time such streets may develop visible bilingual signage such as in Urdu, Arabic or Bengali, reflecting the community's presence. Fischer (2009) calls this proliferation of halal commerce a "*Muslim space making*", where the growth of markets, grocery stores and restaurants marked halal cultivates a social and cultural space for Muslims in British cities (Fischer, 2009).

This urban landscape, therefore, serves as a form of accommodation for the everyday needs of Muslims in Britain and in other contexts with similar socio-religious dynamics. It also invites a reconsideration of how Muslim identity is both expressed by communities themselves and perceived by wider society. Muslim identity is not confined to visible markers such as wearing the hijab or engaging in acts of worship, it is also embedded in the production of built environments that facilitate religiously informed daily practices. These spatial adaptations reflect a lived religion that extends beyond ritual, shaping the urban life in ways that are both functional and symbolic. However, Muslims in Britain still face some challenges in terms of accommodating their needs across other matters, such as housing and public facilities away from this Muslim-friendly built environment.

2.5.2.2. Housing and Public Facility Adaptations

Outside these hubs, the general built environment often overlooks Muslim requirements, pushing communities to cluster together further. Housing is one key issue, as census data show that 32.7% of British Muslims live in overcrowded homes, compared with only 8.4% of the overall population (ONS, 2023). Many British houses are small, terraced homes, unsuited for extended or multi-generational Muslim families, so household crowding is common. Similarly, standard

washroom design rarely meets Muslim hygiene customs, such as Muslims *wudu* (ablution) before prayer that includes washing feet and other parts with clean water. For example, public toilets in Britain typically have only sinks or paper. Police guidance notes that when forced to use ordinary or disabled toilets for *wudu*, Muslims feel embarrassed and often spill water, and recommends installing special ablution stations or bidet sprays (College of Plicing, 2021). In addition, dedicated prayer spaces are often lacking in secular buildings. Workplaces, universities and even motorway services occasionally provide Muslim prayer rooms by default. For instance, when one British university removed the only designated Muslim prayer room to make way for a corridor, students protested that the change was made without any consultation (Rachael Pells, 2017). These everyday gaps, from crowded housing, inappropriate lavatories, to limited on-site prayer areas, mean that mosques, halal shops and Muslim community centres are not just conveniences but vital compensations for secular planning oversights.

In short, the manifestation of Muslim presence in Britain's built environment is less a matter of symbolic display of religion (identity) than of everyday practices. Mosques, halal businesses, and adapted domestic and public facilities emerge primarily as practical infrastructures that enable daily life, worship, diet, hygiene, sociability, and community support, within urban settings that have historically been designed around non-Muslim norms. Where mainstream housing and public facilities fail to accommodate those needs, communities often compensate by adapting spaces or clustering around supportive hubs, meaning that Muslim space is frequently produced through necessity and lived practice rather than deliberate statements of difference.

2.5.3. Studies on Muslims' Participation in Regeneration Projects

The literature focusing explicitly on Muslim participation in regeneration projects is relatively limited, as until the early 2000s, few works isolated Muslim participation in regeneration projects as a distinct topic as Muslims usually featured as part of broader discussions on ethnic minorities or faith groups in urban policy. However, given the socio-political discourse on Muslim communities in Britain (especially post-2001) and the notable presence of Muslims in many regeneration-targeted areas, some studies have touch upon Muslims participation in these projects. There are two different lenses through which Muslims participation is discussed in the literature. Firstly, a faith-based lens and, secondly, through ethnic/racial and socio-economic status, as defining characteristics of the community (see Figure 2.15).

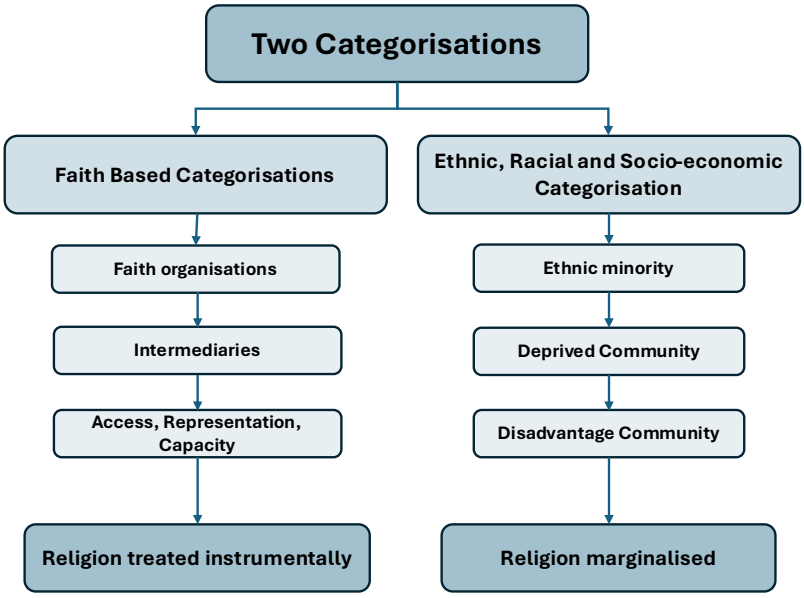


Figure 2.15: Studies on Muslims' Participation in Regeneration projects

Source: Author, based on the literature

2.5.3.1. Faith-based categorisation

There are limited studies that discussed Muslims participation in regeneration projects explicitly in the literature. One of these studies was Farnell et al (2003) study, which covered faith communities' participation in urban regeneration, including substantial data on Muslim organisations. It was conducted in the aftermath of the 2001 disturbances and at a time when the government was keen to engage faith groups in neighbourhood renewal. Findings indicated that Muslim community organisations (mosques, welfare charities, women's groups) were often doing important grassroots work, such as youth activities, drug abuse prevention, supplementary schooling, which aligned with regeneration aims.

However, these organisations were frequently outside the formal regeneration partnerships, as they were not being systematically invited or resourced to contribute. One reason was the lack of "*religious literacy*" among secular agencies, and officials did not understand how to approach or value faith-based contributions. Meanwhile, on the Muslim side, some hesitancy existed about engaging with government programs, either due to unfamiliarity to the process or mistrust. The study recommended building partnerships of trust between councils and faith communities, developing mutual understanding (for example, training council officers in basic cultural competencies, and training religious leaders in how participation processes work). It also highlighted internal diversity, through emphasising that not all Muslims are religiously active, and

different generations have different attitude, so engaging a broad spectrum that includes elders, youth, men, women, was necessary to avoid just working with self-appointed leaders.

While the Farnell et al. (2003) study remains an important early contribution to understanding the participation of Muslims in regeneration projects, the study mainly focuses on organisational engagement and partnership working, with religion treated as a tool for regeneration. For example, religion is limited to the mosque, rather than being examined as a *Place Making* system that shapes the Muslims' motivations and attitudes toward participation.

These limitations are not unique to Farnell et al. (2003), but rather indicative of research on Muslim participation in urban regeneration, where faith was often acknowledged but not explored in depth. For instance, the *Productive Margins programme* at the University of Bristol (2013–2018) examined Muslim participation in Bristol's inner-city neighbourhoods, where there are sizeable Somali and Pakistani Muslim populations concentrated, in particular wards. The research found that engagement was often mediated through local Muslim-led NGOs, community organisations, and prominent activists who acted as intermediaries between statutory bodies and residents. While these actors enabled access to decision-making spaces, reliance on such intermediaries also risked narrowing participation to a small group of recognised representatives, potentially excluding less organised or less visible segments of the Muslim community.

The emphasis on faith-based organisations as potential partners for regeneration tended to foreground issues of access, representation, and capacity, while giving less attention to the lived religious and cultural dimensions that influence how participation is understood, and enacted by Muslims (individuals and communities). Consequently, Muslim participation was frequently framed as a technical challenge (how to engage them), rather than a complex social process shaped by identity.

2.5.3.2. *Ethnic/racial and socio-economic categorisation*

Many other studies moved away from faith-based framings altogether, instead situating Muslims within broader analyses of ethnicity, race, and socio-economic disadvantage (Gale & Hopkins, 2009; Peach, 2006; Phillips, 2006). In these studies, Muslims participation is typically discussed within broader analyses of ethnic minority engagement, neighbourhood deprivation, and socio-economic disadvantage, with religion either marginalised or treated as secondary to ethnicity and race. This reflects the way in which much British regeneration policy and research historically categorised populations using ethnic monitoring frameworks, particularly those

relating to Pakistani and Bangladeshi heritage groups, among whom Muslim identification is statistically dominant (ONS, 2023).

Early Regeneration and urban policy studies frequently examined participation through the lens of race relations and social exclusion, focusing on barriers faced by ethnic minority communities in deprived inner-city areas. For example, research associated with area-based initiatives such as City Challenge (1991-1993) and the SRB (1991-2002) identified low participation among ethnic minorities as being linked to poverty, unemployment, language barriers, and limited institutional trust (Rausch & Gillborn, 2003; Social Exclusion Unit, 2001). In these studies, Muslims appeared primarily as part of racialised minority populations concentrated in regeneration areas, particularly in post-industrial cities and towns such as Birmingham, Bradford, and Oldham.

A similar pattern is evident in studies of the NDC programme, where community participation was largely conceptualised through ethnic and socio-economic categories. National evaluations of NDC framed inclusion primarily in terms of BAME representation and neighbourhood deprivation, with residents in Muslim-majority areas commonly identified as Pakistani or Bangladeshi rather than Muslims. As a result, Muslim participation in NDC partnerships and consultation processes was examined within ethnic minority engagement strategies, reflecting a race-equality rather than faith-based approach to community participation (Batty et al., 2010; Lall & Gillborn, 2004; Rausch & Gillborn, 2003)

However, Phillips (2006) critiques culturalist explanations of minority disengagement, arguing that ethnic minority participation in urban governance is shaped by structural inequalities in housing markets, labour opportunities, and political representation (Phillips, 2006). Her later synthesis (Phillips, 2007) reinforces the argument that what are often framed as "*community cohesion*" or "*integration"* problems are more accurately understood as outcomes of racialised disadvantage and socio-economic inequality (Phillips, 2007). Within this framework, Muslim participation in regeneration is not treated as a distinct topic, but as part of wider ethnic minority experiences of marginalisation in urban decision-making processes.

While Philips' (2006;2007) do not affiliate the Muslims disengagement with their culture, it overlooks the necessity of religious and cultural aspects of the community for their engagement.

Policy-focused research has reinforced this ethnic and socio-economic framing, with the Open Society Institute's report noting that much evidence on Muslims is derived from research on ethnic minority groups, especially Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities, who are disproportionately concentrated in deprived urban areas and affected by poor housing and low incomes (S. Hussain & Choudhury, 2007). The report highlights that participation in local

regeneration is strongly correlated with socio-economic position and experiences of discrimination, rather than religious affiliation.

Similarly, research produced by the Centre on Migration, Policy And Society (COMPAS) situates Muslim participation within broader neighbourhood and socio-economic contexts. Studies of localities such as Birmingham and Newham examine participation practices through the lenses of deprivation, migration histories, and racialised state–community relations, with Muslims largely discussed as part of ethnic minority populations negotiating regeneration under conditions of limited resources and institutional mistrust (Abbas, 2006; Jayaweera & Choudhury, 2008).

The existing literature tends to approach Muslim participation in regeneration through two partial frames, either via organisational engagement (mosques, charities, representative bodies, and recognised intermediaries) or via structural disadvantage (race/ethnicity and socio-economic marginalisation in deprived neighbourhoods) (Batty et al., 2010; Farnell et al., 2003; Phillips, 2006). While both lenses generate important insights about access, representation, trust, and capacity, they rarely examine participation through a third perspective. The meanings attached to religiously and culturally grounded everyday practices, shape motivations, preferred engagement routes, and what participation looks like for different Muslims. As a result, Muslim participation is often treated as a technical inclusion problem (how to bring Muslims into existing participatory spaces) rather than as a socially and culturally situated process in which faith-informed norms, and community infrastructures could be leveraged as assets for designing more appropriate forms of engagement, and therefore, better outcomes of regeneration projects.

2.6. Muslims as a Key community in Community Cohesion and Integration Policies

British Muslims have increasingly been positioned at the heart of debates on community cohesion and integration in Britain, especially since the late 20th century. A series of political, social, and security events, notably the 1989 Rushdie affair, the 2001 northern town riots, the 7/7 London bombings in 2005, Lee Rugby Murder 2013, the Manchester Arena terror attack in 2017 marked key turning points. These events brought Muslim communities under intense public scrutiny, and in each case, Muslims were effectively problematised as a community perceived to be at odds with mainstream British society. In response, governments at both national and local levels introduced a range of reviews, policies, and guidance aimed at navigating these recurring debates. Over time, these documents evolved to address emerging issues, and several

included recommendations relating to community participation in urban regeneration. However, although Muslims were central to many of these documents, participation was often discussed in general terms, with limited emphasis on its specific role in promoting community cohesion and integration. This section examines the historical context of Muslim segregation in Britain, traces the evolution of national and local cohesion and integration policies, and considers the role of community participation within these policy frameworks.

2.6.1. Muslims' Segregation in Britain

The Satanic Verses controversy of 1988–89 (widely known as the Rushdie affair) was one of the first major incidents to push British Muslims into the national spotlight. Muslim protests against Salman Rushdie's novel, including burnings of the book and calls for blasphemy laws, generated public alarm about Muslim immigrants' commitment to core British values like free speech. The government's response through the then Home Secretary (Douglas Hurd) urged Muslim citizens to "*understand the history and institutions of Britain, [and] its democratic processes*" (Hurd, 1989, as cited in (Weller, 2009). Such episodes, unprecedented in Britain, constructed the image of Muslims as a distinct and potentially problematic collective in the public eye. In the following decade, this image was deepened by other events in Britain, such as the 7/7 bombing and beyond such as the 9/11 attacks in the US, which heightened scrutiny of Muslim loyalty and social cohesion. By the early 2000s, Muslims in Britain were increasingly seen by officials and media as a "*threat*" to British values or as bearers of a culturally incompatible religion (Mcghee, 2008; Moore et al., 2008). This increased a social and therefore spatial segregation of Muslims from the wider community, to be clustered in various inner-cities and towns across Britain (Tahar et al., 2023) (see Figure 2.16).

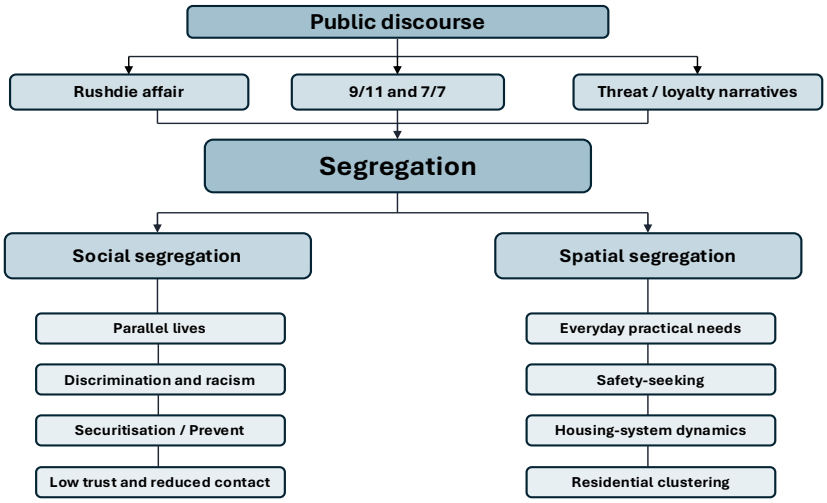


Figure 2.16: Muslims' Segregation in Britain

Source: Author, based on the literature

2.6.1.1. Social segregation

Different events in Britain and the West (as mentioned above), created a rupture in Muslims social interactions with the majority communities of host countries. In Britain, a recurring theme in the literature is that Muslims' lack of social contact with the host community is a crucial issue that has been addressed widely. The Cantle Report (2001) framed the problem as one of communities living "*parallel lives*," arguing that separation across schools, community/voluntary bodies, workplaces, places of worship, language, and social-cultural networks meant that lives "*often do not seem to touch*," preventing "*meaningful interchanges*" (Cantle, 2001). Muslims social segregation was not produced simply by individual cultural and religious preferences, but through a number of factors, including discrimination towards Muslims, their perception as a threat to the Britain's security and values, as well as their alleged disloyalty to the country.

Phillips (2006) shows how the "*self-segregation*" storyline can itself be racialising and blaming, by treating minority clustering as evidence of cultural withdrawal while downplaying the structural forces that constrain social mixing (Phillips, 2006). Phillips notes how, after 2001, British Muslims in particular were represented as socially isolated and "*inward looking*," and how the "*parallel lives*" claim was amplified in ways that made it sound like Muslims themselves were the cause of polarisation (Phillips, 2006)

Phillips (2006) argues that such discourses underplay discrimination and institutional racism that shape where people can live safely and how they relate socially across boundaries. The argument explicitly highlights processes such as racist harassment and institutional constraints that restrict minorities' choices and help reproduce separation, rather than social distance being simply a choice by Muslims (Phillips, 2006, 2007).

Tahir et al (2023) also show how majority suspicion of the Muslim community reduces the conditions for everyday intergroups social contact. They demonstrate that when Muslims are perceived as maintaining their religious culture, the host community views them as less trustworthy and more disloyal (Tahir et al., 2023). Increasing support for surveillance rather than inclusion, such as terrorism-related events and radicalisation discourses are identified as key drivers behind Muslims being positioned as a threat to cohesion (Tahir et al., 2023). This view is further reflected on the Prevent Policy/Duty[4], where institutions are legally required to prevent

[4] Prevent was introduced in 2003 and later formalised through the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015, which placed it as a statutory requirement via the Prevent Duty.

extremism and radicalisation, with greater focus (*surveillance*) on the Muslim community (O'Toole et al., 2016; Qurashi, 2018; Zempi & Tripli, 2023)

Low trust and suspicion discourage daily interactions, and participation in civic or public life can be also approached through a security lens, which prevent reciprocal interactions and reinforces social boundaries.

Thus, Muslims' reduced social interaction with the wider community in Britain is best understood as an outcome of racialised and securitised boundary-making, rather than as a straightforward expression of cultural preference. These dynamics do not only limit interaction in the present, but they also reproduce social boundaries over time by normalising avoidance, suspicion, and unequal recognition. The next section develops this argument further by turning from social relations to the spatial dimension, by examining how residential clustering and neighbourhood geographies intersect with, and sometimes deepen, these patterns of social segregation.

2.6.1.2. Spatial segregation

Muslims' spatial segregation in Britain is generally explained as the product of three interlinked factors rather than a simple preference to live in an Islamic environment. One driver is the need to fulfil the community's everyday requirements (as explained in Section 2.5.2), as living near mosques, halal retail, culturally familiar services, community organisations, and dense support networks facilitates the community daily life. In this sense, Muslim-concentrated areas can operate as a form of "*institutional completeness*", making ordinary practices such as worship, shopping, childcare, and social support, more feasible (Schönwälder, 2007). This does not mean that these neighbourhoods are closed systems, but rather, they can be pragmatic hubs that lower everyday costs and enable religious-cultural practice to be integrated into routine urban life. This "*negotiated choice*" argument is reinforced by McGarrigle's (2006) study, which shows that residential outcomes for South Asian households emerge from interactions between cultural expectations, religious observance, financial constraints, and limited housing options, with different households balancing these factors differently over time (McGarrigle, 2006)

Another factor is safety-seeking under racism, discrimination, and harassment, which reshapes residential mobility and makes concentrated presence of Muslims feel protective. Amin (2002) emphasises that fear of racial hostility and the politics of belonging can push minority groups toward familiar and supportive areas, while simultaneously enabling patterns of avoidance among white residents (*White flight*), producing geographies of separation (Amin, 2002).

Phillips' (2006) critique of "*self-segregation*" similarly warns against reading clustering as cultural withdrawal, as she explained how post-2001 debate racialised space and constructed British Muslims as withdrawing from social and spatial interaction, while overlooking the extent to which exclusion and harassment narrow choices (Phillips, 2006).

Moreover, Hopkins (2025) asserted that everyday Islamophobia strengthens the safety argument by showing how anti-Muslim hostility is frequently encountered in public spaces (streets, transport, journeys to work/school), which leads to further spatial segregation (Hopkins, 2025)

Furthermore, Forst et al (2022) challenge the assumption that concentration automatically implies segregation, as they argue that residents in ethnically concentrated settings often describe concentration as historically shaped by structural racism, but also as a basis for belonging to the area (Frost et al., 2022).

From an institutional and policy perspective, another factor lies in structural housing processes, which distribute groups unevenly across space and can consolidate concentrations over time. Archer & Stevens (2018) highlight that "*integration*" is often assumed to follow from residential proximity, yet the relationship is neither automatic nor simple, as contact effects depend on other conditions (e.g., equal status, cooperation between residents), and housing systems can actively encourage segregation through the ways they manage allocation, neighbourhood change, as well as pressures on limited housing resources (Archer & Stevens, 2018).

So, the review argues that segregation is not just demographic patterning but is shaped by policy and management decisions, and that local authorities/housing providers can either mitigate or amplify tension depending on how they handle perceived unfairness, allocation, and neighbourhood interventions (Archer & Stevens, 2018). Comparative work on Britain further cautions against overclaiming about the extent of segregation, stressing that the key analytical issue is how residential patterns intersect with socio-economic inequality and the points of interaction (work, school, public space) rather than treating spatial concentration itself as the definitive cause of weak integration (Schönwälder, 2007)

Therefore, the literature suggests that Muslims' spatial segregations in Britain are shaped by a combination of everyday practicality, safety-seeking, and housing-system dynamics, rather than a simple preference to live apart. Concentration can make daily life more practical for Muslims by placing mosques, halal provision, culturally familiar services, and support networks within easy reach (as discussed in Section 2.5.2). At the same time, clustering can function as a protective response to racism, discrimination and Islamophobia that constrain mobility and make some public spaces feel unsafe or unwelcoming. Also, residential patterns created by

some policies, such as allocation practices, affordability, and the management of limited resources, can encourage concentrations over time. However, these neighbourhoods should not be treated as isolated enclaves that operate away from wider society. Residents typically remain connected to the wider community through employment, education, services, and everyday movement across urban space. Thus, the provision of accessible, safe spaces where routine cross-community interactions can occur (for example, schools, workplaces, public spaces, and local institutions), encourages inter-communities' interactions beyond residential clustering (Archer & Stevens, 2018; Schönwälder, 2007).

This discussion shows that social and spatial segregation are mutually reinforcing, as residential clustering can reduce routine contact and intensify *inward-looking* social networks, while racism, discrimination, and lack of safety can simultaneously narrow social relations and constrain residential and everyday mobility. However, segregation should not be treated as a Muslims problem or a simple indicator of cultural withdrawal. Instead, it needs to be addressed through its root causes, including unequal housing opportunities, institutional practices, racism/Islamophobia, and the wider politics of belonging that shape trust and social interactions. Additionally, policy responses should work with the reality that concentrated neighbourhoods often operate as pragmatic support infrastructures, and should therefore focus on creating and strengthening connecting hubs, such as schools, workplaces, civic institutions, shared public spaces, and participation forums, that enable safe, routine inter-community social contact beyond the neighbourhood, rather than assuming that dispersal alone will deliver integration.

2.6.2. National and Local Community Cohesion and Integration Policies

Successive British governments responses to the above challenges have evolved over time, moving from multiculturalism to agendas of community cohesion and, later, integration. Multiculturalism, which informed British policy in the 1980s and 1990s, encouraged respect for diversity and minority cultural rights. It assumed that strong ethnic identities could coexist within a unified national framework. However, by the early 2000s, this model was criticised for allegedly fostering segregation over unity. The fact that many riots took place in northern towns and cities in 2001 had deeply divided communities and led some to argue that multiculturalist policies had encouraged communities to lead *parallel lives* (Cantle, 2001). In response, the then New Labour

government (under Tony Blair) pivoted towards a "*community cohesion*[5]" agenda after 2001. The Cantle Report (Community Cohesion Review Team, 2001) described towns fragmented by segregation and lacking a shared sense of belonging (Cantle, 2001). The report emphasised building shared values through ideas such as an oath of allegiance for new immigrants and measures that aim to diversify segregated schools. Community cohesion policies, implemented nationally and by local authorities, sought to promote dialogue between ethnic groups, civic education, and projects to bring youth and neighbours of different backgrounds together (Thomas, 2011). Notably, these efforts, while formally inclusive of all groups, were implicitly targeted at towns and cities with large Muslim (and South Asian) populations, the very communities where cohesion was deemed most problematic (Ratcliffe, 2012).

By the mid-2000s, the discourse had shifted further towards "*integration*", a concept overlapping with cohesion but with an emphasis on immigrants' adaptation to British society. This shift was accelerated by the 2005 London bombings and growing concerns about homegrown Islamist extremism, which raised pointed questions about whether multiculturalism had failed to instil common values. In 2006, the government established the Commission on Integration and Cohesion, whose report *Our Shared Future* (2007) marked a symbolic transition from the language of community cohesion to that of integration, with a sated goal to achieve Cohesive and Integrated communities[6]. The Commission's recommendations still encouraged interethnic understanding and equality, but they placed new weight on common national identity, English language proficiency, and tackling what it termed *"issues related to faith"* in public life (Commission on Integration and Cohesion, 2007). From 2007 onward, "*integration*" effectively became the slogan of policy, gradually replacing "*cohesion*" in official strategy. Successive governments (especially the Conservative-led administrations post-2010) were more explicit in rejecting earlier multiculturalist approaches (Famously exemplified by Prime Minister David

[5] The term community cohesion refers broadly to the strength of relationships and sense of belonging within and between communities. Early official definition that was later adopted was through the Local Government Association (2002), which defined a cohesive community as one where *There is a common vision and a sense of belonging for all communities; the diversity of people's different backgrounds and circumstances is appreciated and positively valued; those from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities; and Strong and positive relationships are being developed between people from different backgrounds and circumstances in the workplace, in schools and within neighbourhoods* (Local Government Association, 2002).

[6] An integrated and cohesive community is one where: *There is a clearly defined and widely shared sense of the contribution of different individuals and different communities to a future vision for a neighbourhood, city, region or country. There is a strong sense of an individual's rights and responsibilities when living in a particular place – people know what everyone expects of them, and what they can expect in turn. Those from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities, access to services and treatment. There is a strong sense of trust in institutions locally to act fairly in arbitrating between different interests and for their role and justifications to be subject to public scrutiny. There is a strong recognition of the contribution of both those who have newly arrived and those who already have deep attachments to a particular place, with a focus on what they have in common. There are strong and positive relationships between people from different backgrounds in the workplace, in schools and other institutions within neighbourhoods* (Commission on Integration and Cohesion, 2007).

Cameron's 2011 speech at Munich Security Conference "*Under the doctrine of state multiculturalism, we have encouraged different cultures to live separate lives, apart from each other and apart from the mainstream*") and in asserting that minorities must do more to integrate into a society defined by "*British values*" (*PM's Speech at Munich Security Conference*, 2011)

A series of policy documents at the national level highlight how Muslim communities were at the centre of this integration agenda, even when they were not explicitly named. The Casey Review (2016) was commissioned by the government to investigate integration and opportunity in deprived communities, led by Dame Louise Casey. The report found that spatial and social segregation were still at worrying levels in some places and highlighted the role of certain immigrant communities in these divides (Casey, 2016). While it discussed multiple factors, the review drew particular attention to Muslims, for instance, concentrations of Pakistani and Bangladeshi heritage Muslims in particular towns, the English language deficits among Muslim women, and the persistence of what it called "*regressive religious and cultural ideologies*" in those communities (Casey, 2016). This focus was not ignored by observers as the Casey Review was critiqued by some for singling out Muslims and framing integration as a one-sided responsibility, without equal emphasis on issues like majority discrimination or poverty (A. Hussain & Meer, 2017).

In the wake of the Casey review, the government launched the Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper (UK Government, 2018) as a formal statement of its integration vision. This Green Paper (2018) continued the trend of addressing Muslim communities without explicitly naming them. It outlined proposals to build "*strong, integrated communities*[7]" and identified key challenges such as residential segregation, educational isolation, linguistic barriers, and limited economic opportunities in specific areas (challenges that correspond to many Muslim-majority neighbourhoods) (UK Government, 2018). This Paper advocated measures including increased English language provision, initiatives to encourage social mixing, and projects to empower women and youth, reflecting issues prevalent in Muslim communities. It also designated several local authority areas as pilot "*Integration Areas*" (e.g. Blackburn with Darwen, Bradford, Walsall), which notably are localities with significant Muslim population. Throughout these policy shifts, from the Cantle Report through to the 2018 Green Paper, Muslims have been a key (implicitly or

[7] *Integrated communities are communities*

where people - whatever their background - live,

work, learn and socialise together, based on shared

rights, responsibilities and opportunities (Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper, 2018)

explicitly) reference group. Research has pointed out that Muslims were at the centre of the reports, strengthening cohesion and integration policies in this period (Tahar et al., 2023). Yet policymakers often stopped naming Islam or Muslims, preferring race-neutral or general terms like "*diverse communities*" or "*isolated groups*" (UK Government, 2018). This reflects a broader reluctance to name Muslims explicitly while integration and counter-extremism agendas framed segregation, British values, extremism, and gender equality in ways that disproportionately problematised Muslim communities (O'Toole, 2022).

From these national level reviews, reports and strategies, similar priorities were repeatedly translated into local guidance, because local authorities were expected to operationalise cohesion/integration through mainstream services and partnership with communities. The LGA's (Local Government Association) guidance (2002, 2004, 2019, 2023) consistently readdress national themes into local sphere, by embedding cohesion in policy to improve communication and targeting hate tensions, and creating contact through schools, youth services, housing, and community facilities.

National calls for cohesion were frequently implemented locally through structured contact programme, for example, school-based linking, youth projects, and shared community activities, explicitly framed as ways to create routine inter groups relationships rather than one-off events.

Moreover, recommendations about integrating cohesion aims into housing management, and community participation in neighbourhood regeneration where repeatedly addresses across the community cohesion to integration policy journey (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2009; Local Government Association, 2019). Thus, community participation was presented as part of the solution**,** but it was usually framed as a general expectation (eg, engagement, partnership working, community leadership) rather than a clearly specified, enforceable requirement for regeneration projects. The 2001 Cantle Report diagnosed "*parallel lives*" through segregation across institutions and social networks (schools, workplaces, voluntary bodies, places of worship, language, and social life), but its recommendations largely about social interactions amongst community groups, and local leadership, and less detailing on how participation should be structured within regeneration projects (which is part of generating these contacts) (Cantle, 2001). The LGA's early *Guidance on Community Cohesion* (2002) similarly positions councils' community leadership role and partnership working as central, and encouraged local authorities to adapt responses to local circumstances, but it framed this largely at the level of the whole community rather than offering detailed, group-specific participation guidance (Local Government Association, 2002). Therefore, the next part

will discuss how community participation was addressed throughout these community cohesion and integration policies, in order to determine the extent of which such important element was recognised.

2.6.3. Community participation in regeneration projects: From Community Cohesion to Integration policies

As explained previously, the landscape of social policy in Britain has undergone significant transformation over the past four decades in the ways it has conceptualised and managed ethnic diversity, cohesion and integration. The trajectory, community cohesion to integration, reflects not only changing governmental priorities but also evolving societal attitudes and responses to demographic shifts, urban challenges, and episodes of social unrest. These policy shifts have been influencing the national approach to urban regeneration and the mechanisms through which minority communities, especially Muslim communities, are engaged in the renewal of their neighbourhoods.

During community cohesion era, policies emphasised the importance of inclusive participation, aiming to ensure that regeneration was not merely a top-down process but one that actively involved residents, voluntary organisations, and local stakeholders. This approach was driven by the belief that cohesive communities are more resilient, better able to manage change, and more likely to sustain the benefits of regeneration over time (Mayo et al., 2011).

The action guides and frameworks developed at the time provided local authorities the ability to foster dialogue, build trust, and create shared spaces where diverse groups could collaborate on regeneration projects. Early joint guidance set out what councils should do in practice (mapping local tensions, convening partners, designing measurable action plans), first through the LGA/Home Office Guidance on Community Cohesion (2002) and then the cross-government Community Cohesion Action Guide (2004)[8], both addressed for local authorities (Local Government Association, 2002, 2004).

[8] Community Cohesion: An Action Guide was published in 2004 to help local authorities translate the emerging national cohesion agenda into local practice. It encouraged councils and partner organisations to address divisions between communities through coordinated action across areas such as housing, education, community development, race equality, faith relations and public services, while also using consultation and local partnerships to strengthen interaction and shared belonging. Its relevance to Ellesmere Green project lies in the expectation that regeneration should not only improve the physical environment but also support relationships between Burngreave's diverse ethnic and religious communities and ensure that different groups can influence local change.

For Muslims, this created both opportunities and tensions. On one hand, local authorities were encouraged to involve Muslim organisations in regeneration projects to promote intergroups interactions. On the other hand, critics noted that Muslim participation became increasingly instrumentalised, as they often expected Muslim organisations to act as mediators of intergroup tensions, while structural inequalities, such as unemployment and housing deprivation in Muslim-majority wards, were less addressed (Amin, 2002; Thomas, 2011). For example, Kundnani (2007) argues that after the 2001 disturbances in Oldham, Burnley and Bradford, policy responses were framed less around empowerment and more around community cohesion, anti-disorder, and the problematisation of Muslim communities (Kundnani, 2007).

From the late 2000s onwards, cohesion and integration policies highlighted the role of community participation in regeneration projects, where local authorities were encouraged to embed cohesion integration objectives into renewal strategies, ensuring that residents, voluntary organisations, and local forums shaped neighbourhood change. For example, Oldham Council's *Co-operative Innovation: The Oldham Approach* (2011) encouraged residents to be involved in controlling services and amenities and investment priorities (Oldham Council, 2011). Leicester's One Leicester Sustainable Community Strategy similarly linked integration to housing renewal and employment, framing inclusion and fairness as core to city-wide planning (Leicester City Council, 2008).

The Casey Review (2016) reinforced this localised, participatory approach, arguing that integration required action on housing, education, and public space (Casey, 2016). Its recommendations shaped the Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper (2018) and Action Plan (2019). The Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper (2018), later, explicitly acknowledges that "*conventional approaches to community engagement and participation have generally failed to reflect and harness this drive towards greater cohesion and inclusion.*" (UK Government, 2018). However, it piloted place-based regeneration and integration programmes in areas such as Blackburn with Darwen, Bradford, Peterborough, Walsall and Waltham Forest (UK Government, 2018). The Green Paper highlighted the role of community participation in regeneration projects as a means of fostering integration. It emphasised that inclusive and accessible public spaces, such as libraries, parks, and community centres, could provide opportunities for meaningful interactions between people of different backgrounds, thereby building trust and a shared sense of belonging (UK Government, 2018). This framing positioned regeneration not only as a vehicle for physical renewal but also as a catalyst for social mixing, community empowerment, and long-term resilience of diverse communities. While the Green Paper does not specifically reference Muslim communities, it lays the conceptual groundwork

for their involvement by promoting shared spaces, participation, and tailored local approaches. Faith groups, including Muslim organisations, were indirectly included as local actors, which was reflected in consultation responses (UK Government, 2018, 2019). However, this way of categorising Muslims returns us to the conclusion drawn earlier in Section 2.5.3, namely that Muslims are often approached through an organisational lens, as a faith group, or as an ethnic minority, while insufficient attention is given to the religious and cultural dimensions that shape their everyday interactions. Consequently, this creates a recurring asymmetry in policy, where Muslims are often positioned, implicitly or explicitly, at the centre of diagnoses of cohesion and integration failures, the participation responses proposed are typically framed in generic, place-based terms.

2.7. Conclusion (Knowledge Gaps)

In the literature and policies reviewed, community participation in regeneration is widely endorsed but unevenly realised, and the same participation problems (power, representation, capacity, trust, and tokenism) are experienced most greatly in deprived neighbourhoods with predominantly minority groups. They also showed that Muslims are repeatedly present in the regeneration, cohesion, and integration debates, yet are most often approached either through organisational lenses (e.g., mosques as representative bodies) or through broad structural categories (race/ethnicity and socio-economic disadvantage), with limited attention to how everyday religious and cultural practices shape motivations, preferred participation methods, and the practical meaning of participation. This section therefore draws these threads together to conclude the knowledge gap at three interrelated levels, theory, practice, and policy (see Figure 2.17).

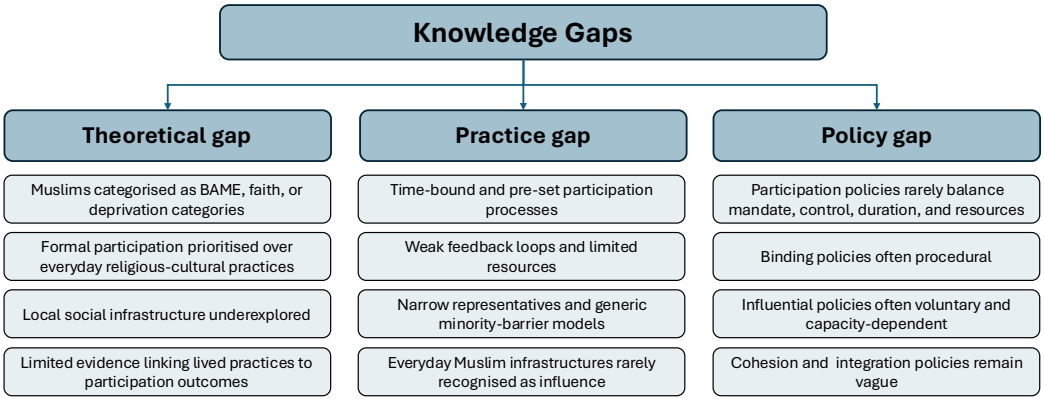


Figure 2.17: Knowledge Gaps

Source: Author, based on the literature

2.7.1. Theoretical Gap

Across regeneration scholarship, community participation is well theorised but there is a clear gap when the focus shifts to Muslim communities. The dominant theoretical resources (Arnstein, 1969; Pretty, 1995; Davidson, 1998; Fung & Wright, 2003; Cornwall, 2008) inform us of the role of power in the participation process, and the difference between voice and influence. Yet, when these frameworks are applied in British regeneration research, Muslim communities are most often subsumed into broader categories such as BAME, faith communities, or deprived neighbourhood residents. This produces valuable findings about deprivation, discrimination, and representation deficits, but it also obscures what is distinctive about Muslim participation as a process informed by religion as a lived everyday practice rather than faith as an organisational categorisation. The literature tends to explain Muslim (dis)engagement either as a generic participation problem (tokenism, weak power transfer, "*usual suspects*" (Blakeley & Evans, 2009) or as a generic minority problem (*ethnic penalty*) (Heath & Cheung, 2007), discrimination, socio-economic exclusion).

In addition, evaluations and case studies typically privilege local partnerships and boards, while they are less equipped to capture how participation is mediated through everyday practices that do not look like civic engagement in official terms, such as mosques as welfare and community hubs, halal high streets as informal support networks, and routine place-based interactions that build social capital[9]. This matters because an important element of participation theory argues that "*capacity,*" "*trust*," and "*representation*" are not qualities that communities simply have, but outcomes produced by institutions, social infrastructures, and repeated interaction under conditions of safety and recognition (Cornwall, 2008; Fung & Wright, 2003; Lowndes & Wilson, 2001; Mansuri & Rao, 2013a). Where the literature treats Muslim participation primarily through registered organisations or recognised intermediaries, it risks missing how participation is generated (or blocked) at the level of everyday practices.

Research on faith communities in regeneration tends to treat religion instrumentally, as a channel through which engagement can be accessed, rather than as an informative system that shapes motivations, trust relations, and preferences for particular participation methods (Farnell et al., 2003; Furbey & Macey, 2005). In addition, studies that critique Muslims "*self-segregation*" narratives and security issues associated with them, rightly highlight structural

[9] Putnam et al (1993) define social capital as '*those features of social organisation, such as trust, norms and networks, that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions*.'

racism, Islamophobia, and constrained choice (Amin, 2002; Phillips, 2006, 2007), but they do not specify the participation in regeneration implications of faith as a day to day lived experience.

Therefore, there is a gap in how participation is conceptualised and evidenced for Muslim communities beyond traditional organisational or minority group categorisation. As such, there is limited empirical work that traces how everyday religious and culturally motivated practices shape their participation. The gap, therefore, lies in the absence of an integrated account linking lived religious-cultural practices to participation outcomes in regeneration contexts. This was addressed through the first research question ***"to what extent and in what ways do Muslims participate in local regeneration projects?"*** in order to determine the underlying social infrastructures that enable or constrain their participation which remain analytically underexplored.

2.7.2. Practice Gaps

The practice gap is not simply related to the fact that participation sometimes fails in practice, but the fact that it often fails in patterned ways that are predictable and are intensified in minority neighbourhoods (such as predominately Muslim ones). Across regeneration and planning practice, participation is routinely delivered as a time-bound process within pre-set parameters, with weak feedback loops and limited resource allocation. This reproduces classic problems identified in theory, including the persistence of power imbalances, tokenistic approaches to participation, inadequate representations, lack of capacity building and limited resources (Arnstein, 1969; Cooke & Kothari, 2001; Cornwall, 2008). The repetition of this pattern result in communities' *consultation fatigue* and deepens mistrust, particularly when visible neighbourhood needs remain unresolved.

Concerning Muslim communities specifically, practice gaps are demonstrated in three aspects, recognition of diverse Muslim communities, their accessibility to participation, and consideration of everyday informal capacity into formal influence. First, recognition problems arise when planners and authorities engage Muslims primarily through a narrow set of representatives (often through established organisations) because these actors are accessible, even though Muslim communities are internally diverse by ethnicity, class, sect, gender, generation, migration history, and even degrees of religiosity. Second, accessibility problems persist when participation is designed around a generic minority barriers model, assuming that Muslim communities face only the standard obstacles of time poverty, language barriers, or prior experiences of discrimination. While these barriers are real, they do not capture the additional access conditions that often shape Muslim involvement in practice, such as holding activities at

suitable times and locations, accommodating cultural and religious needs in the process, creating appropriate routes for Muslim women's participation, and engaging around issues that communities themselves prioritise. The practice gap, therefore, is not only about the capacity of the community, but also about institutional capacity, whether local authorities and regeneration partners design culturally competent processes and invest in facilitation that fits how everyday life is organised locally, including venue and timing choices.

Third, and most importantly, there is a persistent gap between the forms of contribution Muslims already make and the forms of contribution institutions recognise as participation. Muslim neighbourhood infrastructures (such as mosques as community/welfare/education centres, and halal restaurants/cafes as social hubs) generate dense local knowledge and social ties, and practical problem-solving capacity. Yet these assets are frequently invisible (or ignored) in formal regeneration settings or approached only instrumentally (e.g. using the mosque to pass on information), rather than used as decision influence throughout the participation process.

This provides the rationale for the second research question ***How do local authorities approach, and engage with, Muslim communities in local regeneration processes, and what challenges do they face?*** as the evidence suggests that outcomes are strongly shaped by the design and delivery of participation itself. If participation repeatedly fails in predictable ways in Muslim-minority neighbourhoods, then the focus needs to shift from whether Muslims participate to how planners and authorities construct participation.

2.7.3. Policy Gaps

The policy gaps identified in this review relate, first, to community participation policies themselves, and second, to community cohesion and integration policies, particularly in how participation is incorporated within them. Over the past three decades, community participation has been progressively institutionalised across regeneration, planning, and equalities on one hand, and throughout cohesion and integration agendas on the other hand. Although policies designated to promote community participation differ significantly in where they operate (national frameworks versus neighbourhood initiatives), how binding they are (statutory duties versus voluntary opportunities), how much control they give (consultation versus co-decision), and how long participation structures endure (time-limited programmes versus continuous assessments).

Some instruments, such as the *Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act* 2004 and the *Duty to Involve* 2009, created formal procedural obligations, but often with limited redistribution of decision-making power. Others, such as *New Deal for Communities*, embedded stronger

resident representation and local budgets, yet were limited in time and vulnerable to funding constraints. *Neighbourhood planning*, introduced under the Localism Act 2011, formally gave certain plan-making powers to local communities. However, its implementation and impact have been limited, as participation depended heavily on local capacity, available resources, and the ability to navigate complex technical and procedural requirements.

This structure reveals that participation policies have rarely combined mandate, control, duration, and resourcing in a balanced way. Where policies were binding, they were often procedural; where they had influence, they were often voluntary and capacity-dependent; where they were intensive, they were frequently time-limited. As a result, participation has been embedded, but not consistently optimised.

Additionally, community participation was relevant in the context of cohesion and integration policies and agendas, as it was presented as part of the solution, but not emphasised enough in ways that reflect the vital role of participation in cohesion and integration. Also, while Muslims were frequently positioned at the centre of diagnoses of segregation, the proposed participation recommendations were often generic and place-based, rather than adjusted to the socio-spatial and institutional realities shaping Muslims life.

The third research question in this thesis addresses this particular gap by asking ***How are the community cohesion and integration concepts understood and operationalised by Muslim residents and local authorities, and how are national and local policy frameworks considered in local regeneration projects?*** As the review of policies indicates that participation does not occur in a neutral policy environment, it is shaped by how cohesion/integration agendas frame the "problem", define priorities (e.g., segregation, language, extremism, women's empowerment), and direct resources, partnerships, and expectations at local level. If Muslims are repeatedly central to diagnoses of cohesion "failure" while participation is recommended to be operationalised through generic tools, then it becomes essential to examine how these recommendations are translated into the participation process in regeneration projects.

To summarise, these three types of gaps show the importance of exploring Muslim participation by linking how their participation is structured and implemented, with how everyday religious-cultural infrastructures shape the conditions under which participation becomes possible or constrained.

3. CHAPTER Three: Methodology

3.1. Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodological framework and methods employed in conducting my empirical research. It begins by reflecting on the researcher's positionality and how this has influenced both the research process and its outcomes. The chapter then justifies the adoption of a qualitative case study approach to examine Muslim community participation in regeneration projects in Britain, while also explaining the underlying philosophical stance guiding the research.

Following this, the chapter discusses the ethical considerations that informed the conduct of the study. It then describes the multi-method qualitative strategy used during fieldwork, including observation, semi-structured interviews, mapping workshops, and grey literature analysis. The process of participants recruitment and the categorisation of participants are also explained, together with the rationale behind linking specific methods to particular participant groups and research questions.

Finally, the chapter presents the analytical framework used to interpret the collected data. This includes the stages of data organisation, preliminary analysis, and the triangulation process, demonstrating how the different data collection methods contributed to the overall interpretation of the research findings.

3.2. Positionality

Before delving further into the methodology and methods used in this research, it is necessary to reflect on my own positionality, as it is deeply embedded in both the process and outcomes of the research. Building on the background and identity section discussed in the first chapter (Section 1.1), this section reflects on how these aspects have continually supported the research. Originating from an Algerian background, where socialising is an essential part of life, compelled me to explore Sheffield to find ways to adapt to the dominant individualistic lifestyle in Britain (A. Humphrey & Bliuc, 2022). Burngreave offered a sense of belonging to me, the halal food diversity, cafes where people stand outside while having loud conversations. The area, with its mosques, people from around the world including North Africa, and the presence of international traditional Halal shops and cuisines, resonated with me. Since then, I have become

a regular visitor, forging connections, and creating memories with both local residents and frequent visitors like myself. This not only facilitated my research but also was instrumental in initiating it as discussed previous in Chapter one (Section 1.1 and 1.2). I felt a part of the community and wanted to support it in any way my experience allowed. Amongst other factors, my interest in the social aspect of architecture and urbanism, and observing some of the changes in Burngreave not delivering significant added value to the community, encouraged me to launch this research. The area's reputation for drug use and dealing, elevated crime rate, and lack of appeal to the wider community was evident, despite its proximity to the city centre (700 yards). As an individual with an architectural background who previously identified a lack of Muslim community involvement in regeneration projects (as detailed Section 1.2), I was motivated to investigate this further in Burngreave. However, I was aware that I am not better positioned than people who live and work there, nor familiar with how regeneration projects are enacted by local authorities. Therefore, I approached this research with a receptive attitude, attempting to explore the potential for regeneration projects to be more positively transformative in such an area.

My relationship with the area and my role as a researcher created a flexible insider-outsider position, which entailed a shifting balance of the two, depending on the research context and/or process. This blend of insider and outsider perspectives can enhance the understanding and interpretation of the data (Berger, 2015). Additionally, anthropological research highlights that this dual role can lead to unique insights and a more nuanced understanding of the community being studied (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). In the participants recruitment stage, my social connections in the area as an insider played a crucial role in accessing participants for my research. Some of them directly participated, while others assisted by referring me to more active and knowledgeable members of the community. My shared identity as Muslim and my network in the area facilitated access to people from various ethnic backgrounds allowing for a diverse sample that reflects the area's diversity. On the other hand, approaching the youth and Muslim women in the area, was more as a researcher (outsider) who is less informed of their experiences within the area. Nonetheless, as a Muslim (insider), I was aware of gender sensibility tradition within the Islamic culture. For instance, the Arabic school run by my mother-in-law played a significant role in facilitating access to local female participants, thereby avoiding any cultural sensitivities that might obstruct direct contact with local women as a male researcher. This dynamic was equally evident when engaging with non-Muslim participants, predominantly local authorities' officials/officers, where it became more related to their perceptions of me. Being a Muslim investigating Muslims participation, I might be perceived as both an insider, due

to shared religious identity, and an outsider, in my capacity as a researcher. It is likely that I would be seen more as the former than the latter.

To address and mitigate the impact of this dual perception on how interactions unfold, I consistently emphasised that the research outcomes could be advantageous to all stakeholders, rather than being a critique of any specific party. This was not a form of deception, but rather a reflection of genuine curiosity about the subject and the intention to produce well-informed research outcomes. This shift between insider and outsider roles enhanced access to different segments of participants and contributed to the richness of the data (Berger, 2015; Merriam et al., 2001).

My insider position, as a Muslim familiar with the local context, helped build trust, facilitated access, and enabled me to recognise cultural and religious meanings that might otherwise have been overlooked. Whereas my outsider position as a researcher created analytical distance and allowed me to question practices and assumptions that could have appeared familiar or self-evident. To manage potential bias, I maintained reflexive approach through comparing accounts across different participant groups and methods to test whether they were grounded in the data rather than shaped primarily by my own experiences.

Although the insider status presented challenges in maintaining objectivity, the dual role of being both the researcher and the researched provided a distinctive perspective, enabling me to experience, albeit not to the same depth, what other community members experience (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). This shared experience provides a unique advantage point that enriches the research with deeper insight and understanding.

Furthermore, my interpretation of the extensive data collected was driven by the intention to generate knowledge that contributes to building a positive relationship between the Muslim community in Burngreave and local authorities. This objective was a shared and welcomed perspective among all participants, including both community members and local officials. Nonetheless, I remained consistently cautious about suggesting any guaranteed beneficial impacts that may arise from the research outcomes for any party. Thus, my positionality within the research was characterised by a combination of insider and outsider statuses, each playing a distinct role in the conduct of the research.

More importantly, I recognised that the researcher's subjectivity, experiences, and interactions with participants influenced the research outcomes. So, I am not distancing myself from the neighbourhood setting, and neither from my background (as Muslim), acknowledging that I am an integral part of the research process (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). My subjectivity can be seen as

an asset, as it allowed for a more empathetic and holistic understanding of the research participants' perspectives (Berger, 2015). It involved an examination of phenomena from an internal perspective, initiating investigations by centring the viewpoints and narratives provided by the participants involved in the research (Ritchie et al., 2014). This was, for example, apparent in the evolution of my observational data, both before and after the initial interviews. It enabled a more focused analysis of the aspects highlighted by the participants, rather than general observation before the interviews. This also encouraged reflexivity and acknowledged my role in shaping the research process and interpretation of findings (Finlay & Gough, 2008). The reflexivity aspect is further discussed in the subsequent passages related to the analytical framework. This self-awareness was particularly valuable as it allowed me to critically scrutinise my own positioning and ensured that my interpretations of the data remain as contextualised as possible.

3.3. Qualitative case study approach

As mentioned in the first chapter, the design of this research intended to address the following research questions:

- **To what extent and in what ways do Muslims participate in local regeneration projects?**
- **How do local authorities approach, and engage with, Muslim communities in local regeneration processes, and what challenges do they face?**
- **How are the community cohesion and integration concepts understood and operationalised by Muslim residents and local authorities, and how are national and local policy frameworks considered in local regeneration projects?**

The formulation of these research questions was situated within the broader context of the living conditions of Muslims in Britain, as described in the research context and the relevant literature reviewed in preceding chapters. While the existing literature suggested the marginalisation of the Muslim community in Britain, I approached the empirical phase of this research with an open mindset. This was crucial in seeking answers to my research questions. In addition, choosing the local level was the best scale for conducting this research in order to reflect Muslims' experiences, and local authorities' efforts within a limited geographical area. The neighbourhood level has the ability to uncover contextual information and capture everyday interactions, and the micro-level can provide valuable insights into emergent processes (Kearns & Parkinson, 2001).

The choice of the Ellesmere Green project in the Burngreave area as a case study, was motivated by the make-up of the area and the purpose of the project, as discussed in Chapter one, Section 1.5.2. The Ellesmere Green project was a regeneration project led by Sheffield City Council and expected to have a significant socio-cultural and economic impact on the local community at the time (Sheffield City Council, 2007a). Jones & Evans (2008) describe regeneration project as a process involving the redevelopment of areas that have previously experienced periods of economic and social decline through the empowerment of local communities (Evans & Jones, 2008). Thus, the investigation of the Muslim community's participation necessitated an inclusive and comprehensive methodological approach, one that was reliant on multiple sources for data collection and a systematic analysis. Accordingly, the methodology for my research is primarily shaped by the research questions coupled with the intention to involve the local Muslim community and local officials as knowledgeable sources in understanding the complexities of the neighbourhood. Exploring the patterns around the Muslims' participation in the Ellesmere Green project required a deep understanding of the multi-faceted factors that influence their engagement. This included ethnic, religious, social, and economic aspects of the Muslim community on one hand, and the participation processes and policies of the local authorities and planners on the other hand. Therefore, I employed an exploratory methodology focusing on a case study, underpinned by qualitative methods to empirically study the Muslim community participation in the project within its real context.

The qualitative case study methodology was particularly well suited to the study of Muslim community participation in urban regeneration projects such as the Ellesmere Green project in Burngreave. This approach was appropriate for exploring complex social dynamics within their specific contexts, which was crucial to understanding the nuanced ways in which these communities engage in regeneration projects (Yin., 2015). By focusing on the Ellesmere Green project, I gathered comprehensive, in-depth data using a variety of techniques including observation, interviews, mapping, and grey literature analysis (Baxter & Jack, 2008). This was important in order to capture the subjective realities of the Muslim participants involved and gain insight into their perceptions of the regeneration process and its impact on their community. This approach recognises the importance of the environment, which is important when examining cultural and religious factors, as it allows for an exploration of how cultural values and community frameworks shape participation in these projects (Creswell, 2013). It is also characterised as an interpretive method that seeks to understand and make sense of the complexities of human experiences and social phenomena (Merriam, 2009). Hence, my philosophical stance emanated from the interpretive aspect, where participants contributed

differently to the findings of this research, drawing from their own experiences and perspectives on the project and the area in general. Ontologically, interpretivism suggests that while an objective reality may exist, direct access to this reality is obscured by the interpretative lenses through which individuals perceive and construct their worlds within specific contexts (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Epistemologically, interpretivists advocate for context-dependent understanding (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018), and argue that to comprehend phenomena fully, one must consider the unique context in which they occur (Schwandt, 2000). By investigating Ellesmere Green in Burngreave, I explored the multifaceted and context-dependent nature of Muslims' participation in the project, uncovering their subjective experiences and other factors that influenced their engagement. It also provided a valuable platform to incorporate the perspectives and viewpoints of local authorities and urban planners, shedding light on their roles, decision-making processes, and interactions with Muslim communities. Through interactive engagement and diverse methods such as interviews, observations, mapping workshops, and grey literature analysis, I aimed to uncover contextualised understandings, acknowledging the significance of subjective meanings, social interactions, and cultural influences in shaping their experiences. This flexibility of methods in the qualitative approach allowed me to work around some difficulties that (expectedly) arose during the process, considering the sensitivity and cultural context of Muslims. For example, interviewing Muslim woman as a male researcher was not a straightforward process, thus a mapping workshop with the presence of my wife was used as an alternative method to engage with them. This served to include the underrepresented groups in a community that is already overlooked in many aspects including participation in such projects. In fact, one of the significant strengths of a qualitative approach lies in its ability to amplify the voices and perspectives of marginalised individuals and groups. As Creswell and Poth (2018) argue that qualitative inquiry enables researchers to foreground participants' voices and explore their experiences and concerns (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Consequently, the qualitative case study approach helped to adapt techniques and strategies to the changing nature of the project and community inputs, ensuring that the research remains considerate of the cultural and ethical aspects of studying Muslims (Merriam, 2009). Thus, my strategy was to gain knowledge through interpreting the subjective experiences of Muslims and their perspectives of the social and urban context. This meant that, to effectively investigate Muslims participation, an understanding of the participants lived experiences (whether the local Muslim community or local officials) from their subjective perspectives is essential. My approach did not aim to consider community members and officials' views as rivalry, but rather complementary,

recognising the existence of multiple, coexisting realities. Different individuals and social groups may interpret the same phenomenon in diverse ways, leading to a plurality of valid realities.

3.4. Ethical considerations

My regular engagement in the study area for activities such as Friday prayers, shopping, and socialising significantly facilitated various aspects of the fieldwork in my research. My consistent presence in the Burngreave aided in establishing social connections and mutual respect with community members. As noted by Burgess (1984), being immersed in the field allows researchers to build trust and rapport, which is crucial for effective recruitment of participants (Burgess, 1984).

This rapport was instrumental in the participant recruitment process, leading to a snowball effect. Starting from my personal connections, such as friends and our common friends, to more active community members and leaders. This notably expanded my network and facilitated the rapid identification of key participants for the research. My approach to familiarise potential participants with the research, often in casual settings, varied in effectiveness, with some individuals expressing immediate willingness to assist and others showing lesser engagement. Nonetheless, in my interactions with potential participants, I endeavoured to convey the objectives and potential outcomes of my research in a clear and straightforward manner. As clear communication of research goals helps in managing participants' expectations and fostering genuine participation (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). This approach was intended to enable them to make an informed and voluntary decision, free from any influences stemming from the existing respect within our relationship. This careful explanation was not only to prevent exploitation of my connections within the community but also to manage expectations, avoiding any false hope of immediate changes resulting from the research regarding the issues discussed in the interviews.

My identity as a Muslim and a regular visitor to a predominantly Muslim area enabled me to navigate the area comfortably, reducing any concerns related to personal safety and anxiety.

Furthermore, consent forms were orally translated for individuals with limited English fluency, providing them with a comprehensive explanation of how their identities would be handled in the research. So, ensuring informed consent was a critical ethical consideration and a priority in the research, especially when dealing with vulnerable populations (Kvale, 2010).

Conversely, for some participants, particularly officials, who were interviewed remotely via Google Meet for their convenience, there was hesitation in signing the consent form, despite

agreeing to do so post-interview. To address this, I forwarded them the transcript of our conversation to ensure transparency and offer peace of mind to the interviewees. This step allowed participants to verify the accuracy of the discussion and provided them with an opportunity to retract any statements they later wished to withdraw. This practice was important to maintaining ethical standards and respecting participant autonomy (Silverman, 2016)

Concerns were also raised about participant identification for some of those in public roles. Although the research initially intended to name these participants, such concerns necessitated a revision of this approach. Therefore, it was agreed that only their job titles would be mentioned, ensuring their anonymity while upholding the integrity and ethical standards of the research.

In the data analysis phase of my research, my connection with the local Muslim community, facilitated a deeper comprehension and subsequent interpretation of their perspectives within a wider context. This understanding was not necessarily consistent with their own interpretations, but rather it embodied a thoughtful reflexivity (Berger, 2015b). This reflexivity extended to the perceptions of participants who were not members of the community, such as officials, towards the subject. This dual perspective enabled a more detailed analysis, considering both the internal dynamics of the community and external viewpoints (Merriam et al., 2001)

3.5. Multi-methods data collection

The research employed different data collection methods with different stakeholders. This included semi-structured interviews, mapping workshops, grey literature analysis, and general observation for data collection purposes. The selection and utilisation of these methods were guided by both the research questions and the stakeholders involved.

Each method contributes to answering the research questions at varying extents, and ensuring the use of multiple sources, in order to facilitate the triangulation and validation of the data gathered. (see Figure 3.1)

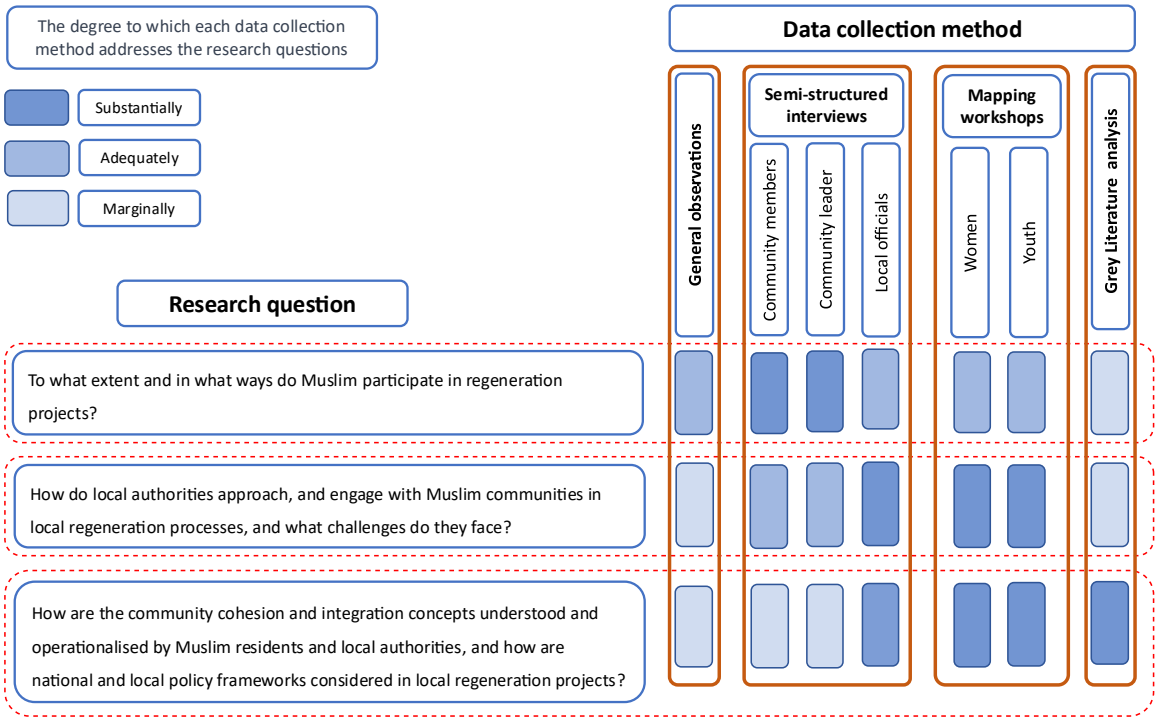


Figure 3.1: Data collection methods relevance in addressing research questions

Source: Author

3.5.1. Semi-structured interviews

The primary data collection method employed in this research was semi-structured interviews, which facilitated direct engagement with local community members and local authorities. This method enabled a targeted refinement of the research scope, optimised the data gathering processes, and assisted in the identification of prominent issues necessitating further examination. The inherent flexibility of semi-structured interviews allowed for a responsive adaptation to the emerging themes during the conversations, thereby enhancing the depth and relevance of the collected data (Smith & Osborn, 2003). In this research, the interviews were designed to provide an in-depth understanding of both local Muslims' and local authorities' involvement in the design of the Ellesmere Green project, and their perceptions of the functionality of the site. Although I establish trajectories before the interview, the semi-structured interviews enabled me to explore more deeply the nuances of the Muslims participation in the project, and uncover fresh perceptions (Ruslin et al., 2022). Unlike structured interviews, semi-structured interviews are characterised by the fact that they are less formal. They allow the researcher to ask specific questions that relate to previously made observations or experiences, which facilitates the collection of different points of view that are essential for

the creation of a comprehensive narrative (Mason, 2017). They also offer interviewees the opportunity to steer the conversation in new directions, enriching the dialogue further.

In order to cover most aspects of the research questions, participants were categorised into three main groups: Community members, community leaders, and local officials. The community members group included participants from the local Muslim community, the community leaders group included one official representative (elected ward councillor), and three semi-official representatives (one Imam -mosque leader- and two board members of a ISRAAC Community Association). The local officials group included three council officers who were closely involved in working with the local Muslim community during the project, the police inspector responsible for the area, and the NHS community engagement manager.

The interview schedules were designed to each targeted participant group and aligned with the primary research questions. However, some questions were modified, particularly for the local officials, to align with the participants' roles and their involvement in the project and the Muslim community in Burngreave (see Appendix, Interview schedule, page 334-339). Despite the schedules being established prior to the interviews, some questions emerged during the conversations, and helped to further understand participants views. By giving participants more freedom to express themselves, semi-structured interviews provided rich and detailed information that may not had been discovered through other methods. Also, the open-ended nature of the questions in a semi-structured interview, enabled interviewees to express their viewpoints in a reasonably open setting compared to standardised and close-ended questions (Flick, 2002).

Interviews were conducted at the beginning of the field work deliberately in order to narrow down the focus of the research and have a better understanding of the complexities of the area's context (for example, identifying the economic and social impact of the presence of people involved in drug-related activities in Ellesmere Green). This also helped me to identify key community members who are more engaged with the local authorities, and how they are perceived by regular members in relation to representativeness.

In terms of sampling, I followed a purposive sampling strategy in order to select participants with either direct involvement in the Ellesmere Green project, such as development officers, or held insightful thoughts about the project and the area in general. Robinson (2014) referred to purposive sampling as "*a non-random way of ensuring that particular categories of cases within a sampling universe are represented in the final sample of a project*" (Robinson, 2014).

According to several studies on interview sample size, saturation is the most important factor determining the number of interviews to be conducted in a homogeneous group (Francis et al., 2010; Guest et al., 2006; Hagaman & Wutich, 2017). In most of these studies, however, the agreed number of interviews is between 12 and 20. During the fieldwork, I conducted a total of 20 interviews with local community members, leaders, and local officials (see Table 3.1).

Participant Group	Number of Participants
Community Members	**11**
Community Leaders	**4**
Local Officials	**5**

Table 3-1 Semi-structured interviews participants groups

Source: Author

Moreover, I repeatedly sought interviews with both former and serving councillors, Muslims and non-Muslims in the area, who were at office during the Ellesmere Green project. Unfortunately, my communications were often ignored or met with caution. Some requested that the questions be sent to them; however, after complying with their requests, I received no further responses.

This again highlights the elected community leaders' inadequate responsibility in representing the local community, a concern frequently addressed and expressed by community members during interviews (see Chapter Five, Section 5.4).

The participants recruitment process was initiated through my personal network within the area and expanded using the snowball sampling or referral technique (Robinson, 2014). The starting point for recruiting Muslim participants was to contact the Imam (Islamic religious leader) of Al-Rahman Mosque, which is located opposite Ellesmere Green. This step was crucial not only for the subsequent recruitment process but also to evaluate the significance of the case study from a religious perspective, given that the focus of the research was on the Muslim community. At this stage, I also recruited participants who I knew were Muslim and part of the Burngreave community. My familiarity with the community enabled me to identify individuals who had insightful views about Ellesmere Green and the area in general, as part of the purposive sampling. As Patton (1990) argues that "*The purpose of purposeful sampling is to select information rich cases that best provide insight into the research questions and will convince the audience of the research*" (Patton, 1990). Through these initial contacts I was able to broaden the recruitment of participants through their shared referrals.

This approach also facilitated the identification of the most active members of the community, providing me with insights into the individuals who might best represent the Muslim community in the area. This included official and semi-official community leader such as the local councillor and other active members of the Muslim community.

To invite local members to participate, I used a variety of methods, including face-to-face conversations, phone calls, or text messages, as most did not routinely use email. Conversely, I utilised email communications with participants who hold official positions, such as the councillor, council officers, and the police inspector. Interestingly, the recruitment of the NHS Community Engagement Manager was purely by chance. After attending a Friday prayer at Al-Rahman Mosque, I came across a public consultation in Ellesmere Green related to a new medical centre led by this manager and assisted by the local councillor. After a casual conversation in which I explained my research, the manager agreed to participate. We then agreed the details of where and when the interview will be via email.

The interviews were conducted in both English and Arabic, depending on the participants' preference. This approach accommodated particularly community members who felt more comfortable expressing their views in Arabic, ensuring greater precision in their responses and clarity in their views. As I speak Arabic, I was able to conduct these interviews without an interpreter, so the flow of conversation was as smooth and effective as in English.

Similarly, I considered the preferences of all participants regarding the day, time and location of the interviews, and all interviews were audio recorded. Interviews were intended to last 30 to 60 minutes, however, due to the nature of semi-structured interviews, some lasted up to 130 minutes.

In the following sections, I will discuss the interview process for each group of participants separately and provide further details and reflections on how recruitments and interviews were conducted (see Table 3.2).

Participants Group	Participant	Code	Descriptive Label
Community Members & Businesses	Participant 01	**P-01**	Local resident
	Participant 02	**P-02**	Local resident
	Participant 03	**P-03**	Community member
	Participant 04	**P-04**	Active member of the Kurdish Community
	Participant 05	**P-05**	Active member of the Yameni Community
	Participant 06	**P-06**	Community member
	Participant 07	**P-07**	Local resident
	Participant 08	**P-08**	Community member and Shop owner
	Participant 09	**P-09**	Local resident and Restaurant owner
	Participant 10	**P-10**	Community member and Business owner
	Participant 11	**P-11**	Community member and Shop keeper
Community leaders	Participant 12	**P-12**	Local Councillor
	Participant 13	**P-13**	Chair of ISRAAC (Somali Community)
	Participant 14	**P-14**	Deputy Chair of ISRAAC (Somali Community)
	Participant 15	**P-15**	Al Rahman Mosque Imam
Local Public Offices	Participant 16	**P-16**	Council Development Officer
	Participant 17	**P-17**	Council Officer
	Participant 18	**P-18**	Council Regeneration Manager
	Participant 19	**P-19**	South Yorkshire Police Inspector
	Participant 20	**P-20**	NHS Engagement Manager

Table 3-2: Participant groups and anonymisation framework

Source: Author

Community members

All the interviewees from the community were men aged between 20 and 60 years, who frequented the central area of Burngreave daily for their social, religious, and shopping activities. Most of them either worked or lived in the area, or both. Of the eleven interviewees, four were business owners with shops located in the immediate perimeter of Ellesmere Green. The choice of including business owners in the research was made at early stages, as they enrich the research by providing further social and economic dimensions. This included the impact of the case study on their businesses, as well as providing a picture of the community cohesion, considering their interactions with diverse community members including Muslims and non-Muslims. All community participants identity will be protected in accordance with the university policy note No.04. *Principles of Anonymity, Confidentiality and Data Protection*, and their words

are quoted throughout the research using a referencing code (as shown in the Table 3.2 above) such as '*community member*', '*local resident*', and '*shop owner*'.

Community participants were from different nationalities including Yamen, Somalia, Tunisia, Algeria, Libya, Iraq, Jamaica, some of which hold the British nationality beside their original nationality. The sampling of the Muslim community in Burngreave intended to be as reflective as possible of the diversity within the community. However, despite the sizable presence of the Muslim Pakistani community in Burngreave and my numerous efforts to secure interviews with recommended individuals, I was ultimately unable to recruit Pakistani participants. Although I initially received promises of cooperation after explaining my research, they eventually withdrew, which is within their full rights. This raised questions about the reasons for their refusals, despite assurances of anonymity. The reluctance to participate could potentially be attributed to two main factors. The first relates to their ethnic status among minorities in Sheffield. As the largest ethnic minority in Sheffield and one of the oldest communities to arrive in the city and in Britain, there may be a perceived sense of distinctiveness within the racial hierarchy that influenced their willingness to engage with an external (to them) researcher (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). The second factor may be tied to their limited use of the Ellesmere Green area, considering the project somewhat irrelevant to their daily experiences and interests, despite a nearby mosque (Dal Ulum Sadiqia mosque) with predominantly Pakistani attendees (see Figure 3.2).

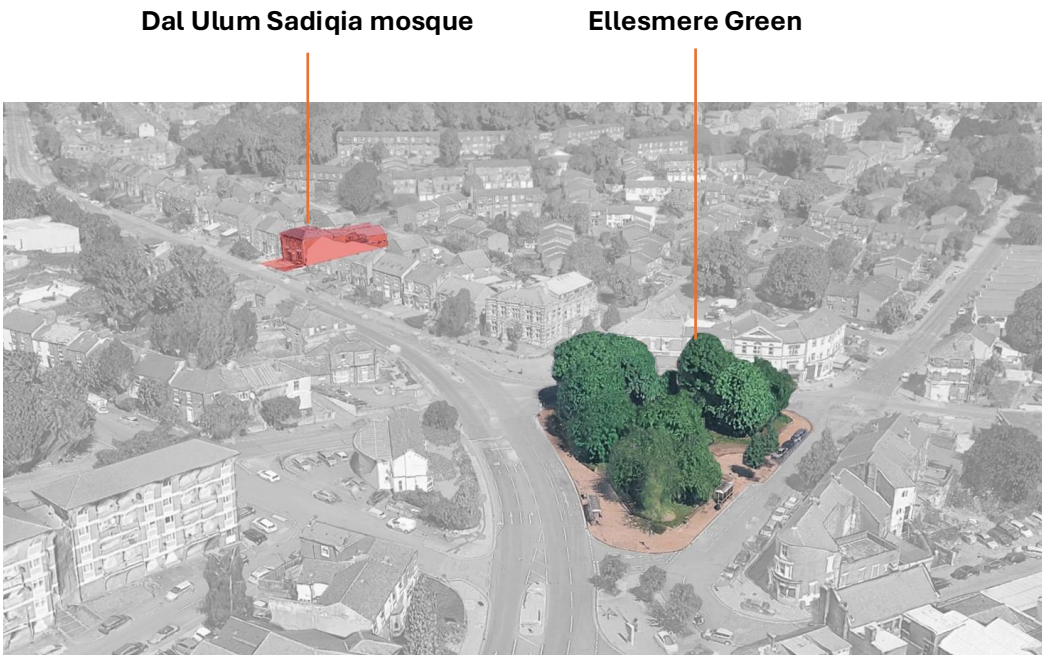


Figure 3.2 Participant groups and anonymisation framework

Source: Highlighted by the author using Google Earth

These assumptions were derived from interactions and communications with some potential Pakistani participants, including active members within the area. For instance, members inquired about my origins before learning about the research and expressed scepticism about participating. Others either disregarded my presence upon arrival for interviews, despite pre-arranged meetings, or indicated that they did not frequent Ellesmere Green, and therefore cannot be part of the research.

Additionally, in my attempts to recruit women for interviews, I anticipated and indeed encountered difficulties, attributable to the traditions of the Muslim community. Such traditions include reservations about women being interviewed by a male researcher in a separate setting. This is particularly relevant in more conservative Muslim communities, where direct private interaction between unrelated men and women can be restricted or considered inappropriate (Doumato, 2000). Despite preparations, including planning to be accompanied by my wife to foster a comfortable environment, I was consistently directed to a local councillor, a female, who was deemed better suited to represent the women of the area, even by male participants. Nonetheless, the limited presence of women in the area was evident through observation, and they were brought up repeatedly during interviews with community members (see Chapter Five, Section 5.6). Therefore, I organised a mapping workshop for them in a group setting, facilitated by the presence of my wife, to ease interaction and ensure their perspectives were included in the research. As women feel more at ease sharing their thoughts in a collective environment where they are not the sole focus of attention from a male researcher (Yager et al., 2013). This proved to be more efficient method, as it comprehensively spatialise the women presence in the area through comparing the produced material. This will be discussed further in the following mapping section within this chapter.

Although this may appear to be a disproportionate sampling of the local Muslim community members, potentially indicating limitations within the research, it reflected the actual composition of their representation (See Chapter Eight, Section 8.5.1.1). Additionally, it revealed the underlying complexities of their participation in projects, highlighting the challenges of diversity within the Muslim community in Burngreave.

The community members recruitment process contributed to the research objectives, particularly in understanding local Muslims' attitudes towards participation. Initially, I anticipated a straightforward recruitment process due to my familiarity with the neighbourhood and my identification with the community. However, the reality proved more challenging. Some community members exhibited reluctance to participate upon mention of audio recording or

consent forms. The sight of a laptop bag also triggered scepticism, suggesting a cautious attitude towards anything perceived as official or formal. This response could be attributed to previous experiences or a general distrust of formal documentation and recording processes, which can hinder participant engagement (Pillay et al., 2023).

It became evident that engaging with the community required building trust and ensuring further transparency about the research objectives and methods. This observation aligns with broader findings in community-based research, where establishing trust and rapport is crucial for successful data collection and genuine participant engagement (Glesne, 2011).

The interview questions for community members were derived from the research questions and involved some alterations during the interviews, depending on how the conversation unfolded (see Appendix, Interview schedule, page 334-339). The questions ranged from basic personal information to their perspectives on the area, the Ellesmere Green project, and their views on community cohesion and integration. However, business owners' schedules included additional questions related to the economic reverberations following changes in the area, including the Ellesmere Green improvement and the construction of the Tesco superstore (see Appendix, Interview schedule, page 334-339).

Community leaders

As mentioned previously, the official and semi-official community leaders who participated in this research were carefully selected based on multiple referrals from local community members. These referring members either participated in the study themselves or recommended individuals whom they believed best represented their interests and perspectives. This referral-based selection process helped ensure that the chosen leaders were as genuinely as possible reflective of the community's views and concerns.

The official leader who participated in the research was a ward councillor, who spent almost a decade as a community activist, and has established an association to support the local youths (Reach Up Youth), before she was elected as a councillor in May 2021, and re-elected in May 2024. The councillor has been involved in many activities within the local community and has been a voice for many locals, particularly Muslim women and youths. She established Reach Up Youth in 2013 in order to prevent the local youth from engaging in criminal activities through many programs using sports, trips, and competitions. The interview was conducted at Verdon recreation centre, in the councillor’s office, and lasted more than two hours. The interview schedule included questions around her views on the area and Ellesmere green as a Muslim woman in Burngreave, an active member in the community and her role as an elected councillor.

The other semi-official community leaders are the Imam of Al-Rahman Mosque, the chair and deputy chair of ISRAAC community association. I know the Imam on a personal level and was mentioned by many prayer attendees to be the suitable person that reflect their sentiments about the area. In addition, the Imam served for more than 20 years at Al-Rahman Mosque, and Ellesmere Green is situated opposite to this mosque. The green space had also been used by the mosque on many occasions as Eid (Islamic festive) prayer site, and activities gathering point. ISRAAC is a Sheffield based community association that welcomes Somali communities in Sheffield and embrace generally all communities. Its current chair was an active member in the Burngreave area and was appointed as a chair of the board committee that ran the New Deal for Communities in Burngreave between 2001 and 2003. Thus, his contribution to this research was invaluable. The deputy chair of ISRAAC, has always been a well-known and an active member amongst Somali community in Burngreave, and has a supportive role within the wider Muslim community in the area. The interview schedules for semi-official community leaders included questions similar to those posed to community members, with additional inquiries related to their active roles within the community. However, follow-up questions were often necessary during the interviews. For instance, the Imam was asked about the role of the mosque in the community and its connection to the Ellesmere Green project. Likewise, the chair of ISRAAC was further interviewed about his involvement in the Burngreave New Deal for Communities programme[10] and the association's role in Burngreave, particularly from the perspectives of community cohesion and integration. The deputy chair was also interviewed about his role as an active member, as well as his perceptions of the area and the Ellesmere Green project.

However, I attempted to recruit additional official community representatives, such as former and serving councillors, to further explore how the Muslim community's voice is reflected in the official public stage. These efforts ultimately proved unsuccessful, as previously explained, for reasons that were not explicitly stated. This underscores the challenges in ensuring that the community's concerns and perspectives are adequately represented at the formal institutional level.

The research aimed to identify participants who hold public official or semi-official positions, as stipulated in the consent form (see Appendix, Consent Forms, page 332 & 333). Although the

[10] Burngreave New Deal for Communities (BNDfC) was a ten-year, area-based regeneration programme operating from 2001 to 2011, supported by approximately £52 million of government funding. It sought to improve housing, education, health, safety, environmental quality, household income and community capacity, and placed resident involvement at the centre of its partnership boards, consultations and local projects. The early proposals for Ellesmere Green emerged during this wider programme, and the intended improvements to the green space and surrounding shopfronts reflected BNDfC's objectives of creating a cleaner, safer, more attractive neighbourhood and building a stronger community through local participation.

community leaders involved in the study unanimously consented to the use of their names when their statements are quoted, I decided to keep only their descriptive position in consistence with the local public officials, after some concerns were raised in regard to anonymity (see below for details, as well as in the above Section 3.4)

Local Public Officials

Five semi-structured interviews were conducted with officials from local authority bodies, including Sheffield City Council, South Yorkshire Police, and NHS South Yorkshire. Participants were initially contacted via email, with interview times and locations arranged at their convenience. The original intention was to recruit development officers directly involved in engaging the Burngreave Muslim community during the design and implementation of the Ellesmere Green project. However, the research scope organically expanded to include the South Yorkshire Police following the initial interviews with local community members. Similarly, the inclusion of NHS South Yorkshire arose from a spontaneous observation made within the intervention area, during a public consultation event (see Field notes).

To determine the council officers involved in the community participation process of designing and implementing the Ellesmere Green improvement project, I conducted an extensive review of documents and local press releases. Initially, I identified two officers, followed by the regeneration manager, who was recommended during an interview with one of the officers. Both development officers were directly engaged with local community members and businesses through door-to-door conversations, public meetings, and questionnaires designed to gather community views.

Their participation was essential to understand the role and efforts of Sheffield City Council in engaging with the Muslim community in the Ellesmere Green project from the council's perspective. For convenience, both interviews were conducted online via Google Meet. The regeneration manager who was responsible for the Ellesmere green project and several other projects, was not directly involved with the local community. Nevertheless, his insights were crucial in understanding the procedures followed by the council to involve local communities in such projects. The interview was conducted at his residence, as per his request. Each council official interview lasted over two hours to ensure comprehensive information gathering. The questions included inquiries about the process followed by the council in engaging communities when designing and implementing regeneration projects, with a particular focus on the Ellesmere Green project. The questions also encompassed the objectives of community cohesion and integration related to these projects. Additionally, police involvement was a

recurring theme in interviews with various participant groups, prompting me to seek an interview with the local police. A friend active in the local police facilitated contact with the area inspector, who agreed to an interview at Ecclesfield Police Station. This interview, lasting 38 minutes, focused on the police's role in the design process of regeneration projects, the impact of local community composition on crimes, and the policing challenges in Burngreave and Ellesmere Green.

Moreover, as previously mentioned, during one of my visits to the area, I encountered the NHS engagement manager conducting a public consultation event at Ellesmere Green. Arrangements were subsequently made for a formal interview at the local NHS headquarters in Darnall, which lasted just over an hour. The questions included inquiries about the tools used to engage communities in general, with a particular focus on ethnic minorities, reflecting on the Muslim community in Burngreave.

Although the research aimed to identify participants holding official public roles, two local officials did not consent to being named. Instead, they agreed to have their job roles referenced when quoting their statements. This agreement was negotiated in writing, and copies of the interview transcripts were provided to them for review. This process was crucial to maintain transparency and credibility, ensuring that their positions could at least be stated (Bryman, 2016). Providing interview transcripts for review is a practice in qualitative research that ensures accuracy and ethical integrity (Creswell, 2013). The officials' preference to remain unnamed highlights the delicate balance between confidentiality and the need for credible data in research (Kaiser, 2009).

To summarise, five interviews were conducted with local officials: three from Sheffield City Council, one with the police inspector from South Yorkshire Police, and one with the local NHS community engagement manager.

3.5.2. Mapping workshops

As stated previously, all the community members who participated in the interviews were men, and the only woman that represented local Muslim women was the local councillor, who discussed many points related to women and youth. In addition, women and youth space usage and activities were repeatedly mentioned by interviewees. Mapping was used as a data collection method in this research through workshops that were conducted with women and young adults (boys and girls), involving three different tasks to reflect their space usage and their perceptions of Ellesmere green and the area in general.

Mapping as a tool to illustrate participants' space usage and activities is a powerful method for gaining insight into human behaviour. Low et al (2019) describe mapping as a method employed to document individuals and entities, as well as their interconnections, within a specified area (Skarlatidou et al., 2019). Through mapping the conduct, actions, and movements of people, in conjunction with their daily patterns, researchers can gain insight into the occurrences and distribution of individuals within that space. Bailey & Falk (2016) explain that this technique allows us to visualise how people interact with their environment, identifying patterns and tendencies that may not be apparent through other forms of observation (Bailey & Falk, 2016). Mapping workshops are participatory tools that engage communities in visualising and articulating their spatial experiences and knowledge (Wood et al., 2010). These workshops enabled me to gather data that are inherently geographical and relational, offering unique insights into the physical and social landscapes of the study area (Fagerholm et al., 2009). Thus, by mapping out the activities of individuals or groups, we gain a deeper understanding of their behaviours and needs, and with its ability to capture both physical movement and social interactions. Additionally, the process of map-making can bring together different perspectives and encourage collaboration among participants. This collaborative approach allows for reflection on potential conflicts or opportunities within the space, leading to improvements in design and planning. Low et al (2019) suggest the use of mapping as an informative tool has the power to enhance our understanding of human behaviour in public spaces while fostering a more inclusive and collaborative approach to design (The Public Space Research Group, 2019).

Therefore, the mapping exercise was designated to these two groups from the local Muslim community, with the help and organisation of the councillor and my wife. The councillor runs youth activities session in the Verdon recreation (community) centre in Burngreave and helped me to gather the young adults at two separate occasions for the mapping exercise. My wife, on the other hand, took the pre-printed material with a list of instructions to guide her to undertake the workshop in a house gathering, where local Muslim women regularly meet. The women group involved six married women (who have children), the young adult boys' group started with six and ended with four participants, as the other two had to leave the workshop in its initial stage. The youth girls' group was larger with nine participants. Both groups' workshops were held in the Verdon recreation (community) centre, and the girls' workshop was facilitated by my wife with my presence.

The mapping workshop included three tasks. The first task involved a printed map section of the centre of Burngreave including Ellesmere green, and Spital Hill. In addition, I provided coloured

sticky dots, green, orange and red for women and youths to illustrate the spaces that they go to regularly, occasionally, and rarely (no-go spaces) respectively (see Figure 3.3).

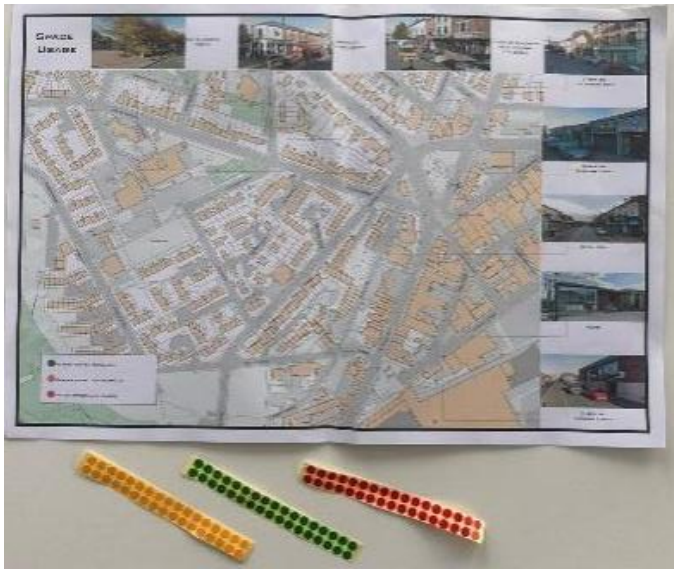


Figure 3.3 Space usage mapping task

Source: Author

Each participant was asked at the end of the task to explain why he/she does not go to the spaces marked in red stickers, either on a separate piece of paper or at the back of the printed map. This is to understand their space usage in the area in general and Ellesmere green and its surrounding spaces in particular. The second task was completed using the same printed map, asking participant to spatialise their social, religious, and economic activities on the map using dark blue, brown, and light blue stickers respectively (see Figure 3.4).



Figure 3.4: Local activities mapping task

Source: Author

This task allowed to visualise the Muslim youths and women' activities in the area, in order to determine the motives behind the space usage illustrated in the previous map (Figure 3.3).

Finally, an A3 paper was handed to participants to share their views on Ellesmere green before and after the improvement project and allow a third section for their thoughts on how they would like to see it in the future (see Figure 3.5).



Figure 3.5 Ellesmere Green perceptions task

Source: Author

This helped to reflect the young people and women's aspirations about the space, and how this can contribute into future design proposals. The mapping workshops were a valuable and unique research tool in this research, as they enabled women and young adults to participate in familiar and comfortable environments. This was particularly important for engaging groups that are frequently marginalised in participation processes and helped reduce some of the barriers often associated with formal research settings (e.g. some women feeling uncomfortable in mixed gender setting). It created a more accessible space for them (especially women and girls) to share their everyday experiences, patterns of space use, and views on Ellesmere Green. Thus, the workshops were useful not only for collecting spatial data, but also for making the research more inclusive.

3.5.3. Grey literature analysis

Grey literature refers to material produced outside conventional commercial and academic publishing channels, including government reports, policy documents, consultation papers, institutional strategies, evaluations, guidance documents and organisational records. Although such material is not usually subject to formal academic peer review, it can provide important

evidence about policy intentions, institutional practices and the implementation of programmes, particularly where relevant information is produced primarily by governments and public bodies rather than academic publishers (Adams et al., 2017; Paez, 2017). In this study, grey literature was therefore examined to understand how participation, cohesion and integration were framed in national and local policy and how these principles were translated into regeneration projects. This necessitated the collection and extraction of relevant national and local documents on community participation in planning, cohesion and integration policies introduced by the central government and Sheffield City Council. This method was used to enhance the comprehension of information provided by officials and to verify data acquired through other methods (Ritchie et al., 2014).

A systematic process was used through grey literature analysis for gathering, documenting, and interpreting research data (Bowen, 2009). In total, 52 documents were reviewed, including reports, reviews, policies, and guidance related to community cohesion, integration, and community participation in design and planning. The selected documents, published or requested by governmental bodies between 2001 and 2021, reflect the period following the 2001 unrest in northern cities and towns in England, which highlighted racial tensions in certain parts of the country (Cantle, 2001). This period was significant due to the heightened focus on community cohesion and integration policies by subsequent British governments. Key events such as the 7/7 bombings in London and the influx of Eastern European migrants to Britain further motivated these documents (Thomas, 2011; UK Government, 2018). The rationale for this timeframe is anchored in both, the Ellesmere Green project timeframe (2007-2013), and the evolving nature of community cohesion and integration policies. Post-2001, there was a notable shift in policy focus, aiming to address and mitigate racial tensions and promote integration within diverse communities (Cantle, 2005). The impact of these policies on Muslim participation is a critical aspect of this research, seeking to link community cohesion and integration policy frameworks to regeneration projects. Therefore, twenty-one (21) most relevant documents were selected to be examined in this research and were categorised into four types. Firstly, five (5) national community participation documents comprise national policies and guidelines related to community involvement in design and planning processes. Secondly, five (5) local community participation documents consist of guidelines and policies produced by Sheffield City Council, detailing the methods for engaging and involving the community in design and planning activities. Thirdly, six (6) national community participation documents comprise national guidelines and policies related to community involvement in design and planning processes. Lastly, five (5) local community cohesion and integration documents derive from the national policy framework and

specifically include those produced or solicited by Sheffield City Council, given that this research is based in Sheffield (see Table 3.3)

National Community Participation documents	Local Community Participation documents	National Community cohesion and integration documents	Local Community cohesion and integration documents
Localism Act (2011)	Burngreave and Fir Vale Master Plan (2005)	**Community Cohesion: A Report of the Independent Review Team (2001)**	Sheffield – Where Everyone Matters / Community Cohesion Strategy for Sheffield (2008)
National Planning Policy Framework (2012)	Sheffield Statement of Community Involvement (2014)	**Building Cohesive Communities (2001)**	New Lives: A Refugee Integration Strategy for Sheffield (2009)
Planning Practice Guidance (2014)	Code of Practice for Publicity and Consultation on all Planning Applications (2014)	**Our Shared Future (2007)**	Sheffield Together: The Sheffield Cohesion Framework (2016)
Community Involvement in Planning: The Government's Objectives (2004)	Code of Practice for Publicity and Consultation on all Planning Applications (2018)	**The Casey Review (2016)**	Sheffield City Council's New Cohesion Charter (2018)
		Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper (2018)	
Strong and Prosperous Communities (2006)	Sheffield Statement of Community Involvement (2020)	**Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper (2018)**	Cohesion Work in Sheffield (2019)

Table 3-3: Grey literature Analysis

Source: Author

3.5.4. Observation

In this research, the utilisation of observation as a data collection method contributed significantly to the improvement of data acquisition and its subsequent analysis (Kawulich, 2005). An unstructured observation approach facilitated the collection of comprehensive information concerning to the behavioural patterns exhibited by individuals within the built environment (Rajendran, 2016). The field work of this research began officially in May 2021 after the ethics clearance and lasted for 24 months. This extended timeframe characterises a slow research approach, allowing for the emergence of nuanced patterns and insights that might be missed in a shorter study (Kuus, 2015). Although this was not a deliberate choice for my research,

it was a natural consequence of being a part-time postgraduate research (PGR) student, where understanding the human behaviour and social interactions requires time and careful observation (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016). As mentioned in the positionality section of this chapter, I have been visiting Burngreave on a regular basis since my arrival to Britain in 2010. Over the years, I have witnessed many changes in the area, including the Ellesmere green improvement project, and the completion of Tesco extra on Saville Street/Spital Hill. However, since the start of this research, I have adopted a more focused approach in observing the interactions of local community members with the built environment, particularly around Ellesmere Green, irrespective of the fieldwork's time frame. This involved exploring the types of various businesses and the nationalities of their owners, and how these factors influence community interactions in the area. Additionally, I examined how individuals utilise various aspects of the public realm, including public spaces, roads, and pavements. This for example showed issues such as parking chaos and litter, highlighting the challenges within these communal areas. More details on these findings will be discussed in the results and discussion chapters. The observation also involved casual conversations with residents in various settings, such as cafés, restaurants, and mosques in different localities within the area.

Following these conversations and interviews with community members, I concentrated on areas including Ellesmere Green and its adjacent shops and streets, the commercial axis of Spital Hill, council-operated community facilities such as Sorby House and Vestry Hall, as well as proximate landmarks like Tesco and its entrance on Spital Hill (see Figure 3.6).

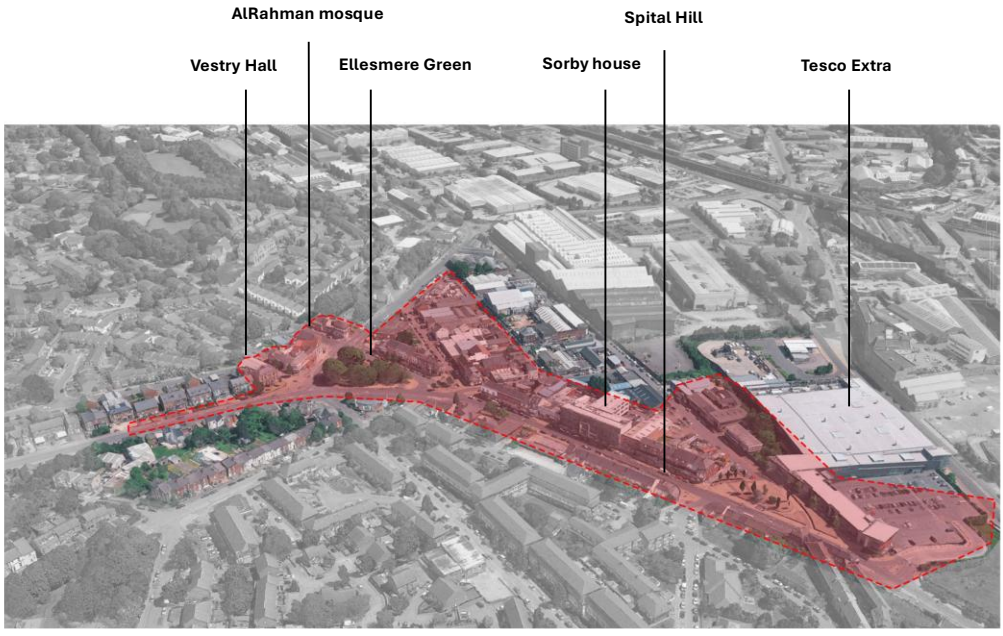


Figure 3.6: Area of focus

Source: Highlighted by the author using Google Earth imaging.

My observation sought to investigate the utilisation patterns and underlying motivations behind the use of these spaces, delving into questions of when and who frequents them and under what circumstances. For example, observations included how people with drug issues utilise Ellesmere Green and how residents tend to walk around the space rather than through it to reach nearby bus stops or shops. The data gathered is often documented through photographs, and comprehensive field notes. Thus, continuous field notes and photographs were captured, with a heightened sensitivity to the cautious attitude exhibited by individuals toward any form of documentation that might bear an official appearance. Hence, field notes were transcribed either at my residence or at my university workspace, after being briefly noted down on my mobile device. This practice emerged due to the reluctance displayed by some individuals who showed discomfort when they perceived me holding a notebook. This was similarly encountered during the recruitment phase for interview participants, where business owners declined to engage in discussions concerning the area or the Ellesmere Green project in instances where I was carrying a laptop bag or notebook.

Furthermore, immersing myself in the area during fieldwork allowed me to gain insight into the dynamics between the community and the council officers stationed at Sorby House and Vestry Hall, and ward councillors.

Observational evidence proved to be a valuable source of additional information about case studies, particularly when attending local events, whether spontaneous or organised. I will provide some examples of events that I witnessed; however, these events and the results of my observations will be discussed in greater detail in the subsequent chapters. During my field visits, I had witnessed some spontaneous occurrences, many of which had been previously discussed in interviews with community members and local officials. This included altercations between drug dealers and their harassment of passersby. In April 2022, I had also the opportunity to see the establishment of a temporary (pop-up) police station on Ellesmere Green as discussed with the local police inspector (see Chapter Six, Section 6.4). This allowed me to observe the role of such technique, and the limited interaction of community members with such initiative. Moreover, in September 2022, I had the opportunity to engage with the local NHS community engagement manager and the councillor, as they were conducting a public consultation event on Ellesmere Green (see Chapter Six, Section 6.5). This consultation was a component of a proposal project aimed at consolidating various local medical practices in Burngreave into a comprehensive health facility. Given its direct relevance to my investigation into Muslim participation in regeneration projects in Burngreave, this event provided me with the unique opportunity to witness local Muslim community members actively engaging in the participation

process in real-time. Also, while strolling with one of the local officials previously interviewed, an encounter arose whereby we were approached by an individual seemingly drunk, who proceeded to voice their frustrations, predominantly stemming from issues of racism, toward the council official (who was White). Additionally, I participated in two council-led public meeting held in the Burngreave, commonly referred to as LAC (Local Area Committee) meetings. These meetings serve as forums where the committee disseminate information and provide updates to the public regarding the council's various initiatives and projects within the area. The committee itself comprised local councillors representing multiple wards within the area, council representatives from various departments, and local law enforcement personnel. The Burngreave ward is part of the Northeast local committee area, along with Firth Park, Southey, Shiregreen, and Brightside wards. These LAC meetings are scheduled on a quarterly basis, rotating among the different wards.

The first of these meetings was organised on the 25th of October 2022, spanning from 17:00 to 19:00, and was held at Burngreave Vestry Hall. The second meeting occurred on the 19th of September 2023, at the same time and venue. Attending these meetings in the capacity of a member of the public proved to be highly advantageous, as it afforded me the opportunity to closely observe the dynamics and interactions among community representatives, local authority officials, and the public (including local Muslims). These diverse layers of observation made substantial contributions to the research effort, playing a pivotal role in enriching the triangulated framework of the data collection process.

3.6. Analytical framework

As this study utilised different methods of data collection, its analysis process required a complex analytical framework based on a thematic analysis and a triangulated process.

Thematic analysis is a widely used method in qualitative research, characterised by its flexibility, adaptability, depth, and focus on identifying patterns within qualitative data. Many scholars including, Boyatzis (1998), Ryan and Bernard (2000), and Holloway and Todres (2003) acknowledged the importance of using a coded and thematised approach as part of a larger analytical framework to analyse data in qualitative research (Braun & Clarke, 2006). However, Braun and Clarke (2006) argued that thematic analysis should be recognised as an independent analytical method that has its own procedures. They define it as "*a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organises and describes your data set in (rich) detail"* (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Guest et al (2012) expand on this by stating that

thematic analysis goes beyond merely counting phrases or words in a text and involves interpreting various aspects of the research topic (Guest et al., 2012). This approach allows researchers to see and make sense of collective or shared meanings and experiences. It is often used when researchers seek to explore the perspectives of different stakeholders, particularly in diverse fields such as psychology, healthcare, and social (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In the context of my research, and the nature of the qualitative data collected, it is evident that such method would be greatly useful to generate themes that eventually address the stated research questions.

Guest et al (2012) argue that thematic analysis provides a flexible method that can be adapted to a wide range of research questions and data types (Guest et al., 2012). The flexibility element has also been discussed by Terry and Hayfield (2017), especially in terms of the theoretical stance of the researcher referring to "*reflexive thematic analysis*". This form of thematic analysis emphasises the researcher's interpretative role, and acknowledges the influence of personal, cultural, and theoretical backgrounds on analysis, deviating from methods that aim for objectivity (Terry et al., 2017). It allows for a deeper engagement with data, recognising that researchers bring their subjective experiences to the analytical process (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Therefore, as a Muslim researcher, my background and understanding of the community provide unique insights in my research, which makes reflexive thematic analysis particularly suitable. This permits an interpretation of data from a lived experiences of the cultural and religious aspects of the Muslim community and facilitates a sensitive interpretation of the community engagement with regeneration projects. This method aligns well with the adopted interpretivist paradigm mentioned previously in Section 3.3, suggesting that reality is socially constructed and best understood from the perspective of individuals involved in the studied phenomenon. As a researcher with an insider standpoint, I can shed light on aspects of community participation that might be overlooked or misunderstood by an outsider. By using reflexive thematic analysis, I aim to explore the complexities of community participation, understanding motivations, challenges, and successes from a culturally informed viewpoint.

Furthermore, analysing information gathered from multiple sources, including interviews, mapping workshops, observations, and documents allows for a convergence of a diverse range of evidence. Hence, resulting in a cohesive and thorough understanding of the complexities around the Muslims participation. This approach acknowledges the diverse nature of truth, recognising that each piece of information from each participant brings a unique perspective, and is essential for a complete understanding. As suggested by Baškarada (2014), following this approach can improve the validity of the research and simplify the interpretation of the findings

(Baskarada, 2014). Additionally, it can uncover any discrepancies or inconsistencies among the sources, presenting opportunities for further exploration and clarification.

Ultimately, the analytical framework was formed following several steps, including organising the data, initial data analysis, then triangulating the outputs, and finally develop final themes that will be discussed in the following empirical chapters (see Figure 3.7).

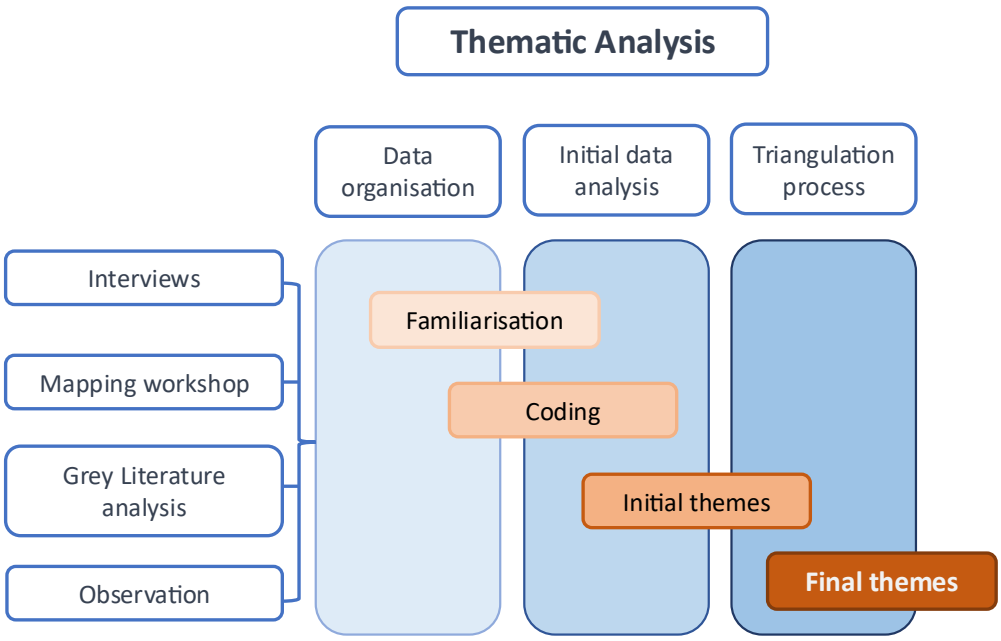


Figure 3.7: Analytical Framework

Source: Author

3.6.1. Data organisation

This step consists of organising the data collected by transcribing interviews, observation notes, and all answers collected from the written tasks of the mapping workshops. This also includes categorising maps produced during these workshops, photographs from observations, and policy documents related to community participation, cohesion and integration. This approach also helped me to familiarise myself with the data collected.

Interviews transcription

This process involved converting the collected oral data (audio recordings) into written transcripts with a non-verbatim approach, with more focus on the content rather than the language (Kvale, 2010; Halcomb & Davidson, 2006; Lapadat & Lindsay, 1999). Some light editing was performed to correct or eliminate sentences deemed irrelevant, or interrupted, for instance, when a participant answered a phone call in the middle of the interview, or talk to another person

passing by. However, repetitions were retained in the transcriptions, as they can be indicative of emphasis and hold valuable insights into the speaker's perspective (J. Bailey, 2008). Additionally, interviews that were conducted in Arabic were translated into English during the transcription process, with an inevitable interpretive aspect of translating interviews (Temple & Young, 2004). Subsequently, all transcripts were categorised into the three predetermined interviewee groups: community members, community leaders, and local officials.

Observation notes

A systematic approach was employed for the organisation of observation notes taken during the field work, adhering to both chronological and thematic frameworks. Firstly, the notes were arranged in a temporal sequence, mirroring the progression of the observational phase which spanned from the pre-interviews period to the mapping workshops conclusion. This chronological arrangement was divided into two distinct stages: the initial observations and subsequent observations.

The initial phase consisted of a general observation of the area, with a particular attention to the Ellesmere green area, whereas in the second phase, observations were focused on the reoccurring topics from interviews, and informal discussions with locals.

The initial observation notes involved various aspects such as the utilisation of space by community members and the overall condition of the Burngreave centre. This included mapping the locations of businesses and identifying the nationalities of the owners, thereby gaining insights into the nature and key areas of interaction among the local Muslim community members. For instance, it was observed that Kurdish and Yemeni individuals owned most businesses in the heart of the neighbourhood, while some workshops owned by White individuals were situated on the side roads. Mainly Somali women owned shops specialising in products for Muslim women.

Thus, I was able to identify significant social and economic nodes within the community and revealed the socio-cultural landscape of area. Similarly with the men gathering outside cafes, people in drug use occupying public spaces such as Ellesmere green, entrances to public buildings, and the littering issues. The subsequent observational notes (during and after interviews), focused more on matters brought up by interviewees from community members and leaders as well as local officials. This included for example the availability of community facilities in the area and their usage, women and girls' presence, local authorities work (including police, council and councillors). Notes accumulated from both phases of these observations were organised into initial themes such as space usage, drugs, littering, community facilities.

Mapping workshops

As previously noted, the study involved conducting mapping workshops with Muslim women and young adults. These sessions included a range of tasks that required participants to express and rationalise their use of specific spaces, their participation in local activities within the designated study area, and to share their perspectives regarding Ellesmere Green. The responses and maps generated from these participants were collected and subsequently organised as mapping and textual outputs as follow:

Maps outputs

Mappings produced by participants were arranged in accordance with both, the participants group, space usage, and local activities, (For example, see Figure 3.8).



Figure 3.8 Example of organising mapping material

Source: Author

Textual outputs

This data organisation was twofold: firstly, it was again arranged in consistence with the participants group, women and young adults. Secondly, it was aligned with the recurring themes identified in the participants' responses on both, the reasons of not going to certain areas (the red dots), and their perceptions on Ellesmere Green before the project, after the completion, and today (For example see Figure 3.9 for the women group)

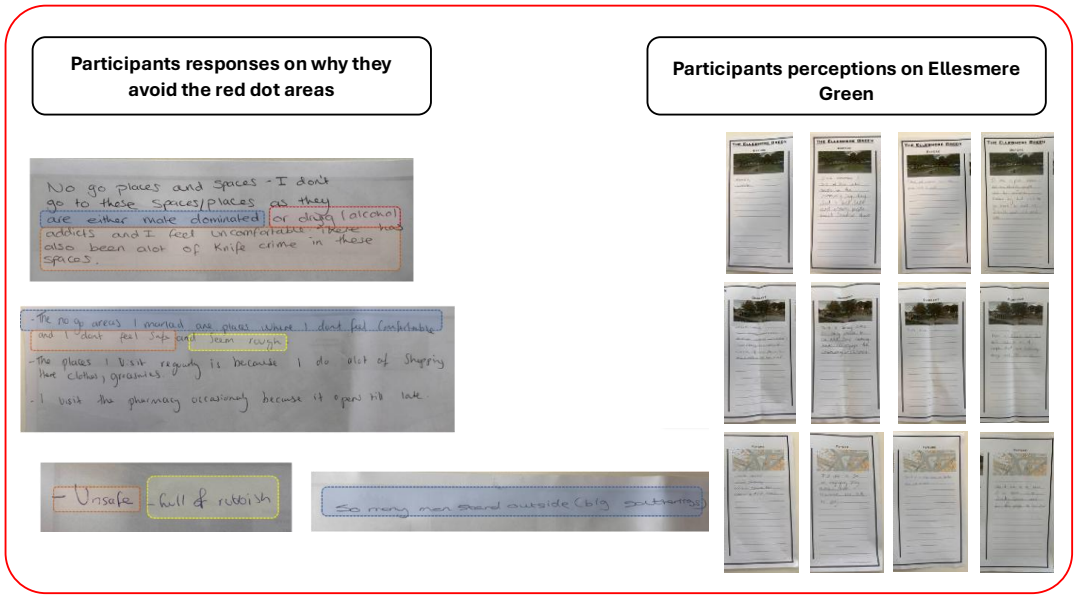


Figure 3.9: Example of organising mapping material

Source: Author

Documents

The documents gathered were uploaded to NVivo and classified into four categories. Two groups with regard to their extent (national and local), and based on their content (community participation, community cohesion and integration) (see Figure 3.10)

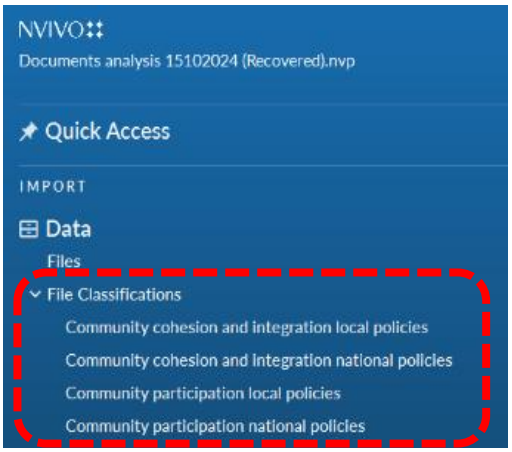


Figure 3.10: Organising Documents

Source: Author

3.6.2. Initial data analysis

This initial data analysis step involved the analysis of data collected taking each method separately in order to be familiarised with the data, and generate initial, open-ended codes that will later lead to preliminary themes before the formulation of the final themes.

Interviews analysis

The approach employed in analysing the interviews encompassed a multi-stage process, commencing with embarking on a thorough examination of the transcripts, dedicating substantial time to reading and re-reading them. This iterative process was instrumental in fostering a comprehensive understanding of the data, allowing for the identification of recurring themes and the emergence of broad topics. Then, using the qualitative data analysis software NVivo, I methodically classified the transcripts' content relevant to each code. This facilitated the organisation and categorisation of data collected from interviews and enabling a more subtle analysis (see Figure 3.11).

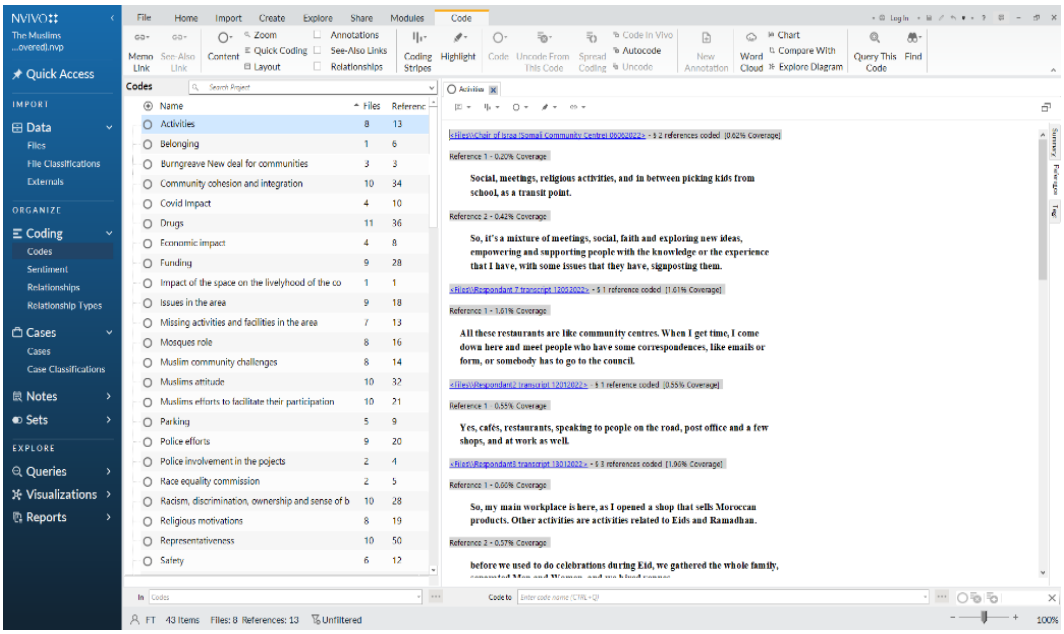


Figure 3.11: Using Nvivo to generate themes

Source: Author

The final phase of the interviews' analysis involved the use of NVivo's mapping ability to illustrate the relationships between the various codes and the overarching themes they represented. Through this process, initial themes were generated, which later provided a vital contribution for some of the discussion chapters, offering a coherent and comprehensive interpretation of the findings.

Observation analysis

As part of the initial data analysis, I reviewed the observational data to develop familiarity with the material and identify recurring themes, patterns, and notable occurrences. This process was conducted manually rather than through NVivo, in order to keep the coding flexible and

responsive to later triangulation with the pre-defined themes already developed from the interview data and linked to the research questions. This helped strengthen the clarity and consistency of themes across the wider dataset.

Mapping workshops analysis

This stage involved combining multiple maps, each combination representing a participants group (women and young adults), to analyse spatial usage patterns (for example see Figure 3.12 for young adult girls) and the various social, religious, and economic activities within the area (see Figure 3.13 for young adult girls), particularly within and around Ellesmere Green.

Furthermore, the workshop responses and written notes were consolidated based on common themes (see Figure 3.14). This method played a crucial role in developing a comprehensive understanding of how each group perceives and interacts with the area, with specific emphasis on their perspectives and experiences related to Ellesmere Green. By synthesising this data, I was able to explore the spatial dynamics and diverse community involvements within the study's designated geographical area, which ultimately contributed to the range of initial themes.



Most participants avoid the Ellesmere green and the surrounding area for being unsafe, dirty and uncomfortable due to the high presence of men around there. However, few participants showed the occasional necessity to go to that area to do some shopping or use the post office services. Tesco and Spital hill shops seems to be the mostly and regularly visited places for the girls for their day-to-day shopping. In addition, the Verdon community centre, and the Furnival community hub are highly used b

Figure 3.12: Social, religious and economic activities (Young adult girls)

Source: Author



Participants activities around the Ellesmere Green and Spital Hill area consist mainly of shopping, which occasionally used as a meeting point for social interactions. However, social activities are predominantly performed at the Verdon community centre away from the central area of Burngreave. Surprisingly, religious activities aren't very much linked with the social activities.

Figure 3.13: Social, religious and economic activities (Young adult girls)

Source: Author

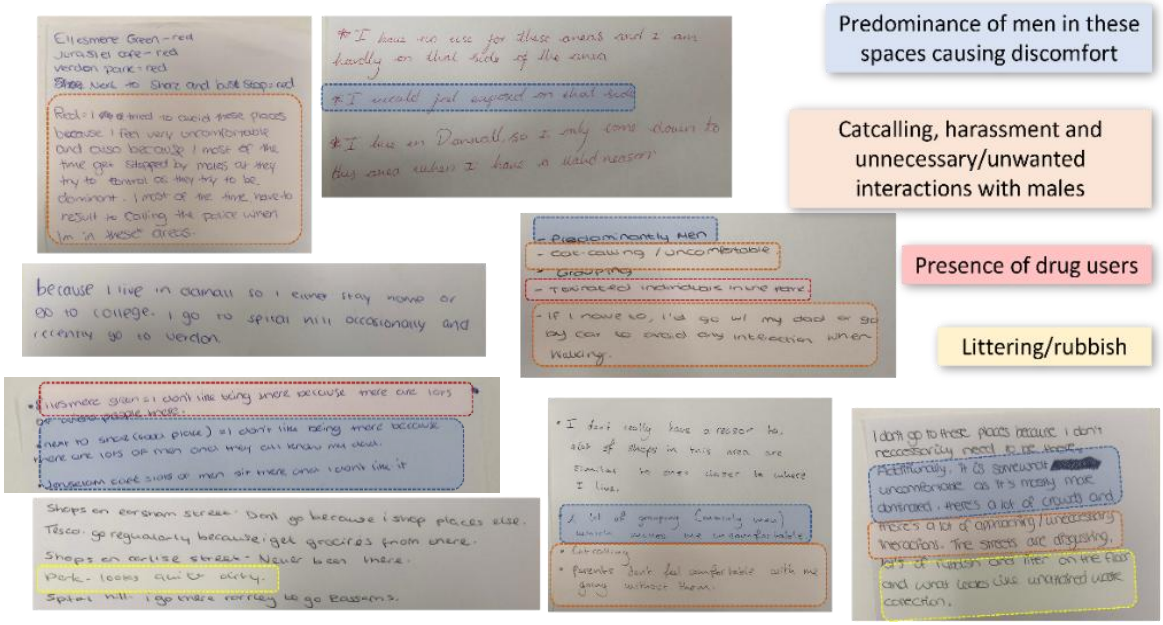


Figure 3.14: Initial analysis of workshop textual material (Young adult girls)

Source: Author

Grey literature analysis

The first action in examining the gathered documents involved thoroughly reading the relevant sections of the documents to identify and extract the relevant information that links community participation, community cohesion, and integration from official records. NVivo software was utilised to thematically categorise these relevant details. So, as mentioned previously (Section

3.6.1), documents selected were uploaded onto Nvivo with four categories, national community cohesion and integration documents, local community cohesion and integration documents, national community participation documents, local community participation documents. Then, an auto-coding was run through the national and local documents (both categories- community participation, community cohesion and integration) (see Figure 3.15). In order to generate codes that mark the intersection of community participation, community cohesion and integration in all selected national and local documents.

A large number of codes were generated, and they were revised and minimised, according to relevance and in line with the research questions on one hand, and relevant to the initial themes developed from interviews (see Figure 3.16).

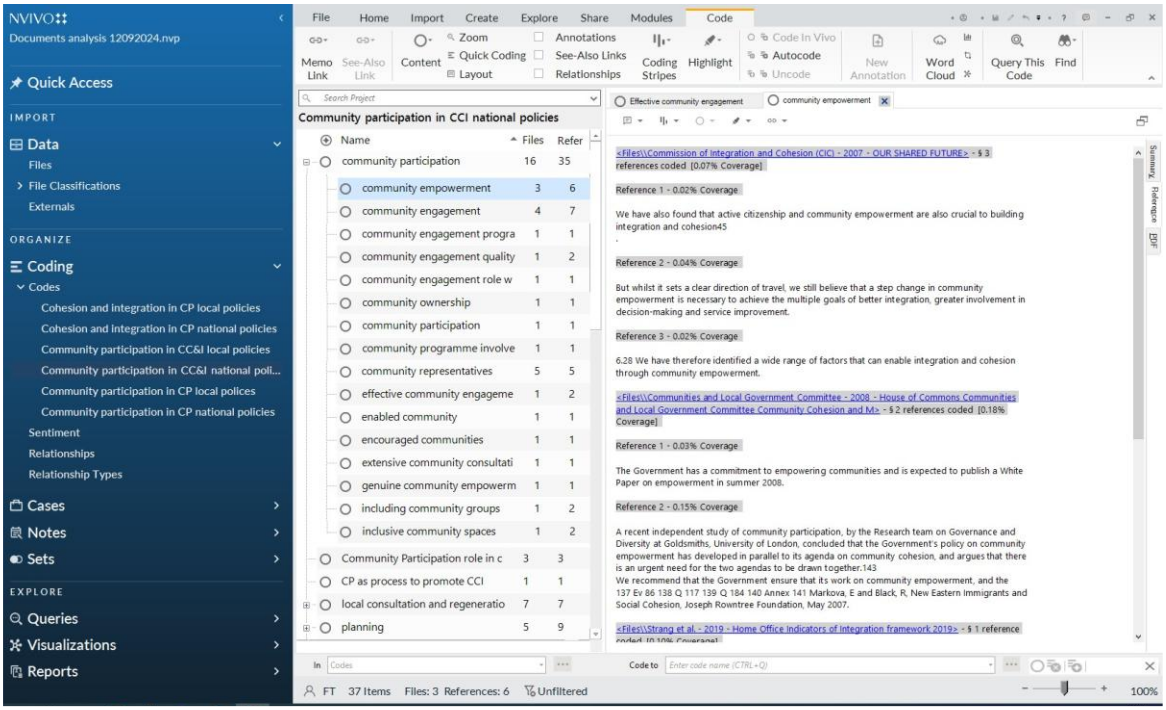


Figure 3.15: Documents Auto Coding

Source : Author

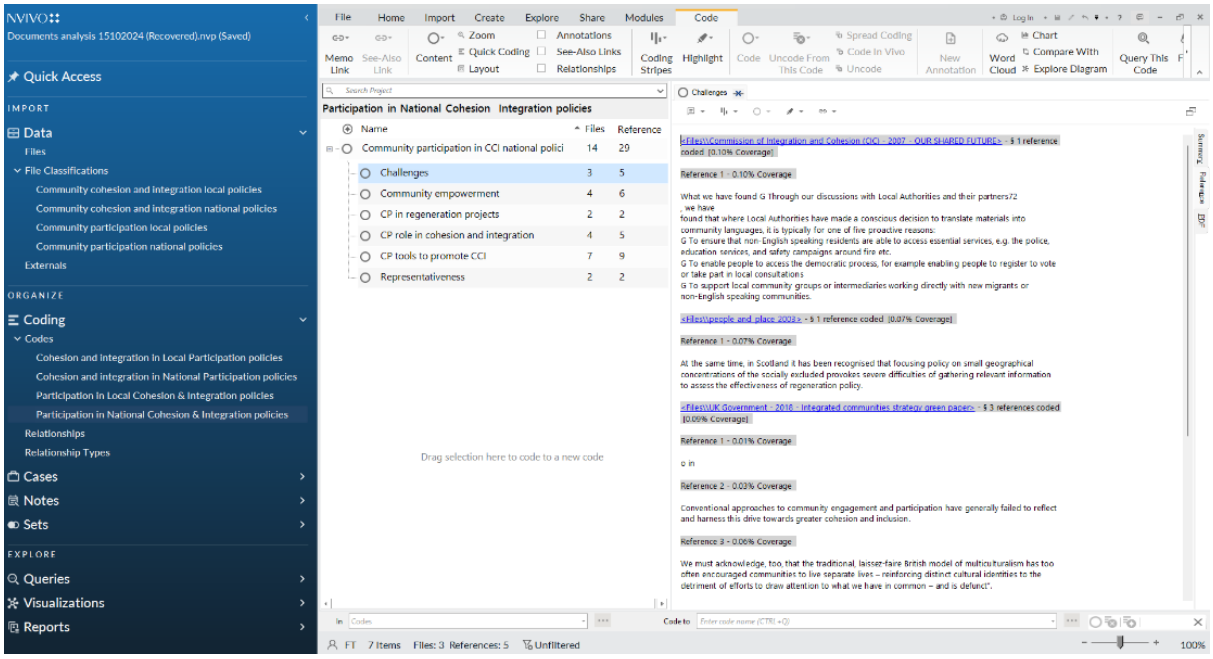


Figure 3.16: Merging codes to generate themes

Source: Author

However, Beyond the collective coding of all documents, each document group was also analysed separately, both as a category and as individual documents. This helped, first, to examine how community participation policies were considered within the council's approach in the Ellesmere Green project. In particular, the local documents were used to assess how Sheffield City Council presented and operationalised community participation, while the community cohesion and integration documents, at both national and local levels, were examined to identify the extent to which these agendas were reflected in the project's design and implementation. Analysing the documents in this way allowed for a comparison between formal policy commitments and the council's practice, thereby helping to evaluate whether cohesion and integration objectives were meaningfully translated into the regeneration process.

3.6.3. Triangulation process

Upon the completion of the initial data analysis and preliminary themes were generated, a process of cross-verification and data integration, commonly referred to as triangulation, was undertaken. Triangulation as a method in qualitative research involves the synthesis of data from different sources or methods in order to increase the depth and validity of the results (Fusch et al., 2018). This process is central to the mutual validation of data and increases the credibility of the research. Triangulation integrates themes drawn from different data collection sources to provide comprehensive results that directly relate to the research questions (Carter et al., 2014). This analytical technique was deployed in this research and involved the synthesis of the initial

themes that emerged from different data collection methods, and the convergence of these themes into overarching ones (final themes) was methodologically aligned with the research questions stated previously (see example in Figure 3.17).

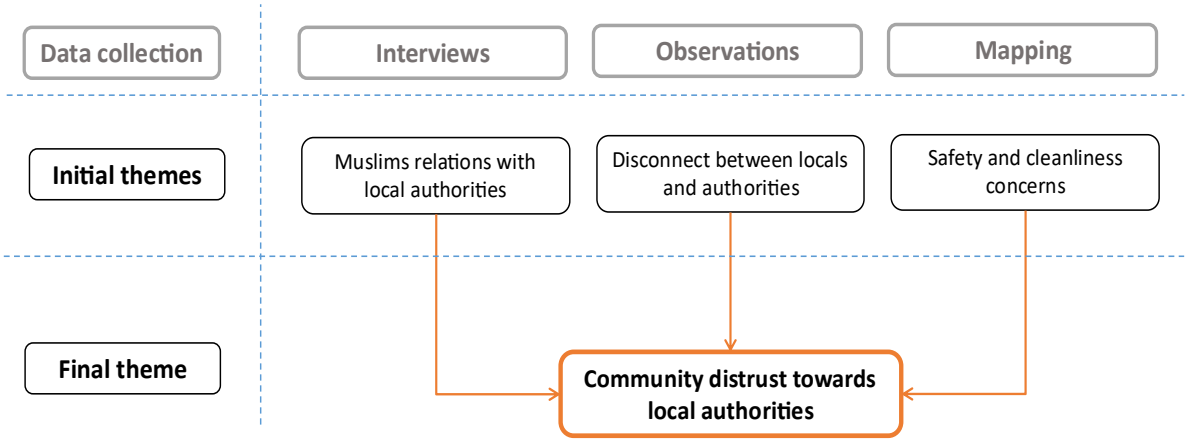


Figure 3.17: Example of triangulation

Source: Author

This process consisted of reviewing the initial themes and focussing them under narrower meanings in line with the research questions (see Figure 3.18). This means that in generating the final themes, there was a back and forth between the initial themes that emerged from the data collected and the framework provided by the research questions. This process also involved cross-checking accounts across different participant groups, particularly between community members and local officials, to identify areas of agreement, disagreement, and complementarity. This data integration served not only to underpin the validity of the findings, but also to provide a holistic understanding of the research subject, thereby enriching the conclusions of the study.

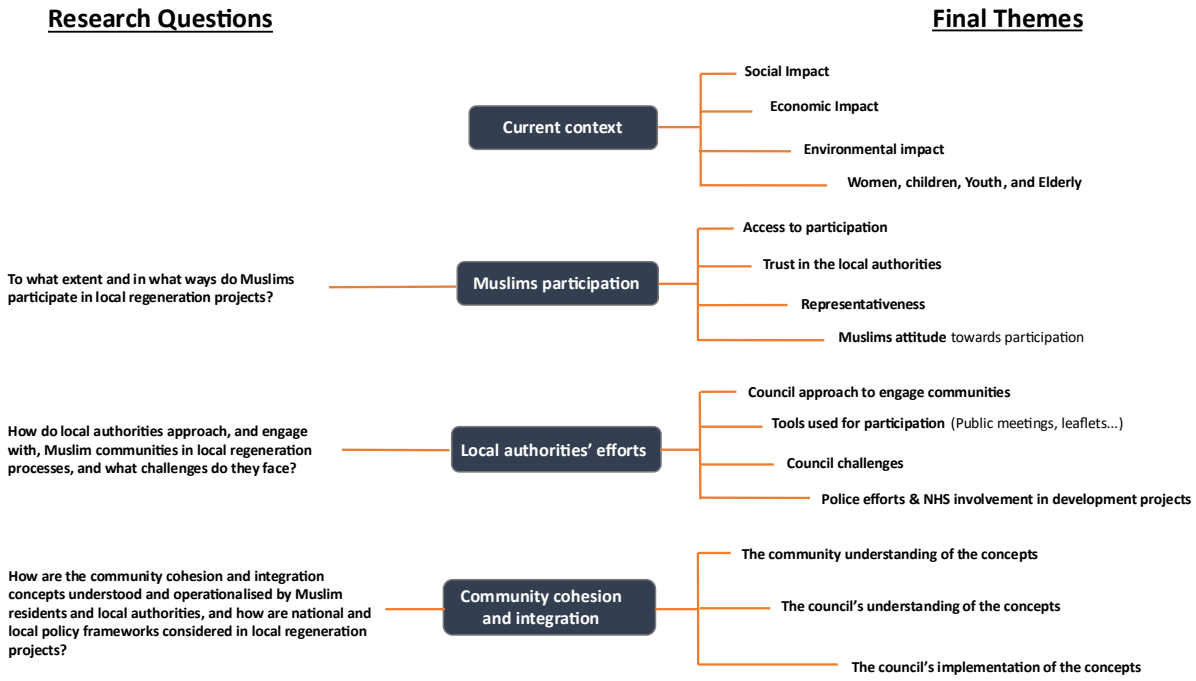


Figure 3.18: Linkage between the research questions and the themes

Source: Author

3.7. Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the methodological framework adopted to investigate Muslim participation in regeneration projects through the case study of Ellesmere Green in Burngreave. The research was grounded in a qualitative case study approach informed by an interpretivist perspective, allowing the study to explore the complex social dynamics surrounding participation within their real context. Focusing on a neighbourhood-scale project enabled the research to capture everyday interactions between community members, local authorities, and the built environment, while recognising that multiple perspectives and interpretations shape how participation is experienced and understood.

The research process was shaped by the researcher's positionality and the reflexive awareness required when conducting fieldwork within a community with which the researcher shares certain cultural and religious characteristics. This insider–outsider positioning facilitated access to participants and informal networks within Burngreave, for example through personal connections that supported participant recruitment and helped establish trust during interviews and informal conversations. At the same time, maintaining a reflexive stance was necessary to critically consider how this proximity to the community influenced the interpretation of participants' experiences and perspectives.

Ethical considerations were embedded throughout the research process in order to ensure respectful and responsible engagement with participants. Particular attention was given to informed consent, anonymity, and cultural sensitivity when interacting with members of the Muslim community (particularly women and young adult girls) and local officials.

The empirical investigation relied on a multi-method qualitative approach that brought together interviews, mapping workshops, observation, and grey literature analysis in order to develop a comprehensive understanding of participation in the study area. Semi-structured interviews provided detailed insights into how community members, community leaders, and local officials perceived the Ellesmere Green project and the broader processes of participation surrounding it. Mapping workshops offered an alternative participatory method through which women and young people could spatialise their everyday activities and perceptions of the area, while observation allowed the research to capture patterns of space usage, such as the presence of men gathering outside cafés, the use of public spaces by people with drug issues, and the role of local businesses as social hubs within the neighbourhood. Grey literature analysis further contextualised these findings by examining national and local policy frameworks related to community participation, cohesion, and integration.

The analysis of the collected material followed a reflexive thematic approach supported by triangulation across the different data sources. By bringing together insights from interviews, observational notes, participatory maps, and policy documents, the research was able to identify recurring themes and relationships between community experiences and institutional frameworks. For example, issues such as the use of public space, perceptions of safety, and the availability of community facilities emerged across multiple data sources, demonstrating how different forms of evidence can complement one another in explaining patterns.

Overall, the methodology adopted in this research combined a systematic analytical framework with a flexible and responsive engagement with the fieldwork context. This approach allowed the study to remain attentive to participants' lived experiences while acknowledging the influence of the researcher's positionality and the ethical responsibilities inherent in community-based research. Together, these considerations provided a robust foundation for examining the dynamics of Muslim participation in regeneration projects, which are explored in the empirical chapters that follow.

4. CHAPTER Four: Ellesmere Green in Burngreave, Sheffield: before and after

4.1. Introduction

This chapter provides the contextual background for the case study examined in this research. It introduces the geographical, historical, and socio-demographic context within which Ellesmere Green regeneration project took place and situates the project within the broader urban and social dynamics of Sheffield. The chapter begins with an overview of Sheffield, outlining the city's demographic composition and the historical processes that have shaped its socio-economic landscape. Particular attention is given to the spatial distribution of Muslim communities in the city and their concentration within some of the most economically deprived neighbourhoods.

Then, it focuses on Burngreave, the neighbourhood where the empirical fieldwork was conducted. This section traces the historical development of the area, from its early rural character to its transformation into a multicultural urban neighbourhood shaped by successive waves of migration, including the settlement of diverse Muslim communities. The socio-economic challenges that have characterised the area since the decline of Sheffield's industrial economy are also discussed, alongside the regeneration initiatives that have attempted to address these challenges.

Following this contextual overview, the chapter introduces the Ellesmere Green regeneration project, which constitutes the central case study of this research. The chapter examines the different phases of the project, including the early proposals, the public consultation processes held in 2006 and 2012, and the eventual implementation of the project in 2013. Drawing on both documentary sources and interview data collected during the fieldwork, the chapter explores how the space was perceived by local residents before the regeneration and how it was subsequently used by the community after the project's completion.

The chapter then analyses the various social, economic, environmental, and religious–cultural impacts of the project as experienced by members of the local Muslim community. Particular

attention is given to the changing patterns of use of Ellesmere Green and the ways in which these changes have affected everyday life in Burngreave. Finally, the chapter considers a number of recent initiatives organised by local authorities and institutions that attempted to reactivate the space through occasional events and consultations. This will allow an overall assessment of the project outcomes before delving into different factors and reasons that surrounded the community participation in the project, from Muslims perspective and local authorities' viewpoint in Chapter five and six respectively.

4.2. Sheffield

My research is located in a Muslim-concentrated neighbourhood in Sheffield, a major city in the north of England. Sheffield's population is approximately 556,500 according to the 2021 Census, with around 21% of it being from the BAME (2021 Census). These BAME communities, comprising Pakistani, Caribbean, Indian, Bangladeshi, Somali, and Yemeni are predominantly concentrated in some of the city's most economically deprived areas (Woodward, 2020). Half of these groups (10.3%) identify as Muslims and are largely settled in the east of the city centre, and mildly in the west (ONS, 2023). Historically, the Muslim migration pattern in Sheffield saw mostly people from South Asia, but also other countries such as Yamen, arriving and settling initially in the northeast of the city. This includes Darnall and Tinsley, where employment opportunities in the steel industry were abundant (Sheffield City Council, 2017). In recent decades, Muslims have arrived in Sheffield, seeking refuge from conflicts in various countries such as Afghanistan, Somalia, Eritrea, Sudan, and Iraq. Most of whom settled in areas with existing Muslim communities. Over time, as became more established and families grew, Muslim communities emerged in nearby eastern areas such as Burngreave, and other southwest wards areas such as Nether Edge, and Sharrow (see Figure 4.1).

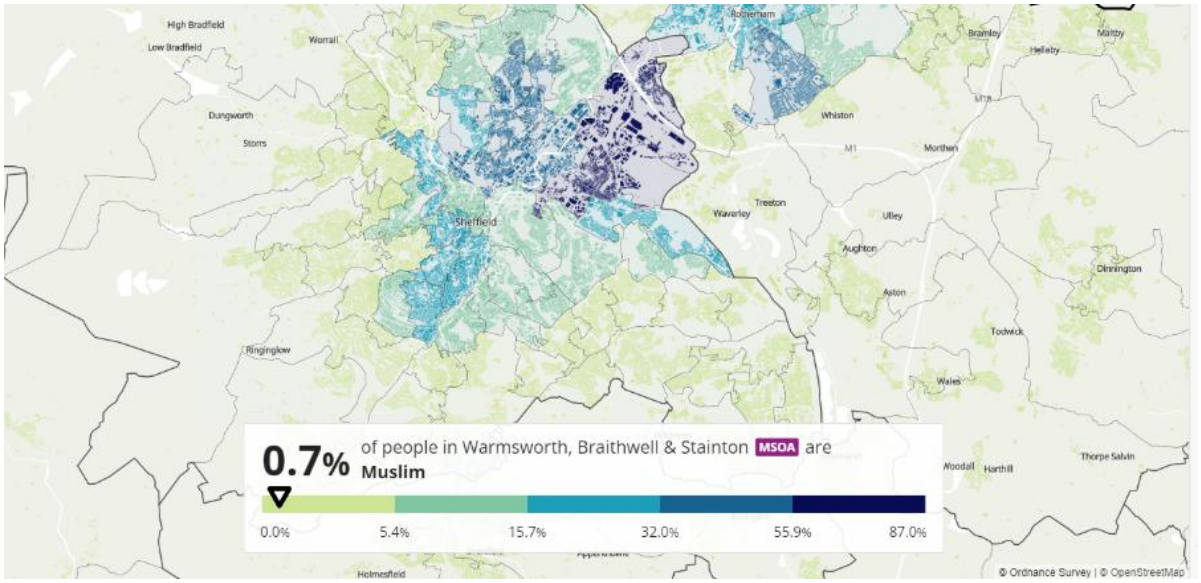


Figure 4.1: Religion by area in Sheffield

Source: ONS, Census 2021

Muslims' presence is more visible in contemporary Sheffield, as over the last half-century, the city has witnessed the gradual emergence of mosques and Muslim community centres. Some of these with their minarets and signage in Arabic, such as the grand mosque (Emaan Trust) in the Brightside area of Burngreave, and Madina mosque between Nether Edge and Lowfield. These features now adorn former school buildings, community hubs, and residential dwellings, repurposed as places of worship and religious instruction since the initial waves of migration during the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s (Saleem, 2018).

Nonetheless, despite not typically being perceived as a city characterised by blunt inequality, Sheffield presents a nuanced reality (Ortiz et al., 2023). The economic downturn of 1973–1975 dealt a severe blow to the city's steel sector, leading to significant socio-economic repercussions, and the industrial heritage of Sheffield, particularly in the eastern areas, was neglected for years. These regions continue to grapple with neglect, remaining economically disadvantaged compared to the historically affluent and cleaner western districts (Ortiz et al., 2023).

So, the clear contrast between the west and east sides of the city persists, delineating a complex socio-economic landscape shaped by historical economic disparities. These deprived areas are mainly in the east and the northeast where the majority of the BAME communities are settled, including most Muslim communities in Sheffield (see Figure 4.2).

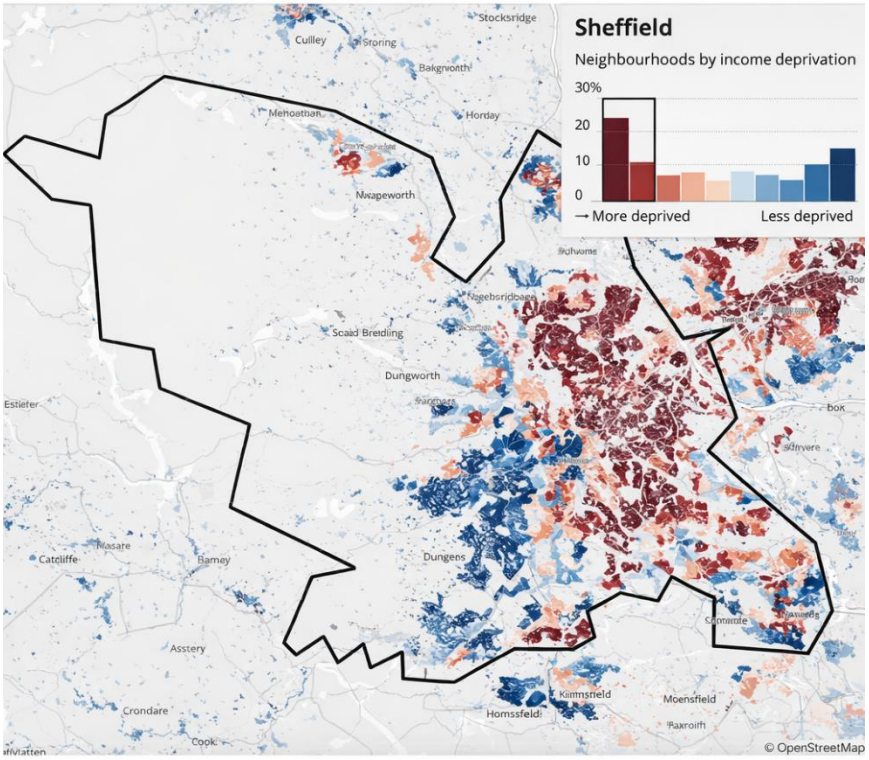


Figure 4.2: Deprivation in Sheffield by area

Source: ONS, Census 2021

Thus, it is apparent that Muslims in Sheffield are generally in a low socio-economic status and living in areas that are described as deprived in one or more dimensions, including education, employment, health, and housing (ONS, 2023).

Sheffield has witnessed many regeneration projects in different parts of the city over the last recent decades, from the New Deal for Communities programmes under the previous Labour government (1997-2010), to the recently announced Levelling Up Funds by the conservative administration. The north and northeast areas where the majority of Muslims are settled in Sheffield, have been part of these projects, such as Burngreave New Deal for Communities between 2001 and 2010, and the Levelling Up Fund for Atterclife. However, Muslims' involvement in regeneration projects and the impact of these projects on their social and economic status have not been particularly explored in Sheffield. As mentioned previously, this constituted one of the motivating factors that precipitated the initiation of this research (see Chapter One, Section 1.2), and the next section illustrates the area and the project selected to investigate this further.

4.3. Burngreave

The case study project (Ellesmere Green) selected to investigate the Muslims' engagement in regeneration projects, is situated in Burngreave, a ward located approximately

700 yards northeast of Sheffield city centre. Over time, this area has undergone many transformations, evolving from rural fields into a demographically diverse, and culturally rich locality. Once an affluent suburb of Sheffield, it has now transitioned into one of the most impoverished and deprived areas within the city. An area with the most diverse Muslim community in Sheffield.

4.3.1. Early history

Throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, Burngreave maintained its predominantly rural character, yet the emergence of industry was gradually altering its surroundings. A historical map from 1846 depicts the landscape dotted with farmsteads, fields, and a limited number of lavish estates owned by affluent families (see Figure 4.3).

During this era, Burngreave was perceived as an appealing location for aristocrats seeking to erect lavish residences and attracted new families who settled in working-class housing such as terraced houses or courtyard buildings. The majority of these families were migrants, mainly Irish, followed by those from Staffordshire (Wilson, 2007).

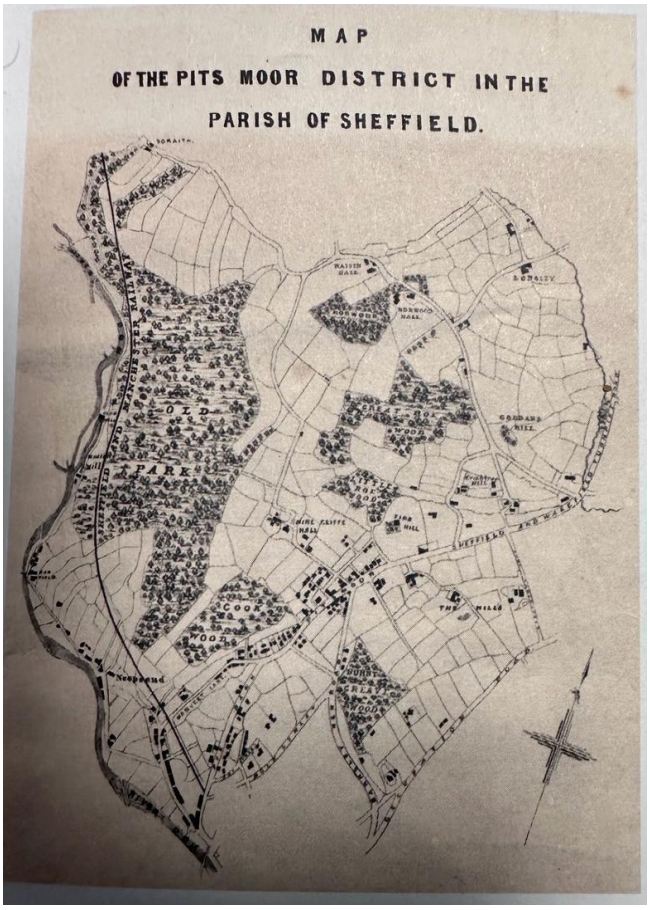


Figure 4.3: Map of Burngreave 1846

Source: Burngreave voices (2007)

In addition to houses and factories, schools, churches, shops, pubs, and allotments, emerged in the centre of Burngreave between the late 1800s and the beginning of the 1900s. By then, Burngreave was known as a middle-class affluent suburb in Sheffield, notably along Burngreave Road where big houses were erected. However, the two world wars had an immense impact on the area, particularly the Second World War, as many arms factories were operating nearby.

4.3.2. Recent history (Muslims arrival to Burngreave)

After World War II, the area underwent significant demolition, and Burngreave was designated for redevelopment in the 1950s, leading to the clearance of slums and displacement of communities. Families moved to new estates like Southey and Parson Cross, and the neighbourhood experienced a decline with shops, pubs, and churches losing customers. In the meantime, local industry thrived in Burngreave and Sheffield due to a need for workers to rebuild the city. Many arrivals from Muslim countries such as Pakistan, and Yemen, as well as other countries including the Caribbean, came seeking job opportunities. Initially planning to return home after a few years, many ended up staying long-term, taking low-paid manual jobs. They brought their families over and integrated into the community by participating in schools and clubs. This period marked the early years of Muslims' arrival and settlements in Burngreave and Sheffield in general. Over time, Muslim and non-Muslim migrants established churches, mosques, grocery shops, and restaurants offering food from their cultures, which led to Burngreave evolving into a multicultural suburb. Furthermore, in subsequent decades refugees from Somalia and other African countries settled in Burngreave for political reasons, enhancing its ethnic and religious diversity and unique character.

However, during the industrial decline in the 1980s and 1990s, Burngreave was affected by unemployment and poverty, and the neighbourhood deteriorated, gaining a reputation for crime and drugs. Once trendy, Burngreave turned into a dangerous area, leading to people moving out and plummeting house prices. Lack of public funds worsened the situation with poorly maintained streets and outdated council homes. Despite this, a transformation process started in the late 1990s with locals forming organisations to address issues and fostering a stronger community spirit. Residents, proud of their heritage, believed change was necessary.

In the early 2000s, Burngreave underwent a significant transformation due to government-funded regeneration efforts such as the New Deal for Communities and Housing Market Renewal programme (Allen et al, 2011). The area saw the reopening of shops on Spital Hill and Ellesmere Green, catering to its diverse population. At that stage, migration remained a notable characteristic of the area, coming from Iraq's Kurdish population, Africans escaping from

different nations in pursuit of safety, and Eastern Europeans who have come seeking employment opportunities. These newcomers contributed to the already present diverse cultural landscape in Burngreave and increased the Muslim community presence in the area.

4.3.3. Burngreave today

Burngreave today has a population of 27,288, almost 65% of whom belong to BAME groups, emphasising its status as one of Sheffield's most culturally diverse wards (ONS, 2023). Half of Burngreave's population (49.5%) identify as Muslim and includes a wide range of ethnic backgrounds such as Asian, Arab, Black and mixed background (ONS, 2023). These people are of different nationalities, mainly from Asia, the Middle East and Africa, contributing to Sheffield's most ethnically diverse Muslim community. The diversity within the Muslim community in Burngreave is reflected in the public realm, where shop frontages are decorated with different nations' flags and languages, and multiple social and religious facilities hosting Muslims from diverse backgrounds. Bungreave's centre has six mosques located within a 300-yard radius, each mosque is managed by a majority ethnicity and/or nationality, while attendees are from various ethnicities and nationalities. For example, Al-Rahman, Es-Sunnah, and Dal-ul-Uloom Siddiqia mosques are managed by Arabs (Libyans/Yamanis), Somalis and Pakistanis respectively, and attendees are from diverse ethnicities and nationalities including Asians, North Africans, Middle Easterns, and Carabians Muslims. Burngreave also has many Halal shops and restaurants offering products and cuisines from different parts of the world, including Yamen, Kurdistan, and Somalia, in addition to stores selling Islamic clothing and articles. All this creates a culturally vibrant atmosphere for the diverse Muslim community in Sheffield and offers amenities that fulfil their day-to-day social and religious needs.

However, the ward is still suffering from the economic decline of the steel industry in the 1970s that impacted the eastern and northeastern areas of Sheffield. Burngreave was described as the home of "*the most impoverished neighbourhoods"* when it was granted the two major national funding projects discussed previously, the New Deal for Communities, and the Housing Market Renewal Programme (Allen et al., 2011). The main objectives of these regeneration projects were to improve the housing diversity and quality, elevate the areas' socio-economic condition, and promote its attractiveness within the city. The Ellesmere Green project was also an ambitious regeneration project initiated by the Sheffield City Council to create an appealing centre for Burngreave that will have social and economic reverberation in the area and beyond. Yet, Burngreave is still considered one of the five most deprived areas in Sheffield, according to the annual equalities' report of 2020/2021 produced by Sheffield City Council. Moreover, the latest

2021 census shows that around 25% of Burngreave's households are deprived in at least two dimensions (there are 4 dimensions, education, health, housing, and employment) (ONS, 2023). In the following section, I will discuss the Ellesmere Green project and its suitability as a case study to investigate Muslims' participation in regeneration projects.

4.4. Ellesmere Green

Ellesmere Green is a roughly triangular green space situated at the heart of Burngreave and is surrounded by various amenities including shops, cafes, restaurants, bus stops, mosques, churches, and health facilities. Originally an agricultural green space, where a Congregational Church and Sunday School were built in 1855 (see Figure 4.4). However, they were later demolished in 1965 (Sheffield City Council, 2004), and Ellesmere Green continues to serve as a communal green space for local residents.

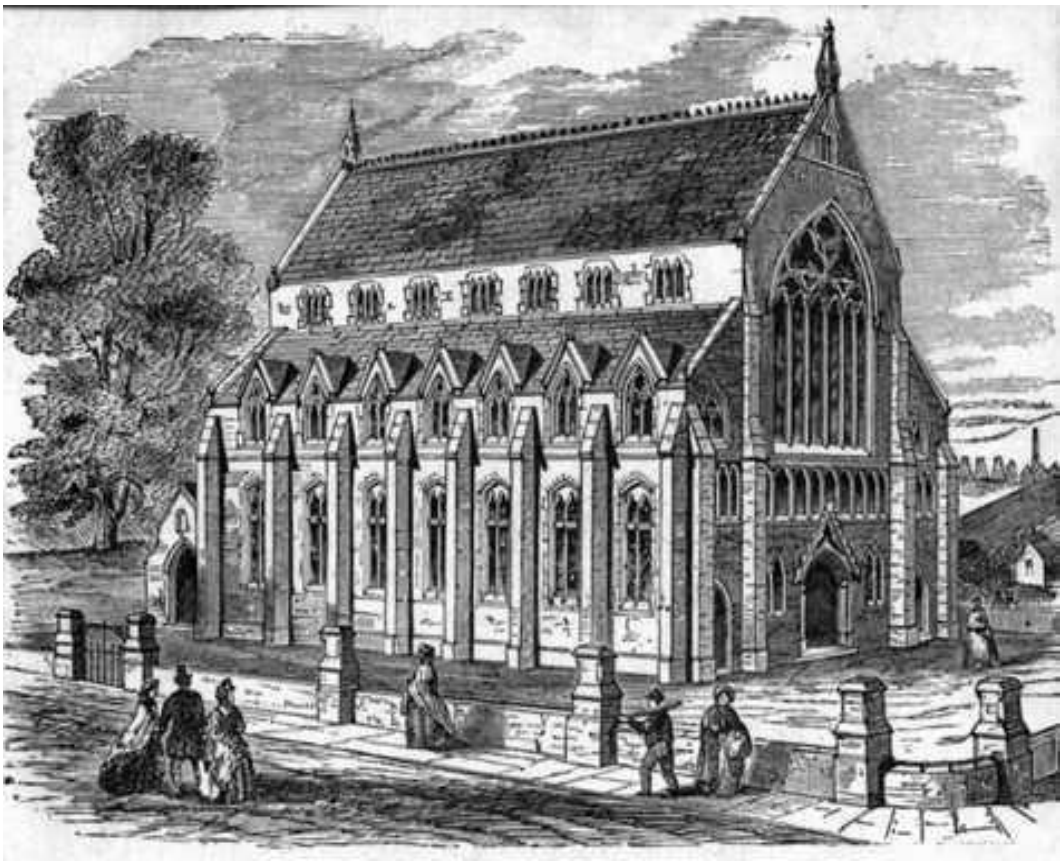


Figure 4.4: Congregational Church in Ellesmere Green after 1855, Burngreave

Source: Unitarian Historical Society

The improvement of Ellesmere Green and its surrounding pavements, streets and shop frontages was part of Burngreave's efforts to enhance its appeal and create a more welcoming environment under the New Deal for Communities programme initiated by the Labour government during the

early 2000s. Although a significant investment of £52 million was allocated for improving various aspects within Burngreave between 2001 and 2011, Ellesmere Green and Spital Hill regeneration was articulated as part of the 2005 master plan of the area produced by Sheffield City Council (see Figure 4.5).

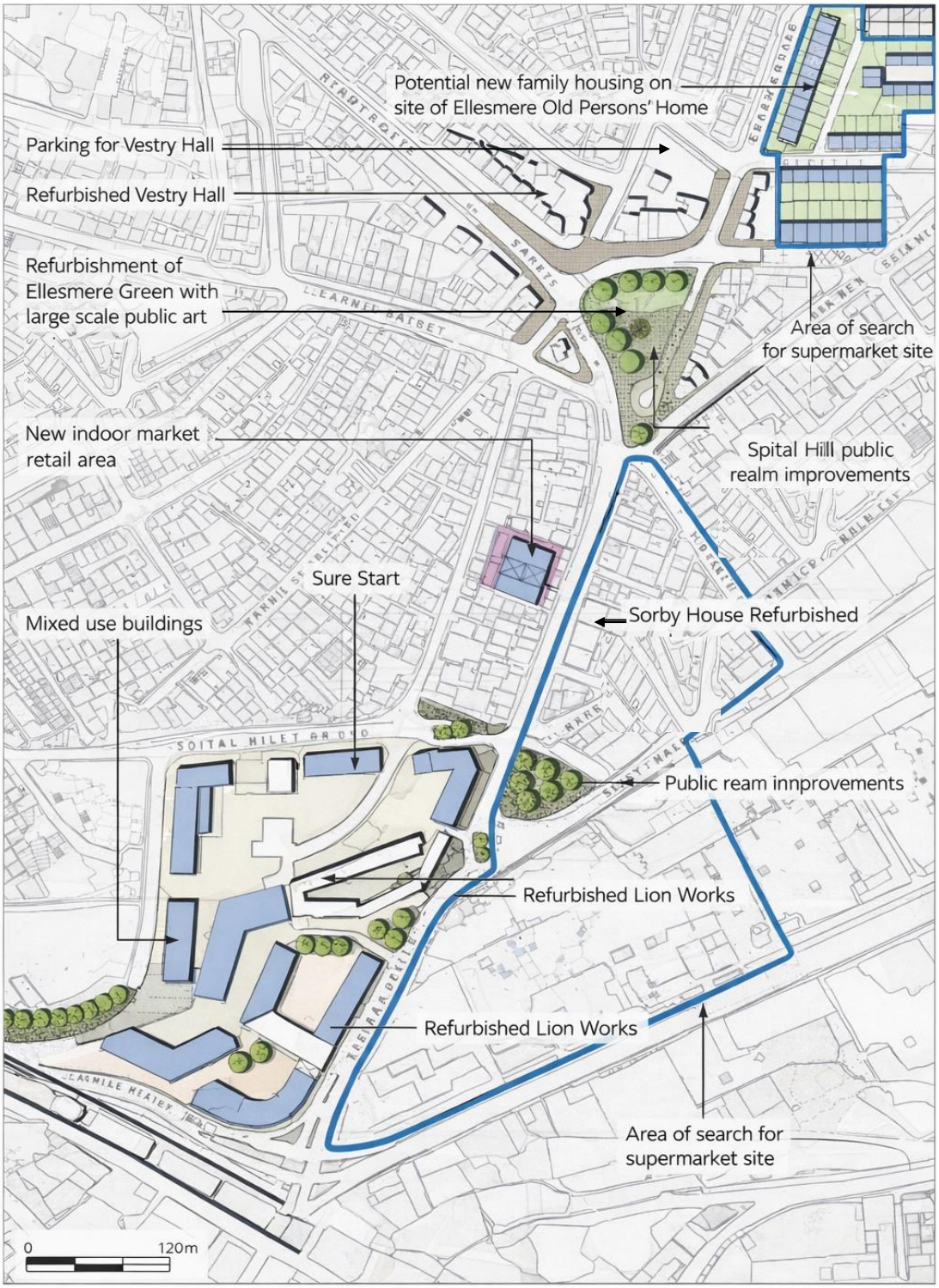


Figure 4.5: Burn greave Master Plan, 2005

Source: Sheffield city council

This initial proposal was followed by a public consultation phase that took place in the second half of 2006 and eventually ended up with a fresh proposal by 2007. The reasons for suspending the 2007 proposal to not be implemented are unclear, but in 2012 there was another round of public consultation. This new consultation was associated with the launch of a revised proposal which included similar aspects to the 2007 plan and led to the project's completion in the summer of 2013 (Sheffield City Council, 2007a).

Since this research aims to investigate the participation of local Muslims in the Ellesmere Green project, the next section will describe both series of public consultations held in 2006 and 2012. Illustrating the process will be from the already available resources, before reflecting on the data collected from various participants during the fieldwork to include the community perception of the space before and after the regeneration project.

4.4.1. Before the improvement

Before examining the outcomes of the regeneration project, it is important to understand both the earlier attempts to improve Ellesmere Green and how the space was perceived by the local community prior to its redevelopment. Like many urban public spaces in areas undergoing regeneration, Ellesmere Green had already been identified by local authorities as a site requiring intervention. In 2006, proposals were introduced as part of wider regeneration initiatives in Burngreave, accompanied by consultation exercises aimed at involving residents and businesses in shaping the future of the space. These initiatives revealed that Ellesmere Green was not only considered an important element of the neighbourhood's public realm but also a focal point for broader efforts to improve the image and functionality of Spital Hill as a district centre. At the same time, community memories of the space prior to its regeneration illustrated a more complex picture. While the green space served as a place for everyday encounters, particularly for local residents gathering after mosque prayers or during community activities, it was also associated with persistent issues such as drug use and anti-social behaviour. The following sections therefore examine the early regeneration proposals and consultation processes surrounding Ellesmere Green, alongside the community's recollections of the space before the project was implemented.

4.4.1.1. Early proposal and its public consultation

Before its improvement, Ellesmere Green consisted of landscaped grass adorned with mature trees, pathways, benches, public toilet, and bins (see Figures 4.6).



Figure 4.6: Ellesmere Green before improvement

Source: Burngreave green audit, 2004

Along with other operations such as the renovation plans of Vestry Hall and Sorby House that were part of the regeneration programme initiated through the Burngreave New Deal for Communities programme, Ellesmere Green was also considered for improvement by the Sheffield city council.

The initial proposal of improving Ellesmere Green first emerged in 2005 by the local council as part of the Burngreave and Fir Vale Master plan, which included the improvement of the green space and many other aspects of the public landscape in the area (see Figure 4.5).

The project aimed to revitalise Spital Hill as a District Shopping Centre by providing opportunities for local entrepreneurs and improving the public realm. So, improving the green space was perceived as a crucial element in enhancing the area's appearance and attractiveness to users within Burngreave and beyond, thereby, promoting community cohesion and integration.

The Design and Statement produced by SCC (Sheffield City Council) in 2007, shows that the first round of involving the local community in the detailed design (see Figure 4.7) of Ellesmere Green proposal was conducted between July 2006 and December 2006.

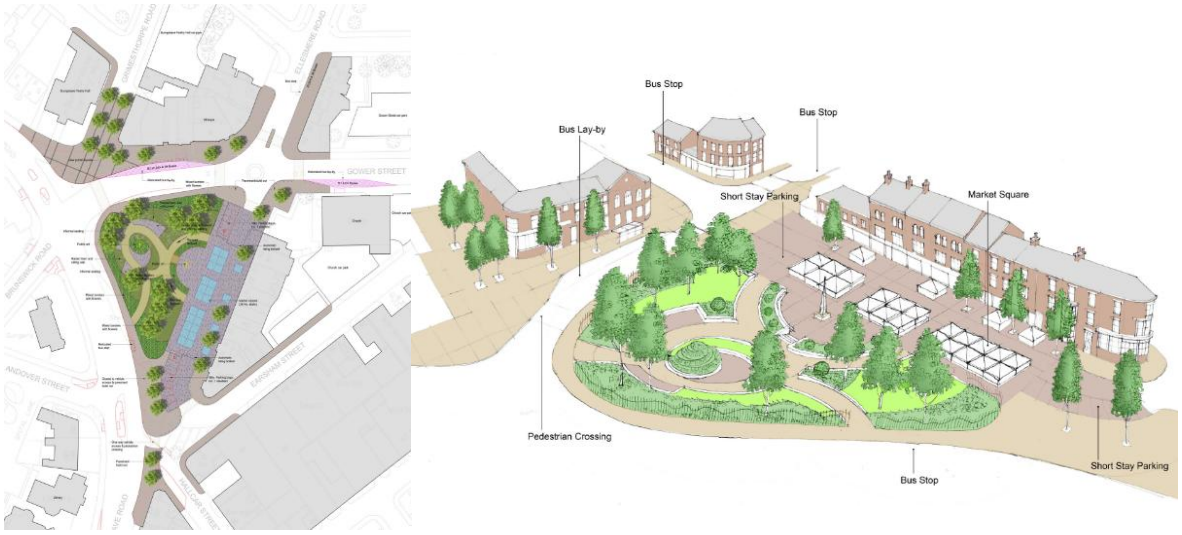


Figure 4.7: Ellesmere Green 2006 proposal

Source: Sheffield City Council

In addition to some interactive conversations, surveys were the predominant tool used with the local stakeholders to gather feedback and comments from the local community and businesses. Although the religion question was introduced in the precedent national census of 2001, the process did not consider the respondent's religion as a factor in these surveys, however, gender, ethnicities, and disabilities were regarded.

In July 2006, residents were invited to comment on Ellesmere Green's improvements with a sketch plan at the Abbeyfield Festival (this is a community event that takes place in Abbeyfield Park, where the local community comes together to celebrate its diversity through artwork, music, and food). In a subsequent survey in November 2006 with businesses in Spital Hill District Centre, 56% of them responded, most of them males (82%), 69% were from Black and Minority Ethnics community, and the rest White members, while 5% identified themselves as having a disability (Sheffield City Council, 2007a). Almost three-quarters (74%) of respondents felt that the poor aesthetics of the neighbourhood were detrimental to trade. Concerns were also expressed about the image of the neighbourhood and perceived safety. Despite these issues, 90% of respondents planned to stay, with 66% stating that improvements to the neighbourhood would make them more willing to stay and invest in their business (Sheffield City Council, 2007a). Key to attracting more trade were environmental improvements, more car parking, grants to improve premises and a positive portrayal of Spital Hill in the media. A bank/ ATM, supermarket, petrol station, general store/DIY and a more diverse retail were cited as needs. A month later, in December 2006, a consultation was conducted with local individuals at various venues including, New Roots Café, Gower St Mosque (Al-Rahman mosque), Rainbow House, BCAF Buildings Group, Ellesmere Green: Festival of Lights and the St Peter's Church. At this stage, the

respondents included 56 individuals, with 61% male, 46% from minority ethnic backgrounds, and 19% disabled (Sheffield City Council, 2007a). However, it was reported that many participants did not provide ethnicity data, so the figures may not be fully representative.

The consultation gathered feedback on the community members' likes, dislikes, and desired activities and safeguards for the Ellesmere Green area. The results showed an appreciation of the grass, trees, community hub, central location, and seating, while pigeons, poor maintenance, and unsafe conditions were undesirable in the Green. On the other hand, aspired activities included a market, children's play, and suggestions to improve safety and appearance with more planting, lighting, seating, and better maintenance.

However, there were divided views on traffic, with some wanting all traffic removed and others wanting to keep buses. The plan proposed new pathways within the space, the demolition of the public toilets, and the closure of the adjacent part of Ellesmere Road for community market use. It also consisted of repaving the surrounding pavements and renovating the shop shutters.

While the 2006/2007 public consultation demonstrated a proactive role by the local authorities, the process did not pay greater details into the specifics of the local community such as the religious and political use of the green space. For example, the space was highly used by the mosque attendees between the daily prayers, and as a praying site during the Muslims' Eid festival, as well as a gathering point for many marches, such as the march against the war in Iraq and Palestine (see Figure 4.8).



Figure 4.8: Protest gathering point in Ellesmere Green, 2004 (against the Iraq war)

Source: INDYMEDIA, 2004

Moreover, the proposed plan was put on hold, and eventually not implemented for unknown reasons. However, five years later, in 2012, a fresh public consultation phase was launched with a similar proposed plan, and no mention of the previous 2006/2007 consultation outcomes in any official or unofficial reports produced in relation to the newer consultation process. The Northeast Community Assembly in July 2011 led by Sheffield City Council recognised the need to improve Ellesmere Green in their reports but did not refer to the previous phase (Sheffield City Council, 2014a). Similarly, the local newspaper, the Burngreave Messenger, reported on both phases separately without linking the initial phase to the then-newer one. This ambiguity was also echoed during the interviews with the council officers, and community leaders, as all participants were unaware of the 2006/2007 consultation (this will be discussed further in this chapter, Section 4.4.2).

4.4.1.2. The community's memory of Ellesmere Green before the regeneration

As mentioned above, Ellesmere Green (EG) featured landscaped grassy areas complemented by mature trees, pathways, benches, bins, and a public toilet (as shown in Figure 4.6). Despite some positive social interactions among locals, including gatherings of elderly people, the community largely perceived EG as a problematic space. It was known as a space frequently used by people with drug issues for anti-social and often illegal activities. Many participants from both the community and the council recalled that drug use and anti-social behaviour were part of EG's environment at that time.

A local community member, who had lived in the area since the 1990s, described what was happening in EG at that time:

" When I first came, there were public toilets here, and there were always problems and fights, so the authorities cleaned the whole space, and it became one of the nicest places, where the elderly people could sit and chat after prayers, and before they went home."

(P-02, Local resident)

Similarly, a restaurant owner who had been near EG for over 20 years added:

" Before, they [people with drug issues] used to sit there as well, and after they did the work, we were all happy. We used to go out of the Mosque and clean it."

(P-09, Local resident and Restaurant owner)

Interestingly, these issues were not recorded as recurring problems within the Design and Access Statement of the initial public consultation conducted in 2006/2007. However, during the

latter 2012 public consultation, the team confirmed that drug abuse and anti-social behaviour were still prominent issues. A council development officer remarked:

"People will remember, particularly women—some of the Asian women that I got to know, shop owners and others—wouldn't go through it because they used to get some verbal abuse just walking in daylight through Ellesmere Green. We knew about the drug issue; we knew about the loitering issue··· there were needles, anti-social behaviour, and it really needed a major overhaul." **(P-16, Council Development Officer)**

This indicates that drug use and anti-social behaviours were more prominent issues in EG around 2012 compared to earlier years, and designers were aware of these challenges during the community participation process. However, it remains unclear what specific measures were taken from a design perspective to deter drug use in EG, aside from demolishing the toilet block, adding some footpaths, and improving lighting, as outlined in the 2012 proposal plan below (see Figure 4.10). The officer further explained:

"Ellesmere Green was the most creative one, ····· So, the very initial ideas we talked to members, we talked to my colleagues in landscape architecture, very experienced people wanted footpath, the idea of seating areas, clear vision so that you are not going into a dark space, we need to install lighting." **(P-16, Council Development Officer)**

Nonetheless, after the project was completed, the community had a different attitude towards the space and expressed a sense of its ownership, as an open space for the local community's social, cultural, and even religious activities. Below, I explain the process followed to accomplish the project, including the 2012 "public consultation", proposal, and the local community reaction to its completion.

4.4.2. The Ellesmere Green project and the community reaction

4.4.2.1. The 2012 proposal and its public consultation

The official documentation related to the 2012 public consultation appears to be unavailable at the Sheffield City Council level, and it is claimed that the data was deleted from the system during a maintenance exercise (according to communications with some council officers). However, the Burngreave Messenger was reporting regularly on this to inform the local community about the consultation related to the improvement of Ellesmere Green. The process ran during the summer of 2012 between the 2nd and 27th of July and included physical and online

questionnaires for the local residents to express their opinions on the proposed improvement plan of the EG (Haimeed, 2012). The online version was set up on the council website, while the physical questionnaires were available at Sorby House. In addition, two main events were organised for the local community to share their views on the green space, one between the Vestry Hall and the Green space, and the other, in the New Roots café (See Figure 4.9). Both events included activities for community members and their children and had the proposed plan demonstrated for them to comment on (Haimeed, 2012).



Figure 4.9: Ellesmere Green 2012 proposal

Source: Highlighted by the author from Google Earth

This event included activities for community members and their children and had the proposed plan demonstrated for them to comment on. This new plan marked similar features to the 2007 proposal except for keeping the adjacent part of Ellesmere Road open for traffic and parking. This plan proposed removing the then-existing public toilets, installing new metal railings along the edges of the Green, and developing a central gathering area with updated seating and footpath layout, stone walls, and public art. Parking restrictions were also reconsidered, and the bus lay-bys were reconfigured to create a temporary space for events and future markets, rather than the previously permanent enclosed market space (see Figure 4.10).



Figure 4.10: Ellesmere Green 2012 proposal

Source: Sheffield city council

The plan proceeded with minimal changes following some frustrations expressed by the residents who felt that their feedback was overlooked, as the council cited the high maintenance costs and insufficient funds for renovations.

Subsequent discussions led to a compromise that prompted some enhancements, including a public art feature, extra litter bins, bicycle stands, and increased maintenance (Haimeed, 2012). However, most of the additional aspects were neglected in the implementation phase, which was completed in the summer of 2013. Similar to the previous public consultation (2006), the implications of different local religious and cultural aspects presented in the space and its usage were not taken into consideration (at least from the Burngreave messenger reporting on the process). Nonetheless, some aspects may had been regarded according to some official participants during the data collection process, such as the officers' awareness of the Islamic ethos when approaching Muslim community members and their places of worship. This will be shared and discussed further in the subsequent chapters.

After the finalisation of the 2012 plan, its implementation work started in early 2013 and was eventually completed at the end of the same year (Mellor, 2013)(see Figures 4.11& 4.12). Since then, Ellesmere Green has undergone various levels of usage by the local community. At first, the space was well used by the local community and was appreciated by most people in the area,

particularly Al-Rahman mosque attendees, who had used the space in between the daily prayers, and as a praying site for the Eid prayer.



Figure 4.11: Ellesmere Green before 2013

Source: Burngreave green audit, 2004



Figure 4.12 Ellesmere Green Completed in 2013

Source: Bernhards Landscapes (2013)

4.4.2.2. The community reaction post completion

After the Ellesmere Green (EG) project was completed in the summer of 2013, many community members perceived the improvements as a positive and hopeful development for the area and its residents. This perception was supported by responses highlighting the renewed cleanliness of the space and an increased sense of safety, which allowed elderly residents to gather and socialise comfortably. As a result, EG became a hub for community activities, including sitting, conversing, and litter picking, as well as serving as a site for Eid prayers, as evidenced by the quotes below (see Figure 4.13).



Figure 4.13: Ellesmere Green Opening ceremony (Summer 2013)

Source: © Anwar Suliman & Alrahman mosque Facebook page

These activities began soon after the project's completion and fostered social engagement for a few years thereafter. It is generally agreed among participants that this favourable usage of the space diminished before the COVID-19 pandemic. One restaurant owner and resident near EG for over twenty years, estimated that this continued for years.

"…, most of the community members used to sit there, including the elderly people.… the crime rate has risen, at the same time the drug-addicts are now in the green space that we

have always been cleaning. Before, we used to clean it after leaving the Mosque in order to give a good image about our community in the area, despite the council's negligence." ***(P-09, Local resident and Restaurant owner)***

This suggests that once the space was cleaned and maintained, it became a welcoming environment where elderly residents felt comfortable gathering after prayers. In this sense, EG briefly functioned as a safe and accessible multigenerational space within the neighbourhood, supporting informal social interactions among older residents and reinforcing the role of the space as an extension of the nearby mosque's social life.

Another local resident added

"When it was first opened, we were very happy in the first and second years, and we used to pray even the Eid prayer in the green space." ***(P-02, Local resident)***

This positive relationship with the space is further illustrated by the use of Ellesmere Green for communal gatherings and events during the years following the project's completion. Activities such as residents gathering for prayers, demonstrate how the space was actively maintained and animated by the local Muslim community. Thus, Ellesmere Green briefly operated as a locally meaningful social, cultural and religious hub, where everyday encounters and collective practices reinforced a sense of community cohesion. However, participants noted that this pattern of use gradually declined in the following years, as the increasing presence of drug use and anti-social behaviour began to alter how the space was perceived and experienced by residents.

4.4.2.3. Ellesmere Green today

The once community-valued green space has unfortunately deteriorated in recent years, both in terms of usage and appearance. A concerning trend has emerged, with people involved in drug-related activities frequently congregating in the green space, leading to disturbances and disruptions for the local community and businesses. This has resulted in a significant decline in the presence of regular users, particularly elderly, women and children, who have been avoiding most of the central area of Burngreave, including Ellesmere Green (see Figure 4.14).

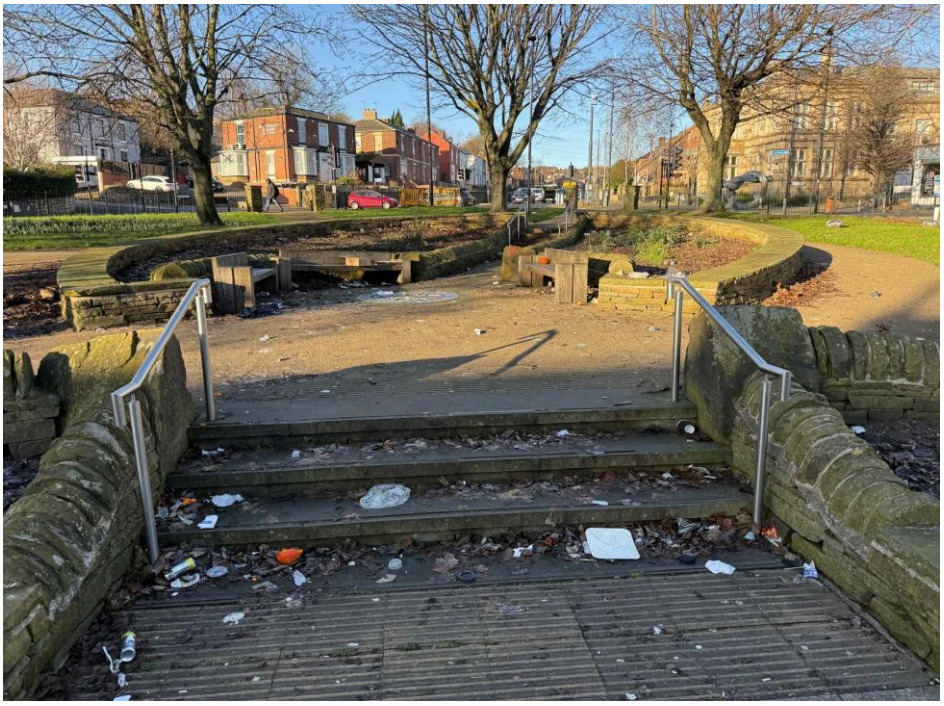


Figure 4.14: Ellesmere Green (2022)

Source: Author

The space returned to its previous state of issues, such as drug use and anti-social behaviours, with just a new layout, which understandably frustrated the local community.

All community members who participated in the research expressed deep concern that the only central green space in the heart of Burngreave has been compromised by drug use and alcoholism. These are some quotes from their responses when asked about the current usage of the EG, and why community members are not using it.

"We were surprised after a short period that a huge number of drug addicts started to sell and use drugs, and these people are not from the area but from other areas. It looks like they have been told to go and sit there. This caused considerable damage… Now, you may only find four drug addicts in there [pointing to the people in the green space], but in the summer, the number is approximately 30 to 40."

(P-09, Local resident and Restaurant owner).

"Because now, for example, the people who congregate [there] they're drug addicts, and alcoholics" *(P-13, Chair of ISRAAC, Somali community).*

Throughout the field work, there were also many occasions where people sitting in the space were observed publicly drinking alcohol, using drugs, or both.

However, the implications and reverberations of the current state of the space on the area and the local community have multiple social, economic, environmental, religious and cultural impact. The following section will discuss this in further details.

4.5. The impact of the project on the local Muslim community

The current condition and use of Ellesmere Green (EG) reveal important insights into the broader outcomes of the regeneration project and its impact on the surrounding community. Urban regeneration initiatives are typically expected to improve not only the physical environment of an area but also its social, economic, and environmental conditions, thereby enhancing the overall quality of life for local residents (As discussed earlier in Chapter Two, Section 2.3.1). Public spaces within such projects are particularly significant because they often function as focal points for social interaction and local commerce. However, when these spaces become associated with neglect, antisocial behaviour, or environmental degradation, their potential to fulfil these roles is significantly undermined. In the case of Ellesmere Green, participants consistently linked the current state of the space to a range of negative consequences affecting everyday life in Burngreave. These impacts extend beyond the physical boundaries of the green space itself, influencing patterns of social interactions, economic activities, environmental quality, and the ability of local residents to use the space for cultural and religious purposes. The following sections therefore examine these impacts across four interrelated social, economic, environmental, and religious–cultural dimensions.

4.5.1. Social impact

The primary impact highlighted by community members relates to the safety and inclusivity of Ellesmere Green (EG), particularly in relation to the visible presence of antisocial behaviours within the space and its surrounding area. Urban public spaces are generally expected to facilitate everyday social interactions and strengthen community bonds (Qi et al., 2024). However, as described by several participants, the growing presence of individuals consuming drugs and alcohol has transformed EG from a space of informal gathering into a place associated with discomfort and avoidance. This transformation has had tangible consequences for the everyday social life of the neighbourhood, especially for groups that previously used the space regularly, such as elderly residents, worshippers from nearby mosques, and women attending occasional community events.

A business owner described how the presence of individuals begging or loitering around the green space directly affects daily interactions with customers and residents.

"The greenspace makes it more stressful. Because you're dealing with people who come to ask people for money [begging]. So, I work in a post office where people come and get money, or you got people to use the [cash] machine for £5 or £10. Sometimes I come out because they're outside, asking people, "do you have a pound for coffee? can you give me some money" sometimes, if I see them, I have to come outside because of the harassment they cause".

(P-11, Community member and Business Owner)

This highlights how behaviours associated with EG spill over into surrounding businesses and services, shaping the way local residents and workers navigate the area. Rather than serving as a meeting point, the space now produces anxiety and requires informal monitoring by nearby shopkeepers and employees. In effect, those who work around the green space feel compelled to remain vigilant in order to protect customers and passersby from harassment.

Similarly, another shopkeeper described how the presence of groups associated with drug use alters everyday movement patterns around the space.

"I do see in recent years, obviously with the druggies coming in. I have noticed when I would be standing near my shop, let's say if they are in a group or just talking or walking through. People would try to avoid them". *(P-11, Community member and Business Owner)*

This avoidance behaviour illustrates how perceptions of safety reshape the way public spaces are used. The green space, which had previously functioned as a place where residents could sit, converse, and observe everyday life, now becomes something that people move around rather than through. This shift is particularly significant in Burngreave, where EG is located at a central junction connecting shops, bus stops, and community facilities.

The local councillor also narrated a story of a women that was brutally attacked by another female drug abuser, which led the victim to be subject to an extensive medical intervention.

"People are getting attacked there. One lady was at the bus stop and got hit there. She needed brain surgery. I personally know her, and I spoke to her daughter, and she said to me that she had the print on her head. She [the person who attacked the victim] was a crackhead".

(P-12, Local councillor)

The significance of such incidents extends beyond the individuals directly involved. Stories of violence circulate within the community and contribute to a broader perception of the space as

unsafe. As a result, residents, particularly vulnerable groups, become increasingly reluctant to spend time in the area altogether.

Likewise, other community members eye witnessing experience with such criminal activities and anti-social behaviours.

"People don't want to come into the community because they're frightened of being robbed. I've seen people get robbed on a daily basis when they come to the cash machine to collect the money. I've seen people go up there and take money out of their hand, and I've seen people frightened and shaking when they're standing behind them and give them a £10 or £20."

(P-10, Community member and Shop owner)

"I myself witnessed two to three times people fighting and stabbing each other with knives, and women are scared now to sit and wait at both bus stops." ***(P-02, Local resident)***

"a source of damaging the youth, and a source of crimes, whether during the day or the night. I personally can't sleep because of the screaming and fighting between them, as I live opposite the green space. Troubles every day, you hear their noise, my child can't sleep, my wife can't sleep, I can't sleep." ***(P-09, Local resident and Restaurant Owner)***

All of these are evidence of extreme anti-social behaviour and the detrimental social impact on local people. These testimonies align with behaviours observed during the field work, where people were dinking and taking drugs publicly, and sometime arguing and shouting while using foul language, which created an unpleasant, uncomfortable, and indeed unsafe environment for community members (see Appendix, page 346 & 347, Field notes A- b, g, j, l.).

These concerns were also reflected in the mapping workshop held with local Muslim women and young adults (this will be further discussed in Section 5.6).

The existing literature also supports the described social impact of the drug use in open public spaces. Studies indicate that drug use in urban green spaces significantly reduces their use for positive community activities (Cohen et al., 2016). When a space is perceived as unsafe, especially for families and children, the community withdraws, resulting in decreased levels of social engagement (Jennings & Bamkole, 2019). The presence of anti-social behaviours has effectively excluded women, children and young girls from entering EG, as they feel uncomfortable and unsafe being in or around the space. This will be further discussed in Chapter five, Section 5.6.

The social impact has expanded further in the area, particularly in open public spaces where people with drug issues tend to gather, causing discomfort among community members. These locations include spaces outside public buildings such as Vestry Hall and Sorby House, as well as Tesco supermarket (see Figures 4.15).

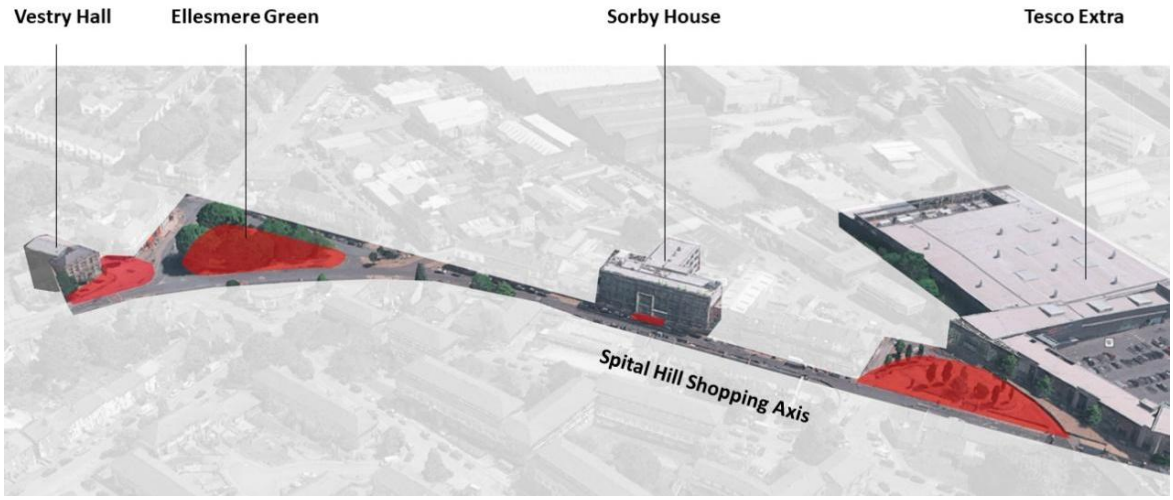


Figure 4.15: Drug use and anti-social behaviours outside key public buildings

Source: Highlighted by the author using Google Earth imaging

During the fieldwork, it was observed that individuals frequently gathered in these spots to drink publicly and harass passersby. For example, a group was seen standing outside Sorby House, holding beer cans, and intermittently approaching members of the public to ask for money (see Field notes). In response to these issues, institutions managing these buildings have introduced measures that have unintentionally affected the wider neighbourhood. For example, entrances have been closed, such as the Spital Hill entrance of Tesco, and access to certain public facilities, including Vestry Hall and Sorby House, has been significantly restricted. While these measures aim to control antisocial behaviour, they also reduce the accessibility of spaces that previously served as points of interaction between residents, services, and community organisations. The rolling effect of these developments has therefore altered not only the function of Ellesmere Green but also the social dynamics of the whole area.

4.5.2. Economic impact

The economic impact of the misuse of EG was also reflected in the decline in the area's vitality. Beyond its social implications, the changing perception of the green space appears to have influenced how Burngreave is viewed by residents, visitors, and potential investors. From a broader economic perspective, the presence of drug use and antisocial behaviour in public spaces can undermine the reputation of a neighbourhood and reduce property values,

particularly when such spaces were originally intended to function as attractive amenities within the urban environment (Lo et al., 2025). Urban green spaces often contribute positively to neighbourhood desirability and surrounding real estate values; however, when these spaces become associated with neglect or insecurity, their contribution to local attractiveness diminishes. In Burngreave, participants frequently connected the changing reputation of EG to wider perceptions of the area as a whole.

This concern was articulated clearly by a community member who reflected on how Burngreave might be perceived by outside investors.

"…but the reputation of the area has a negative influence on what pool of people it is open to. So, for argument's sake, I'm an investor, and I come to Sheffield, and I've got £3 million that I want to invest. I want to build apartment complexes. Where can I build my apartment complexes, Kelham Island or Burngreave? I think Kelham Island because the area's got a bigger, better reputation than Burngreave. So, trying to change the reputation of an area is very hard."

(P-03, Community member).

Although the participant was discussing issues of community cohesion during the conversation, his reflection also highlights how the perceived condition of the neighbourhood influences economic decision-making. The comparison with Kelham Island, an area widely recognised in Sheffield for its regeneration and growing property market, illustrates how reputation plays a significant role in shaping investment patterns. In this sense, the deterioration of EG contributes to a broader narrative about Burngreave that may discourage external investment and reinforce existing socio-economic inequalities. This is in line with existing research suggesting that deteriorating public spaces can negatively influence neighbourhood reputation and investment potential (Lo et al., 2025),

At a more immediate and local scale, the economic impact of EG's current usage is felt directly by nearby businesses. Several shop owners expressed frustration that individuals consuming alcohol and using drugs in the green space discourages customers from entering the area. For businesses located around Spital Hill and the surrounding streets, the green space forms part of the everyday commercial environment, and its decline affects how comfortable residents and visitors feel when shopping in the area.

One shop keeper described how these conditions influence both customer behaviour and the overall atmosphere of the neighbourhood.

"Now, these shops in front of you, I am ready to take you to two or three shops; they will say to you that our business is affected because of the women's fear of entering the area……it has multiple impacts; economically, the business went down, it has been affected in terms of the visitors of Burngreave, and it is a big problem" **(P-08, Community member and Shop keeper)**

This statement highlights an important link between the social environment of EG and the economic performance of nearby businesses. If certain groups such as women and families avoid the area due to safety concerns, the diversity of customers visiting local shops is reduced. This is significant in Burngreave, where many small businesses rely heavily on everyday community interactions and frequent visits from local residents.

As fewer people hang around in the area, businesses lose opportunities for casual customers, spontaneous purchases, and social exchanges that typically support the vitality of local commercial streets.

Addressing these issues is therefore not only important for restoring the social function of EG but also for re-establishing the area's economic vitality and confidence in Burngreave as a place for everyday commerce and future investment.

4.5.3. Environmental impact

Environmental quality also emerged as a significant concern among participants, reflecting broader issues affecting both Ellesmere Green (EG) and its surrounding area. Several interviewees and workshop participants described the space as poorly maintained, pointing to persistent problems such as littering, fly tipping, and the presence of drug-related waste. These environmental issues were not limited to occasional neglect but appeared to form part of the everyday condition of the green space, shaping how residents perceive and interact with it. The accumulation of rubbish and discarded materials contributes to a general sense that the space is no longer cared for, reinforcing its association with disorder and discouraging regular community use.

These perceptions were particularly evident during the mapping workshop conducted with young female participants, where some explicitly linked their avoidance of the green space to its poor environmental condition. One participant simply described the situation as:

"Park looks quite dirty" **(female community member, mapping workshop)**

Another participant elaborated on this observation, noting the visible accumulation of waste and the apparent absence of regular maintenance:

"Lots of rubbish and litter on the floor and what looks like unattained waste collection" ***(female community member, mapping workshop)****.*

Such comments indicate that environmental degradation is not perceived merely as an aesthetic issue but as a factor influencing how comfortable residents feel when entering or remaining in the space. The visible presence of rubbish signals neglect and reinforces the perception that the area is not adequately maintained.

More serious concerns were raised during interviews with local residents and business owners regarding the presence of drug-related paraphernalia. A restaurant owner who lives near EG described how the spread of discarded needles intensifies both environmental and health-related anxieties within the community:

"They took over all the places, and the disaster is the drug needles you find everywhere, right and left. If a kid plays there and falls onto something like that, diseases will enter his body." ***(P-09, Local resident and Restaurant owner)***

This illustrates how environmental problems extend beyond litter and visual degradation to include potential public health risks. Research shows that the improper disposal of drug-related waste can pose serious health risks, particularly to children and pets who may accidentally come into contact with contaminated items (Nyiri et al., 2004). The presence of drug needles not only contributes to the perception that the space has been taken over by harmful activities but also creates fear among parents and families who might otherwise allow children to use the area.

Observations made during the fieldwork further support these accounts. On several occasions, the green space was covered with litter, including bottles, cans, and food packaging (see Field notes & Figure 4.16).



Figure 4.16: Littering in Ellesmere Green

Source: Author, 2022

These materials were often concentrated around seating areas and pathways, suggesting that the space was being used for activities that generate waste but without adequate disposal or maintenance measures (However, some waste bins were recently added to the space). The accumulation of litter, drug paraphernalia, and alcohol containers not only undermines the visual quality of these spaces but can also contribute to longer-term ecological impacts, affecting plant life, soil conditions, and the overall sustainability of the urban landscape (Green et al., 2019). In the case of Ellesmere Green, these environmental issues appear to reinforce existing social concerns, further limiting the potential of the space to function as a healthy and welcoming public space for the local community.

4.5.4. Religious and cultural impact

From a religious and cultural perspective, the current use of Ellesmere Green (EG) for public drug use and alcohol consumption has had a profound impact on the Muslim community in Burngreave. The space, which once served as a focal point for collective activities and shared experiences, has gradually become less suitable for the practices that previously gave it meaning within the local community. Due to its location directly opposite the Al-Rahman Mosque, EG functioned as an extension of everyday social, cultural and religious life (see Figure 4.17).



Figure 4.17: Al-Rahman mosque's location to Ellesmere Green

Source: Highlighted by the author using Google Earth imaging.

As discussed above in Section 4.4.2.2, residents described how the space was regularly used not only for informal gatherings but also for more structured events, including communal prayers and celebrations that brought together different members of the neighbourhood (see Figure 4.18).



Figure 4.18: Al-Rahman mosque's activities in Ellesmere Green

Source: Al-Rahman mosque Facebook page (2016)

According to the Imam of Al-Rahman Mosque, the green space once played an important role in sustaining these communal interactions and fostering a sense of shared responsibility among residents.

"As a Muslim, we prayed the Eid prayer in the site, and hosted different social events, opened celebrations. I remember one day the lord mayor of Sheffield awarded me in the green space. I have good memories with the space. We used to provide meals for residents and people passing by, and organise litter picking activities in the area, and the space in particular. This is our responsibility as residents of this area." ***(P-15, Al-Rahman Mosque Imam)***

The Imam's quote illustrates how the green space became intertwined with religious practice and cultural expression within the neighbourhood. Activities such as prayers, public celebrations, and the distribution of food to residents and passers-by transformed the space into a setting where religious values were expressed through everyday acts of generosity and collective care. The reference to residents organising litter-picking activities also reflects how members of the mosque community felt a moral responsibility toward maintaining the space, and EG functioned as a visible platform where the presence of the local Muslim community could be expressed in the wider public realm.

Such uses of public space align with research suggesting that open urban spaces often become important locations for cultural and religious gatherings, enabling communities to reinforce social ties and express collective identities within shared environments (Peters et al., 2010). In Burngreave, EG allowed the local Muslims to translate practices often associated with the mosque in the wider public perception, into the surrounding urban space, strengthening the visibility of these cultural and religious activities.

However, participants indicated that these practices have significantly declined in recent years due to the increasing presence of drug use and alcohol consumption in the green space. As the environmental condition of EG deteriorated and antisocial behaviour became more visible, the space gradually became unsuitable for activities that require cleanliness and safety. The frustration and disappointment felt by members of the mosque community were evident when one attendee described how the deteriorating condition of the space prevented them from praying Eid.

"We used to pray in that Ellesmere Green in Eid. ···, they had to cancel it, it was so dirty. There's so much glass on there. There are so many needles they couldn't pray that Eid".

(P-09, Local resident and Restaurant Owner)

This highlights how the degradation of the space directly interferes with religious practices that depend on a safe and clean environment. The presence of broken glass and discarded needles not only creates physical hazards but also undermines the appropriateness of the space for prayer. For the Muslim community, the inability to hold Eid prayers in EG represents the loss of an important collective tradition that brings together large numbers of residents in a shared celebration.

Public green spaces are widely recognised as environments that support cultural and communal activities while strengthening social interaction among residents (Zuin, 2010). When such spaces deteriorate or become associated with unsafe behaviour, their ability to support these practices diminishes.

Nonetheless, despite these challenges, EG has occasionally continued to host certain community-related activities. During the fieldwork, the space was observed being used for events such as a community fun day, the temporary installation of a police pop-up station, and a public consultation event organised for a proposed healthcare facility (see Field notes). These occasional uses indicate that the space still retains some potential as a community gathering place, although its ability to support the regular religious and cultural practices described by participants has been significantly diminished. The following section will discuss these uses in further detail.

To conclude, this section suggests that the current state and usage of Ellesmere Green have produced a range of negative consequences that challenge the core objectives typically associated with urban regeneration projects. Instead of functioning as a welcoming and vibrant public space that encourages social interactions, supports local businesses, and enhances environmental quality, EG has increasingly become associated with antisocial behaviour, environmental neglect, and public safety concerns. These conditions have affected the everyday lives of local residents by discouraging the use of the space, reducing economic activities in nearby businesses, and limiting opportunities for community gatherings and cultural expression. Ellesmere Green appears to have fallen short of delivering its intended outcomes across multiple dimensions. Nevertheless, despite the magnitude these challenges, the space has not been entirely abandoned by the community. During the fieldwork, several instances were observed where residents, local organisations, and institutions temporarily reclaimed the space for meaningful activities such as a community event and a consultation (see Field notes). These occasional uses demonstrate that Ellesmere Green still retains a symbolic significance within the neighbourhood and that community actors continue to resist its takeover by drug and

alcohol-related activities. The following section will explore these moments in more detail, highlighting how residents and local organisations have attempted to reintroduce positive and meaningful uses of the space.

4.6. Revitalising attempts of Ellesmere Green

Despite the negative social, economic, environmental, and cultural impacts associated with the current use of Ellesmere Green, some initiatives have been undertaken by local authorities in an attempt to reintroduce positive community-oriented activities into the space. These efforts reflect a recognition among local stakeholders that the green space continues to hold symbolic importance within the neighbourhood. As a central public space located at the heart of Burngreave and directly adjacent to key community places of interest, Ellesmere Green has the potential to function as a platform for civic engagement and local community interactions. Consequently, local authorities have occasionally organised events and consultations within the space in order to reclaim it from its current misuse and encourage community presence. The following examples illustrate how such initiatives have temporarily transformed the space into a site of engagement between residents and local institutions.

4.6.1. Community Fun day 15/09/2021

After many complaints raised by both residents and business owners in Burngreave regarding the current usage of Ellesmere Green, a local councillor organised a Community Fun day (see Figure 4.19).



Figure 4.19: Community Fun Day in Ellesmere Green

Source: The Satr, 20 Sept 2021

In this event, a number of services were invited from local authorities, including police, housing, and health services. The Fun Day held various culturally and religiously activities such as music,

food, Henna[11] (body art), in order to attract and engage community members with local authorities' services (Kessen, 2021). It is unclear from the Star article to what extent the Community Fun Day facilitated local community engagement with various activities and services. However, the presence of local authorities, particularly the police, undoubtedly contributed to a safer environment for residents to participate in the event. These types of initiatives are crucial for fostering stronger connections between local authorities and the community. However, their frequency is even more important. While it is understandable that such a level of commitment from local authorities is challenging, consistent engagement is vital for sustained community support.

4.6.2. Community consultation 16/09/2022

On the afternoon of Friday 16 September 2022, Ellesmere Green was used as a temporary public engagement space by the NHS Community Engagement Team (see Figure 4.20).



Figure 4.20: Public consultation, Ellesmere Green

Source: Author, 2022

[11] According to Bhardwaj (2001), "Henna is a small tree whose leaves are ground into a paste that, when applied to the skin, produces a reddish-brown stain. It is commonly used in cultural and ritual ceremonies, such as weddings, religious holidays, and festivals across South Asia, the Middle East and North Africa" (Journal of Cultural Heritage, 6(3), 237-244))

The event aimed to inform and consult local residents about a proposal to integrate several GP practices into a new health centre planned for the Spital Hill area. The consultation was organised in collaboration with a local councillor and some community members who assisted in explaining the proposal to residents and encouraging participation. The timing and location of the consultation were deliberately chosen to coincide with Friday prayers at nearby mosques, particularly Al-Rahman Mosque, allowing the organisers to reach community members as they left the mosque and passed through the area. Surveys were distributed to residents, who were invited to share their views on the proposal after receiving a brief explanation of the planned consolidation of local medical practices into a single facility.

The event was part of a wider programme led by NHS South Yorkshire to consult communities about the development of new GP health centres in North Sheffield (see Table 4-1 and Figure 4.21), supported by £37 million in government funding. These proposals aimed to improve primary care provision in areas with significant health inequalities, including Burngreave (Figure 4.22), Southey Green, Shiregreen, and Page Hall/Firth Park (NHS South Yorkshire Integrated Care Board, 2022)

New Health Centre location	Relocating GP practices
Foundry 1-Spital Street	• Burngreave Surgery • Sheffield Medical Centre
Foundry 2-Rushby Street	• Page Hall Medical Centre • Upwell Street Surgery
SAPA 1-Wordsworth Avenue	• Firth Park Surgery • Shiregreen Medical Centre
SAPA 2-Wordsworth Avenue	• The Health Care Surgery • Buchanan Road Surgery • Margeston Surgery

Table 4-1: Proposed Medical centres in Sheffield

Source: Sheffield City Council, improved by the author

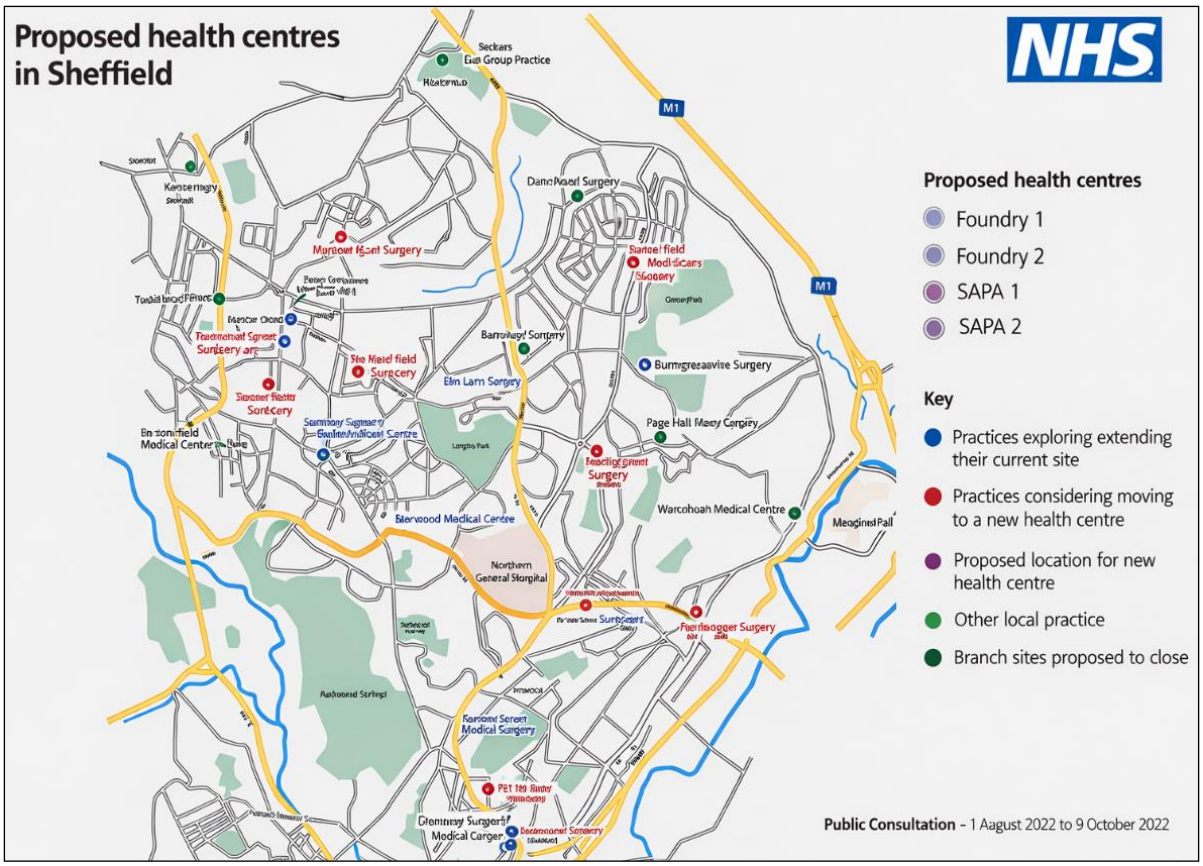


Figure 4.21: Proposed health centres in Sheffield

Source: Sheffield City Council

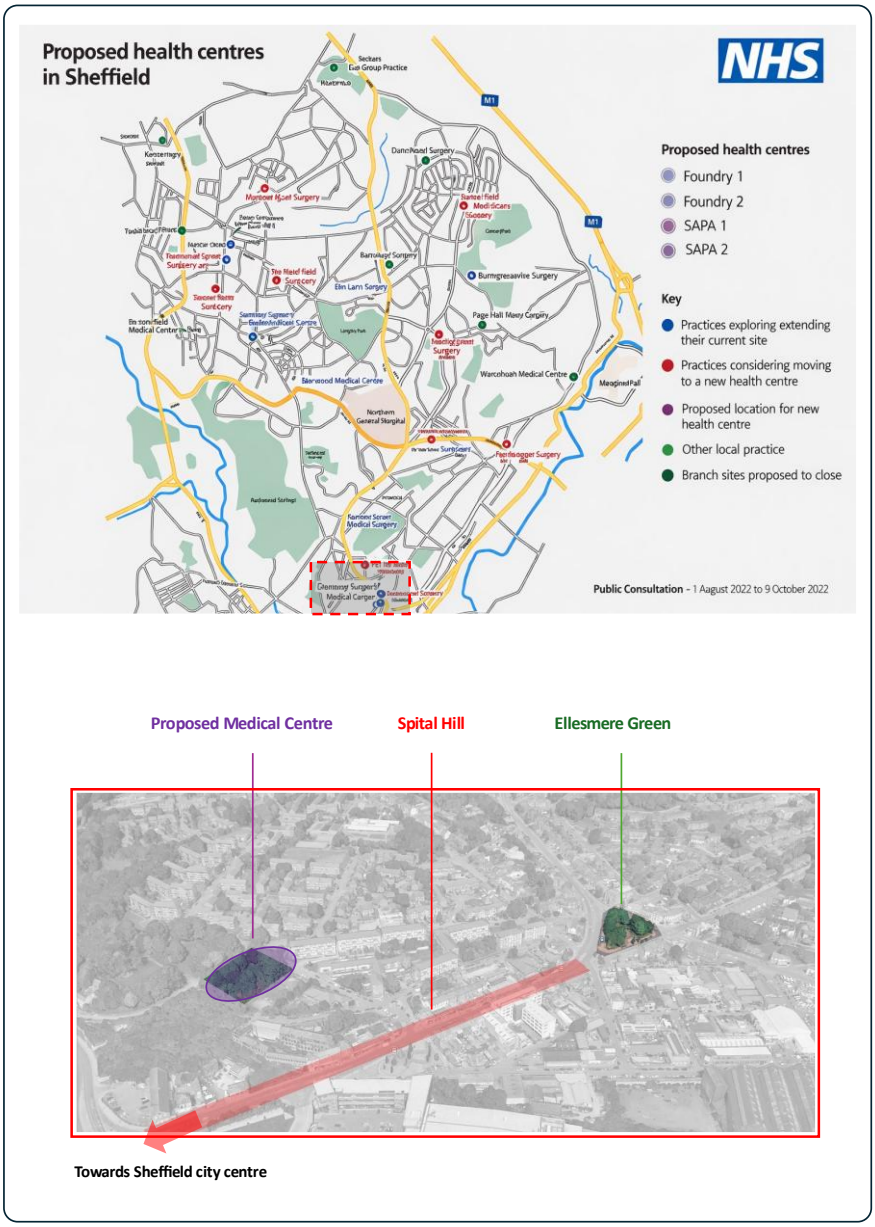


Figure 4.22: Proposed Burngreave medical centre

Source: Sheffield City Council

The significance of this event lies not only in some details of the consultation process itself (which will be further discussed in the next chapters) but also in how Ellesmere Green temporarily regained a meaningful community function. During the event, the space was used as a point of dialogue between local residents and public institutions, creating opportunities for informal conversations about healthcare services and wider community concerns.

These initiatives demonstrate attempts by local authorities and public organisations to counteract the negative reputation and misuse of Ellesmere Green by reintroducing positive activities and encouraging residents to re-engage with the space. Events such as community fun

days and public consultations briefly transformed the green space into a setting for interaction between residents, services, and public institutions, temporarily restoring its function as a community gathering point. However, these initiatives remain relatively limited in scope and largely driven by institutional actors rather than sustained community-led engagement. Their occurrence as isolated events, rather than as part of a continuous programme of activation and management, restricts their ability to significantly alter the everyday experience of the space.

4.7. Conclusion

This chapter has examined the historical development, regeneration process, and contemporary condition of Ellesmere Green within the socio-economic, cultural and religious context of Burngreave. By tracing the evolution of the EG regeneration project from its early proposals in the mid-2000s to its completion in 2013 and the subsequent experiences of local Muslims, the chapter has illustrated the complex relationship between regeneration planning and everyday community use.

Although the regeneration project initially generated a positive response among local residents, particularly members of the Muslim community who used the space for social, cultural, and religious activities, this favourable period proved to be relatively short-lived. Within only a few years, the space began to experience a resurgence of many of the issues that had historically characterised it, including drug use and antisocial behaviour. As demonstrated throughout the chapter, the deterioration of the space has had multiple consequences extending beyond its physical boundaries, affecting social interactions, economic activities, environmental quality, and the ability of residents to use the space.

The trajectory of Ellesmere Green therefore raises concerns about the effectiveness of the regeneration project in achieving its intended outcomes. Despite the physical improvements introduced through the project, the space has gradually reverted to many of the conditions that the regeneration initiative sought to address. Thus, the case of Ellesmere Green illustrates how regeneration interventions that focus primarily on physical redesign may struggle to produce sustainable long-term improvements in the social, economic, cultural, and environmental life of urban spaces.

Nonetheless, the most meaningful short-lived uses of the space following the completion of the project were not the result of planned design intentions or outcomes anticipated during the consultation processes. Rather, many of the positive activities that animated the space, such as gatherings after mosque prayers, Eid prayers, community meals, and voluntary cleaning

initiatives, were initiated by members of the local Muslim community themselves. These practices emerged organically as residents responded to the improved physical environment of the space and sought to integrate it into their everyday social, cultural, and religious life. However, these uses were largely absent from the design proposals and consultation discussions that preceded the project's implementation (as discussed in the subsequent chapters below).

While local authorities have occasionally attempted to reintroduce positive uses of the space through events, these initiatives have remained limited in scope and largely driven by institutional actors.

Thus, the history of the Ellesmere Green regeneration project suggests that the project can be understood as a largely unsuccessful regeneration intervention. Although the physical redesign initially improved the appearance of the space, the long-term community outcomes anticipated by the project were not sustained. The case therefore illustrates the limitations of regeneration strategies that prioritise physical improvements without fully understanding the social practices and community dynamics that shape how public spaces are actually used.

The contrast between the participation processes associated with the EG regeneration project and the everyday community practices that later emerged in the space, suggests that important aspects of local social and cultural life were not sufficiently recognised during the planning stages of the project. The following chapters will explore this in greater depth by examining the perspectives of both the local Muslim community and local authorities regarding participation in the Ellesmere Green project and the factors that shaped the outcomes.

5. CHAPTER Five. Muslims voices on their participation in the Ellesmere Green project

5.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I address the first research question ***"To what extent and in what ways do Muslims participate in local regeneration projects?*** through discussing the experiences of the local Muslim community regarding their participation in the Ellesmere Green (EG) project. During the fieldwork, it became evident that the Muslim community in Burngreave held an unsatisfactory view of their involvement in the project. Despite two rounds of public consultation, as outlined in Chapter Four, Muslims in Burngreave demonstrated little to no participation in the project. Their perceptions towards the Muslims participation in the EG project were primarily shaped by ongoing drug use and related anti-social behaviours in Ellesmere Green, further reinforced by the community's disappointment in the role of local authorities in involving them. The data reveals four key factors contributing to the overwhelming negativity surrounding perceptions of local Muslims participation in the EG regeneration project. Firstly, there was a lack of awareness and engagement tools to effectively invite and involve community members in the planning process. Secondly, distrust towards local authorities created a complex relationship, further discouraging participation. Thirdly, issues with community representativeness obstructed effective communication of their concerns, as when voices are not represented, either formally or informally, local authorities may act on inaccurate premises. Finally, a dominant negative attitude towards participation was fuelled by several challenges, including socio-economic status, language barriers and the feel of irrelevance (see Figure 5.1). I will discuss each factor in turn.

Finally, the chapter pays particular attention to the experiences of women, young people, and elderly residents. Drawing on their perspectives show that Muslim participation and exclusion operated differently across age and gender, shaping how different groups used, avoided, or felt represented in Ellesmere Green

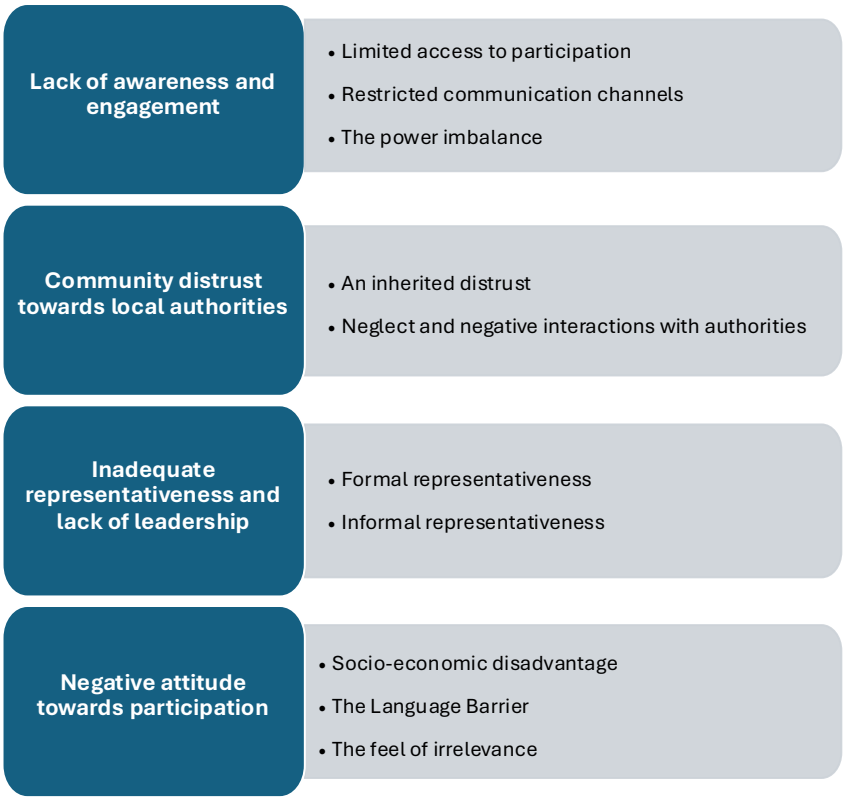


Figure 5.1: Defining Factors of Muslims' participation in the Ellesmere Green Project

Source: Author

5.2. Lack of awareness and engagement

The success of any regeneration project seeking genuine community participation in its planning requires those conducting the design to engage as many community members as possible. To achieve this, local authorities collaborate with various local community organisations and employ a range of tools to invite and engage residents in the process. However, the Muslim community in Burngreave has demonstrated a lack of awareness of public consultations and a sense of detachment from engaging with the local council in the EG project or any other regeneration projects. Analysis of the data reveals three key factors contributing to this perception. The tools used to attract and engage Muslim community members have proven ineffective, leaving them unaware of developments in their neighbourhood. The communication channels offered by the council are limited, and restricted for a meaningful interaction between the council and the local Muslim community. Finally, the imbalanced power created by the council's task-oriented approach (box ticking exercise) to engage local businesses, and the local Muslim community.

5.2.1. Limited access to Participation

Many regeneration project consultations are designed with the assumption that community members have an easy access to participate in design process through certain tools, such as online platforms, community meetings, and printed materials (Lawson et al., 2022).

While these tools may be effective in communities where members are active and aware of the process, they may not resonate with other communities that are less responsive to such engagement approaches. As noted in Chapter Four (Section 4.4.2.1), the EG regeneration team engaged with the local community in Burngreave in 2012, prior to implementing their design, which shaped the current state of EG. Sheffield city council utilised various tools in the process, including leaflets, public meetings in enclosed spaces, and face-to-face interactions with local businesses in the Ellesmere Green area. However, several participants reported a lack of awareness regarding the EG project and other regeneration initiatives. They expressed that they were neither invited to share their views nor informed about the consultations taking place. For example, the Chair of the ISRAAC Somali Community Centre, an active member of the Muslim community in Burngreave, remarked:

"No, I wasn't aware of the consultation··· and no one [in my entourage was invited]"

(P-13, Chair of ISRAAC).

Similarly, another shop keeper whose shop is opposite Ellesmere Green expressed unawareness of the consultation when asked about their involvement in the project.

"I haven't heard of any project that they invited me personally, me or the people that I know, but I can't speak for everyone." (P-08, Community member and Shop keeper).

These responses highlight the limited effectiveness of the tools used by the council to raise awareness of the EG project in order to involve the local community in it. As, if these key stakeholders were not informed, it is unlikely that other community members were made aware.

This lack of awareness features the importance of critically evaluating the methods used to engage communities in regeneration projects. While the tools employed by the council (leaflets, public meetings, and direct interactions with local businesses) might be standard in many consultations, they appear to have fallen short in reaching a diverse audience, particularly within Burngreave's Muslim community. So, the assumption that community members have equal access to these tools is not always accurate. Research by Blakeley and Evans (2009) emphasises that traditional participation methods often fail to account for the varying socio-economic and

cultural contexts within urban communities (Blakeley & Evans, 2009). For instance, many residents may not have the time, resources, or confidence to attend public meetings or engage with printed materials. Thus, diversifying participation methods beyond leaflets and meeting to more interactive workshops held in an informal setting, including well-used community centres such as Verdon centre in Burngreave, and social spaces, including cafés, restaurants and mosques in the area.

More creative, proactive, and culturally tailored approaches are also required to attract a wider range of members to the process. For example, street performances, and pop-up events in public areas have proven effective in attracting the attention of minorities, especially young members. In a regeneration project in a culturally diverse neighbourhood in Birmingham, organisers used pop-up sessions in high-traffic local parks (Allies and Morrison Urban Practitioners, 2011). These events were deliberately organised near community hubs such as markets and transportation hubs to maximise visibility and draw attention to the regeneration project (Allies and Morrison Urban Practitioners, 2011). A Rap music workshops was also employed as a creative method to invite children and young people in discussions about neighbourhood regeneration in Cork City in the South of Ireland (Byrne et al., 2020).

Culturally themed public booths and exhibitions, such as those at community festivals and fun days, can effectively raise local awareness and encourage involvement in regeneration projects (Sarkissian et al., 2010).

Also, while social media was not as prominent in the early 2010s (the time of the EG project), platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok now play a significant role in attracting minority communities. In Los Angeles, public health initiatives targeting predominantly Hispanic communities leveraged social media platforms with culturally tailored content, using short videos featuring influential local figures and community elders to explain the projects' potential benefits (R. Humphrey et al., 2024).

Thus, providing an appropriate access for the Muslim community in Burngreave to participate in regeneration projects, requires creative, culturally tailored approaches like pop-up events, and leveraging social media platforms with culturally relevant content.

Nevertheless, the timing of the suggested tools, including the choice of day and time, is crucial in amplifying the call for community participation. As noted in Chapter Four, Section 4.6.2, the NHS representative deliberately scheduled a public consultation for a Friday afternoon at Ellesmere Green to coincide with Friday prayers, aiming to engage as many community members as possible as they are leaving local mosques (see Figure 5.2).



Figure 5.2: Public Consultation, Ellesmere Green, 2022

Source: Author

This approach could also be effective if scheduled on an Eid day (Fitr or Al-Adha), as a high proportion of Muslims, including men, women, and children, attend Eid prayers, creating significant potential for community engagement.

By genuinely prioritising inclusive practices, through a combination of culturally appropriate tools and a specific timing, it can significantly contribute to encouraging the Muslim community in Burngreave to be better aware and actively involved in initiatives such as the EG project.

5.2.2. Restricted communication channels

Effective communication between community members and local authorities is essential for fostering meaningful engagement beyond formal representation through facilitating the reach of the wider local community (Cornwall, 2008). Any restricted access to these communication channels can exacerbate lack of awareness amongst community members.

In Burngreave, for instance, a council business representative established a WhatsApp group intended to facilitate communication between the council and local businesses. However, their participation was limited, as described by a local business owner:

> *"We can't comment or send messages unless you are the admin··· the messages are their messages."* ***(P-10, Community member and Shop Owner)***

This limited access to communication was also evident when once, I rang the intercom door to request access and was told that it works on appointment base (see Field notes), and second, during a Local Area Committee public meeting held at Vestry Hall in Burngreave on 19 Sept 2023, 17:00–19:00. Community members, including myself, were left waiting outside a locked door, ringing the intercom for approximately five minutes before being granted entry. Upon entry, we were required to present proof of registration before being allowed access to the main hall (see Field notes, see Figure 5.3).



Figure 5.3: Vestry Hall entrance, Burngreave, 2023

Source: Author

This controlled accessibility measures appear to undermine the primary objective of these forums, which ought to seek and promote dialogue, and foster open conversations between local authorities and community members. By enforcing these restrictive procedures, the very purpose of these channels risk being compromised, potentially discouraging the participation of those whom they are intended to engage.

Coleman & Firmstone (2014) notes that when local authorities restrict communication, they effectively prioritise control over engagement, perpetuating a sense of disenfranchisement (Coleman & Firmstone, 2014). This approach may appear efficient to authorities from a safety measure standpoint, as the councillor explained

"I've seen a lot of people getting in, but it really depends on the character. This place is public [Verdon community centre]. I have to be careful because if I get six-seven crackheads coming in and want to use the toilet. That's why we have a security door, but I've always had access because they can see that I'm not a threat". ***(P-12, Local Councillor)***

Nonetheless, it reinforces community mistrust, as it prevents open exchange and minimises community agency.

Thus, local authorities must adopt more inclusive and transparent communication channels, such as incorporating measures to enhance inclusivity in public meetings by ensuring that venues are open, welcoming, and easily accessible without complex entry requirements. Also, having multiple different communication channels so there are a variety of ways for community members to contribute their perspectives. Local authorities must view communication not as a top-down process but as a collaborative effort.

Another aspect that overlaps with other factors affecting Muslims communications in the participation process is the language barrier. As it contributes to a cycle of communication challenges that prevent effective awareness and engagement within the Muslim community in Burngreave. This was highlighted by the Imam of Al-Rahman Mosque.

"Another thing, as a message, Muslims need the interpretation side. It is very important. One of the barriers is language. So, it would be appreciated if they provide an interpreter or something, even in meeting with us as Muslims, because they [Muslims] have a strong presence in the area, and most of the shops surrounding the green space are Muslims, residents are Muslims. ***(P-15, Al-Rahman Mosque Imam)***

On the other hand, local authorities have made efforts to translate some printed participation materials, such as leaflets, as addressed by the council development officer when asked about the adaptation made for the local community.

"We did translate some of the communications into different languages. So, we did do that, and if people wanted the question to be put in different languages, they could also do that. ⋯. For example, translated the adverts into particular languages when we brought them."

(P-16, Council Development officer)

Using translated material can accommodate some community members, but, in face-to-face interactions, this approach is often less effective, as described by the officer:

"There was some woman who ran some businesses on Spital Hill that I remember, and she couldn't speak very good English. She will rely on a young person to translate for her. That was always difficult because it was such a shame that I couldn't communicate, and she needed to use somebody else to translate what she wanted to say. But we got there" ***(P-16, Council Development officer)***

Thus, it is useful for the council and the community to break through such barriers through interpreters or bilingual staff for an effective engagement with the local community. For example, during the public consultation held by the NHS, the councillor interpreted the aims of the project into Arabic and Somali for several community members passing by, actively seeking their opinions. This example highlights the importance of language adjustments in facilitating communication between the community and the council, particularly given that only around 50% of Burngreave's population speaks English at home (ONS, 2023). Although it may not be feasible to provide interpreters or council staff fluent in all the languages spoken in the area, prioritising support for the most widely spoken languages, other than English, such as Arabic and Somali, is essential to fostering inclusivity and effective participation. Furthermore, there are other digital ways to reach people through social media with different languages and subtitles - e.g. short videos/podcasts/Tiktok - that people can watch or listen to, as using these additional methods helps to make research more inclusive.

5.2.3. The power imbalance between the council and the community

Although most of the research participants, asserted their unawareness of the project taking place, some business owners confirmed that there was a consultation process, despite not being part of it. A shop owner asserted when asked about whether he was invited to participate in the project:

"Yeah, some people, but I wasn't there; I was abroad. Some people went. Everybody put their issues, and everybody who's put their story away or put their comments got nothing back " ***(P-10, Community member and Shop owner)***

Another grocery shop keeper affirmed that a consultation took place but was not present at the time.

"No, I was away, but they [the authorities] have spoken to my uncle and few people" ***(P-08, Community member and Shop Keeper)***.

The council's use of face-to-face engagement to involve local businesses appears to be an effective approach for ensuring direct participation in the process. Yet, drawing from the community members' perception of their involvement, some may argue that the council's efforts were primarily directed towards engaging with local businesses. Findings in the literature demonstrate that urban planning processes often prioritise stakeholders with perceived immediate economic impact, such as businesses, over residential community groups (Ročak & Keinemans, 2023; Stapper & Duyvendak, 2020; Thorning et al., 2019). This is not the case with the EG project, as the data indicates that the influence of businesses in the design process is neither evident nor significant. As there was a sense of disappointment towards the power imbalance in their engagement. Local business owners below described their interactions with council officers during a consultation process that was part of separate regeneration efforts to improve the area's appearance.

"They asked me, how would you like to improve the front of your business? I remember them coming up to the front shop and giving us colour schemes. Do you want red?"

(P-11, Community member and Business owner)

"They came to ask the community about what they needed, and they said, "we'll put shutters on your shops, and you can leave the lights on at night". But I didn't let them put any shutters in my shop. Because I've got Fatiha [The first chapter of the Quran], I have a prayer on the front window. So, I'm the only shop around here that never went for the grant for the shutters. They said we'd got some money, and it was £5000. I never got a penny."

(P-10, Community member and Shop owner)

Community participation in regeneration projects is often shaped by existing power imbalances, which frequently leads to top-down processes driven by local authorities, rather than empowerment of local communities (O'Sullivan et al., 2024).

These perceptions from local businesses exceed this notion, of power being with local authorities, to highlight the task-oriented approach adopted by the council, which emphasises control over local businesses and, by extension, the community, rather than fostering meaningful engagement and a commitment to addressing their needs. This includes considerations of religious and cultural significance, such as the case of a shop owner who rejected a new shutter because the old one featured Quranic verse (see Figure 5.4).



Figure 5.4: Local Business shutter with Qur'anic verses, Burngreave, 2022

Source: Author

The issue is not merely that such a request could have been easily accommodated by, for instance, removing the panel with the verses and attaching it to the new shutter, but also the assumption that new shutters would enhance the area's appearance, even though they are visible only when the shops are closed. This approach requires reconsideration, calling for a shift towards a more balanced distribution of power and prioritising proposals that reflect the needs and concerns of local business, and residents rather than superficial assessments.

Overall, there are significant challenges that prevented a genuine approach to maximise the community awareness, and involvement in the EG project. These are mainly related to the approach and tools used by the local council to engage the local community, vis-à-vis the nature of the local community in Burngreave. Despite efforts by local authorities to engage residents through consultations, the methods employed have often fallen short of effectively reaching its potential. The data revealed critical barriers, including limited awareness, inadequate communication channels, language barriers, and power imbalances between the council and the community.

To address these shortcomings, local authorities must adopt more inclusive, creative, and culturally tailored approaches to community participation. Strategies such as holding participation sessions in informal community settings (cafes and restaurants), employing interpretation tactics for widely spoken languages, and leveraging culturally relevant tools like pop-up events or social media campaigns. Moreover, fostering a more balanced distribution of power requires prioritising proposals that stem from the needs and concerns of the community over superficial or economically driven assessments.

5.3. Community distrust towards local authorities

Trust is fundamental for nurturing and maintaining relationships, enabling civic engagement, promoting equitable access to resources, and fostering cooperation between local authorities and community members (Lansing et al., 2023). On the other hand, the lack of trust undermines the efficiency of the community participation in urban regenerations led by local authorities such as local councils in Britain (Aitken, 2012). In Burngreave, distrust toward local authorities, particularly the council and the police, was one of the prominent matters that were repeatedly expressed by community members and leaders in Burngreave. This was asserted by many participants when expressing their views on the local authorities' relationship with the local Muslim community.

"…., we don't have confidence in the system…… The truth of the community, there's no trust in the government" ***(P-02, Local resident, Yameni background)***

This illustrates a deep level of scepticism toward governmental institutions. The participant's reference to a lack of "*confidence in the system*" suggests that distrust is not limited to a specific authority but extends to broader governance structures. Such sentiments can influence how community members perceive initiatives led by public institutions, including regeneration projects, potentially discouraging them from engaging in processes that are perceived as controlled and dominated by authorities.

A similar concern was expressed by the deputy chair of ISRAAC, who attributed the deteriorating relationship between the local council and the community to a lack of confidence in the ability of authorities to produce meaningful change.

"……the reason being, this is my personal view, I could be totally wrong, is that people do not have confidence that things will be different" ***(P-14, Deputy chair of ISRAAC)***

This highlights another dimension of distrust, the belief that participation with authorities may not lead to tangible outcomes. When community members perceive that their participation is unlikely to influence decisions or produce visible improvements, participation can be seen as ineffective or just symbolic. Such perceptions can discourage residents from investing time and effort in participation processes, particularly when previous experiences have reinforced the belief that authorities are unlikely to respond to community concerns.

The significance of trust in shaping participation was also highlighted by the NHS community engagement manager, who emphasised that distrust toward large public institutions often presents a major barrier when attempting to work with local communities.

NHS engagement manager pointed to the community's lack of trust in public institutions when asked about the challenges that they face when engaging communities, emphasising that this distrust lies at the heart of the community's perception.

"I think trust is a big one. I think there's many factors in that. I think there's generally a distrust in large organisations in general, and that kind of statutory organisations like the council and the NHS, I think, quite often, there is a sort of trust deficit for many reasons. So that is a big one." ***(P-20, NHS Community engagement manager)***

This suggests that the issue extends beyond individual organisations and reflects a broader perception of institutions. The reference to a "trust deficit" indicates that distrust is often shaped by multiple overlapping experiences and factors, making it a complex issue that cannot be addressed through isolated engagement activities alone.

These statements reflect a broader pattern identified in the literature, where marginalised communities often feel a lack of trust in local government, eg. (Blakeley & Evans, 2009; Dargan, 2009; Taylor, 2007).

In the case of Burngreave, this distrust appears to be influenced by several interconnected factors, including the community members' migration backgrounds, their previous experiences with authorities in different contexts, and perceptions of neglect or limited responsiveness from local institutions. These elements were frequently mentioned by participants during the research and are also supported by the existing literature on community participation and urban regenerations discussed in the literature Chapter.

5.3.1. An inherited distrust

In explaining the reasons behind the distrust between the community and local authorities, one community member backed by the SYP (South Yorkshire Police) inspector connected this sentiment to the experiences of non-UK-born individuals with government institutions in their countries of origin. They stated,

"So as Muslims, we sometimes have no trust in the authorities. Why is that? That's because, in the countries that we come from, there's no trust in the police."

(P-03, Community member, Tunisian background)

This reflects how mistrust toward institutions can be rooted in earlier experiences of governance and policing in migrants' home countries. For individuals coming from contexts where state institutions are perceived as unaccountable, the idea of engaging with authorities may already be framed by scepticism. As a result, distrust is not necessarily produced by current local experiences alone but may instead be inherited through previous social and political encounters with the state.

A similar observation was made by a SYP inspector, who acknowledged how the diverse migration histories of Burngreave residents may shape their perceptions of public authorities:

"If you look at the amount of cultures in Burngreave, those guys that have come into Burngreave from another country, what was their relationship like with the police? Would they trust us? Would they have the same relationship with us?"

(P-19, SY Police inspector)

The inspector's reflection highlights the importance of understanding the historical and cultural contexts from which residents arrive. In neighbourhoods such as Burngreave, where many residents originate from countries with different political and institutional systems, expectations of authorities may differ significantly from those assumed within British governance structures. This perspective recognises that trust in institutions cannot be taken for granted and may require time and effort to develop.

Research by Menjívar & Bejarano (2004) echoed this and suggests that immigrants from authoritarian regimes often carry a legacy of scepticism toward any form of governmental authority, and these experiences can deeply affect how immigrants engage with public institutions in host countries (Menjívar & Bejarano, 2004). Although, these quotes are both about the police rather than local government, people may not distinguish between them when deciding who can be trusted, and the mistrust extends to the local authority as another agent of the state. In Burngreave, approximately 50% of the population consists of individuals born abroad, with many from African and Middle Eastern countries (ONS, 2023). Specifically, a substantial number of these residents arrived in the UK between the ages of 16 and 60 years old, indicating that they spent a significant portion of their lives in their countries of origin. Many of these non-UK-born members come from regions where community participation may not be

commonly facilitated by local authorities, a factor that can shape their expectations in their new environment.

Therefore, acknowledging and addressing the community's perceptions of local authorities, shaped by their experiences in their countries of origin, can foster a more understanding attitude and encourage greater participation in proposals initiated by the authorities, such as urban regeneration projects.

Local authorities can collaborate with trusted community leaders or organisations to bridge the gap between institutions and immigrant communities. Engaging intermediaries familiar with the cultural and social dynamics of the community can significantly improve participation by reducing fears and fostering dialogue (Sandercock & Lyssiotis, 2003). The experience of the NHS community engagement manager during the public consultation in EG serves as an example of how a locally trusted member of the community can encourage participation.

"I've been there for an hour, when I kind of first arrived, and very few people came near people, you could kind of see people really walking around to kind of avoid having a conversation. Whereas actually, when, as soon as I had someone that was a sort of recognised member of the community with me, that actually people, people let down their guard and, and had a level of trust to kind of come over and, and, and have that conversation"

(P-20, NHS engagement manager)

This demonstrates how the presence of a recognised community member can significantly alter the dynamics of engagement between residents and institutional actors. The NHS engagement manager described how residents initially avoided interacting with officials, which may reflect the inherited scepticism discussed earlier. However, once a familiar local figure joined the particiption activity, residents appeared more willing to approach and participate in the conversation.

5.3.2. Neglect and negative interactions with authorities

The neglect and negative past interactions with local authorities is another factor that can significantly erode community trust, leading to disengagement and scepticism toward future initiatives. When communities feel their concerns are dismissed or inadequately addressed, it fosters a sense of alienation. Many community members in Burngreave expressed dissatisfaction with their experiences with local authorities, particularly the council and the

police. For example, one community member shared their experience, as part of explaining what is needed in the area.

"We need the council support…. I have been complaining about the way they take care of the area. We have many children who play in the street…Nottingham Street. They damaged all the grass, and the grass is not even. Sometimes they damage cars… The council called me back, and I told them everything. Imagine if you miss your payment for one month, they will take your house. So, I said 'I need to call', so I called and sometimes I wait over an hour, sometimes they say they are very busy, and people are not complaining… Probably the main thing is that they [Muslims] know that they [local authorities] don't care."

(P-04, Active member of the Kurdish Community)

This shows how everyday interactions with local authorities can shape perceptions of trust. The participant's frustration with long waiting times and difficulties contacting the council suggests that barriers may discourage residents from reporting issues or engaging with authorities. By comparing the strict enforcement of financial obligations with the perceived lack of response to community concerns, the participant interprets this imbalance as evidence that authorities "*don't care*." Whether or not this reflects the intentions of local authorities, such perceptions can significantly contribute to scepticism and distrust among residents and discourage participation in initiatives led by local authorities.

Similarly, in explaining the reasons behind such perception, the NHS engagement manager and the SYP inspector also believed that this perceived distrust is influenced by the previous interactions of communities with local authorities.

"I think some of that [distrust] is based on the fact that people feel that they've not been heard before. So, they might have been involved in something, and then they didn't really hear back about it, or something different happened to what they kind of wanted. So that's, that's always a big challenge." *(P-20, NHS engagement manager)*

This indicates that distrust may emerge when community members feel that their participation does not translate into meaningful outcomes. The manager highlights how engagement processes that fail to provide feedback or produce visible results can create a perception that authorities are not responsive to community input. Over time, such experiences may reinforce scepticism toward future initiatives led by local institutions.

A similar explanation was provided by the SYP inspector, who connected the lack of confidence in authorities to earlier experiences with public services.

"I think that is because people are not confident in us. People might have rung us before, had a poor service, and might not call us again". (P-19, SY Police inspector)

This emphasises how individual encounters with institutions can shape broader perceptions of trustworthiness. Negative experiences with service provision, even if isolated, may influence how community members interpret subsequent interactions with authorities. When residents perceive that their concerns are not addressed effectively, they may become reluctant to engage again, reinforcing cycles of disengagement and mistrust.

Such perceptions of neglect are not uncommon among minority communities in the UK. Research has shown that British Muslim communities often report feelings of marginalisation, which can contribute to scepticism toward public institutions. Muslims may disengage from institutions due to racism and Islamophobia, particularly when there is an expectation that they will be treated unfairly or discriminated against because they are Muslims (Isani, 2018). These broader social dynamics can influence how Muslim communities interpret the actions of local authorities and shape their willingness to participate.

The factors contributing to such perceptions, including community members' backgrounds and their experience with institutions are widely documented in research examining patterns of distrust among immigrant and minority communities. For instance, Christopher et al (2008) suggest that the inclusion of marginalised communities is often complicated by the need for sustained trust-building engagement, particularly in contexts where communities have historically experienced neglect or exclusion (Christopher et al., 2008). Similarly, research by the Urban Institute highlights that undocumented and mixed-status communities are frequently described as "*hard-to-reach*" due to economic and social barriers, including a lack of trust in authorities where there is a history of systemic neglect or exclusionary policies (Salas et al., 2022). This perception is particularly pronounced in areas with significant Muslim populations, where past experiences of biased or inadequate service provision can intensify feelings of being underserved by local authorities (Ansari, 2002).

Therefore, the distrust between Burngreave's Muslim community and local authorities appears to stem from a combination of interconnected factors, including the migration backgrounds of many residents and their past experiences with institutional interactions. These experiences along with expectations of being treated in an unfair or discriminatory way, can foster a sense of

neglect, shaping how community members perceive participation initiatives led by local authorities.

Addressing these perceptions requires a deliberate effort from local institutions to build more meaningful relationships with the community. Genuine participation involves acknowledging community concerns, responding transparently to feedback, and working collaboratively with residents to improve service provision.

Regular engagement, for example, involves moving beyond one-time consultations and instead establishing ongoing relationships with community members through dedicated liaison officers who can maintain continuous dialogue (Dargan, 2009). This also includes ensuring that local authority staff are culturally aware and reflective of the diversity of the communities they serve (Andrews et al., 2005).

Both the council and the police can play a proactive role in facilitating such engagement, ensuring that responsibility for initiating collaboration does not fall solely on community members. An example of such an initiative was provided by the collaboration between Reach Up Youth and Ecclesfield police station, which organised a football match between local teenagers and police officers. This activity created a neutral and informal environment where young people and officers could interact, helping to challenge stereotypes and encourage dialogue.

"When we played football with the big boys. After the game, they wanted to talk about Stop and Search. They wanted to know what their rights were. Let's have that conversation. It was about the Power of stopping a car comes from. Not from stop and search control. It's about whether you have to take the driver's licence and insurance on it. But then when having conversation if you smelled cannabis, the power starts to get activated or can be activated. Just having that, I think their understanding of English law comes from American films. That means to me, I think that's probably how they understand English law." **(P-19, SY Police inspector)**

Such initiatives have the potential to alleviate tensions and positively reshape pre-existing perceptions, fostering a more open and collaborative relationship between the community and local authorities. As acknowledging and rectifying past negativity experienced by the local Muslim community in service provision can rebuild trust. Similarly, for the local council, organising regular pop-up events that are culturally tailored, as mentioned previously in Section 5.2, can significantly enhance the trust-building process between the community and the council. For further trust-building strategies, Lansing et al (2023) research concluded numerous steps that could be taken in order to build trust between community members and local

authorities, in urban regeneration initiatives. This included Building relationships and Engagement, embodying core values of trustworthiness, and sharing decision-making, championing autonomy, and addressing barriers to trust (see Figure 5.5) (Lansing et al., 2023).

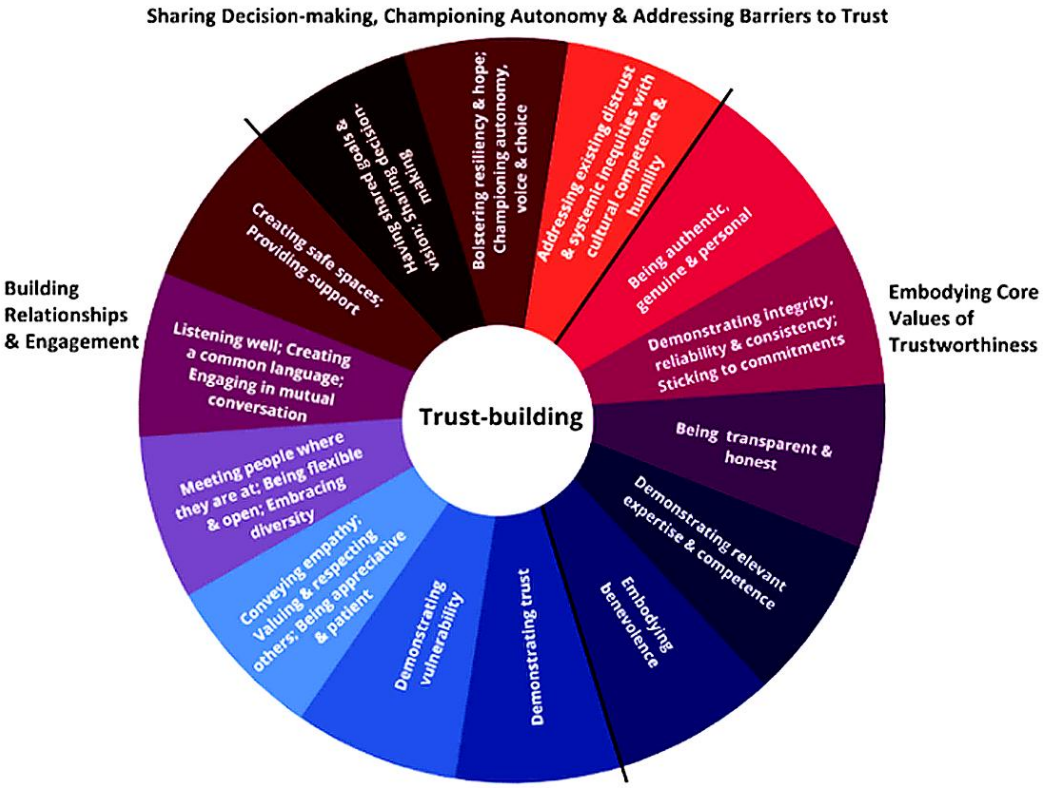


Figure 5.5: Key dimensions of trust-building in community participation

Source: Lansing, 2023

5.4. Inadequate representativeness and lack of leadership

While representativeness and leadership are closely related concepts, they often operate differently and may even conflict in practice. Representatives are typically associated with democratic processes that prioritise deliberation and procedural legitimacy, sometimes at the expense of rapid action (Papadopoulos & Warin, 2007). Leaders, on the other hand, may prioritise effectiveness and efficiency in decision-making, even if this reduces inclusivity (Yukl, 2013). In the context of the Muslim community in Burngreave, however, these concepts often appear to be used interchangeably, as both are expected to convey and advocate for the concerns and needs of the local community.

As discussed in the literature, in many regeneration projects, local authorities tend to rely heavily on formal structures of representation, such as elected councillors and recognised community organisations, when seeking to engage with residents (see Section 2.5.2).

According to the council development officer, Sheffield City Council adopted this approach during the Ellesmere Green (EG) regeneration project by contacting established organisations and recognised representatives as the primary channels of engagement.

"The housing department, the Tenants and Residents Association [TARA], through all the community groups that we knew in the area, including mental health groups, were contacted…. we talked to the Mosque and talked to the councillors; two of the three local councillors were Muslims, and they also told us whatever they thought was needed…. We contacted any representative association, and there were a couple of organisations that we also contacted representatives that are independent. You look for the key groups, not every single person…. All the community organisations that represented anybody in the area were invited…The Burngreave Messenger, all the businesses around the area, housing services, the Mosque."

(P-16, Council Development officer)

This approach illustrates a common institutional practice in community participation, where authorities rely on identifiable representatives and organised groups as proxies for broader community voices. While such mechanisms can facilitate communication with large and diverse populations, they may also risk overlooking informal networks and everyday community dynamics that are not captured through formal organisational structures. As a result, participation processes may appear inclusive while still failing to reflect the diversity of perspectives within the community.

Despite the council's efforts to involve various representatives and organisations, many participants expressed dissatisfaction with how the community was represented in regeneration initiatives such as the EG project. This dissatisfaction emerged at both formal levels, such as elected councillors, and informal levels, including community leaders such as Imams.

5.4.1. Formal representativeness

In the context of British communities in general, formal representativeness refers to the structured system through which elected officials, such as local councillors, act on behalf of their constituents to ensure that community interests are considered in decision-making processes. Councillors act as a bridge between the community and the council, keeping

residents informed about issues that affect them and advocating on their behalf (Local Government Association, 2025).

They play a crucial role in the success of regeneration initiatives. They are integral to building social capital and fostering community engagement, acting as vital links between local authorities and the people they serve (Purdue, 2001).

However, many participants expressed dissatisfaction with the extent to which local councillors actively engaged with the community outside of electoral periods. Several respondents suggested that interactions between councillors and residents often became limited once elections had passed.

"In several electoral campaign many parties used to come to the mosque. Give the time, give the leaflets and to explain what the party is going to do for the area. But once they're elected, you won't see that person again in many, many, many, many cases that I experienced myself, the usual people, very nice people, they talk to you, they consider you, they want to listen to you. They want you to listen to them. They explain exactly the problem of the community. And then once they win the election, even if they're not elected, then you will not see them again"

(P-07, Local resident, Algerian background)

"We only see the councillors when there is an election. We see them and then done until the next elections" **(P-06, Community member, Tunisian background).**

"I don't see them [councillors]. The new one is good [the councillor participating in this research]. But apart from her, I don't see the other two. I don't see them, they don't represent the area, and they don't get involved with the community…. I would love to see these councillors held accountable…. They [councillors] don't represent the area, and they don't get involved with the community" **(P-11, Community member and Business owner).**

"For quite a long time, there were quite a few councillors, and I don't think there was anyone of them that was representing the community" **(P-05, Active member of the Yameni Community)**

These views highlight a perceived gap between formal representation and everyday engagement with the community. When councillors are seen as absent from ongoing community life, their ability to act as effective intermediaries between residents and policymakers may be weakened.

Such perceptions can undermine trust in formal structures of representation and limit the effectiveness of participation mechanisms within regeneration initiatives.

Scholars have similarly noted that reliance on formal representatives in participation can sometimes result in procedural inclusion without meaningful involvement, particularly when representatives prioritise electoral agendas or institutional priorities over sustained community engagement (Klausen et al., 2023). In such cases, communities may feel that their concerns are not adequately communicated to decision-makers, reducing the perceived legitimacy of participation processes.

However, the experiences described by some local officials illustrate that effective formal representation can emerge when elected representatives are embedded within the community and actively involved in its everyday life. They highlighted the role of the current councillor as an example of such engagement.

"I do my very best, because obviously, I see it, I know it's there. So, we work really closely with, I don't know if you've spoken to [the councillor], the Labour councillor. She's a councillor now but her project Burngreave Big Brother [a project organised by Reach Up Youth that uses sports to inspire the youth in Burngreave] which will be that project we've been supporting. I've been supporting them since I took this post up, playing basketball with them, we play football with them on Concord Park, we had police against the big brother, they absolutely thrashed us." ***(P-19, SY Police Inspector)***

Similarly, the NHS community engagement manager emphasised the impact of the councillor's interaction with community members in encouraging their participation in public consultations (as mentioned in Section 4.6.2).

These examples demonstrate how formal representatives who maintain strong connections with the community can help bridge the gap between institutions and residents. Research by Copus (2023) suggests that effective representation depends not only on holding formal positions but also on maintaining close relationships with the communities being represented (Copus, 2023).

Thus, although formal representation is often criticised in the literature for producing procedural inclusion without meaningful community influence, the experiences described in Burngreave suggest that its effectiveness depends largely on how closely representatives are embedded within the communities they serve. When elected officials maintain visible and consistent engagement with residents, participate in everyday community activities, and build relationships beyond electoral cycles, formal representation can become a valuable bridge between

institutions and local communities. However, these findings also highlight the risks associated with relying heavily on a single individual to fulfil this role, as over-dependence on one representative can create vulnerabilities in community representation as discussed in the literature, (Section 2.3.4.3). For this reason, strengthening community participation requires diversifying leadership and representation structures, ensuring that participation processes are supported by a broader network of community actors rather than concentrated in a one key figure. Therefore, while embedded representatives can play an important bridging role, building the community's broader capacity to organise, articulate, and convey its concerns and needs should be considered a more sustainable objective (see Section 2.5.2.2).

5.4.2. Informal representativeness

Alongside formal political representation, many communities also rely on informal forms of leadership and representation. Informal representatives are individuals who, despite lacking official position, emerge as trusted voices within their communities due to their social networks, cultural influence, or grassroots involvement (Jackson et al., 2023). Within British Muslim communities, such leadership often takes multiple forms, including religious, educational, and community-based leadership structures (Gilliat-Ray & Timol, 2020).

However, participants in Burngreave suggested that these informal structures of representation were either fragmented or insufficiently coordinated to effectively represent the broader Muslim community.

"Nobody represents the local community in a proper way. Nobody ever presented us,as a committees.··· we need to set up a community steering group, or a business steering group. That means we are a body to represent the community, we are a body to represent" **(Active community member and Business owner)**

"I think the main thing we're missing in this area is leaders ···. We don't have enough people that want to take charge… that wants to be someone that represents people···. We don't have enough people, and I mean by this, leaders that can get people to come together. They are not forming an opinion of what we think; they're just doing what they want. We don't have enough people to give it to say, "this is not good enough."

(P-1, Community member and Business owner)

"The Muslim leaders in this community are not doing anything"

(P-10, Community member and Shop owner)

These criticisms highlight a perceived leadership vacuum within the community. When residents feel that neither formal representatives nor informal leaders effectively articulate their concerns, their voices may become marginalised within public decision-making processes, including regeneration projects.

Some participants linked this perceived lack of leadership to the internal diversity of the Muslim community in Burngreave and the presence of multiple mosques serving different cultural groups.

"I don't think, sadly, our Imams in Burngreave have influence over the community. Why is that? It is because we've just got so many different cultures and religions in sort of sub-mosques in Burngreave. Probably about five or six mosques in a two-mile radius. So, within the area, you've got five mosques, and that's five Imams. I think that the issue is that we're not united together as a community. Every mosque does that little thing, and we just choose to ignore the problem. We know that there is a problem, but it's not affecting me, it's not affecting my family, it's not affecting the way I live, just put your head down and keep walking. We do not challenge the problem." **(P-03, Community member)**

"We don't do enough as a collective. Every Mosque has its own Committee. It feels divided. It feels like that··· Everyone's friends in this area. Even the Imams are friends, everyone's friends. But I don't see that together. I don't see any unity in that sense."

(P-11, Community member and Business owner)

These perceptions suggest that fragmentation across community institutions may limit the collective influence of informal leaders. At the same time, such fragmentation does not necessarily reflect divisions within the community itself. As one Kurdish participant explained, mosque attendance is often fluid and not strictly determined by ethnic or national backgrounds.

"I go to different mosques, not just the Kurdish one, today I pray in Mohamed mosque, tomorrow in another mosque. When I talk to people, I see them as friends regardless of their colour or background" **(P-04, Active member of the Kurdish Community)**

This suggests that the challenge may not lie in diversity itself but rather in the absence of coordinated mechanisms that allow different community institutions to act collectively when representing shared interests.

Moreover, informal representativeness is not limited to mosques or established community organisations, but extend to active community members that support the community while socialising with them in places such as restaurants, café or football pitches.

"All these restaurants are like community centres. When I get time, I come down here and meet people who have some correspondences, like emails or forms, or somebody has to go to the council." ***(P-04, Active member of the Kurdish Community)***

This illustrates how everyday social venues can function as informal support networks where community members assist one another with administrative matters and communication with local authorities. Such spaces allow individuals who are familiar with local institutions and procedures to act as intermediaries for others, particularly for those who may face barriers such as language or limited knowledge of bureaucratic systems.

Similarly, participants emphasised that effective engagement with residents often depends on individuals who are socially connected and able to interact with community members in familiar settings rather than relying solely on formal structures.

"Communication and someone who represents them. So, when the kids cannot only talk to but also get along with them, it doesn't always have to be professional. They've got to be able to connect with you." ***(P-11, Community member and Business owner)***

This highlights the importance of relational trust and social proximity in community representation. Individuals who regularly interact with residents in everyday spaces often possess a deeper understanding of local concerns and informal networks within the community. As a result, they may be better positioned to communicate community perspectives to institutions than formally appointed representatives who have limited day-to-day interaction with residents.

These examples suggest that informal community actors who interact regularly with residents in social settings may possess valuable insights into the community's needs, challenges, and internal dynamics. Engaging with these individuals can therefore provide local authorities with a more nuanced understanding of the community and help ensure that participation processes reflect a wider range of perspectives. By reaching beyond formal representatives and incorporating voices emerging from everyday social environments, participation processes can better capture the lived realities of the community and strengthen the legitimacy of participation.

5.5. Negative attitude towards participation

Evidence from the interviews suggests that, despite the presence of some participation opportunities during the regeneration of Ellesmere Green, some Muslims in Burngreave demonstrated negative attitude towards participation. This was not necessarily a rejection of regeneration itself, but rather to a combination of apathy, lack of confidence, and social barriers. Several stakeholders, including local officials, community leaders and residents described a pattern in which participation opportunities existed, but community members did not always take part in them.

For instance, the Imam of Al-Rahman Mosque acknowledged that participation levels were often low within the community.

"Some shortcomings··· not responding to the local authorities' invitations, programs and activities. There is apathy amongst the Muslim community, a lack of will and there isn't the positive soul." ***(P-15, AlRahman mosque Imam)***

This statement from a key religious leader indicates that the issue of limited participation is recognised internally within the community itself. It also suggests that disengagement is partly related to a lack of motivation or initiative among some residents rather than simply the absence of participation opportunities.

He further explained that a number of factors contributed to this situation, including fear of the unknown and language barriers that discouraged involvement in public initiatives.

Similarly, the local councillor highlighted frustration with the limited response from residents despite significant outreach efforts by officials and community representatives. The councillor emphasised that engagement opportunities were promoted, yet participation remained low.

"If you put this event on and go everywhere and put leaflets on it··· 'we're having a consultation here today, you better turn up', and nobody comes, I have done my bit."

(P-12, Local Councillor)

This suggests that participation processes were organised and publicised, but they did not necessarily translate into meaningful community attendance. It indicates a disconnect between the availability of engagement opportunities and the willingness or ability of residents to participate.

The councillor further criticised a tendency within the community to complain about local issues without taking active steps to address them, arguing that residents should

"Stop listening and start doing··· [they] sit there and complain about everything instead of doing something." ***(P-12, Local Councillor)***

This indicates that some community members prefer informal discussions about local problems rather than participating in formal decision-making processes, as discussed above in Section 5.4.2.

Council officers involved in the regeneration process expressed similar experiences. The principal development officer explained that extensive efforts were made to encourage participation, including distributing thousands of leaflets and organising community events . Nevertheless, attendance remained very low.

"You put 50,000 leaflets and then you get two people··· sometimes I have got more officers than I have got people who want to come to meetings" ***(P-16, Council Development officer)***

This suggests that formal processes alone were insufficient to stimulate engagement within the local community. Some participants attributed this lack of participation to broader cultural and social dynamics within the community. One participant argued that many residents preferred to avoid involvement in public issues unless they directly affected them, and local Muslim community could sometimes be isolated from the wider community.

"We just sometimes choose to ignore the problem, and if they're not affecting my family and me, [I'm] not really bothered·····Because we don't want to get involved, the Muslim community sometimes can be very closed in itself, very segregated from everybody else. Very closed in itself, very segregated from everybody else," ***(P-03, Community member)***

These findings align with wider research on minorities participation in urban regeneration (as discussed in the literature in Section 2.5). Studies have shown that ethnic minority communities often face barriers to participation, including the lack of confidence in interacting with public institutions (Khan, 2007).

Another important factor highlighted in the interviews was the perception that ordinary residents lacked the knowledge or authority to influence planning decisions. A council official reflecting on the Ellesmere Green participation process observed that although many residents were

welcoming and friendly, they did not feel empowered to challenge or influence the design of the project.

"Looking back, nobody really thought that they could change it – that it wasn't their place to comment or to change it." ***(P-16, Council Development officer)***

This reflection suggests that some residents perceived planning and regeneration projects as the responsibility of professionals only rather than in collaboration with ordinary community members. As a result, they may have felt that their opinions would have little influence on the final outcomes, reducing their motivation to participate.

In short, negative attitudes towards participation among some Muslims in Burngreave should not be understood simply as unwillingness, but they reflected a wider set of barriers, including apathy, fear of the unknown, language difficulties, low confidence, limited trust in formal processes. These barriers are directly link to the constrained community capacity in disadvantaged communities , as discussed in Chapter Tow, Section 2.2.4.4 .

Thus, strengthening Muslim participation in regeneration requires more than providing consultation events or distributing information; it requires sustained work to build confidence, knowledge, trust, leadership, communication channels, and practical skills within the community. Community capacity should therefore be taken forward as an overarching concern, because without it, participation risks remaining formally available but practically inaccessible to many residents.

5.6. Women and youth

Another important theme emerging from the interviews concerns the experiences of women, children and young people in relation to Ellesmere Green. Participants frequently suggested that the success of a public space should be evaluated by whether it is accessible, safe and welcoming for families, particularly women and children. However, many participants argued that safety concerns, antisocial behaviour and the way the space is used by certain groups have limited the extent to which women and youth benefit from the regeneration of Ellesmere Green (As discussed in Section 4.5 - the impact of Ellesmere Green on the area).

For example, the council regeneration manager emphasised that the presence of women and families should be a key indicator of the success of the EG project.

"The success will be where if I go there and I see women, the babies, prams, gym, children play··· I don't see as much as I would like, still dominated by young people or young men."

(P-18, Council Regeneration manager)

The police inspector also highlighted that the ultimate aim of regeneration should be to create a neighbourhood environment where women and children can move safely and confidently.

"All that I would like to see··· is the mum and her child walk from one side to Tesco, Vestry Hall to Tesco unmenaced··· I don't think she would be confident doing that for the moment." ***(P-19, SY Police Inspector)***

However, the current state of Ellesmere Green demonstrates that most women are excluded from using EG and surrounding areas due to reasons primarily related to safety concerns caused by behaviour of some men in the area. This was raised by a participant who explained that women's everyday mobility in the area is constrained by fear of drug-related activities:

"There are women that can't go shopping in the area without the husband and a car··· fearing the drug-addicts··· because the drug-addict is unconscious, and can stab someone, steal from a woman····· I Myself witnessed two to three times people fighting and stabbing··· and women are scared now to sit and wait in both bus stops··· so women are avoiding the area."

(P-02, Local resident)

This concern was echoed by another business owner, who described the space as unusable for families:

"Our kids can't play there, parents can't sit there, women can't go there, it became a den for the drug-addicts." ***(P-09, Local resident and Restaurant owner)***

The local councillor (who is a female) also criticised the way public spaces around cafés (including EG) are occupied in ways that restrict movement for women and their children.

"····· Why are you sitting outside Cafes? Instead of going inside, move for the women to walk with their prams, instead of standing there? What are you doing? Do you not have a religion, are you not ashamed of yourselves? I tried to educate my people before I attack anyone else."

(P12, Female, Local councillor)

This pattern of exclusion is further reinforced by findings from the women and girls' workshop, which indicate that the space is not perceived as fit for purpose for women and families, and is often regarded as a no-go area for them.

When asked to identify places they do not use in Burngreave, all participating women and girls pointed to Ellesmere Green, as unsafe and uncomfortable to be in. These spaces were described as being dominated by groups of men or drug use (often both) and as unclean, further discouraging their use (see Figure 5.6 and Figure 5.7).

Space Usage (Women)

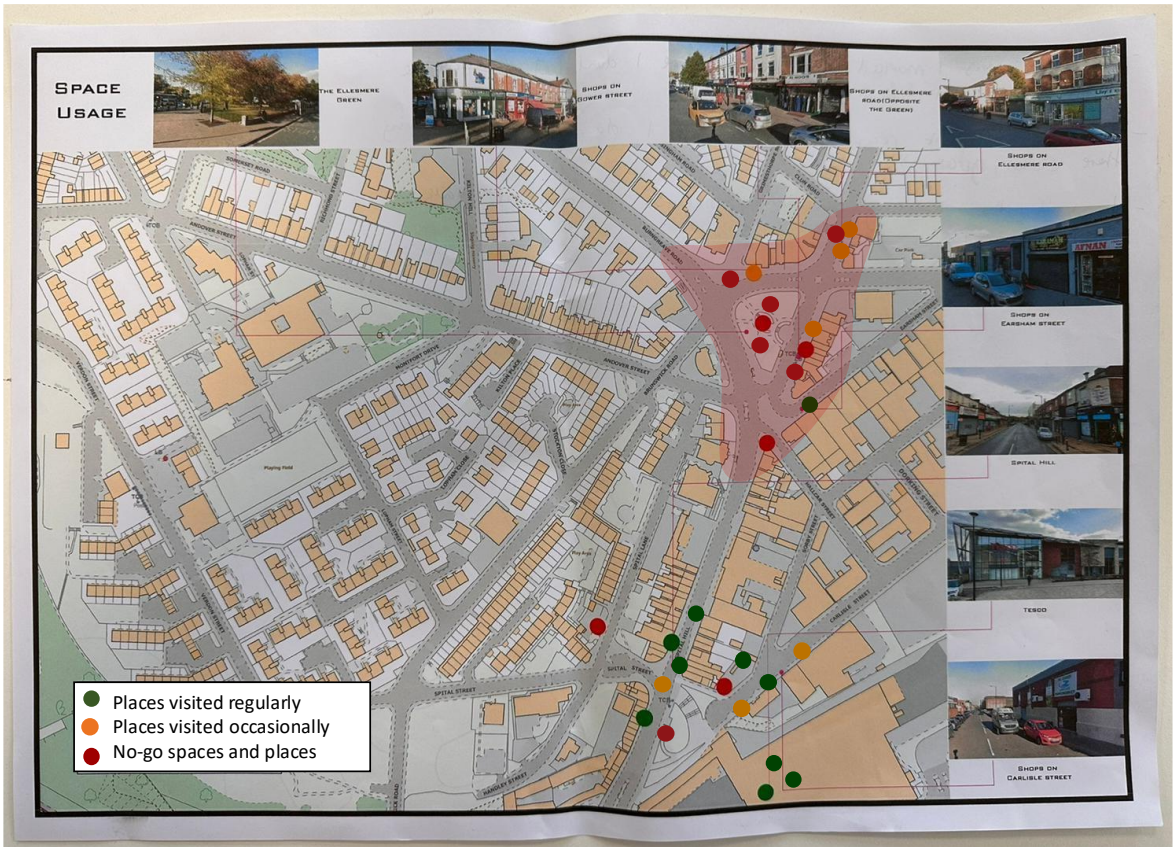


Figure 5.6: Space usage, Women mapping workshop

Source: Author

Space Usage (Girls)



Figure 5.7: Space usage, Young adult girls workshop

Source: Author

These illustrations show how women and girls avoid the EG area (red and some orange spots) due to the feel of insecurity, and the maps demonstrate how these perceptions and feelings can restrict women's use of local spaces, limiting their engagement with both the physical environment and wider community life.

In addition, field observations showed that several shops on Earsham Street, a secondary street near Ellesmere Green, are run by women and mainly serve women's needs. This suggests that, because Ellesmere Green itself is perceived as unsafe or uncomfortable, women have created and relied on alternative social and commercial spaces nearby (Field notes; Figure 5.8).



Figure 5.8: Women spatial use of EG and surrounding area

Source: Highlighted by the Author on Google Earth.

Moreover, the notes produced by women participants, alongside those from young adult girls, reveal a consistent pattern explaining why Ellesmere Green and surrounding spaces are avoided, and how this avoidance is closely linked to issues of safety, uncleanness and male dominance (See Figure 5.09and Figure 5.10).

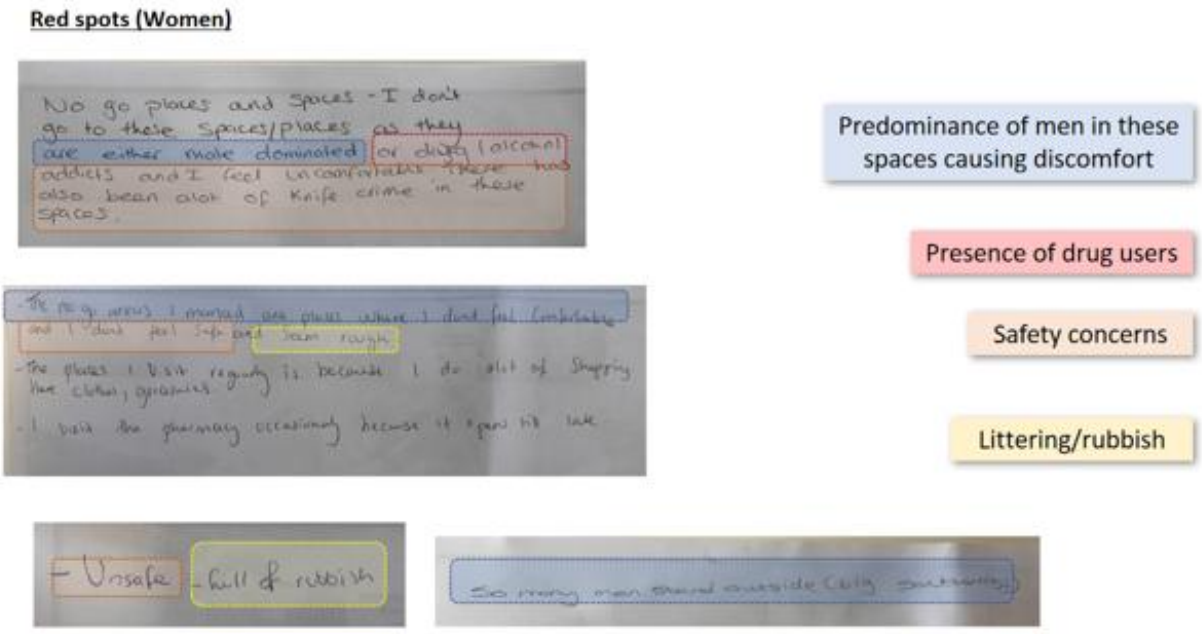


Figure 5.9: Women explaining their space use

Source: Author

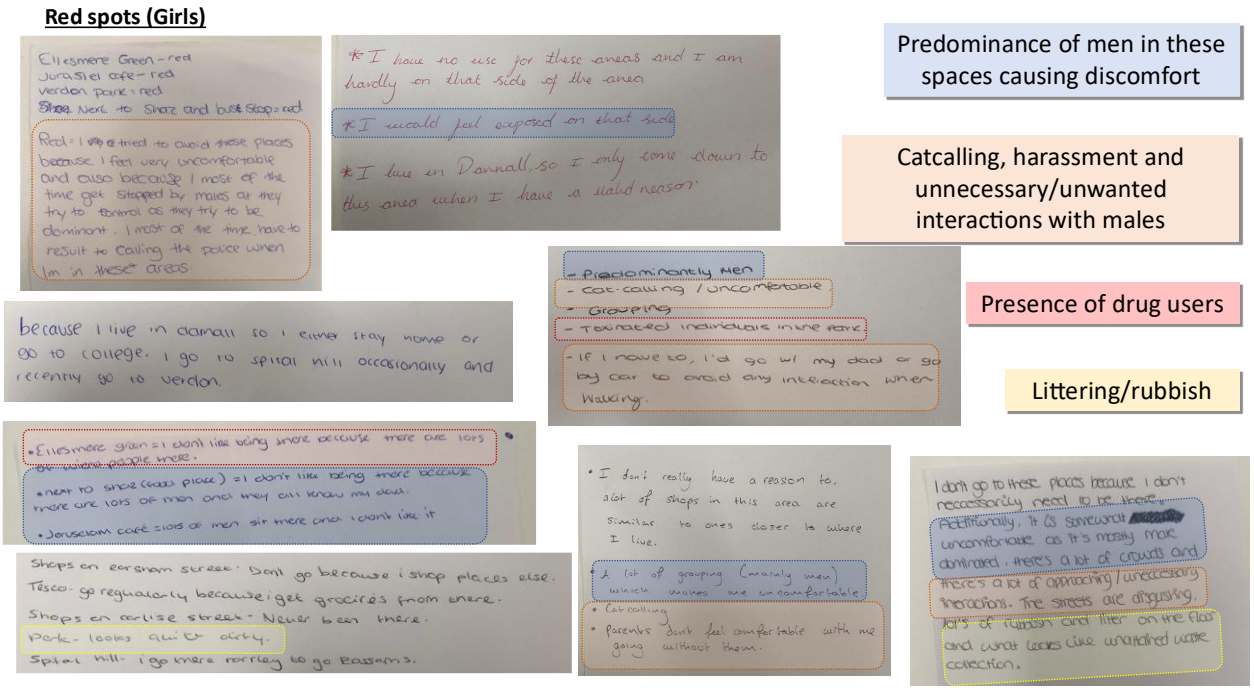


Figure 5.10: Young girls explaining their space use of EG and surrounding area

Source: Author

A key theme emerging from the women's notes is the perception of unsafety, as participants described EG as place where they "*don't feel comfortable*", "*don't feel safe*" and "*feel unsafe*.

These reasons indicate that both, women and girls perceived security as a major factor that determine their space usage. Also, environmental issues such as littering and uncleanness heighten their fear, and create an unwelcoming environment for women and girls.

Moreover, the perception of male-dominated public space further strengthens this feeling, which is consistently identified across both women's and young adult girls' explanations of avoiding EG. Women described spaces as "*male dominated*" with "*so many men stand outside* (big gatherings)," and younger participants similarly associated the EG with "*a lot of grouping* (mainly men)" and environments that are "*predominantly men.*" (see Workshop notes).

This concentration of male presence shapes how space is experienced, producing discomfort and a sense of exclusion. For young women in particular, this is intensified by experiences of harassment and unwanted interaction, including "*catcalling,*" "*unnecessary interactions,*" and being "*stopped by males*." (see Workshop notes).

These experiences reflect Valentine's (1989) argument that women's use of public space is shaped by fear, leading to restricted, negotiated and conditional presence rather than equal access (Valentine, 1989).

In addition, as mentioned previously with male participants, the presence of antisocial behaviour and crime further reinforces these patterns. Women participants explicitly linked their avoidance of EG with "*drug/alcohol addicts*" and "*a lot of knife crime*," while younger participants referred to them as "*intoxicated individuals in the park [EG]*" (see Workshop notes). Such perceptions confirm Pain's (2001) argument that women's fear of crime is shaped through everyday experiences of harassment, which in turn influence how they negotiate and avoid particular spaces (Pain, 2001).

As a result, young adult girls adopt some strategies to navigate public spaces and ease their restricted mobility. Younger participants described needing to be accompanied with their parents to avoid unnecessary interactions with males in the area.

One participant noted "*I'd go with my dad or go by car to avoid any interaction when walking*", (see Workshop notes).

These experiences and testimonies demonstrate that the avoidance of Ellesmere Green by women and girls is the result of interconnected social, spatial and experiential factors, including male dominance, harassment, fear of crime.

However, from a participation standpoint, these issues can be interpreted as a consequence of a limited or ineffective involvement of women and young people (especially girls) in the regeneration process. The absence of features that would support women and girls' presence and use of the space, such as youth and children-oriented facilities (Playground or Outdoor gym), or mechanisms to manage antisocial behaviour (such as more lighting), suggests that their needs and experiences were not adequately incorporated into the design and planning stages of the EG project.

Workshop findings indicate that women and girls in Burngreave engage through informal, culturally embedded networks, as their social interactions are often tied to everyday activities such as shopping or religious activities, rather than organised meetings or public events. Women and girls tend to meet socially during their shopping (in Tesco for example) or when attending some mosque related activities (see Figures 5.11, 5.12).

Activities (Women)



Figure 5.11: Women's local activities

Source: Author

Activities (Girls)



Figure 5.12: Girls' local activities

Source: Author

The failure to engage with these networks likely contributed to their exclusion from the regeneration process, therefore, their voices marginalised and less benefiting from the final outcomes. Therefore, the limited use of Ellesmere Green by women and young adult girls can be understood not only as a response to immediate conditions such as safety and harassment, but also as an outcome of exclusion from participation itself. The resulting space, while physically improved, remains socially inaccessible to key segments of the community. This demonstrates the need for more inclusive, strategies that actively involve women and young people through the networks and spaces in which they are already present in.

The concentration of boys' activities in and around Ellesmere Green further reinforces the perception of the space as male dominated. As illustrated in Figures 5.13 and 5.14, the clustering of social, economic and informal interactions within this area means that young men become the most visible and constant users of the space.

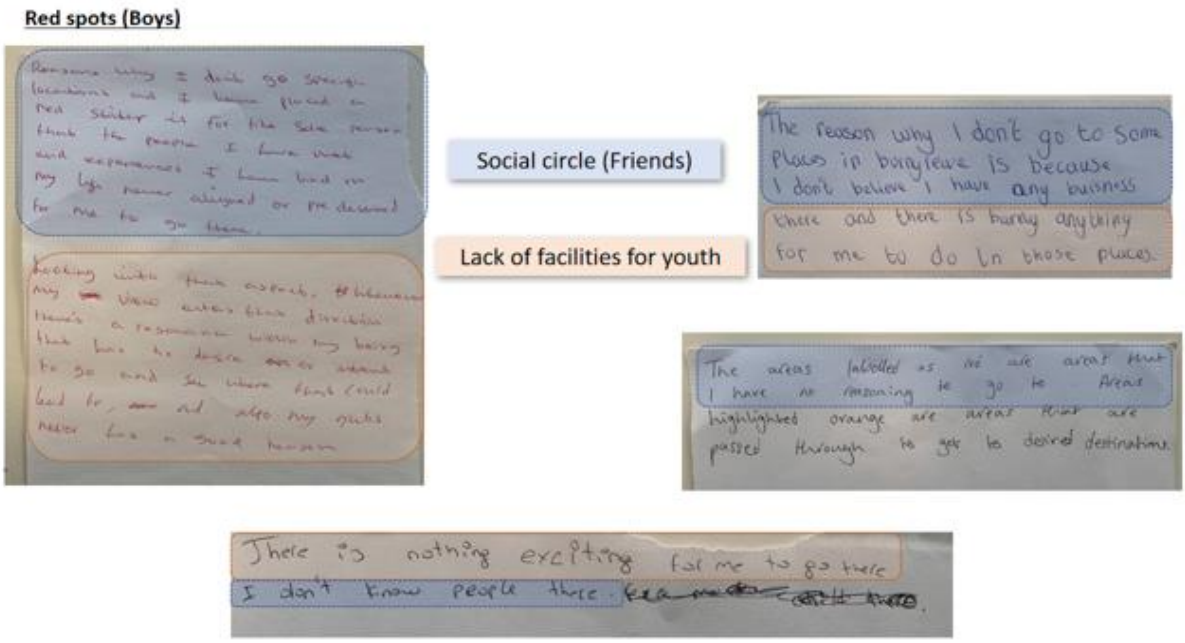


Figure 5.13: Boys explanation of their space usage

Source: Author

Activities (Boys)



Participants have different social, religious and economic activities around the Ellesemere Green area , and mainly shopping activities along spital hill. Tesco seems to be a place not only for shopping but also for social meetings with friends. Most of the Mosques in the area are used by the youth mainly for religious activities.

Figure 5.14: Boys local activities

Source: Author

This sustained presence contributes to shaping the character of Ellesmere Green as a predominantly male environment, which, as discussed earlier, can discourage women and young girls from accessing or using the space. Importantly, this pattern is not simply the result of deliberate exclusion but is closely linked to the lack of appropriate youth-oriented facilities within the area as described by both young adult boys and emphasised by other community members during interviews. As the data suggests, boys' activities are largely structured around friendship networks and informal gathering, with limited alternative facilities available to accommodate these practices.

While the perception of male dominance in Ellesmere Green cannot be attributed solely to young people, it is nonetheless shaped and intensified by broader structural issues within the area. In particular, the lack of youth facilities means that young men have few alternative spaces in which to socialise, leading them to gather in visible public areas such as Ellesmere Green. Participants acknowledged this as a local issue,

"When I see youth, I see them passing by, not stopping unless they are getting food; otherwise, there is nothing for them to really do in Burngreave." ***(P-08, Community member and Shop Keeper, UK-born, Yameni background)***

[the area] just needs young people's facilities.…They need football. These are our youngsters during their social time, after studies, and after work; they need to spend that energy in a positive way. So, a facility is needed for young people, a facility for elderly people, and we need a positive shelter scheme ***(P-13, Chair of ISRAAC Community association)***

In light of these findings, improving the outcomes of regeneration projects such as Ellesmere Green requires a more inclusive and context-sensitive approach to participation in relation to women and young people. The evidence suggests that traditional, formal modes of participation, such as consultations, meetings and public events, are insufficient to capture the perceptions of these groups, whose everyday social interactions are often embedded within informal and culturally specific networks. As demonstrated, women tend to engage through activities such as shopping or attending mosque-related events, while young people's interactions are shaped by friendship networks and informal gathering spaces. Therefore, rather than expecting these groups to participate through conventional channels, engagement strategies need to be reoriented to meet them where they already are. This involves actively working within existing social spaces and networks, recognising the patterns of everyday life, and building trust through accessible forms of interaction. By doing so, planners and local authorities would be better

positioned to understand and address the distinct priorities of different groups, including safety, accessibility, and appropriate facilities. Ultimately, such an approach would not only enhance participation but also contribute to the creation of public spaces that are genuinely inclusive, socially responsive, and more effectively used by the whole community.

5.7. Elderly

I attempted to recruit elderly participants for interviews; however, all those approached declined to take part, without any clear explanation (this will be further discussed in Chapter Eight, Section 8.5.1.1). Despite this limitation, the interview data from other participants provides a clear and consistent understanding of how the elderly are perceived within the community in relation to the use of Ellesmere Green (EG). Across multiple stories, older people within the Muslim community are viewed as key everyday users of the area, whose routines, proximity, and social practices make EG a potentially important space for daily use.

The chair of ISRAAC community association, for example, emphasised that Burngreave attracts a significant elderly Muslim population because of its local infrastructure, including mosques, shops and restaurants. He explained that retired individuals come to the area to spend time socially, eat, and attend prayers, and suggested that spaces like Ellesmere Green could support these routines, particularly as a place to sit, socialise, and wait between prayers

"When they wake up, they're retired, they want to come to the local shops, local restaurants, local Mosques··· they are spending here their lunch time··· they can interact. After we pray··· other people want to sit somewhere··· have a cup of tea··· this [EG] could play that role"

(P-13, Chair of ISRAAC Community association)

This indicate that EG was locally understood as a potential everyday social infrastructure for older people, supporting routine activities such as sitting, talking and resting. This aligns with Hammond & Rodgers (2023) guide that highlights that accessible outdoor spaces are essential for older people's wellbeing, social participation and sense of belonging (Hammond & Rodgers, 2023). Similarly, local councillor highlighted the importance of designing the space to actively accommodate elderly users, and emphasised the value of collective and intergenerational activities suggesting features such as:

"a funny chess game··· that's built-in··· something needs to be done··· services should come in··· put some stalls··· barbecue·····. there should be something that the children make together, or the elderly make together."." **(P-12, Local councillor)**

These suggestions reflect a desire for a space that is not only physically accessible but also socially programmed, encouraging interaction among different age groups.

However, despite this recognised potential, several participants argued that EG no longer serves this function due to the presence of drug and alcohol users. For example, one participant noted that:

"We are upset about who took over the space, these drug addicts, instead of it being for the elderly people sitting there and having conversations on the benches that they used to be. The problem is not the transformation; the problem the drug addicts who took over the place after it became nicer." ***(P-02, Local resident)***

These testimonies indicate that the needs and experiences of elderly users were not sufficiently embedded in the planning process of the regeneration of EG. While participants clearly articulated what local older people routine is (spend most of the day, either praying nearby EG-AlRahman mosque, or waiting between prayers), these practices appear to not have been taken into account during the EG project. Although this is reflected in the broader critique within participation literature (Cornwall, 2008), understanding these dynamics requires a deeper exploration of the community's culturally and religiously embedded practices.

Thus, age-friendly environments require ongoing collaboration with older residents to ensure that spaces reflect their everyday needs and practices (Hammond & Rodgers, 2023).

Overall, the data demonstrates that elderly people were widely perceived as essential users of Ellesmere Green, whose daily routines and proximity to the area positioned them as key beneficiaries of the regeneration project. However, their subsequent exclusion (largely due to antisocial behaviour) suggests that their needs were not adequately incorporated into the planning process.

Therefore, it is important to treat elderly residents as a central stakeholder group in regeneration projects, and to adopt participation approaches that engage them within their existing social environments. Methods such as outreach in mosques, informal discussions in local cafés, and small-group consultations in familiar settings may be more effective in capturing their perspectives. Without such approaches, regeneration risks producing spaces that are physically improved but socially misaligned with the needs of those who are most likely to use them on a daily basis.

5.8. Conclusion

This chapter has explored the perceptions of the Muslim community in Burngreave regarding their participation in the Ellesmere Green (EG) regeneration project. In doing so, it directly addresses the first research question: ***To what extent and in what ways do Muslims participate in local regeneration projects?***

The findings suggest that Muslim participation in the EG project was limited in both extent and depth. While formal consultation processes were implemented by local authorities as discussed in Chapter Four (Section 4.4.2), the evidence presented in this chapter indicates that the local Muslim community in Burngreave, considered that their participation was largely partial and ineffective.

At a general level, Muslim participants showed that they were almost absent from the process and far from an active and meaningful participation capable of influencing decision-making.

This limited extent of participation can be attributed to a combination of structural and relational factors identified throughout the chapter. These include lack of awareness of the project, restricted and controlled communication channels, language barriers, and power imbalances between the council and the community. Together, these factors constrained the ability of Muslim stakeholders to access, understand, and engage with the participation process. Also, distrust towards local authorities, shaped by both previous local experiences and inherited perceptions from countries of origin, further discouraged participation. As discussed in the literature, trust is a critical precondition for participation, and its absence can significantly reduce the willingness of communities to engage with institutional processes (Blakeley & Evans, 2009; Dargan, 2009).

In addition, the findings revealed that participation was weakened by limitations in both formal and informal representativeness. Although local authorities relied on recognised representatives such as councillors, mosques and community organisations, many participants questioned their ability to adequately reflect and represent the diversity of the Muslim community in Burngreave. At the same time, informal leadership structures were described as fragmented and lacking coordination. This resulted in a situation where Muslims voices were not effectively communicated, further reducing the extent to which Muslim stakeholders could meaningfully influence regeneration outcomes.

The chapter also demonstrated that participation was not only limited by institutional barriers, but also shaped by internal community dynamics, including apathy, lack of confidence, and perceptions of limited agency.

Moreover, the extent of participation varied significantly across different segments of the Muslim community. Women, young people, and elderly residents were shown to be particularly underrepresented in the process. For women and girls, participation was constrained not only by limited participation opportunities but also demonstrated by their restricted use of the regenerated EG due to safety concerns, harassment, and male dominance. Their absence from the outcomes of the project reflects a failure of participation mechanisms to engage with their informal networks through which they organise their everyday lives in Burngreave.

Similarly, although young adult boys were users of Ellesmere Green, this was not a reflection their meaningful participation in shaping the space but largely shaped by friendship networks and the lack of youth facilities. Consequently, their presence contributed to perceptions of male dominance, which in turn discouraged other groups from using the area (such as women and girls).

In the case of elderly Muslim residents, although direct participation could not be captured through interviews, Muslim members consistently identified them as key everyday users who should have benefited from the regeneration of Ellesmere Green. However, their exclusion from the space due to antisocial behaviour suggests that their needs and routines were not adequately considered in the planning process.

Therefore, these findings indicate that the extent of Muslim participation in the EG project was limited and certain groups being more excluded than others. While the barriers identified here resonate with those discussed in the wider participation literature, the Burngreave case demonstrates that participation in a Muslim-concentrated area is deeply shaped by local social, cultural and religious practices. These practices structure how different community groups use space, interact with one another, and engage with institutions.

The key element that can be drawn from this chapter is to show that participation cannot be effectively understood or approached without engaging with these informal, culturally embedded structures. For example, women were shown to be more reachable through everyday activities such as shopping or attending mosque-related events, and elderly residents through mosques, cafés and local social settings. These spaces function as informal arenas of communication, support and representation, yet they remain largely outside participation frameworks.

The next chapter builds on these findings by examining the perspectives of local authorities, exploring what they claim to have done to engage the Muslim community in the regeneration process, and assessing the extent to which these claims align with the experiences and perceptions presented in this chapter.

6. CHAPTER Six: Local authorities' efforts and challenges

6.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses the efforts and challenges of local authorities in the Ellesmere Green regeneration project, in an attempt to address the second research question, ***How do local authorities approach, and engage with, Muslim communities in local regeneration processes, and what challenges do they face?***

Local authorities in this thesis refer mainly to the local council (Sheffield City Council) as the authority that was responsible for planning and implementing the Ellesmere Green project, including the community participation process. However, as the research field work evolved, local police (South Yorkshire Police) and the NHS (National Health Service) engagement with the local Muslim community in Burngreave were also addressed as part of the broader local authorities' efforts and challenges when engaging with Muslims from a regeneration projects standpoint.

Accordingly, this chapter is structured as follows: First, it explores the council's engagement with the local Muslim community in Burngreave, through considering both, policy frameworks implemented in the process and practice-based approaches adopted. Second, it analyses the specific challenges the council encountered in reaching and involving Muslim residents, drawing on accounts from local Muslims, and council officers who were directly or indirectly involved in planning the EG regeneration project. The chapter then turns to the role of the police, examining their contributions to the project's design, and their ongoing interventions following the project's completion. Finally, the chapter briefly demonstrates the NHS approach to engage Muslims in Burngreave, through mainly an observation made during the field work, and an interview conducted with the NHS community engagement manager.

6.2. The local Council's approach to participation

Urban regeneration projects often see local councils having a dual role, as the planning authority responsible for setting regulatory frameworks, and as the active planning entity

initiating, funding, and delivering schemes (Roberts et al., 2016). When local councils hold this dual role, their responsibilities to local communities become more complex and ethically charged. In such role, councils are not only tasked with ensuring that planning processes adhere to statutory obligations and strategic visions, but also with delivering tangible outcomes that meet the needs of the community. This combination of regulatory and delivery roles heightens the expectation that councils will act as accountable agents of public interest, particularly in deprived or marginalised areas where trust in institutions is low (Batty et al., 2010). The responsibility to ensure inclusive and meaningful community participation becomes especially significant, as councils must balance their institutional agendas with genuine participatory commitments (Dargan, 2009). Failing to uphold this responsibility can lead to tokenistic participation practices, where the process exists more as a procedural requirement than as a tool for co-production (Monno & Khakee, 2012). Understanding this complexity is crucial for evaluating how Sheffield City Council (SCC) navigated participation commitments in regeneration projects in general and the EG project in particular. In the following sections, I examine SCC efforts through both its policy agendas and its practice-based approaches. The analysis focuses on the council's policies on community participation and their implementation, drawing on grey literature analysis of relevant local policies as well as interviews with council officers and officials who were directly or indirectly involved in the community participation process of the EG project.

6.2.1. Policy framework

Community participation in planning policies has evolved over several decades in Britain, with key milestones shaping both national and local planning policies, ad explained in Chapter Two, Section 2.4. Although the evolution of community participation in planning policies introduced primarily to England, similar principles have been adopted across Britain, with some regional variations. Sheffield City Council's approach to community participation is shaped, first and foremost, by the statutory requirements embedded in national planning policy frameworks.

At local lever, Sheffield City Council's approach to community participation is characterised by a policy-led framework that integrates both statutory and non-statutory elements. The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) provides the statutory foundation for public engagement, while the Code of Practice for Publicity and Consultation on Planning Applications offers detailed guidance for effective consultation. This dual framework ensures that community participation is not only a legal requirement but also a practical and integral part of the planning process.

The council regeneration manager articulated these two parts of the Council's policy-led approach to community participation, wherein participation strategies are systematically guided by established policy frameworks.

"There are two different things, in the statutory plan making process, it is a requirement, it is set out in government guidance, that if you have to undertake formal consultation, and there are various prescribed steps…… The other is more informal, which is where you might do an area plan, it doesn't have any statutory basis, but an area might need some action. So, it might be called an action plan. In that one, you will go out and try and engage with people."

(P-18, Council regeneration manager)

Although the officer did not explicitly reference the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) or the Code of Practice for Publicity and Consultation on Planning Applications, these documents underpin the Council's policy-led approach. The SCI, as a statutory requirement, outlines the methods and principles for engaging communities in the planning process. Complementing this, the Code of Practice provides detailed guidance on consultation procedures for planning applications, ensuring that community participation is conducted effectively and in accordance with established standards.

The initial Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) was adopted in 2006 to outline local guidelines to promote community participation and later reviewed in 2014 and 2020 respectively. A Code of Practice for Publicity and Consultation on Planning Applications was also introduced in 2018 to provide detailed guidance on how SCC publicises and consults on planning applications. The Code was designed to assist planning officers in implementing the statutory commitments outlined in the SCI, offering detailed, practical advice with illustrated examples. However, the Code of Practice did not hold a statutory basis other than providing guidelines to support the implementation of the Statement of Community Involvement.

6.2.1.1. Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) – Introduced in 2006, Updated in 2014 and 2020

The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) is a legally required document that outlines how Sheffield City Council (SCC) engages with the public in preparing planning policies and making decisions on planning applications. The SCI was first introduced in 2006 in response to the 2004 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act, which made participation a statutory requirement in the planning process. However, the SCI was further updated in 2014 and 2020 in line with other

national policy documents, particularly Localism Act of 2011, and different updates of the National Planning Policy Framework.

2006 Version – Initial Introduction

The first SCI (2006) established a structured approach for involving the community in the Local Development Framework (LDF), a set of planning documents that guided development in Sheffield. It set out the methods SCC would use to inform, consult, and involve residents, businesses, and stakeholders in planning decisions. Key features included, public exhibitions and consultation events, as well as formal written consultations on local plans and policies. While this version was a step forward in formalising community participation, it lacked flexibility in responding to different communities' needs. As, its reliance on standardised methods such as exhibitions and written consultations assumed equal capacity to engage, despite evidence that such approaches often fail to reach marginalised groups (Cornwall, 2008). Nonetheless, it has established an important milestone towards involving communities into the planning processes.

2014 Update – Strengthening participation

The SCI was reviewed and updated in 2014 to align with national policy changes, particularly the Localism Act 2011, which introduced Neighbourhood Planning. The 2014 update established support for Neighbourhood Plans, allowing local communities to take more control over developments in their areas. It also offered more accessible consultation methods, including online surveys and social media engagement. This update emphasised on early involvement, ensuring the public was engaged from the beginning of policy-making processes rather than later stages.

2020 Update – Modernising participation

The most recent SCI update (2020) was a response to further national policy changes, particularly the updated National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) version of February 2019, and the need to incorporate new communication technologies amid the COVID-19 outbreak. Key improvements included, some digital consultation platforms, making it easier for residents to participate online, and improved engagement with "*hard-to-reach*"[12] communities, ensuring that consultation was inclusive and representative. It also included clearer guidance for developers, requiring them to consult communities before submitting major planning applications.

[12] *"Hard to reach"* was mentioned in the Statement of Community Involvement, and used by a senior council officer "*We were always mindful that when we do plans or area action plans that we try reach out everybody, including those* ***hard to reach.***" (Development manager)

This 2020 SCI remains the guiding framework for public participation in Sheffield's planning processes, ensuring that residents have a meaningful voice in shaping the city's future. However, this is along with the Code of Practice for Publicity and Consultation on Planning Applications that was introduced in 2014 as a detailed mechanism to conduct community participation.

6.2.1.2. Code of Practice for Publicity and Consultation on Planning Applications

The Code of Practice was introduced in 2014 and updated in 2018 to provide more detailed, practical guidance for Sheffield City Council officers on how to publicise and consult on planning applications. Its main purpose was to help officers implement the Council's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) by standardising procedures for neighbour notification and site notices, and by providing illustrated examples of how wider notification should be applied in different cases. In particular, the Code explains how officers should interpret "*adjoining*" land, when wider neighbour notification is appropriate, which development types may justify broader publicity, and how additional rounds of notification should be handled when applications are amended. It also clarifies that, in the event of an appeal, details of interested parties should be passed to Legal Services so that they can be notified. However, the Code is much narrower than the SCI itself, as it is focused more on the publicity side (notifications), and less on how to engage communities in the process, narrowing the participation ambitions set out in both the 2014 and 2020 SCIs. Thus, although the Code operationalises publicity, it does not adequately operationalise the SCI's wider commitments to inclusive, relational, and context-sensitive participation. It translates community participation into a technical question of who is notified and how, rather than a question of how different communities are meaningfully engaged and enabled to influence planning outcomes.

Therefore, although the statutory SCIs commit Sheffield City Council to early, inclusive, and meaningful community participation, the 2018 Code of Practice reflects a much narrower understanding of participation centred mainly on publicity and notification procedures. Consequently, the Code does not fully embody the wider participation principles set out in the SCIs, as it reduces community participation to procedural compliance rather than enabling genuine influence over planning outcomes.

6.2.3.1. Relevant policies in effect during the Ellesmere Green project

During the timeframe of the Ellesmere Green project (2012–2013), Sheffield City Council's (SCC) local community participation policy in planning was primarily guided by the 2006 version of the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). This was despite the implementation of national

planning frameworks, including the Localism Act 2011 and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2012.

From a policy perspective, assessing SCC's engagement with the Muslim community in the Ellesmere Green project in Burngreave involves evaluating the council's adherence to its local policy. However, comprehensive searches through online archives and official Council resources revealed that the 2006 SCI document is no longer accessible. Subsequent inquiries to the council indicated that the document is no longer available in their archives, possibly due to technical maintenance that led to its erasure.

The absence of the 2006 SCI poses a limitation in conducting a comprehensive analysis of the evolution of community participation policies within Sheffield. Nevertheless, the 2014 SCI update provides valuable insights into the shortcomings of the previous 2006 version by highlighting key changes implemented. These limitations included the lack of early community involvement and pre-application engagement, as introduced in national legislation and policies such as the Localism Act 2011 and the NPPF 2012. These aspects were later incorporated into the 2014 SCI update, which came after the completion of the Ellesmere Green project. Similarly, the use of digital communication platforms to enhance public engagement was not part of the SCI during the project's timeframe. Thus, SCC's planning policies were not keeping pace with national policy changes in a timely manner, causing delays in responding to evolving challenges related to community participation.

Although it is not clear why there was a delay of updating the SCI locally in accordance with the national Localism Act 2011 and the NPPF 2012, it created a misalignment between national policy advancements and local implementation, which shows a reactive rather than proactive approach within SCC's planning practices during the Ellesmere Green project. The council's reliance on an outdated SCI, despite the existence of more progressive national frameworks, suggests a gap between national and local policy. This gap likely impacted the effectiveness of community participation, particularly with underrepresented groups such as the Muslim community in Burngreave. As communities such as Muslims may require longer and phased participation time frame that allow aspect that may encourage their participation such as building trust, and wide reach through digital means. The following section will delve deeper into SCC's practice-based approach, examining whether these policy shortcomings manifested in the council's engagement approach during the Ellesmere Green project, through interviews with council officers directly involved in the project.

6.2.2. Practice-based approach

Across Britain, local councils have adopted a dual approach to urban regeneration that integrates both formal policy frameworks and adaptive, practice-based methods (De Magalhaes, 2015). This hybrid model is evident in various regeneration initiatives, where statutory planning instruments are complemented by flexible, community-responsive practices. For instance, the New Deal for Communities programmes, implemented in cities like Sheffield and Newcastle, relied on formal policy structures while empowering local partnerships to tailor regeneration projects to specific community needs (Batty et al., 2010). This blend of policy and practice ensures that regeneration projects are both strategically guided and contextually relevant, addressing the unique challenges and opportunities within diverse urban settings.

6.2.2.1. General Council approach to community participation

Sheffield City council often implements a general practice-based approach to urban regeneration, which involves identifying areas in need of regeneration and communicating proposed projects to the community. This approach typically includes analysing socio-economic data, land use patterns, and community needs to inform regeneration projects. Data collected from council officers indicates a structured methodology for identifying and communicating regeneration needs. The following segments delve into this general practice-based approach, focusing on how the council identifies the need for regeneration projects and subsequently communicates these plans to the local community

6.2.2.1.1. Identifying the need for regeneration

Sheffield city council considers a set of statistical data in determining the areas that are in need of regeneration projects. This includes the population of the area, its ethnicity, its socio-economic status, and the land use within the area, before producing proposal for the community to be consulted. The regeneration manager explained how the regeneration projects are usually initiated, when asked about the criteria considered by the council to identify the places where regeneration is needed.

"I think, a number of things. The colleagues I worked for was called (Orderly Plans), what their job was to do, is to prepare local plans. As part of the local plan preparation, they had put together what we call (Position Statement), and that position statement was about everything from what's the socio-economic demographic characteristics of an area. So, everything from, population that can be any characteristic size of households, the socio-economic groups,

income level, all of that to get an understanding of the different areas. For example, Darnall, we would get to know, both the overall numbers of population, the harmony of ethnic minorities, we also know about the size of households. We also know about other things like amount of public space, open space, another colleague would be responsible for taking stock of all the open spaces in the area, both formal and informal. Then they did a fairly complex analysis, saying, in this area, it is under provided with formal open space or informal open space, or that there is too much of derelict land or spaces in this area. So that was the way of understanding and some, and it's not always 100% science. But you get a feel for an area that some areas lacked access to immunity access to open space, or access to formal playing pitches, you get a sense." (P-18, Council regeneration manager)

Although *"orderly plans"* in the context of SCC is not available in the Council's public database, it likely refers to a planning framework the council uses for urban development, community engagement, and spatial organisation. It reflects a structured approach used by the council to assess the status of neighbourhood and identify their regeneration needs. Based on this assessment, the council presents initial proposals to the community, which are referred to as "*Position statements*" to be consulted upon before being implemented. However, the Position Statements are formal documents, served to communicate the council's policies and actions on important issues such as planning, housing, and public health (Sheffield City Council, 2020). They outline the Council's views, strategies, and intended actions on a specific subject area, and provide several key purposes, such as policy clarity, guidance for stakeholder, and accountability. So, each Position Statement document is tailored to its subject, ensuring that all parties involved understand the Council's expectations, commitments, and the context for decision-making (Sheffield City Council, 2020). In terms of planning, the Position Statement includes the development team analysing the local area and its population data, to identify whether a regeneration project is needed.

However, the top-down approach to identifying the need for regeneration projects tends to marginalise the lived experiences of local communities and diminishes their ability to define what is genuinely required in their areas. This approach stands in contrast to the principle of early engagement, which is strongly emphasised in the 2014 and 2020 versions of the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). Nonetheless, the Council's perception, and its experience, of early community engagement suggests that its implementation is not always practical. The regeneration manager, who has worked with various community groups for over 25 years,

pointed out that approaching the community without a concrete proposal or plan can also be a difficult and challenging process.

"There isn't a hard and fast route, but ideally, we've always said the early consult, the better. Sadly, not always practical, because you go with a blank sheet and people say, "what do you want to sell us?". Because people aren't often aware of these things, as I mentioned earlier, depends on the area in some areas, the be very articulate, and they'll tell you in other areas they don't know. So sometimes you do have to go some way towards showing up something. So, in areas like Darnall, we did planning for real exercise, where we went and we had a model and said "look, we could do this we could do that" People can more easily understand. So, sometimes you have to take a little bit, and then they will get engaged and perhaps give you a comment in their own way." **(P-18, Council regeneration manager)**

This suggests that the council's commitment to early community engagement in identifying the need for regeneration is not always practical, as its success also depends on the socio-economic status of the community. This point was raised several times during the interview with the officer. When asked specifically whether the community, in addition to the council, can initiate regeneration project, the officer responded,

"Yes, both [the council and the community]. But I would also say that, again, depends, if you go to area like Dore and Totley, or even areas like here -meaning Nether Edge- [these areas are in the South of Sheffield and are predominantly populated with affluent communities], the community will tell you. But if you go to areas like Manor and Darnall [area in the east and northeast that are relatively deprived in Sheffield] the community won't tell you, they're just not articulate enough. Add a layer of either the socio-economic groups or the ethnicity, the level of participation, the understanding of what's possible, goes down. So, the reality was that you get little bit, particularly in areas further east of the city and the north of the city are less [articulate] than the South and the West of the city." **(P-18, Council regeneration manager).**

This statement is supported by literature highlighting the influence of socio-economic status on community participation. Studies indicate that individuals from lower socio-economic backgrounds often face significant barriers to pro-active participation, primarily due to time constraints and limited access to resources necessary for informed involvement (Moore McBride et al., 2004; Schröder & Neumayr, 2023). In Sheffield, communities with low socio-economic

status are predominantly located in the north and north-east of the city (see Figure 6.1), where many ethnic minority groups, including Muslims, reside.

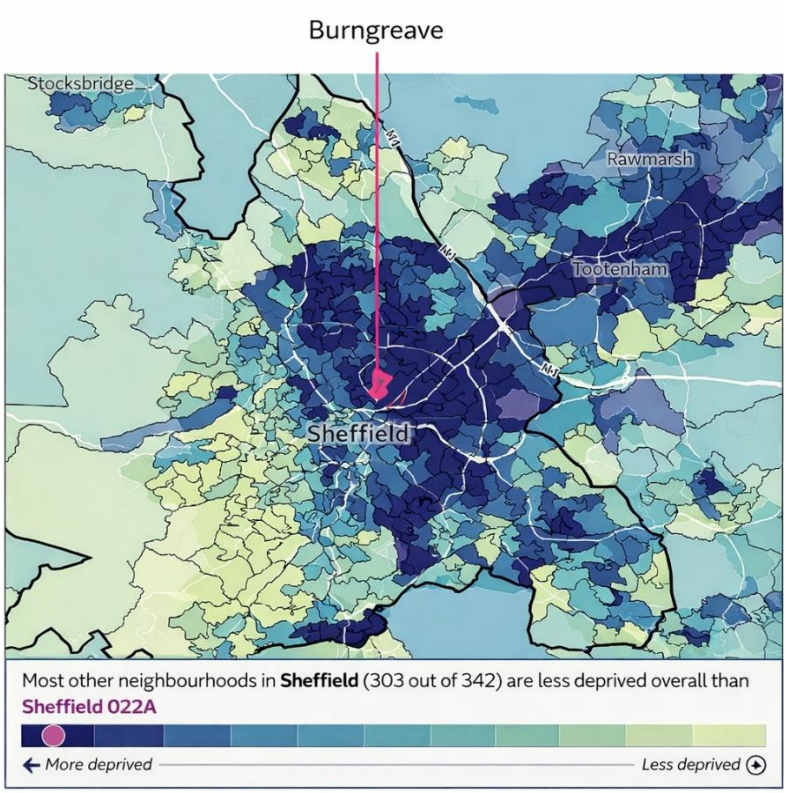


Figure 6.1: Deprivation in Sheffield

Source: ONS, Census, 2021

However, some of these areas are also inhabited by predominantly White working-class populations who experience similar socio-economic disadvantages (ONS, 2023). The local Council acknowledges that such class-based disparities affect communities' capacity to articulate their needs and engage meaningfully in regeneration initiatives as asserted by the officer. The 2020 Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) reaffirms several key principles of effective community participation, which are embedded in the participation methods outlined throughout the document (Sheffield City Council, 2020). These principles include fostering a culture of participation by encouraging community participation in planning processes; ensuring early involvement-or *'front loading'*- by consulting communities at the earliest possible stage; and maintaining continued involvement throughout the planning process.

Additionally, the SCI emphasises the importance of reaching out in ways that are responsive to people's varying experiences and needs, designing consultation arrangements that are fit for purpose and proportionate to the scale of the proposal, and ensuring clarity by providing

transparent planning processes with clear timetables for the preparation or review of development documents and planning decisions (Sheffield City Council, 2020).

Therefore, although the Council may perceive that some communities -particularly ethnic minority groups- are "*just not articulate enough"* to be engaged in the very early stages of the regeneration process, it remains essential that the principles mentioned above are embedded within the council's broader approach. This would support the empowerment of these communities by enhancing their capacity to articulate their needs and to initiate regeneration projects.

6.2.2.1.2. Communicating the regeneration projects with the local communities (Participation process)

Following the identification of the need for regeneration in a given area, the council proceeds to the next phase of its approach to community participation. This includes communicating the proposed plans and design concepts to the local community. This stage involves the use of various tools and methods aimed at involving residents in shaping the regeneration proposals. Before discussing methods described by the officer, it is important to address the statutory nature of these methods. During the interview with the regeneration manager, it was noted that the tools currently employed by the council do not have a statutory basis and are instead used as part of an informal approach to engage the community.

"…… you might go on the radio, you will put some adverts in the local newspaper, you might put some posters here and there, you might have meetings in community centres, and people come along. Then obviously increasingly, you go online, and you alert people and they go to a website and they kind of find out when they respond. So those are the two big differences. The statutory process requires it, the non-statutory process doesn't require it. But it's a good practice. Because if you've consulted, then if you were to use that policy in making planning decision, it carries more weight. So, for example, if somebody came along, wanting to develop a land, we would have said "no, no, we want to save that land to something else". If you've consulted on that, and you had a response, you can refuse planning permission, and if that applicant wants to challenge, you got stronger grounds to say, yes, we've got this policy, even though it's not statutory, it did have support for the local people."

(P-18, Council regeneration manager)

However, the statutory 2020 Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) outlines a range of tools that the Council is expected to utilise to facilitate meaningful community involvement in planning processes. These methods include contacting individuals and organisations via a consultee database, making documents accessible online through the Sheffield Consultation Hub, and providing hard copies at the principal office and other locations across the city. Media outreach, including press releases, social media, and newsletters, to widen awareness beyond registered consultees. In-person engagement through public exhibitions, meetings, drop-in sessions, city conferences, and targeted events, which may be held in specific neighbourhoods or central locations depending on the scope of the project. Therefore, all the methods mentioned by the officer are set out in the 2020 legally binding Statement of Community Involvement (SCI), rather than being merely informal approaches adopted by the council to engage the community. Acknowledging the statutory status of the SCI and attributing greater significance to its content could strengthen the council's efforts to achieve more effective and inclusive community participation. Moreover, the incorporation of more innovative and culturally responsive methods could substantially improve levels of engagement, particularly among ethnic minority communities, as previously discussed in Chapter five. Nonetheless, the regeneration manager emphasised that this process is essential as it strengthens the council's position when assessing planning permissions. As when the community has been consulted and their input recorded, any resulting policies or plans carry more weight in formal planning decisions. This means that community input, becomes a powerful tool for influencing future development outcomes, such as rejecting planning applications that conflict with the community-supported vision.

Moreover, at this point in the council's general approach to community participation, there is an apparent shift from top-down decision-making towards greater grassroots participation. Communication methods during this stage are, in theory, varied and accessible. These include traditional channels such as local radio announcements, newspaper advertisements, posters in public spaces, and meetings held in community centres. In more recent years, these conventional forms have been supplemented by digital engagement tools, with the council making use of online platforms to raise awareness and solicit community feedback. This approach was highlighted in the earlier quotation and further echoed by the development officer when asked about the use of digital advertising and social media.

"Like I said, we use traditional methods of communication, like press releases and local media, and use social media as well. But it's actually making sure that I walk so I easily go through all the shops and say, "I'm doing these. Have you got an email? Can I have you in my database", or

anybody that is directly affected? You always talk to people and try to have all these contacts, which obviously takes a lot of time. Those two, I would say the top ones."

(P-16, Council Development Officer)

Overall, the council's approach to communicating regeneration projects with local communities reflects an evolving recognition that regeneration extends beyond physical redevelopment; it also involves rebuilding trust, fostering a sense of ownership, and sustaining meaningful dialogue with residents. While the use of both traditional and digital tools suggests an effort to reach a broad audience, it remains unclear how effective these methods are in practice, particularly in engaging ethnic minorities such as Muslims. To gain deeper insight into the effectiveness of these communication tools, the following section will examine the council's efforts and approach to participation during the Ellesmere Green project.

6.2.2.2. The Council's approach to community participation during the Ellesmere Green project

To explore the specifics of the Council's approach to community participation, in relation to The Muslim community, this section draws on Ellesmere Green regeneration project in Burngreave as a case study. This project provides a useful example through which to examine how participation practices were implemented by the council in a real-world project. Given the time that has passed since the project's completion, most of the insights presented here are based primarily on interviews conducted with the council officers who were directly involved in delivering the project including its community participation procedure. Both the council's development officer and the council officer took part in engaging directly with community members and local organisations. This serves as an important source of the approach and tools used to involve the majority local Muslim community in Burngreave into the design of the EG project.

In addition, as previously noted in Chapter Four, efforts were made to obtain documentation related to the second phase of community participation of the project. However, it was reported that these records had been lost as a result of technical maintenance procedures. Nonetheless, practitioner reflections often offer valuable insights into how participation is implemented on the ground, beyond what official documents can capture (Parker & Street, 2015), as this can reveal the informal dynamics, challenges, and decision-making processes that shape the outcomes (Cornwall, 2008). Therefore, these interviews serve as an important source for understanding the efforts made by the council to involve Burngreave Muslims in the EG project.

6.2.2.2.1. Identifying the need for the Ellesmere Green project

From the council's perspective, the identification of the need to regenerate Ellesmere Green emerged from a combination of routine observation, funding opportunity, and consultation informed by community input. When asked how the Ellesmere Green project was initiated, the council's development officer explained:

"*Mainly, they came to my team in writing. So just to put it in context, we knew there was a need. This was kind of a shabby kind of space, so we knew there was an issue, and money was being covered by and collected from Tesco to be able to do the front whole of Spital Hill and lift the area, the character of the shops to encourage more people to come and shop locally as well as Ellesmere Green. In terms of the issues and aspirations of this space, I got initially involved with the local members. The ones in the community who will understand what the key issues in these are. This is how this all started.*" *(P-16, Council Development Officer)*

However, a closer examination of this process reveals underlying tensions between perceived urban necessities and the more complex realities of genuine community representation and the articulation of local needs. Drawing on interviews data and relevant planning literature, this section critically examines how the justification for the Ellesmere Green regeneration project was constructed and legitimised by Sheffield City Council.

Institutional observations

The initial rationale for the Ellesmere Green regeneration project was largely informed by observations of the site's deteriorating physical and social condition. The Development Officer who led the project described the area as a "*rat-infested space*," noting the presence of an abandoned toilet block, a lack of usable seating or lighting, and concerns about safety, particularly among women, some of whom reported experiencing verbal abuse and avoided the space even during daylight hours.

"In the history of Ellesmere Green, it used to be a church, it used to be a massive church. The church was demolished, the cellars are still there, and it is a breeding ground for rats. When we took it over, it was a rat-infested space, back in the early 2010s, with no sitting area; we know certain areas with a lot of drug addiction and the toilet block. Now, there used to be a lot of antisocial behaviour issues, and the idea was you wouldn't get much done in it. People will remember, particularly women, some of the Asian women that I got to know, shop owners

and stuff, but they wouldn't go through it because they used to get some verbal abuse from them by just walking in daylight through Ellesmere Green. The idea was to obviously have all these formal passages, make sure that it was a lot more transparent, and so on. So, when we know there's a need, we will design a project or, say, concept design"

(P-16, Council Development Officer)

In addition, from a more strategic perspective, as articulated by the council officer directly involved in community participation in Burngreave during the Ellesmere Green project, greater value was placed on the role of public space improvements as a catalyst for wider regeneration. The officer reflected on how such interventions can initiate broader socio-economic change, particularly in deprived areas, by enhancing the built environment as part of a larger, multi-dimensional effort to address complex urban challenges:

"I'd go back to that thing of a public realm being an initiative to kickstart wider regeneration. So, in terms of the city centre, it was right during the Peace Garden, and how it made a major difference to the city centre[13]*. So, there's a lot of evidence and a lot of evidence to say that green space and a good public realm improve house prices and improve the economic outcome. Suppose you were to say that the public realm intervention is part of an overall regeneration of the area, one aspect contributing to that regeneration. Suppose you bring that regeneration if you bring jobs, better schools, and better services for people with drug issues. Then the whole thing will be solved. What you're saying is that this is part of that solution. We thought that it was a valid way of helping that regeneration. What's happened in Burngreave is almost the opposite to the extent that Tesco was even thinking of closing the store. So little trade in Tesco thinking of closing. They had a list of places that they were closing, and I think that was one of the ones that were under consideration because I guess the surrounding community is not affluent, and people weren't necessarily coming from outside to shop there. The part of the council that I'm sad about is that, as planning, development and regeneration, what can you do about the drug issue? (It's not that you don't care, but what tools do you have to deal directly with it? You can try to improve the economy and social outcomes of the area*

[13] The regeneration of the Peace Gardens had a positive impact on Sheffield city centre by transforming it into a highly attractive and well-used public space, contributing to increased footfall and social activity. The refurbishment was reported to be "immediately popular with the public," highlighting its success in enhancing the quality and usability of the city centre environment (Winkler, 2007)

through physical interventions) You have no direct influence on housing, and you have no direct influence on education, have no direct influence on drug education, health initiatives and things? What can you do? The idea is that by bringing a better public realm, you might help that issue. It's a good way to help." ***(P-17, Council officer)***

This perspective reflects the wider urban regeneration logic that positions public realm improvements as a catalyst for broader socio-economic renewal (McClimens et al., 2012). While the officer rightly noted the planning department's limited influence over structural issues such as health, education, and drug misuse, relying primarily on physical interventions risks oversimplifying complex urban inequalities (Imrie & Raco, 2003). Without parallel investment in social infrastructure and services, such improvements may offer only superficial change (Bailey, 2010).

Nonetheless, the overall council's rationale to initiate the EG regeneration project align with the previously discussed general approach of the council to initiate regeneration projects, which begins with identifying a need based on an observed decline.

However, the framing of Ellesmere Green as a failed public space in the first-place risks overlooking the impact of long-term neglect and institutional underinvestment in contributing to its condition. Rather than being solely the result of anti-social behaviour and drugs, the site's decline can also be seen as symptomatic of broader structural issue, particularly in deprived areas such as Burngreave. This was expressed by the Officer who noted that despite longstanding community concerns, the local council lacked the financial resources to address them.

"My understanding is that is has been a desire to improve Ellesmere Green for many, many years. The council didn't have the money to do it. I know that there was a long history of doing that, and also, the planning applications took a long time to be determined. It shook quite a lot of things because the local sector obviously would suffer from having a massive store [Tesco, Saville Street], and people will think about ideas as to how to improve this."

(P-16, Council development officer)

It is significant that although community concerns about the condition of Ellesmere Green had persisted for years, they remained largely unaddressed until external resources became available. This suggests that regeneration, while often framed as a response to grassroots needs or visible decline, is also heavily reliant on institutional funding capacity. The claim by officers

that financial constraints had stalled action for years may highlights how patterns of underinvestment can perpetuate inequality in areas like Burngreave. It also raises further questions not only about the availability of funding, but also about how resources are allocated and spent, and whether other areas or communities were prioritised over Burngreave. This context sets the stage for the next factor that enabled the initiation of the Ellesmere Green regeneration project, the emergence of a funding opportunity.

Funding opportunities

The activation of the EG project was also triggered by the availability of Section 106 planning gain contributions from Tesco's nearby development. Section 106 agreement, also known as a "*Planning Obligation"*, is a legal mechanism under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 that allows local planning authorities, such as Sheffield City Council, to secure contributions from developers to mitigate the impact of new development (GOV.UK, 2019) (*Planning Obligations*, 2019). As per the Development Officer quote above, the project emerged from,

"*…money was being covered by and collected from Tesco to be able to do the whole front of Spital Hill, and lift the area*" ***(P-16, Council development officer)***

So, in this case, the opening of a Tesco store nearby on Saville Street/Spital Hill (see Figure 6.2), triggered a financial obligation reserved for public urban realm improvements in the surrounding area, including Spital Hill and Ellesmere Green.



Figure 6.2: Tesco, Saville Street/Spital Hill

Source: Highlighted by the author on Google Earth

While this facilitated necessary investment in a neglected space, it also exemplifies a reactive, opportunity-led approach to regeneration, where community needs are addressed not through proactive strategic planning but as ancillary benefits of private development. Critiques claim that such planning obligations are dependent on market activity, often leaving deprived communities reliant on external investment to unlock overdue improvements (Bailey, 2010; Imrie & Raco, 2003).

Nevertheless, Section 106 remains a potentially valuable tool for facilitating local improvements-provided it is implemented in a transparent and participatory manner. Rather than simply accepting developer contributions as a transactional necessity, local council should use the opportunity to initiate early and inclusive dialogue with affected communities about how such funds should be spent. In the case of Ellesmere Green, the availability of Section 106 funding could have served as a catalyst for a community-led vision for the space, ensuring that improvements reflected locally articulated needs rather than being shaped primarily by institutional or developer priorities. When deployed strategically, Section 106 can support meaningful regeneration by attaching investment to the lived experiences and aspirations of the local community, rather than functioning merely as a compensatory mechanism tied to market-driven development.

Reliance on formal representation

Another key element in amplifying the need for regenerating Ellesmere Green (EG) was the early engagement with formal representatives of the Burngreave community, mainly ward councillors and established local organisations. As the development Officer explained above, their initial understanding of local needs "*came through the local members... the ones in the community who will understand what are the key issues*" (P-16, Council development officer)

This reliance on formal representation was further reinforced by the same officer, who described how the early stages of the design process were shaped primarily through engagement with a small number of stakeholders.

"We talked to local members, and we talked to the local key stakeholders in order to organise our thoughts in terms of Ellesmere Green... The very initial ideas we talked to members, we talked to my colleagues in landscape architecture... The initial ideas came from the local members and residents' association, about five to six key stakeholders, we got the initial ideas to design, and then we went to wider consultation···. we talked to the Mosque and talked to the

councillors; two of the three local councillors were Muslims, and they also told us whatever they thought was needed." **(P-16, Council development officer)**

This reveals how the initial regeneration scheme was co-produced by council officers and a small circle of formal community representatives, with broader public consultation framed as a later phase- to be discussed in the subsequent sections. The council officer also expressed scepticism, noting that the initial artistic elements of the design were developed primarily in consultation with these formal representative, based on the assumption that they adequately represented the broader local community.

> *"The idea probably came from other officers and me, and we went through the councillors who were Talib Hussein at that time, Jackie Drayton and Ibrar Hussein. I'm sorry to say that there was no interaction with the community to design the approach to the project. The project was designed here. I wouldn't do this now, except sometimes you've got time constraints and things."* **(P-17, Council officer)**

Reflecting on Sheffield City Council's efforts to engage the local Muslim community in identifying and initiating the need for regenerating Ellesmere Green, significant gaps become apparent despite initial well-intentioned efforts. Early engagement relied heavily on formal representation, notably through local councillors, two of whom were Muslim as asserted by both officers. Although this approach ensured a degree of Muslim representation, it assumed homogeneity within the Muslim community, overlooking its internal diversity and complexity. Both Muslim councillors mentioned are of Pakistani background. However, the businesses surrounding Ellesmere Green and their clientele, are predominantly from other national backgrounds, particularly Yemeni, Somali, Kurdish, and North African communities (see Figure 6.3). As while various Muslim ethnic and nationality groups share foundational religious beliefs, each possesses distinct cultural traditions shaped by their unique historical, linguistic, and regional contexts (Pew Research Center, 2012). In addition, the officer acknowledgement of the shortcomings of this strategy, highlights a critical gap between representative participation and genuinely inclusive community participation, particularly for a multi-ethnic and culturally diverse Muslim community such as Burngreave. Therefore, the reliance on councillors and established local organisations as proxies significantly limited meaningful participation, risking the marginalisation of the predominant groups within the Muslim community in the area. In an area such as Burngreave, where the community is predominantly Muslim, such assumptions risk marginalising groups who may not be embedded within formal participation structures. This

critic was also evident amongst the community interviewees as discussed in Chapter five, Section 5.4, and reflected in community participation literature, which warns against the limitations of working exclusively through formal or *'invited'* spaces that may unintentionally reinforce existing exclusions (Cornwall, 2008; Lowndes & Wilson, 2001).



Figure 6.3: Businesses by nationality background

Source: Author

Consequently, while the Council's approach provided a structural pathway to initiate the regeneration project, it revealed systemic inadequacies in fully engaging the Muslim community in Burngreave, potentially compromising the legitimacy and effectiveness of the regeneration outcomes.

Without early engagement of the local community with more culturally responsive engagement, such reliance risks undermining the legitimacy and effectiveness of regeneration efforts as discussed in Chapter five, Section 5.2.

6.2.2.2.2. Communicating the Ellesmere Green project proposal with the Muslim community (Participation process)

During the Ellesmere Green regeneration project, Sheffield City Council employed several participation methods to communicate proposed designs to the local community, notably targeting Burngreave's significant Muslim community. Council officers utilised a dual approach combining indirect and direct methods. Indirect methods included printed multilingual leaflets, open-invitation drop-in sessions, and general informational events, such as the community fun day held at New Roots Café. The development officer described these broad outreach efforts:

"We contacted anybody, any representative Association, and there was a couple, there were a couple of organisations that we also contacted. Representatives that are independent. You look for the key groups, not every single person. We printed 1000s of leaflets and invited people to come along. Dropping in the café. All the community organisations that represented anybody in the area were invited. There was mental health, support mental health through gardening."

(P16, Council development officer)

The council officer further emphasised the importance of direct engagement during the communication phase. He recalled personally visiting local businesses and community groups alongside the project Artist in an effort to ensure widespread participation across Spital Hill.

"Once you've got the sort of initial idea and design [of the public artwork part of the project], the artist drew this up. He and I went around every single shop and every business on Spital Hill. We went up and down, and we made sure that we covered absolutely everybody and talked to everybody as well as community groups. Probably most represented by the TARA, which didn't have particularly Muslim representation on it at all. White and Afro-Caribbean. The

artist and I went to every single shop and engaged with the Muslim community as far as we could and also approached the Mosque but did not get a response." **(P-17, Council officer)**

Taken together, these quotes show that the Council employed a mix of direct and indirect participation tools to communicate the Ellesmere Green proposal exceeding its general approach to communicating proposals with communities, discussed above Section 6.2.2.1.2.

This dual approach reflects an effort to maximise outreach and inclusivity, although the effectiveness of each method varied. Contrary to the approach taken in developing initial design ideas phase, council officers engaged directly with the local Muslim community through interactions with predominantly Muslim-owned and run businesses in the area.

Moreover, although the Tenants and Residents Association (TARA) lacked Muslim representation, and the mosque did not engage specifically with the public art team, direct interactions with local Muslim residents and businesses provided a more representative form of engagement with the Muslim community.

These interactions created a welcoming atmosphere, often with shared meals and cultural exchanges. However, despite these visits, the officer later acknowledged that the community did not feel their voice would carry any real weight.

"What we got was that people were fantastically open and generous, and welcoming. Really thrilled that we've come to speak to them. Deeply polite, but without the language of official understanding or architectural understanding to communicate, I would not expect people to have this sort of language, but I think I am trying to say that looking back, I feel that people didn't feel that it was right for them to question the design etc. - my experience is that a white community would be much more vocal about what they didn't like etc. People would welcome us, shop owners, even if they were busy, give us a cup of coffee, or often give us gifts. We were given a CD and a Quran. It was a deeply moving experience for me and the artist. But we came out thinking, "Oh, this is great. We've really connected with people and talked to loads of people, but in fact, looking back, nobody really thought that they could change it – that it wasn't their place to comment or to change it…. we actually didn't get much feedback on the visual elements of this at all. Or even the conceptual elements. People didn't feel, and it didn't have the vocabulary, it didn't have the understanding that they could say, "I don't like that. you

should do it like this, you should have those colours because those colours are meaningful to our community". They didn't say that." **(P-17, Council officer)**

An extract from this quotation appeared earlier in Section 5.5 to discuss the negative attitude of the Muslim community towards participation; the fuller quotation is used here to illustrate further issues related to communication the EG project with the Muslim community. The community response reflected in this quotation goes beyond immediate cultural or socio-economic barriers and points towards deeper, structurally embedded patterns of exclusion. The officer's narrative reveals a contrast between the apparent success of the participation process, described through terms such as "*open*," "*welcoming*," and "*deeply polite*", and its actual outcome, where "*nobody really thought that they could change it*." This disconnection is critical. As, it suggests that what was interpreted by the council officer as positive engagement may in fact reflect a form of superficial interaction shaped by unequal power relations, rather than meaningful participation. Importantly, the officer's observation that community members "*didn't feel that it was right for them to question the design*" indicates a deeper sense of internalised disempowerment, where individuals do not perceive themselves as legitimate contributors to decision-making processes (as discussed in Chapter Five, Section 5.5). The comparison with a "*more vocal*" white community further reinforces this point, highlighting how participation is not evenly distributed across groups but is shaped by historically produced inequalities in confidence, and familiarity with institutional processes.

Moreover, the emphasis on the community's lack of vocabulary to engage with design should not be understood solely as a technical limitation, as it reflects a broader issue of exclusion, where the forms of knowledge valued within planning processes are not aligned with those available to the community.

Therefore, the limited feedback observed during the participation process is better understood not as a failure of the community to participate, but as a consequence of entrenched systemic exclusion, where communities that routinely experience marginalisation develop constrained expectations of their role in relation to authority (Cornwall, 2008; Gaventa, 2006).

Such limitations emphasise the necessity of adopting deeper, culturally sensitive participation methods. Scholars advocate for methods that empower diverse communities to articulate their spatial and social aspirations effectively, promoting co-production and shared output (Fincher & Iveson, 2008; Miraftab, 2004; Healey, 1997)

Thus, despite their efforts, Sheffield City Council's engagement strategies for Ellesmere Green remained primarily informational, leaving critical gaps in genuine participation among

Burngreave's Muslim community. To overcome this sense of exclusion, the council needs to create participation processes that actively empower communities rather than expecting them to adapt to institutional norms. As although the officer's approach to the community included engaging people in familiar spaces (going to their shops and restaurants), the lack of accessible and non-technical forms of communication undermined the confidence. Equally important is demonstrating that community input has real influence through clear feedback and visible outcomes, helping to shift perceptions from participation being "*not their place*" to a legitimate and valued form of engagement.

To conclude, although Sheffield City Council has a policy framework for community participation in regeneration projects, it needs to keep pace more consistently with the national statutory framework. At the same time, non-statutory guidance should be consistent to and implement the statutory policies (SCIs) through diversifying tools that work with different communities and context-appropriate to different areas. In the case of Muslims in Burngreave, this could include clearer requirements for early relational trust-building, culturally responsive engagement, multilingual and non-technical communication, co-design tools, and feedback mechanisms that demonstrate how community views have influenced outcomes. From a practice-based perspective, the findings suggest that although the Council is aware that some communities, such as Muslims in Burngreave, may face particular barriers to participation, this awareness alone is insufficient. Rather than simply working around perceived characteristics of the community (acknowledging their limited capacity towards participation), the council needs to challenge itself to develop more creative and empowering approaches that enable communities to articulate their own priorities, initiate the kinds of projects they see as relevant to their needs, and participate meaningfully in both the identification of regeneration needed and the communication and shaping of project proposals.

6.3. The local council's challenges

Despite the efforts made by Sheffield City Council to involve the local community in the Ellesmere Green project, and the shortcomings identified in these efforts, the findings also indicate that the council face a number of challenges in attempting to deliver meaningful participation in practice. Also, although the policy framework has evolved since the EG project (Section 6.2.1), the council's practice-based approach still faces challenges.

These challenges are not presented here to excuse the limitations of the council's approach, but rather to highlight the complex institutional and local conditions within which participation is

negotiated. Using insights from council officers' interviews, this section examines community participation barriers faced by the council when engaging Burngreave's Muslim community.

In the Burngreave context, two issues emerged from the data, funding constraints and cultural gaps. Together, these factors shaped both the scope of the council's engagement and its ability to respond effectively to the needs and expectations of the local Muslim community.

6.3.1. Funding Constraints

While much urban regeneration literature focuses on funding challenges related to infrastructure delivery (Adair et al., 2000; UN Habitat, 2021; Liao & Liu, 2023), Sheffield City Council's experience at Ellesmere Green demonstrates that limited funding also significantly constrained the quality and scope of community engagement itself.

Without adequate investment in these areas, participation risks becoming superficial, reactive, and tokenistic (Cornwall, 2008). A fundamental challenge Sheffield City Council faced in effectively engaging the Muslim community in the Ellesmere Green regeneration project, was funding constraints. Council officials repeatedly highlighted how budget limitations influenced the depth, scope, and quality of community participation processes. As revealed across council officers' interviews and local community voices, the lack of funding directly constrained participatory efforts, especially in the context of a diverse communities, where reaching them requires more resources. However, these limitations stemmed from three interrelated factors, the reduction in local government budgets due to national austerity policies, the rigidity of council budget frameworks that delay timely and locally tailored responses, and the missed opportunities evident even when substantial investments, such as the Burngreave New Deal for Communities, are not strategically managed for lasting community benefit. As the regeneration manager and the council officer stated when asked about the council challenges when approaching community participation,

"The answer is resources—how much money we have, in terms of how much we can afford to spend on doing publicity? And, staff resources, how many staff do we have to be able to have exhibitions and be there to answer questions?"

(P-18, Council regeneration manager).

"Financial challenges. The main challenge is how you get the amount of quality that you want within the budget." *(P-17, Council officer)*

Together, these factors have restricted not only the depth of participation with Burngreave's diverse communities, but also the capacity to translate policy ambitions into meaningful, sustainable outcomes.

6.3.1.1. The Impact of national austerity policies

One of the most significant drivers of funding constraints for local authorities in England over the past decade has been the implementation of austerity policies following the 2008 global financial crisis. Between 2010 and 2020, central government funding for local councils in England fell by almost 50% in real terms, leading to significant cuts in non-statutory services, including regeneration and community engagement (National Audit Office, 2021; Ogden & Phillips, 2024).

For Sheffield City Council, the austerity era resulted in sustained reductions in budgets for community activities, including those connected to the Ellesmere Green project. Council officers working under these constraints frequently cited not only reduced overall budgets but also uncertainty about future funding, which disadvantaged long-term planning for participation activities (as demonstrated in the quotes above).

Research has shown that austerity measures disproportionately affected deprived urban areas (like Burn greave), where the need for participatory approaches and tailored outreach is greatest (Deas & Doyle, 2013). The combination of shrinking budgets and increased need meant that engagement processes often became transactional and limited in scope, undermining the legitimacy of regeneration initiatives (Habermehl & Perry, 2021).

6.3.1.2. Budget rigidity

The inflexibility of local council budgets has had a significant impact on both the effectiveness of regeneration efforts and the degree of community participation in areas like Burngreave. As community needs and priorities often differ between neighbourhoods, yet the mechanisms for distributing funding are frequently rigid and fixed. As highlighted by the regeneration manager, simply increasing maintenance spending in response to visible problems does not necessarily lead to long-term improvements, and can actually reinforce a cycle of short-term, reactive measures rather than addressing underlying issues.

"The Council has maintenance regimes, and they will do that and suddenly say, "hang on, you now need to increase the regime by 50%, because it's more dirty". Whereas another area where they don't have the same problem, but it's exactly identical. Do you then take the money from that area and put more money in Darnall area? Money isn't always going to resolve that

problem. He's not going to resolve it, because what will happen is that you do more and more maintenance, you'll be just like a mouse in awheel, he just will never catch up."

(P-18, regeneration manager)

This illustrates how formula funding, typically based on population size, deprivation indices, and historic spending, often fails to account for sudden or localised challenges, such as spikes in littering or fly-tipping (Local Government Association, 2024). The lack of flexibility means that councils are limited in their ability to respond to the unique, sometimes temporary, maintenance needs that arise in areas such as Burngreave.

This budget rigidity directly affects community participation by constraining opportunities for the community and local organisations to shape local priorities and influence how resources are used. In addition, it contributes to the understanding that nothing changes so there's no point in complaining to or engaging with the local council. When communities perceive that council spending is unresponsive to their lived realities, motivation to participate in regeneration projects can wane, as described by the community participants in Chapter five, Section 5.2.2. Furthermore, it limits the potential for collaborative solutions, such as working with local mosques or community leaders to foster shared responsibility for public spaces.

Ultimately, promoting a more flexible and strategic approach to maintenance budgets -not just increasing spending, but aligning resources with local knowledge and long-term engagement- could empower communities, build trust, and create the conditions for more sustainable participation in regeneration project. As even significant investment can have limited or short-lived impact, whereas a small amount of investment can have a large impact if invested appropriately (Lerner, 2014). This disconnect between funding mechanisms and real community needs was especially apparent in the Burngreave New Deal for Communities initiative, where a lack of flexibility and meaningful participation led to missed opportunities and persistent dissatisfaction at the local level.

6.3.1.3. Lost opportunities, Burngreave New Deal for Communities (BNDFC) as an example

The case of the Burngreave New Deal for Communities (BNDfC) is an illustration of how funding constraints are not just about the amount of money allocated, but fundamentally about how funding is distributed, who benefits, and how far such investments reach the communities they are intended to serve. Despite an unprecedented £52 million investment from the Central Government in the early 2000s, community leaders described the programme as a profound

missed opportunity- one shaped as much by the quality of participation and resource management as by the volume of funds (Batty et al., 2010).

The deputy Chair of ISRAAC Community Association, and Burngreave community activist expressed this sense of frustration and loss.

"This area got £52 million through the New Deal for Burngreave. If you ask the question, where did that £52 million go? The community have benefited nothing… What difference did the 52 million make? Very little. Most of the jobs that they advertised were highly paid jobs. The only people who could get those jobs were the middle class who had masters, PhD, and experience… They worked for three or four years, and when the funding was coming to finish, they built a good CV, got a good salary, and now moved on, and the people have benefited nothing from the 52 million, and yet they tell you this area spent 50 million, not even 10 million was spent in the improvement." **(P-14, Deputy Chair of ISRAAC)**

Yet from inside the programme, the Chair of ISRAAC, who was part of the initial board of the programme acknowledged that, despite disappointment, some positive legacy did result.

"I believe that the 52 million made a big difference. If it didn't make whatever was expected, but at least it's done a lot of business, it has a lot of impact to the community in the area, whether it's the housing area, whether it's education, or support the schools··· the New Deal for Communities was not only helping the community, it was helping the schools, the housing, all sorts of the health, all these were part of it. And now, all the things which are there, I think it was because of the New Deal for Communities funding, somehow, or some aspect of it."

(P-13, the Chair of ISRAAC)

However, he also pointed to structural problems in how the programme was managed and lacked sustainability after the funding ended:

"There was no continuation or a strategic exit plan. That was the weakest thing, you know, there was no exit plan in terms of what will happen if the money finishes··· most of them died after the New Deal, because there was no continuation." ***(P-13, the Chair of ISRAAC)***

These quotes offer several crucial insights. Firstly, it reveals how structural funding constraints are not just a matter of insufficient resources but are rooted in who controls, accesses, and benefits from those resources. Although the funding appeared generous on paper and was,

according to the Chair, well-managed by programme leaders, its impact was neither felt by ordinary community members nor reflected in the condition of the area, as demonstrated in Chapters Four and Five. It diverted into administrative costs, high-salaried roles, and failed projects whose ownership and management often remained with the local council, not the community. The removal of community control over key assets, such as Sorby House and Vestry Hall (as discussed in Section 5.2.2), further deepen this alienation, highlighting the failure to build sustainable community participation capacity.

The Deputy Chair remarks exposed a disconnect between the ambitions of regeneration policy and the experience of marginalised communities. The emphasis on qualifications and professional experience in recruitment for regeneration roles meant that local people, who are mostly from BAME (Black and Minority Ethnic) backgrounds and less likely to hold such credential, were systematically excluded from meaningful participation or leadership in projects meant for their benefit. As a result, the initiative left little lasting legacy for those it was intended to empower, undermining both trust and future participation, as articulated by the Deputy Chair.

"If you don't resource those organisations, those organisations are the vehicle of engagement of those communities. So, if they are not properly resourced, you lose that element and people become individualistic. What brings people together is organisations. If those organisations are not properly resourced, they will fall apart or close. So, they need staffing, they need outreach workers, they need to advocate on behalf of those communities, and the local authority can use this organisation as a vehicle to reach those, that they call 'hard to reach communities."

(P-14, Deputy Chair of ISRAAC)

This perspective points to a deeper lesson about the mechanisms of funding constraint, particularly in relation to capacity building within community organisations. It highlights that without sustained investment in local organisations as key intermediaries, regeneration funding is unlikely to translate into meaningful or inclusive participation. Beyond simply delivering projects, these organisations require resources to build their internal capacity, such as staffing and outreach, which enables them to effectively represent and mobilise their communities. Thus, funding is not only about physical regeneration outcomes, but also about strengthening the local social infrastructure that reinforces participation.

The legacy of the BNDFC, therefore, is not one of insufficient funding, but of a missed opportunity to develop sustainable, community-led capacities that could support long-term participation. It shows the importance for future initiatives to prioritise not only how much funding is allocated,

but how it is invested in empowering local organisations to act as durable vehicles of participation, ensuring more inclusive, accountable, and community-driven regeneration processes.

6.3.2. Cultural Gaps

Another challenge Sheffield City Council faced in engaging the Muslim community of Burngreave during the Ellesmere Green regeneration project was navigating persistent cultural gaps, such as the language barrier and the community expectations. While the Council made visible efforts to reach out to local Muslims, these challenges constrained the Council's ability to foster meaningful, reciprocal engagement.

6.3.2.1. Language barrier

For Sheffield City Council, the language barrier proved to be one of the most persistent challenges in engaging Burngreave's Muslim community during the Ellesmere Green regeneration project. Despite well-intentioned efforts, including the translation of written material, the Council often found that language difficulties still prevented meaningful, independent participation by many community members. This struggle was reflected in the experience of council officers on the ground, as the development officer recalled,

"There was some woman who ran some businesses on Spital Hill that I remember, and she couldn't speak very good English. She relied on a young person to translate for her. That was always difficult because it was such a shame that I couldn't communicate, and she needed to use somebody else to translate what she wanted to say. But we got there. Obviously, one needs to deal with the language" ***(P-16, Council Development Officer).***

Such situations limited the council's ability to build direct and trusting relationships with community members, particularly in a context where multiple languages are spoken. Reliance on informal interpretation can lead to meanings being lost, simplified, or misunderstood, affecting how accurately community views are communicated. As Reed et al (2024) argue, inclusive participation requires more than translation, it demands careful attention to how language shapes understanding and participation (Reed et al., 2024). Although working across multiple languages is time and resource intensive, it offers significant value, and addressing this barrier can enhance the quality of participation, strengthen trust, and enable more inclusive and effective regeneration outcomes for the wider community.

6.3.2.2. Misaligned Expectations

Beyond language, the Council encountered cultural dynamics that shaped how the Muslim community interpreted the purpose of participation. Despite Council's efforts to encourage participation, the experience of community participation often felt disconnected from the Muslim community expectations. While the council organised public meetings and events with the intention of fostering inclusive participation, many Muslims found these practices unfamiliar, reflecting a deeper gap in cultural expectations around decision-making and influence. Council officers themselves recognised these limitations, as the officer asserted in the quote mentioned above in Section 6.2.2.2.2, and here is a reminder of an extract of it of it.

"We came out thinking, 'Oh, this is great. We've really connected with people and talked to loads of people,' but in fact, looking back, nobody really thought that they could change it – that it wasn't their place to comment or to change it. What we got was that people were fantastically open and generous, and welcoming… but without the language of official understanding or architectural understanding to communicate" ***(P-17, Council officer)***

This comment reveals more than a simple language barrier. It shows a lack of cultural familiarity with community participation processes, which leads to disempowerment. Many in the Muslim community in Burngreave had different perception towards, and expectations from local council. As the community leader and Deputy Chair of ISRAAC explained,

"Our cultures, Arabic, Muslim, Somali culture··· if we go to a meeting and things are decided, and you come two weeks later, and still going through the bureaucracy. People think these people are not serious, why are we wasting our time? They will not hang around; they will move on" ***(P-14, Deputy Chair of ISRAAC)***

He added,

"Our communities are doers… If they want to build a supermarket, they make a decision to build it here, you will have to consult for two years… It's just a big wheel, meeting after meeting… These people do not have the time. So, when they come to tell them nothing with action, they will give up and just get on with their lives" ***(P-14, Deputy Chair of ISRAAC)***

Such views were repeatedly raised by community members, as part of the factors feeding their negative attitude towards community participation as outlined in Chapter five, Section 5.5. Miraftab (2004) and Volpp (2007) argued that many formal participation mechanisms are

grounded in Western norms of citizenship that may not resonate with more action-oriented traditions found in migrant and minority communities (Miraftab, 2004; Volpp, 2007). This can leave residents feeling disempowered or excluded, even when consultation is intended to be inclusive, and leads to the conclusion that consultation is a 'tick box' exercise without the capacity for meaningful change. Addressing these challenges requires not only providing information in accessible forms, but also rethinking participation practices to better reflect the cultural expectations and lived realities of the communities involved (Fink et al., 2021; Rong et al., 2023).

Overall, while Sheffield City Council recognises key challenges related to funding constraints and cultural gaps, there is limited evidence that these issues have been systematically addressed in practice. Existing literature provides directions for mitigating such challenges. Studies emphasise the importance of investing in long-term community capacity building, particularly through supporting local organisations (Cornwall, 2008; Lowndes & Wilson, 2001), alongside addressing language barriers through dedicated resources for professional interpretation and culturally competent facilitation (Fincher & Iveson, 2008). Therefore, while these challenges are not unique to Sheffield, their continued presence highlights the need for a more proactive and reflexive approach, where the Council not only acknowledges barriers but actively redesigns its participation practices to better align with the lived realities of diverse communities such as Burngreave's Muslim community.

6.4. The local Police role

As discussed previously in Chapter Four (Section 4.5), Ellesmere Green created a considerable nuisance for the local community in Burngreave. Safety and security were repeatedly raised by participants, and the role of police was brought up regularly in discussions. Thus, the police involvement matters not only to ensure safety, but also in shaping the usability and beneficiary of regeneration projects such as the EG project for the community. This section attempts to focus on exploring this role in the context of EG and the broader police-council relationship in regeneration projects. Interviews conducted with community members and the South Yorkshire Police Inspector (North Eat, which includes Burngreave) demonstrate that the police role extends far beyond enforcement. It involves trust-building, everyday presence, and coordination with wider institutional actors, particularly the council. However, similar to the council, police efforts are constrained by structural limitations, community mistrust, and fragmented multi-agency working. The data shows that the local police have an important responsibility when engaging with the local community in Burngreave, particularly Ellesmere

Green. As participants repeatedly saw the police as necessary to restoring safety, visibility, and confidence in the area. They viewed police efforts as limited, reactive, and insufficiently coordinated with the council and other agencies. Nonetheless, the police appear to face challenges similar to those identified for the council, as they are expected to engage meaningfully with the local Muslim community, yet their efforts are constrained by limited resources, mistrust, and a lack of sustained multi-agency coordination. From planning perspective, it appears that there is a limited cooperation between the police and the council in terms of regeneration projects.

6.4.1. Police engagement with the community in Burngreave

Understanding police engagement with the local community is essential within the context of regeneration, as the police form a key component of the broader local authority structure. The nature of this relationship has implications that extend beyond policing itself, shaping how the council and its initiatives are perceived by residents. In areas such as Burngreave, where Ellesmere Green is widely associated with drug use and antisocial behaviour, the police are often the most visible representatives of institutional presence. As such, a positive and consistent relationship between the police and the community can contribute to building trust not only in policing practices but also in wider regeneration efforts. Where trust is established, communities are more likely to engage cooperatively, share information, and participate in addressing local challenges alongside public authorities. Conversely, weak or fragmented relationships can reinforce disengagement and undermine the effectiveness of regeneration initiatives. It is therefore important to examine both community perspectives and the police viewpoint in order to understand how this relationship is experienced and negotiated in practice.

The South Yorkshire Police (SYP) Inspector demonstrated a clear awareness of the challenges associated with policing in Burngreave, particularly in relation to trust, perception, and engagement with a diverse community. As the police are considered within the local community as part of the authorities that they have trust issues with (as discussed in Chapter Five, Section 5.3). He explicitly acknowledges that the issue is not simply crime levels, but how these are experienced and interpreted by the community:

> *"Crime in Burngreave is not necessarily above crime in Sheffield. But the community feel like there is more crime and more antisocial behaviour than there actually is, which is a massive challenge for me, my teams, and Sheffield City Council to get the community to feel safer in that locality."* **(P-19, SY Police inspector)**

This distinction between recorded crime and perceived insecurity suggests that policing in Burngreave, particularly within a Muslim-majority context, must address not only criminal activity but also the social production of fear, which is shaped by visible disorder such as drug use and antisocial behaviour in Ellesmere Green. This resonates strongly with community perception presented earlier in Chapter Four (Section 4.5), where participants described daily exposure to such behaviours as central to their avoidance of Ellesmere Green. The police consider mistrust as a key barrier that shape the Burngreave local community perception towards the police, which is linked to their previous experience with the police as well as the nature of the community in Burngreave.

"So, we've got a lot of issues in Burngreave around trust. We are trusted in some pockets; in others, no—but for very different reasons. So, I think there is underreporting. But I also think our systems can lead people not to report. Because if you ring 101, you can find yourself waiting for some time, you get frustrated, you hang up. And that has a knock-on effect on confidence, doesn't it?..... People might have rang us before, had poor service, and might not call us again. If you look at the amount of cultures in Burngreave, those guys that have come into Burngreave from another country what was their relationship like with the police? Would they trust us? Would they have the same relationship with us?" **(SYP inspector)**

The inherent distrust is relevant in the context of Burngreave's Muslim communities, many of whom may carry prior experiences of policing from other contexts (as discussed in Chapter Five, section 5.3.1). However, as affirmed above by the inspector, the local community's experience with the local authorities, and the police in particular, shows that authorities neglect plays a vital role in increasing this distrust (as discussed in Chapter Five, Section 5.3.2). A community member and a shop owner located opposite EG, express the frustration felt by the community regarding the EG being used for drugs and anti-social behaviours.

We spoke to the authorities, we've had the MP in this community, we've had the police in this community, we've had the council in this community, we've had meetings just over the road over there in the library with all these, the MP, the police, the community leaders. We've told them what's up in this community, and we said we need these phone-boxes removed because people take heroin, they are taking crack and having sex in there, and they don't do anything. We've put that there on the board, and we heard nothing back from them. Nothing.

(P-10, Community member and Shop owner)

This shows a strong disappointment among community members and business owners because of the inaction and non-responsiveness of local authorities, including the police. This perception deepens the perception that police efforts are performative rather than effective. This is particularly damaging, as it erodes trust and reinforces the belief that even when the community speaks clearly, its concerns are not being acted upon. Nonetheless, the Inspector's reflection demonstrates an institutional awareness that trust is lacking in Burngreave and that there are efforts made for it to be addressed, especially the EG issue.

"We were challenged by business owners around Ellesmere Green about antisocial behaviour, open drug dealing, open drug use. That acted as a catalyst and refocused our activity."

(P-19, SY Police inspector)

Thus, while community members may perceive their concerns as being overlooked, the police do appear to acknowledge these issues and make efforts. For example, the Inspector outlines multiple attempts to engage the community through formal and informal and proactive methods, including pop-up police stations and sports games such as basketball and football.

"We work really closely with a number of organisations. For example, [the councillor] and her project Reach Up—Big Brother—which we've been supporting. I've been supporting them since I took this post up, playing basketball with them, playing football with them on Concord Park. ……. playing basketball with them [the youth], … we are trying a number of different ways to engage with young guys……We use Ellesmere Green as a pop-up police station… the tent will go up, and we'll hold the ground, and we'll invite the local community to come and see us there." ***(P-19, SY Police inspector)***

These efforts suggest an intention within the police to build trust in Burngreave that move beyond enforcement, and towards relational and context-sensitive engagement. For example, the Inspector pointed to moments where informal engagement has proven more effective through interactions following sports activities, where young people initiated conversations about policing.

"When we played football with the big boys. After the game, they wanted to talk about Stop and Search. They wanted to know what their rights were. …… It was about the Power of

stopping a car comes from……I think their understanding of English law comes from American films. …, I think that's probably how they understand English law." ***(P-19, SY Police inspector)***

So, these informal settings can create spaces for genuine dialogue, allowing misconceptions to be addressed and relationships to develop organically, where young people feel comfortable asking questions and officers could respond in a more accessible and relatable manner.

However, more formal setting such as using pop-up police stations that are aimed to engage with the local community will be limited in their effectiveness if not performed with a genuine intention to foster this relationship. As although the police as an institution took the initiative of pop-up stations, fieldwork observations raise questions about the effectiveness and delivery of these methods in practice. During site visit, while the pop-up police tent was indeed present on Ellesmere Green it was observed to be largely inactive, with officers remaining inside the police van rather than engaging directly with the space or community (see Field notes & Figure 6.4).

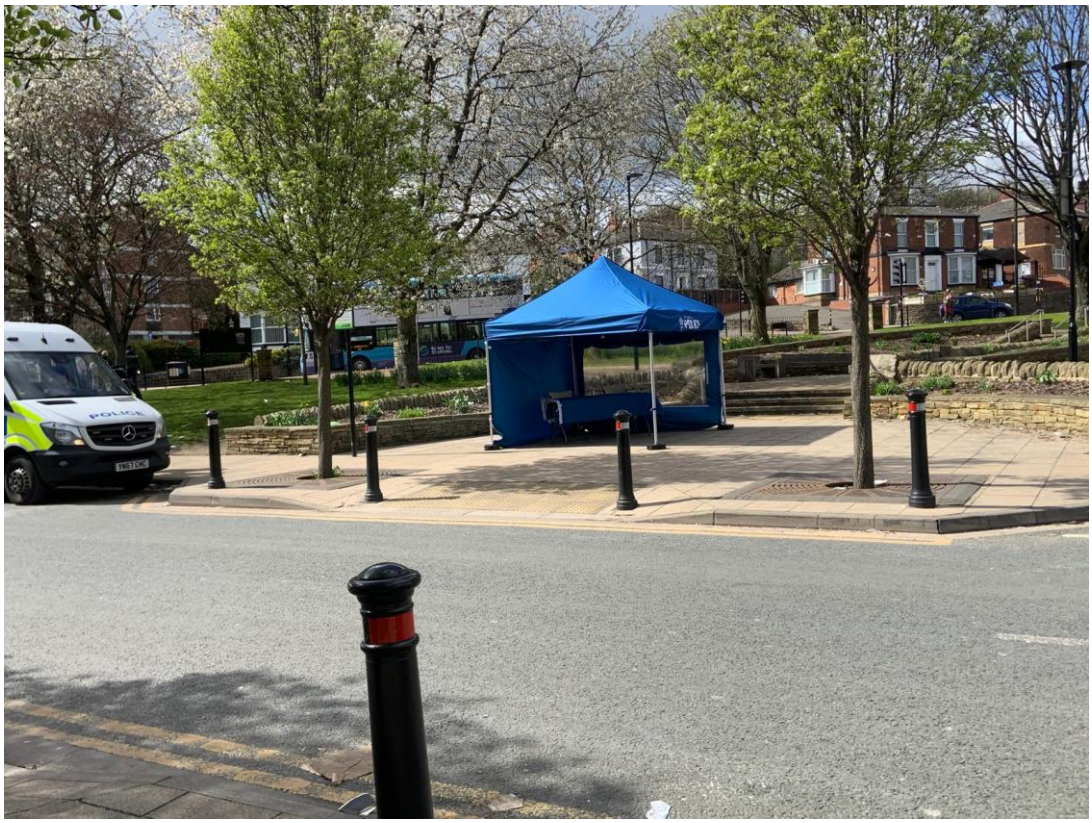


Figure 6.4: Police Pop-Up station, Ellesmere Green, April,2022

Source: Author

Thus, while the presence of the police contributes to maintaining safety in Ellesmere Green and the surrounding area, there remains a lack of active engagement with the community, limiting the development of meaningful relationships and the building of trust between the police and local residents.

6.4.2 The police and regeneration

The interviews also show that the police are not only relevant to community relations after regeneration has taken place, but are already implicated in the regeneration process itself, especially through issues of design, safety, and the management of space. This is important because it suggests that the police are part of the governance of public space, not merely responders to incidents.

The findings from interviews with the council development officer and the police inspector suggest that the police are involved in the planning of local regeneration projects. Both, council officer and the police confirm that the police are routinely consulted during these projects. As the development officer explains,

"Police were involved by the way they were consulted··· There are things obviously like terrorist attacks and things, so they need to approve designs to make sure that they are terrorist attack proof. For example··· somebody wanted to put a couple of benches on Exchange Streets··· and the police weren't happy about that because it's another area with a lot of drug dealing going on··· 'We don't want them because that will lead to another breeding ground.' So, we always involve them in terms of design just to make sure that they are happy with the proposals."

(P-16, Council development officer)

Similarly, the Inspector confirms that this involvement is embedded within specific institutional mechanisms:

"Yes [we were involved in regeneration projects], but generally through a department focused on designing out crime." *(P-19, SY Police inspector)*

This demonstrates that the police have a recognised role in regeneration projects through design-based interventions aimed at reducing opportunities for crime. The development officer's quote is particularly revealing because it demonstrates how the police can influence public realm design by anticipating how certain physical elements might be used. Benches, which might otherwise be seen as amenities that support social use, and rest are reframed here as possible

infrastructures of disorder. Also, a community member recalled that after complaints were made, police intervened and changed some of the features of EG.

"Even Sheffield Star has talked about the plants and flowers that have been cut. Because once when we complained about them, the police came and started searching the space, and they found knives and drugs, so they cut all the plants within the green space. This wasn't the first time, of course." ***(P-09, Local resident and restaurant owner)***

Such isolated interventions, such as cutting plants after finding drugs (see Figure 6.6 & 6.7), shows that the police involvement in the project in the planning phase failed to translate into design-based measure to prevent crimes, which led to such reactive crime-tackling approach.



Figure 6.5: Ellesmere Green newly accomplished

Source: Bernhards Landscapes, 2013



Figure 6.6: Ellesmere Green without plants and flowers, 2022

Source: Author

To conclude this section, the findings indicate that strengthening the relationship between the police and the local community is not only essential for improving perceptions of safety, but also for enhancing trust in other local authorities, especially the council, and by extension, in regeneration initiatives such as Ellesmere Green. Where this relationship is positive and sustained, it can support more effective collaboration between residents and local authorities, creating the conditions for more meaningful participation and better regeneration outcomes.

The use of informal engagement methods, such as football and basketball activities highlighted by the Inspector, demonstrates promising practice and should be further encouraged a, particularly in partnership with community organisations and local leaders.

As discussed in Chapter Five (Section 5.2.1), such culturally appropriate and informal settings can facilitate more open dialogue and help overcome barriers associated with formal participation processes. However, while the police are formally involved in regeneration through design consultation, their role needs to be taken in practice. This requires a shift from reactive interventions (cutting plants and flowers) towards more proactive, preventative approaches that are embedded within both the design and ongoing management of spaces. Ultimately, more coordinated and genuinely engaged collaboration between the police, the council, and the community is necessary to ensure that regeneration efforts are effective.

6.5. The (National Health Service) NHS approach to community participation

This section discusses the local NHS (National Health Service) approach to engaging communities (particularly Muslims) through analysing the interview conducted with the engagement manager of the NHS South Yorkshire Integrated Care Board, and the observation of the public consultation witnessed in Ellesmere Green. Similar to the council approach, the NHS currently has a statutory obligation to involve communities in the participation process of their projects, and a non-statutory part that rely on how to engage with communities in practice.

"I see my role has two major points in it. One is about keeping the organisation safe from legal challenge so that we work within our legal duties around involving the public in our planning and decision making. So that's a very sort of processes part of it. But the other part of it as well is building relationships with communities to facilitate that. But for me, the main part of my role, it is very much building those relationships with communities, so we can build that insight into our commissioning decisions and what we do, and hopefully, it strives

towards a Co-production model, although I don't like using the term co-production that much, because I think within the NHS, there are limitations to deliver what I think is true Co-production, which is sharing of power. And the NHS is a very hierarchical structure that likes to keep its power within itself. But that's part of my role is to find those opportunities and make our commissioners aware of actually the benefits of sharing the power with communities when making decisions." **(P-20, NHS engagement manager)**

This quote demonstrates that there are three important elements that constitute the NHS approach to community participation, that needs to be unpacked here. First the legal (statutory) part, second, the context-appropriate method(s) of participation (non-statutory), and finally, the power dynamic that influence the process.

The legal side of the community participation is manifested in the statutory guidance document *Working in Partnership with People and Communities (2022*) introduced by the NHS to ensure that communities are involved in the planning of the proposals of different services. This document replaced the 2008 *Statutory Guidance for Trusts*, the 2017 *Statutory Guidance for Commissioners*, and the 2021 *Implementation Guidance for Integrated care systems (ICSs)*.

This latest guidance requires NHS institutions not only to consult communities, but also to systematically plan, document, and demonstrate how public input has shaped decisions, while ensuring inclusive engagement that prioritises marginalised groups. Importantly, the guidance does not prescribe a specific method(s) of participation, but provides a flexible framework that allows organisations to adapt their approaches to different contexts, while remaining accountable for meaningful involvement (NHS England, 2022).

In practice, beyond the statutory requirements, the way community participation is carried out is largely shaped by each NHS organisation in terms of the methods it adopts, the approaches it prioritises, and the specific contexts in which it operates. The manager provided some examples on different methods used to engage different communities in different areas.

"[the councillor], down in Ellesmere green told us that Friday prayer was a great opportunity to catch a lot of people that are engaged in their community that would want to talk to us, and that was absolutely the case. But then you go up to Parson Cross. We targeted some things around the Methodist churches around there that have a big following. But that it wasn't really about having a set day and time to go along and talk to people on the street and have one to one conversations. It moved much more towards catching people in shops

or public meetings as well. Actually, some of the public — we held public meetings across all of the areas, but actually in Burngreave we had very few people that came along to those. Whereas up in Shiregreen and Parson Cross lots of people came to those public meetings. ……So, different people get attracted to different ways of being involved." ***(P-20, NHS engagement manager)***

This is an important shift from standardised participation practices towards a more adaptive approach that recognises participation as socially and spatially situated. Rather than expecting communities to engage on institutional terms, the NHS attempts to meet people within existing patterns of their daily activities. In the Burngreave context, where religious practices structure everyday life, such alignment is particularly significant in enabling access to Muslim participants who may otherwise remain excluded from traditional consultation formats.

The NHS approach to engaging the local Muslim community reflects a more context-sensitive and relational model of participation, particularly when compared to the more procedural approaches observed in other authorities' settings (police and council). This is evident in both, the observed consultation event at Ellesmere Green (as discussed in Chapter Four, Section 4.6.2) and the engagement manager's interview, which together demonstrate an awareness that participation must be embedded within the lived realities of the community rather than imposed through formalised methods, illustrated by the deliberate timing of the participation to coincide with Friday prayers.

Moreover, the NHS engagement manager positions trust as a fundamental barrier to participation, rooted in a broader distrust between communities and local authorities, discussed previously (Section 5.3.2). This mistrust is shaped by past experiences where participants felt unheard or saw no alignment between their input and outcomes, reflecting a failure in feedback mechanisms.

"The main challenge, trust is a big one, I think just trust. There are many factors in that I think there's just generally a distrust in large [public] organisations in general, and that kind of statutory organisations like the council and the NHS, I think, quite often, there is a trust deficit for many reasons. So that that is a big one. I think some of that is based on the fact that they that people feel that they've not been heard before. So, they might have been involved in something, and then they didn't really hear back about it, or something different happened to what they wanted. So that's always a big challenge." ***(P-20, NHS engagement manager)***

This shows that disengagement is not simply a lack of interest but a response to perceived tokenistic participation. Trust, therefore, is both a precondition and an outcome of participation, requiring institutions to demonstrate responsiveness and tangible impact, or participation risks reinforcing existing scepticism. However, in the case of NHS engagement with Muslims in Burngreave, the engagement manager was able to leverage the trust associated with a local councillor who attended the event, which helped shift community perceptions and encouraged greater participation, as described by the manager.

"When we met at Ellesmere green, I'd been there from about 10 o'clock, I think. And I'd spoken to a few people that walk past but they were, you know, people were distant. They didn't really trust this guy with an NHS badge in the middle of Ellesmere green. But then, it starts to get a little bit busier as a sort of that prayer time started to come and people were walking past but again, people were distant. And then as soon as [the councillor] was there, people gravitated towards us and towards [the councillor], and it's having that trusted relationship within communities that I think it breaks down barriers, really, I think it gives a level of trust in the work that we do, and the motives that we're doing it with, to kind of bring people in and do that and also there are enablers that [the councillor] can speak a number of different languages to help and some volunteers and staff can do that as well. But that is a huge thing."

(P-20, NHS engagement manager)

This illustrates how trust operates as a relational and socially embedded resource, as the initial distance from community members, despite physical presence and timing, demonstrates that institutional identity alone (the NHS badge) can act as a barrier rather than an enabler. Trust is instead mediated through recognised community figures such as the councillor, whose existing relationships and linguistic capacities function as key access points. Trust can also be reinforced through racial, cultural, and religious lines.

"…. being a white person expecting to talk to Black African people or Asian people, Muslims. That actually, there is a barrier there. And it's that, and I think it comes down to that trust again, you can't just, you can't just parachute people into an area and expect a level of trust to have an honest conversation about something. Without something breaking down that that barrier and making that connection, I've not managed to place exactly where that comes from, I think, for me, it just comes down to trust. I've been there for an hour, when I first arrived, and very few people came near, you could see people walking around to avoid having a conversation.

Whereas actually, as soon as I had someone that was a recognised member of the community with me, people let down their guard and had a level of trust to come over and have that conversation…" (P-20, NHS engagement manager)

The manager's reflection acknowledges that engagement is constrained when institutions attempt to "*parachute*" into communities without prior relationships, suggesting that trust cannot be assumed but must be negotiated through meaningful connections. The presence of a recognised community member again emerges as critical in reducing social barriers and enabling dialogue, indicating that trust-building is contingent on both representation and sustained relational engagement rather than one-off interventions.

Nonetheless, the power dynamic remains a critical tension within the NHS approach to participation, particularly in relation to the limits of how far trust-building can translate into meaningful influence over decision-making. While relational participation strategies may facilitate access and dialogue, they do not necessarily redistribute power in any substantive way. As highlighted by the engagement manager, the NHS operates within a hierarchical institutional structure that retains decision-making authority, which constrains the extent to which participation can move beyond participation towards genuine co-production. This reflects wider critiques within participatory governance literature, where institutional willingness to engage does not always equate to a willingness to share power (Arnstein, 1969; Cornwall, 2008)

"I see my role has two major points in it. One is about keeping the organisation safe from legal challenge so that we work within our legal duties around involving the public in our planning and decision making. So that's a very sort of processes part of it. But the other part of it as well is building relationships with communities to facilitate that. But for me, the main part of my role, it is very much building those relationships with communities, so we can build that insight into our commissioning decisions and what we do, and hopefully, it strives towards a Co-production model, although I don't like using the term co-production that much, because I think within the NHS, there are limitations to deliver what I think is true Co-production, which is sharing of power. And the NHS is a very hierarchical structure that likes to keep its power within itself. But that's part of my role is to find those opportunities and make our commissioners aware of actually the benefits of sharing the power with communities when making decisions."

(P-20, NHS engagement manager)

This demonstrates that while the manager previously emphasises the importance of building relationships and generating community insight, there is a clear recognition that these processes operate within limits, where ultimate authority remains with the institution's structure. So, even where trust is successfully established, its transformative potential is restricted by structural conditions that limit community influence over final decisions. Consequently, the NHS approach can be understood as operating within a negotiated space, where efforts to build trust and adapt participation methods coexist with enduring institutional hierarchies that shape the boundaries of participation.

Therefore, the NHS approach demonstrates important strengths that should be further developed, particularly its use of context-sensitive participation methods and its emphasis on building trust through relational, and embedded in the local Muslim community practices, such as cultural and religious activities. However, for these efforts to translate into meaningful participation, greater attention must be given to power-sharing, ensuring that community input has a tangible influence on decision-making. Introducing more formalised mechanisms, such as co-governance structures or decision-making forums, which can help institutionalise this shift, moving participation beyond consultation towards genuine partnership (Fung & Wright, 2003). As, the benefits of building trust risk being limited in their impact, unless power-sharing is embedded within existing engagement practices. Thus, the NHS can ensure that its participation efforts lead to more effective outcomes, while also fostering deeper and more sustainable trust between local authorities and the communities they serve. More importantly, this approach has the potential to extend beyond the NHS, offering a model for other local authorities, including the council, to adopt similar practices. In turn, this can positively shape Muslims participation by building trust leading to more inclusive and beneficial processes, and better regeneration outcomes.

6.6. Conclusion

This chapter, by discussing the local authorities' efforts to engage the local Muslim community, including the council, police, and the NHS, it addressed the second research question, ***How do local authorities approach, and engage with, Muslim communities in local regeneration processes, and what challenges do they face?***

Drawing on the Ellesmere Green regeneration project, the chapter examined the approaches adopted by Sheffield City Council, South Yorkshire Police, and the NHS, highlighting both their efforts and the challenges they encountered when engaging the Muslim community in

Burngreave. While each authority operates within different institutional mandates and adopts distinct participation strategies, the findings reveal a number of shared themes, particularly the centrality of trust, the importance of context-sensitive participation, and the limitations posed by structural constraints such as power imbalances, funding, and institutional practices.

Sheffield City Council's approach is characterised by a relatively comprehensive policy framework that combines statutory and non-statutory elements. However, the analysis shows that this policy-led approach does not consistently translate into effective practice. In the Ellesmere Green project, despite the use of multiple engagement methods, participation remained largely informational, with limited opportunities for meaningful influence. The reliance on formal representatives, the use of technical language, and the absence of culturally tailored engagement contributed to a situation where the Muslim community did not recognise themselves as active (or present) participants in the process.

Similarly, the police demonstrate an awareness of the importance of trust and community engagement, particularly in a context marked by perceptions of insecurity and prior negative experiences with authorities. Efforts such as informal interactions through sports and the use of pop-up police stations indicate a shift towards more relational approaches. However, these efforts remain inconsistent and, at times, symbolic rather than fully embedded in practice (such as the pop-up police stations). Moreover, although the police are part of the regeneration processes, their role is still largely reactive, with interventions responding to emerging issues rather than being proactively integrated into the design and planning of public spaces. This has implications for spaces such as Ellesmere Green, where safety concerns persist despite regeneration efforts, suggesting that more sustained and proactive involvement is required.

In contrast, the NHS offers a more adaptive and context-appropriate model of participation, demonstrating a clearer understanding of the need to meet communities within their lived realities, and daily practices. By aligning participation with cultural and religious practices, such as Friday prayers, and working through trusted community figures, the NHS has been more successful in overcoming barriers related to trust and access. However, even within this more effective model, structural limitations remain, particularly in relation to power-sharing. The hierarchical nature of the institution constrains the extent to which community input can shape decision-making, highlighting a persistent gap between participatory aspirations and institutional practice.

Across all three authorities, there is a clear recognition that trust, cultural and religious understanding, and tailored participation approaches are essential for meaningful participation.

Yet, the findings also demonstrate that awareness of these factors does not automatically lead to their effective consideration. In many cases, authorities acknowledge the challenges but do not sufficiently adapt their practices to overcome them, whether due to resource constraints or institutional rigidity. As a result, participation processes risk remaining superficial, reinforcing rather than addressing existing patterns of disengagement.

Importantly, the chapter also shows that the challenges identified cannot be addressed by individual authorities acting in isolation. Regeneration contexts such as Burngreave are shaped by complex and interrelated social, economic, and health issues that require coordinated, multi-agency responses. As articulated by a community member, addressing issues in Ellesmere Green requires collaboration between multiple stakeholders,

> "*When we complained about them, the police told us that this issue should involve four stakeholders and that it is not a security issue only. They said that the council should provide housing for these people, the charities and others should provide them with a safe place, the health department, as these people may suffer from certain illnesses or problems, so they can treat them for addiction. Then the security aspect comes after. These are the four establishments that should collaborate to treat these people.*"
>
> *(P-09, Local resident and Restaurant owner)*

This perspective highlights the need for a more integrated approach, where planning, policing, health services, and community organisations work together to address the root causes of local challenges rather than treating them as separate issues.

Therefore, moving forward, there is a need not only to strengthen separate participation practices within each authority, but also to enhance coordination between them. Encouraging the council to adopt more culturally responsive and empowering participation methods, supporting the police in developing more proactive and embedded roles within regeneration, and building on the NHS's strengths in relational engagement, while addressing its limitations in power-sharing, can collectively contribute to more effective outcomes. Ultimately, a collaborative and holistic approach to participation has the potential to foster deeper trust, more inclusive participation, and more sustainable regeneration outcomes that genuinely reflect the needs and aspirations of Muslim communities in Burngreave.

7. CHAPTER Seven: Community Cohesion and Integration in the Ellesmere Green Project: conceptualisation and evaluation

7.1. Introduction

This chapter addresses the third research question, ***how are the community cohesion and integration concepts understood and operationalised by Muslim residents and local authorities, and how are national and local policy frameworks considered in local regeneration projects?*** It does so by examining the Ellesmere Green regeneration project in Burngreave through the policy lens of community cohesion and integration, and by exploring how these ideas were interpreted by local Muslim residents and by the council officers involved in the project. The chapter first situates Muslim participation in regeneration within the shift from multiculturalism to community cohesion and then to integration, showing how these policy frameworks increasingly shaped expectations around participation, shared spaces, and inter community groups relations. It then examines how these ideas were reflected, interpreted, and applied in the Ellesmere Green project, which took place during the transition from the later community cohesion period to the early integration agenda.

The chapter then turns to the Burngreave case itself. It explores how local Muslims understood community cohesion and integration through the lens of everyday life, shared activities, trust, resources, and the use of local space Then, it contrasts this with the council's more procedural understanding, largely framed through demographic awareness, equality assessment, and formal access to participation. Building on this comparison, the chapter evaluates the extent to which the Ellesmere Green project reflected cohesion and integration policy ambitions in both process and outcomes.

7.2. Muslims participation in regeneration projects during Community Cohesion to Integration policies

As explained previously in Chapter Two, Section 2.7.3, over the past four decades, Britain social policy has shifted from multiculturalism to community cohesion and, more recently, to integration, reshaping how ethnic diversity and participation are understood within urban regeneration. These policies have increasingly emphasised shared values, social interaction, and active citizenship. Muslim communities in Britain have been at the centre of these policies, in spite of their inexplicit mentioning in many of those documents. Since the arrival of large-scale post-war migration, Muslims have become concentrated in some of the country's most deprived urban neighbourhoods, making them central stakeholders in regeneration projects (Peach, 2006; Phillips, 2006).

However, the extent and nature of their involvement have varied across the three eras, multiculturalism, community cohesion, and integration.

During the multiculturalism era (1960s–1990s), multicultural policies acknowledged cultural pluralism, but regeneration strategies tended to treat Muslim organisations as representative of "*ethnic communities*" rather than as separate actors with their own complexities (O'Toole, 2022)

Following the 2001 disturbances, the community cohesion agenda shifted the focus towards shared values and intergroup interaction (Cantle, 2001). Thus, local authorities were encouraged to involve Muslim organisations in regeneration projects to promote intergroups interactions. However, critics noted that Muslim participation became increasingly instrumentalised, as they often expected Muslim organisations to act as mediators of intergroup tensions, while structural inequalities, such as unemployment and housing deprivation in Muslim-majority wards, were under-addressed (Amin, 2002; Thomas, 2011).

From the late 2000s onwards, the integration agenda emphasised community participation, shared spaces, and local engagement (UK Government, 2018, 2019). While this created new opportunities for participation, Muslim participation remained indirectly framed within wider policy goals, with limited assessment of its specific impact (O'Toole, 2022).

Across these policy phases, while opportunities for participation increased over time, Muslims participation was often address through established organisations, and through the lens of ethnic minority groups, with little considerations of how other aspects such as cultural and religious aspects may motivate or discourage their participation. The Ellesmere Green project timeframe (2012-2013), situated within the late community cohesion and early integration

period, and therefore be evaluated in light of these overlapping policy frameworks and their implications for the nature and depth of Muslim participation in local regeneration processes.

7.3. Community cohesion and Integration policies implications in the Ellesmere Green project, Burngreave.

The Ellesmere Green regeneration project in Bungreave, offers a microcosm of the challenges and opportunities in aligning regeneration with cohesion and integration policies. The area, characterised by a significant Muslim population faced, and still facing, deprivation, poor housing, and limited public amenities. During the period of the Ellesmere Green project, national and local policy agendas were shaped primarily by the frameworks of community cohesion and integration. As outlined previously in Chapter Four Section 4.4, although the project was first initiated in 2007, it was subsequently abandoned before being resumed in 2012 and completed in 2013. Thus, the decision to examine the Muslims participation in the Ellesmere Green project through both community cohesion and integration frameworks reflects the specific timeframe of the project's design and implementation. The project took place during a transitional period, when the effectiveness of community cohesion policies was increasingly questioned, and central government began shifting towards integration as a new policy approach to managing diversity in Britain (see Section 7.2).

This includes few but most relevant policy documents, such as *Community Cohesion: An Action Guide*" (Local Government Association, 2024), and *Our Shared Future* (Commission on Integration and Cohesion, 2007). In addition, during that time, the most relevant local community cohesion and integration official document consisted of *Sheffield Community Cohesion Strategy* (2007) (Sheffield City Council, 2007b). In this section, I shall discuss the extent of which these policies were reflected on the EG project in Burngreave, drawing from both, official community cohesion and integration documents and interviews conducted with the Muslim community in Burngreave, and the council officials that were involved in the project. However, before delving into this, it is important to discuss the local Muslim community conceptualisation of community cohesion and integration, as well as that of the council officers who were directly involved in the project.

7.3.1. The local Muslim community conceptualisation of community cohesion and integration

At the time of the EG project, the most prominent official document that provided a combined definition of community cohesion and integration was the "*Our Shared future*" report by the

Commission on Integration and Cohesion (CIC) in 2007. Although the commission recognised that cohesion and integration are similar, it differentiates between the two.

"*Cohesion is principally the process that must happen in all communities to ensure different groups of people get on well together; while integration is principally the process that ensures new residents and existing residents adapt to one another"* (Commission on Integration and Cohesion, 2007)

Therefore, it introduced a definition that combines both concepts in a transitional fashion that demonstrated the post-community cohesion framework adopted previously by the government.

"An integrated and cohesive community is one where:

1. *There is a clearly defined and widely shared sense of the contribution of different individuals and different communities to a future vision for a neighbourhood, city, region or country.*
2. *There is a strong sense of an individual's rights and responsibilities when living in a particular place – people know what everyone expects of them, and what they can expect in turn.*
3. *Those from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities, access to services and treatment.*
4. *There is a strong sense of trust in institutions locally to act fairly in arbitrating between different interests, and for their role and justifications to be subject to public scrutiny.*
5. *There is a strong recognition of the contribution of both those who have newly arrived and those who already have deep attachments to a particular place, with a focus on what they have in common.*
6. *There are strong and positive relationships between people from different backgrounds in the workplace, in schools and other institutions within neighbourhoods."* (Sheffield City Council, 2007b)

Although participants were not aware of the officially adopted definition of community cohesion and integration, their understanding of the concepts aligned largely with the principles of different communities *coming together* and *getting on*.

"If I was to think about community cohesion, it is about people from all around the area coming together. Integration, I would say, doing activities together" (P-08, Community member and Shop Keeper, UK-born, Yameni background)

"I mean, when you hear the word community cohesion, integration means that various different communities come together and integrate into one. That community then gets on with each other, and that's community cohesion. It's my understanding that it is the government recognising that communities need to come together. Which is integration, and they need to get on together as a community, which is community cohesion. Right? It's my understanding of that principle" **(P-03, Community member, Tunisian background)**.

Nonetheless, Muslim participants had different interpretations of cohesion and integration, which manifested in a mixture of optimism, pragmatism, and caution. While many participants welcomed the concepts as "*good words*" that encourage harmony and belonging, they were equally clear that such policies often remain rhetorical unless backed by practical action. Their reflections revealed recurring themes, including the importance of resources to make cohesion a reality, the role of shared spaces in fostering inter-groups interactions, and the perception that integration, though sometimes understood as joint activities, can also feel like pressured assimilation that threatens religious and cultural identity.

7.3.1.1. Concepts versus Reality

Several participants acknowledged the appeal of the terms and agreed on the positivity of adopting these concepts; however, they remained sceptical about how far such ideas are reflected in reality. For the Chair of Israa (Somali Community Centre), the words *integration* and *cohesion* carry a positive meaning, but a challenging reality.

"The word sounds very good, but the reality is different. The principle of the words is very positive, the question is, does it work in practice? That's the challenge. But it is very positive that integration be part of the community. It's all positive, but it has to be backed up with practical [actions]." **(P-13, Chair of ISRAAC)**

On the other hand, a community member and a business owner explained that community cohesion and integration is a lived reality in Burngreave without an official policy intervention in the area.

"I don't think the community integration in Burngreave has anything to do with what the government have introduced. I think again that this policy probably has been introduced with good intentions. However, in reality, does it actually happen? Or is that just a thing that normally happens as a society anyways? I would argue that Burngreave has always been a

diverse area. If it wouldn't have been for the local businesses in the area, would you get the same level of community cohesion? Integration? So, if it wasn't for Red Sea Cafe, would you get all the different melting pots of people meeting together? Is that something to do with what the government have done? Or is that due to the local business and local area? My personal views are that I don't think this area is diverse because of what the government have done."

(P-11, Community member and business owner)

These responses reveal a clear disconnect between policy discourse and its practical impact at the community level. Although the language of cohesion and integration was received positively, it was often regarded as largely rhetorical. In practice, these policies were seen as making limited contributions to fostering cohesion and integration, with communities themselves driving these processes independently of government policies.

These views are also confirmed in reports and reviews, commissioned by successive governments as well as in other publications, where Muslims in Britain state that the impact of community cohesion and integration policies is absent from their daily interactions. For example, Casey Review (2016) shows that despite governmental policy, many people (particularly Muslims) report that they don't feel integrated; that services, opportunities, or social mixing are not functioning in ways promised by these policies (Casey, 2016). This suggests that there are limitations as to what local communities can do themselves, without government support, to facilitate cohesion and integration.

Ultimately, regardless of how closely Muslim communities' understandings align with official definitions of cohesion and integration, their responses suggest that there is a limited, if any, connectivity between their everyday life and the impact of such policies.

7.3.1.2. Spatial Concepts

Some participants associated community cohesion and integration with the availability of physical spaces that enable social interactions. For example, one resident understood these concepts in relation to the lack of public spaces where people from different communities could meet and interact.

"I don't see anything that is happening to combine the communities together, and there isn't, for example, a place where different community members can meet and just talk; I don't see a place like that. Like an enclosed environment, such as a building or a community centre in the midst of Burngreave, there could be just a place for members even from different communities,

basically like schooling everyone's cultures and their experiences in life." *(P-08, Community member and Shop Keeper)*

Here, cohesion and integration are perceived as not abstract policy ideas but spatially grounded practices, that dependent on accessible, shared space where everyday encounters can occur. However, although there are enclosed public buildings in the area including, Sorby House, Vestry Hall, and Verdon Community Centre, many participants either unaware of these buildings or perceive them rather official building, as demonstrated by a community member

"I don't even know what Sorby house is for if I am honest with you."

(P-08, Community member and Shop Keeper)

This reflects how such buildings can appear distant and inaccessible to local residents, despite being formally "public." Rather than operating as open and welcoming spaces, they are perceived as institutional or official, limiting their role in fostering interaction and participation. This sense of detachment is reinforced by restricted access arrangements, such as locked doors and appointment-based entry (as discussed in Chapter Five, Section 5.2.2), which further weaken their visibility and everyday relevance within the community.

This issue is not only about physical access but also about the way these spaces are embedded within (or disconnected from) local social networks. As another participant explained:

"It means we should be working together. There's no working together. Everybody's just doing their own thing. You've got community centres, one or two places around there. They never come into these communities. We've got a community centre up the road, you've got a Mosque up down that road, that Fatima centre, that was built for the community, they never come down here, and ask the people in the community, what do they need? Or what do they want? They've never done that. I've never seen them."

(P-10, Community member and shop owner)

This highlights a broader critique where the problem is not that communities are "*hard to reach*," but that public institutions and community organisations fail to actively engage with them. Community facilities may exist, but without meaningful outreach, they remain socially and functionally disconnected from the people they are intended to serve. In this sense, cohesion and integration are shaped not only by the availability of spaces but by how inclusively they are managed and how effectively they reach into everyday community life.

Scholars have emphasised the importance of physical infrastructures in shaping opportunities for contact across different community groups. In the British policy context, the Cantle Report (2001) identified the lack of common meeting places as a driver of "*parallel lives*," recommending investment in spaces that encourage meaningful interaction (Cantle, 2001). Other studies also mentioned these concerns, showing that community centres, libraries and parks can function as meeting points where everyday multiculturalism is enacted (Neal et al., 2015; Peterson, 2017). However, while such venues are essential assets, they are not sufficient on their own to build a cohesive and integrated community. As Doering (2014) argues, cohesion initiatives risk superficiality if they focus only on physical assets without addressing structural inequalities, representation, and the quality of engagement (Doering, 2014). Thus, community buildings are necessary enablers of cohesion, but without openness, accessibility, and active investment in social relationships, they remain underused or disconnected from the very communities they are meant to serve.

7.3.1.3. Identity Threat

Although community cohesion and integration were positively perceived at large, some participants were reluctant and cautious in approaching these concepts. A clear example was a local resident who hesitated to answer the question about cohesion and integration before expressing his concerns regarding the topic.

"You have asked a tough question, and it is not easy at all. They want to force us to enter into their religion, and we don't accept that. I am a Muslim. I wouldn't accept that. Firstly, they started in school, and this is one of the dangerous things that is making us lose our children. We are happy about the financial support, we are happy we are in Britain, and we are happy about everything, but there are things that we cannot accept. This way, we are selling our kids; in fact, they have already been sold. They are not ours anymore. So, there are things that we will not accept, especially if it is to do with religion. We won't accept it at all. We want to be moderate, neither extremist nor loose. We hold onto our religion with strength without being like those terrorists that kill people, and we are against them."

(P-02, Local resident, Yameni background)

While this account does not refer specifically to the Ellesmere Green project or Burngreave, it reflects a wider perception among some Muslims regarding their position within British society. The response illustrates how integration is, at times, interpreted not as inclusion, but as pressure towards cultural and religious conformity. For example, education emerged as contested issue,

where schools are seen as sites where secular values are introduced that might be at odds with Muslim parents' beliefs. The fear expressed here is not of mixing with other community groups, but of losing control over children's moral and spiritual development, and therefore, their religious identity. This perception helps explain the caution and distrust with which some local Muslims may approach local initiatives, including regeneration projects led by local authorities (as discussed in Chapter Five, Section 5.3).

Such concerns are also expressed in debates within the literature. For example, Modood & Ahmed 2007 argues that many British Muslims favour *integration* without *assimilation*, where participation in civic life should not mean abandoning faith commitments (Modood & Ahmad, 2007). Yet, as Kundnani (2007) observed in his critique of cohesion policy, government strategies often blur the line, linking integration to conformity with "*British values*" and positioning Muslim communities as a problematic group (Kundnani, 2007). This can reinforce perceptions, like the one voiced above, that integration is an attempt at religious and cultural erasure.

In addition, policy documents also revealed the tension between integration and religio-cultural identity. In her report, Casey (2016) observed that some Muslims had called for clearer guidance on how Islam relates to life in the UK, noting emerging efforts by senior clerics to establish a national body that could provide 21st-century, British-contextualised religious rulings (Casey, 2016)

Similarly, the Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper (2018), highlighted the importance of English language learning, youth engagement, and community mixing as pathways to integration, while focusing on battling extremism, both Islamist and far-right groups (UK Government, 2018). Thus, when integration is framed as a safeguard against radicalisation, Muslim communities may see it less as an invitation to belong than as monitoring and assimilation mechanism. This highlights a disconnect between policy intentions and lived experiences, as for some Muslims, integration is not rejected outright but is approached with caution due to fears of assimilation and the erosion of religious identity. Consequently, participation in initiatives associated with local authorities may be shaped by underlying mistrust.

To summarise, the voices of Muslim community leaders and members in Burngreave reveal that community cohesion and integration are not fixed terms but lived concepts, interpreted in multiple ways. For some, they evoke positivity, neighbourliness, and collective responsibility; for others, they are just buzz words unless backed with tangible resources, accessible community spaces, and genuine opportunities for participation. Some perceive them as demands for

altering their identity, sparking anxiety about the loss of cultural characteristics and parental authority. This diversity of meanings demonstrates that, while cohesion and integration remain central in government discourse, Muslims in Burngreave often frame them through the lens of everyday realities, whether that is local businesses like cafés acting as genuine spaces of mixing, community centres that feel inaccessible and disconnected, or concepts that are perceived as a threat. What emerges is a negotiated understanding in which Muslims embrace cohesion and integration when it aligns with dignity, fairness, and shared life, but resist integration when it is experienced as threatening to faith. This sets the stage for exploring the local council's conceptualisation of community cohesion and integration, and its approach to apply their policies into regeneration projects in areas with a predominantly Muslim community such as the Ellesmere Green project Burngreave.

7.3.2. The local council's conceptualisation of community cohesion and integration

The interviews conducted with the three council officers who were involved in the EG project (directly or indirectly) shed important light on how community cohesion and integration are interpreted. Although their reflections seemed different, their understanding of these concepts remained around promoting equality.

The local council conceptualisation of community cohesion and integration was through the demographic mindfulness and equality assessment. Within this conceptualisation, cohesion and integration were linked to understanding the demographic profile of an area and ensuring that different groups had an equal opportunity to take part in consultation processes. Cohesion and integration appeared to be approached through procedural inclusion, such as adapting communication methods and making participation more accessible to minority communities.

One local council interpretation of community cohesion and integration was shaped primarily by demographic awareness and equality-oriented inclusion. In this view, cohesion and integration were not approached first as a question of shared belonging, trust, or relationship-building, but through knowing the composition of the area and ensuring that different groups were given access to the participation process. This was illustrated in the development officer's explanation,

"I do look at community cohesion in terms of talking to the locals about their demographics, I do my homework, who lives here, where they come from, and what kind of area it is, and then talking to the local members……For example, translated the adverts into particular languages

when we brought them.....I put up some signs, and I think I did it in three or four languages, just to make sure that people couldn't say, 'I didn't understand', just in case, and they were still there." **(P-16, Council development officer)**

This shows that cohesion and integration were conceptualised through demographic mindfulness, through the council understanding of the make-up of the area and adjusts its communication to reflect that diversity. The quote therefore points to an equal opportunity understanding of cohesion, through making participation available to different demographic groups.

A similar understanding was evident in the regeneration manager explanation, where community cohesion and integration were framed through representation within consultation.

"As to the community cohesion side of things, it's hard to say other than making sure a representative representation, so that every group is represented in the consultation. When they were represented, they have equal opportunity to have their say. So, it could be a Pakistani man or a woman or it could be an Afro Caribbean, they have equal chance to comment and they have maybe the same comments as a white person, or maybe not. But if they all have the same opportunity, then the chances are that you'll end up with an overall response. We do find what commonality amongst people." **(P-18, Council Regeneration officer)**

This demonstrates that cohesion and integration are conceptualised even more explicitly through equality of participation. The key concern was not primarily how relationships between the different community groups are built, but whether every group is represented in the consultation and has an equal opportunity to have their say. The assumption appears to be that once formal equality of voice is secured, some form of commonality will emerge through the participation itself. This reinforces the idea that, from the council's perspective, cohesion and integration were being understood through representational fairness and demographic inclusion. Different groups are recognised as categories that must be included in the process, and cohesion is seen as something that can follow from that balanced representation.

This interpretation is reinforced further by the council's formal procedures, as described by the regeneration manager:

"There is a template that we all have to work to, and the template is this, when we do any new project, we have to do an equal opportunity impact assessment, and environmental impact assessment. When we do equality impact assessment, we have to demonstrate how does it

impact on people of low income, on women, people of minority ethnic backgrounds, people with disabilities, young people…. So, you have a council procedure that requires you to release equality impact assessment, which makes you address the equality assessment"

(P-18, Council Regeneration officer)

Thus, this further strengthens the view that local council conceptualisation of community cohesion and integration operated through an equality and demographic lens. The emphasis is placed on identifying how a project may affect different social groups and on ensuring that those groups are formally included in participation. However, this remains distant from the wider policy understanding of community cohesion and integration discussed earlier in this chapter. As the Commission on Integration and Cohesion (2007) defined cohesion as the process through which different groups "*get on well together*," while integration was understood as the process through which "*new residents and existing residents adapt to one another*" (Commission on Integration and Cohesion, 2007). While the council's equality assessment may help identify how a project affects different sections of the community, it says far less about how the project might actively build trust, shared belonging, or stronger relationships between different groups (Commission on Integration and Cohesion, 2007). Thus, this approach may help the council assess equality impacts and be more aware of demographic diversity, but it does not in itself amount to a fuller cohesion and integration strategy concerned with bringing people together.

7.3.3. Evaluating community cohesion and integration policy considerations in the project

This section attempts to evaluate the Ellesmere Green (EG) project from the perspective of community cohesion and integration, to determine the extent to which these policy agendas were reflected in the project's design, implementation, and long-term outcomes. This evaluation was organised around three dimensions: the policy framework, the project process, and the project outcomes. These dimensions helped to assess whether cohesion and integration considerations were reflected in how the project was designed and implemented as well as in the longer-term effects of the space on the local community (see Figure 7.1).

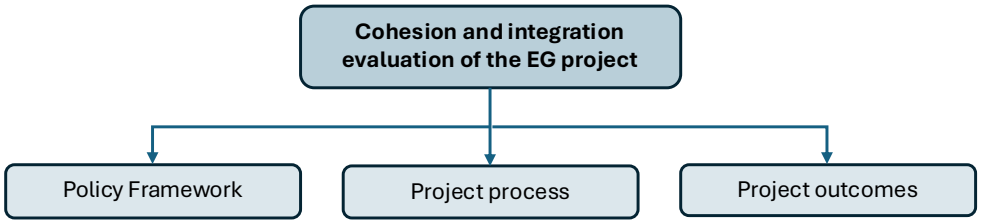


Figure 7.1: Cohesion and integration evaluation of the EG project

Source: Author

7.3.3.1. Policy framework

As discussed earlier in this chapter, the project took place during the transition from the community cohesion framework to the early integration agenda. It might therefore be expected that the project would, at least in part, reflect policy concerns with bringing different groups together, strengthening trust in local institutions, and enabling meaningful participation in neighbourhood regeneration projects (Commission on Integration and Cohesion, 2007). The *Our Shared Future* report explicitly demonstrates that "*on regeneration, the key to creating these open and shared spaces is to ensure that they are designed in consultation with all sections of the local community, engendering a sense of ownership and belonging.*"(Commission on Integration and Cohesion, 2007). However, the evidence presented in this thesis suggests that the EG project fell short of these aims, with little evidence of deeper translation of cohesion and integration into practice or lasting positive social outcomes (as discussed in Chapter Four, Section 4.5).

Both the interviews and the wider findings of this thesis suggest that cohesion and integration were treated primarily as an equality challenge, addressed through attempts to provide opportunities for the local Muslim community to participate in the Ellesmere Green project (as discussed above in Section 7.3.2).

In addition, assessing the demographic profile of an area without a deeper understanding of the everyday structures and place-based practices of the local community is, in itself, a limited way of approaching equality impact. The Commission on Integration and Cohesion report (2007) encouraged public bodies to extend this equality assessment to include cohesion and integration, "*all public agencies involved in the funding of affordable housing and area based regeneration should ensure that equality impact assessments are extended to include assessment of the impact of the policy upon integration and cohesion*"(Commission on Integration and Cohesion, 2007)

Thus, the council efforts seem to have reduced these concepts to procedural inclusion rather than understanding them as broader social processes concerned with trust, belonging, shared use of space, and relationships across different community groups.

7.3.3.2. Project process

At the level of project process, the evidence suggests that the Ellesmere Green project did not create a participation structure capable of supporting meaningful inclusion. As Chapter Five demonstrated, representation within the project was inadequate (Section 5.4), and Muslim participation was neither sufficiently broad nor sufficiently embedded to reflect the diversity of the local Muslim community. This is important as the value of participation in such a project depended not simply on whether local people were invited to take part, but on whether the process enabled inter-groups interactions.

This failure was especially significant in a project that might otherwise be expected to contribute to cohesion and integration. If the participatory process itself was not representative, inclusive, and sustained, then it is difficult to argue that the project could produce broader outcomes such as trust-building, shared ownership, or stronger relations across the community, as recommended in the cohesion and integration policies.

As demonstrated in the council interviews, community cohesion and integration were not clearly treated as components of the project process, which suggests that participation was not structured in a way that would intentionally support these aims. Instead, the project process remained too limited to translate the social ambitions associated with regeneration into practice. The weakness of the process, therefore, was not separate from the later weakness of outcomes, but one of the conditions that helped produce them.

7.3.3.3. project outcomes

In terms of project outcomes, the evidence suggests that the Ellesmere Green project fell short of supporting community cohesion and integration within the local community itself. As Chapter Four, Section 4.5 shows, the condition and use of the space had exclusionary effects on local community members, including women, young people, elderly residents, and local businesses. Rather than functioning as an open, safe, and shared environment that could support everyday social interaction, the space became associated with drug use, anti-social behaviour, and restricted community use.

This is significant when assessed against the aims of community cohesion and integration, and regeneration projects in general. Before considering whether EG succeeded in bringing together

different ethnic or social groups across Burngreave or beyond, the evidence indicated that it struggled to remain inclusive even for the immediate local community. Thus, the project did not produce a space that encouraged belonging, and routine positive interaction among local residents. Instead, its later condition appears to have limited access, reduced confidence in use, and weakened its value as a shared public space.

These outcomes are especially damaging in light of the wider policy ambitions associated with cohesion and integration, which were concerned with enabling people to live well together, use shared spaces with confidence, and develop positive social relationships within neighbourhoods (Commission on Integration and Cohesion, 2007). Public space is often understood as one of the everyday settings in which trust, encounter, and multicultural interaction can develop (Amin, 2002; Neal et al., 2013). In the case of EG, however, the space did not operate as such a shared asset, but it became a contested and compromised environment that generated negative social, economic, environmental, and religious impacts, as discussed in Chapter Four, Section 4.5.

From this perspective, the project failed at the level of outcome because the space itself did not support inclusive and confident use, even within the local community, let alone between different communities.

To summarise, this evaluation of the Ellesmere Green project suggests that community cohesion and integration agendas were not successfully realised in either policy framework, process or outcome. The project reflected only a limited and procedural understanding of these concepts, failed to secure adequate and meaningful Muslim participation, and ultimately produced a space whose later condition have excluded important sections of the local community itself. Thus, the EG project fell substantially short of the aims associated with both community cohesion and integration policy.

7.4. Conclusion

This chapter examined Muslim participation in The Ellesmere Green regeneration project from a community cohesion to integration perspective. In doing so, it addressed the third research question: ***How are the community cohesion and integration concepts understood and operationalised by Muslim residents and local authorities, and how are national and local policy frameworks considered in local regeneration projects*?**

Across the transition from multiculturalism to community cohesion and then integration, Muslim participation in regeneration became increasingly shaped by policy concerns with shared values, inter-group relations, and local engagement. However, it was often approached instrumentally and through broad ethnic-minority frameworks, rather than through careful attention to the

specific religious, cultural, and spatial realities of Muslim communities (as discussed in Section 7.4). The EG project, taking place within the late community cohesion and early integration period provided an important opportunity to examine whether these policy ambitions translated into meaningful Muslim participation on the ground.

The findings suggest a clear disconnect between how the local Muslim community and the local council conceptualised community cohesion and integration. For many Muslim participants, these concepts were understood through everyday life, people getting on together, meeting in shared spaces, doing activities together, and building relationships. In several respects, these views were closer to the official policy emphasis on positive relationships, trust in institutions, and shared futures than the more procedural understanding offered by the council. However, Muslim members were also clear that cohesion and integration could not be reduced to rhetoric, as they valued the principles, but judged them by whether they were visible in practice through resources, meaningful inclusion, and spaces that actually worked for local people. This shows that local Muslims were not inherently opposed to cohesion or integration, but many appeared open to forms of integration grounded in participation and mutual respect, provided these were not experienced as coercive, assimilationist, or detached from lived realities (Kundnani, 2007).

This is important in light of the wider policy discourse of "*parallel lives*" and self-segregation associated with community cohesion and integration debates (Cantle, 2001).

By contrast, the local council's conceptualisation was largely framed through demographic awareness, equality procedures, and formal access to participation. Knowing "*who lives here*," translating materials, and carrying out equality impact assessments were treated as evidence of cohesion-oriented practice. While these measures should be recognised as steps towards inclusion, they remained limited. Demographic profiling and equal opportunities do not, in themselves, reveal how people encounter space in their everyday lives, how trust operates within the neighbourhood, or how exclusion is actually experienced on the ground. The council's approach tents to have limited cohesion and integration to procedural inclusion rather than understanding them as deeper social processes concerned with trust, belonging, and the shared use of space (Commission on Integration and Cohesion, 2007).

The evaluation of the EG project reinforces this conclusion. The project fell short not only because Muslim participation was inadequately secured, as shown in Chapter Five, but also because the resulting space did not sustain inclusive use within the local community itself, as shown in Chapter Four. Thus, evaluation of the Ellesmere Green project shows that cohesion and integration were not meaningfully embedded in the project's policy framework, participatory

process, or outcomes. Although the project took place during a period when policy emphasised shared spaces, belonging, and inclusive participation, these aims were largely reduced to procedural inclusion rather than translated into socially inclusive space. As it did not function as a safe and shared environment for the local community, particularly for women, young people, elderly residents, and local businesses. This reinforces the wider argument that regeneration cannot contribute to cohesion and integration unless participation is meaningful, representative, and connected to the everyday realities of the communities it is intended to serve (Commission on Integration and Cohesion, 2007).

8. CHAPTER Eight: Conclusion & Recommendations

8.1. Introduction

This concluding chapter puts forward a proposed approach to engage Muslim communities in local regeneration projects, derived from the findings of this study. The approach is presented as a recommendation emerging from the examination of Muslim participation in the Ellesmere Green project and the broader relationship between Muslims in Burngreave and local authorities. It is informed by the evidence discussed throughout the preceding chapters, drawing on the perspectives of both the local Muslim community and local authority actors, alongside the relevant policy frameworks examined in the thesis. The chapter outlines this approach through two interrelated dimensions: policy and practice, and considers its wider implications for social cohesion and integration. It then returns to the research questions, objectives, and overall aim of the study in order to show how they have been addressed through the findings and analysis presented in the thesis. In doing so, the chapter draws together the main insights generated by the research and demonstrates how they contribute to a fuller understanding of Muslim participation in local regeneration processes. It also sets out the principal contributions of the thesis, highlighting its relevance to theory, policy discussions, professional practice, and methodological debates. The chapter then reflects on the limitations of the research, acknowledging the boundaries of the study and the challenges encountered in its design and execution. Finally, it identifies a number of areas that would benefit from further investigation and offers recommendations for future research.

8.2. Developing a meaningful approach to engage Muslims in local regeneration projects.

This section attempts to propose a coherent approach for a meaningful participation of Muslim communities in regeneration projects at a local level. The starting point of proposing this approach is the knowledge gaps identified in the literature review in Chapter Two, Section 2.7.

Although community participation is widely promoted as essential to sustainable regeneration projects, it remains uneven in practice, particularly in deprived minority neighbourhoods. Within

these gaps, Muslim communities have frequently been treated either as part of minority categories or through formal organisational lenses (eg. mosques), while insufficient attention has been paid to how everyday religious, cultural, and social practices shape trust, accessibility, representation, and participation itself. This thesis has addressed that gap by examining Muslim participation through the Ellesmere Green regeneration project in Burngreave, as an inquiry of how participation is structured, recognised, and enabled within such projects.

Across Chapters Four to Seven, the evidence suggests that the principal barrier was not simply whether Muslim community members wanted to engage, but whether the participation structure was accessible, culturally appropriate, and resulting in tangible outcomes for the community.

The case of Ellesmere Green illustrates how traditional participation approach (for example, relying on public meetings, exhibitions, and surveys) did not align with the everyday spaces through which Muslims organise, build trust, and shape community action (places such as, mosques, halal high street networks, cafés, women's informal networks).

Research argues that religion should be studied not only as institutional affiliation but as practice embedded in everyday routines and meanings, while it is enacted in ordinary life contexts beyond formal worship settings (Ammerman, 2014; McGuire & McGuire, 2008). Similarly, the empirical chapters (Four to Seven) suggest that participation in a Muslim-concentrated neighbourhood cannot be made meaningful unless participation explicitly engages these lived socio-spatial infrastructures. Therefore, this study proposes an approach that is designed around the everyday activities of the local Muslim community. It is set of policy and practice commitments intended to shift participation in regeneration away from information-led consultation, towards culturally sensitive, and power sharing structure.

This approach is built on two elements, a policy element and a practice element (see Figure 8.1)

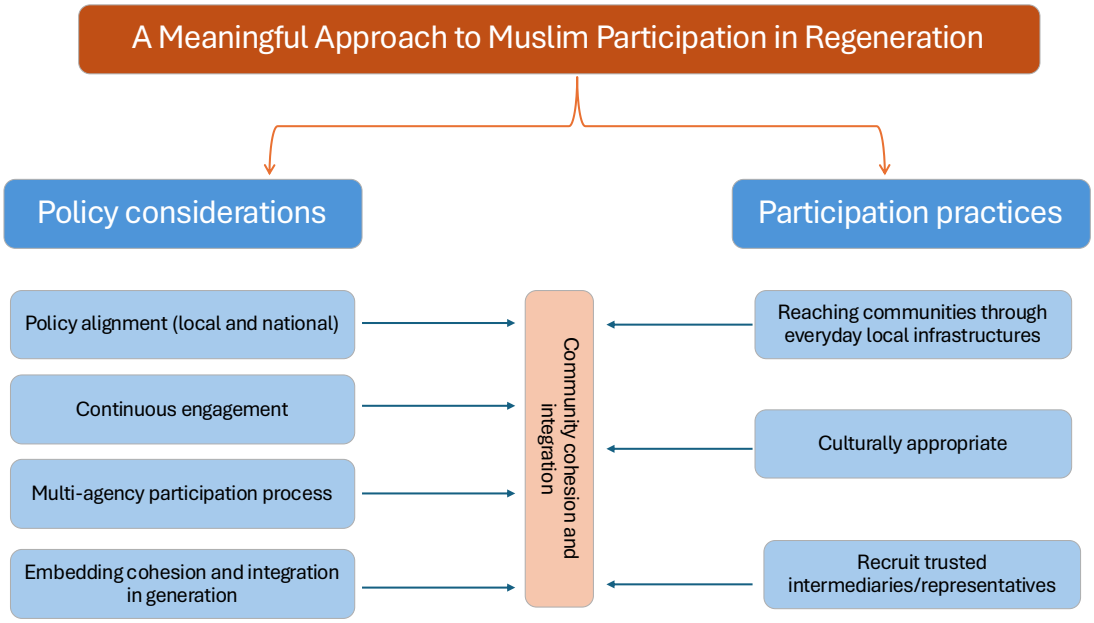


Figure 8.1: Proposed Approach to Muslims participation in local regeneration projects

Source: Author

The policy element provides the formal and institutional conditions through which meaningful participation can be enabled, while the practice element translates those conditions into local regeneration project in a context of Muslim-concentrated area.

8.2.1. Policy considerations

The policy dimension of the proposed approach is concerned with creating the formal frameworks through which meaningful participation can be enabled, sustained, and translated into influence on the outcomes. These involve local official policies related to community participation, Statements of Community Involvement (SCI), and the Code of Practice for Publicity and Consultation (CoPPC), and wider cohesion and integration agendas. These frameworks matter because they define when communities participate, who must be involved, how the process must be run, and what influence community input can have.

Community participation in regeneration projects should not be framed as a narrow procedural requirement in the local policy, but as a structured and ongoing process that is designed to build trust, open access, recognise diverse forms of local social organisation, and connect participation to both decision-making in regeneration projects and wider cohesion and integration agenda. This requires a policy framework that moves beyond generic consultation principles and responds more directly to the lived social, cultural, and religious realities through which participation takes place. Accordingly, the policy dimension considerations here appeal for a more timely, relational, inclusive, and multi-agency framework, one that spans from before

regeneration needs are identified, continues throughout project delivery, and extends beyond completion through feedback. Therefore, these considerations are divided into four elements that improve the current and future local police frameworks, particularly the Statement of Community Involvement, and the Code of Practice for Publicity and Consultation.

8.2.1.1. Local policy framework alignment with national policy requirements

The Ellesmere Green case shows that the local policy dimension (Statement of Community Involvement) was outdated during the project period (2012–13). Sheffield's SCI dated from 2006 and had not been updated to reflect major national shifts by the time Ellesmere Green was designed, despite the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) requires that SCI must updated at least every five years. It was only until 2014 (8 years later) that the SCI was updated in accordance with those national policy frameworks (such as the Localism Act 2011 and the 2012 NPPF). Nonetheless, the current SCI was adopted in 2020, while the supporting Code of Practice for Publicity and Consultation on All Planning Applications was last updated in 2018. The Code itself is designed primarily to assist officers in delivering the commitments set out in the SCI by providing "*more detailed, practical advice*". However, because it predates the 2020 SCI, it cannot fully reflect the latest commitments of the SCI. In fact, this weakness is not only visible when the 2018 Code is compared with the 2020 SCI, but also already evident when it is compared with the 2014 SCI, the policy context that immediately preceded it. The 2014 SCI stated that community participation should include early involvement, continuing involvement, and reaching out (Sheffield City Council, 2014b), whereas SCI (2020) specifically required officers to consider the timing, type of venue, and the involvement of different communities, including faith groups through equality structures. It also required the publication of consultation reports and responses to consultees after each stage (Sheffield City Council, 2020).

By contrast, the 2018 Code does not translate these broader commitments into requirements for officers to implement and remains focused mainly on who receives notification letters, where site notices go, how far "*adjoining*" land extends, and which application types warrant wider notification. As a result, the SCI gestures towards inclusive participation, while the Code operationalises mainly the narrowest, application-stage aspects of publicity and notification (see Chapter Six, Section 6.2.1. for more details).

Thus, the first policy consideration shaping the proposed approach to meaningful participation is the need to ensure consistency not only with the latest national expectations for community participation, but also within the local policy framework itself. In particular, the Code of Practice

should be regularly updated so that it accurately reflects, translates, and operationalises the commitments set out in the Statement of Community Involvement.

8.2.1.2. Relational continuity and trust-building across the full project cycle

Another key feature missing in earlier and current local policy is a strong commitment to building relationship and continuous participation efforts. Meaningful participation takes time and trust, especially where historical relations between communities and authorities are fragile (as discussed in Chapter Five, Section 5.3). Yet both the SCI and the Code still structure participation largely around one-off interventions (as discussed in Chapter Six, Section 6.2.1), rather than around a full cycle running from the identification of a regeneration need through design, delivery, and post-completion review. The 2020 SCI refers to continuing involvement and provides for consultation reports, but it does not institutionalise long-term relational community contact at project level (Sheffield City Council, 2020). The Code is also limited in terms of sustained participation before or after the formal application process (see Chapter Six, Section 6.2.1.2). This limitation was also evident in the findings of this research, particularly in the current condition and impact of Ellesmere Green after the project's completion (see Chapter Four, Section 4.5). It was further reinforced by the council officer's confirmation that, once the project had been completed, there was no return to it in any structured way.

"From that point of view, I would say I don't go back and do any evaluation ……. But with Ellesmere Green, we obviously had a set of objectives, and we met them in terms of doing the changes that we wanted to do. But I didn't go back to anything else."

(P-16, Council development officer)

Therefore, the policy framework should require SCI and the Code of practice (or at least in the Code) to include a clear participation time frame that extend from problem identification (to determine that regeneration is needed) to post-completion review. This would require the Code to operationalise this commitment through structured participation plans. This includes early trust-building through regular liaison meetings with the community throughout the project cycle, and post-completion review sessions through which communities can reflect on what worked, what failed, and what they and local authorities should learn for future schemes.

In the context of Ellesmere Green, where many participants perceived their participation as ineffective, such a feedback requirement would be particularly important as a trust-building device. This would not only promote trust between authorities and the community, but it will also

help communities to have better representation and build capacities needed for participation in regeneration projects (As discussed in the literature in Chapter Two, Section 2.5.2).

An extended timeframe for community participation would also create a closed feedback loop, enabling communities to see that their input was not tokenistic and allowing institutions to learn from mistakes. Incorporating explicit reporting such as *"you said, we did"* for regeneration projects would help communities see that their contributions, as without visible responsiveness can intensify *consultation fatigue* and deepen mistrust (Cornwall, 2008; Mansuri & Rao, 2013a). In communities where authorities are already viewed with suspicion (such as the case in Burngreave), the difference between tokenism and meaningful participation is often not whether participation took place, but whether people can clearly see what it did. Moreover, the feedback loop would also help officers and local authorities to learn from the shortcomings of previous schemes, improve the participation process, and therefore, enhance regeneration projects outcomes.

8.2.1.3. Multi-agency participation as a policy requirement

In the context of the Ellesmere Green project, the findings demonstrated that the planning process should have involved a wider range of relevant local actors from the outset, rather than relying primarily on a council-led regeneration approach (See Chapter Six). The later deterioration of Ellesmere Green was caused by a combination of community safety concerns, visible drug use, homelessness, health-related vulnerabilities. This indicates that agencies such as the police, the NHS, housing and homelessness services, and other community support bodies could have played a critical role during the planning stage by identifying likely risks, shaping more realistic design and management responses, and ensuring that the project addressed the wider social conditions affecting the site. Their early involvement might have helped move the project beyond physical improvement alone towards a more preventative, coordinated, and socially sustainable form of regeneration.

The SCI 2020 already provides a limited basis for wider institutional involvement. It recognises a range of bodies within its consultation framework, including Equality Hub Networks, Local Area Partnerships, statutory consultees, local community groups with a known interest, and others (Sheffield City Council, 2020). However, these provisions remain largely framed as *lists of consultees* and notification bodies rather than as a requirement for joined-up participation design where the character of a place, the condition of an area, or the concerns raised by residents clearly extend beyond planning matters alone.

Therefore, the requirement of multi-authority and multi-service participation at local regeneration project level is needed. A stronger SCI would therefore need to require each participation plan to assess whether the social and physical condition of the area calls for the involvement of other relevant local authority functions and local public institutions alongside the planning authority, and to justify how their inclusion will help ensure that community concerns are addressed in a coherent way.

At the level of the Code of Practice, this should be translated into practical criteria for officers, for example by requiring them to consider at an early stage whether community participation should involve relevant council departments, local policing, health services, housing providers, youth services, environmental services, and other locally responsible public bodies, depending on the nature of the place and the concerns already evident there.

8.2.1.4. Beyond equality assessment: embedding cohesion and integration as participation goals

The Ellesmere Green project shows that, in diverse and disadvantaged neighbourhoods such as Burngreave, physical improvements alone are unlikely to produce socially sustainable outcomes (as discussed in Chapter Seven, Section 7.3.3). The SCI 2020 already provides an important foundation by reflecting the *Public Sector Equality Duty*, including the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, and by requiring liaison with equality advisers and networks representing protected characteristics. It also commits the council to early involvement, continuing involvement, and "*reaching out*," which creates space for a broader understanding of inclusive participation. However, the SCI is limited of making community cohesion and integration explicit objectives of the participation process itself, and as outcomes of the regeneration project. Thus, community cohesion and integration should be embedded in the SCI, through requiring each regeneration participation plan to state not only how different groups will be reached in the participation process, but also how the project process (including community participation) and outcomes are expected to contribute to social connections, and positive local relationships.

In addition, a stronger Code should require officers, where relevant to the scale and context of a regeneration proposal, to consider whether the participation design, creates fair opportunities for different local groups to take part; uses shared and commonly used local settings in ways that support constructive encounter between different community groups and segments (White, Asians, Women, Youth, and Elderly). This would align the local planning practice with what cohesion and integration policy has repeatedly suggested, such as the latest Local Government

Association (LGA) guidance (2026), which argues that Local Plans, housing strategies, and regeneration schemes should embed cohesion considerations and design features that encourage social mixing (Local Government Association, 2026). Therefore, cohesion and integration should be embedded in the participation process through both, the SCI and the Code of Practice.

8.2.2. Participation practices

The previous policy element of the proposed approach to engage Muslims in regeneration projects provided the formal conditions for their meaningful participation in its general terms. However, the practice element in this section determines how those conditions are translated into forms of participation that Muslim communities can access, trust and engage with. In the context of Burngreave, the findings suggest that the failure of the Ellesmere Green project was not simply that participation opportunities were absent, but that the methods used were poorly matched to the everyday realities of a Muslim-concentrated area. Formal consultation was offered, yet many local Muslims remained unaware of it, did not feel addressed by it, or did not regard it as a process through which their views could carry real weight (as detailed in Chapter Five). Women, elderly residents, and many others were particularly absent, while the most positive uses of the space that later emerged came not from the official participation process, but from community practices that had never been properly recognised during planning. The practice element of the proposed approach therefore concerns how participation should be carried out on the ground in ways that respond to the specific social, cultural, religious, and linguistic dynamics of Muslims participation. In practical terms, this means engaging through the everyday infrastructures of community life, adopting culturally and gender-sensitive methods, working through trusted intermediaries and culturally competent participation teams, and ensuring that both the participation process and the eventual project outcomes contribute to stronger cohesion and integration.

This section focuses on turning the policy framework into on-the-ground practice to engage local Muslim communities in the context of Burngreave (or any similar context). Three key priorities are addressed here, reaching people via everyday local social spaces, using culturally and gender-sensitive methods, and deploying trusted, culturally competent facilitators. Each subsection below identifies what went wrong at Ellesmere Green and outlines actions to address it, drawing on EG evidence and best practice.

8.2.2.1. Reaching communities through everyday local infrastructures

As discussed in Chapter Five, although the council made some efforts to engage the local Muslim community beyond traditional setting (formal public meetings), including through familiar spaces like shops and restaurants, these efforts were directed mainly at shopkeepers and business owners rather than the community itself. They also remained largely informational and were weakened by inaccessible and technical forms of communication (Chapter Five, Section 5.2.2). As a result, many local community members did not experience the process as one in which their participation was meaningful or influential.

To address this, planning officers must embed participation within the everyday spaces and routines of the community, while also choosing appropriate times to maximise outreach. For example, council officers seeking to reach and engage the local Muslim community should hold participation sessions in places where different segments of the community regularly carry out their social, economic, and religious activities. This may include participation outside mosques, particularly after Friday prayer, as in the NHS consultation event at Ellesmere Green (see Chapter Four, Section 4.6.2, and Chapter Six, Section 6.5), as well as in cafés and restaurant courtyards where members of the community regularly gather. These sessions could involve council officers, community representatives, and community support police officers, allowing multi-agency responses to be given on the spot to concerns that may appear to fall outside the immediate scope of the project, but which nevertheless may have implications for the space regeneration, such as the current use of Ellesmere Green by drug and alcohol abusers (social and policing matter at the same time). It could also include organised walks through the area, where planners or council officers walk with residents so that local issues can be identified and discussed directly on site, an approach consistent with walking or "*go-along*" methods that generate place-specific insights by grounding discussion in the lived environment (Carpiano, 2009; Evans, 2011).

More importantly, these efforts should take place on a regular basis (as suggested in the policy considerations above) in order to build connections with the local community, strengthen trust in local authorities, and gradually enhance the community's capacity to participate in such projects (Ansell & Gash, 2008a).

In the context of Burngreave, such spaces could include mosques, locations along Spital Hill such as the area outside Sorby House, the public space between Tesco and Spital Hill, and Tesco itself.

As discussed in Chapter Five, Section 5.6, many local women and girls appear to experience

Tesco not only as a supermarket, but also as a point of socialising and meeting friends .Any engagement in these spaces would, of course, need to be carried out in collaboration with those responsible for them, whether mosque leaders, the Tesco management team, or other relevant public and community organisations.

In short, reaching communities through their everyday local infrastructures would help ensure that participation is organised around how people actually live, meet, and use space, rather than around institutional convenience.

8.2.2.2. Culturally appropriate, gender-sensitive, and linguistically accessible methods

As the findings of Chapter Five suggest, the problem in Ellesmere Green was not only that participation opportunities were limited, but also that the methods used (such as leaflets and drop-in sessions) were poorly matched to the cultural, gendered, and linguistic realities of the local Muslim community. Although the council considered translation in the form of printed materials such as leaflets, this alone was insufficient to widen participation in a meaningful way. Written translation may help circulate information, but it does not by itself enable dialogue, clarification, or confidence in engaging with technical planning matters. As a result, participation remained formally open but substantively narrow, with many local Muslims still unable to access, understand, or trust the process.

To address this, participation must be organised in ways that are culturally appropriate to the community's everyday life and collective ethos. This means that planners and officers should make use of culturally significant occasions as opportunities for community participation. Events such as Eid festivals or other religiously and socially important gatherings can provide valuable moments to discuss regeneration proposals with a broader range of residents in a setting that is already familiar, trusted, and well attended. This would allow participation to take place in a less formal and more socially meaningful environment, while also demonstrating respect for the community's ethos. Such an approach is consistent with Mansuri & Rao (2013) who emphasise that participation is more effective when it is adapted to local context (Mansuri & Rao, 2013) and reflects the argument that participation in diverse communities settings should accommodate differences rather than assume that inclusion is achieved through traditional methods for all groups (Modood, 2013)

A culturally appropriate approach must also take gender seriously as a practical condition of participation. In the context of Burngreave, offering women-only sessions whether through

focused groups or workshops would represent a necessary means of widening meaningful community participation. The experience of this research (women-only and girls-only mapping workshops, as demonstrated in Chapter Three, Section 3.5.2) showed that women and girls were more effectively engaged when participation took place through methods that reflected their comfort, safety, and everyday routines. The same principle should apply to regeneration practice. Council officers seeking to involve Muslim women should therefore organise women-friendly and, where appropriate, women-only sessions in settings that feel accessible and socially acceptable to them. This may include community centres, women's sections of mosques, or other trusted local venues. Such sessions would allow Muslim women to discuss issues such as safety, children's use of space, mobility, and the everyday barriers affecting their relationship with a site such as Ellesmere Green. These concerns are unlikely to be fully expressed in more formal or mixed settings, as gender-sensitive practice is not only about fair access, but also about enabling excluded voices to be part of the process in a meaningful way.

Moreover, in a context such as Burngreave, bilingual or multilingual council officers would be particularly valuable where available, since they could help bridge both linguistic and cultural distance between local authorities and residents, as was the case in the NHS consultation session. The local councillor ability to speak Arabic, and Somali in addition to English facilitated the communication aspect of the process (As described in Chapter Six, Section 6.5). However, where this is not possible, interpreters become an alternative way to increase the reach of the participation process. Interpreters are needed to support explanation, questioning, and discussion in real time, and this is particularly important where residents may be unfamiliar with planning terminology or uncertain about the relevance of their own views to official decision-making (as discussed in Chapter Five, Section 5.5).

Therefore, culturally appropriate, gender-sensitive, and linguistically accessible methods are essential if participation is to move beyond formal openness and become meaningful in practice.

8.2.2.3. Trusted intermediaries and culturally competent participation teams

A further weakness of the Ellesmere Green participation process was the inadequate representation of the local Muslim community as discussed in Chapter Five, Section 5.4.1. The council relied mainly on recognised representatives such as councillors, community organisations, and some shopkeepers. While these actors have an important role, the findings showed that they did not adequately reflect the internal diversity of the Muslim community in Burngreave, nor were they always regarded by residents as the people who best understood or

spoke for everyday community concerns. This meant that participation remained filtered through a narrow set of formal channels, while other forms of local leadership and trust operating within the community's social infrastructure remained largely unrecognised. This weakened both the reach and legitimacy of the participation process, since many residents did not see themselves reflected in those who were invited into the process on their behalf.

To address this issue, participation in Muslim-concentrated areas such as Burngreave should not stop at established community organisations, even though their involvement remains important. It should go further and actively identify people who are seen locally as trustworthy, familiar with the area, and genuinely concerned with community well-being, regardless of whether they hold a formal or informal title. In contexts such as Burngreave, trusted intermediaries may be found beyond mosque committees or organised groups, and among individuals who are known in everyday community life for helping residents with local problems, liaising with public services, or simply being consistently present and accessible. A practical approach would therefore require council officers to find out directly from residents who they trust, who they see as representing them, and who they believe genuinely cares about the area. As the literature has shown, the legitimacy of community participation depends heavily on who is recognised as credible, trustworthy, and able to bridge the gap between institutions and communities (Ansell & Gash, 2008a).

This point is reinforced by the experience of this research itself. In seeking to recruit participants who best speak for the community, community members were happy to pint to someone from the community who they perceive as helpful and representative. It became clear that some of the most meaningful forms of community influence did not necessarily come through people with formal roles, but through individuals who were known in the neighbourhood and regularly supported others with local issues (sometimes in very ordinary settings such as over tea or a shared meal). Therefore, local authorities should widen their understanding of who can function as an intermediary in regeneration participation, and participation teams should recognise that trust may be built around everyday social credibility and not formal position. This is especially significant in Muslim-concentrated neighbourhoods, where community networks are often embedded in personal relations and routine mutual support (Woodward, 2020).

Nonetheless, meaningful participation cannot depend on intermediaries alone. It also requires participation teams (council officers) that are culturally competent in how they approach the community. In the EG case, distrust towards authorities was reinforced by the perception that

officials were outsiders who did not sufficiently understand the social and cultural context of the area (see Chapter Five and Six).

Thus, a more effective approach would ensure that officers working closely with the community receive at least basic training in relevant religious and cultural awareness (Jahnke, 2017). This helps to equipe the staff with a working understanding of the diversity within Muslim communities and of the local norms, and sensitivities (Husain, 2019). Such training could include awareness of prayer times and gender norms in certain settings, as well as an understanding of the role of mosques beyond worship, including their educational, welfare, and community functions (Al-Krenawi, 2016; Al-Krenawi & Graham, 2000). It should also recognise the importance of informal relationship-building before formal requests for participation are made, so that participation is approached with greater understanding and less scepticism (Ansell & Gash, 2008a; Dinham & Francis, 2015).

In short, trusted intermediaries and culturally competent participation teams are essential in contexts such as Burngreave, as they help move participation beyond narrow formal representation (local established community organisations) toward relationships that are socially credible and locally grounded.

8.2.3. Community cohesion and integration implications of the proposed approach

The proposed approach has implications that extend beyond improving the quality of community participation, and has direct relevance for community cohesion and integration, both in the participation process, and in the regeneration outcomes it is likely to produce. This is important in the context of Burngreave, where the Ellesmere Green case showed that the project fail because the process did not consistently build trust or created the conditions under which the space could become more welcoming and socially sustainable after completion (see Chapter Four, Section 4.5). The proposed approach lies not only in its capacity to make Muslim participation more meaningful, but also in its potential to support the wider cohesion and integration aims that have repeatedly been attached to regeneration projects in Britain.

This implication is especially relevant when considered in light of recent policy direction. The Local Government Association and Belong guidance published in 2026 argues that cohesion is not self-sustaining, cannot be reduced to Equality Act compliance alone (as was the case in the EG project, as discussed in Chapet Seven, Section 7.3.3), and must be actively embedded across local authority services and partnerships. The same guidance explicitly links cohesion and

integration to place-making, participation, local planning, and regeneration design, including the use of features that encourage social mixing and the involvement of residents and community organisations in shaping local plans and design codes (Local Government Association, 2026).

To make this contribution operational, local authorities would need to embed it within a practical implementation framework for regeneration participation (See figure 8.2).



Figure 8.2: Cohesion and Integration Implementation Framework

Source: Author

This would begin at project inception by mapping affected groups, everyday community spaces, local tensions, and opportunities for contact, while extending equality assessment to include cohesion and integration impacts. A second step would be to establish a participation governance structure with clear council responsibility, allocated staff time and budget, and the involvement of councillors, community organisations, and trusted local actors. Third, the participation plan itself should be co-designed around accessible venues, culturally and gender-sensitive methods, appropriate timings, and targeted outreach to underrepresented groups, including women, youth, and elderly residents. Fourth, participation should be delivered through a combination of formal and informal settings, using trusted intermediaries and repeated contact in familiar community spaces so that trust can be built over time. Fifth, local input must be tied to clear design and decision points, supported by visible feedback loops showing how participation has shaped proposals. Finally, participation should continue beyond project completion through regular review of how the space is used, by whom, and with what effects on safety, inclusion, and inter-group relations. Implemented in this way, cohesion and integration are not left as hoped-for by-products of regeneration, but are built into both the participation process and the long-term social outcomes of the project.

Within this context, the proposed approach offers a practical means of translating these ambitions into the everyday realities of regeneration in a Muslim-concentrated neighbourhood. At the level of the participation process, this approach allows reaching people through the spaces they already use, adapting participation to cultural and gendered realities, and working through trusted intermediaries who can reduce scepticism and build trust in institutions (as discussed in the previous sections of this Chapter).

In addition, such approach strengthens shared ownership over local regeneration projects, and create more constructive encounters between different groups, when discussing common concerns of place, safety, and neighbourhood life.

Furthermore, the implications are also important at the level of project outcomes. The Ellesmere Green case demonstrated that physical improvement alone did not secure long-term community use, safety, or inclusivity (see Chapter Four, Section 4.5). By contrast, a meaningful approach would increase the likelihood that regeneration outcomes reflect the concerns of those groups whose use of space is often least detectable in traditional consultation approach (Mansuri & Rao, 2013a), including women, elderly residents, and young people, whose everyday routines

and perceptions of safety proved central to the social sustainability of Ellesmere Green (see Chapter Five).

Therefore, the cohesion and integration implications of this approach are divided into twofold. First, it would strengthen the participation process as a site through which trust, dialogue, and shared local ownership can be built. Second, it would improve the likelihood that regeneration outcomes themselves contribute to more inclusive, better used, and more socially connected spaces.

To conclude, developing a meaningful approach to engaging Muslims in local regeneration projects must be built on the interaction of policy, practice, and wider social purpose (community cohesion and integration). The policy element establishes the formal and institutional conditions through which participation can be enabled, including stronger alignment between national and local frameworks, clearer continuity of community participation (particularly in minority groups -such as the Muslim community), multi-authority coordination in the participation process, and the embedding of cohesion and integration within the participation guidance. The practice element then translates those conditions into forms of participation that Muslim communities can relate to and trust, by working through the community's everyday local infrastructures, culturally and linguistically appropriate methods, and trusted intermediaries.

Moreover, the cohesion and integration implications of the approach show that meaningful participation can help shape participation processes and regeneration outcomes that are more inclusive, more used by different groups, and more supportive of social interactions.

8.2.4. Resource implications of the proposed approach

The proposed approach has resource implications that need to be acknowledged, particularly within the financial constraints facing local governments. As discussed earlier in this thesis (Chapter six , Section 6.3.1), reductions in local authority resources can encourage participation to be approached primarily as a statutory or procedural requirement rather than as a sustained process of relationship-building. This concern is also recognised by the Local Government Association, which notes that meaningful and innovative engagement requires financial and human resources, while reductions in council resources have resulted in the loss of engagement teams and reduced capacity to move beyond minimum statutory requirements (Local Government Association, 2023).

Although this research does not provide financial data from which the monetary cost of the proposed approach could be calculated, its main resource requirements can be identified. Within local government, implementation would require dedicated officer time across the project cycle, including a named participation lead responsible for coordinating engagement, maintaining community relationships, providing feedback and organising post-completion review. Depending on the local context, additional expenditure may include interpretation and translation, culturally and gender-appropriate engagement sessions, venue or event costs, staff training, and facilitation. The proposed approach would also require staff time from relevant services, such as planning, housing, public health and community safety. This is consistent with LGA guidance that councils should assess whether sufficient staffing, skills and resources exist to support community participation and should provide staff with appropriate engagement training (Local Government Association, n.d.).

Finally, the approach requires particular skills as well as additional time and personnel. These include facilitation, cultural and religious awareness, intercultural communication, conflict management, community mapping and the ability to work with groups that are less easily reached through traditional community consultation. Trust-building itself is time-consuming and requires sustained institutional commitment (Ansell & Gash, 2008b). The practical implication is therefore not necessarily that councils establish a large new participation structure for every regeneration project, but that participation resources are identified and allocated at the start of the project, and responsibilities are clearly assigned. Therefore, meaningful participation should be treated as an integral project cost and capability requirement as part of the determined regeneration budget.

8.3. Addressing the research questions, aim and objectives

This thesis examines Muslims participation in local regeneration projects through the case of the Ellesmere Green project in Burngreave, to investigate how participation was experienced by local Muslims, how it was approached by local authorities, and how it was shaped by wider community cohesion and integration frameworks. The empirical chapters addressed these concerns in a sequential way.

Chapter Five focused primarily on Muslim participation itself and therefore addressed the first research question and objective. Chapter Six examined how local authorities approached and organised participation and therefore addressed the second research question and objective. Chapter Seven then explored the role of community cohesion and integration concepts and policy frameworks in regeneration projects and therefore addressed the third research question

and objective. These chapters fulfilled the overall aim of the study by showing that Muslim participation in regeneration is shaped by the interaction between everyday community life, institutional practice, and wider policy context.

8.3.1. Addressing the first research question and objective

The first research question was, ***To what extent and in what ways do Muslims participate in local regeneration projects?*** The related objective was, ***to demonstrate Muslims' perceptions of their participation in local regeneration projects, and the local dynamics that shape those perceptions.*** This was addressed mainly through Chapter Five, which examined how the Burngreave Muslim community understood its involvement in the Ellesmere Green project.

Chapter Five showed that the extent of the local Muslims participation was limited as their engagement was constrained by several factors. These included low awareness of the project, narrow and controlled channels of communication, language barriers, distrust towards local authorities, unequal power relations, and weaknesses in both formal and informal representation. The findings also showed that women, young people, and older residents' are more effected by the outcomes of the regeneration project, which suggest that their participation was ineffective.

The chapter also addressed *in what ways* Muslims participated by showing that the Ellesmere Green participation process was structured mainly around formal participation mechanisms, such as public meetings, exhibitions, questionnaires, and other official consultation methods. However, the findings suggested that these methods did not sufficiently connect with the local social, cultural, and religious practices through which many Muslims in Burngreave organised their everyday lives. As the fieldwork itself demonstrated, different groups were more meaningfully reached through familiar community settings and routines, including mosques, cafés, shops, women's gatherings, and other informal local networks. Chapter Five therefore showed that Muslim participation in the Ellesmere Green project was shaped by a mismatch between formal participation procedures and the everyday community infrastructures through which trust, communication, and local engagement were more effectively sustained.

8.3.2. Addressing the second research question and objective

The second research question was, ***How do local authorities approach, and engage with, Muslim communities in local regeneration processes, and what challenges do they face?*** While the related objective was, ***To examine local authorities' approaches to engaging***

Muslim communities in local regeneration processes, and to identify the challenges influencing that engagement. This was addressed mainly through Chapter Six, which examined the roles of Sheffield City Council, South Yorkshire Police, and the NHS in relation to Burngreave and the Ellesmere Green project.

Chapter Six showed that these authorities approached engagement differently but faced a number of shared challenges. The council relied on a relatively broad policy and consultation framework, yet in practice its engagement remained largely formal and informational, with limited scope for meaningful influence. The police showed awareness of the need for trust and community interaction, but their role in regeneration was often reactive and not fully embedded in the planning of local projects. The NHS, by contrast, demonstrated a more adaptive and context-sensitive model by engaging people through trusted figures and everyday religious and community practices.

The chapter also showed that all three authorities faced important challenges. These included funding constraints, institutional rigidity, power imbalances, weak coordination, and difficulties in translating awareness of trust and cultural difference into effective practice. However, the findings suggested that local authorities need to do more to move beyond largely procedural participation and towards more relational, coordinated, and context-sensitive processes.

8.3.3. Addressing the third research question and objective

The third research question asked: ***How are the community cohesion and integration concepts understood and operationalised by Muslim residents and local authorities, and how are national and local policy frameworks considered in local regeneration projects?*** The related objective was, ***to analyse Muslims' and local authorities' conceptualisation and operationalisation of cohesion and integration in light of policy frameworks, and their influence in shaping Muslim participation in local regeneration projects.*** This was addressed mainly through Chapter Seven, which examined the Ellesmere Green project through the policy context of community cohesion and integration and considered how these concepts were understood by both, the local Muslim community and council officers.

Chapter Seven showed that Muslim residents and local authorities understood cohesion and integration differently. For many Muslim participants, these ideas were interpreted through everyday life, such as people getting on together, using shared spaces, taking part in common activities, and building relationships within the neighbourhood. However, these concepts were also judged against practical realities, including whether local spaces were inclusive, whether

resources were available, and whether participation led to meaningful inclusion rather than remaining rhetorical. By contrast, the local council's understanding was more procedural, centred on demographic awareness, equality assessment, and formal access to participation.

The chapter also addressed how national and local policy frameworks were considered in the regeneration process. It showed that the Ellesmere Green project took place during the transition from the community cohesion agenda to the early integration agenda, and that these policy frameworks provided a general language of inclusion, participation, and positive local relations. However, their translation into practice was limited. Cohesion and integration were reflected weakly in both the participation process and the longer-term outcome of the project.

8.3.4. Addressing the overall aim of the research

When considered together, Chapters Five, Six, and Seven addressed the overall aim of the thesis, which was ***to explore Muslims participation in local regeneration projects and to investigate the community cohesion and integration policies considerations in that process.*** Chapter Five demonstrated how participation was experienced by the local Muslim community and showed that it was constrained by a range of structural and representational factors. Chapter Six then examined how local authorities approached participation and highlighted both their efforts and the institutional challenges that limited more meaningful participation. Finally, Chapter Seven situated these findings within the wider policy context by showing how cohesion and integration were understood differently by Muslim residents and local authorities, and how these policy frameworks were weakly reflected in the Ellesmere Green project. Thus, the aim of exploring Muslim participation in local regeneration projects and investigating the community cohesion and integration frameworks on the process, was therefore addressed through the cumulative argument of these three chapters.

8.4. Key thesis contributions

This thesis makes three main contributions to knowledge on Muslim participation in regeneration projects through addressing the key research gaps identified in the thesis (Chapter Two, Section 2.8). First, it makes a literature contribution by reconceptualising Muslim participation through lived religious-cultural practice rather than treating Muslims only as an organisational category or within broader minority classifications. Second, it makes a policy and practice contribution by showing how meaningful participation depends on the policy frameworks and practical arrangements through which participation is structured, recognised,

and enabled. Third, it makes a methodological contribution by demonstrating how research in a Muslim-concentrated neighbourhood such as Burngreave must be navigated through reflexive, culturally responsive, and adaptive methods in order to capture everyday life experiences.

8.4.1. Theoretical Contribution

The key theoretical contribution of this thesis is that it extends community participation scholarship by showing that Muslim participation in regeneration projects is shaped by the everyday religious and cultural practices through which trust, capacity, and social connections are produced. Classical and contemporary participation scholarship has already established that participation is fundamentally structured by power, institutional design, and the extent to which citizens can move from being consulted to having meaningful influence (Arnstein, 1969; Cornwall, 2008; Fung & Wright, 2003; Gaventa, 2006). However, when these frameworks are applied in the British context, Muslim communities are commonly categorised into broader community groups such as “BAME”, “faith communities”, or deprived neighbourhood communities. While such approaches demonstrate structural inequalities, they tend to overlook the specificity of Muslims participation by treating religion as an organisational symbol rather than as a lived social practice (See Chapter Tow, Section 2.7.1).

This thesis addresses that gap by developing an explanation of participation that links everyday religious-cultural and social community life to institutional participation approach. In doing so, it argues that Muslim participation should not be understood solely through visible formal indicators such as attendance, board membership, or representation through recognised and established organisations. Rather, it must also be understood through the informal and everyday infrastructures that sustain community life, including mosque-based networks, local practices, routine social support, and culturally embedded forms of interaction.

As participation theory increasingly recognises that voice, capacity and influence are not simply pre-existing community qualities, but are shaped through repeated interaction, institutional design, and the social conditions under which participation becomes possible (Lowndes & Wilson, 2001). By bringing these insights into discussion with literature on faith and regeneration, this thesis shows that Muslim participation is better conceptualised as a relational and socially embedded process than as a narrowly institutional one. It therefore contributes a more precise conceptual vocabulary for analysing Muslim participation in regeneration and moves the literature beyond instrumental or overly generic accounts of “faith participation” (Farnell et al., 2003).

A further theoretical contribution lies in extending debates on Muslim life in Britain by specifying the regeneration implications of critiques of *self-segregation* narratives and securitised framings. Existing scholarship has rightly challenged simplistic accounts of Muslim social and spatial segregation (As discussed in Chapter Two, Section 2.7.1) by pointing to structural racism, Islamophobia, and constrained choice (Amin, 2002; Phillips, 2006, 2007). This thesis builds on those critiques by showing how such framings also affect participation in regeneration, through shaping how Muslims are recognised, approached, and positioned within community participation processes.

8.4.2. Policy and Practice Contribution

This thesis makes a policy and practice contribution by developing a more meaningful approach to engaging Muslim communities in local regeneration projects. Drawing on the Ellesmere Green case, it shows that the key problem was whether the participation process was institutionally supported, culturally appropriate, accessible, and capable of producing visible influence. In response, the thesis advanced a two-part framework for meaningful participation, where a policy element, which establishes the formal and institutional conditions for participation, and a practice element, which translates those conditions into forms of participation that Muslim communities can engage with.

At the policy level, the thesis contributes by showing that meaningful participation requires stronger alignment between national expectations, local participation frameworks, and wider cohesion and integration agendas. The Ellesmere Green case demonstrated that participation was shaped by a policy environment in which community participation was formally recognised yet unevenly operationalised (see details in this Chapter, Section 8.2.1).

Therefore, this thesis contributes by arguing that policy should treat participation as a relational and continuous process extending across the full cycle of the regeneration process. Based on the findings, it proposed four policy considerations for more meaningful participation in Muslim-concentrated neighbourhoods. First, stronger alignment between local policy frameworks and current national requirements; second, relational continuity and trust-building from problem identification through to post-completion review; third, multi-agency participation as a formal requirement where regeneration issues extend beyond physical planning alone; and fourth, the embedding of cohesion and integration as explicit goals of the participation process rather than leaving them as indirect or assumed outcomes. This contribution moves participation policy away from one-off consultation and towards a framework that connects inclusion, influence, trust, and socially sustainable regeneration. It also reflects the more recent policy direction in

local government guidance (Local Government Association, 2026), which argues that cohesion cannot be reduced to equality compliance alone and should be embedded across local authority strategy, partnerships, place-making, and regeneration.

At the practice level, the thesis contributes by showing how these formal policy conditions must be translated into forms of participation that are grounded in the everyday realities of Muslim community life. The evidence from Ellesmere Green shows that participation was formally available, but many residents did not feel addressed by it, did not find it accessible, and/or did not regard it as a process through which their views could meaningfully shape outcomes. The thesis therefore makes a practical contribution by showing that meaningful participation in Muslim-concentrated neighbourhoods depends on engaging with the places, and relationships through which trust and capacity are produced.

Thus, the thesis develops three main practice priorities. The first is the need to reach communities through their everyday local infrastructures; the second is the need for culturally appropriate, gender-sensitive, and linguistically accessible methods; the third is the importance of trusted intermediaries and culturally competent participation teams (see details above in Section 8.2.2).

These policy and practice contributions show that improving Muslim participation in regeneration projects requires a framework in which policy establishes the conditions for continuity, recognition, coordination, and cohesion, while practice translates those conditions into accessible and trusted forms of participation rooted in everyday community life.

8.4.3. Methodological Contribution

The methodological contribution of this thesis lies in demonstrating how research on Muslim participation in regeneration projects can be conducted in a way that is context-sensitive, culturally aware, and responsive to the social realities of a Muslim-concentrated neighbourhood. The study developed a qualitative case-study approach that combined semi-structured interviews, mapping workshops, observation, and grey literature analysis in order to capture everyday community life, institutional practice, and policy context. In doing so, the thesis shows that researching Muslim participation requires methodological flexibility and sustained engagement with the field, particularly where trust, representation, and access cannot be assumed in advance (Creswell, 2013; Yin., 2015).

A central methodological contribution of the study is the way the methodology navigated the Burngreave context through a reflexive insider–outsider position. The research did not approach

the area as a detached external inquiry, nor did it assume that a shared Muslim identity with the community guaranteed access. The research process involved a shifting positionality in which insider connections supported trust, recruitment, and cultural understanding, while outsider reflexivity remained necessary in interpreting different perspectives (as discussed in Chapter Three, Section 3.2). This positioning helped the research gain access to participants through local social networks, identify trusted individuals within the community, and engage more meaningfully with the social and cultural norms that shaped participation in the area.

One of the clearest examples is the use of mapping workshops with Muslim women and young people, introduced not simply as an additional participatory tool but as a necessary methodological adaptation where interviewing was not equally appropriate or accessible.

Likewise, the use of Arabic where preferred, oral explanation of consent procedures, and flexible recruitment through face-to-face contact, phone calls, and community referrals showed that methodological access depended on linguistic and cultural responsiveness rather than standardised research procedures alone.

The thesis also contributes methodologically by showing the value of a slow, relational, and adaptive fieldwork strategy in a neighbourhood such as Burngreave. The research was not built around scheduled formal encounters, but around repeated presence in the area, observation over time, casual conversations, and attention to the everyday settings through which local life was organised. This allowed the study to identify the informal spaces, and relationships through which trust and legitimate representation were actually produced.

More importantly, the methodological contribution of the thesis relates to the conduct of the research itself, as it offers insights into how Muslim communities can be engaged more broadly. The fieldwork showed that engagement is more likely to be meaningful when it works through trusted networks, familiar settings, culturally appropriate arrangements, and methods that allow participants to express their views comfortably. For example, engaging female participants within familiar settings, such as women's house gatherings and sessions with young women in a community centre, showed that gender-sensitive and context-appropriate methods can generate insights that may otherwise remain marginalised or overlooked. This provides a methodological lesson for research with minority communities, particularly where formal or mixed-gender settings may restrict participation. Thus, the thesis offers a transferable methodological insight for future studies and engagement exercises involving Muslim communities in similar urban settings.

8.5. Research limitations and future research

This thesis has provided a detailed and context-sensitive account of Muslim participation in regeneration through the case of Ellesmere Green in Burngreave. However, as with all qualitative research, its contribution should be understood alongside a number of limitations. These limitations do not diminish the value of the study. Rather, they clarify the scope of its claims and identify areas in which future research can build on its findings.

8.5.1. Research limitations

This research has provided a detailed examination of Muslim participation in regeneration projects through the case of Ellesmere Green in Burngreave. However, as with all qualitative case-study research, a number of limitations should be acknowledged, as they help define the scope of its findings and indicate where further research is needed.

8.5.1.1. Limited access to some key participant groups

One limitation of this research was the inability to access some participant groups whose perspectives would have further strengthened the analysis. Although issues affecting elderly residents were identified through interviews, observation, and the wider empirical material, elderly participants themselves were not successfully interviewed. After some attempts to recruit some elderly mosque attendees, it seems that there was certain degree of scepticism towards being part of the research. This is purely an assumption, as no explanation was given to their rejection in this regard, but the more I tried to explain the research the more they resisted taking part. This meant that the research could not hear directly from older residents about their experiences of the area, their perceptions of the Ellesmere Green project, or the ways in which age shaped their relationship the space. As a result, some aspects of generational difference had to be interpreted indirectly from other community members, rather than through first-hand accounts. However, probably more could have been done to involve them if I had more time in the field work to find a person whom they trust, or a place where they may feel more comfortable participating.

Another limitation relates to the absence of interviews with local councillors who were in post at the time of the Ellesmere Green project. Despite repeated efforts, multiple points of contact, and initial expressions of interest, these interviews did not go head. This limited the study's ability to reconstruct more the representative dimension of the participation process at the time the project was being designed and implemented. Although interviews with later elected

representatives, local officials, community leaders helped to address this gap to an extent, the absence of those councillors means that the thesis could not capture directly how elected representatives at that specific time understood community participation, local priorities, and their own mediating role between the council and the community.

In addition, some segments of the local Muslim community, particularly Pakistani participants, were not successfully recruited despite repeated attempts.

This limitation means that the study could not capture all sections of the local Muslim population equally, this disproportion is itself revealing. As, the difficulty of accessing some community groups, and the need to adapt methods for others, reflects the wider issues of the complexity of the community representativeness that the thesis identified as central to local Muslim participation. Thus, the fieldwork limitations were not entirely external to the research questions, they were partly an expression of it.

8.5.1.2. Gaps in documented evidence

A further limitation was the lack of access to some of the original consultation documentation relating to the 2012 participation process. According to communications with the council, some of these materials had been lost during technical maintenance. This created a gap in relation to how consultation was formally recorded, how community responses were documented, and how the council presented the participation process at the time. The absence of these records did not prevent the research from proceeding, as other documents, interviews, and observations provided substantial evidence. However, it did restrict the level of triangulation that was possible and meant that parts of the participation process had to be reconstructed through retrospective accounts rather than verified directly through a complete archival record.

8.5.1.3. Limited examination of the funding dimension of participation

A further limitation of this research concerns the funding dimension of participation. Although this issue was considered from the perspective of local authorities, particularly in relation to the challenges discussed in Chapter Six, Section 6.3.1, the study did not examine the full scope of how funding shaped the participation process. This was the case of the EG project, and the proposed approach to Muslims participation (As discussed in Chapter Eight, Section 8.2). As while the research identified that funding constraints affected the design, reach, and continuity of participation, it did not extend to a detailed investigation of the financial structures behind

participation, such as budget allocation, funding priorities, resourcing decisions, or the extent to which financial limitations influenced the quality and duration of community participation.

As a result, the thesis is able to show that funding matters, but it cannot provide a full account of how financial decision-making shaped participation in Ellesmere Green or in comparable regeneration schemes. A more detailed understanding of this dimension would have required further evidence, including access to financial records, internal budgeting processes, and broader comparative evidence on the resourcing of participation in such projects.

These limitations point to some unavoidable gaps in access, evidence, and scope and clarify the boundaries within which the thesis findings should be understood.

8.5.2. Future Research

Beyond the limitations identified above, this thesis also opens up a number of important directions for future research. These arise from its findings and conceptual contributions, particularly in relation to how Muslim participation is shaped by place, community infrastructure, and institutional practice. Two areas appear especially important: comparative research across different local contexts, and closer examination of the role of community organisations in building participation capacity.

8.5.2.1. Comparative research across other neighbourhoods and cities

A first direction for future research would be to examine Muslim participation across a wider range of neighbourhoods, cities, and community contexts. The Burngreave case has shown that participation is shaped by local social infrastructure, institutional relationships, and the policy environment within which participation takes place. Participation scholarship has long argued that participation must be understood in relation to context, including who participates, in what, and under what conditions of influence and recognition (Cornwall, 2008). Research on local governance similarly suggests that civic capacity is shaped not only by community characteristics, but also by institutional design and the ways in which local authorities organise participation (Lowndes & Wilson, 2001). Thus, Future comparative research would help to explore how far the patterns identified in Burngreave are shared in other Muslim-concentrated areas, and how far they vary according to factors such as the demographic composition of the Muslim community and institutional approaches to participation.

Such research would be particularly valuable because Muslim communities in Britain are internally diverse, and the conditions under which participation takes place are likely to differ

across places. Variations in ethnicity, migration history, language, and levels of religiosity may shape trust relations, ideas of representation, and preferred forms of engagement. Comparative research across different neighbourhoods and cities could also show whether different local authority approaches, political priorities, and resource conditions produce different outcomes for participation. Consequently, future research would test the transferability of the findings from Burngreave and deepen understanding of how place-specific and institutional factors interact to shape Muslim participation in regeneration projects

8.5.2.2. The role of local community organisations in building participation capacity

A further area for future research is the role of local community organisations, particularly mosques and community associations, in building the capacity of local Muslims to participate in regeneration projects. While this thesis has shown that Muslim participation is shaped by the design of participation processes, local authority practices, and wider policy frameworks, it has focused more on the role of public institutions, and less on how local community organisations themselves help prepare and support participation. Yet the findings suggest that organisations such as mosques and community associations may be important not only as access points for participation, but also as spaces of trust, everyday contact, and local legitimacy. Future research could therefore examine more directly how local Muslim organisations contribute to building participation capacity, including through information-sharing, trust-building, representation, and the support of wider community participation in regeneration projects.

This future research direction is especially important because existing work on faith and regeneration has already shown that faith groups often have long-term local commitment, community reach, and practical knowledge, while also warning that official agencies do not always understand their internal diversity or how best to work with them (Farnell et al., 2003; Furbey & Macey, 2005). In the Burngreave case, the mosque and organisations such as ISRAAC appeared to function as more than symbolic representatives. They were also part of the neighbourhood's social infrastructure through which information, trust, and community connection were maintained. However, this thesis did not investigate how such organisations themselves understand regeneration, how they build confidence and awareness among community members, or how far they can act as sustained vehicles of participation across the life of a project.

Future research could therefore examine more directly how these local organisations contribute to participation capacity-building and deepen the findings of this thesis by shifting attention from the external design of participation by local authorities to the internal community infrastructures through which local Muslims may become more able to engage in regeneration projects.

8.6. Concluding remarks

In conclusion, this thesis has argued that meaningful Muslim participation in local regeneration projects cannot be secured through formal and traditional mechanisms alone. Rather, it depends on the quality of relationships between local authorities and Muslim communities, the ways in which participation is understood and practised in local contexts, and the responsiveness of policy frameworks.

Despite its relatively small physical scale, Ellesmere Green in Burngreave has provided an analytically rich site through which to examine a much broader set of social, institutional, and political dynamics. The case of EG revealed the complexity of Muslims' community life and participation within a unique urban setting, and in doing so offered important insights into the position of the local Muslim community within regeneration processes. The study has shown that even a spatially limited project can illuminate wider questions concerning how communities are recognised, how participation is structured, and how relationships with public institutions are formed, experienced, and negotiated.

Through this case, it became possible to uncover the significance of social infrastructure within the local Muslim community, beyond formal organisations and community actors, but also through the networks, relationships, and local forms of support that shape participation in everyday life. The research demonstrated that participation in regeneration cannot be understood separately from the broader relationship between Muslim communities and public institutions. Questions of trust, representation, and responsiveness emerged as central to understanding both the possibilities and the limits of participation. The EG project served as a lens through which deeper and longer-standing patterns of interaction between local authorities and Muslim communities in Burngreave could be explored.

The findings of this thesis also suggest that projects such as the EG project may have implications that extend beyond their immediate physical or environmental outcomes. Where approached in a meaningful and inclusive way, such projects can create opportunities for strengthening relationships across communities and between communities and local institutions, thereby contributing to wider processes of cohesion and integration. However, the

study also indicates that such outcomes cannot be assumed. They depend on the extent to which participation is genuinely inclusive, relationally grounded, and supported by both appropriate policy frameworks and culturally and contextually effective practice.

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Appendices

Ethics approval letter

The University Of Sheffield.

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Approved: 11/03/2021

Farouq Tahar
Registration number: 180124770
School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture
Programme: PhD in Architecture

Dear Farouq

PROJECT TITLE: Muslims participation in architecture and urban projects: A mixed methods qualitative study of Burngreave, Sheffield
APPLICATION: Reference Number 033068

On behalf of the University ethics reviewers who reviewed your project, I am pleased to inform you that on 11/03/2021 the above-named project was **approved** on ethics grounds, on the basis that you will adhere to the following documentation that you submitted for ethics review:

- University research ethics application form 033068 (form submission date: 08/02/2021); (expected project end date: 01/05/2023).
- Participant information sheet 1076396 version 2 (08/02/2021).
- Participant consent form 1076398 version 2 (08/02/2021).

The following amendments to this application have been approved:

- Amendment approved: 11/03/2024
  - Mapping_Participant_Consent_Form_Final_05032024.docx

If during the course of the project you need to deviate significantly from the above-approved documentation please inform me since written approval will be required.

Your responsibilities in delivering this research project are set out at the end of this letter.

Yours sincerely

Chengzhi Peng
Ethics Admin
School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture

Please note the following responsibilities of the researcher in delivering the research project:

- The project must abide by the University's Research Ethics Policy: https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/research-services/ethics-integrity/policy
- The project must abide by the University's Good Research & Innovation Practices Policy: https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/polopoly_fs/1.671066!/file/GRIPPolicy.pdf
- The researcher must inform their supervisor (in the case of a student) or Ethics Admin (in the case of a member of staff) of any significant changes to the project or the approved documentation.
- The researcher must comply with the requirements of the law and relevant guidelines relating to security and confidentiality of personal data.
- The researcher is responsible for effectively managing the data collected both during and after the end of the project in line with best practice, and any relevant legislative, regulatory or contractual requirements.

Information Sheet

Participant Information Sheet

1. Research Project title

Muslims participation in architecture and urban projects: A mixed methods qualitative study of Burngreave, Sheffield

2. Invitation

This is a PhD research that is conducted at Sheffield School of architecture (University of Sheffield), and you are being invited to take part in this project. Before you decide to do so, it is important you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

3. What is the project's purpose?

This research aims in its broad goal to investigate Muslims participation in architecture and urban projects at local level, and the efforts that have been made by professionals and local authorities in engaging them. It also attempts to scrutinise how community cohesion and integration policies influenced this process. Thus, this fieldwork intends to explore the Muslims participation in the improvement design **of the Ellesmere Green Project in Burngreave,** and reflect on Sheffield city council efforts and procedures followed in this project, and how local community cohesion and integration policy consider Muslims participation in the project. The outcomes of this research will contribute into promoting a clearer vision about engaging Muslims for the designers and decision-makers of architecture and urban projects (development & regeneration projects) in the setting of the local community cohesion and integration policy.

4. Why have I been chosen?

You have been chosen to participate in this research as you are member of the local Muslim community, community organisation, private or public establishment that has been either involved or affected directly or indirectly by the project.

5. Do I have to take part?

It is entirely up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be able to keep a copy of this information sheet and you should indicate your agreement through signing the consent form. However, you can still withdraw at any time before the data has been analysed (approximately up to 4 months after the data collection), without any negative consequences, and without providing a reason. If you decide to withdraw after the analysis is carried out, only anonymous information will be kept and all personal information will be destroyed.

6. What will happen to me if I take part? And What do I have to do?

If you agree to take part in this research, you will be asked 10 to 15 open questions on regards to your involvement in, thoughts and opinions about the project and the area in general, and how do you perceive the project's impact on your daily life experience. You will have the choice to respond or refrain from answering any question. You will also be given the

opportunity to express any other views related to the topic throughout the interview. The overall duration of the interview will be between 45 and 60 minutes, and you will be ask to give your permission for the interview to be audio recorded and/or noted.

7. What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

Taking part in the research is not anticipated to cause you any potential physical and/or psychological harm or distress. The interview will be carried out the same as any conversation experienced in everyday life. However, if at any stage, you may not feel comfortable, you still have the right to withdraw without giving a reason.

8. What are the possible benefits of taking part?

Even though there are no instant benefits for participants in this research, it is hoped that this study will have a beneficial contribution on how architecture and urban projects are designed and realised for the use of different communities

9. Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential?

During the research, your gender, age, religion, ethnicity will be recorded to be later analysed along with your responses to the interview questions or any views or opinions you may express. However, you will not be identified in any reports or publications, and all the collected information will be strictly confidential. However, if you are a community leader, current or former councillor, current or former council official, your name might be mentioned with your full consent. You will be asked to sign a consent form before the interview, where you will be required to print your name and sign it. This will also be kept strictly confidential and it is just to confirm that you have given the permission to participate in the research. If you agree to us sharing the information you provide with other researchers, Data collected may be shared in an anonymised form to allow reuse by other researchers, and will not allow any individuals to be identified or identifiable.

10.What is the legal basis for processing my personal data?

As mentioned in section 9, your gender, age, religion, ethnicity will be recorded, but not your name, as it will be replaced with a number (participant 1, 2, 3... etc.). However, if you are a community leader, current or former councillor, current or former council official, your name might be mentioned with your full consent Nonetheless, your personal data will be treated under the General Data Protection Regulation (applicable in the UK and EU from 25 May 2018). According to this, we are required to inform you that the legal basis we are applying in order to process your personal data is that '*processing is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest*' (Article 6(1) (e)).

11. What will happen to the data collected, and the results of the research project?

After the interview is finished, all the information recorded and each participant will be given an ID/reference number to ensure anonymity of the data collected. This will be later stored on my password protected University Google Drive with a backup in my University file-store and my password protected personal laptop. Consent form, interview notes and any other hard copy material will be kept at my university office in a lockable cabinet. In addition personal information will be destroyed after 6 months of completing the project, and only anonymised data will be kept for further researches. However, due to the nature of this research it is likely that other researchers may find the data collected to be useful in answering future research questions. We will ask for your explicit consent for your data to be shared in this way.

12. Who is organising and funding the research?

This research is organised by the University of Sheffield (School of architecture), and is funded by the researcher.

13. Who is the Data Controller?

The University of Sheffield will act as the Data Controller for this study. This means that the University of Sheffield is responsible for looking after your information and using it properly.

14. Who has ethically reviewed the project?

This project has been ethically approved via the University of Sheffield's EthicsCommittee (UREC), as administered by School of Architecture. The University's ResearchEthics Committee monitors the application and delivery of the University's Ethics Review Procedure across the University.

15. What if something goes wrong and I wish to complain about the research?

If there are any complaints about the research, please contact the researcher or one of his supervisor (contact details below). If your complaint has not been handled to your satisfaction, please contact the head of the School of Architecture, Professor Karim Hadjri.

16. Contact for further information

Researcher: Farouq Tahar
Email: ftahar1@sheffield.ac.ukk
T: 07586503286

Supervisor: Dr Krzysztof Nawratek
Email: k.nawratek@sheffield.ac.uk
T: 0114 222 0327

Co-Supervisor: Dr Joanne Britton
Email: n.j.britton@sheffield.ac.uk
T: 0114 222 643

Thank you for your time reading this. I hope you be interested and take part in this research project.

Participant Consent Form, Community members, Leaders, and officials

Participant Consent Form

Muslims participation in architecture and urban projects: A mixed methods qualitative study of Burngreave, Sheffield

Please tick the appropriate boxes	Yes	No
Taking Part in the Project		
I have read and understood the project information sheet and the project has been fully explained to me. (If you will answer No to this question please do not proceed with this consent form until you are fully aware of what your participation in the project will mean.)	☐	☐
I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project.	☐	☐
I agree to take part in the project. I understand that taking part in the project will include an interview, during which I will be asked series of questions related to the research topic.	☐	☐
I understand and agree that the interview will be recorded through audio recording device and/or notes will be taken.	☐	☐
I understand that my taking part is voluntary and that I can withdraw from the study at any time. I do not have to give any reasons for why I no longer want to take part and there will be no adverse consequences if I choose to withdraw.	☐	☐
How my information will be used during and after the project		
I understand my personal details such as name, phone number, address and email address etc. will not be revealed to people outside the project.	☐	☐
I understand and agree that my words may be quoted in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs. I understand that I will not be named in these outputs unless I specifically request this, or I give my full consent use my name if I am a semi-official or official member of a local organisation or establishment.	☐	☐
I understand and agree that other authorised researchers will have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form.	☐	☐
I understand and agree that other authorised researchers may use my data in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs, only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form.	☐	☐
I give permission for the responses and views that I provide to be deposited with the researcher (Farouq Tahar) and his supervisors (Dr Krzysztof Nawratek & DR Joanne Britton) so it can be used for future research and learning	☐	☐
So that the information you provide can be used legally by the researchers		
I agree to assign the copyright I hold in any materials generated as part of this project to The University of Sheffield.	☐	☐

Name of participant [printed] Signature Date

Name of Researcher [printed] Signature Date

Project contact details for further information:
Researcher: Farouq Tahar
Email: ftahar1@sheffield.ac.uk
Supervisor: Dr Krzysztof Nawratek
Email: k.nawratek@sheffield.ac.uk
Co-Supervisor : Dr Joanne Britton
Email: n.j.britton@sheffield.ac.uk

Person who can be contacted in the event of a complaint:
Professor Karim Hadjri
Head of School of Architecture
Western Bank, Sheffield S10 2TN. The Arts Tower, Room 13.07
Email: k.hadjri@sheffield.ac.uk
Tel: 0114 222 0307

The template of this consent form has been approved by the University of Sheffield Research Ethics Committee and is available to view here: https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/rs/ethicsandintegrity/ethicspolicy/further-guidance/homepage

Participant Consent Form, mapping workshops

The University Of Sheffield.

Participant Consent Form

Muslims' participation in architecture and urban projects: A mixed methods qualitative study of Burngreave, Sheffield

Please tick the appropriate boxes	Yes	No
Taking Part in the Project		
I have read **and understood the** project information sheet and the project has been fully explained to me. (If you will answer No to this question please do not proceed with this consent form until you are fully aware of what your participation in the project will mean.)	☐	☐
I am 18 years or over, and I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project.	☐	☐
I agree to take part in the project. I understand that taking part in the project will include a mapping workshop, during which I will be asked to participate in a series of tasks related to the research topic.	☐	☐
I understand and agree that notes will be taken during the workshop	☐	☐
I understand that my taking part is voluntary and that I can withdraw from the study at any time. I do not have to give any reasons for why I no longer want to take part and there will be no adverse consequences if I choose to withdraw.	☐	☐
How my information will be used during and after the project		
I understand my personal details such as name, phone number, address and email address etc. will not be revealed to people outside the project.	☐	☐
I understand and agree that my words and maps produced may be quoted in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs. I understand that I will not be named in these outputs	☐	☐
I understand and agree that other authorised researchers will have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form.	☐	☐
I understand and agree that other authorised researchers may use my data in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs, only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form.	☐	☐
I give permission for the responses and views that I provide to be deposited with the researcher (Farouq Tahar) and his supervisors (Dr Krzyzstof Nawratek & DR Joanne Britton) so it can be used for future research and learning	☐	☐
So that the information you provide can be used legally by the researchers		
I agree to assign the copyright I hold in any materials generated as part of this project to The University of Sheffield.	☐	☐

Name of participant [printed] Signature Date

Name of Researcher [printed] Signature Date

Project contact details for further information:
Researcher: Farouq Tahar
Email: ftahar1@sheffield.ac.uk
Supervisor: Dr Krzysztof Nawratek
Email: k.nawratek@sheffield.ac.uk
Co-Supervisor : Dr Joanne Britton
Email: n.j.britton@sheffield.ac.uk

Person who can be contacted in the event of a complaint:
Professor Renata Tyszczuk
Head of School of Architecture
Western Bank, Sheffield S10 2TN. The Arts Tower, Room 13.07
Email: r.Tyszczuk @sheffield.ac.uk
Tel: 0114 222 0313

The template of this consent form has been approved by the University of Sheffield Research Ethics Committee and is available to view here: https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/rs/ethicsandintegrity/ethicspolicy/further-guidance/homepage

Interviews schedules

What do I need to know? And why?

From the local Muslim community leaders and members

- An overall picture on the participants' background, including their religious and ethno-cultural affiliations, immigration history, and their ties with the Burngreave area.
- Their general views regarding the built environment in the area (facilities, houses, public spaces…), in order to reveal their perceptions towards the overall urban setting in the area, before narrowing down the conversations towards more specific questions about the Ellesmere Green project.
- Comprehend the local Muslims religious, cultural and social needs in the area, and the extend of which these needs are met and manifested in the current built-environment
- The level of communication of the Muslim community members -and leaders in particular- with the local authorities, including the means and channels that are usually used by the Muslim community members to address their demands.
- The Muslims attitude towards participating in a local regeneration project, and their thoughts on the efficacy of the process. This will help the research to understand how it would possible to accommodate their religious and cultural needs, and illustrate the role of this participation in addressing Muslims exclusion, and facilitating their social inclusion.
- The Muslims Views on Ellesmere Green before and after the improvement, to comprehend the Muslim community's opinion on the changes made within the project as well as its surrounding. This includes the changes experienced in various aspects, socially (interactions amongst Muslims and with others), culturally (cultural activities within the Ellesmere Green perimeter) and economically (local business performance).
- The Muslims awareness, engagement and participation throughout the project progression, in order to understand if they had any inputs, and how this fed towards the projects' outcomes.
- The local authorities' efforts to motivate and involve the Muslim community in designing the project from the Muslims point of view. This will generate satisfactory methods to be used when engaging Muslims in the participation.
- Muslims familiarity and understanding of the community cohesion and integration, including different local and national policies.
- Views on the project's impact on community cohesion and integration.

From the local officials (Ward Councillors, Council officers, and other public officials)

- Procedures followed by the council to design and realise local regeneration projects, in order to have an understanding of the structure that is put in place.
- The relationship between local officials and the Muslim community in the area from the officials' point of view, including difficulties and eases in involving tghem, as well as the local authorities ways of communicating with the local Muslim community members.

- Approach(es) and methods used by the council to engage communities in general -and Muslims in particular- in designing local urban and architectural projects.
- The council Planning and design team role in communicating the Muslim community's needs, and the extent of which they interpret them into the Ellesmere Green project.
- The ward councillors' role in intermediating between the Muslims needs, and the local councils efforts in proposing, designing and realising the project.
- The local official community cohesion and integration policies and their position within the national agendas. Especially the ones related to regeneration, urban and architectural projects.
- The use of the Ellesmere Green project in promoting cohesion and integration at a local level.

Questions

For the Muslim community leaders & Members

- Age, ethnicity, education, employment status, and material status?
- When did you moved to/how often do you visit Burngreave and what were your reasons behind living in/visiting the area?
- How do you usually spend your time in Burngreave, and what places do you often visit while in the area?
- What are your social, cultural and religious activities that are often linked to Burngreave, and what do you think is missing in the area in order to improve your day-to-day experience?
- How often do you go to Ellesmere Green, and what do you think of the transformation made in 2013?
- What are your thoughts on the impact of the work done through the Ellesmere Green project on your day-to-day life?
- Were you invited to share your views on the proposed Ellesmere Green project at the time, which included re-designing the Green space as well as renovating the surrounding streets and shops frontage?
- Did you have any views on the project? And were they taken into consideration?
- How do you describe the planners and council efforts in engaging the local community in general –and Muslims in particular- in this project?
- To what extent were the local community's views taken into full consideration?
- What is your understanding of community cohesion and integration compare to that of the authorities?(read the official definition of community participation and integration to the participant)
- What do you think of the local authorities' efforts in implementing community cohesion and integration in designing and realising the Ellesmere green project?
- To what extent do you think that local authorities have been successful or unsuccessful in this project?
- Is there any remarks/suggestions in the council's approach to improve the Muslims involvement in such project, and better implementation of the community cohesion and integration policies through it?
- What role do you think local Muslims could/should play in facilitating their participation in architecture and urban projects in the area?

For Business owners

- How long has your business been running for, and how would you describe its performance throughout this period?
- When and how do the local planning authorities usually approach you in case of a local urban and/or architectural development in the area?
- Have the local planning authorities invited/approached you somehow to take your opinion on –at the time- the proposed Ellesmere Green project?
- How do you think local authorities could/should have approached the business owners in relation to designing and realising the project?
- How do you perceive Ellesmere Green before, during the works and after completing the improvement from an economic and social perspective?
- What impact did the project have on the number of costumers that visit your business?
- What role do you think local Muslims could/should play in facilitating their participation in architecture and urban projects in the area?

For the Councillor

- How long have/had you been a Burngreave ward councillor for, and why did you decide to become one?
- What are your responsibilities and roles as a ward councillor, and how are these exercised in the event of planning urban and/or architectural interventions in the area?
- What are your thoughts on the local council's engagement with the Muslim community in Burngreave; especially in terms of the urban and architectural projects in the area?
- How do you describe the planning officials approach to engaging the Muslim community in the Ellesmere Green project?
- How did you use your position to facilitate the Muslims involvement in the project, and are there any difficulties or barriers that may affected the process?
- Do you see that the project's outcomes responded to the local Muslim community needs/concerns?
- How do you see the impact of the different phases of the project in relation to the local and national community cohesion and integration agendas?
- What role do you think Muslims could/should play to facilitate their participation in architecture and urban projects in the area?
- What are the points that you think could/should have done differently for better outcomes?

For the Council Officer, Development Officer & Regeneration manager

General

- Can you please tell us about your job, and how long have you been working a development officer for Sheffield city council, and what are your responsibilities?
- What type of projects that you are involved in?
- In development projects (Architectural, Urban or Artwork), what stages do you usually follow to design a project, and what do you mainly take into consideration?

- How do the council regard the communities' involvement in development projects (Architectural, Urban or Artwork), and at what stage of the project the community participation/consultation is considered?
- What means do you use to reach out to community members in order to involve them in these projects? And how this could differ from a community to another?
- What steps do you follow when engaging with the local communities?
- What are the main challenges that you face while engaging with local communities? And how does this differ from a community to another?
- How would you describe the outcomes of the current procedures followed in designing these projects and involving the communities?
- How does the council reassess its development and regeneration projects?
- How is the council implementing the community cohesion and integration policies into the local development and regeneration projects? (Such as the green paper: integrated communities, the race equality commission)

Burngreave (Ellesmere Green)

- Where did the idea of improving Ellesmere green originated from, and why? And what were the objectives of the project at the time?
- What were your responsibilities and involvement in the Ellesmere Green project?
- What process was followed to generate the initial design proposals, and to what extend did the local community participated in this?
- How did you engage with the local community throughout this project? What tools did you use? and what extra measures did you take to facilitate their involvement, if any?
- What was the council's approach in involving marginalised groups in the project? And is the heterogeneous nature of the Muslim community in Burngreave had been taken into consideration? And how?
- What are the main challenges that you faced when engaging with the local community? And what do you think are the barriers to their participation?
- Do the council seek active participation from the community, or a community representation will be enough?
- How successful do you consider the community participation in the project, and why?
- To what extent do you think you have responded to the local community's needs/concerns, how did you evaluate this? (eg. Feedback, reassess)
- To what extend do you think the final project achieved its objectives?
- According to a few interviews carried out with local community members, there is a disappointment and frustration about the use of the project. Is the council aware of this and what do you make of it?
- How did the council implement the community cohesion and integration policies into the Ellesmere green project? (The Burngreave New deal for communities)
- What role do you think Muslims could/should play to facilitate their participation in architecture and urban projects in the area?
- Reflecting on your experiences, what can/should be done in future to facilitate community participation and engagement?

For the South Yorkshire Police Inspector

General

- I would like you to talk a little bit about your journey in the police, how long have you been working for the police, and how long have you been part of the Ecclesfield police forces?
- How do you see the crime data in Burn greave since you have started your responsibility in Sheffield?
- What are the main issues that police are dealing with in Burn greave? And how are the police tackling these problems, what tools are usually used in the context of Burn greave?
- Do police usually get involved in the process of any development or regeneration projects (public/private)? And what do their inputs include? Are they part of a certain planning permission approval procedure?
- How do the police usually communicate with the local community in Burngreave? what is the main type of patrol in the area (foot/car), and why?
- How do you describe the local community crime-reporting performance? Do you think that the data reflect the reality in Burn greave?
- What means are used to facilitate the interaction between the police and the community members?
- How do you describe the level of trust between the local community and the police? In both directions.
- Do you consider people original background when communication with the community?
- What are the challenges that the police frequently face in the area? And does the multicultural nature of the area pose further difficulties for the police?
- What do you think the local community should do to facilitate their involvement in policing the area?

Ellesmere Green

- What can you say about the current state of EG? Considering the presence of drug users who are affecting people's lives and business owners in the area?
- Do you think this is a common issue across the city or is it limited to certain areas only (drug users bein in a public green space)?
- Why do you think drug users would choose to occupy this particular space, which is located in the heart of the neighbourhood?
- How are the community members addressing the issue and how is the police responding to the issue?
- From a policing point of view, what do you think could/should be done within the space to deter these anti-social behaviours from EG?

For the NHS community engagement manager

General

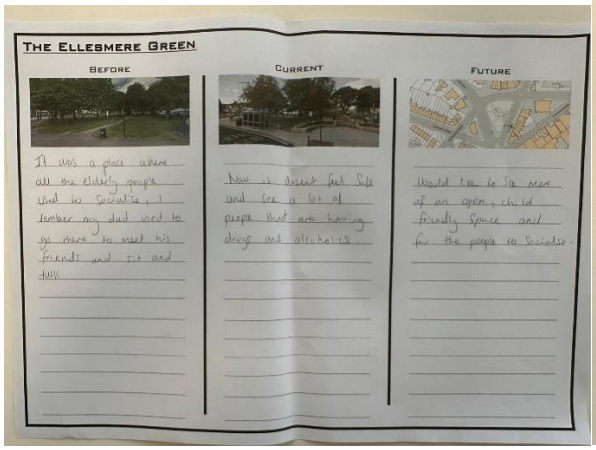
- Can you please tell us about your job, and how long have you been in this position, and what are your responsibilities?
- What type of projects that you are involved in?
- In development projects, at what stage do you usually engage with communities?
- What means do you use to reach out to community members in order to involve them in these projects? And how this could differ from a community to another?

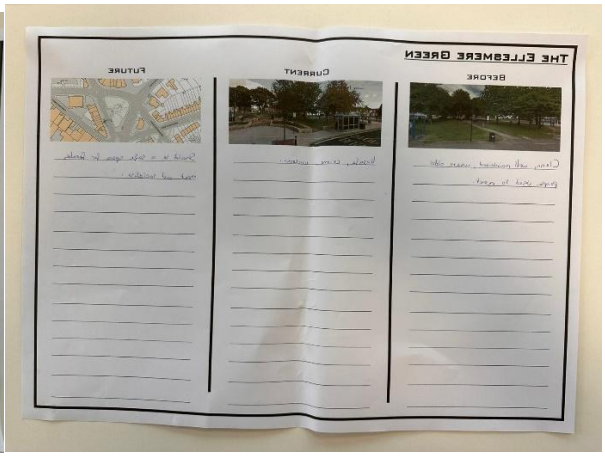
- What steps do you follow when engaging with the local communities?
- What are the main challenges that you face while engaging with local communities? And how does this differ from a community to another?
- How would you describe the outcomes of the current procedures followed in involving the communities?
- How does the council reassess its development and regeneration projects?

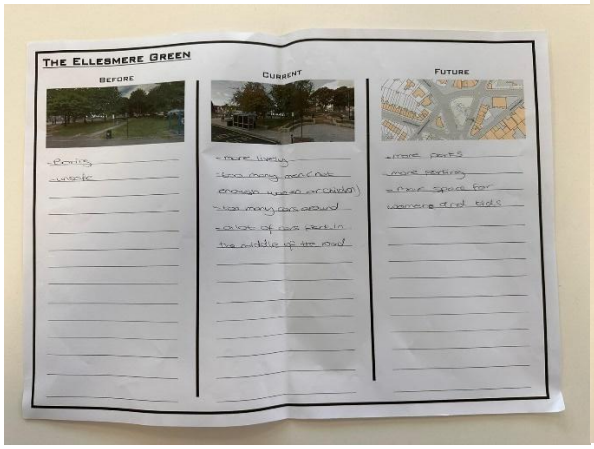
Burngreave

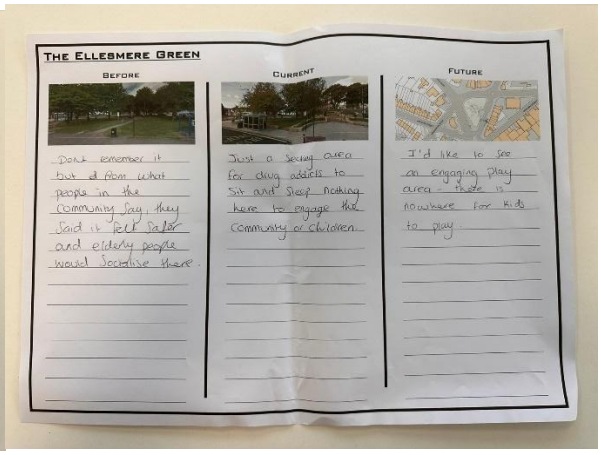
- What were your responsibilities and involvement in the Burngreave area?
- What process was followed to generate the initial design proposals, and to what extend did the local community participated in this?
- How did you engage with the local community throughout this project? What tools did you use? and what extra measures did you take to facilitate their involvement, if any?
- What was the NHS approach in involving marginalised groups in the project ?
- What are the main challenges that you faced when engaging with the local community? And what do you think are the barriers to their participation?
- Do you usually seek active participation from the community, or a community representation will be enough?
- How successful do you consider the community participation in the project, and why?
- To what extent do you think you have responded to the local community's needs/concerns, how did you evaluate this?
- How do you interpret people's feedback?
- What role do you think Muslims could/should play to facilitate their participation in such projects?
- Reflecting on your experiences, what can/should be done in future to facilitate community participation and engagement?

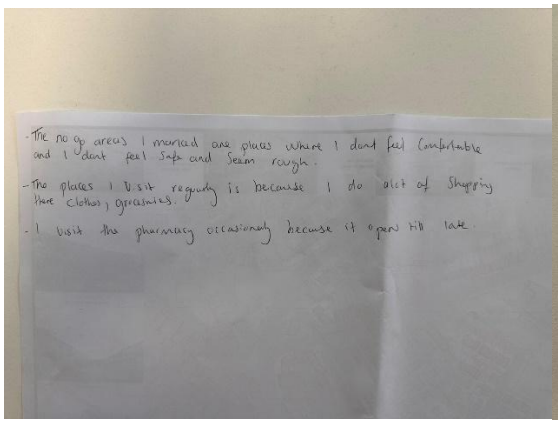
Women Workshop notes

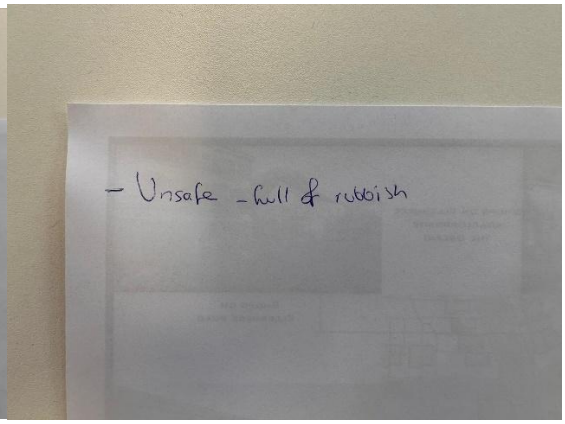


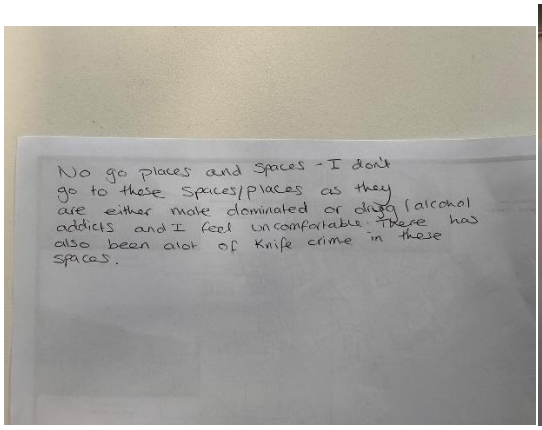


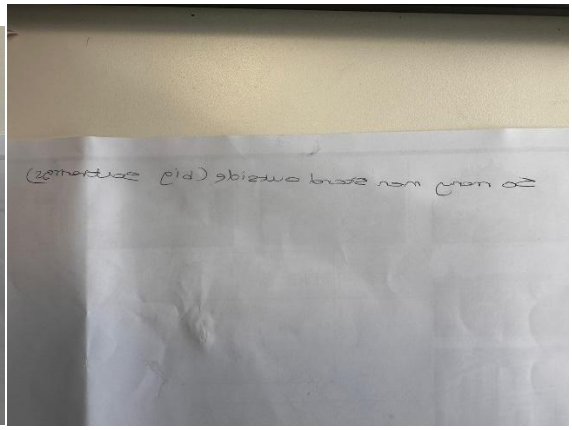




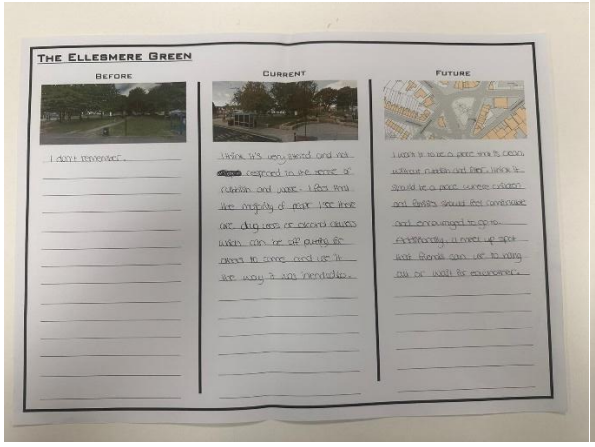

- The no go areas I mentaid are places where I dont feel Comfortable and I dont feel Safe and Seem rough.
- The places I visit regularly is because I do alot of Shopping there clothes, groceries.
- I visit the pharmacy occasionally because it open till late.

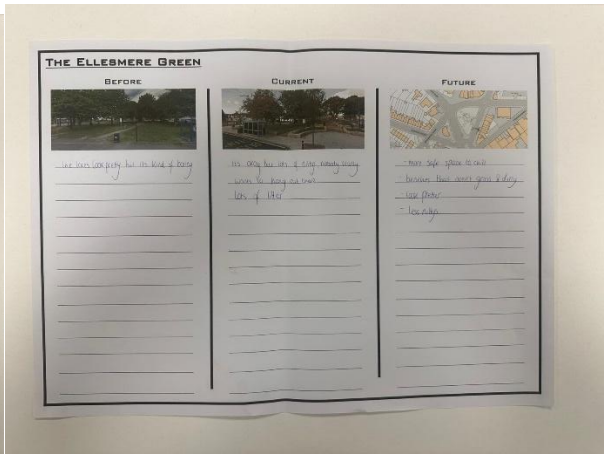

- Unsafe - full of rubbish

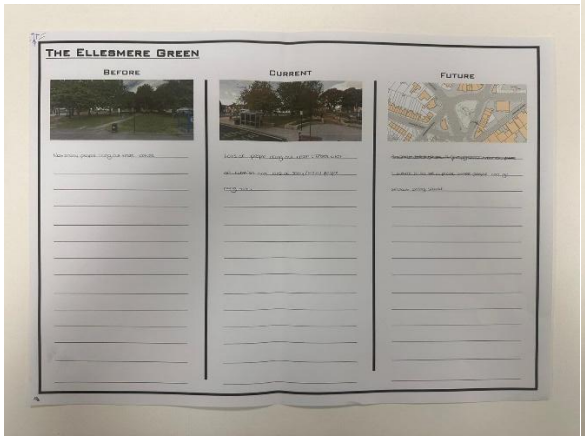

No go places and spaces - I don't go to these spaces/places as they are either male dominated or drug/alcohol addicts and I feel uncomfortable there has also been alot of knife crime in those spaces.

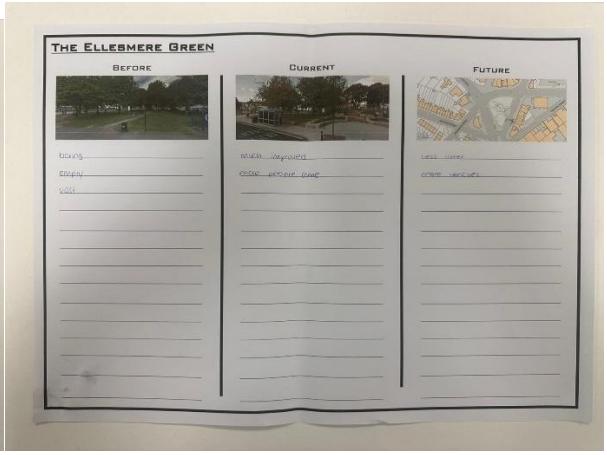


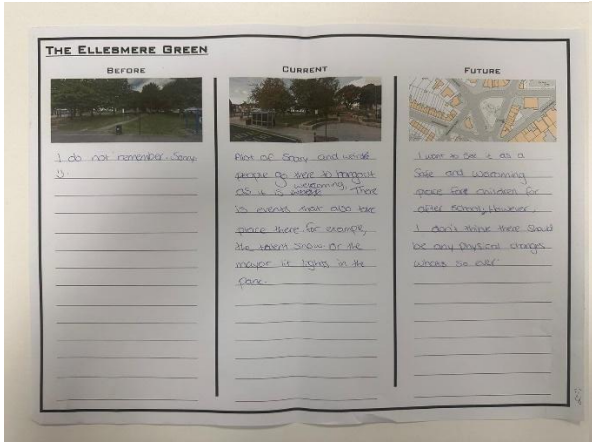
Young Adult Girls

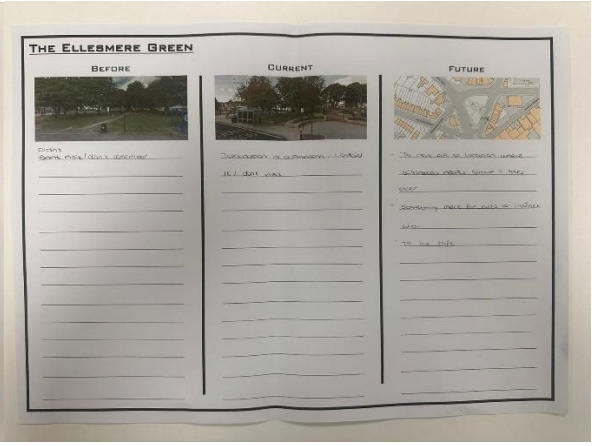


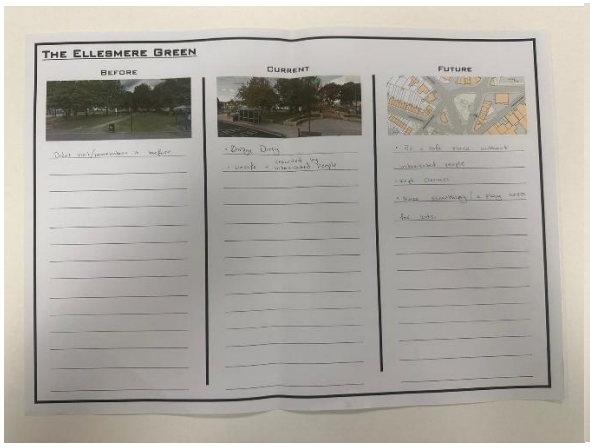


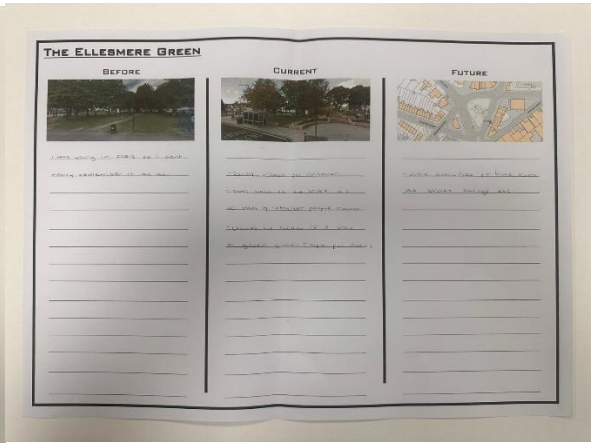


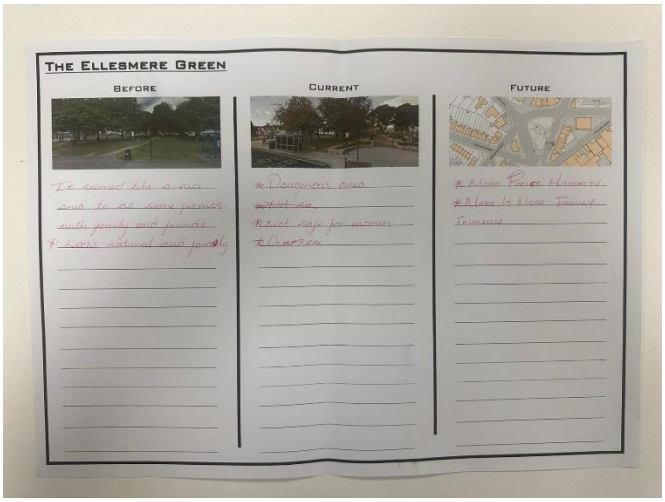


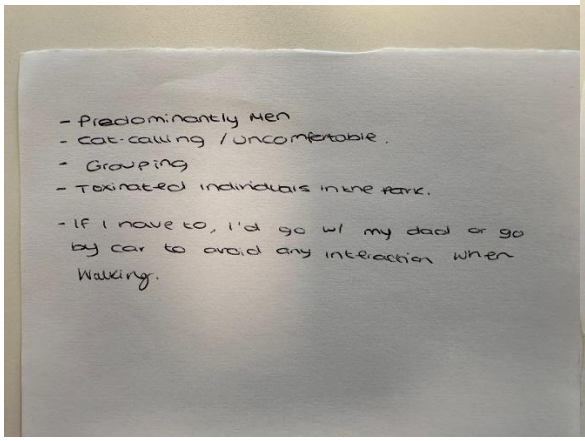


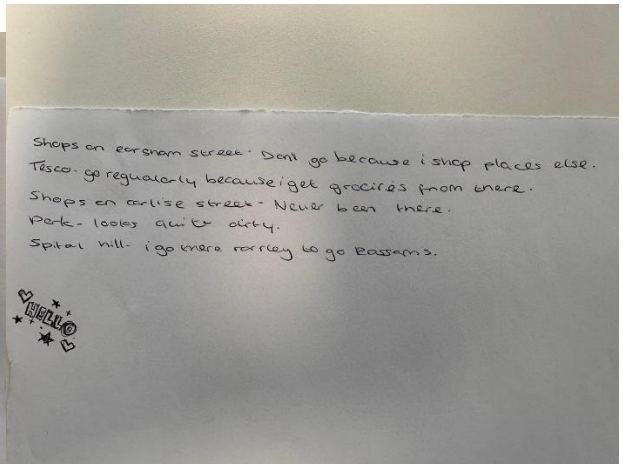


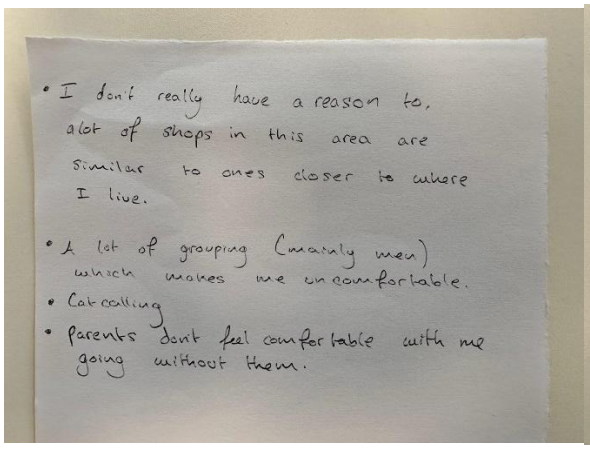

THE ELLESMERE GREEN
BEFORE
CURRENT
FUTURE


THE ELLESMERE GREEN
BEFORE
CURRENT
FUTURE

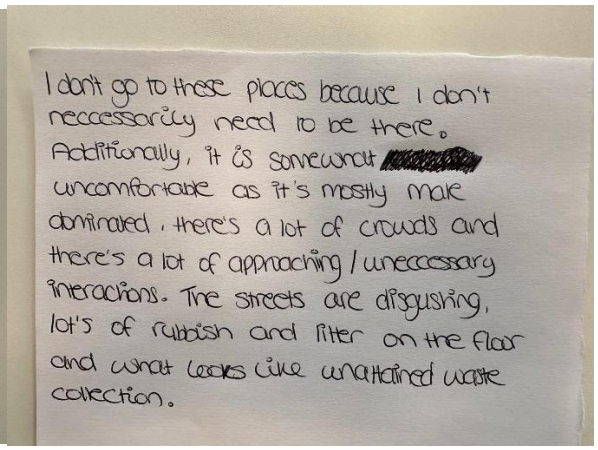

THE ELLESMERE GREEN
BEFORE
CURRENT
FUTURE
* Dangerous area
* More Police Humanity
* More to More Immune
Friendly


- Predominantly MEN
- cat-calling / uncomfortable.
- Grouping
- Toxinated individuals in the park.
- If I have to, I'd go w/ my dad or go by car to avoid any interaction when Walking.

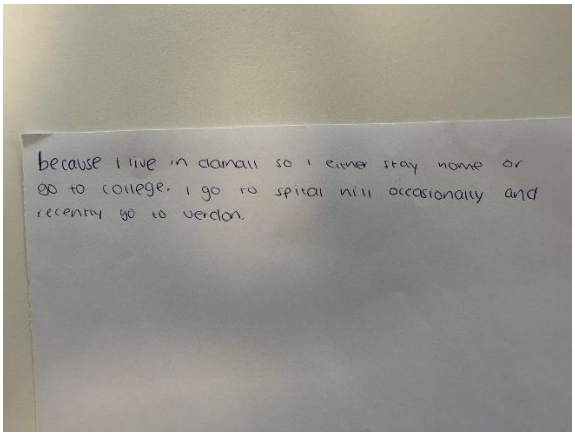

Shops on earlsham street - Don't go because i shop places else.
Tesco - go regularly because i get groceries from there.
Shops on carlise street - Never been there.
Park - looks quite dirty.
Spital hill - i go there rarely to go Bassams.



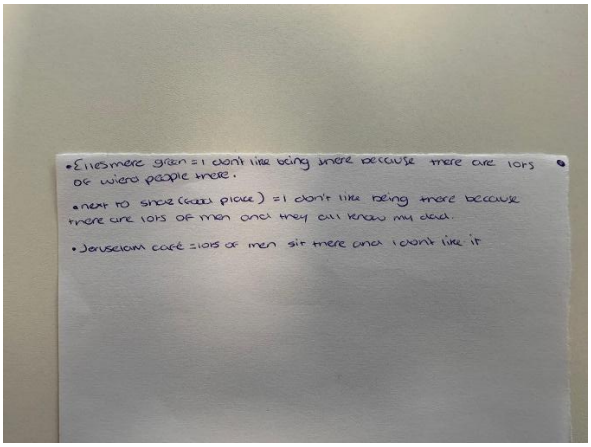
- I don't really have a reason to, alot of shops in this area are similar to ones closer to where I live.
- A lot of grouping (mainly men) which makes me uncomfortable.
- Cat calling
- Parents don't feel comfortable with me going without them.



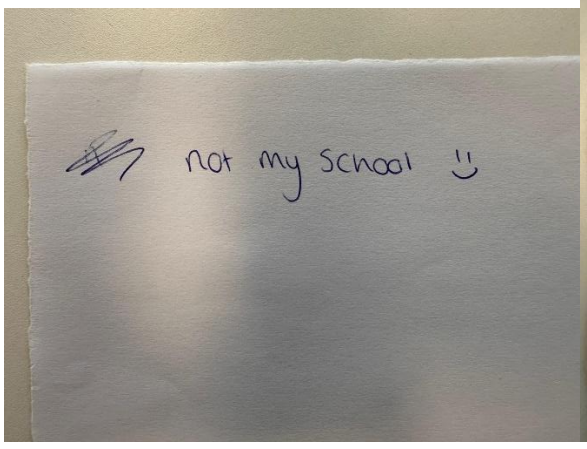
I don't go to these places because I don't neccessarily need to be there. Additionally, it is somewhat [redacted] uncomfortable as it's mostly male dominated, there's a lot of crowds and there's a lot of approaching / uneccessary interactions. The streets are disgusting, lot's of rubbish and litter on the floor and what looks like unattained waste collection.



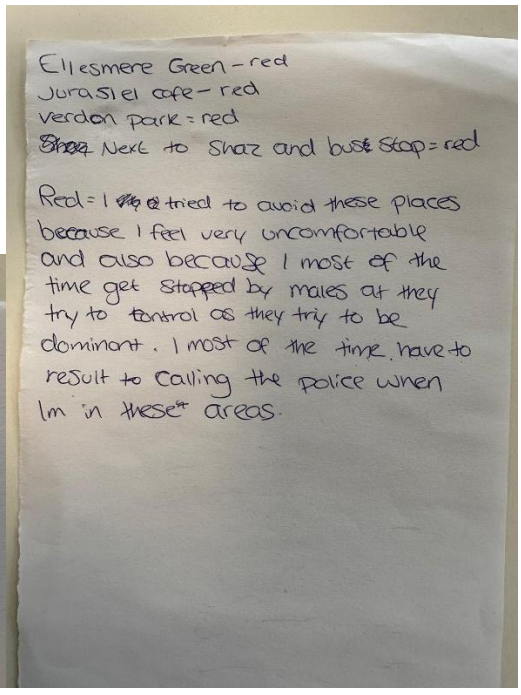
because I live in clamall so I either stay home or go to college. I go to spital hill occasionally and recently go to verdon.



- Ellesmere green = I don't like being there because there are lots of wierd people there.
- next to shaz (exact place) = I don't like being there because there are lots of men and they call/know my dad.
- Jerusalem cafe = lots of men sit there and I don't like it

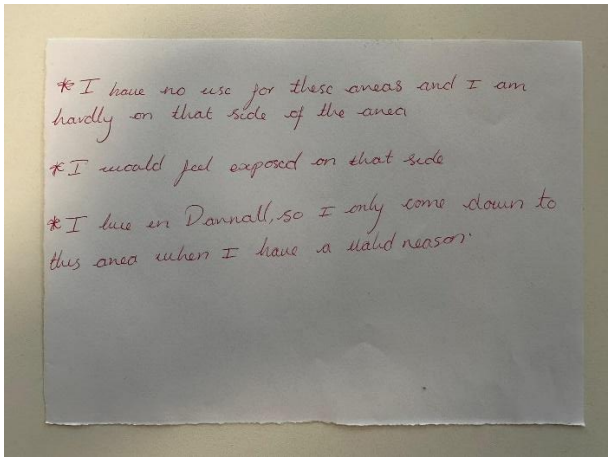


not my school :)

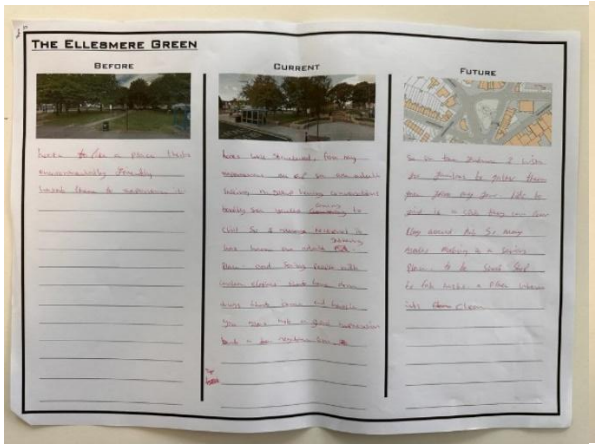


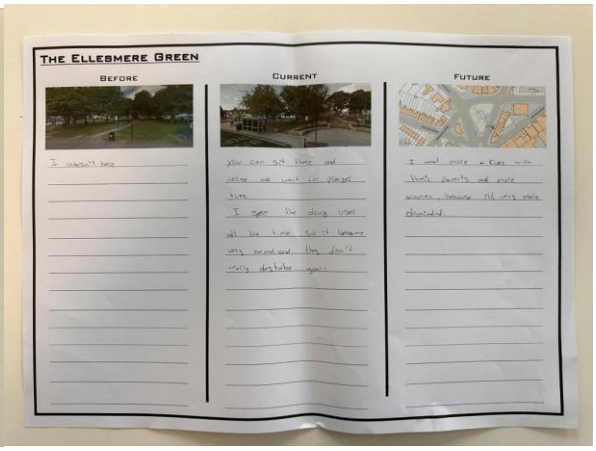
Ellesmere Green - red
Jurasiel cafe - red
verdon park = red
~~Shaz~~ Next to Shaz and bus Stop = red

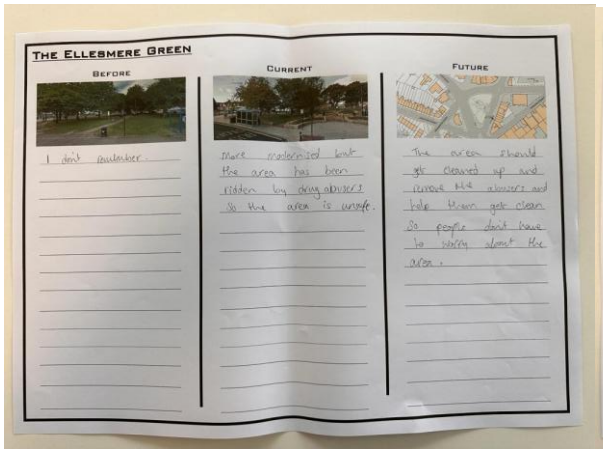
Red = I ~~did~~ tried to avoid these places because I feel very uncomfortable and also because I most of the time get stopped by males at they try to control as they try to be dominant. I most of the time have to result to calling the police when Im in these areas.

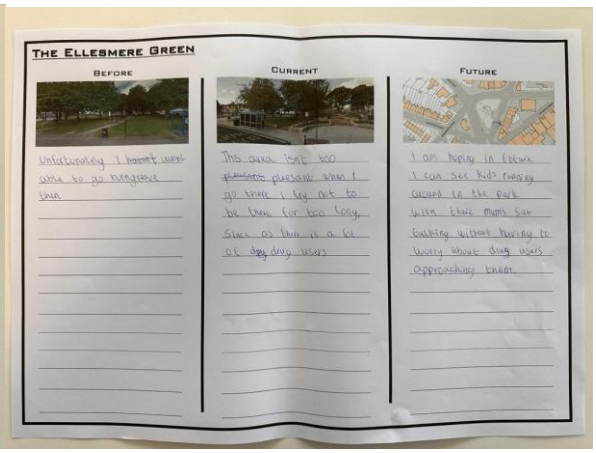


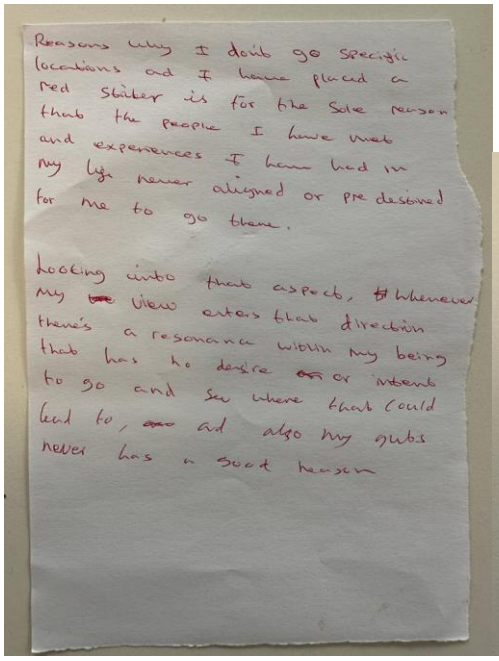
Young Adults Boys Workshop notes

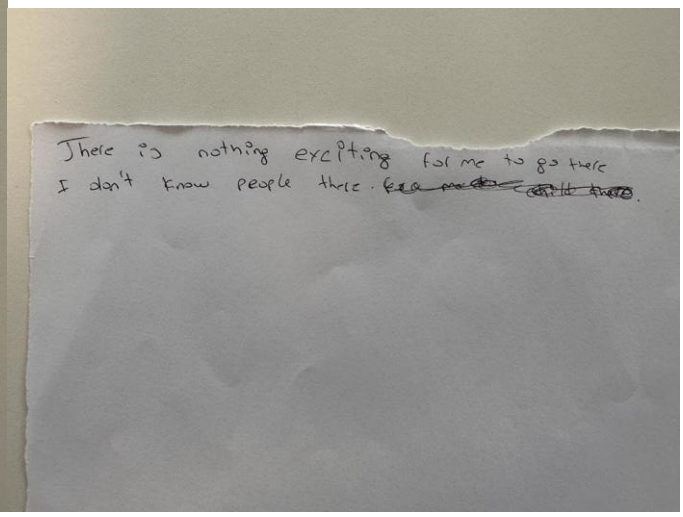


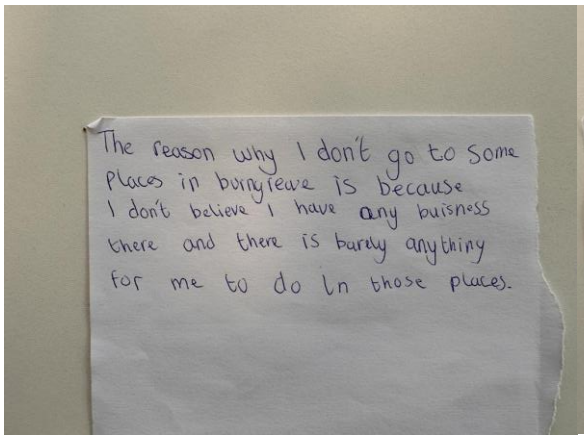


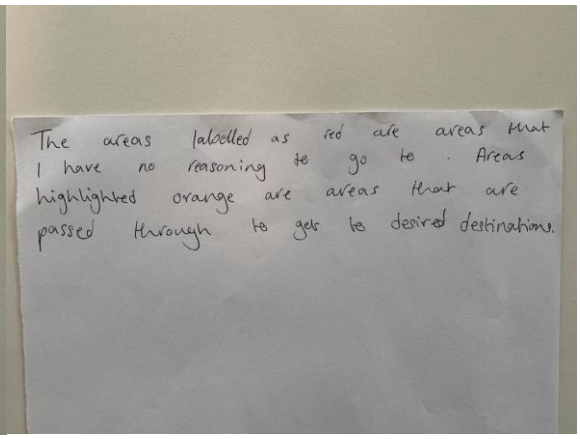












Some Field notes

A. General Observations (Before interviews):

a. The area seems to be male dominated, with people sitting and standing outside cafes (sometimes cars stop in the middle of the road and join the conversation and talk to each other)
b. Drug users observed sitting in the green space creating an unsafe environment for passersby, and most people walk around the green space to go to the bus stops
c. The Spital Hill road is very busy, and shops are busy most of the time, with particularly high presence in the takeaways, cafes and restaurants.
d. People offering items (they seem to be stolen items, as some still have the security tags on them), which imply that these practices are normalised in Burngreave.
e. Businesses are diverse and some add foreign flags (Kurdistan, Yemen Pakistan,.) to their frontage, and the use of Arabic language in others.
f. Limited presence of White people
g. A group of people was seen standing outside Sorby House, holding beer cans, and intermittently approaching members of the public to ask for money (16/02/2023)
h. Although many restaurants and businesses serve the diverse community of Burngreave, some groups prefer to gather in businesses where they share the ethnicity/nationality with the owner.

i. Women and children presence is limited in the central area of Burngreave.
j. I was approached by people asking for money (several times, and usually the same people) (26/01/2022)
k. Frequent long queues outside the cash machine outside the post office
l. A man using drugs (injecting himself with a needle) inside the telephone box
m. Some youth sitting in groups outside (vestry hall) 05/12/2022
n. I spoke with the police pop-up station. All of the officers were inside the can, and when I approached them, a woman police officer got off the van and I started a conversation about what they are doing, and she explained that they are here in case the community wants to talk to them. I asked how the community is responding, and she said they come and talk to us (well I watched them for nearly an hour, not a single member went towards the police and not a single officer left the van an made it to the tent (pop-up). (9/4/2022)

B. Observations related to me trying to enter Vestry Hall 15/09/2022

- I rang the intercom and someone answered it and this was the conversation:

Me: “Hi, I was wondering if I can enter the building”.

Staff: “Do you have an appointment with someone?”.

Me: “No, I just wanted to see the building and see what is going on” or “Does it have to be only through pre-arranged appointment”.

Staff:” Yes, Sorry”.

Me: “Ok, Thank you”

C. Observations (After interviews):

a. The walk with council officer and the confrontation with one of the drug users 7/6/2022
b. The Christmas lights in Ellesmere Green
c. The public meeting in Vestry Hall, and the conversation with LAC officer, the police, and a council officer
d. The Friday prayer chaos
e. The parking chaos
f. Men sitting outside cafes
g. Beggers outside the post office
h. Littering in Ellesmere Green
i. The closed entrance of Tesco on Spital hill, and the temporary walking path created along side the road leading to Tesco main car park.
j. The community participation event in Ellesmere Green organised by NHS
k. The shooting incident in the carwash on Burngreave road (29/03/2022)
l. People talk about Burngreave in a bad way, but still come to the area on a daily basis
m. Police entering the café with sniffing dog (02/09/2023
n. Men standing outside obstructing the pavement (13/04/2022)
o. Women shops in a secondary street away from central public spaces
p. Being stopped by the police opposite Verdon centre
q. The area being a meeting place for the local Muslim community during Eid festive and Christmas day
r. Most people do not trust local authorities, and have l a lack of understanding of how the system works
s. Some workshop workers are White but do not interact with the local community
t. Burngreave messenger was closed on 20 July 2023.