

**Community participation and the village appraisal process in rural
England: a case study of Northamptonshire.**

A thesis submitted in candidature for the degree of
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ABSTRACT: COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AND THE VILLAGE APPRAISAL PROCESS IN RURAL ENGLAND: A CASE STUDY OF NORTHAMPTONSHIRE.

The uptake of village appraisals in the English countryside has attracted considerable attention over recent years though, in contrast to the many earlier studies, this research examines the nature and process of participation in these essentially 'bottom-up' initiatives and explores the connections between the uptake of village appraisals, their outcomes and key participants.

A realist approach is developed to enable a detailed interpretation of the process of village appraisals at the national and local level, focusing upon the wider national structures and the ways these are shaped by the distinctive characteristics of individual localities and the people and groups who live there. This study focuses on the county of Northamptonshire, which has a long history of self-help and where village appraisals have been taken up with particular enthusiasm.

Given the shift towards local governance in the past two decades, and a growing emphasis on individual and community responsibility and procedures such as the village appraisal which mobilize local skills and resources and empower rural communities from the structures of government, the study involves a detailed investigation of the relationships which currently exist between the statutory authorities and local communities with specific reference to the village appraisal. Further research using participant observation of over 30 steering group meetings in three case-study villages, supported by a survey of over 300 households and 40 interviews with parish councillors and steering group members, gave detailed insights into the means by which local people were availed of the opportunity to participate in the village appraisal process and to shape its content and structure.

The key conclusions indicate that significant tensions are evident in the attitudes of local government agencies, particularly in how they might participate in the village appraisal process and what forms that participation should take. At the local level, the notion of participation, seen as an integral part of rural life, is shown as illusory with most villages and villagers choosing not to become involved. As a result most appraisals are conducted by small elites within the village, often with the token involvement of the population through a questionnaire survey.

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Chapter one

Introduction

1.1 Research context

The increase in the uptake of rural community development initiatives over the last 20 years (Miller and Ahmad, 1997), can be linked to the shift which has taken place in the overall approach to planning for rural communities since the late 1970s under the 'New Right' agenda of Margaret Thatcher and the Conservative government which came to power in 1979. Due to the fiscal crisis and the decline in economic growth that faced the government during the early 1980s, a policy to cut back on public spending was initiated. In so doing, the concept of 'active citizenship' was developed to promote the idea of self-help amongst individual citizens whereby:

“their moral responsibilities were to care and provide for their needy neighbours and to meet their obligations to give of their talents and skills in the management of public and welfare services” (Kearns, 1992: 20).

To enable citizens the opportunity to meet such obligations, the government encouraged citizen participation in the planning process by pushing “power out beyond local government and into the hands of the people whom it is elected to serve” (Michael Heseltine, Environment Secretary 1987 as quoted in Kearns, 1992: 23). In other words the government proposed a shift in the way decisions were to be made and power held, from a situation where people were democratically elected to represent their 'constituency' in the planning process, such as sitting on a parish council or the planning committee of district and county councils (representative democracy) to one where, in theory, any individual could take a direct and active role in decisions about the allocation and management of resource provision in the locality (participatory democracy). Consequently, the promotion of active citizenship redefined the relationship between the state and the individual and altered the way that local authorities were able to organize and control public services for and within (rural) localities. According to Kearns (1992) and Malpass (1994), this shift in government policy was deliberately adopted as a strategy that was 'antithetical' to the concept of local government.

“Conservatives have long had a dislike and distrust of local government. [As such,] the notion of active citizenship is being used as a vehicle for the removal of responsibilities from the control of local authorities” (Kearns, 1992: 23).

Active citizenship was thus considered as an initiative to free people from “the need to rely on public authorities” (Kearns, 1992: 23).

As a result, this new approach has led to a potential redistribution of power away from local government, such that the term ‘local governance’ is now seen as a more acceptable term to describe the relationships between the state and the individual (Rhodes, 1996). Of course this is not to say that the structures and mechanisms of what might be termed the statutory systems of local government have disappeared, rather that they are seen as being set alongside other ways of engaging people as active citizens in decisions about the provision, management and operation of services to particular localities. One way in which this has been done has been to invest more powers in the hands of the parish councils, an idea which was central to the government’s ‘White Paper’ on rural areas (DoE/MAFF, 1995), and which has been put into practice, for example, through consultation on planning applications in selected counties of rural England (Derounian, 1997). Another way which has been particularly popular has been the emphasis placed upon partnerships (as equals) involving, where appropriate, the statutory agencies, voluntary groups and organisations, the private sector and any other interested parties or individuals (Edwards, 1998). The great advantage of this approach was not just its flexibility, as different partnerships or alliances come together according to the specific theme under consideration, but also its deregulatory capability and with this, of course, the opportunity to reduce the spending requirements of the state. What this meant, therefore, was that where central funding was available, the money would be allocated in competition to the ‘best’ proposal and/or funding would be replaced or complemented by the services of active and responsible citizens. In this sense, the shift from local government to local governance has been seen not just as the specific ideological viewpoint of a Conservative government, but as part of a much wider change in British society (see Table 1.1)

Table 1.1 New developments in British local governance (after Goodwin and Painter, 1996: 643).

Sites of regulation	British local government in Fordism (Post war - 1979)	New developments (governance) (1979 - 1996)
Financial regime.	Keynesian.	Monetarist.
Organizational structure of local governance.	Centralized service delivery Pre-eminence of formal, elected local government.	Wide variety of service providers Multiplicity of agencies of local governance.
Management.	Hierarchical Centralized Bureaucratic.	Devolved, 'flat' hierarchies Performance driven.
Nature of services provided.	To meet local needs Expandable.	To meet statutory obligations Constrained.
Ideology.	Social democratic.	Neoliberal.
Key discourse.	Technocratic/managerialist.	Entrepreneurial/enabling.
Economic goals.	Promotion of full employment Economic modernization based on technical advance and public investment.	Promotion of private profit Economic modernization based on low-wage, Low-skill, 'flexible' economy.
Social goals.	Progressive redistribution social justice.	Privatized consumption/active citizenry.

One of the problems associated with this process, at least from the state's viewpoint, has been the exercise of power and control, whether in a general sense as in the creation of regulatory bodies, or in the supply of funding through its statutory requirement, or more specifically in the ways it has compromised potential tensions between the various agencies and groups in partnership agreements. As a result many have suggested that the shift in power is much more apparent than real, whilst according to Hogwood:

“one of the ironies of the Conservative government has been, that in its concern to roll back the frontiers of the state (to say nothing of the constant re-invention of the theme of deregulation) it has presided over the greatest extension of formal regulation of any postwar government” (1997: 708).

Furthermore, Murdoch (1997) has argued that a reliance on ‘active citizenship’ is just a move by the state towards adopting a new set of ‘governmentalities’ and the empowerment of rural communities through active citizenship is cautioned as being a mere consequence of the new governmentality. Thus, rather than citizenship being the vehicle for change, Murdoch considered it to be a consequence of the changes in government policy and the necessary cuts that had been made to public spending.

Nevertheless, enabled and supported by the partnerships between the private sector and voluntary organisations, self-help initiatives were hailed as a breakthrough in the quest to create a participatory democracy and move away from the principle of representative democracy which had been the basis upon which conventional rural planning and decision making were built (Stewart, 1996). One particular self-help initiative that fitted very neatly into the ideology of the Conservative government and its wish to empower rural communities and encourage active citizenry was the village appraisal. More specifically the involvement of local people in conducting surveys and producing general plans for their locality, and which had been encouraged in a very low-key way by Rural Community Councils since the 1920s, suddenly took on a much more central role on the rural planning agenda. Indeed, according to the rural 'White Paper' published by the former Conservative government in 1995 as a collaborative exercise between the Department of the Environment and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, stated:

"working in partnership can take many different forms and can involve a wide range of people. At one end of the spectrum, voluntary organisations, the churches and parish councils can act as a focus for local people working together. Mechanisms such as the village appraisals.... can help communities to define their priorities, identify what they can do to meet them and target limited resources effectively" (DoE/MAFF, 1995: 17).

Furthermore, in a recent report, Malcolm Moseley, formerly director of the voluntary organisation Action for Communities in Rural England (ACRE), has calculated the uptake of the village appraisal and has argued that:

"over the past 20 years more than 1500 English, Welsh and to a lesser extent Scottish rural communities have systematically taken stock of themselves and their future using... the 'parish [village] appraisal'" (1997: 197).

According to Moseley, over one million rural people are believed to have participated in a village appraisal through the completion of a household questionnaire survey, enabling each individual in the locality to express (confidentially) their views and opinions about the present and future of their village, its services, facilities and planning requirements (ACRE, 1991 (a); Moseley, 1997). The variety of purpose, subject matter and methodology used to obtain an individuals views is believed to set the village appraisal apart from other community development tools (Bovey, 1993). The results of the survey can be published

as a written report or 'village appraisal document' to attract the attentions of the planning authorities and relevant agencies in dealing with the physical, social and welfare needs of the community. In essence the village appraisal empowers the community and encourages individuals to participate in the decision making process even though it has been found to be "extremely time consuming, often taking several years to complete" (Bovey, 1993: 22-23). But as a mechanism of participatory democracy it is believed to be the most significant tool currently being used to target limited resources in rural communities effectively (Moseley, 1997).

Not surprisingly, given the growing importance of the village appraisal as a tool for informing the decision making process, some limited amount of research has already been carried out. Most prominent to date has been that undertaken by Moseley et al (1996 (a) & (b)) and Moseley, (1997). Both studies were based upon appraisal activity in Gloucestershire and Oxfordshire. The research by Moseley et al monitored how far "they [village appraisals] subsequently generated practical action" (1996 (b): 309), in terms of how the information gathered through the household questionnaire survey becomes the tangible and intangible products for rural community development. In particular, the research was concerned with how successful the village appraisal has been a tool for community development. Additionally, Moseley (1997) has investigated the rate of uptake of the village appraisal and the roles played by key actors from the voluntary agencies across England, Scotland and Wales. However, whilst both studies have increased our knowledge and awareness concerning the village appraisal no attempt has yet been made to place these studies into a wider, national context, whether as an evaluation of the impact of the Conservative government's attempts to encourage effective and flexible partnerships that are responsive to the unique needs of particular localities, or as a detailed investigation of the real meaning of active citizenship and local participatory democracy. In this sense they are best seen as good descriptions of the patterns of response in two areas of lowland England and indicators of how best to make the link between appraisal activity and positive outcomes.

In this way, these studies follow the pattern of previous investigations of the village appraisal undertaken by both academics and practitioners within the voluntary sector. For instance, Derounian (1984), then a RCC officer, studied the variety of outcomes that were

achieved through the implementation of the village appraisal in specific localities in Devon, whilst an earlier study by Francis (1982), now (1999) an RCC officer in Northumberland, focused on the application of the village appraisal in Kent and aimed only to:

“show what is distinctive about village appraisals, how they are prepared and how well they have been implemented” (Francis, 1982: 336).

A study by Fisher (1993) concentrated on the types of outcomes that were achieved as a result of the village appraisal in Devon and considered the advantages that could be gained by a community as a result, whereas Ashman (1993) monitored how successful the community and the planning authorities in Devon and Gloucestershire were at turning the outcomes of the village appraisal into the tangible benefits. Taking a slightly different approach, Lumb (1990), Wright (1992) and Bovey (1993) considered the roles played by the local RCC officer during the process of the village appraisal.

It is within this context, that this study of community participation in the village appraisal across rural England has been undertaken. The change in government policy has been initiated over a period of 20 years and as such, a study of its impact within the rural community is appropriate. There is a need in particular to understand the extent to which the notion of local governance has penetrated to the grass roots through the application of the village appraisal and the effect that the participation of the multitude of actors and agencies involved can have on rural service provision. Such an examination will add substantially to the debate about a community development initiative that has been widely encouraged and promoted by the previous government in order to achieve the goal of active citizenry. In exploring these issues it is necessary to adopt a philosophical framework that recognises the actions of all the key actors involved in the process as well as the wider structural constraints they work within. Thus, in contrast to the earlier studies, the present research adopts the use of realism to incorporate both perspectives whilst illustrating the spatial variations in the village appraisal and the importance of historical processes which have enabled an understanding of the contemporary patterns of social and political change in rural areas.

1.2 Research aims and objectives

This study is concerned with recent changes to the ways in which the needs of rural communities have been identified and met under the previous Conservative government and the impact of an initiative that has changed the focus from one firmly based in the statutory planning system (in which local people were represented by their democratically elected councilors) to one which openly encourages the active participation of all citizens in a system of flexible partnerships including a range of statutory and non-statutory, voluntary agencies, organisation and individuals. Specifically, it is concerned with investigating the engagement of rural people and localities across England during the 1980s and 1990s in the village appraisal process. Central to this is a detailed examination of the process of participation of rural people within their particular community, and also the community interacting with planning agencies and voluntary organisations in the preparation and production of the village appraisal.

In order to achieve these aims the study has specific objectives.

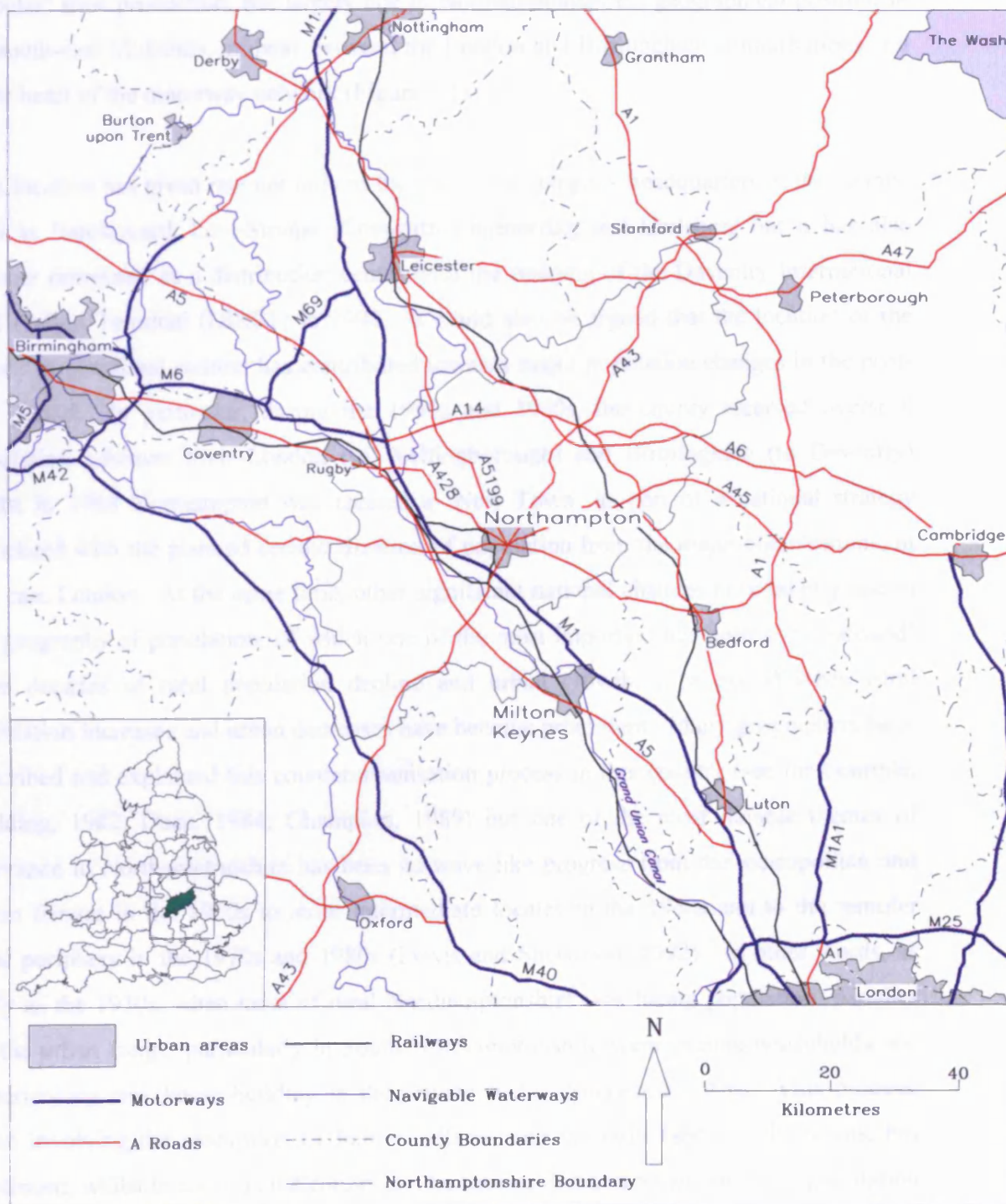
1. To place the village appraisal within the debate concerning the shift in the relationship between the state and locality under the 'New Right' agenda of the 1980s to understand how the village appraisal 'fits' into the philosophy of local governance and to examine the rise in the importance of the village appraisal as a means of empowering rural communities and promoting active citizenship.
2. To examine the meanings attached to the definition of a village appraisal and the ways in which these meanings are shaped by the various actors in the appraisal process and how these in turn shape the appraisal as a product.
3. To analyse geographical variations in the uptake of village appraisals nationally and with local case studies and to explore the role of the contingent effects of local people in shaping this distribution.
4. To explore the meanings attached to the concept of participation and to investigate, through detailed case studies of three villages, the process of participation in the village appraisal with a critical evaluation of:

- the representation of the community through the selection, role and function of the elite and powerful steering group;
 - the structure and content of the final document.
 - the representation of the wider community (households and individuals) and their empowerment through the village appraisal questionnaire survey;
5. To evaluate the success of the flexible partnerships, which are central to the concept of local governance, and examine if the village appraisal can be used as an effective tool to promote rural community development.
 6. To evaluate the power of participation in the village appraisal and its ability to convert rural citizens into the new partners of government.

1.3 Northamptonshire: a case study.

Northamptonshire is a shire county which falls within the standard region of the East Midlands though, as Figure 1.1 shows, its geographical shape and position, midway between the London and West Midlands conurbations, give it a transitional character, with the different parts of the county showing characteristics closer to the area to which they bound than to the East Midlands and giving the county overall a considerable degree of diversity. Nevertheless, in general terms Northamptonshire is a county which is largely rural in character, though during the late nineteenth century with the emergence of a factory system, the larger urban centres of Northampton and Kettering and the smaller 'A6' towns of Rushden and Raunds for example, became synonymous with the boot and shoe industry. In addition, for a period of over 100 years up to the 1960s reserves of low grade iron ore gave rise to extensive ironstone quarrying throughout the county and, in the case of Corby to the establishment of a New Town in 1950 consequent upon the decision with the Scottish firm of Stewart's and Lloyds to develop an integrated iron and steel works in the town and to bring in several hundred families from Scotland (Grieco, 1987).

Figure 1.1: The geographical location of Northamptonshire.



Over the past three decades however, the economic base of the county has changed, in part due to the closure of the steel works at Corby in the 1980s and the gradual decline of 'popular' shoe production, but largely due to Northamptonshire's geographical position in the south-east Midlands, midway between the London and Birmingham conurbations and at the heart of the motorway network (Figure 1.1).

This location has given rise not only to the growth of company headquarters in the county, such as Barclaycard, Levi-Strauss, Cosworth Engineering and Carlsberg but it has also become renowned as a distribution centre with the opening of the Daventry International Rail Freight Terminal (DIRFT) in 1998. It could also be argued that the location of the county in a national context has contributed towards major population changes in the post-war period. In particular, during the 1950s and 1960s, the county received overspill population schemes from London (to Wellingborough) and Birmingham (to Daventry) whilst in 1968 Northampton was created a 'New Town' as part of a national strategy associated with the planned decentralization of population from the major conurbations, in this case London. At the same time, other significant national changes have taken place in the geography of population, of which one of the most important has been a 'turnaround' from decades of rural population decline and urban growth, to a period when rural population increases and urban decreases have become prominent. Many geographers have described and explained this counterurbanisation process in this country (see for example, Fielding, 1982; Dean, 1984; Champion, 1989) but one of the most notable themes of relevance to Northamptonshire has been its wave-like progress from the metropolitan and urban fringes in the 1950s to more intermediate locales in the 1960s and to the remoter rural periphery in the 1970s and 1980s (Lewis and Sherwood, 1992). In other words, as early as the 1930s, when most of rural Northamptonshire was losing population, parishes on the urban fringe, particularly in South Northamptonshire were gaining households and experiencing new house-building in the private sector (Sherwood, 1996). This process, often involving the absorption of former villages into the built fabric of the towns, has continued, whilst in addition the county can be seen as part of a wider pattern of population change, whereby in the 1970s and 1980s most of the country's population growth was concentrated in the belt immediately beyond London and the South East region (SERPLAN) and extending from East Anglia through Northamptonshire and Oxfordshire to Wiltshire, Dorset and Hampshire (Lewis, 1998). Not surprisingly therefore,

Northamptonshire has been amongst the ten fastest growing counties of England and Wales in each decade since the 1960s, though as Table 1.2 illustrates, the population growth rates in the county show considerable variations through time and from district to district.

During the 1960s the fastest growth was associated with those towns given expansion status in the 1950s and 1960s (Corby, Wellingborough, and Daventry) though what was also particularly noticeable was the highest rate of growth in the most rural district of the county, South Northamptonshire. This district lies in the corridor between Northampton and Milton Keynes, and its accessibility was enhanced during this period by major developments in the national transport system which passed through the district (the construction of the M1 and M45 motorways; the electrification of the London-Birmingham railway). During the 1970s and 1980s the overall growth rate in the county slowed, largely as the result of the planned overspill and New Town projects coming to an end. In the case of Corby, this 'company' town has now experienced two decades of population decline and at various times has been given different forms of economic assistance to overcome the closure of the steel works. There has also been a conscious attempt through a succession of County Structure Plans to concentrate new housing developments in the larger urban areas or, in the countryside in a small number of 'key' settlements. This helps to explain the growing dominance of Northampton (and its share of overall growth in the county) and a slowing down in the growth rates in the more rural parts of the county. The districts of South Northamptonshire and Daventry fell below the national average growth rate in the 1980s, having been well above for each of the previous two decades. On the other hand East Northamptonshire, whose rural population characteristics qualified parts of it (with Huntingdonshire) for Rural Development Area assistance in 1985, was one of two districts with rates above the county average for the 1980s having been well below during the 1960s and 1970s.

These trends in population growth have importance as a context to the study of the village appraisal process in three particular ways.

Table 1.2 Population growth rates in the districts of Northamptonshire 1961 to 1991.

District	% population (1991) in settlements < 3000	Population present				Population change %		
		1961	1971	1981	1991	1961-71	1971-81	1981-91
South Northamptonshire	80.3	40937	55811	64295	69171	36.33	15.20	7.58
Daventry	72.3	37329	48057	57692	61851	28.74	20.05	7.21
East Northamptonshire	37.5	51623	56582	61194	66773	9.61	8.15	9.12
Wellingborough	28.4	44168	56080	64199	66720	26.97	14.48	3.93
Kettering	15.3	59859	65809	71336	75482	9.94	8.40	5.81
Corby	9.8	40041	52611	52515	52031	31.39	-0.18	- 0.92
Northampton	2.9	124100	133673	157217	178570	7.71	17.61	13.58
Northamptonshire	29.2	398057	468623	528448	570598	17.73	12.77	7.98

OPCS (1961, 1971, 1981, 1991).

First, concerns about the changing character of rural communities in Northamptonshire, whether as a result of rural depopulation or in the in-migration of newcomers, were being expressed as early as the 1920s and led to responses which can easily be identified as early forms of village appraisal activity. Thus there were initiatives to conduct stocktaking exercises of rural land use and domestic water supplies and to provide a record of village histories and village memories of rural life. Whilst these are looked at in more detail in chapter 2, the significant point is that the current interest in village appraisal activity is merely the successor to earlier forms in which it is widely recognised that Northamptonshire was a pioneer county. Moreover these earlier attempts were a response not just to what were seen as fundamental social and economic changes taking place in rural areas, but also to a perceived gap in the statutory planning system to deal effectively with such matters.

Table 1.3 Migration trends in three villages in South Northamptonshire in the early 1980s.

Social class	Movers (%)			Stayers (%)		
	Kislingbury	Greens Norton	Helmdon	Kislingbury	Greens Norton	Helmdon
I	11.86	10.53	20.93	0.00	15.22	2.08
II	28.81	30.70	32.56	27.06	17.39	20.83
IIINM	27.12	26.31	9.30	17.65	15.22	16.67
IIIM	13.56	16.67	25.58	36.47	43.48	29.17
IV	3.38	7.02	0.97	11.76	6.52	18.75
V	3.38	4.39	0.00	1.18	2.17	2.08
Unclassif*	11.86	4.39	4.65	5.88	0.00	10.42

*Unclassified. (Sherwood, 1986).

Second, detailed survey work of particular localities in Northamptonshire (Sherwood, 1986) has confirmed that the dominant flows of in-migrant households have been drawn from the middle classes (Table 1.3), whilst a succession of planning policies, commencing with the County Development Plan of 1950 has focused attention on to the “(excessive) rate of growth in the rural areas” (Northamptonshire County Council, 1980: 4.21), and the need to shift subsequent development to urban rather than rural areas, or at worst into the larger ‘key’ villages and smaller market towns of the county. The importance of this process has been to introduce a non-growth, protectionist philosophy into the rural planning process, one which clearly coincides with the views of the newcomer households,

concerned not just with any attrition of property values but also with the loss or the potential loss of that rural amenity they most sought to attain. What is also significant in the growth of village appraisal activity is that the perceived pressures upon the Northamptonshire countryside have stimulated substantial (important) local activity in the 1980s. Thus, for example, in 1983 and 1989 an alliance of groups representing Northamptonshire 'Rural Voice' (The County Landowners Association, CPRE, NFU, Northamptonshire Association of Local Councils, Women's Institute, Northamptonshire Rural Community Council), presented their 'rural strategy' for the county. Amongst their conclusions to the 1989 report were:

1. "there is an important role for the local communities in the assessment of their needs and problems and in planning for the future. This should involve the whole community and a parish appraisal provides an excellent methodology" (author's emphasis);
2. "the needs and opinions of local people must be given much more weight when decisions are made which affect their community";
3. "communities, voluntary and statutory organisations and local authorities should all work together to be much more flexible in their attitudes and approaches to solving local needs" (Northamptonshire Rural Voice, 1989; no page, emphasis added).

Clearly the notion of flexible partnerships, which is at the heart of the concept of local governance, was central to this strategy, and this reflected an alternative yet complementary approach to the rural areas of the county which had been introduced in 1987 with the launch of the 'Parish 2000' initiative. This represented a partnership between the county and district councils, the Northamptonshire Wildlife Trust and the Northamptonshire Rural Community Council and at its heart was a customised 26 page pack providing detailed guidance on the production of a 'village appraisal'. The significance of these developments is not just that they pre-date so much that was at the heart of the philosophy underpinning the 1995 'White Paper', but that Northamptonshire was very much in the vanguard of the process. Indeed, in 1990 it was the first county nationally to appoint a Village Appraisal Officer (Ian Nelson), working through the local Rural Community Council but with his salary part-paid by the county council. In this respect, at least, rural Northamptonshire represents an excellent basis for a more detailed study of this process at the local level.

Third, the coming together of statutory organisations such as the district councils and other non-statutory and voluntary groups presents a further important context to the study of

village appraisals. Indeed, the tensions created between them, which stem from the differing geographical contexts within which they operate, reflect their priorities as organisations. This is particularly noticeable in the disposition of the seven district councils, which (since 1974) have constituted Northamptonshire. As Table 1.4 shows they vary considerably in their areal extent and populations, but particularly in their numbers and proportions of rural parishes. The importance of this distribution is that all the districts of Northamptonshire contain what one would clearly recognise as distinctive and discrete rural communities, yet the allocation of a rural parish to a district which is largely rural (South Northamptonshire, Daventry), or urban (Corby, Kettering, Northampton) or a mix of the two (East Northamptonshire) has major implications, not just in the overall profile of the district but also in the formulation of policy for the district and in the relationships between the district council, with a brief only for its administrative area, and those bodies representing the whole county or specifically rural interests across the county. The fact that the county contains such a wide range of rural and urban local authorities but which is wedded to the notion of partnerships, regardless of the urban and rural flavour of the districts, adds a particularly interesting angle to the role and status of village appraisal activity across the county and the ways in which the principle of partnerships actually operates in practice at the local level.

Therefore, the county of Northamptonshire offers an excellent stage to study the concept of the village appraisal. Additionally, at the onset of this project there were three villages poised to commence their appraisal, namely Brixworth, Stoke Albany and Dingley, and which were prepared to accept the author to attend all the meetings and to interview members of the appraisal team and other residents of the community from the outset of the project to the publication of the appraisal document.

1.4 The structure of the thesis.

This thesis investigates the ways in which the changing nature of government policy at the national level has been translated into action at the local level through the medium of the village appraisal. In so doing, it explores two principal areas:

Table 1.4 Characteristics of the seven districts in the county of Northamptonshire.

District	Area (Sq Km)	Population 1991	Density (per Sq Km)	% population (1991) living in parishes <3000	No. of rural parishes	Jarman Index*
Corby	80	53044	663	9.8	7	7.7
Daventry	666	62886	94	72.3	74	-22.6
East Northamptonshire	510	67686	132	37.5	54	-10.0
Kettering	233	76150	327	15.3	22	- 4.1
Northampton	81	180567	2229	2.9	6	9.6
South Northamptonshire	634	70685	111	80.3	74	-23.7
Wellingborough	163	67789	416	28.4	18	4.0

"The Jarman Index was originally designed to help in the analysis of pressures on the workload and services of a GP" (Northamptonshire County Council, 1995; paragraph 29).

1. the gap in the present understanding about the procedures of community participation in the village appraisal, an initiative which has been actively encouraged by central government to deliver 'power to the people', promote active citizenship and the ideals of a participatory democracy;
2. the need for a theoretically informed study which considers both the planning agencies and the individuals in the planning system in order to comprehend the relationships which exist and the consequences which these relationships have for the processes of community participation and empowerment, the strategy of active citizenship and the ideals of a New Right government and of local governance.

Accordingly, **Chapter two** presents an historical review of the planning system as it applied to rural Britain during the twentieth century and considers the ways in which the current planning policy (from 1979 onwards) to deregulate statutory planning and encourage local governance through community participation have been shaped by two previous periods of policy change prior to 1947 and between 1947 and 1979. This is followed in **Chapter three** by a conceptualisation of community participation as a key part of the newly democratised planning process and the principle mechanism used to achieve 'active citizenship'. The roles played by, and the relations between, the key actors in the planning system are analyzed to determine the impact on community participation. Subsequent discussion in this chapter outlines the typical participator in the planning process. **Chapter four** provides an explanation of the contemporary village appraisal and the rise in its popularity during a period of intense change in rural planning. **Chapter five** explains that a realist perspective is the most appropriate to study the effects of the shift from a centralized government planning policy to one of local governance. The application of this approach then shapes the structure of the following analysis.

In order to understand the extent of the village appraisal, **Chapter six** analyses their spatial distribution at the national level across rural England and the local level in Northamptonshire. Additionally, the influence of the key actors in the village appraisal process is considered with particular examination of their impact on the take up of the village appraisal process in Northamptonshire. A detailed analysis of the participation of the parish council, steering groups and wider community in the village appraisal is provided

in **Chapter seven** to demonstrate a critical insight into local governance is being adopted at the grass roots level. **Chapter eight** assesses the success of engaging people and localities under the ideology of local governance by evaluating the outcomes achieved in the village appraisal and the power that can be conveyed by appraisal activity in the wider decision making arena. A summary of the key conclusions of the thesis and the implications for rural planning policy is provided in **Chapter nine**.

Chapter two

Planning for rural communities

2.1 Introduction

The twentieth century has been a period of considerable change in rural England. The social and economic restructuring of the population that has taken place has transformed the nature of rural areas and their inhabitants. At the same time, the reorganisation of political structures has affected the way in which services are provided. Accordingly, the planning system¹, in so far as it affects the countryside and settlements within it, has changed significantly. Rural planning, which, in its rudimentary form at the start of the century, was largely concerned with protecting the countryside from the encroachment of urban development, has evolved into a complex, competitive, politicised process in which the relationships formed between the formal, 'political' agencies of central and local government, voluntary organisations, individuals and community organisations have become a critical axis in the provision of adequate public services in all aspects of rural life.

Set against such a background, this chapter traces the evolution of the planning system across three main periods of change, 1900 to 1947, 1947 to 1979, and 1979 to present day (Table 2.1 (p.21)). The significance of the year 1947 in this broad survey of the planning system is the Town and Country Planning Act of 1947, which is often seen as a major turning point in the history of planning. The period prior to 1947 was dominated initially by the rise of a largely voluntary sector, concerned with major physical, social and environmental changes affecting the countryside. This was gradually replaced from 1947 to 1979 by the progressive introduction of a national statutory planning strategy based upon a mixture of legislation and surveys. From 1979 and the return of a Conservative government (spurred on by Thatcherite policies of choice, de-regulation and self-help) there has been a gradual shift backwards to a much greater local involvement and active citizen

¹ It is necessary to define the terms 'planning system' and 'planning process'. The planning system is the established set of procedures or structures that are introduced in order to deliver planning. The planning process on the other hand, is a method of proceeding with the flow of proposals initiated for the benefit of the community.

participation in decision making at the local level which has resulted in a revival of the fortunes of many moribund rural organisations. Such a review is necessary in order to explore the links between the historical, rural planning system and the contemporary processes of local governance, active citizenship, self help and community participation which are now seen as a key element of the current rural planning system, in which the village appraisal process has an important role to play. The significance of the past lies in the creation of the voluntary sector which established devices for rural community development in the absence of a strong statutory planning process; it is such organisations in this sector that are a key element in the present planning system and in the implementation of initiatives like the village appraisal. Therefore, by examining the changing character of the planning system, a much clearer picture will be painted, not just of the “transformation in social, political, economic and cultural relations” (Goodwin and Painter, 1996: 635), but also of the evolution of village appraisal activity within the new structure.

First, it is necessary to briefly introduce the planning process, considering a definition of planning and a framework within which the chapter can be placed.

2.2 The planning process: a definition and framework.

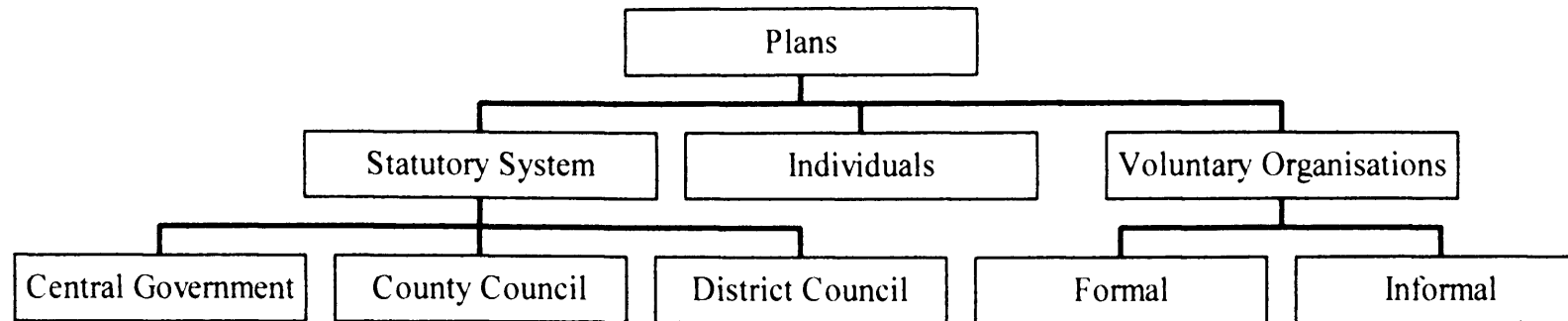
Planning is considered in the literature to be a statutory mechanism implemented by the state to regulate legislation regarding the future development of an area. As such it acts as the critical axis in the land development process (DoE, 1988; Rydin, 1993; Cullingworth and Nadin, 1994). According to Pacione (1984), England has one of the most highly developed planning systems in the developed world, although as Hall explains:

“planning is extremely ambiguous and difficult to define. Planners of all kinds think they know what it means, it refers to the work they do. The difficulty is they do all sorts of different things and so they mean different things by the word” (1973: 3).

Table 2.1 The principle planning concerns in the three key periods of change in the planning process.

	Prior to 1947	1947 to 1979	1979 to date
Control	Localized	Centralized	Localized
Legislation	Pre-government	Government	Deregulated governance
Mechanisms	Voluntary activity	Central and local government policy	Partnerships between the public sector, private sector and voluntary organisations
Influencers	The voluntary movement	The Town and Country Planning Act 1947	The Skeffington Report 1969 Margaret Thatcher's Government 1979-1990
Issues	Urbanisation. Planning chaos. Rural deprivation Rural neglect. Rural decline. Suburbanisation. Rural depopulation	Regulation. Countryside planning. Idealization or Idyll-isation of rural areas. Counterurbanisation. Emergence of a new 'rural class structure'.	Public participation. Deregulation of planning. Self-help. Rural community development. Competition for resources. Redistribution of power from local government to a multitude of agencies.

Figure 2.1 A typology of the planning system



One consequence of the diverse nature of the planning process is the variety of terminology that exists and the lack of specificity in the planning agenda: for example, rural planning, urban planning, land use planning, development planning and physical planning (Healey, 1983).

However, if planning is examined in its simplest form, it can be considered as a mechanism to produce proposals that are of benefit to the whole community. Planning or plans are used to deliver policy statements (whether implicit or explicit) which in turn are derived from an ideology. Hence, it is argued that planning or plans are not necessarily a statutory mechanism, but can be developed and implemented by any person who wishes to solve a problem and shape the future of their environment. As such, plans can originate at three different levels; at an individual or community level, at the level of the voluntary organisation or from the statutory system through central or local government (see Figure 2.1).

Within this framework, rural planning or plans satisfy three main agendas. The first is to provide for environmental planning, to protect the countryside from urban encroachment and:

“facilitate much needed development... to strike the right balance between that development and the interests of conservation” (DoE, 1988: note 3).

The second agenda of planning is at a “sociological and political level, to provide a means to mediate local conflict” (Marsden *et al*, 1993: 99). In this context planning is a vehicle used to drive the ideology of a representative democracy, to reflect public interests through elected representatives in their dealings with the professional planners. The planning system therefore, is a negotiating arena that brings together planners and the public. In so doing, it is often heralded as an open forum for democracy in which:

“citizens have a significant influence over what happens, have equitable rights to influence and are entitled to know how policies have been adopted” (Healey: 1991: 177).

The third agenda of planning considers the actual ‘physical needs’ of people within rural communities, such as the provision of village halls, playing fields and community centres.

This is an area often neglected by the statutory system but fulfilled by the actions of voluntary organisations and agencies that aim:

“to create communities fully equipped with the physical means needed for a satisfactory social life” (1948: 72 as quoted in Cullingworth and Nadin, 1994).

This framework for planning, which creates the potential of all individuals in society to become involved in plan making forms the basis of the following discussion. Furthermore, the historical review of rural planning emphasises, that in the absence of statutory planning mechanisms, the individual, community and voluntary organisations play a key role in the environmental, social and economic planning of the locality.

2.3 Planning and rural communities: 1900 to 1947.

This critical period in planning history has been typically characterized by the need for urban containment, the protection of the countryside and the “preservation of the traditional way of life and traditional economy” (Hall *et al.*, 1973: 51). The need to protect the countryside was initiated by what was seen as the failure of a weak urban planning policy and by the gradual encroachment of towns into adjacent rural areas, combined with the demise of a great number of landed estates and the control they had long exerted over the rural, largely agricultural economy and their workers living in ‘closed’ villages. The movement of rural populations to ‘open’ (accessible) villages during the agricultural depressions of the 1890s and 1920s and the continued physical expansion of larger towns into the countryside in the interwar period resulted not just in population decline and abandoned houses in many villages, but also in a large number of new buildings in the larger villages and on the urban fringe to support the influx of population. The growing significance of these undesirable pressures were seen by many as affecting the appearance of the countryside and prompted the formation of voluntary organisations concerned with protecting the future of the countryside and its established population (see sections 2.3.1 and 2.3.2). Between 1932 and 1947, however, central government began to introduce a number of regulated statutory planning initiatives to reinforce and formalize the concerns expressed by voluntary organisations; this symbolized a change in attitude towards the planning of rural areas.

The widely held image of traditional rural communities is one of spatial isolation both from each other and from major urban areas and lived in by inhabitants who were mutually bound by kinship and who shared social, cultural and economic ties. Rural populations were characteristically self-reliant, 'close knit societies' (Jones, 1973; Newby, 1979; Cater and Jones, 1989; Rural Development Commission, 1993 (a), 1994), in which the village survived largely as a self-sufficient unit providing for most of the community's requirements (although there is evidence to suggest that those villages closest to urban areas would sell their produce at an urban market and thus create economic ties outside of the village). Life in rural England was thus perceived as being independent of urban society (Wolfenden Committee Report, 1978), whilst in the many sociological studies in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries which investigated the impact of urbanisation and industrialization a clear contrast was drawn between the strong bonds of neighbourliness and community (*gemeinschaft*) which it is argued characterised rural society and the much looser forms of association (*gesellschaft*) which were associated with the city (Tönnies, 1887; Wirth, 1938). In this sense the relationship between place and society was characterised by a dichotomy: urban and rural. Not surprisingly this rather simple model was challenged. Thus for example, rather than the rural population being bound together by a strong sense of community and the provision of mutual aid Newby argued strongly that the relationships which existed between the employer and employee in rural communities, specifically in Eastern England, were actually stifling and paternalistic in nature. He indicated that rural life was far from idyllic and that "the village inhabitants... were imprisoned by constraints of various kinds, so that reciprocal aid became a necessity" (1979: 154) rather than the 'natural' outcome of choices exercised by family and kinship patterns established over the decades.

In a number of other studies of actual rural communities at this time, similar observations were made. Thus, for example, Sturt in his study of his home village of Bourne in Hampshire (1984) at the turn of the century found that it was essential when describing rural life, to avoid an:

"over romantic view of the past, for there was never an absence of vice, misery, folly or personal tragedy" (1984: xii).

Increasingly however, the traditional form and homogeneity of the rural community was affected during the first four decades of this century by the impact of urbanisation, including not just the in-migration of people with different demographical and social characteristics, but also different ideals and expectations. The process of 'urbanisation' reduced the differences that existed between the urban and rural areas when changes to the village:

"were thrust upon the people from outside - changes in their material or social environment, followed by mere negations on their part, in the abandonment of traditional outlooks and ambitions" (Sturt, 1984: 192).

Table 2.2 Distribution of the population in England and Wales, 1901 to 1931.

Census year	Urban districts (%)	Rural districts (%)
1901	77.0	23.0
1911	78.1	21.9
1921	79.4	20.6
1931	80.0	20.0

(Saville, 1957: 26)

The urbanisation of the countryside involved a complex two-way relationship between urban and rural areas. In this way, the time-space location of a village *vis à vis* an urban core affected not just the physical impact of a town upon its morphology and physical characteristics, but also the demographic and social composition of its population (Lewis and Maund, 1976). Thus 'traditional' communities were more likely to be found in the remote, isolated settlements of the periphery, whilst on the urban fringe there was either the physical expansion of towns to engulf the village or, in free standing rural villages the in-migration of commuters and/or retirees. At the same time many villages in remote rural areas were experiencing population losses, whilst in all villages selective out migration amongst the young was a common experience. According to Saville, urban areas continued to increase their share of the total population of England and Wales throughout the period 1901-1931 (Table 2.2) whilst Jones (1973) explains this movement of rural population as being a result of the employment opportunities and services that were readily available in urban areas but not available in rural areas. An example used by Sherwood (1996) illustrates that in Northamptonshire in the 1930s a factory worker in the town was paid a wage of £2.70 per week compared with the wage of an agricultural worker of £1.60 per week. The impact of urban populations upon the countryside was the accelerated construction of the roads and

railways, the development of the automobile and the introduction of public transport; each provided greater access to the countryside for the urban dweller (Wake, 1935; Thomas, 1939; Bracey, 1959; Brasnett, 1969). This movement into the countryside of urbanites was seen to break down the simple urban - rural dichotomy, and to create instead what researchers such as Rees (1950) and Frankenberg (1965) referred to as a rural-urban continuum of social relationships. The relationship between the physical changes in the villages of rural England was seen nowhere more clearly than in the ribbon developments of the 1930s that were hastily constructed alongside the transport routes into the most accessible areas of rural England and in the building of housing estates in the more convenient villages (Cherry and Rogers, 1996). However, because the houses were 'attached' to the edge rather than integrated into the original village settlement Orwin claimed that, rather than integrate the lifestyles of the urban and rural people, urbanisation and suburbanisation further divided the two communities and contributed to the decline of what he saw as the traditional rural community.

"This accommodation... has proceeded hitherto without any deliberate direction. Generally there has been no attempt to assimilate the newcomers to the old community. The new houses... on land adjacent to the villages... are housing estates in miniature in their siting, in their architecture and in their occupants. They are something entirely apart from the old village" (Orwin, 1945: 65).

Moreover, there were sharp contrasts between these new 'private' houses, which were constructed to an exceptionally high standard for the period, being "three bedroomed, with kitchen, bath and garden" (Cullingworth and Nadin, 1994: 3) and the standard of much rural housing which with the exception of many estate villages was found to be:

"deplorably low, both in planning and accommodation. The services of the house, such as water supply, electricity, gas and sewerage are wanting altogether, or else only partially available and often inadequate" (Orwin, 1945: 6).

The differences between rural and urban were "being steadily narrowed... by the invasion of the countryside by bricks and mortar" (Saville, 1966: 35). According to sociologists such as Webber and Pahl, the impact not just of these processes but also of national values and attitudes upon the population, regardless of where they lived, removed the long held argument

establishing a direct relationship between place and behaviour. Thus in Pahl's oft quoted words:

"any attempt to tie patterns of social relationships to specific geographical milieux is a singularly fruitless exercise" (1966: 322).

Not surprisingly, such a view has been challenged by many geographers who argue that location remains a key factor, in that the process of diffusion of new ideas and attitudes is socially and spatially selective:

"and consequently produces differential codes of behaviour based upon social class and life cycle differences" (Lewis, 1979: 40).

Whilst there is abundant evidence that the image of the English village, redolent with notions of the rural idyll, of neighbourliness and self reliance remains an important element not just in people's reasons for moving to the countryside, but also in the minds of planners and policy makers (DoE/MAFF, 1995).

The evident decline of the traditional rural society during the inter-war period, triggered by the unplanned expansion of urban areas into the countryside and the migration of population to and from the countryside, threatened the very existence of 'rural' England and it was under such circumstances that the voluntary movement developed and thrived. Rural communities were characterised by self-help and self-reliance, and because of this the introduction (led by both urban and rural dwellers) of national and local scale volunteer-led organisations was seen as non-problematic. Voluntary organisations represented a form of proto-government, applying self-help strategies in rural communities to encourage citizens to participate in establishing a measure of planning in the rural environment (Brasnett, 1969; Williams, 1984 (a)).

The brief reviews which follow explain the origins of the national and local voluntary organisations, organisations which play an important role in current rural planning (see section 2.5).

2.3.1 The formation of national voluntary organisations.

The absence of a channel for public opposition to government planning policy led to the creation of a “negative obstructive opposition”, which was seen as the only form of democratic participation available for the majority of citizens (Connell, 1978: 175). Volunteer-led organisations lobbied for the protection and preservation of the countryside from planners and industrial developers because:

“as towns have grown in size, town life has become ever more mechanised and by reaction there has been a growing hunger for country things and ‘natural’ occupations.. This feeling has been intensified because the countryside has been in danger” (Bourdillon, 1945: 209).

According to Connell (1978) this form of voluntary citizen participation occurred in two areas. First, in the more aesthetically pleasing rural parts of the ‘Home Counties’ (such as North Downs in Surrey) which felt the pressure of the expanding metropolis and second, in the remoter and more attractive parts of rural England where development of any kind was felt to be severely detrimental and which led, on occasions, to extreme local reactions in order to preserve the countryside. However, Barr suggested that because the most accessible rural communities became the first destinations for the mobile middle classes, these early voluntary organisations were quintessentially middle class in their origin, their typical participators being:

“middle aged, middle class, and guarding their comforts of quiet and privacy and beauty” (1968: 152).

National voluntary organisations helped protect the rural environment from unplanned growth, and fostered respect for the countryside and for rural areas by encouraging urbanites to take an ‘intelligent’ interest in the countryside (Rydin, 1993): in most cases these organisations focused much of their concern on the leisure use of the countryside. Thus for example, the period witnessed the creation of pioneering environmental voluntary organisations such as the National Trust, founded by Octavia Hill in 1895 and the Youth Hostel Association which was set up in the 1920s (Francis and Henderson, 1992; Rydin, 1993; Cullingworth and Nadin, 1994; Cherry and Rogers, 1996). However, the most notable environmental voluntary organisation was the Council for the Preservation of Rural

England (later the Council for the Protection of Rural England, the CPRE). Formed in 1926, the organisation co-ordinated a variety of rural interests and promoted legislation to preserve and protect the countryside (Blunden *et al.*, 1985; Rydin, 1993).

The introduction of the Rural Community Council (RCC) into rural areas represented a departure from an environmental focus. This country-wide voluntary organisation, founded in Oxfordshire in 1921, was initially formed to provide social, recreation and entertainment facilities within the countryside to match those already provided in urban areas (Snelson, 1963; Brasnett, 1969; Blunden *et al.*, 1985; Leavett, 1985). In addition, the RCCs wished to maintain a balance of population within the rural areas and ensure that the new, in-coming populations were not drawn back to the urban areas. They aimed to achieve this by fostering a sense of community and providing:

“for countrymen and women a personal service of aid and advice, making known to them the facilities which the local authorities could give and to the local authorities the special needs of the village groups and individuals, and supplementing the statutory services by organising less formal activities” (Snelson, 1963: 6).

Rather than protect rural areas, the RCC planned to enhance and improve “the quality of life” (Blunden *et al.*, 1985: 64) in rural communities, and in so doing it became a potentially powerful means of perpetuating voluntary service within rural society (Brasnett, 1969; Cripps, 1985; Rogers, 1987). To achieve this the RCCs aimed to co-ordinate the work of other national voluntary organisations in rural areas:

“to view the state of things as a whole, and to fit the jig-saw together to produce the complete picture” (Macwhirter, undated: 4).

Leavett argued that the RCCs were unique in that they were best placed to integrate the work of a multitude of agencies. More specifically the RCCs were seen as:

“an independent voluntary organisation at county level which brings together a wide range of other voluntary bodies, local authorities and statutory agencies to promote and support voluntary action to alleviate the social and economic problems of rural communities” (1985, as quoted in Rogers, 1987: 356).

The work undertaken by these national voluntary organisations through their roles as protectors of the countryside was an example of informal planning in what was seen as a general absence of anything directed by the state. Indeed, self-defined interest groups of a voluntary nature were given a relatively privileged position in the planning process. They did not command resources as a statutory organisation might, but through the employment of “experts”, they were effective in promoting their cause (Cullingworth and Nadin, 1994).

2.3.2 The formation of local voluntary organisations.

Local voluntary organisations, or village organisations across rural England were formed largely in response to the changing relationship between the town and countryside (Bourdillon, 1945). Indeed, many such organisations were formed and dominated by incoming ‘urban’ populations intent on maintaining or rebuilding a sense of community and revitalising the processes of self-help and self-reliance. By 1916, it was argued that one in four villages in rural England had at least one village organisation (Ashby, 1916). Often centred on the church or the public house, such organisations reinforced the importance of the village in maintaining a visible rural community and focused upon the “amelioration of harsh economic circumstances” though others argued that this programme was driven by these urban newcomers attempting to recreate their idea of the rural idyll (Bourdillon, 1945: 207). Furthermore, Newby suggested that the number of voluntary “clubs, societies and organisations” supported by a village was seen as a key indicator of a flourishing village life (1979: 197).

The establishment of the most prominent village organisation in rural England, the Women’s Institute, (WI) dates from 1915 in Wales. The movement originated in Canada at the end of the nineteenth century and the first branch was established in the United Kingdom on the island of Anglesey in North Wales. The movement was formed to educate and train women in the village to understand and help alleviate the problems associated with the growing impact of towns upon the countryside in an attempt to stem the movement of population from rural communities to urban areas (Bourdillon, 1945; Jenkins, 1953; Bracey, 1959; Martin, 1962). Whilst the WI was “continually drawn to the needs of the village as a whole and to the world beyond the village as well” (Bourdillon, 1945: 215), its primary concern was upon the vitality of the village and ensuring the welfare of women and

children. This was to be achieved by promoting “a sense of responsibility and well-being within the village” (Bracey, 1959: 144) and adopting the processes of self-help and self-reliance to educate the village women and to “develop co-operation and initiative” (Martin, 1962: 95).

In a broad overview of the WI movement up to the outbreak of World War Two, Bourdillon has provided some examples of the proposals made by the WI:

“the bus stop is inconvenient for passengers living beyond the church, and would the bus company consider moving it 100 yards further up the road where those waiting can shelter in Mrs Higgins barn?... the ditch beyond Mr Brown’s shop is filled with stagnant water, will the parish council see that it is cleaned?” (1945: 215).

In addition, a report by His Majesty’s Inspectors in 1926 on the Educational work of the Women’s Institute recognised that this village organisation improved conditions and instigated planning initiatives within the village (Martin, 1962). An example of work undertaken by the WI in Northamptonshire in 1923 reinforces the contribution made by this organisation to the rural community during this period. The Northamptonshire WI introduced the Village Histories Project in 1923 to:

“collect information about the past history of their villages and at the same time keep a record of current events” (Wake, 1935: preface).

The result of the project was a guidebook to Northamptonshire villages that was written by community members and produced in 1925 with a second and third edition produced in 1929 and 1935 respectively (Wake, 1935). The rationale for the guide was clear:

“a village which does not know its history is likened to a man (sic) who has lost his memory and the WI will indeed be doing a good work, if by taking up the study of local history they should succeed in restoring and strengthening a sense of tradition and continuity in their own villages” (Wake, 1935: 10).

The project encouraged the collection of a range of information as Table 2.3 illustrates (Wake, 1935).

Table 2.3 Contents of the Village History Projects.

Traditional & recent/ present day	Printed information	Manuscript information
Geology	County histories	Records of the Lord of the Manor
Archaeology	Village and family histories	Records of local charities
Churches	Parish registers	Local wills
Occupations	Local periodicals and newspapers	Manuscript collections of the NRS*
Population	Government publications	The Public Records Office
Schools	Publications of NRS*	Old letters
Transport	Guide books & directories	Glebe terriers
Village Traditions	Pamphlets and sermons	Documents in the church chest
The 1914-1918 war	Books on special subjects	Documents in the county hall

*Northamptonshire Record Society.

The 'Village Histories Project' was instigated during what was seen as a period of considerable change within rural Northamptonshire particularly the "uncontrolled and unrelated construction of houses and bungalows" in so many villages (Wake, 1935: 11). Wake believed that such changes threatened both the village memory and village traditions and that the 'Village Histories Project' was needed to ensure that a record was produced of these traditions before they were lost forever.

During the same period, a number of other pioneering initiatives in Northamptonshire involved local people in recording information about their rural localities as a basis for future planning and policy making. The first of these was a land use survey of Northamptonshire that was instigated by the geography master at Northampton Grammar School and the County's Chief Education Officer. All the parish surveys were conducted by school children and three maps, to a scale of one inch to one mile, were later published by the Ordnance Survey. So impressive was this work that it gave rise to the first national surveys of land use in the 1930s under the direction of (Professor) Dudley Stamp and to subsequent (national) follow up surveys in the 1960s (under Dr Alice Coleman) and the 1990s (under Rex Walford) (Sherwood, 1996; Walford, 1997). Second, directed by Joan Wake (county archivist) a survey of field names in Northamptonshire was again undertaken by school children and not only provided the first such survey in Northamptonshire, but was "a piece of pioneer work which has been adopted...for other counties" (Wake, 1935:

16). Finally, in 1934 the WI under the direction of Dr MacIntosh, the County's Chief Medical Officer of Health assisted in a survey of the water supplies, wells and standpipes in all Northamptonshire villages. This survey was seen as central to a planning policy developed in the late 1930s and the post war period, which provided a proper supply of clean water to the county's rural communities and which helped raise the standard of amenity in rural areas to that enjoyed by their urban counterparts (Sherwood, 1996).

Not surprisingly the rise of these voluntary organisations and the concerns they expressed about the changes affecting rural Britain led to the gradual introduction of legislation at a national level. More specifically the expansion of towns into the neighbouring countryside, the unplanned proliferation of 'plotland' developments (Hardy and Ward, 1984) and the local authority housing programmes of the inter war years to replace overcrowded and unfit rural dwellings (Bowley, 1945) were raising fundamental questions about the need for a formalised land use strategy. Hence in 1932 the government took action to contain the unplanned expansion of urban areas through the introduction of the first planning policy that included the countryside; the Town and Country Planning Act 1932 (Hall, 1973; Healey, 1983; Cullingworth and Nadin, 1994). This formal planning policy commenced a process which began to take the power for planning rural areas away from the voluntary organisations and placed it into the hands of the professional planners. The Act required the preparation of plans by the professional planners for all land types and any subsequent development in the plan area was subject to local authority control and the ultimate approval by the Minister of Health (Rydin, 1993). Furthermore, this attempt to contain the extent of the urban sprawl into rural areas was re-inforced by the introduction of the Ribbon Development Act (1935) which was designed to control "the spread of development along major roads" (Cullingworth and Nadin, 1994: 3). However, these measures were judged inadequate since, in the case of the 1932 Act, it took three years to pass through parliament, a time during which "variations and amendments were not possible" to any unplanned development that had occurred (Cullingworth and Nadin, 1994: 4). Furthermore, even when the 1932 Act was in operation, it became a 'zoning plan', whereby land was zoned for particular uses such as residential or industrial. Once zoning had been completed, the local authority still had no direct control over the individual developments in the zones and

they were largely constructed at the discretion of the developers (Cullingworth and Nadin, 1994).

At the end of the 1930s, surveys were commissioned in an attempt to bring land use change under planning control and which supported the principle of protecting rural land and agricultural areas from urban encroachment. The Report of the Barlow Committee (1940) undertook to solve the problems of land zoning created through the 1932 Act whilst the Report of the Scott Committee (1942) commented on the utilisation of land in rural areas (Gilg, 1994). In addition, the work by the planner Abercrombie ensured that the containment of urban land use would occur through the introduction of the Green Belts Act (1955). In general terms, however, the arrival of the Second World War in 1939 had a dramatic effect on the physical planning of agricultural land (as all rural areas were required to respond to the food crisis) whilst social and cultural planning was virtually abandoned until 1947.

2.3.3 Summary.

The period of rural planning prior to the Second World War was largely based on the philosophy of self-help, which relied on the participation of citizens - both rural and urban - to protect and preserve the countryside from encroachment by urban expansion and urban ways of life. The threatened breakdown of formerly close knit rural communities by the processes associated with urbanisation encouraged the establishment of voluntary organisations and village groups in an attempt to sustain or recreate the rural community and to conserve the rural idyll. Voluntary organisations undertook much of the planning of rural communities in the absence of statutory planning mechanisms. Even though the government attempted to regulate planning after 1932 by placing power in the hands of the professional planners, it failed to make a significant impact on urban sprawl or recognise the social and welfare needs of the rural community.

2.4 Planning and rural communities: 1947 to 1979.

This was a period during which the statutory planning system came to dominate the rural agenda and when many of the voluntary organisations so active in the pre-war period

became marginalised in the planning process. In this sense the introduction of much greater central control over the planning system can be seen as one element of a much wider process of nationalisation effecting, for example, the coal and steel industries, the railways and the health service which were seen as the main means by which the country could implement a centralised and planned recovery from the second world war.

The first regulated planning Act for the countryside, the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act was considered revolutionary. Not only did it professionalise the planning process and planners through the introduction of new powers that were embodied in the legislation, but it marked the commencement of an era of centralised planning control over the planning system (Rydin, 1993). As Haar noted:

“only now for the first time are sufficient powers conferred upon planners to shape an efficient environment that will secure the best possible use of the limited land resources. It puts Britain in the lead of democratic planning for the land” (1951: 156).

The Act was the culmination of various government-sponsored reports (for example The Barlow Report (1940), and The Scott Report (1942)). The reports confirmed that inter war planning mechanisms had failed to stop chaotic development caused by population and settlement pressures in rural areas (Phillips and Williams, 1984; Pahl, 1984; Gilg, 1994). Consequently, the new Act took a much stronger view than those embodied in previous approaches:

“large cities were no longer to be allowed to continue their unchecked sprawl over the countryside. The explosive forces generated by the desire for better living and working conditions would no longer run riot. Suburban dormitories were a thing of the past. Overspill would be steered into new and expanded towns which could provide the conditions people wanted” (Cullingworth and Nadin, 1994: 9).

Moreover, central government placed all development under the tight control of local government structures, making the county and borough councils accountable and representative of opinions within the wider community. In so doing, local authorities became responsible for undertaking land use surveys, producing five year development plans for their area and for granting planning permission to developers. It was the introduction of a representative democratic planning process. Planning permission would

only be given after a consultation period and so long as it complied with 'development plans'. The development plan was thus considered to be the lynch-pin of the 1947 Planning Act and was defined as:

"a plan indicating the manner in which the local planning authority propose that land in their area should be used" (Cullingworth and Nadin, 1994: 49).

In three parts, the plan consisted of a survey report, a written statement of the main proposals, and detailed maps indicating planning proposals for a five-year period. The plans were only implemented following a public inquiry and with the approval of the minister of health.

Some indication of this move towards regulation and government within the countryside can be illustrated by the lack of recognition throughout this period for the work undertaken by the voluntary organisations and by rural communities. Stewart (1948) argued that the level of citizen participation incorporated into the 1947 Act was insufficient; participation and self-help were stifled with the introduction of government regulated planning, particularly in comparison to the time prior to the Second World War when rural communities had been expected to play an active part in planning for their own environments. Continued deprivation and neglect experienced in rural areas during the war years, according to Stewart, increased the motivation in rural communities to undertake their own surveys and determine their own resource requirements. As he found, the rural community wanted to take a "quicken interest in its future", to try and sustain the rural inheritance and to provide:

"something better for the on-coming generation than its parents had enjoyed" (Stewart, 1948: 11-12).

Therefore, encouraged by this positive attitude amongst local people towards the planning of their environment, and in the absence of any intervention by planners, a survey and a

plan of a rural community in Kent was undertaken by the planner Cecil Stewart, aided by Arthur Smailes, Marion Bowley and Dennis Chapman (1948)².

Funded by the Leverhulme Research Fellowship Trust, the study was intended to have a positive influence on the planning professionals and encourage them to adopt a planning mechanism that worked for and with rural communities because:

“so far little attention seems to have been given to the smaller rural communities which go to make the pattern of our English countryside.. This survey aims at filling this gap by indicating the method and technique that were adopted in one particular village, in the hope that it may provide a useful guide to those interested in the future well-being of such communities” (Stewart, 1948: 5).

The work centred on the problems associated with the out-migration of people from rural areas, the subsequent re-population by urban people and the amenity/utility deficiency being experienced (see Table 2.4).

Table 2.4 Contents of the village survey in Kent

A general questionnaire survey
Geology
Location
Growth and Change
Accessibility
Transport
The Village Appearance
Employment
Population

The authors wanted the project to have an impact on statutory planning policy for rural areas, hoping it might act as a blueprint for future planning initiatives. As the first independent planning initiative to concentrate on the requirements of the rural population, the researchers encouraged the participation of the whole community:

² Arthur Smailes later became Professor of Geography at Queen Mary College, London and was a pioneer in the newly developing specialism of urban and settlement geography. Marion Bowley was an economist who had recently published (1945) a definitive national survey of housing policy in Britain. The choice of two such prominent academics to undertake this work indicates the importance that was placed upon this survey of village life.

“to put forward their own ideas for the future” (Stewart, 1948: 52).

Despite this, the initiative failed to attract the interests of the professional planners, and the research team was bitter and disappointed by the absence of support and acknowledgement from the local authority planning departments for the conclusions reached during the study.

“Were all the ideas that had been evolved for new housing, for improved education, for recreation grounds and community buildings to be no more than pieces of paper which could now be securely tied up in red tape and filed away in some obscure and dusty shelf? What of the guinea pigs themselves? Were all their hopes for a future and better environment for themselves and their children after them simply to produce an amusing essay in make-believe?” (Stewart, 1948: 133).

This evident disregard for public involvement was characteristic of the new planning process though, in addition, the new planning process failed to keep pace with the changing political, social and economic environment of the post war period (Alcock and Christensen, 1995). Consequently, there was widespread dissatisfaction amongst both rural and urban communities not only with the planning process but also with the political decision making process under the various governments of the 1950s and 1960s. It was no longer perceived that central government and planning professionals were acting in a manner akin to a representative democracy and people began to challenge this bureaucracy through what became known as the ‘New Social Movement’ (Hall, 1973; Hain, 1976, 1980; Long, 1976). As the planning process was seen as an important agent in resource distribution, the continuing resource imbalance and the lack of social planning for the disadvantaged heightened concern amongst the public. Thus disillusionment gave rise to conflict as evidenced by increased public participation in protests and community action groups during this time, for example the Covent Garden community action group was formed to protest against the re-housing of the whole community away from the area and the subsequent clearing of the poor housing which remained after the war (Hain, 1976).

Further exacerbating the problems of rural areas in this period was growing evidence that the revival in population fortunes of many accessible villages in the inter war period was now being experienced by many remoter rural communities. Thus for example, where depopulation and the decline of the traditional rural communities had dominated many

academic studies, particularly in the west of England and Wales in the 1940s, 1950s and early 1960s, the patterns and processes of counterurbanisation came to dominate research in the 1970s and 1980s (Lewis and Maund, 1976; Champion, 1989; Lewis, 1989). Many arguments have been put forward to explain a process which appears to characterise most advanced economies (Champion, 1989), including the extension of commuting fields as a result of improvements to the transport networks and personal mobility and changes in the quality of the rural housing stock. Others such as Massey (1984) have linked the turnaround to more fundamental economic changes and the emergence of new spatial divisions of labour consequent upon the move towards a post-Fordist society, whilst others such as Cloke, (1985 (b)) have focused upon the life style preferences of migrants, whether seeking a 'clean-break' from the city or living in the countryside and working elsewhere.

Regardless of the arguments, however, what has emerged from counterurbanisation studies in much of rural Britain is the spatially and socially selective patterns of in-migration and the close relationships between these patterns and the rural housing market, and thus with the effects of 'rural' planning policy. This relationship will be examined later. What is also important is that the counterurbanisation process has brought to many villages a new 'service class', dominated by professional, well-educated, articulate individuals and households keen to be involved in local organisations and decision making (Massey, 1984; Cloke and Thrift, 1990). Notwithstanding what many see as significant differences or 'fractions' within this service class (Cloke, 1990; Phillips, 1993) others have drawn attention to larger divisions between these newcomers and the local population. According to Crichton in her study of Stratfield Mortimer in Berkshire the use of the term village was a misnomer because "it suggests a place where people know and mind about one another, as is no longer the case" due to the building and development which has occurred in order to accommodate the in-coming population (1964: 71). Similarly, Pahl found that the in-coming population to two villages in Hertfordshire between 1945 and 1961 were predominantly middle class (81%) and they "moved in separate worlds" to the working class indigenous population (1965: 11). Consequently, the needs of the in-coming population dominated the rural agenda, so that the needs of the other rural residents (the locals) were being marginalised (Pahl, 1975, Moseley, 1979). Therefore, the process of rural planning was seen to be:

“out of tune with contemporary needs. Public acceptability, which is the basic foundation of any planning system, was beginning to crumble” (Cullingworth and Nadin, 1994: 49).

As a result, a new era of town and country planning commenced in 1968 with the introduction of the Town and Country Planning Act. This was seen as a turning point for the planning system in that it represented an attempt by the government to incorporate the demands of the public to be more properly represented in the structured planning process (Cullingworth and Nadin, 1994). Development Plans were replaced by ‘Structure’ and ‘Local’ Plans, which were intended to provide comprehensive planning controls over a much more extended period. The Structure Plans were produced by the county council to provide a strategic tier of planning and comprised a written statement of policies, supported by a key diagram and a report of a survey to cover a 15 year period (Rydin, 1993; Cullingworth and Nadin, 1994). The Local Plans devised largely by district and borough councils provided the detailed guidance on local land use. Also a written document, they covered planning over a ten-year period and were accompanied by annotated maps specifying the location of new developments together with areas of protected land. Incorporated in both sets of plans were guidelines for planners to increase the levels of public participation during the identification and evaluation of key planning issues. This was a move to respond to what was seen as the population’s growing desire for a new type of social planning to address the imbalance of access to goods, services, opportunities and power (Long, 1976; Hain, 1976, 1980; Williams, 1984a). By introducing public participation into the planning process in this way central government provided the public with a controlled amount of power in the decision making process.

The commitment to the concept of public participation was further demonstrated by the publication of the Skeffington Report (HMSO, 1969). The Skeffington Committee, under the chairmanship of Arthur Skeffington (secretary to the Minister of Housing and Local Government), was appointed to:

“consider and report on the best methods... of securing the participation of the public at the formative stages in the making of development plans for their area” (HMSO, 1969: 1).

The report suggested that consultation and participation at the 'grass-roots' level should become an integral part of the planning process. To ensure that this process was undertaken, the committee proposed a number of methods to incorporate public participation into the planning system. For example:

“people should be kept informed throughout the preparation of a structure or local plan for their area;
the public should be told what the representations have achieved or why they have not been accepted;
people should be encouraged to participate in the preparation of plans by helping with surveys and other activities as well as making comments”
(HMSO, 1969 as quoted in Cullingworth and Nadin, 1994: 252).

However, the report was not without its critics because it failed to examine, in any great detail, the mechanisms by which the professional planners might instigate participation at the 'grass roots' (Cullingworth and Nadin, 1994). Furthermore, the lack of substance in the report illustrated that a pressurised government under the premiership of Harold Wilson had introduced the policy of public participation with little fundamental thinking about its objectives (Arnstein, 1969; Long, 1976). In doing so, the Skeffington Report and public participation were seen as a panacea for a whole host of problems within society. Wengert (1976) believed that participation was a golden opportunity to raise the level of public consent in order to channel societal conflict elsewhere, whilst Arnstein (1969) argued that public participation was a mechanism through which the planning authorities could justify their actions and manipulate the public into believing that they had made a valuable contribution to the planning of their locality. Also, whilst public participation was introduced into the planning system, it was only integrated into formal planning policy through the Structure and Local Plan process.

During the period between the Skeffington Report and 1979, the only change to statutory planning policy which affected the rural areas was the introduction of the Local Government Act (1972) following the report issued by the Redcliffe-Maud Committee. The Local Government Act instituted the current two-tier system of local government, in which planning functions were split between the county and district/borough councils. County councils were made responsible for the production of the Structure Plans, these being the broad skeletal frameworks and overall planning strategies, whilst the role of the

district councils was to flesh these out for their areas as Local Plans (Blowers, 1980; Wright, 1992; Rydin, 1993; Cullingworth and Nadin, 1994). Furthermore, the Act provided for the planning powers of the typically rural based parish council. As a locally elected council, the parish was given a greater degree of flexibility than other council tiers, to exercise planning powers. Indeed, under the 1972 Act parish councils were, for the first time given the “right to be notified of planning applications” (Blunden *et al.*, 1985: 42) whilst also having authority over local environmental and social planning (for example, improvements to footpaths and street lighting). Therefore, without formal constraints the parish council was able to form a bridge between the statutory authorities and the voluntary sector, becoming an important part of the local government system and community life in rural areas (Francis, 1982; Blunden *et al.*, 1985). This re-organisation of the local government structure was further evidence of the gradual shift away from the ideology of centralised government. It was a mechanism that enabled the State to increase the power of local government and the parish council – who were, as the lowest level of government closest to the people. It strengthened the principle of representative democracy at least until the election of the Conservative government in 1979.

There is a further point. Under the frameworks introduced by the Structure and Local Plans many local authorities particularly in southern England introduced development strategies for their rural areas which progressively channelled housing development away from the countryside and into towns or into a limited number of larger rural service centres or ‘key’ villages (Woodruffe, 1976; Cloke, 1979). One significant effect of this process, particularly when coupled with a growing demand for rural residence, was to widen the price divide between urban and rural properties and, within the countryside, between the large and small villages (Sherwood, 1986). Increasingly therefore, these changes in the rural housing market were to have a major impact upon the flows of households into the countryside. Rural England, particularly rural shire England was rapidly being transformed into middle class England, and this change, which was to quicken in the 1980s and 1990s, is fundamental to a wider appreciation of the significance of strategies which have encouraged local participation in the village appraisal process at the present time.

2.4.1 Summary.

This period in planning history from 1968 to 1979 was dominated by the introduction of a regulated planning policy. The 1947 Town and Country Planning Act was the first regulated planning policy but, although it was hailed as innovative, it was perceived as failing to satisfy the social and welfare needs of rural communities. The introduction of the 1968 Town and Country Planning Act and the subsequent publication of the Skeffington Report (1969) were turning points, representing the government's attempt to respond to public demand, to alleviate the potential for conflict caused by regulation and to involve the public, once again through participation initiatives, in the decision making process.

2.5 Planning and rural communities: 1979 to the present.

The Town and Country Planning Act (1968) and the Local Government Act (1972) demonstrated a modest move away from regulated planning policy and centralised decision making. However, with the election of Margaret Thatcher's government in 1979, the process of planning took a further, more dramatic shift which has resulted in de-regulated statutory planning for rural areas (Peck, 1993). During the period known as 'Thatcher's Decade' (Rydin, 1993) the strategy of 'active citizenship' was promoted and the process of public participation from the 'bottom-up' was adopted as the principal mechanism for implementing rural planning (Kearns, 1992). Active citizenship represented a shift in political ideology from a managerialist role to an entrepreneurial form of governance (as explained in Table 1.1) where local networks and partnerships were considered as key themes (Goodwin and Painter, 1996). A more open, participatory democracy was envisaged in which greater power in the decision making arena was given to people at the 'grass roots' level. However, whilst inspiring de-regulation on the one hand, the creation of private sector, self-regulatory bodies to work in partnership with rural communities has resulted in the largest expansion of formal regulation by any post-war Prime Minister (Hogwood, 1997).

The political influence exerted by the Conservative government after 1979 on the planning system instigated two distinct shifts in power relationships that have altered the course of rural planning. The first shift was between central and local government, whilst the second

was a financial shift from the public to the private sector. The shift in power relationships between local and central government left local government with a greatly reduced level of authority in planning issues. Kearns believed that Conservative governments have long had a natural distrust of local government, stemming from the political control of most of Britain's major cities, traditionally in the hands of the powerful labour authorities and of the trade unions (1992). As a consequence of the withdrawal of funds from local government and the gradual de-regulation of the planning process, planners came to rely on a process dubbed by Cloke as "planning by opportunism" (1988: 37). This was planning by the 'back-door', where the planning professionals were pressured into using the resources offered by the voluntary sector and rural communities in an attempt to cut public spending and service provision in rural areas, which were naturally more expensive.

The second shift was in the financial responsibility between the public and private sector. This changed the emphasis of planning towards private sector generated community development, a move that increased the number of structures (institutions and agencies) with power in the planning process and which encouraged partnerships between the public, private and voluntary sectors (Bowler and Lewis, 1991). Using a 'public sector hands off' approach (Cloke, 1990), the Thatcher government opened rural planning up to the forces of the market place placing a "much greater emphasis on competition between places for resources" (Goodwin and Painter, 1996: 645). Thus, rural localities were forced to compete against each other for limited resources in order to implement planning initiatives a policy that Bell and Cloke (1989) suggested was detrimental to rural areas, which are 'a poor arena for competition'. Additionally, Murray and Greer (1992: 174) argued:

"rural development cannot be left solely to market forces because the market is incapable of providing the requisite guidance".

This move by central government signalled the decline of government intervention in rural planning in favour of more locally arranged procedures (Ryder and Silver, 1985; Cloke, 1990; Checkoway, 1995): a move from local government to local governance (Kearns, 1992; Malpass, 1994; Burton and Duncan, 1996; Goodwin and Painter, 1996; Miller and Ahmad, 1997; Murdoch, 1997).

However, it could be argued that the government's reliance on voluntary sector agencies to "complement, supplement and extend statutory provision" (Williams, 1984 (a): 1) was only possible because a voluntary sector framework was already in place. Additionally, it was believed to be politically attractive to encourage the voluntary sector to instigate rural community development initiatives because they were more effective than the local planning authorities at sustaining community empowerment whilst providing 'grass roots' democracy and understanding social needs within rural communities. Furthermore, what is of even greater significance is the coincidence of this push towards greater local participation with the growing dominance of an articulate, professional middle class in most rural communities, particularly in southern England. The fact that this population formed much of the Conservative party's 'natural' constituency meant that there was now an opportunity for them to become actively involved in a process which could be shaped by their own policy agenda and produce a countryside and a rural community in their image (Rural Development Commission, 1993 (a) & (b); Rogers, 1987; Baines, 1990).

Despite the arguments being developed here, it would be misleading to suggest that the Conservative government had totally abdicated responsibility for any form of state regulation over rural planning (Hogwood, 1997). Indeed, the period was characterised by a number of Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPGs) covering aspects such as Housing (PPG3), and the Countryside and Rural Economy (PPG7), whilst several quangos (for example - the Rural Development Commission (RDC), the Countryside Commission, the Highlands and Islands Development Board, the Mid Wales Development Board, and the Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs)), operating between central and local government, began to play an increasingly important role over the allocation of structural and other resources to particular geographical areas or selected aspects of the countryside. Such quangos were given authority within the new deregulated planning process to determine planning strategy within rural areas and regulate or develop different rural localities depending on their social and economic circumstances. Thus, for example, when the RDC set up its revised rural development areas (RDAs) in 1994 to receive structural funds in order to assist economic and social change where it will not easily occur of its own accord (Rural Development Commission, 1993), these areas were defined by 10 census variables to a rather crude formula which set the geographical scale (the ward) and the number

required (six) to create a viable region. At the same time each RDA was required to prepare its own programme, in partnership with a range of agencies, but a clear structure of accountability was laid down linking the management strategies back to the commission and other funding organisations. A similar structure has emerged with the creation of European Union Objective 5b areas where academics have questioned, *inter-alia*, the ways in which areas such as those in East Anglia has been designated and the criteria on which they are based (Ward and Woodward, 1998). In summary, therefore, what characterises all these organisations is that:

“they not only have considerable flexibility to interpret what their responsibilities mean, but can develop their own strategies to meet them, set their own implementation time scales and decide their enforcement practices” (Rees 1990: 37).

However, this shift to local governance (in which voluntary organisations and quangos played an important part) by the Conservative government has been interpreted not just as a commitment to active citizenship and the application of rural community development through public participation and local empowerment, but also as a consequence of the adoption of a set of different governmentalities in which:

“the state no longer wishes to govern directly, but rather indirectly through companies and communities” (Murdoch, 1997: 115).

Thus, active citizenship may be considered as a useful outcome both to the cuts that the Conservatives wished to be made to public spending and the changes that were introduced to the local government structure.

Moreover, the power given to the ‘quangos’ to set their own agenda for rural restructuring has attracted a growing amount of criticism. On the one hand, some argued that their policy implementation mechanisms failed to reflect the shift of emphasis to active citizenship, and that rural communities were not empowered, but remained isolated from the decision making process (Weale *et al*, 1991; Rydin, 1993). On the other, according to Cloke, the ‘quangos’ were limited in their approach to rural community development and remained:

“nibbling at the edge of major structural problems rather than as an apparatus for biting deeply into the task of rural development” (1990: 315).

Either way, many ‘quangos’ were seen as conducting rural development programmes that failed to impact on the people or communities in which they lived. This fostered a “growing disillusionment” amongst inhabitants of rural communities who wished to play a more active role in the decision making (Bowler and Lewis, 1991: 162).

Some critics would argue that this retraction of funding was the long-term intention of Margaret Thatcher’s de-regulation tactics and that harnessing the long nurtured resources within rural communities was the only suitable instrument for rural planning. Cloke (1988) and Kearns (1992) both believed, that by using tactics such as self-help and active citizenship, the government could avoid any direct expenditure in rural areas whilst still being perceived to have introduced a policy that would solve planning problems in a previously neglected area. In this way self-help could be interpreted as:

“an opportunistic clutching at straws in the absence of any other implementation mechanism” (Cloke, 1988: 38).

Even so, the formalisation of active citizenship, which harnessed community self-help, was considered by many to be a natural consequence of this process towards greater local participation (Rural Development Commission, 1982; McNab, 1984; Francis and Henderson, 1992). After all, self-help was always seen as an integral part of rural life, the foundation stone of rural communities (Woolett, 1981; Rural Development Commission, 1982; Dunning, 1985). Indeed, it is questionable whether the policy of ‘active citizenship’ would have been implemented but for the historical images of rural communities as centres of charity, benevolence and self-help. Self-help was already seen as fostering “stable, self-reliant communities” (Bowler and Lewis, 1991: 163) and leading to activities which were “truly responsive to people’s needs” (Rogers, 1987: 359). Furthermore, self-help epitomised the notion of active citizenship because, like active citizenship, it is:

“an organised form of joint social action. In its most concentrated form it contains ideological demands for participation, democracy and development ‘from below’, rather than a response to traditional development appraisals and statutory programmes ‘from above’” (Williams, 1984 (a): 1).

Therefore, the introduction of active citizenship was widely accepted as a policy in which public participation:

“must be a key consideration to produce genuine development” (Grieco, 1990: 31).

The decision to formalise the process of active citizenship was central to the Conservative government’s views on the future of the countryside, as expressed in the ‘rural’ White Paper published in 1995.

“There is plenty of scope for more shared use of facilities, transport and buildings. Often this can only be achieved with the help of rural people themselves, and this active citizenship cannot be taken for granted – it needs to be worked at and encouraged” (DoE/MAFF, 1995: 13).

In other words there was a need to create not just an ideological context within which active citizenship was to be encouraged but also a set of frameworks and procedures which made it possible. The notion of self-help and voluntarism was developed later in the White Paper, building upon this image of self reliant rural communities.

“Self help and independence are traditional strengths of rural communities. People in the countryside have always needed to take responsibility for looking after themselves and each other. They do not expect the government to solve all their problems for them...In any case local decision making is likely to be more responsive to local circumstances than uniform plans” (DoE/MAFF, 1995: 16).

The White Paper goes on to suggest mechanisms by which local people can begin to take responsibility for decision making and taking in their communities. These include informed activities such as voluntary action to support environmental improvements or to offer lifts to car-less residents, or more formal structures such as Local Exchange Trading Systems (LETS) which bring people together to exchange their skills or services using a local ‘currency’ which enables them to sell and write ‘cheques’ when they make a purchase (Williams, 1996). More pertinent to this study is the emphasis the White Paper gives to the village appraisal. On page 17 it states that the village appraisal is one mechanism which “can help communities to define their priorities, identify what they can do to meet them and target limited resources effectively”, whilst on the following page it emphasises the role which the local RCC can play, whether co-ordinating, supporting or (part) financing village

appraisal, and cites for example (Tetbury in Gloucestershire) which offered “an opportunity to canvass the opinion of local residents on a range of issues to provide a basis for future local decisions” (DoE/MAFF, 1995: 18).

However, further comments in the White Paper suggested that the government’s approach to self-help displays evidence of elitism in that it would like to encourage a particular type of person to participate in self-help exercises, a person who is currently “participating in local institutions such as the parish council “ voluntary groups (for example the WI, the Village Hall committee and the WRVS), or in the church (DoE/MAFF, 1995: 142). It could be argued therefore, that the encouragement of active citizenship to allocate scarce resources in rural localities meets with the ideological viewpoint of the Conservative government in which such notions as freedom of choice, the removal of the shackles of state control and the engagement in partnerships between voluntary groups and the statutory agencies have been wedded together to empower those groups that are increasingly dominant in rural areas and which form the natural constituency for the Conservative party. In other words, far from creating a ‘new magistracy’ in the countryside, in which all residents play a full share in the processes of decision-making, what is being suggested is the emergence of small groups of ‘power brokers’ using the opportunities offered by this new local governance to shape their own particular agendas rather than those of the community at large.

2.5.1 Summary.

During this recent period of planning history the emphasis has been placed on delivering power and freedom within the decision making process to a number of key structures and agents in the planning system. It has been a period dominated by the ideologies of de-regulation and de-centralisation; although the sheer number of self-regulatory private sector organisations that have been introduced has resulted in the greatest post-war extension of formal regulation. In order to cut public spending and reduce service provision in rural areas (the most costly geographical area for which to provide) the notion of active citizenship was formulated to promote local governance and community development through self-help and public participation in initiatives like the village appraisal. However,

critics have argued that this policy for planning of rural areas is elitist and appeals only to those 'natural' participators within rural communities, thus excluding large numbers of people from the decision making process.

2.6 Conclusion.

This chapter has reviewed the provision for planning of rural communities since 1900. The review has found that over the period, extensive use has been made of the traditional qualities that are deemed to exist in rural communities: self-help, self-reliance and community participation. As such, the techniques associated with the village appraisal are not just contemporary mechanisms that aid rural community development.

The foregoing review has illustrated that self-help emerged as a result of the inadequate planning methods implemented by statutory authorities in rural communities. Prior to 1947, a general absence of statutory planning, combined with the pressures from the urbanisation of the countryside, led to rural communities relying on forms of proto-government through the creation of voluntary sector organisations to develop policies with a specific rural focus. The formation of national and local voluntary organisations, most notably the RCCs and the WI, was in response to the needs of the rural population and to stem the outward movement of people from the countryside. The voluntary organisations encouraged self-help initiatives to enable people to 'help themselves' and foster a sense of pride within rural communities. The period from 1947 to 1979 was one of regulation; a period, which saw a shift away from the reliance on voluntary organisations for social, economic and welfare aid to the introduction of a centralised system of government. Although land use controls were implemented through the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act to ensure the long-term productivity of the agricultural land, the social and welfare requirements of rural people were consistently neglected. The publication of the village plan in Kent by Stewart (1948) illustrated the importance of involving local people in the decision making process, the role of public participation in the planning process was largely ignored by the planning representatives until 1969 when the Skeffington Report was commissioned. Even so, it was not until 1979 and the return of the Conservative government under Mrs Thatcher that the full potential of public participation was

developed. Following reforms to reduce public spending, the statutory planning mechanisms for rural areas were weakened and were paralleled by a rise in the range of alternative approaches as the most appropriate mechanisms by which the actual needs of rural people and communities could be met. The de-regulation of rural planning, which was only possible because the framework of the voluntary sector was already in place, and the introduction of government appointed quangos to work in partnership with the voluntary organisations meant that once again rural communities were reliant on self-help initiatives and community participation. As one response to the introduction of competitive resource allocation, the contemporary village appraisal was encouraged as one mechanism that exploited what was seen as the benevolent nature of rural society.

In order to add some depth of understanding to the village appraisal, the following chapter will consider the concept of community participation, which is fundamental in the delivery of both active citizenship and local governance. An appreciation and understanding of the theoretical and practical aspects of community participation will create a conceptual framework for the detailed analysis of three village appraisals in Northamptonshire.

Chapter three

Community participation: theory and practice

3.1 Introduction

Participation can be defined simply, as 'having a share in'. In this thesis, participation is looked at specifically in terms of local people having a share in how decisions are made regarding the allocation and provision of services, facilities and amenities to particular localities. Indeed, consequent upon the policies of deregulation introduced under the Conservative government through the 1980s, the planning system has become more open to the wider participation of local people, with the village appraisal being one way in which local initiatives, self-help and partnerships (all of which are central to the notion of governance) can engage local people and organisations in decisions about resource allocation. Furthermore, the importance of participation as a key process in the present planning system is emphasised by its connections to the concept of 'active citizenship', the emphasis being placed on the development of partnerships between key actors in order to promote empowerment and community development from the 'bottom-up'. It is this shift in policy that provides a context to this chapter, since 'having a share' begs a number of important questions about the form and function of participation which may result from the relationships that exist between the key actors in the new planning process. These relationships include those between the statutory authorities (including the elected planning representatives of the county, district and parish councils and the professional planners); the private sector agencies; the voluntary organisations; the village appraisal steering group; and individuals within participating communities.

In order to explore these relationships, this chapter will consider three theoretical perspectives, the 'contemporary representative democracy' perspective, the 'participatory democracy' perspective and the generation of 'bias', to demonstrate their relevance to an understanding of the contemporary 'democratised' planning process. The relationships formed between the general public and statutory bodies and their significance to community participation in the decision making process have been explored by a number of authors including Arnstein (1969), Pateman (1970), and Hain (1976) and these are critically

evaluated in the next section of the chapter. This is followed by the fourth section of the chapter will development of a typology of public participation paying particular attention to some of the procedures reported upon in studies of rural community development and village appraisal activity in rural England. This produces an interesting distinction between different types of participation that can occur in the process of delivering local governance at the 'grass roots' level. It also raises further issues about the mechanisms employed to facilitate active citizenship and the implications of these mechanisms in influencing who participates and who does not. These two themes form the final part of this chapter. Initially however, the chapter will explain the concept of public participation as it is described through the literature, together with its links with active citizenship and the village appraisal.

3.2 An explanation of participation.

'Community', 'citizen' or 'public' participation are terms used interchangeably to describe a process that remains a contested activity both in theory and practice. It is generally acknowledged that participation was introduced to the statutory planning process through the specially commissioned Skeffington Report (HMSO, 1969). It is commonly assumed that participation was established as a statutory mechanism to alleviate many of the social, economic and political problems that were facing the government of the day (Long, 1976). More recently, participation has become a tool used to promote active citizenship, to deliver local governance and to encourage rural community development in the perceived absence of 'satisfactory' statutory planning mechanisms. Therefore over time the values, objectives and methods associated with the application of participation have been used to satisfy a number of different purposes (Miller and Ahmad, 1995). Although the rationale for participation has changed over the last 30 years participation can be conceived as being a continuum; with manipulation usually from the top down at one end and empowerment from the bottom up at the other end (Arnstein, 1969; Abbott, 1995).

Although participation within the planning system is seen as commencing with the Skeffington Report (Long, 1976) it has been argued that little thought was given by the government to its particular objectives. Indeed, it quickly became a controversial slogan

within the planning system and a bone of political contention which had undergone “very little analysis” (Arnstein, 1969: 216). Ironically, Arnstein suggested that:

“the idea of citizen participation is a little like eating spinach: no one is against it in principle because it is good for you” (ibid.).

Fagence on the other hand argued that participation could be a useful mechanism for development planning if only it was “satisfactorily representative” and “involved every person in the community” (Fagence, 1977: 273). According to Arnstein (1969) and Pateman (1970) however, the opportunities presented to each individual to participate in the decision making process were unequal and participation was found to be biased towards the elite in society (see section 3.4 for a more critical discussion).

This definition of participation can also be seen through the work of O’Riordan (1977). His evidence suggested that participation should be considered as:

“a slippery concept, easy neither to define nor to execute” (1977: 159).

Such an argument was founded primarily on evidence that illustrated the ways in which the ‘elite’ planners were capable of manipulating the participation process either to co-ordinate planning policy or to persuade the public that they were advising the decision making process, when in reality the important decisions had been made prior to their participation. As O’Riordan stated, participation:

“conjures up socially desirable connotations which can all too easily be countermanded in practice” (1977: 159).

Similarly, Pacione (1988: 229) accused the planners of only “pay[ing] lip service to the ideal” of grass roots planning rather than incorporating it into the planning process. Therefore, and to use the words of Styles, participation became a much-used term within the sphere of planning:

“that described a vague and undifferentiated good” (1971: 163).

More recently, it would seem that attitudes have changed towards participation. There is less scepticism towards participation. Of course, this is not to say that a consensus has

been reached, rather, it is widely accepted that participation can mean a variety of different things to different individuals. As Smith summarises:

“it can mean anything, from consultation of a few select power holders, to citizen empowerment through developing responsibilities and decision making options to local citizens” (1991: 112).

Likewise, Checkoway (1995) has argued that participation can be of equal benefit to the two key groups of actors in the process: the agencies (which include the planning authorities, public and private institutions) and the individual citizen.

“Participation can promise benefits for agencies and citizens. For agencies it [participation] can collect and provide information, identify attitudes and opinions, generate new ideas... involve traditional non-participants...and develop community organisation. For citizens... it can offer opportunities to gain representation, exercise political rights and influence policy decision” (Checkoway, 1995: 9).

Additionally, public participation has become a high profile tool to deliver local governance and community development in rural areas since the introduction of the ‘active citizen’ strategy (1988) under Margaret Thatcher’s Conservative government, which intended to:

“liberate individuals’ efforts and initiatives, in contrast to the stifling oppression they would endure under Labour” (Kearns, 1992: 23).

Consequently, Craig and Mayo consider that participation has become “the central issue of our time...the best route to unleash people’s entrepreneurial spirit” (1995: 1) and when “done with skill and commitment [it] can create change (Checkoway, 1995: 9). Moreover, as Barber argues “participation fosters more participation” and so it can only be a ‘good thing’ (1984: 272). Indeed, the Community Development Foundation, a registered charity active in community development research across the United Kingdom, is full of praise for the role played by community participation as a tool to promote rural community development and:

“improve the regeneration of communities...improve the effectiveness of local partnerships between public and private agencies and community organisations, and increase the sensitivity of public authorities to local needs and aspirations” (1989: 2 as quoted in Miller and Ahmad, 1995).

Similarly the Community Workers' Co-operative, a charity committed to pursuing community development in Ireland believed that participation can help:

“challenge existing power relations...to seek the restructuring of ownership and control of wealth and other resources on an equitable basis...to empower the working class and marginalised groups” (1990: 332 as quoted in Miller and Ahmad, 1995).

However, whilst in theory attitudes towards participation appear to have changed over time, it is unclear whether the suspicions about unequal participation expressed by Arnstein (1969), Pateman (1970) and O’Riordan (1977) have been alleviated in practice. More recently authors such as Abbott (1995), Alcock and Christensen (1995) and Checkoway (1995), have switched from examining the actual effects of participation on individuals in the locality and have preferred to discuss the pursuit of participation by agencies (i.e. the planning authorities and institutions). According to Checkoway, “the record of participation (meaning the opportunities provided) appears uneven” (1995: 9). It is because of this that chapter 6 of this thesis will consider the nature and processes of participation in rural planning, specifically in the village appraisal, to determine if such positive attitudes towards participation as those expressed above, are warranted. In the light of the emphasis placed upon community participation as a planning tool in the recently published rural White Paper (DoE/MAFF, 1995), it is necessary to investigate whether there is a bias towards the participation of the elite in rural society or if the benefits of participation are equal for all ‘actors’ in the process.

Prior to a discussion surrounding the theoretical perspectives of participation, there is one further point of interest that adds to the explanation of participation. Work undertaken by Fagence (1977) included a framework of participation, based on the techniques that were applied to encourage participation in the planning process and the consequences of using these techniques for the role played by individuals and communities in the decision making process. The framework of participation that Fagence (1977) used has been classified according to:

1. the number of people likely to be involved;
2. the degree of planning awareness required;

3. the capability of the planning system to accommodate participation;
4. the attitude of the participant group (negative or positive) towards planning.

Table 3.1 illustrates the threefold participation framework and the techniques that were identified as enabling public participation. Of particular interest to this thesis are the similarities between the techniques classified by Fagence as having a 'low-level' impact on the decision making process (1) and those frequently associated with the village appraisal.

Table 3.1 A framework of participation methods.

Participation framework	Participation techniques
1. Methods that have a low-level impact on the decision making, for example public relations or information gathering exercises.	Public exhibitions; Public meetings; Information documentation; Questionnaire surveys.
2. Methods which are capable of sustaining a high level of impact on the decision making process, for example plan or policy generating exercises.	The Delphi method; Nominal Group method; The Charrette.
3. Methods which are of the 'self-help' variety.	Self-help manuals; Planning aids

(Adapted from Fagence, 1977).

The techniques described as having a low-level impact on the decision making process are typically exercises in 'public relations and publicity' (Fagence, 1977), developed to ensure that a flow of information exists between the planning agencies and individuals within the locality. Even though this framework was developed in the late 1970s when participation was only just being integrated into the planning system, it still has relevance to the planning process today. As chapters one and two have explained, the village appraisal is not only used as a tool to aid planning, but is also used to develop knowledge about a particular locality and make the planners aware of the needs and aspirations of the wider community. In so doing, it may adopt some of the techniques associated with the first stage of the classification (Table 3.1): public exhibitions, public meetings, information documents and the questionnaire survey.

To further explain, the use of the exhibition (first suggested in the Skeffington Report) allows planning proposals to be communicated simply and effectively between the agencies

and individuals. The use of visual aids is believed to be dynamic and imaginative (HMSO, 1969). A public meeting is the traditional method of communication between the planning authorities and the public in which an invitation is extended to all members of the public or a representative group to listen to the proposals being made about a locality. However, it is widely acknowledged that meetings of this type tend to be dominated by the vociferous and articulate elite who have less fear about expressing their views in public (Rogers, 1987; Cloke, 1990). Information documentation refers to the programme of publicity that is undertaken in order to disseminate information regarding planning matters. After the introduction of the Local Government (access to information) Act in 1985 planning authorities had to publish information about their functions and be open to assessment by the public (Cullingworth and Nadin, 1994). The documents used by the planners can take many forms including, leaflets, brochures, surveys, reports, statements, news sheets, or bulletins. Problems can arise with the nature of the language used to disseminate such information: for example, planners may use planning terminology which few people really understand (Bigham, 1973; Pacione, 1988 but see also section 3.6.3 for a detailed discussion of the barriers to participation). Finally, the questionnaire survey is designed to:

“elicit responses on precise matters material to the issues under investigation preparatory to the preparation of a plan or policy” (Fagence, 1977: 282).

A questionnaire can be created to obtain specific answers that help to reinforce a particular viewpoint and can therefore be open to the charge of being manipulative (Oppenheim, 1966; McNeill, 1990). Despite this, the ability of a questionnaire to collect large amounts of data on a wide scale to aid description, prediction and decision making means that it is a practical mechanism to implement (Judd *et al*, 1991). It is worth noting though, that England (1974) would consider the household questionnaire survey of less use than the public meeting, the exhibition and the provision of information because it does not always involve the whole community in the planning process and there is the opportunity to manipulate both the content of the questionnaire and the data gathered.

By virtue of the fact that Fagence has classified all of these techniques as having a low-level impact on the decision making process, there have to be major implications for the participative potential of the village appraisal which does, at certain stages, adopt all four

techniques and which particularly relies on the questionnaire survey. Thus far, much of the research about the outcomes of the village appraisal has monitored the types of outcomes that have been achieved, rather than investigating whether the village appraisal has enabled the citizens to have any real power in the decision making process. For these reasons an important element of this research is to investigate whether the advocacy of the village appraisal through the rural White Paper has extended the true effect of participation beyond this 'low impact' phase, or if Fagence is correct in his assumptions that in order to sustain a higher degree of impact on the decision making process, the techniques used should be replaced or extended by additional methods described below.

In order to sustain a higher degree of impact on the decision making process (2) and encourage forms of participation which allow an individual to have some control over locality based planning, Fagence (1977) suggested the application of three particular methods: the Delphi method, the Nominal Group method, and the Charrette method. The Delphi method is "one of the most well established means of collecting expert opinion and of gaining consensus between experts on various unknown factors under consideration...by allowing a group of individuals to reach consensus...without actually meeting face to face" (Green et al, 1990: 113-14). This method guarantees anonymity for the expert and ensures that the expressed opinion of the expert stems from the individual rather than a group of individuals that have succumbed to the desire to conform. The Delphi method is generally applied in the fields of planning, anthropology, social welfare, or service provision.

The Nominal Group method is similar to the brainstorming method whereby each participating individual will take the time to assess a particular event or issue in private, following which a discussion in a larger group can offer individuals a range of solutions to the problem. For example, 'Planning for Real', 'Parish Maps' and 'Village Design Statements' are methods that use Nominal Group techniques to introduce planning into rural communities. 'Planning for Real' is a form of participative planning which uses large scale coloured maps of a given locality to encourage groups of villagers to stimulate ideas and generate 'often intense debates' about issues that affect the locality and which need to be tackled through the local plan process (Bowles, 1995). 'Parish Maps', are a socially created vision of a locality used by a community to illustrate to local planning agencies the

importance and distinctiveness of the local environment (Clifford, 1996). 'Village Design Statements' are now being encouraged as a means of considering the 'look' of the built environment of the village and the ways in which the different elements fit together to produce distinctiveness to the locality. In this sense they extend the notion of 'Conservation Areas' to consider the whole village, regardless of its historical and architectural characteristics, and encourage a holistic and integrated view towards the future planning and look of the village as a built, visual entity. Each participator in such exercises is provided with an opportunity to offer opinions for the future planning of the community (in writing, or diagrammatically or verbally), following which the points are then made the focus for collective discussion (Common Ground, 1991; Countryside Commission, 1991, 1996; Countryside Commission *et al.*, no date; Crouch, 1996).

The Charrette method, a French term meaning a brief period of intense activity within a set time frame, is a technique for developing a community plan through partnership between the planning authorities and the community. It is a community-led initiative which, like the village appraisal, has a small steering group from the community to work co-operatively with professional experts, to develop and implement a plan with recommendations for the future of the locality. However, the Charrette method does not use large-scale community participation. Although the concept of participation is vital to the use of the Charrette method, in order to make a high impact on the decision making process it relies solely on the ideas that are generated from within the steering group. Fagence (1977) implies through this classification that if large numbers of people participate in the decision making process, the result will be low-impact in nature. Thus, in terms of the village appraisal, this would suggest that those which fail to account for the opinions of the wider community would have a greater effect on the decision making process.

The self-help methods described by Fagence were introduced because of the inadequate participation mechanisms in the planning system and in an attempt to encourage structured participation and community planning. Self-help manuals and planning aids contained step-by-step instructions on how to undertake the physical planning of the community and they included information on the type of plans to undertake, the selection of sites for development, the planning design process and the requirements for educating the

community group. As such, the use of these methods would ensure that communities followed the wishes of the planners whilst believing they had power and control over the planning of their community. It would have the effect of standardising the planning process.

3.3 Theoretical perspectives of participation.

This section will analyse critically the theoretical perspectives of 'contemporary representative democracy' and 'participatory democracy', which have particular relevance to the contemporary planning process. The concepts of elite leadership and power are considered in order to demonstrate how participation is affected by the constraints of structure. Furthermore, an examination of the 'generation of bias' in public participation, albeit in an urban context, will make the point that equality of participation in the planning system is not available to all people within society and that in order to participate, a selection of rules may need to be adopted. From this analysis, a framework for study will be developed.

3.3.1 Contemporary representative democracy.

Our understanding of a representative democracy or 'elitist' democracy has evolved over the last 50 years. It is appropriate to consider this perspective within this thesis because the current system of local government (county, district and parish council) which has a responsibility to deliver planning to local communities, is founded on the principle of a representative democracy (Stewart, 1996). In essence, the theory has been advanced through the work of Schumpeter (1943, 1979), Berelson (1952), and Dahl (1956, 1961), through elitist theorists such as Michels (1915) and Mosca (1939) and the more contemporary writers such as Pateman (1970) and Fagence (1977). Combined, their research has established the notion that levels of public participation by the ordinary citizen are very low and that a minority elected 'elite' dominates the majority of participation and leadership opportunities. This section will discuss the works of the key writers on the issue of a representative democracy in relation to the effects which it has upon the process of participation.

The theory of representative democracy originates with the work of Schumpeter (1943) and was outlined in his book *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*. Significantly, this represented a revision of the 'classical' theory of democracy dominant at the time and which Schumpeter considered unrealistic because of its expectation of full participation amongst ordinary citizens in matters associated with government. In contrast, Schumpeter characterised democracy as a mechanism by which the ordinary citizen was represented in government by those who were capable of obtaining power through a system of voting. In so doing, he considered democracy to be an:

“institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people’s vote” (Schumpeter, 1943: 269).

Whilst this definition distinguishes the democratic process from other political systems (for example, dictatorships), it illustrates that this particular democratic method is based upon the issues of representation, power and competition for leadership. Thus although Schumpeter implied that through the democratic process all people were free to compete in elections for the leadership positions, Dahl (1956) noted that the opportunity to become a leader in the democratic process was limited to those individuals who exhibit the attributes associated with power and leadership. As it is only the higher social classes that have the social training¹ in consensus required, such people (the minority elite) are enabled to become leaders. Dahl believed that conflict was a characteristic of the wider majority who consequently ‘resisted training’ in the rules of leadership and rejected the right to compete for the leadership positions within society.

However, as Dahl argued in his study of the representative democratic process the ordinary citizen, though not ‘eligible’ to compete for leadership, does in fact largely control the leaders within society. He stated that:

“democratic theory is concerned with the processes by which ordinary citizens exert a relatively high degree of control over leaders” (Dahl, 1956: 3).

¹ Pateman (1970: 9-10) describes effective social training as:

“training which would develop individual attitudes that support the democratic norms”.

This 'high degree' of control was achieved through the participation of individuals in the election process. The participation of the ordinary citizen guaranteed that leaders were competitive and remained responsive to the majority, in order to gain citizen votes. Dahl (1956) and (later) Sartori (1962) argued that it was this form of competition that ensured a truly representative democracy, though as Parry (1969) suggested, competition also makes leaders less accountable to the remainder of society. Indeed, as noted by Fagence:

"no process or power is available to prevent the elite from imposing its supremacy over the remainder of society" (1977: 38).

The existence of an elite within society, willing and able to fill the roles of leaders was used by the theorists to explain the occurrence of low levels of citizen participation in a representative democracy (except of course during the voting for leaders). As Pateman states in her study of the democratic process, citizen participation was found to have:

"no special or central role. All that is required is that enough citizens participate to keep the electoral machinery working satisfactorily" (Pateman, 1970: 5).

Furthermore, as Berelson (1952) suggested, low levels of participation and general apathy were a functional necessity for democracy in order to cushion the shock of disagreement, adjustment and change that naturally occurred in society. Michels (1915) and Mosca (1939) in their studies of public participation, argued that people were actually inept at participating fully because they were:

"politically incompetent, apathetic, inert, politically unambitious, psychologically needing guidance and direction" (as quoted in Fagence, 1977: 39).

Consequently, the causes of low levels of participation were believed to lie more with the individual and a lack of competence, rather than with the activities of an elite and the imposed mechanisms of a representative democracy. Even so, these 'elite' theorists have proposed that low levels of participation are somewhat favourable to a representative democracy. For instance, Berelson (1952) and Dahl (1956) concluded from the study of the political system that the apathy and disinterest of the majority population played a valuable role in society and that only a minority of citizens needed to participate in order to maintain

the stability of the system because the lower socio-economic groups (the majority) tended to produce authoritarian personalities who were not afforded the social training that generated a consensus view.

On the other hand, Sartori (1962) questioned the reasons for low levels of participation and demonstrated that people would only participate and take an active interest in issues for which a level of personal experience was felt. However, he was of the opinion that this task was not possible for the average citizen where politics was concerned and, contrary to the earlier beliefs of Michels (1915) and Mosca (1939), the apathy of the public was:

“nobody’s fault in particular and it is time we stopped seeking scapegoats”
(Sartori, 1962: 87-90).

Additional evidence from the studies of the political system by Mosca (1939) led to the suggestion that a more complex form of elite leadership existed within the representative democratic process. He argued that rather than introduce mechanisms to increase the levels of public participation for the ordinary citizen, encouragement should be given towards satisfying the members of a lower level elite that was found to occur.

“Below the highest stratum in the ruling class there is always...another that is more numerous and comprises all the capacities for leadership in the country. Without such a class any sort of social organisation would be impossible”
(Mosca, 1939: 404).

According to Mosca the existence of lower levels of elite groups provided an appropriate bridge between the powerful decision makers and the rest of society. Furthermore:

“from within it [the lower level of elites] come the...small number of persons who are capable of forming opinions of their own as to people and events of the day, and therefore exercise great influence on the many who are not capable of having opinions of their own” (ibid.: 410).

As Fagence quite aptly notes, the danger with this approach, as far as the planning process is concerned, is that this lower level elite becomes

“impregnated with the values and standards of the ruling elite in the prosecution of its duties” rather than forming an allegiance with the wider majority “and it is this which renders the planner liable to the charge of attempting to impose

alien values and standards upon those for whom he alleges he is working” (Fagence, 1977: 40).

Therefore, in a representative democracy, which as Stewart (1996) stated is the current system operated within local government, the planning system is open to elite tendencies. The two different levels of elite will not only affect the application of public participation, but will also determine who is given the opportunity to participate. If the planning system at the local level is dominated by such elites, whether it be the elected representatives on the parish council or the district or county planning committees, then the likelihood is that policy will reflect the views of such groups rather than the community as a whole (Hampton, 1977).

3.3.2 Participatory democracy.

The theory of participatory democracy in its original form is most closely associated with the ideas of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) and the English exponent of utilitarianism John Stuart Mill (1806 – 1873). Participatory democracy differs fundamentally from ‘contemporary representative democracy’ in that it is founded on the assumption that every individual can and should participate in the political decision making arena. This section will expand on the work of Rousseau and Mill and demonstrate the links between their writing and the more contemporary research of Pateman (1970), Hall (1973), Lumb (1978), Buchanan (1982 (a)) and Held (1993).

Rousseau is called the ‘theorist par excellence of participation’ because in his thesis *The Social Contract*, participation is considered as “very much more than a protective adjunct to a set of institutional arrangements” (Pateman, 1970: 22). It is considered to be the foundation of the democratic system. Rousseau regarded participation as being an inter-relationship between the workings of the political structures and the attitudes of the agents or individuals who interacted with them. In contrast to the theory of representative democracy, the individual was not required to have equality with the elites in the planning process in order to participate; rather Rousseau advocated a situation whereby citizens could assemble as political equals:

“no citizen shall be rich enough to buy another, and none so poor as to be forced to sell himself” (Rousseau, 1968 (translation): 96).

In this situation it is assumed that the individual citizen is powerless to achieve anything without the co-operation of others, or the majority. As Hall (1973) explains in his précis of Rousseau’s work, the only policy which is acceptable to all is one where any benefits and burdens are shared equally by all members of society.

Additionally, Rousseau did not favour the introduction of formal, organised groups because this provided an arena for the monopoly of power to emerge. Even so, he recognised that unorganised individuals would inevitably unite with a common cause in ‘tacit associations’ although it would be difficult for such associations to obtain support for a particular policy because of the conditions under which participation occurs: as powerless individuals, participants needed to benefit equally from their involvement and this would not happen if participation was organised within the confines of a group (Hall, 1973). As Held confirms, the participation of the citizen was:

“highly fragile, subject particularly to corruption if dependent solely upon the political involvement of any one major grouping” (1993: 17).

If in fact it was impossible to avoid these organisations, it was suggested that they should “be as numerous and as equal in political power as possible” (Lumb, 1978: 20) so that “none could gain at the expense of the rest” (Pateman, 1970: 24).

Rousseau’s theory was also based on a more profound understanding of participation. Not only did participation mean that the citizen would have direct involvement in the regulation of those institutions which make decisions affecting their daily lives, but that participation would also affect the human personality. Rousseau considered the central function of participation to be educative, whereby the participatory process developed the individual as an active citizen concerned with public duty and civic virtue (Hall, 1973; Held, 1993). This is summarised by Pateman:

“Rousseau’s ideal system is designed to develop responsible, individual, social and political action through the effect of the participatory process” (1970: 24 -

25).

Furthermore, once the participatory process is established, the system becomes self-sustaining because:

“the very qualities that are required of individual citizens if the system is to work successfully, are those that the process of participation itself develops and fosters; the more the individual participates, the more able he is to do so” (ibid.: 25).

The educative value placed on the participation process is immeasurable because the citizen becomes actively aware of the wider, national picture through participation and will thus recognise further opportunities to participate.

John Stuart Mill also advocated the educative aspects of participation for the individual in the decision making process. He believed that an important function of the ‘popular participatory institutions’ (for example, working men’s clubs and labour associations) was to assist the development of the politically conscious individual. In a critique of Mill’s work on Representative Government, Thompson argues that Mill invoked the principle of active citizenry, in that:

“the participation of each citizen be as great as possible to promote both the protective and the educative goals of government... to protect the interests of each citizen and improve the political intelligence of all citizens” (1976: 9).

Similarly, Mill (1963) also believed that there was a self-sustaining dimension to participation. However, unlike Rousseau, Mill argued that participation was of no use at a national level if an individual had not been prepared for the process at the local level, because it is at the local level that they learn about governance. Fostering of the qualities required for participation had to be achieved at the local level if the citizen was to be able to participate effectively in the “government of the great society” (1963: 106). Thus, the local level was believed by Mill (1910) to be where the real benefits of participation occurred and where the individual learnt democracy.

Contrary to the argument by Rousseau, Mill set a high value on the importance of the well-educated elite person. In a similar manner to the theorists of representative democracy Mill

believed that only the 'wisest and best' people should be elected to office at all political levels. Moreover, he thought that the ideal system was one where plural voting was heightened by educational attainment where:

"everyone ought to have a voice, but that everyone should have an equal voice is a totally different proposition" (Mill, 1910: 283).

This argument illustrates that Mill's foremost concern was for the success of the democratic society: only as an adjunct should society incorporate the process of universal participation. The products which resulted from participation (for example, the election of the 'wisest and best people' to democratic office) were his primary consideration, despite this type of participation being considered as an elite activity in which the objective was to complete a task successfully and to the highest possible standard.

This duality of opinion by Mill, where on the one hand he believes in the educative value of participation as illustrated by Rousseau but on the other that participation should be biased (in his case towards the educationally elite) is a problem echoed in current debates about the planning system. The planning system as Buchanan argues is "inherently political" in its nature (1982 (a): 5). It reflects the political system in so far as the decision making councillors are the elected elite that appoint technicians or planning professionals to translate decisions into policy. Predominately, these elected elite are "drawn exclusively from a narrow social stratum" (Burton and Duncan, 1996: 6). As such, Buchanan explains:

"that planning policies reflect patterns of power and influence in society...[and that whilst] the democratic ideal of local government is responsive and responsible to the 'public interest'...in reality, such an ideal division of responsibility and of a publicly responsive and responsible local government has been found wanting" (1982 (a): 8).

Thus, in the delivery of active citizenship and local governance through the planning process, two approaches to public participation could be taken: the planners (who may be either the elected representatives or the professional planners), may encourage public participation on the one hand but limit its results on the other if they do not conform to their preconceived notions of democracy and participation. It is exactly this duality of approach to public participation that is examined in the empirical chapters 6,7 and 8. Furthermore, as

chapter 7 will illustrate, villages within the same district in Northamptonshire can undertake the same participation process (i.e. the village appraisal) but the outcomes differ widely depending on the attitudes of the agencies that are responsible for implementing planning requirements.

3.3.3 The generation of bias in public participation.

The generation of bias in public participation is the third theoretical concept relevant to participation. Critics might argue that the concepts associated with the generation of bias are too urban based and somewhat dated for today, nevertheless the work by Mills (1959), Dahl (1961), Bachrach and Baratz (1970), Lukes (1974), and Saunders (1979) is still relevant for the discussion within this thesis of public participation in the planning process. Rather than examine the relationships between the agencies and individuals, theorists in the United States have largely debated the issues surrounding the groups that have effective power through participation. Five different perspectives can be identified, based on urban case studies, which illustrate the power that particular groups have gained through the process of participation. Of interest to the argument developed within this research is the evidence that groups of non-participating individuals exist and bias is frequently extended within the participation process towards those sections of the community that are allied to the elite in society.

The elitist perspective has previously been described through sections 3.3.1 and 3.3.2. 'Elitist' theorists such as Michels (1915) and Mosca (1939) have argued that the elite in society control the political and democratic process and its institutions because of the power gained through their leadership or 'social training'. Additionally, research by Hunter (1953) in his study of Atlanta, Georgia and by Mills (1959) has pointed to the influential position that is given to the local elite businessmen within the local government structure. However, as both Hunter and Mills noted, the exercise of power by these 'new' elites in the process is not accountable to the majority population in a democratic sense in the same way that the elected elite are (Hindess, 1996). Thus, such power may in fact be short-lived because these groups are not accountable to the wider community.

The pluralist perspective put forward by Dahl (1961) was based on the idea that power was not as concentrated as the elitist theorists believed, rather it was distributed between a number of different interest groups. In his study of the political system in New Haven, in Connecticut Dahl found that it was a:

“republic of unequal citizens...but for all that it is a republic” (1961: 86).

The inference here is that the United States was still a place where the people rule, rather than a concentration of unified elites. However, his observations of participants in the political system did indicate that the middle class elite and those people with business interests in the political forum still dominated the participation/democratic process. This rather undermines his own argument because although they may be different individuals, they are all pursuing the same goals.

The neo-elitist perspective was introduced to counter Dahl's pluralist position. Bachrach and Baratz (1962) argued that the pluralist picture of American politics was too restrictive indicating instead that power through participation did not lie with the individuals but with the ability of certain groups (specifically, the elite and the business community) to exclude a wide range of issues from public debate; issues that would be of concern to the majority population. Indeed, Bachrach and Baratz argued that the pluralist view of participation only concentrated on the discussion of one face of power - the public face - whilst the second or private face of power covertly excluded the interests of particular groups of people from the decision making arena. Thus, they believed there was a 'mobilisation of bias' which is the culmination of a:

“set of predominant values, beliefs, rituals and institutional procedures ('rules of the game'²) that operate systematically and consistently to the benefit of certain persons and groups at the expense of others. Those who benefit are placed in a preferred position to defend and promote their vested interests” (Bachrach and Baratz, 1970: 43-44).

To further understand the process of participation and the obstacles that exist to exclude certain sections of a given community from participating, Bachrach and Baratz suggested

that the non-participants or non-decision makers needed to be investigated. Such an approach is evident in the work of Hayes (1972). He found through his research in Oakland, in California, that urban renewal was rapidly promoted by those elite individuals who had business interests in the redevelopment whilst the issues that concerned the displacement of the black population who lived in the affected areas were not raised on the political agenda.

The fourth perspective is radical in its approach. Led by Lukes (1974) and his research of the power debates of the 1960s and 1970s it is to some extent a critical evaluation of the previous three perspectives. Lukes recognised that, in the exercise of power, the victims of exclusion (as described by Bachrach and Baratz (1970)) “may not even be conscious of their interests” let alone realise that they were at risk from the participating elites (1974: 25). Consequently, and according to Hindess in his contemporary critique of the power debate, there would be no attempt made by such excluded individuals to defend their interests and those in power would be:

“able to influence the thoughts and desires of its victims without their being aware of its effects” (Hindess, 1996: 35).

The final perspective is a typology developed by Saunders (1979) to consider the power gained through participation in terms of a number of relationships that existed between pressure groups and the political elite during periods of public participation in an urban community (see Figure 3.1). Within this thesis, the typology can be usefully adapted to introduce the dynamic relationships that exist between the agencies and communities in the planning process.

The typology has two axes. The first axis refers to the congruence of interests and measures the extent to which the demands of the community group match the expectations of the decision making elite in the planning process. The second axis refers to the strategies (the political strategies in the case of Saunders’ examples) that are adopted in

² The ‘rules of the game’ are the rules of access: they allow some groups to be involved and be influential in the decision making process whilst denying others a part.

order to meet such demands. A brief description of the six-fold division in the typology follows.

Figure 3.1 A typology of the relationships between the planning elite and rural communities.

Political Strategy	Congruence of Interest	
	High	Low
Conciliatory	Political Partnership	Competing Agreement
Coercive	Tactical Protest	Non-competing Contradiction
Inactive	Political Communion	Political Exclusion

Political partnership occurs when the community group has a high congruence of interests with the planning elite and to achieve their demands adopt a conciliatory position to work in partnership with the planning structures. Competing agreement occurs when the congruence of interests is low and there is competition between the two groups. As such, the community group has limited contact with the planning elite during the participation process, but in order to satisfy their demands, whether it is extra resources for the locality, 'respectable' communities would use a conciliatory approach to follow the correct procedures. Tactical protest is a mechanism where the community groups use coercive techniques to emphasise the strength of feelings about an issue and deliver direct action to the agreement of the planners with whom they share similar interests. The non-competing contradiction, however, is the situation in which the community group uses direct action but its goals are not shared with the planners. Conflict and hostility between the two groups are frequently encountered in this situation. The final two sections of the typology involve the groups within society who do not need to or cannot express their demands because the system presents barriers for their participation. Political communion describes the situation whereby the community group has the same interests as the planners and consequently do not need to actively participate because their interests are being served. Political exclusion, as the final division, occurs when people are not represented at all in the participation process. This is the concept of non-decision making (as termed by

Bachrach and Baratz, 1970) and was believed by Saunders to affect the very poor and the very weak in society whose interests are neglected during the process of participation in favour of those individuals who have similar interests to the planning elite.

The issues raised through these five perspectives have consequences for the participation of the citizen in the planning process. Using an analogy of a soapbox, Saunders summarises the problems of power and participation quite aptly. He suggests that:

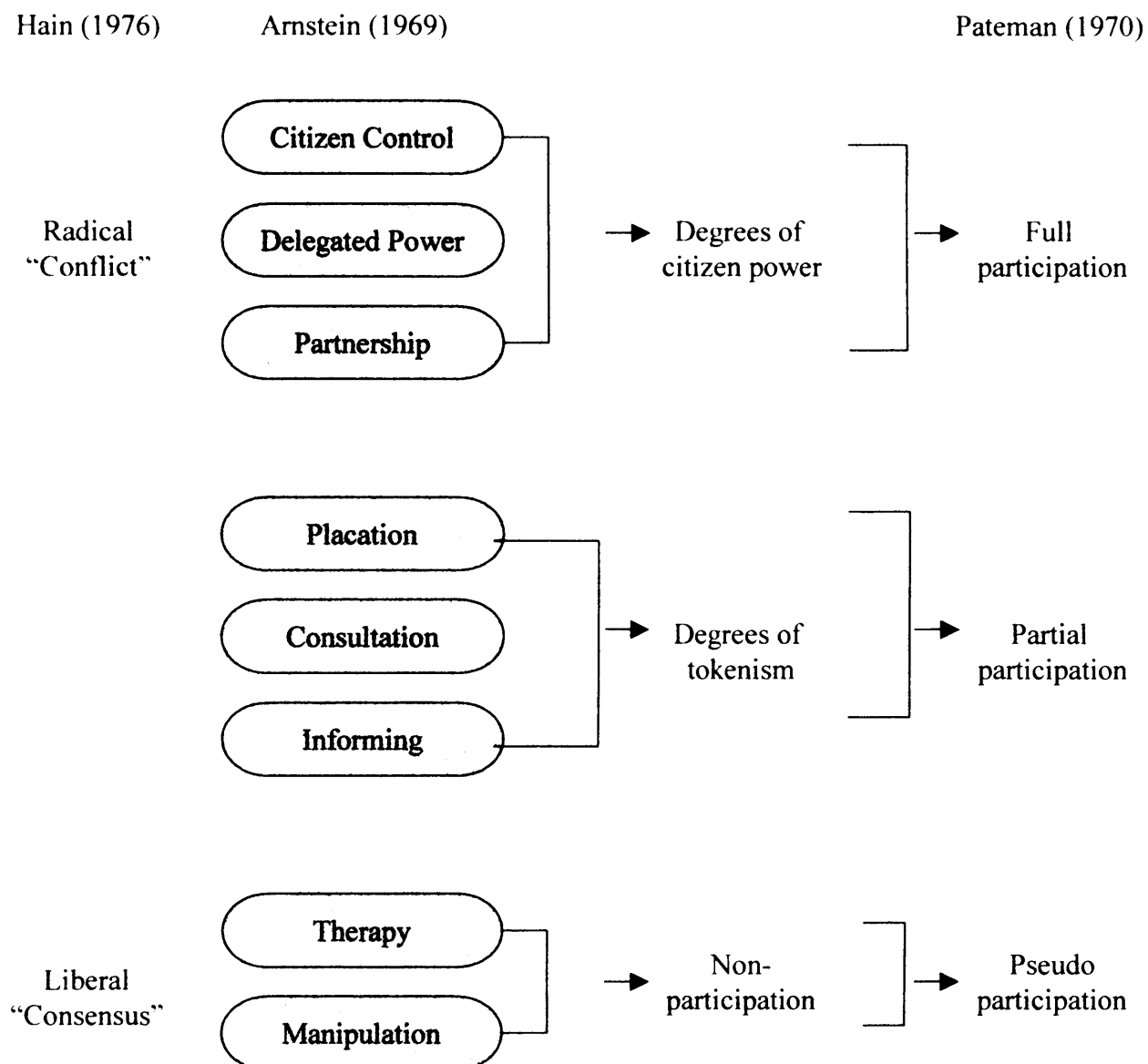
“an upturned soap-box vividly symbolises our right to free speech, but provides no guarantee of any right to be heard. To secure a hearing we may be obliged to follow as closely as possible the shifting and ambiguous rules of access, yet these rules are themselves loaded. For those who gain - whose voices are heard and whose interests are routinely taken into account - the liberal pluralist model of urban politics advanced by Dahl is clearly appropriate. But for those who lose, those who cannot make their demands heard and whose interests are routinely ignored or overruled, the right to a soap-box represents little more than the right to whistle in the wind” (1979: 64-65).

These ideas of participation are further examined through the following section. The discussion of the models of participation demonstrates that those in authority have the power to limit the participation of the public.

3.4 Models of participation.

So far this chapter has indicated that a number of influential views can affect the levels of public participation that are achieved by the individual or community in the decision making process. To further this argument, three models will be discussed in this section which have been devised to express the type of power and levels of participation that can be achieved by individuals participating in the planning process (see Figure 3.2). Although the models by Arnstein (1969), Pateman (1970), and Hain (1976) were developed prior to the introduction of the contemporary notions - active citizenship and local governance - the discussion through this chapter and the subsequent empirical chapters will demonstrate that the models are still relevant to the debate.

Figure 3.2 Models of participation



The earliest of the three models, by Arnstein, is a detailed analysis of participation. It represents the degrees of public participation in the decision making process as eight rungs on a ladder: each rung corresponds “to the extent of citizens’ power in determining the end product” (1969: 217). The ladder rungs can be grouped into three categories of participation: non-participation; degrees of tokenism; and degrees of citizen power.

The bottom rungs of the ladder, manipulation (1) and therapy (2) are described as non-participation, whereby the planners control the agenda yet persuade the public that they have contributed to the planning process. Arnstein has suggested that these two levels of participation are a replacement for genuine participation and are just an exercise in which planners can educate and ‘cure’ citizens. Rungs (3) and (4), informing and consultation, enable the power holders (i.e. the planners) to offer a degree of tokenism to the participating citizens. Citizens may hear and be heard but:

“under these conditions they [the citizens] lack the power to ensure that their views are heeded by the powerful” (ibid.: 217).

Rung (5) placation is, according to Arnstein, just a higher level of tokenism because the powerless citizens though in a position to advise still have no authority to decide. Hence, it is a mechanism for the power holders to appease the public. Further up the ladder, degrees of citizen power become evident in the decision making arena. The public can enter a partnership (6) with the planners in which the decision making is perceived to be an equal venture, be given delegated powers (7) to act on behalf of the planners, or obtain full control (8) over the decisions which may affect a given locality.

The second model is that devised by Pateman. Based on her research of the industrial workplace, the model distinguishes between three levels of public participation that can be achieved by an individual: pseudo, partial and full. ‘Pseudo’ participation occurs when the public is persuaded to accept a decision that has already been made. In a mechanism akin to manipulation on Arnstein’s ladder, the public forego the opportunity to participate whilst believing that their opinion was important to the decision. ‘Partial’ participation enables the public to participate actively in the decision making process through attempts to influence the power holders. However, the final decision is still taken by those in power.

As Pateman explained, it is a:

“process in which two or more parties influence each other in the making of decisions but the final power to decide rests with one party only” (1970: 70).

Finally, in the situation that allows for ‘full’ participation, the power that is held in the decision making process by the public and those in authority is equal. The process occurs whereby:

“each individual member of a decision making body has equal power to determine the outcome of the decisions” (ibid.: 71).

The third model is that presented by Hain (1976). His theory of participation is based on the radical and liberal approach to participation that he argued existed within urban areas of Britain in the 1960s. Hain’s Marxist interpretation of community participation indicated that radicals were closely associated with methods of active conflict, whereby they challenged the powerful decision makers in society to transfer the ownership of the means of production to the (working class) population. Through the implementation of public participation, radicals expected the complete redistribution of power from the state to the local people in their home localities. Hain (a radical left winger) envisaged radicals playing a key role in the decision making process. Their challenge to the existing structures of authority through the process of participation and through the emergence of a new, alternative society of “counter-institutions” and “parallel structures” was predicted to replace the present system of planning (1980: 20). Thus, Hain provided the radicals with the level of citizen control within his model of participation (as shown in Figure 3.2). On the other hand, the liberal approach to community action encouraged the community or individual to work alongside the agencies in a ‘consensus’ partnership (in a similar manner to the proposals implemented under Margaret Thatcher (a radical right winger) that encouraged partnerships between the public and private sectors, voluntary organisations and communities). According to Hain, however this would only result in the manipulation of the liberal individuals by those in authority. As such any participation that was undertaken would be limited to the lower levels of the decision making process.

In principle Hain’s approach to community participation was advocated to eradicate the

bureaucratic obstacles which hindered the participation of individuals in the planning process from the 'bottom-up', to distribute more information to the community to enable participation to occur on a wider basis within the decision making process and to increase the openness within government. However, the process of community action is considered either too radical in its conflict approach, or too lame as a consensual method. Furthermore, authorities dismiss conflict style action as irresponsible whilst once the consensus approach is well established within the community it often closely reflects a method of community involvement (see section 3.5) rather than direct action. Therefore, Hain's model of community participation is somewhat limited, as it is unlikely that the authorities would provide a conflict group with the resources that they required for the redistribution of power to occur unless the authorities themselves had a political commitment to community action (Limb, 1986). It is more likely that liberals, through initiating partnerships, would gain more citizen control and increase their participation to the higher levels of the decision making process.

Combined, these models of participation have three limitations. The first is that whilst they illustrate the control which those in authority have over public participation, there is no acknowledgement that participation can be encouraged for a variety of reasons and multiple methods of participation are employed by a single authority in a given locality. For example, as a measure of delegated power the planning authority may sponsor a community bus scheme or encourage the management of a community centre, which are normally controlled from within the community, whereas citizen control can be encouraged through the introduction of community development initiatives by external authorities such as the (former) Rural Development Commission. In addition, community action as supported by Hain may be initiated from within the community by radical individuals, or the voluntary sector can encourage rural development through citizen control and self-help.

The second limitation concerns the fact that those individuals who are participating may be satisfied with low levels of participation. For example, Wengert (1976) believed that higher levels of participation do not imply a higher level of individual satisfaction, nor does it mean that an increased level of democratic decision making has been achieved or that the individual is less alienated because of participation. There is no allowance within the three

models for an individual or community group to be satisfied if one specific task has been completed which resulted in the delivery of local governance and the education of the individual or the community group to becoming active citizens. Citizen control has to be strived for at all costs.

The third limitation concerns the elite in society. No account is taken of the impact which elitism has on the attitudes towards the concept of participation. People with different levels of power within a given planning authority may have a different perception of the application of community participation (as explained through representative and participatory democracy). As Walmsley states:

“the perception of those in authority to their role will determine the care, enthusiasm and encouragement with which information is provided and provision for participation is made” (1980: 27).

Therefore, different planning authorities may apply specific planning initiatives to reflect their beliefs in participation. It is the impact that this has upon participation that will be considered in the following section. A framework for participation will illustrate the origins of the different techniques of participation and the effects that the multiple actors in the planning process can have.

3.5 A framework of participation in the planning process.

In the framework in Figure 3.3³, public participation is divided into three different types. Community development can be delivered from either the ‘top-down’ or the ‘bottom-up’ as a result of initiative from either the planning agencies or individuals in the locality (Limb, 1986; Francis and Henderson, 1992). Community action is determined purely by individuals within the locality and is consequently a ‘bottom-up’ driven process. Community involvement is where the motivation to undertake the planning initiative is supplied only from the ‘top-down’ by the public or private sector agencies and institutions and the voluntary sector (Limb, 1986; Rogers, 1987; Bowler and Lewis, 1991).

³Please note, that the typology is not based on the type of participation which is undertaken through a pressure group scenario for example, an animal rights group or environmental group, rather it reflects the thematic participation of an individual in the planning process.

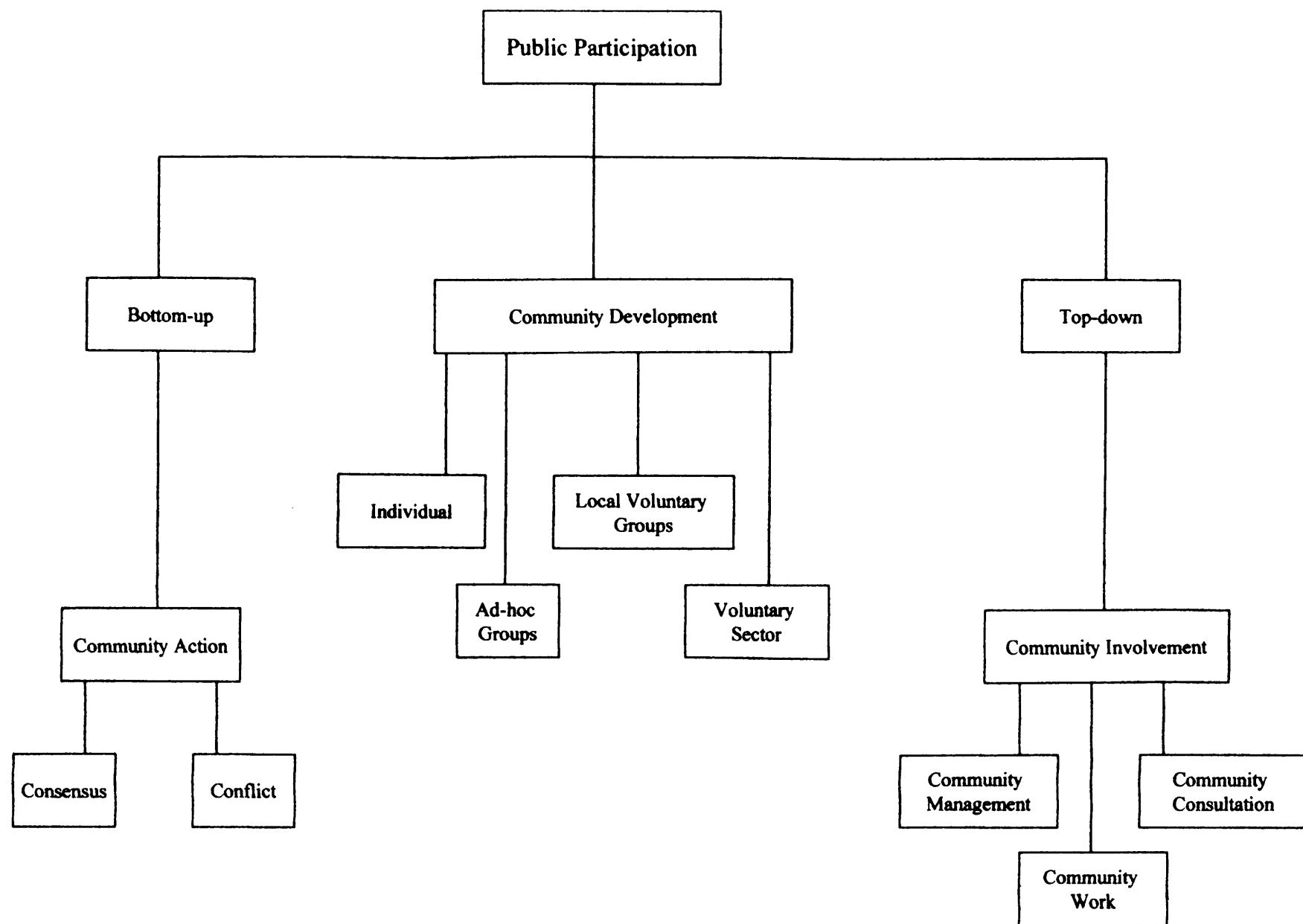


Figure 3.3 A framework for participation

(Source: adapted from Hain (1976), Leat (1981), Bovaird et al (1995), Taylor (1995))

The brief reviews that follow examine the origins of the three types of participation as described in the framework, explaining their relevance to this study of participation whilst adding to the debate about the effectiveness of public participation as a key mechanism to implement rural planning initiatives and deliver local governance in the deregulated planning process.

3.5.1 Community development.

If community development is defined very simply as ‘a community working together for its mutual benefit’, it is of most concern within this framework because it is one of the primary objectives of the local governance and active citizenship strategies promoted by the Conservative government (Alcock and Christensen, 1995; Checkoway, 1995; Miller and Ahmad, 1995). Additionally community development is one of the key objectives of the village appraisal, although as the discussion in section 4.4 will demonstrate, the village appraisal can actually result in different types of participation.

Community development became a dominant means of tackling locality based problems during the late 1960s and 1970s through the introduction of the Home Office sponsored, Community Development Projects (Hain, 1976; Limb, 1986; Francis and Henderson, 1992; Butcher *et al*, 1993). According to Alcock and Christensen, community development was implemented initially from the ‘top-down’ because it was an ideal “means of identifying and responding to the failings of state welfare” (1995: 110): a means through which the government structures could challenge the social, economic and structural problems in the locality. The support for community development today stems from the numerous changes to rural planning policy that have occurred since the 1980s when Margaret Thatcher’s government argued that the multiplicity of problems faced by rural communities were best solved from within the locality (Abbott, 1995). The encouragement of voluntarism (Alcock and Christensen, 1995), the building of partnerships between the key actors in the planning process and the reliance on public participation (DoE/MAFF, 1995) created a situation in which community development was considered to be the most appropriate “vehicle through which change [could be] enacted at the local level” and local governance could be delivered from the ‘bottom-up’ (Abbott, 1995: 161).

Two main characteristics of community development have been identified by Butcher et al (1993: 24). The first is that by using community development the community can “define its own needs and make provision for them”. Second, community development involves:

“fostering creative and co-operative networks of people and groups in communities” (ibid.: 24).

However, the line between the delivery of ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom-up’ community development is very fine. Indeed, key actors can express their agenda for community development using either a ‘top-down’ or ‘bottom-up’ approach depending on their perspective of participation. The ensuing ‘battle’ to implement a given agenda will determine the precise nature of the participation, whilst demonstrating the role of powerful actors in the planning process. The dual role of community development is summarised by Miller and Ahmad who argue that community development can be:

“seen as an effective mechanism to ensure that local populations are not totally isolated... [but on the other hand it is also] a method to provide legitimacy to the emergent form of the local state... providing possibilities for decentralisation and greater responsiveness to local conditions and needs, the devolution of policy making and extension of local democracy, as well as a means by which the local state can effectively regulate the delivery of services, the production over which it now has very little control” (1995: 274).

The process of community development can be applied in four main ways from either the ‘top-down’ or the ‘bottom-up’.

The first way is by the individual. Participation in a community-led development project enables people to:

“grow in confidence and competence, collectively giving them and their communities self respect and greater influence and control over their future” (Francis and Henderson, 1992: 3).

Often the individual will be motivated by mutual aid, which is the process of helping someone in order to help oneself; philanthropy, or charitable service; and sociability, the social aspect of working and meeting with other community members (Butcher et al, 1980;

Williams, 1984 (a)). For example, participation on a committee will present many people with the opportunity to discuss wider common problems that affect them, which can then diversify into self-help projects that benefit the community.

The second way in which community development can be applied is through an 'ad-hoc' group (for example the village appraisal steering group). As the term implies, these are groups created to fulfil a specific purpose. The occurrence of such groups is widespread throughout the rural community and according to Essex (1987) they are on the increase. They differ from the organised voluntary group in two main ways (Leat, 1981). First, they are short-lived locality based groups that are created for a particular activity of immediate concern to the community. Second, they are flexible groups with self-appointed leaders and will change with the circumstances of the activity. These groups use participation to help the development of the wider community, in addition to helping themselves.

The third application of community development is that encouraged by local 'elite' voluntary groups such as the parish council. These groups encourage its members to undertake small projects that can stimulate community development within the locality – always from the 'bottom-up'. The types of project that are completed in this way include the building of bus shelters, the improvement of the local environment, footpaths and hedgerow maintenance.

The fourth application of community development is through the voluntary sector. Voluntary organisations, as successful facilitators of community development, are considered effective developers of 'bottom-up' initiatives compared to the local planning authorities. They are renowned for providing grass roots democracy, sustaining community integrity, and understanding social needs within rural communities. The voluntary organisations, of which the Rural Community Councils are a prime example, advertise and encourage the use of public participation to identify future areas where the community could be developed. The only drawback to this idealistic approach to community development is that the objectives for the work undertaken by the voluntary sector is delivered through government quangos and local planning structures who predominantly fund the voluntary organisations and consequently have control over their conduct. Thus,

the voluntary sector participation in community development is considered from the 'top-down'.

3.5.2 Community action.

Community action differs from the community development approach because it involves communities making demands of policy makers to acknowledge their interests and be responsive to their demands (Butcher et al, 1993; Bovey, 1993; Davies and Herbert, 1993). It is considered by Hain to be a process in which:

“the deprived define for themselves their needs and forms of actions to meet them” (1976: 20).

Although it is believed to form part of the United Kingdom's long tradition of social and political protest, Hain (1976) first developed the ideology of community action, albeit in an urban context. As section 3.4 discussed, Hain interpreted community action through the behaviour of the 'radical' and 'liberal' individual who organised and delivered community action on the basis of 'conflict' or 'consensus'. He developed the theory for two reasons. First, community action satisfied the radical unrest that was characteristic of the 1960s. Second, community action seemed to reflect the “evolving structure of the modern state” (Hain, 1976: 11).

The idea of rural community action has been growing in interest since the 1980s (Butcher et al, 1980; Barr 1991; Francis and Henderson, 1992; Bovey, 1993; Butcher et al, 1993). It shares the same framework for participation as that set by Hain (Henderson and Thomas, 1980). According to Butcher et al (1993), the objective for an individual undertaking community action in rural areas is to gain power in the decision making arena for the provision of services for the locality. The relationships of conflict and consensus are created between the key actors involved in the planning process in order to achieve the objective, although the emphasis is definitely “to employ conflict oriented strategies and tactics” (ibid.: 29). The nature of participation in rural community action is generally perceived to be politically motivated. This is evident from the work by Butcher et al who noted that community action:

“frequently involves people who have limited experience of political organising yet they need to rapidly become credible and politically adept in identifying and pressurising actual sources of power” (1993: 30).

These words by Butcher *et al* reflect Hain’s argument for the redistribution of power to radical citizens. However, as section 3.4 discussed Hain was criticised for this approach by Limb, who stated that the planning structures had moved on from the idea of being held to ransom by radical community groups:

“conflict based community action is often dismissed by authorities as irresponsible” (1986: 89).

Despite the implications for the re-emergence of this method of participation the public, private and voluntary sector agencies and institutions today are in favour of encouraging rural community action. For example, in recent literature published about the village appraisal process, it is indicated that communities must:

“ensure that the village appraisal is a catalyst for community action” (Leigh, 1998: 2).

However, it is unclear whether this would be an advertisement for conflict style community action or the consensual action as encouraged by the Conservative government in their policy to develop partnerships between the key actors in the planning process. This begs a number of questions. First, is there a renewed pressure for community based conflict towards the planning agencies for service provision? Second, if so, what are the implications for the delivery of government policy? Third, would conflict gain more citizen control and participation at the higher levels of the decision making process in the contemporary planning system (as indicated in Figure 3.2) than the initiation of partnerships as was suggested by Limb (1986)? These matters have not yet been discussed through the literature. Consequently, the empirical chapters of this study will discuss if there is a widespread ‘push’ towards the application of rural community action and the effect this has on participation in the planning process.

3.5.3 Community involvement.

Community involvement, which is the third type of public participation, is delivered from the 'top-down'. It is a process that recognises the 'pro-active' role played by the agencies in the planning process. Beresford and Croft have argued that the planning agencies have their own particular "view of citizenship [and in doing so they] will try to push movements in ways which fit in with [their] own interests" (1993: 5). It is assumed that by empowering the community to become involved in the planning process, the agencies can deliver participation as they wish. Thus, as Figure 3.3 illustrated, community involvement is multifaceted. It comprises community work, community management and community consultation.

Community work is concerned with the welfare of groups within the community. According to Craig and Mayo (1995) all instruction for community work is delivered by the local authority, planning agency or through the voluntary sector. It has two particular roles. First, Taylor (1995) argued that community work can develop and support the community to act as service providers and agents for the local authority, whilst on the other hand it can use community groups to introduce their own services and reduce government spending within the community. For example, Harris (1993) found in the Stroud District of Gloucestershire that community care schemes were being implemented as a direct result of village appraisals which had been encouraged by the voluntary sector; volunteers were replacing statutory services under the guidance of the traditional service providers. Second, designated community workers appointed from the 'top-down' would undertake to offer a type of therapy (see Arnstein's ladder, Figure 3.2) in order to address the dislocation of disadvantaged groups. An example of this is one used by Beresford and Croft (1993), and concerns the disabled and their requirements within the rural locality. In this situation the community has no control over the level and type of service offered.

Community consultation is where the agencies encourage the community to become involved in providing information for the planning process either through the local plan consultation periods or through surveys (like the village appraisal) about the services and facilities that are provided within the locality. The authorities may use the information

gathered to improve or identify needs in a given locality, although Arnstein (1969) suggested that this type of information can be ignored by the agencies to leave the community as advisors to those who hold the power and control in the decision making process.

The final type of community involvement is community management. This is considered a very different level of community involvement whereby the planning agencies actually delegate power to groups or individuals within the locality to manage certain facilities or services. During the period of the Conservative government, this type of community involvement was really used as a substitute for local authority services that were reduced during the initiative to cut public spending. Indicative of this type of community involvement would be the implementation of Integrated Rural Development initiatives, for example, the Two Valleys Project in the Peak District (Peak Park Joint Planning Board, 1990) which implemented a large number of social, economic, and environmental schemes over a seven year period that required a significant community contribution (in the form of fund raising or man power). However, overall control for the schemes that were implemented lay with the agencies, from the 'top-down'. Similarly, Rural Action, which provides grants for environmental improvements within the locality, is a form of community management. For example, the report submitted by the Public Sector Management Research Centre (Bovaird *et al.*, 1995) evaluates the processes and products of Rural Action for the Environment initiative, in which management teams (comprising sponsors, a steering group and a development team) were responsible for overseeing the initiation and implementation of environmental projects within a broad range of localities from the 'top-down'. The communities only took control of the projects (59 were recorded in total) after they had been established, although the communities provided the volunteers to ensure the projects were completed. Results included: project specific outcomes; raised awareness and increased skills of local people; community development; increased knowledge and confidence of participants; environmental improvements; and community spirit.

However, as useful as this typology may be to explain the role of public participation in the planning system, it has a limitation in that the categories of development, action and

involvement are not mutually exclusive: what may begin as one technique of participation can in fact finish as another due to the manipulation by key actors in the process. The ways in which the contingent effect of local people and actors respond to the wider structures is at the heart of the realist approach adopted in this thesis and so it will provide a deeper understanding of the multiple forms of public participation that exist and the processes of participation that are undertaken. By examining the interactions between the agencies and the community and considering the contingencies which may affect the interactions, the arguments through chapters six, seven and eight will demonstrate that the Conservative government's ambition for rural planning policy is complicated by the existence of multiple techniques of participation that can be encouraged from both the 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' by multiple actor networks. In these situations, the hypothetical line drawn between the 'top-down' or the 'bottom-up' can be moved by the key actors in order to manipulate or further regulate the village appraisal process and the outcomes that are achieved (Alcock and Christensen, 1995; Checkoway, 1995).

After focusing on the theoretical aspects of public participation during the first part of this chapter it is now necessary to consider the practical application of participation in order to understand the process in more detail. The following section will discuss the practice of participation with particular reference to empirical studies of participation in the village appraisal.

3.6 The practice of participation.

The practical aspects of participation are concerned with the objectives of participation, the process that it entails and the people who participate. In effect, this part of the chapter will examine whether participation can be considered an effective tool for encouraging active citizenship amongst all members of the public or if, as the theoretical discussion implied, the opportunities for participation are biased towards particular sections of the community. In so doing, it is divided into four parts:

- the objectives of participation for both the planning agencies and individual within the community;
- the types of people who participate;

- reasons for non-participation;
- the empirical studies of participation in the village appraisal.

3.6.1 Objectives of participation.

The planning agencies and individuals within a community have their own objectives for participating in decision making initiatives. In the literature (for example, Wengert, 1976; Lumb, 1978; Walmsley, 1980), there are two groups of objectives which are identified according to the benefits that can be gained through participation. The first, 'developmental objectives', are identified as the benefits that could be achieved by an individual's participation in the planning process. The second, 'instrumental objectives', are the benefits gained by the planning agency which adopts the process of participation. The evidence indicates a contrast and a potential conflict between these two groups of objectives, and these have implications both for the process of participation and its application within the planning system as a mechanism for active citizenship and local governance. In particular, there is evidence of an inequality in the distribution of power through participation whereby planners appear to have more control over the process of participation than the individual.

3.6.1.1 Developmental objectives.

These objectives concern the participation of the individual and relate to the notion that participation in the planning process creates a 'better' and more active citizen. There are three main objectives.

First, developmental theory was a fundamental part of Rousseau's theory of participation. He argued that through participation an individual could take responsibility for some of the decisions that affected the way in which he/she lived his/her life. The benefit of participation would, in addition to making the individual a better citizen, increase his/her awareness about issues that affect the community and thus develop the active citizen.

The second objective is one that suggests the process of participation enables an individual

to make an active decision to free themselves from the feeling of powerlessness, from merely being a pawn in someone else's game, to a situation where he/she has an opportunity to shape his/her own life. The objective of participation is to develop the individual to make themselves the subject, rather than the object of the forces, which will determine the social, economic and political conditions in which s/he lives (Kearns, 1992; Goodwin and Painter, 1996). Participation is believed to release the human potential, and move the individual towards self-development and political mobilisation (Francis and Henderson, 1992; Beresford and Croft, 1993; Miller and Ahmad, 1995).

The third objective was also recognised by Rousseau and to some extent by Mill. An individual would adopt participation in order to improve his/her psychological health and growth. This would enhance the quality of society. The basis of this objective, as Wengert argued, is founded on the belief that the individual can use participation as a mechanism to regain control of his/her life and learn from its use, because:

“on balance it seems reasonable to generalise that today's citizen, no matter where he lives has lost control of many aspects of his life” (1972: 28).

Therefore, the objective of participation from an individual's perspective is to break the grip of authority and help oneself to make a better environment in which to live. This in theory is what was intended through the delivery of the concepts of active citizenship and local governance (Kearns, 1992; Burton and Duncan, 1996).

3.6.1.2 Instrumental objectives.

Instrumental theory is a theory founded on the belief that planners work for the public to satisfy its needs and requirements. As Plumridge suggests:

“local planning authorities provide a service for the public, and this service cannot function if the wishes of the public are not adequately understood” (1969: 214).

Four ‘functional’ objectives of participation have been identified to guide the practice of participation for planners. However, whilst the planners can provide the means by which the public participate, their motives may not be clear.

O'Riordan (1977) implies that one objective of participation for the planners is politically motivated, to identify and reflect public interest. The understanding was that planning policy formulated with the consent of the public is more readily accepted than one developed without (Hampton, 1977; Sewell and Coppock, 1977).

The second objective of participation is to provide information to the individual and community about planning initiatives and intended planning policy (HMSO, 1969; Walmsley, 1980). This it was believed, would create a two-way flow of information between the planners and the public as a means of communicating ideas about future planning proposals. However, as Thomas has argued, all too frequently just a one-way flow is promoted:

“from the authority to the citizen, and not the two-way exchange of ideas we thought constituted public participation” (1973: 172).

The reason for this is that the planners choose not to accept the advice and information which is offered by the groups or individuals during consultation periods (Pacione, 1988; Checkoway, 1995), because it is often seen as a challenge to the professional status of planners. Indeed, if society is prepared to train planners to plan, then they should be able to do so, without public intervention.

The third objective of participation is to narrow the gap between the elite planners and the public - between the “them” and “us” - by making society more aware and informed about future planning proposals and the planning process itself (Walmsley, 1980; Cairns, 1996; Stewart, 1996). However as Walmsley found, the main purpose is not to provide information as a mechanism to resolve potential conflict, whereby public participation enables the planners to anticipate and remedy areas of potential conflict, allowing for a more “effective working of the process itself” (1980: 28).

The final instrumental objective is the concept of strategy, which is applicable both to the public and the planners and has been described by Wengert (1976: 26) as:

“a manoeuvre to accomplish other unstated or stated objectives”.

For example, an individual can delay the implementation of planning policy by offering advice through participation in the planning process, but as sections 3.2 and 3.3 have demonstrated the planners can manipulate the situation and make decisions irrespective of this intervention by the citizen.

“Once you have given people the opportunity to say what they want, they can go away, quite content and even if it not acted upon, they often feel quite happier about it: they have been listened to...it is just a matter of people feeling more satisfied” (Long, 1976: 94).

What this indicates, therefore, is that planners have considerable power and control over the level of participation that is undertaken by the citizen, a factor which has major implications for the implementation of public participation and for the delivery of local governance.

3.6.2 Who participates?

“The process of decision making should take into account the views of all those who have a legitimate interest in the matter at issue” (Sewell and Coppock, 1977: 7).

There appears to be considerable difference between the people at whom participation is aimed, and those people who actually participate. Indeed, whilst participation should introduce people with neglected interests to the decision making process, experience has shown that it is precisely these people who are being excluded (Little, 1987; Beresford and Croft, 1993; Miller and Ahmad, 1995; Abram *et al.*, 1996). In the late 1960s, Biddle and Biddle recognised the potential for involving the neglected in the decision making process by making available the training necessary to make leaders and participants of everybody, not just the educated:

“to make leadership training available to the educated only is to close the door to leadership to the disadvantaged. The list of the individuals... who do not qualify is long. Sometimes these people may have records of delinquency or of undesirable associations. Such people are often condemned to inferiority by their neighbour's opinions” (1968: 77-78).

However, the recent writings of rural geographers and community development activists have indicated that problems of empowering the 'traditionally neglected' people still exist within rural society. In rural areas specifically, the groups and organisations involved in local empowerment tend to be "dominated by powerful and repressive elites" (Francis and Henderson, 1992: 33-34). It is because of evidence of this nature that Beresford and Croft suggested that:

"enabling broad based involvement is as important as accessing newcomers [to the participation process]. If our efforts to empower ourselves don't extend to all groups then they are only likely to perpetuate the existing dominance of white, middle class, conventionally articulate people" (1993: 139).

However, according to Little (1987) the problem is a causal effect of the system of government which prevailed for a decade under Mrs Thatcher. Little argued that the empowerment of the middle classes within the rural planning process is due in principle to the middle class policies of the Conservative government. She is of the opinion that policies of:

"Conservative anti development...not only protect the interests of the middle classes but actively disadvantage the least affluent. This will result in...a reinforcement of middle class exclusivity in the countryside" (1987: 198).

Therefore, if people with neglected interests are not participating, it is necessary to look more closely at the type of people who do participate in local level planning initiatives.

Early research looking at participation included an examination of a participator's "life stage or his social position" (Walmsley, 1980: 59 (emphasis added)) which referred to the social, economic, and demographic characteristics of the participator. For example, an individual's concern and experience with matters beyond everyday living was believed to indicate their ability to interact socially and therefore to participate (Taylor and Stringer, 1973; Stringer and Ewens, 1975; Goldsmith and Saunders, 1976). Additionally, the study of the participators at 12 public, regional planning meetings in Lancashire and Cheshire conducted by Stringer and Ewens (1975) and Goldsmith and Saunders (1976) included the creation of a profile of what they termed, the 'typical participator'. This was the profile of

a person more likely to participate in local planning initiatives: i.e. an active citizen. The person was found to be male, middle class, a long term resident of the area, a home owner, a car owner, well educated, and a regular participant in community based voluntary organisations. This was termed the 3M concept, i.e. male, middle class and mobile. Table 3.2 illustrates the results from these two studies.

Table 3.2 A comparison of the characteristics of participators in Lancashire and Cheshire.

Characteristic of participator	Lancashire average (%)	Cheshire average (%)
<u>Length of residence</u>		
Under 5 years	16	16
6-15 years	7	19
16-25 years	22	16
over 25 years	50	48
<u>Sex (% Male)</u>	63	65
<u>Age</u>		
under 35	28	24
over 35	74	76
<u>Tenure (%Owner Occupiers)</u>	87	76
<u>Use of Car</u>	74	76
<u>Age at which education ended</u>		
under 14	27	18
15	15	9
16 - 18	53	30
over 18	1	37
<u>Group Membership</u>		
none	5	5
1-3	54	50
more than 4	46	43
<u>% Middle Class</u>	63	81

Even amongst a female sample, Taylor and Stringer (1973) found that the participants were better educated and from a higher social class. These results correspond with a recent study of volunteering in the United Kingdom undertaken by Lynn and Smith (1991) of the Volunteer Centre. The profile of participants in voluntary organisations in the early 1990s is shown in Table 3.3 and demonstrates that people in the higher social classes (managerial/technical) are more likely to become involved in voluntary activity.

Table 3.3 The relationship between social class and participation.

Social class	% of people who were considered as active participants in voluntary organisations in the UK
Managerial / Professional	72
Other non-manual	59
Skilled manual	58
Semi-skilled manual	48
Un-skilled manual	37
Unclassifiable	33

The fact that the ‘typical participator’ in rural England is middle class comes as no surprise according to Phillips, who has argued that the “emergent orthodoxy” (1993: 131) is for rural areas of England to be “middle class territory” (Buller and Lowe, 1990: 27). Indeed, research by Abram *et al* in Buckinghamshire, a county which has been described as “middle-professional, comfortable England” (1996: 361), found that village organisations were referred to as “middle-class type organisations” where participants had the “social, technical and communicative assets required to make successful representations” (ibid.: 355). Additionally, Abram *et al* found that the empowerment of the middle classes in the local planning process was the result of their overwhelming concern for “the physical and social aspects of their immediate environment” (1996: 355). Participation in village organisations enables the rural middle classes to:

“use the planning system to shape the village in accordance with ideal images of the rural community... it follows therefore, that participation in the planning system – as an ostensibly public-interest activity of the state – is a critical arena for middle class... activity” (ibid.: 355 - 361).

According to Short *et al* this is a powerful ideology particularly seen in rural locations where there is a perpetual hope of reasserting a “moral arcadia away from the anonymity of the urban masses” (1986: 209).

However, the principle of public participation is supposed to provide the community with a degree of control in the planning process, although the number of actors that have been introduced since de-regulation has created a plethora of networks which are regulated by the actor with the most power (not necessarily the community). This ‘regulation’ of a de-regulated process is an intentional social practice and reflects the tensions created by the

need to satisfy an agenda for self-help (Goodwin and Painter, 1996). Regulation of self-help constrains the input that the weaker actors in the network can have in the decision making process. Such layers of power amongst the actors within any self-help oriented planning initiative illustrate that it is open to the vagaries of manipulation. As Bowler and Lewis found, the input by the community into 'top-down' controlled self-help initiatives:

"is constrained by several managerial layers of technical, political and financial control" (1991: 176).

Furthermore, Cloke and Little (1990) claimed that the leadership roles within rural communities they studied were dominated by in-comers to the village, who formed a new middle class elite. As section 2.3 illustrated, the local village organisations are the focal point of social interaction and the breeding ground for self-help initiatives like the village appraisal but it is the new middle class 'fraternity' who are establishing such organisations (Essex, 1987; Little, 1987). Bowler and Lewis also recognised that an "internal community leadership" (1991: 177) exists in rural areas in which the most powerful actors in the locality regulate the process of participation to suit their own needs. Often with different planning needs and requirements than the established rural population, the new middle class has come to dominate self-help groups and to set the agenda for future community development. Sorensen and Epps have subsequently argued that community leaders in Australia can emerge from two sections of the community, being either "prominent citizens with prestige [or] professionals or technicians, though leaders of small communities may combine these roles" (1996: 115). What participation does, therefore, is to facilitate the creation of a power elite. Thus, the leadership of a project or even a community is yet another arena for middle class activity.

In addition to this, other research has suggested that the level of affiliation an individual has with the surrounding area will increase the tendency to participate. Thus, Lynn and Smith (1991) established that levels of participation were highest amongst people who felt they had strong links with the locality, these being considered as the number of people known locally. They found that just 38% of participators knew no more than one person locally, whilst 68% knew 30 or more people. On the other hand, through research conducted in Oxfordshire, Simmie (1971) found evidence to suggest that active participants had few

friendship or kinship networks within the village and concluded that leadership within the village was a function of social isolation.

This evidence has illustrated the characteristics of a typical participator. However as the following discussion will indicate, the first steps to becoming a typical participation are often the most difficult.

3.6.3 Reasons for non-participation.

Heberlein (1976) suggested there was a three-fold determinants for participation, namely the nature of the issue under debate, the character of the individual, and the social circumstances of the individual. The first requirement is a belief in the relevance of the issue under debate. The second, is the awareness of an opportunity to participate. The third is the belief that participation will have an effect on the outcome. These requirements are equally considered as barriers to participation for those citizens who do not satisfy them. This section will examine the three requirements in detail.

3.6.3.1 A belief in the relevance of the issue.

The belief in the relevance of any issue assumes a certain degree of understanding about that issue and this, regardless of an individual's own knowledge, can only be delivered by the planning authorities or the voluntary sector to prospective participants. This requires that the supply of information must be appropriate and made available to all individuals in the locality. As Walmsley stated:

“the information must, of course, be placed where people in the normal course of their lives are likely to encounter it” (1980: 52).

Because of the wide variability in the human population, such a process was not straightforward, as Taylor and Stringer concluded from their study of the potential participation of mixed race women in South London (1973). They found that a number of techniques used to disseminate information were required to attract the attention of the 200 women they studied. These reflected the attitudes and circulation patterns of a cross

section of the public (for example, leaflets, letters, local papers, library displays, exhibitions and public meetings). Furthermore, Sewell and Coppock have suggested that to transfer information to the public:

“no-one technique is adequate, and that a combination of several is usually required” (1977: 3).

More recently, Stewart has argued that innovation in methods of participation is required if people are to achieve their rights to participate:

“innovation in democratic practice can strengthen the participation by citizens...[and] are designed to bring the informed view of ordinary citizens into the process of local government” (1996: 32).

In total, ten methods are used to convey information to potential participants in the planning process (Table 3.4). For example, Stringer and Taylor (1974), Stringer and Ewens (1975) and Goldsmith and Saunders (1976) studied participation at the public meeting and found that it attracted the more elite members of the community (section 3.6.2). On the other hand, Fagence (1977) critically assessed the value of using the survey technique and the exhibition to increase the participation of all members in a locality and found that the survey is one of the weaker methods to use (as previously suggested in section 3.2). Additional, work by Francis and Henderson (1992), Croft and Beresford (1992), the DoE (1994) and Stewart (1996) appraised the use of workshops, group meetings and task forces and their application in the modern planning process.

Table 3.4 Techniques used to convey information from the planning authority to the public.

Surveys	Task forces
Public hearings	Referenda
Exhibitions	Letters
Information documentation	Representations at group meetings
Workshops or seminars	Public meetings

The language used to explain the issue at hand must be appropriate to reach all individuals within the community. The ‘rules of the game’ debate applies here, which according to Bachrach and Baratz (1970) hinders the participation of the disadvantaged in society (disadvantaged in this sense means those individuals to whom the language used presents a

barrier to their participation). A similar view was put forward by Bigham, who stressed that:

“it would be in the interests of the consensus element in planning to strive to reduce the use of an over-specialised vocabulary (or jargon) and to replace it...with plain English [except for material targeted at particular groups]” (1973: 8).

This highlights the fact that the use of language:

“is an automatically discriminatory feature between sections of the public with different levels of education” (Walmsley, 1980: 58).

A further characteristic to be noted is the belief that, once an understanding of the issue is obtained, the individual must perceive that the issue will directly affect them as an individual and alter the environment in which they are living (Parry *et al.*, 1992; Stewart, 1996). Wood argues that only a perception of ‘threat’ (which is a reactive trigger for participation), will encourage an individual to become involved.

“The majority of citizens are usually willing to delegate their interests in government, almost to the state of abdication as long as decision makers perform adequately and do not deviate too much from the past performance. Only when it feels threatened does the public respond” (1976: 138).

He argues that people only participate because they are consciously aware of the relevance of the issue and its importance. However, there is substantial evidence that suggests the perceived threat has to be greatest at the local level, in the area that most affects the individual’s environment (Parry *et al.*, 1992). Therefore, as it was suggested through the theory of participatory democracy, people will participate largely in local initiatives where they will directly benefit from the effects that their participation will have on the planning process. This was recognised by the Skeffington Report in which participation was promoted through the local plan process rather than the structure plan process.

3.6.3.2 An awareness of the opportunity to participate.

The awareness of an opportunity to participate in the planning process is considered to be a

function of the psychological and socio-economic characteristics of the individual, whereby participative behaviour is attributed to personality and social status (Pranger, 1968; Heberlein, 1976; Walmsley, 1980). As such it is recognised that each individual is different in behaviour and social position, so there can be “no equality of perceived opportunity” where participation is concerned (Walmsley, 1980: 60). Section 3.6.2 illustrated that the typical participator was middle class, well educated, mobile and male, so there must be a greater perceived opportunity for this type of person to participate in the planning process than for other types. Indeed, Bachrach and Baratz (1970) found that through the ‘mobilisation of bias’ power was exercised in favour of the elite within society, who had both the resources and skills to understand the ‘rules of the game’ and express their interests in the issue under debate (section 3.3). Therefore, the typical participator is believed to have a familiarity with the process of participation (Abram *et al.*, 1996); when a person participates the awareness of additional opportunities to participate is increased (i.e. the notion of active citizenship) (Kearns, 1992; Malpass, 1994).

3.6.3.3 A belief in the ability to change the outcome.

Batley stated that (1972: 95):

“the citizen’s statutory right to information and consultation means little if he doubts that his involvement can have any impact on planning”.

He found that people participated mainly to produce an ‘end-product’ rather than for the educative value of just being involved in the process. However, whilst people do participate for what can be achieved through the outcome, it takes a special type of person to believe that they have the ability to change the outcome. According to Milbraith and Klein (1962), this special type of person is one who believes in their ability to change the outcome through participation. This ‘sociality-dominance-esteem-syndrome’ is a characteristic associated with elite leaders who are self-confident and who participate with confidence and familiarity. They are people aware of their own ability and the effect that their participation will have on the outcome.

A study of the ‘sociality-dominance-esteem-syndrome’ was conducted by Batley (1972) in

Byker, Newcastle upon Tyne. Batley found that even when the residents felt 'threatened' by proposals to remove the slum conditions in the local community, they remained passive in their responses. This was demonstrated by their lack of participation in local protest groups and organised activities to prevent the clearance. He explained this behaviour by the fact that they were not confident in their ability to change the outcome in their locality. After performing a test on people's confidence, he found that only 9% believed in their ability to successfully change the outcome of the slum clearance initiatives; over 54% were indifferent and would not participate.

However, rather than participation being the sole responsibility of the individual, the planning authority can increase the participation of citizens (Kearns, 1992; Malpass, 1994; Goodwin and Painter, 1996). By acknowledging fully the relative merits of the outcomes of planning initiatives undertaken using public participation, the agencies could increase the power afforded to the individual in the decision making process and ensure that participation was not only equal across all sections of a community, but that it would be considered as:

"the act of sharing in the formulation of policies and proposals" (HMSO, 1969: 1).

According to Arnstein, if participation managed to change the outcome and result in the redistribution of power from the authority to the individual citizen, participation would be responsible for creating a sense of self-worth in the population and inspire them to participate at other times; in effect, creating active citizens.

3.7 Conclusion.

This chapter has reviewed the theory and practice of community participation. In so doing, it found that actors could adopt two approaches to deliver active citizenship and local governance through community participation in the planning system. The process of participation can be manipulated by those planning agencies which are responsible for its implementation in the locality: planners may encourage participation on the one hand but limit its outcome on the other if the outcomes do not correspond with their opinions of

democracy or participation. The models of participation presented by Arnstein (1969), Pateman (1970), and Hain (1976) further illustrated how the agencies can limit the power of public participation in the decision making process, often rendering participation a process in manipulation or therapy. The influence of this 'top-down' control over the 'bottom-up' process of participation results in different types of participation which satisfy different agendas for rural planning; namely community development, community action and community involvement. This jeopardises the delivery of local governance through community participation, restricting the development of the active citizen and constraining the citizen's role in the decision making process.

A further issue that was considered through the foregoing review was that of the elite and powerful within the planning system. It was found that this type of person dominates the planning process both from within the planning agencies and the locality. The planning system is represented by two types of elite, the professional planners and the elected representatives who, it is argued, can control the function of participation from the 'top-down' to meet their own requirements. In addition, there is a third type of elite, represented by the social elite within the community. These typical participators are considered to be the middle class, mobile, well educated and (usually) male members of the community and those most associated with participation in local planning initiatives (where participating female members of the community were monitored their characteristics were found to be of a similar nature). So, whilst participation is a concept which appears to offer an equal opportunity for everybody to become involved in the planning process, in reality there is a 'mobilisation of bias' (Bachrach and Baratz, 1970). Therefore, an inequality of perceived opportunity exists for participation (the rules of the game) that favours the elite within rural society and leaves sections of the community disassociated from the decision making.

Given the importance attached to the village appraisal as one mechanism to implement the notion of active citizenship and deliver local governance through participation in partnerships, it is necessary to look more closely at this initiative. The remaining chapters of this thesis will develop and examine these themes in some detail, by reference to research conducted at the national level and through three case studies in Northamptonshire. First, however, it is necessary to examine the issues which surround the

contemporary village appraisal.

Chapter four

Village appraisals: a contemporary overview

4.1 Introduction.

In chapters 2 and 3 it has been shown that, for much of the century, many rural communities in England have applied self-help methods both as a means of dealing with the difficulties of life in the countryside and of preparing environmental, social and welfare plans in the absence of a strong planning system. It was further argued that this tradition of self-help, independence and voluntarism was seen as a basis upon which a more appropriate and flexible approach to the contemporary needs of rural residents could be built. In this sense the recent growth in the popularity of the village appraisal is a reflection of an emerging government policy of 'local governance' which, through a less hierarchical planning system, encourages greater involvement by local people in the decision making process and with it the notion of the active, participating citizen.

The delivery of village appraisal, in rural England at least, has been boosted by the active support of two organisations with a particular responsibility for addressing issues specific to the countryside. The first is ACRE (Action for Communities in Rural England) and the second is the Rural Community Council (RCC) of which there are currently 38, one in each of the non-metropolitan counties. This chapter commences with a brief overview of their status and function, as a context for a more detailed discussion of the village appraisal. What is important here is the need to consider the complexities associated with the notion of an appraisal and the implications of these complexities for ideas of participation, self-help and partnership which lie at the heart of governance. Thus, for example, the absence of any statutory basis to the village appraisal has meant that the definition of an appraisal and an appraisal agenda can, and will, vary quite considerably, and this has major implications in terms of how the process of an appraisal might be manipulated (whether deliberately or not) by particular actors and its outcomes interpreted. A discussion of these issues, and the insight they provide for the principles of participation and partnership form the remainder of this chapter.

4.2 The key voluntary organisations in the village appraisal process.

4.2.1 Action for Communities in Rural England (ACRE).

ACRE is a new, self-regulating organisation first introduced into the voluntary sector in 1986-87. Its objective is to promote the welfare of rural communities and ensure the social, economic and cultural development of people who live in the countryside (Henderson and Francis, 1993). The organisation has a two pronged approach to rural community development, at a national and a local level. At the national level, ACRE lobbies central government on issues associated with rural life; for instance affordable housing, employment, public transport, rural services and child care. Also, ACRE:

“provides specialist advice, conducts research, manages national projects, publishes a wide range of publications and provides information, training and other services” (Henderson and Francis, 1993: no page).

At the local level, ACRE’s support as an umbrella organisation for the 36 RCCs ensures that it maintains a degree of community representation. Working in partnership with the RCCs, ACRE promotes localized, self-help initiatives. Malcolm Moseley, ACRE’s first Director, emphasized the organisation’s commitment to the principle of ‘bottom-up’, self-help initiatives with a particular emphasis on those least able to do so on their own accord.

“The task of ACRE is to speak up for the homeless, the isolated and the poor and to help village communities to have the confidence and the skills to take hold of their future and to do so in a socially responsible manner” (as quoted in Henderson and Francis, 1993: no page).

In addition to this, ACRE also aims to work closely with village hall committees, parish councils and local voluntary organisations in the village, reflecting and supporting the work undertaken by the RCCs (Francis and Henderson, 1992; Henderson and Francis, 1993).

4.2.2 The Rural Community Councils (RCCs).

The RCCs have existed in England since the early 1920s, whilst their significance as voluntary organisations now is merely a continuation of their importance in the inter-war period when they provided much needed support to rural communities suffering from

neglect, deprivation and decline and where there were rather weak formal planning mechanisms to deal with the problems of the rural economy. With representation in all 36 non-metropolitan counties in England, they are now considered to be at the hub of voluntary activity in contemporary rural society (Rogers, 1987). However, this has not always been the case, and from the late 1930s onwards they became somewhat marginalised due to problems of funding and the fact that other organisations such as the CPRE and WEA were taking over much of their work. It was also the case that the planning system was beginning to introduce stricter controls over development in the countryside, whilst many parish councils felt that the RCC and its staff were too remote from the villages themselves and the problems they faced (Baker, 1953). The re-emergence of the RCCs in recent years has been in conjunction with the shift in government policy towards local governance. Indeed, in the rural White Paper, published in 1995, it was stated that “Rural Community Councils (RCCs) play a valuable part in strengthening rural communities and helping local people to develop local solutions to local problems...we particularly value RCCs’ assessments of local needs, including village appraisals” (DoE/MAFF, 1995: 18, emphasis added). The opportunity afforded to the RCCs in the contemporary planning process has resulted in voluntary organisations that are expected to:

“provide arguably the most important development network in rural areas both financially...and socially, since they have a good knowledge of ‘grass roots’ issues derived from their local contact with parish councils, village hall committees and voluntary organisations” (Williams, 1984 (b): 75).

McLaughlin argues that the RCCs are in a perfect position to contribute to the contemporary planning process because of their:

“established links with both statutory and non-statutory organisations...and the fact that they are not a formal part of the recognised administrative decision making machine may increase the confidence of many organisations and the general public” (1979: 124-125).

Since the mid 1980s, the RCCs have been encouraged to assume a much “stronger role in promoting rural development and community initiative” (Blunden *et al*, 1985: 64). Thus, whilst they still maintain traces of a link with the village charity of years ago, these proactive organisations are today responsible for performing three particular functions within rural society. The first is to monitor the needs of the local inhabitants and make

representations on their behalf in the most appropriate places, for example, lobbying the district and borough councils through their representations on the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) or Rural Development Area (RDA) committees where appropriate. The second function is to give support to the parish councils and other voluntary organisations such as the village hall committees. Their third function is to organise rural development through the introduction of services that will eventually become self-sustaining, such as working with the community to provide a community shop, or a community bus.

However, RCCs are increasingly operating on a tight, unpredictable economic base, dependent on financial resources from the Rural Development Commission (RDC), local government and other voluntary organisations. With a limited 50 per cent funding from the RDC and the failure in recent years of local government to increase their grants, even in line with inflation (primarily due to the cutbacks which local government offices have experienced), the RCCs are more dependent than ever on voluntary contributions. Such an insecure operation limits the independence of the RCCs and the flexibility of their action. This is apparent in the individual organisations where staffing levels fluctuate and where services vary depending on the level of income generated. As Blunden *et al* write:

“the range and effectiveness of their [the RCCs'] activities varies considerably, depending largely on the size and quality of their permanent staff” (1985: 64).

Nevertheless, despite these difficulties, there is clear evidence that ACRE and the RCCs are seen as having an important facilitating role to play in the generation and production of village appraisals though, in the process, it is also evident that their views and ideas may well influence the forms that such appraisals take. In order to investigate these and other issues it is necessary to consider in more detail some of the debates surrounding current appraisal activity and to offer a ‘state of the art review’ of where the initiative currently stands.

4.3 A review of the issues and debates concerning the contemporary village appraisal.

This discussion will cover six problematic aspects of the contemporary village appraisal.

- definitions and the appraisal agenda;
- an exemplar;
- standardisation;
- the process versus product debate;
- triggers for implementation;
- outcomes.

4.3.1 Definitions and the appraisal agenda¹.

So far, it has been shown that many actors participate in the de-regulated planning process. In terms of the village appraisal, the key actors are the planning authority (including those elected onto the planning committees at county and district level as well as the professional planners), the formal voluntary organisations (the RCCs), the village appraisal steering group, the wider community (including ‘ad-hoc’, informal organisations), and the parish council (Dauncey, 1979; Francis, 1982; Derounian, 1984, 1985; Williams, 1984 (a); Francis and Henderson, 1992; Ashman, 1993; Bovey, 1993; Fisher, 1993; Harris, 1993; Sherwood and Lewis, 1994; Moseley *et al*, 1996 (b)).

¹ There are two areas of confusion that must be discussed prior to explaining the problems associated with the definition of the appraisal, in order to alleviate any misunderstanding at later stages in the thesis. The first area is concerned with the confusion over the terminology that is used in the description of this planning tool; *i.e.* whether it is termed a ‘village’ appraisal or a ‘parish’ appraisal. Moseley argues for the use of the term ‘parish’ appraisal for the reason that most of the exercises undertaken “have indeed related to the English ‘parish’ ...rather than to the village *per se*” (1997: 197). However, within this thesis it is argued that the appraisal should be referred to as a ‘village’ appraisal for a similar reason. In the county of Northamptonshire, it was found that in just three instances was it claimed that an appraisal had been undertaken as a parish initiative. The three parishes are Hemington Parish (which includes the settlements of Hemington, Luddington and Thurning), Pilton Parish (which includes the settlements of Stoke Doyle and Wadenhoe) and Pattishall Parish (which includes the settlements of Pattishall, Astcote, Dalscote and Eastcote). As such, it would be inappropriate to refer to a ‘parish appraisal’ when they appear to be predominantly village based appraisals. The second area of confusion is associated with the interchangeability of the term ‘village appraisal’. It is used to refer to two quite different ideas, the process of undertaking the locality based study and the product or written report/document which is frequently the culmination of the locality study (although by no means a guaranteed end-product). Through this thesis, the terms ‘village appraisal’ and ‘appraisal document’ will be used to refer to these two ideas.

With such a diverse array of actors, problems with regulation can occur. Each actor involved in the village appraisal can attempt to regulate the process in order to satisfy its particular agenda for development. It would be expected, therefore, that no single agenda would exist which exactly defines the village appraisal process, primarily because one actor will not necessarily accept what another determines as a definition of the village appraisal. This is quite apparent when the variety of agendas or definitions that exist within the literature about the village appraisal are considered; though interestingly, these agendas are largely based on the perceptions of people who have not actively participated in the village appraisal².

Francis (1982) states that it is difficult to define the village appraisal because it has no basis in statute. Thus, whilst it is a mechanism encouraged by the government as a means of identifying a community's planning needs, the village appraisal can have no legal or institutional definition. Despite this, authors still seek to define the village appraisal, and in so doing place constraints around a process that is merited for its flexibility. In particular many cite the definition provided by Sulaiman who argued that a village appraisal is a:

“type of ‘stock taking’ of the village or community. Villagers, parish councils and local societies can get together, to collect information about the village, which can be used to assess life today, how it has changed and look forward to future prospects” (1988: 76).

However, even using this simple definition of the village appraisal creates difficulties, since it excludes the participation of certain key actors from the partnership that would seem central to the village appraisal process. The agenda that is set by Sulaiman pays no attention to the role of the planning authorities or the RCCs; rather she sees the village appraisal to be a partnership conducted by individuals and groups within the locality.

² Please note that in the absence of a comprehensive review of the definitions of the village appraisal offered by the individual RCCs this has been incorporated into the empirical analysis of the thesis.

On the other hand, Denman's agenda for the village appraisal process is based around the participation of the RCCs, which he believes play a vital role. Village appraisals are encouraged through the voluntary sector, in partnership with other public and private sector agencies and institutions, and therefore Denman argues that the RCCs must be key actors and participators in the process, not just playing the part of enablers. Additionally, the RCCs are believed to play an important part in the regulation of the village appraisal by developing:

“effective public participation in planning; encouraging the local community to consider its own situation, identify needs and draw up a programme of local action to tackle some of these problems” (1978: 141 as quoted in Fisher, 1993).

Alternatively, Dauncey (1979) regards the agenda of the village appraisal as a means of devolving power to the parish council. As the lowest tier of government that bridges the gap between the statutory planning authorities and the voluntary organisations, Dauncey argued that parish councils are the preferred agency through which the village appraisal should be delivered at the ‘grass roots’. Hence, whilst the appraisal is believed to be an ‘ideal’ method to survey “people’s opinions and ideas, upon which any plan ought to be based” it is also seen to provide the parish council with power in the decision making process (Dauncey, 1979: 10) it is interesting to note that this view, and the way it is expressed, is not far removed from the vision voiced in the rural White Paper, namely that village appraisal “can help communities to define their priorities, identify what they can do to meet them and target limited resources effectively” (DoE/MAFF, 1995: 17). However, what this definition does do is reflect an agenda which retains a representative democracy rather than introducing a participatory democracy and an active citizenship closer to the ideals of local governance. Similarly, Williams (1984 (a)) defines the village appraisal as being a process that should remain a statutory responsibility. The initiative to undertake a village appraisal should come from the ‘top-down’ and the power to determine planning policy should remain with the elected planning representatives and professional planners. As such, the agenda for the village appraisal should be:

“a response to local authority needs for producing policy documents with a public participation input, [but] with the initiative firmly in the hands of the District Council” (Williams, 1984 (a): 21).

In sharp contrast, Harris (a community development worker for Gloucestershire RCC) believed that a village appraisal should be developed and implemented by the community through widespread participation in a household questionnaire survey. This is considered to be the most effective means of gathering information in order:

“to establish both the current aspirations of the community and a strategy for the future” (1993: 1).

The key to this particular definition is the involvement of the community and the emphasis on grass roots democracy. This is an agenda for a participatory democracy.

These agendas demonstrate that, whilst so many actors participate in an unregulated way in the village appraisal, there will be no agreement on who should or does participate. This is not to suggest that a consensus agenda for the village appraisal should be reached but that a careful investigation does need to be undertaken to determine the effects of the multiple agendas on the role played by the community in the village appraisal. The variations in agenda offer an important insight into how the village appraisal process operates and is interpreted by the different people involved. This will form the basis for much of the analysis in chapter 6.

Finally, despite this wide variation in approach and definition, there is always one village appraisal at Stocksfield, Northumberland which is quoted above all others as an exemplar of what the village appraisal is all about and for this reason, if for no other, it is worth examining in more detail.

4.3.2 An exemplar.

Interestingly, the village appraisal in Stocksfield, is generally agreed within the academic literature to be the first such appraisal to have taken place (Lumb, 1990; Moseley *et al.*, 1996 (b)). Undertaken in 1971 at a time just after the Skeffington Report when public participation was only just being incorporated into the statutory planning process, Stocksfield was a “unique story [of] a do-it-yourself exercise” (Stocksfield Neighbourhood Working Party, 1971: front cover).

However, it is the opinion of the author that this village appraisal was not unique in the sense that it was the first of its kind: rather Stocksfield was a contemporary version of a mechanism that had long since been employed within rural communities. What makes it unique was the time when it was undertaken. Stocksfield is considered representative of a turning point in planning history where the notions of self-help, participation and grass roots democracy were wedded together outside of the constraints of statutory planning.

“It is an account of an interesting experiment in grass roots democracy [which tells] the story of how the Northumbria village...set about the job of assessing its own needs and planning its own future” (Stocksfield Neighbourhood Working Party, 1971: front cover).

The Stocksfield village appraisal was undertaken by a group of professional people, largely members of the parish council, who in turn formed the Neighbourhood Working Party. According to the Neighbourhood Working Party, “there was no particular motive...and certainly no threat” for undertaking the village appraisal, just a wish to plan how the village would “evolve during the latter part of the 20th Century” (ibid.). Even so, there had been concern amongst villagers for the effects which statutory planning proposals were having on the village. The introduction of the Redcliffe-Maud Report (the pre-cursor to the Local Government Act (1972) that de-centralised power to the district and borough councils and to the parish council) and of the Plowden and Seeborn Reports regarding service provision provided the stimulus to:

“look searchingly at our village’s physical and social environment, as it exists now and as we would like to see it... developing up to the end of this century” (Stocksfield Neighbourhood Working Party, 1971: 2).

The village appraisal took the form of a 32-page document based on the findings of a household questionnaire survey undertaken by a ‘Statistics Group’ and completed by approximately 2,000 people. Additionally, there was a public exhibition which contained photographs, results and recommendations for the future of the village. The working party proposed a total of 12 recommended action points to satisfy the future needs of the community (Table 4.1). The recommendations required the co-operation of a number of statutory agencies and institutions: the parish council, the education authority, the county planning officer, the county footpaths officer, British Rail, the county planning authority, community association, the BBC/ITA, the Minister of the Environment

Table 4.1 The recommended action points of the Stocksfield village appraisal.

RECOMMENDED ACTION POINTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ a new mobile classroom; ▪ a purpose built first school in the village; ▪ the provision of extended rail links; ▪ changes to the local British Rail station; ▪ the creation of a youth club; ▪ the provision of two play areas; ▪ the provision of a new television transmitter; ▪ environmental improvements; ▪ provision of a leisure area; ▪ traffic improvements; ▪ footpath improvements; ▪ changes to the parish boundary.

(Stocksfield Neighbourhood Working Party, 1971).

There are striking similarities between the village appraisal in Stocksfield and the plan of a Kent village undertaken by Stewart (1948) and previously described in chapter 2. The only difference is that those involved in the Kent study were academics rather than a community group yet the Kent project did involve a cross-section of the community and encouraged community participation at all stages of the process. Furthermore, other projects undertaken by voluntary organisations and rural communities prior to 1948 (described in section 2.3.2) demonstrated characteristics akin to the contemporary village appraisal (for example the Village History Project in Northamptonshire). Hence, it would appear that the extensive publicity that the Stocksfield village appraisal has received through the academic papers of Lumb (1990), a community development worker with Northumberland RCC before her untimely death, has established it as a central reference point in the village appraisal literature despite the existence of precedents. Certainly there is evidence that it was the first recognizable appraisal of what one might term the modern era, incorporating into its practices the principles of co-operation, a participatory democracy and partnership which many would argue are the central tenets of the contemporary period. In the longer term, however, it is one marker, albeit a significant one, in the history of local survey activity.

Table 4.2 A model of the village appraisal process (ACRE, 1991 (a)).

STAGE 1	Call a public meeting to establish levels of interest and form a steering group.
STAGE 2	Decide why your community wants to do an appraisal and note down its main aims and what area will be covered, such as the parish, village or other community area.
STAGE 3	Consider how you plan to fund the project.
STAGE 4	Draw up a realistic time scale and consider publicity for the project.
STAGE 5	Familiarise yourself with the village appraisals software package.
STAGE 6	Decide on those issues important to your community and on which you want to ask questions, and list them.
STAGE 7	Use the 'menu' of questions that is available from the village appraisals software package to design the questionnaire based on the issues that are important to your community.
STAGE 8	Print the final version of the questionnaire, distribute it to your chosen area of study.
STAGE 9	Use the software package to obtain the most useful analysis.
STAGE 10	Review the aims of the appraisal and produce a well written, lively and accurate report with constructive recommendations for action.
STAGE 11	Launch the report and decide on the most appropriate authorities with which to negotiate proposals for your community.
STAGE 12	Review the situation after one year to see how things are progressing.

4.3.3 Standardisation.

Any problems associated with the standardisation of the village appraisal stem from the effects of a best-practice model produced by ACRE and implemented through the RCCs (Lumb, 1990). The computer software programme, first produced by ACRE (1991), facilitates best practice across the often disjointed voluntary sector and provides rural communities with a model to follow during the process of the village appraisal.

The review that follows (to be expanded in chapter 6 with an in-depth examination) explains the origins of the village appraisal model and the effects it has on the standardisation of the village appraisal.

4.3.3.1 A model of the village appraisal process.

Table 4.2 illustrates the village appraisal model as suggested in ACRE's publication *Village Appraisals: helping you to plan for your community's future* (1991 (a)). The model, used in conjunction with the computer software programme, was developed and produced by ACRE, Cheltenham and Gloucester College of Higher Education and Gloucestershire RCC. Its main objective was to aid and encourage the wider uptake of the village appraisal by rural communities. The software programme provides a list of questions from 14 subject areas to create a household questionnaire survey (see Table 4.3).

ACRE suggests that between 50 to 60 questions be asked through the household questionnaire survey, though a maximum of 80 questions can be used if necessary. The steering group can also compose a maximum of ten additional questions that will be unique to their village. The questions within the programme have been compiled and evaluated by ACRE, the Forest of Dean District Council, Gloucestershire County Council and Gloucestershire RCC. They are believed by ACRE to reflect the main issues in contemporary rural society, albeit on the basis of an evaluation within the Gloucestershire area. Indeed, it could be argued that the issues may show variation from one part of rural England to another and that the issues facing a commuter village in Oxfordshire are very different from those facing a declining mining village in the northern Pennines of Northumberland (Newby, 1988). Equally, within an area there may be similar variations

such as between an 'Estate' village which has been 'closed' to any form of development for many years and a village on the edge of a large town and threatened by suburban growth. The danger of a standard questionnaire, even with the flexibility to add questions, is that it generates a lot of material which may not be so important and less information where it is needed.

Table 4.3 The subject areas in the ACRE village appraisal software programme

CATEGORY	SUB SECTIONS
People	Number; Age; Disabilities; Sex; Migration.
Housing	Type; Size; Location; Value; Future needs; Migration.
Employment	Type; No. of employed persons; Location of workplace; Commuter? Future needs.
Education	Level required.
Transport & Highways	No. of vehicles; Bikes; Garages; Parking; Bus service; Rail service; Traffic levels; Speeding
Countryside / Environment	Footpaths; Public rights of way; Roads; Lanes; Wildlife; Dogs; Litter; Best Kept Village; Noise pollution; Buildings; Improvements.
Health & Social Services	Access; Residential care; Good Neighbour Scheme; Community care.
Emergency, Environment & other Services	Standard of service; Neighbourhood Watch; Gas connection; Waste disposal.
Retail Services	Services requirements; Shops; Post Office.
Sport, Social & Entertainment	Leisure services; Facilities; Allotments; Clubs and Societies.
Information & Communications	Library service; Provision of parish information; Parish magazine/newsletter; Notice board; TV and Radio reception.
Religion	Place of worship; Importance of religion.
Local government	Role of parish council; Awareness of local representatives; Planning control.

(ACRE, 1991 (b)).

In adopting the model, ACRE recommends that rural communities ensure the household questionnaire survey be:

“designed to allow everyone to take part in the appraisal so that they can register their own views and opinions on issues that affect the community”
(ACRE, 1991 (b): 2).

It is advised that a copy of the questionnaire survey is sent to each household within the locality and that every member over the age of 11 should be provided with the opportunity to participate. The computer programme can also be used to analyse the results of the

household questionnaire survey and produce graphs for easy interpretation and inclusion in the village appraisal document. The advantage of the software programme is that it helps produce a village appraisal and ensures that the problems associated with the household questionnaire survey (for example data collection, analysis and interpretation) do not engulf steering groups and jeopardize the production of the written report.

What the appraisal model also suggests (Table 4.2) is that the whole exercise is based around a questionnaire survey, with little or no evidence of other forms of consultation, participation or involvement. By implication, therefore, the whole process remains tightly constrained by the agenda as seen by the steering group (stage 2), following which the maximum participation from the wider community is through responses to the questionnaire survey (stage 8). Finally, following 'publication' of the report and "constructive recommendations for action" (stage 10), communities are encouraged to "decide on the most appropriate authorities with which to negotiate proposals for your community" (stage 11). Implicit in this approach is a signal that much of the decision making still lies outside the reach of local people, so that the model only recommends constructive action with the authorities. There seems to be, therefore, a view emerging from these guidelines that only particular forms of appraisal activity (such as this one) are likely to succeed and then only if produced in a particular way. How this model is delivered by the RCCs and ACRE in actual rural communities will be discussed in a later chapter, together with a discussion as to how they are received by local planning authorities, but it does raise questions about who in reality is empowered by any shift to a less hierarchical planning system.

A final consequence of the standardisation discussion has been the debate over process versus product, particularly since the introduction of best practice models in the village appraisal is believed to have increased the tendency of rural communities to "take a hard-headed view [in producing the village appraisal]...keeping firmly in their sights the end product" (Moseley, 1996: 14-15).

4.3.4 Process versus product.

When the village appraisal was first undertaken in Stocksfield:

“the village stopped in its environmental tracks, took itself by its social collar, shook itself creatively and came up with a collective testimony as to the way it wished to evolve” (Stocksfield Neighbourhood Working Party, 1971: front cover.).

According to critics, this act of creativity in the village appraisal process would be virtually impossible to detect today because of the “degree of standardisation [that] has occurred” (Bovey, 1993: 55). The introduction of best practice models and the incorporation of recommended techniques and methods to use during the implementation of the village appraisal, has set “certain standards” that are being followed across rural England (Lumb, 1990: 182).

Lumb (1990) argued that the consistent reproduction of a standard practice of the village appraisal has shifted the emphasis away from a ‘process’ to a ‘product’ in its own right. No longer is the process the crux of the initiative, in which the village appraisal would be tailored to the specific, unique requirements of the individual community. Rather, the village appraisal process is only considered as the necessary pre-cursor to the village appraisal document or written report. As a consequence the heterogeneity that exists in rural localities is being jeopardised and, furthermore, local governance is being delivered not from the ‘bottom-up’ but from the ‘top-down’ by organisations that implement best-practice models. Ironically, it is the mechanisms put in place by statutory planning authorities which have encouraged this emphasis on the product. In other words, the document was introduced in order to attract the attentions of planners who were familiar with written reports and also to “counteract those [plans] put out by the planning authority” (Lumb, 1990: 182). On the other hand, Bovey (1993) has suggested that the village appraisal document has become a necessary adjunct to the village appraisal process because it has more credibility within the statutory planning system than the benefits accrued by the community through the process. The written document is supposed to provide the rural community with access into the planning process and ultimately the decision making process, although this is not always the case in reality.

The popularity of the written report has increased, according to Lumb, because of the difficulty which the RCC officers have in explaining the village appraisal “to local people who... are still accustomed to having decisions made for them” (1990: 182); even though

rural communities are considered to be more adept at helping themselves than the planning system has ever been (DoE/MAFF, 1995). The RCC officers provide rural communities with a worked example of what would be created if the ‘correct’ process, similar to the one offered through the ACRE model, was followed. Communities then become eager to produce a document of similar quality to the one that is exhibited by the RCC (because only the ‘best’ examples are used). As the process is not a tangible item that can be exhibited, its benefits are less important to the RCC officer trying to convince a community the village appraisal is a worthwhile initiative.

However, the evidence of the shift from process to product within the literature remains unexplored. Whilst Bovey (1993) has described the links between the village appraisal document and the statutory planning system, there is little evidence of any exploration of these links. For this reason, chapters 6 and 8 will debate the role of the RCC as an agent within the planning process trying to regulate the village appraisal and mould it into a mechanism that not so much replaces the statutory Local Plan but enhances it, and ensures that it is undertaken from the ‘bottom-up’ according to a prescribed model. Moreover, chapter 7 will examine the impact of the process – product debate upon the process of participation in the village appraisal, with particular emphasis on the recruitment of members onto the steering group with specific characteristics to satisfy the ‘process’ or ‘product’ agenda.

4.3.5 Triggers for implementation.

As an initiative that can “foster community spirit, encourage a sense of local pride... [and] present information in a professional and structured way” (Sherwood and Lewis, 1994: 80), the village appraisal would appear to be an ideal vehicle to promote active citizenship and local governance. Aside from the attempts by the agencies to regulate and standardise the village appraisal, it is a mechanism that reflects the essence of planning from the ‘bottom-up’ in that allows for the heterogeneity of rural communities. As such, it is expected that there are as many triggers for undertaking the village appraisal as there are outcomes. The following examples from within the literature demonstrate that two broad categories of triggers exist, either pro-active triggers or reactive.

4.3.5.1 Pro-active triggers.

Pro-active triggers for the village appraisal are those which have been initiated from within the community “often in response to a specific local controversy” (Derounian, 1984: 32). Such “trigger concerns are many and varied” (Moseley *et al*, 1996 (a): 9). For example, in the Forest of Dean, Fisher found that a key trigger for the village appraisal was to improve social planning.

“Appraisals seem to be more socially oriented, representing the needs particular to those communities...the consensus is one of pro-development” (1993: 19).

On the other hand, Bovey, in her study of Hayfield in Derbyshire, found that the village appraisal was triggered as a response to a growing concern over ‘green’, or environmental issues. Within the community it was felt that local people needed to be empowered to take an active interest in their environment and provide a:

“strategic framework, within which activities could be ordered... which led to the idea of undertaking a parish appraisal” (1993: 43).

This concern for what has now become central to the ‘Rural Action’ programme was also found by Moseley *et al* (1996 (a)) to be a major trigger for village appraisals in Gloucestershire and Oxfordshire. However, as Table 4.4 illustrates, an additional 11 triggers were found across the two counties (Moseley *et al*, 1996 (a): 14b).

Table 4.4 Pro-active triggers to the village appraisal in Gloucestershire and Oxfordshire.

Clubs and Societies
Community Centre
Employment
Information
Local Environment
Playground
Road Conditions
Road Safety
Shopping
Social Activities
Village Hall
Youth Facilities

Harris, (1993) in her study of the Stroud District in Gloucestershire uncovered a further pro-active trigger. The trigger was recognised as the community's need to update local information about the views and opinions of the local population and was considered by Harris to be the principal reason for undertaking the village appraisal. For example if a community was "considering the provision of new play facilities", a village appraisal would help reach a decision about whether to "consider the under 5's, 5 - 10's or over 10's" (ibid.: 4). Additionally, the village appraisal may act to reduce the tension that is frequently generated within a community between the newcomers and the established residents. Harris found that joining together many different groups of people across the village in order to conduct the appraisal could ease such tension. Thus the process could benefit all sections of the community (Harris, 1993).

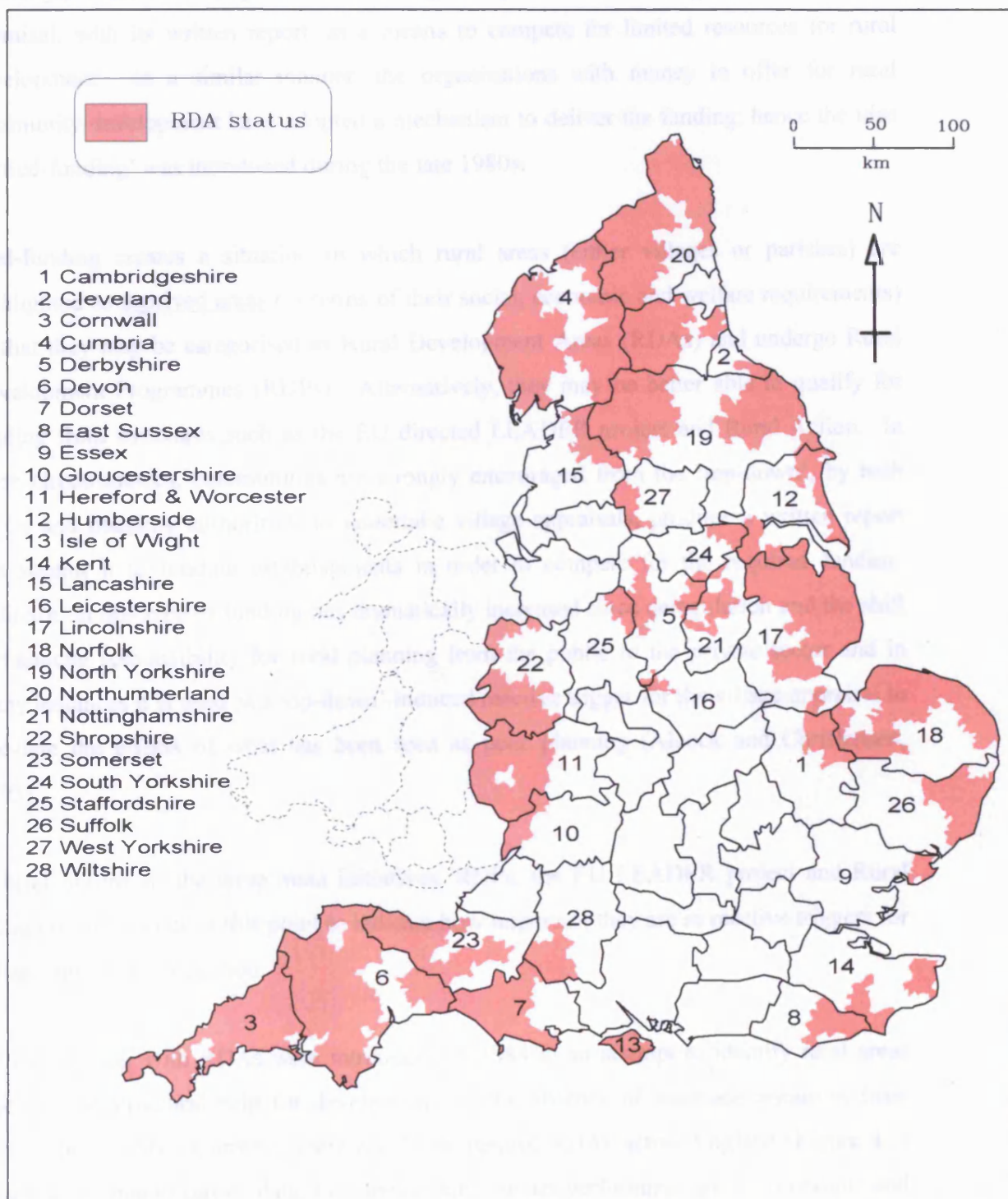
4.3.5.2 Reactive triggers.

Reactive triggers occur for example when the wider community protests against what it considers poor planning initiatives introduced from the 'top-down' by the local planning authorities without prior public participation. In such circumstances, the village appraisal acts as a vehicle to convey the community's reaction to a planning decision and often to suggest alternative ideas (Harris, 1993: 4).

For example Derounian (1984) found that in Devon an application for a large-scale luxury housing development triggered the village appraisal in Thurlestone, whilst in the neighbouring village of Hawkchurch the village appraisal was conducted to clarify the uncertainty about new, small industrial units that were to be built in the village.

Moseley *et al* (1996 (a)) in their research in Gloucestershire and Oxfordshire found however that reactive triggers were not as abundant as pro-active triggers. The five reactive triggers to village appraisals in both counties were anti-development, traffic, speeding, low cost housing, and the police. This may demonstrate that in Gloucestershire and Oxfordshire poor planning policy implemented from the 'top-down' is less common and that the planning agencies are more adept at listening to the wants and wishes of rural communities (Moseley *et al*, 1996 (a): 14b).

Figure 4.1 Counties in England with a designated RDA status.



One consequence of the shift towards greater involvement and participation by a range of organisations has been the introduction of competitive tendering for the provision of limited resources in rural areas (Cloke and Bell, 1989). Naturally, the agencies in the planning process (including the RCCs and planning authorities) have adopted the village appraisal, with its written report, as a means to compete for limited resources for rural development. In a similar manner, the organisations with money to offer for rural community development have adopted a mechanism to deliver the funding; hence the idea of 'tied-funding' was introduced during the late 1980s.

Tied-funding creates a situation in which rural areas (either villages or parishes) are highlighted as deprived areas (in terms of their social, economic and welfare requirements) so that they may be categorised as Rural Development Areas (RDAs) and undergo Rural Development Programmes (RDPs). Alternatively, they may be better able to qualify for funding from structures such as the EU directed LEADER project and Rural Action. In these circumstances, communities are strongly encouraged from the 'top-down', by both RCCs and planning authorities, to undertake village appraisals, produce a written report and submit it to funding establishments in order to compete for the required funding. Reliance on this type of funding has dramatically increased since deregulation and the shift in financial responsibility for rural planning from the public to the private sector and in many instances it is used as a top-down'-induced reactive trigger for the village appraisal to alleviate the effects of what has been seen as poor planning (Alcock and Christensen, 1995).

A brief outline of the three main initiatives, RDPs, the EU LEADER project and Rural Action is appropriate at this point to indicate how important they are as reactive triggers for village appraisal production.

RDPs, together with RDAs were introduced in 1984 in an attempt to identify rural areas that needed structural help for development in the absence of adequate resources from within the locality. Currently there are 24 designated RDAs across England (Figure 4.1) where according to census data, localities exhibit 'under performing' social, economic and welfare indicators. Within the RDAs, RDPs are implemented using community participation. RDPs were a means by which the Rural Development Commission (RDC), a

government appointed 'quango', could target limited resources effectively (Bowler and Lewis, 1991). Two types of RDPs can be identified within the RDAs. The first type is termed 'broad benefit' appraisals that are initiated from the 'top-down', based on government guidelines, to formulate rural policy that induces community action. The second type of RDP are 'specific benefit' appraisals, encouraged from the 'bottom-up', where "local needs are advanced by local interest groups, private individuals or elected representatives" in order to tackle rural issues either marginal to the planning system or where planning has been a contributing factor (Bowler and Lewis, 1991: 174). The triggers for undertaking these projects, however, are only being realised in the largest rural communities.

The European Union Leader Objective 5b project:

"is aimed at developing the potential of rural areas by ways of innovative and demonstrative projects, exchange of ideas and trans-national experience" (DoE, 1995: 320).

In order to qualify for the available funding, a specific agenda (outlined by the European Union) has to be satisfied and only if an area had:

- a below average level of economic development;
- employment dominated by the agricultural sector;
- poor levels of agricultural incomes;
- problems of peripherality;
- problems of depopulation;
- a susceptibility to economic pressures (Ward and McNicholas, 1998: 28).

Furthermore, a rural community has to comply to undertake a rural innovative programme that offers at least one of the following:

- technical support for rural development;
- vocational training;
- support for rural tourism, small firms, craft fairs and local services;
- local agriculture, forestry and fishery products;
- safeguarding or improving the environment and living conditions.

Table 4.5 The areas eligible for LEADER 5b project funding.

p = part of the County: a = all of the County.

Cambridgeshire (p)
Cornwall (a)
Cumbria (p)
Derbyshire (p)
Devon (p)
Durham (p)
Hereford and Worcester (p)
Humberside (p)
Kent (p)
Lancashire (p)
Lincolnshire (p)
Norfolk (p)
North Yorkshire (p)
Northumberland (p)
Shropshire (p)
Somerset (p)
Staffordshire (p)
Suffolk (p)

Funding is provided for those rural areas that require development and structural adjustment and where the 'per capita' is less than 75 percent of the EU average. Within the UK, however, just 18 counties are eligible to receive any money from the EU (Table 4.5) under the Objective 5b project. Whilst it is the authority of the EU institutions that has set the criteria of eligibility for funding, it is stressed that through the Objective 5b project, actors at the local level were to:

"gain a greater input into the policy process" and more importantly the project is to be administered by an approach which stressed the building of new links between different levels of government...the approach [also] required that dialogue and partnerships be developed in localities between different sectors and groups of actors, including local government, business interests, rural development and training agencies and voluntary and community groups" (Ward and McNicholas, 1998: 29).

Rural Action is a similar type of initiative to the LEADER project. Rural communities have to satisfy an agenda set by the organisation Rural Action to qualify for any financial assistance. In contrast to the LEADER project, all rural communities in the UK are eligible, but grants are only available to make it "easier for people in rural communities to undertake any project which benefits their local environment or increases understanding and care of it" (Rural Action, (no date): Leaflet (emphasis added)). Even so, Rural Action does help rural communities obtain the necessary funding by initiating contact with all the relevant organisations or authorities that help:

"a group to develop the skills and knowledge needed to carry out [the] project successfully" (ibid.).

Examples of projects undertaken using Rural Action grants include: an energy audit (West Yorkshire); the creation of a conservation group (Suffolk); the creation of a recycling group which has secured five rural jobs (Devon); and the formation of a youth 'green' group (Nottinghamshire) (Rural Action, (no date): Leaflet).

The problem with tied-funding is that the incentive to undertake the village appraisal is provided from the 'top-down' rather than from the 'bottom-up'. The process of 'tied-funding' in which rural communities follow an agenda devised by the planning agencies is an approach to rural community development that is becoming ever more popular as resources for rural areas dwindle. As such, the impact that it has on the village appraisal, as

a tool to encourage active citizenship and deliver local governance needs to be investigated in chapters 6 and 8.

4.3.6 Outcomes.

In order to set the scene for the empirical analysis that follows in chapter 8, a review of the various outcomes of the village appraisal is undertaken. Two themes are covered:

- tangible outcomes;
- intangible outcomes.

4.3.6.1 Tangible outcomes.

Recommended action points or RAPs is a term coined by Moseley *et al* (1996 (a)) to describe the action and planning initiatives which rural communities have recommended as a direct result of the village appraisal. They are considered to be the potential outcomes of the village appraisal, although in order to become outcomes, they need to be implemented. The RAPs are usually described within the appraisal document, which would frequently be perused by elected planning representatives and planning professionals. The RAPs appear in a variety of formats depending on the layout of the written document, either clearly identified as a list of RAPs, laid down within the body of the text, or simply written as a desirable scenario. The following discussion describes the types of RAPs that have been identified within the literature.

Derounian, through his work as an RCC officer in Devon, found a variety of RAPs which “could be directly or indirectly attributed to the appraisal” (1984: 32). In South Tawton, a parish within the Okehampton District, it was recommended that the doctors carry out a home visit on all persons aged over 70 years at least once a year. In addition, it was believed that a bus service from the village into Okehampton would be a worthwhile investment. The broad issue of housing was included in the RAPs of three further villages that Derounian monitored. At Old Bishops 13 new houses were recommended, whilst Bradninch wanted new ‘starter homes’ for the local young people and Chagford identified the need for some sheltered housing. Job creation was the priority in the RAPs in

Hawkchurch, where it was suggested that the parish and district councils should build light industrial workshops to introduce new employment into the area.

Harris (1993) identified two principal types of RAPs during the analysis of 17 village appraisals in the Stroud District of Gloucestershire. The RAPs were categorised as 1) those that would improve the environment for the whole community, make a contribution to rural community development and 2) those RAPs that only benefit certain groups of people within the community. The following list contains the eight RAPs that were implemented in the Stroud District; they are divided into the two types:

1. RAPs that benefit the whole community:

- the creation of newsletters;
- the introduction of village directories;
- improvement to public transport;
- the formation of new social groups.

2. RAPs that benefit certain groups:

- formation of play groups;
- introduction of voluntary services;
- housing;
- the introduction of community care initiatives.

Additionally, Moseley *et al* (1996 (b)) identified 422 RAPs in their study of 44 village appraisals undertaken in Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire which were grouped into the following nine categories:

1. reducing traffic related problems (speed limits, removing traffic hazards);
2. improving the very local environment (reduce litter and dog dirt, plant trees, improve street lighting);
3. curbing housing development and increasing social housing provision;
4. reducing crime and the fear of crime;
5. improving the quality of community life (more social events, restore village hall);
6. the retention or restoration of village services (public transport, school, shops);
7. improve local infrastructure;
8. increase recycling provision;
9. provide better youth facilities.

According to the authors, 90 percent of the 422 RAPs could be encapsulated within these nine groups. Furthermore, Moseley *et al* asserted that the outcomes of the 44 village appraisals across Oxfordshire and Gloucester represented “an agenda for action in rural southern England in the mid 1990s” (1996 (b): 320).

There is obviously a multitude of RAPs that are identified as a result of the village appraisal. Even so, the success of the village appraisal is not necessarily based upon the identification of such RAPs. It rather depends on whether the community is able to achieve the implementation of the RAPs, which is not just the responsibility of the community. The village appraisal is a partnership between the key actors in the planning process who are encouraged to work together. But, as previous discussions in this chapter have illustrated, there are problems for participation so that rural community development, especially from the ‘bottom-up’, is not always a guaranteed outcome (but neither is it always a desired outcome). Consequently, as the following discussion demonstrates, the key actors are adopting certain mechanisms to ensure the village appraisal will adhere to a given agenda. The significance of this process on the delivery of local governance and widespread community participation will be examined further in chapter 7.

First, Fisher (1993) found that the implementation of the RAPs is positively affected by following the best-practice models laid down by the RCCs. Despite the effects of standardization caused by the best-practice models, the advice provided by the RCCs is specifically tailored for maximising the impact of the village appraisal. As such, Fisher argued that the success of the village appraisal “depends as much on the ensuing activity and organisation, as in the process of carrying it out” (1993: 53).

Second, Ashman’s (1993) study *The Success of Village Appraisals in Implementing Recommendations* tested several hypotheses that were believed to affect the success of the RAPs. His study of six villages in Devon and Gloucestershire found that there was a particularly high statistical correlation (although no figure is recorded) between the village appraisals that achieved the implementation of the RAPS and where the:

“election of members to a steering committee [had occurred] because they possess skills needed in an appraisal and the implementation of recommendations” (1993: 63).

Similarly, Moseley *et al* (1996 (b)) found that the dynamism and motivation of individuals on the steering group of the village appraisal was crucial to ensure that the RAPs were implemented.

Third, Ashman (1993) and Moseley *et al* (1996 (b)) indicated that for the implementation of any given RAP to be successful, it must be fully supported by the majority of community members. It was found that where community support for the RAP was over 70 percent, there was a higher success rate of implementation (Ashman, 1993). Furthermore, Ashman's study concluded that the parish council played a large part in securing the implementation of the RAPs in that a village appraisal was more likely to achieve a desired outcome with the active support of the parish council.

Finally, Moseley *et al* (1996 (b)) established that the implementation of the RAPs was affected by which organisations were responsible. From the study of 44 village appraisals it was found that RAPs were implemented in three main ways either, 'totally', 'partially', or 'not at all' (Table 4.6). The analysis found that the RAPs which were implemented either partially or totally were predominantly the responsibility of the local community or parish council; community based organisations were found to be best placed to implement the recommended action (although support from the parish council for the village appraisal is often needed). Of those RAPs that were not implemented, the power to do so frequently lay with the external planning authorities.

Table 4.6 The implementation of the RAPs in Gloucestershire and Oxfordshire.

Category	Gloucestershire		Oxfordshire		Total	
Totally	83	31.9%	54	33.3%	137	32.5%
Partially	95	36.5%	40	24.7%	135	32.0%
Not at all	82	31.5%	68	42.0%	150	35.3%
Total	260	100.0%	162	100.0%	422	100.0%

(Moseley *et al*, 1996 (b): 321).

Very little research has been conducted to understand why RAPs are not implemented. The most comprehensive analysis is that completed by Ashman (1993). The results of his study indicated that the main reason why RAPs were not implemented was the lack of external

help for funding the required community development by the planning authorities or local government agencies (for example the Health Authority or Highways Agency) as illustrated in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7 The reasons for the failure of the RAPs.

Reason for failure of RAPs	% of total
Lack of external help	29.4
Insufficient demand	23.5
Lack of community interest	17.7
Lack of resources	17.6
Not a priority	11.7

(Ashman, 1993: 68).

This is an issue that links back to the previous discussions regarding the reactive triggers to the village appraisal and the issue of tied-funding. In certain 'deprived' areas of rural England, agencies and organisations are better able to offer funding to implement RAPs which are identified through the village appraisal. The only alternative to this is to make rural communities compete against other localities for the allocation of ever decreasing resources.

4.3.6.2 Intangible outcomes.

Intangible benefits or outcomes are those that affect the individuals who participate in the village appraisal, often resulting in the betterment of the rural community through the skills that are acquired by participating individuals. According to Lumb (1990), the community and the participants are bypassing the possibility of experiencing the intangible benefits in favour of producing the ideal village appraisal document and implementing community development (section 4.3.4). However, the study by Fisher (1993) clearly identifies an adjunct to the planning potential of the village appraisal. The three intangible benefits that he identifies are the epitome of active citizenship and local governance and although Fisher does not make this connection, his work provides the basis for further assessment in chapters 7 and 8 of this thesis. The potential that the appraisal initiative has as a tool to develop an individual citizen within the community needs to be investigated in response to the government's policy to deliver local governance.

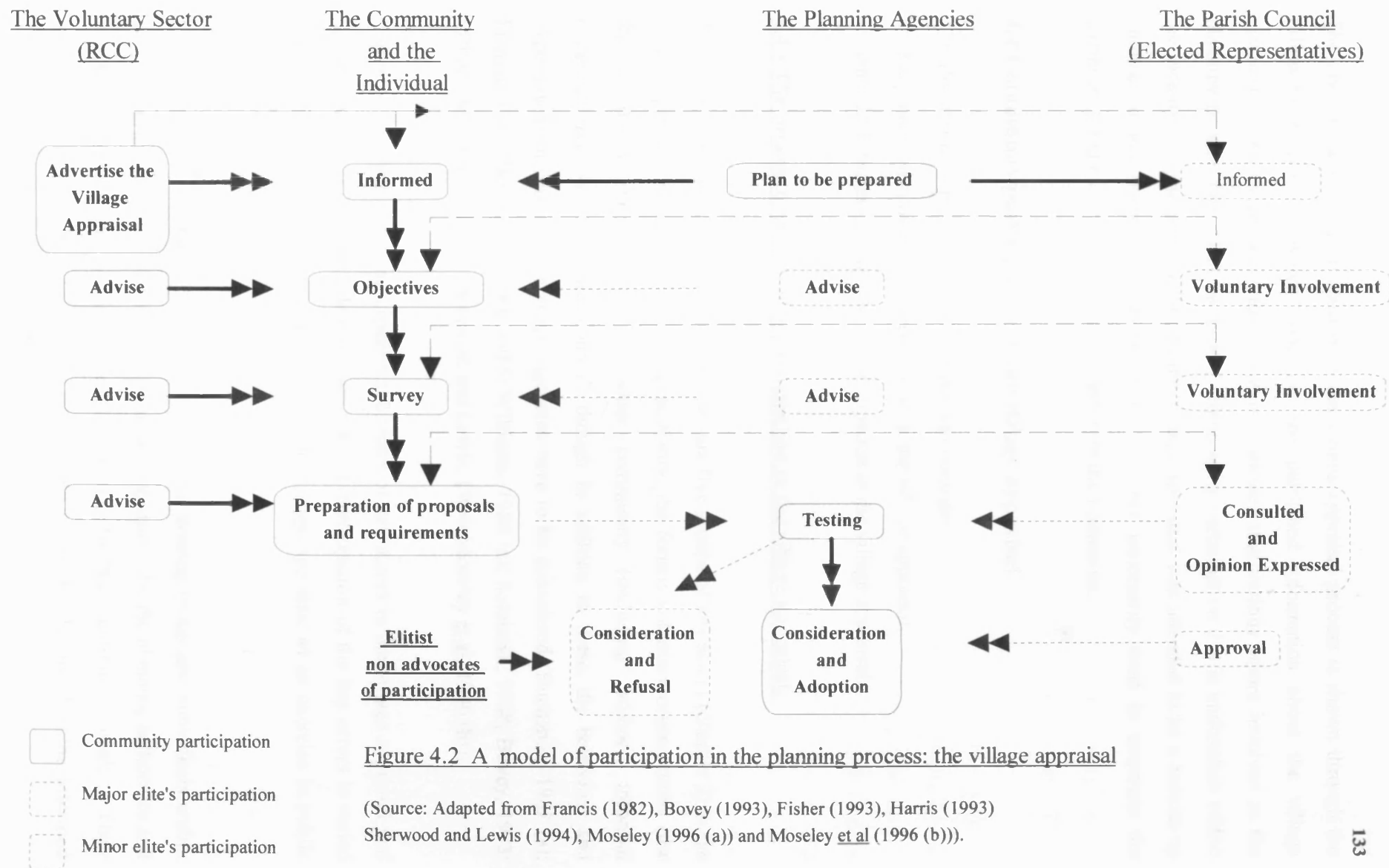
The first intangible benefit that Fisher identified is the potential of the village appraisal to educate the community and increase its awareness. In his study of Parracombe and Cornwood parishes in Devon, Fisher found that, as a consequence of the village appraisal, the relationship between the parish council and the wider community had been improved by the dissemination of detailed information about the duties of the parish council which created a greater understanding of the difficulties and problems that were experienced by the council. Furthermore, the educative value of the appraisal was recognised amongst the local authority planners as constituting “a valuable learning exercise” (Fisher, 1993: 46).

The second, more undervalued intangible benefit for the community, is the degree of compromise which occurs through the village appraisal as a solution “to the polarisation of opinions that exist” (Fisher, 1993: 46). The village appraisal enables all participants in the process to air their views and opinions and become aware of those that are held by others. In this way, the appraisal provides an arena within which compromise can grow.

The final area in which the village appraisal can benefit the community is in the political arena. “As a leveller of elite domination” the appraisal can be an incentive for the elected, representative parish council to “get their house in order - to take stock” of what they are all about (Fisher, 1993: 59). It also provides an opportunity for individuals to compete for election onto the council; if these people have been involved with the appraisal then they are likely to lead the village into the future, based on the RAPs which have been identified, and the need to engage in debate with others, such as planners, if the RAPs are to lead to actual outcomes.

Therefore, from this evidence the village appraisal can be considered as more than a means to instigate physical planning initiatives. Indeed, as Fisher concludes from his research:

“arguably the best appraisals are those that, whilst responding to the local physical planning process, realise the limitations of a purely planning driven document...encouraging a broader sweep of social issues...enabling the appraisal to work for the community at various levels” (1993: 59 (emphasis added)).



The diverse nature of participation in the village appraisal process is shown through the following discussion, which considers the published information about the village appraisal. The evidence in the literature indicates that various actors involved in the planning process can affect the type of community participation that is undertaken within the locality. Furthermore, although the village appraisal was intended to be a bottom-up method to aid community development, it is not necessarily used to empower the community and nor is it always conducted from the bottom-up.

4.4 Community participation in the village appraisal.

This discussion is divided into two sections to consider:

- the process of community participation in the village appraisal;
- empirical studies of community participation in the village appraisal.

4.4.1 The process of community participation in the village appraisal.

As section 4.3.1 discussed, potentially there are five groups of key actors (chapter 2) in the village appraisal process, the planning authority, the formal voluntary organisations (the RCCs), the steering group, the wider community (including ‘ad-hoc’, informal organisations), and the parish council; though in addition to these, the behaviour and expectations of central government agencies have to be considered (Buchanan, 1982 (a); Francis, 1982; Derounian, 1984, 1985; Williams, 1984 (a); Sulaiman, 1988; Bovey, 1993; Fisher, 1993; Harris, 1993; Sherwood and Lewis, 1994; Moseley *et al*, 1996 (b)).

Figure 4.2 illustrates the participation processes of key actors in the village appraisal and the reviews that follow will demonstrate that the participation of the key actors is varied and flexible, indicating the complexities of the village appraisal as an exercise in public participation.

As has already been stated, the participation of the steering group and individuals within the community can be initiated either from the ‘top-down’ by the planning authorities and voluntary organisations or from the ‘bottom-up’ by the community itself. Their participation involves four key stages (as outlined in chapter 2): they become informed

about the village appraisal; set an agenda for its implementation; undertake a household questionnaire survey; and produce a village appraisal document which could include Recommended Action Points (RAPs) for the future planning of the village. In addition to these four stages, public meetings can be held and exhibitions undertaken to advertise the document to the individual, the wider community and the planning authorities. Even though the steering group has the overall responsibility for initiating the village appraisal within the community, the degree to which they control the process will depend on the characteristics of the planning authorities, the parish council or the voluntary sector who all participate in the process at various stages.

The planning agencies can 'control' the village appraisal according to their interpretation of public participation. During the village appraisal process the agencies may have either a positive or a negative influence through their role as advisors to rural communities and in their decision to adopt or refuse the recommended action. The effect of the involvement by the planning agencies was identified in research undertaken by Fisher (1993). The planners were found to have mixed agendas for the implementation of the village appraisal. For example, the evidence from Cotswold District Council demonstrated that planners had initiated the village appraisal from the 'top-down' by actively:

“encouraging the communities to carry out village appraisals in addition to the standard questionnaire” (1993: 19).

However, as Fisher argued, this is a method of community involvement rather than community development and tends to result in village appraisals that:

“are essentially planning driven and would not, perhaps otherwise have been done...this somewhat blinkered approach has been less than successful, producing appraisals of limited value” (ibid.).

Additionally, Fisher found that the outcomes of the village appraisals undertaken in Devon had a limited impact upon the county council. As one county planning officer remarked, “we don't take much notice of them” (as quoted by Fisher, 1993: 48). Such behaviour by planning agencies limits public participation to an exercise that resembles what Arnstein referred to as community consultation rather than the expected community development.

According to Francis (1982) and Moseley (1996), the participation of the parish council takes two forms. Through full participation the elected parish council controls the process of the village appraisal within the locality and takes full responsibility and ownership for the initiative. In a situation of non-participation, an appraisal can be completed that fully represents the views of the local community but the absence of the parish council raises questions concerning the legitimacy of the document in the eyes of the planning authorities. Such village appraisals may not be recognised and this can undermine any benefits that the wider community could gain from participating in the process. Thus although the participation of the parish council is voluntary, this elite have the power to limit both the participation of the wider community and the effects of any community development which may result.

The voluntary sector (represented by the RCC) play the role of advisor following the initial stages of pro-actively advertising the village appraisal process (Kearns, 1992). However, Lumb (1990) in her study of the RCC officers in Northumberland considered them to play a key role in the village appraisal process. As section 4.3.4 has discussed, Lumb argued that RCC officers were in an opportune position to influence the village appraisal. Through their use of standard blueprints for the appraisal process, the officers could alter the outcomes of the village appraisal and affect the participation of the wider community. Additionally, Bovey (1993) observed village appraisal activity in Derbyshire and found that, whilst the RCC community development worker was regarded as an enabler or facilitator of change in the locality, there was also the power to manipulate the village appraisal process through their participation. In her case study of Hayfield, Bovey found that the behaviour of the community development worker compromised the outcome of the village appraisal because the steering group did not set an adequate agenda for the village appraisal and failed to achieve widespread community participation.

From this evidence it can be concluded that the implementation of the village appraisal within the locality and its application as a tool to encourage active citizenship and deliver local governance must hinge on the complexity of the relationships that exist between the key actors. At key points in the process there is the potential for the village appraisal to be manipulated to the advantage of one or other group. Therefore, the nature and

characteristics of the key actors will influence the process of participation in the village appraisal.

A further insight into participation in the village appraisal is gained through examining the empirical studies that have previously been undertaken.

4.4.2 Empirical studies of participation in the village appraisal.

Thus far, three academic papers have been published which consider the nature of public participation in the village appraisal.

The first study refers to research by Francis in Kent (1982). The objective of the study was to assess how rural communities prepared and implemented their planning policy guidelines through the village appraisal. His case study involved using a combination of questionnaire surveys and in-depth interviews to analyse the 27 village appraisals that had been completed prior to the commencement of his research³. Francis chose the 27 villages from:

“all [the] village appraisals which had been notified to the Countryside Officer following a request circulated to all parish councils in the county” (p. 340).

In so doing, Francis chose to use information that had been collected from the ‘top-down’ to study this ‘bottom-up’ initiative. This decision could have had implications for the results of his study because he relied on the information that had been gathered by the Countryside Officer.

³ Of the 27 village appraisals that were studied, only 25 were used to calculate the participation rates due to a problem with finding participants to interview in two of the villages.

From the information provided Francis found that participation on the steering groups of the village appraisal was mixed. Just six village appraisal steering groups consisted of both parish councillors and members of the wider community, whilst 17 of the village appraisals were conducted under the sole direction of the parish council with five of these undertaken by just one person. Additional analysis of the levels of public participation in the village appraisals produced a somewhat confusing summary of the situation in Kent during this time. Francis found that just eight villages undertook a questionnaire survey although 22 of the village appraisals attempted to incorporate wider community participation in some form, for example a public meeting or exhibition. However, only one village included more than 50 percent of the wider community, whilst 15 involved less than 10 percent in the village appraisal. Francis also found that from the eight villages that used the household questionnaire survey only two incorporated what he had termed “a full programme of participation” (p. 342, emphasis added), including a household questionnaire survey, the publication of a draft version of the village appraisal for public consultation and a public exhibition. Even so, it is evident that this full programme comprises little more than various forms of passive participation with only limited opportunities for debate within the community.

Whilst Francis has generated a relatively small amount of information regarding public participation in the village appraisal his research was completed at a time when no previous systematic study of the initiative had been undertaken. Therefore, the data outlined above presents a picture of the early village appraisals and consequently is used as a basis for this research project, especially where the participation of the parish council is concerned.

The second study is that undertaken by Moseley *et al* (1996 (b)). The study monitored, amongst other things, the levels of participation that had been achieved in village appraisals undertaken in the two shire counties of Gloucester and Oxford. Both of these counties have seen extensive village appraisal activity. However, the authors, in a remarkably similar way to Francis (1982), organised their study areas according to a list of completed appraisals that had been compiled by the RCCs. Even so, this remained an incomplete record and:

“interestingly a small number of further relevant appraisals emerged as the field work began. As befits a genuinely community-based initiative, one or two [village appraisals] had clearly been undertaken without this fact registering in the RCC office” (Moseley *et al* (1996 (b): 313).

44 completed village appraisals were selected for the research, 28 in Gloucestershire and 16 in Oxfordshire⁴.

The study provides an overview of the genesis of the village appraisal and “assesses their practical usefulness” (p. 311). In so doing, the levels of public participation in the household questionnaire survey were described. It was found that in Gloucestershire the response rates to the household questionnaire survey (which are used to reflect the basic level of public participation) were between 36 and 94 percent whereas, in Oxfordshire the response rates were between 47 and 90 percent. The response rate was below 60 percent in just six villages, indicating that response rates across a range of villages do not spread symmetrically around the mean but tend to be skewed toward higher percentage responses. In other words, the use of the average tends to underestimate the actual level of public participation in questionnaire surveys. Thus Moseley *et al* were able to conclude that:

“nearly 40,000 individual households provided the information and views collated in the 44 appraisal reports” (1996 (b): 317).

This evidence illustrates that the method of incorporating wider community participation in the village appraisal, or at least the attitude towards the concept of public participation, has altered over time. Since Francis undertook his case study in Kent, the village appraisal methodology has become more sensitive and appears to have started to “capture the views of the silent majority” (Moseley *et al*, 1996 (b): 316), as indicated by the apparent increase in public participation between the two studies. However, in the absence of a detailed analysis of the response rates in the study conducted by Moseley *et al* it is difficult to make any firm conclusions concerning the levels of participation in the village appraisal. Even though the two studies are pioneering in their nature, they add little to our understanding of

⁴ This was not the full complement of completed village appraisals within the two counties. In Oxfordshire 25 appraisals had been completed and in Gloucestershire 62 appraisals were completed within the time period set by the authors 1990 - 1993.

the mechanisms associated with community participation in the village appraisal, though Moseley *et al* do suggest that the variable participation rates:

“reflected the level of personal contact, the tenacity of the interviewers and questionnaire collectors and, in some smaller communities, an apparent sensitivity regarding confidentiality” (1996 (b): 316).

The absence of a wider understanding of participation in the village appraisal is more apparent in the third study undertaken by Moseley (1997). This indicated that since 1970, 1500 villages nationally had completed a village appraisal, that over one million people have participated by providing their views and opinions in a questionnaire survey about their village, and that an additional 15,000 people have actively participated through the steering group. However useful as this extrapolation is, Moseley does not explain the type of participation that is undertaken or the consequences of the levels of participation that are achieved. Effective as the village appraisal is for encouraging public participation, there are problems with the technique of collecting information through the medium of a household questionnaire survey that should be recognised (as briefly suggested in chapter 3, section 3.2). Thus Fagence (1977) classified the household questionnaire survey as an information gathering exercise with ‘low levels’ of impact on participation in the decision making process. England (1974) believed that it should be relegated to an order below that of the public exhibition, public meetings and the publication of information brochures because, whilst it represents a form of public participation, it is not a satisfactory means of involving the whole community in the planning process. Hilse (1973) further developed this latter point by suggesting that: (a) the results of the survey may be influenced by the ‘environment’ at the time of completion, which would invalidate the views and opinions at a later date; and (b) that the survey results are susceptible to manipulation by those in authority. Often the questionnaire survey is produced to prove or to disprove an issue, rather than as a pro-active document. Furthermore, as Oppenheim stated (1966), a questionnaire survey is an instrument that should be applied scientifically, not just as a list of questions or a form to be filled out and as such it should be specially designed. This would certainly make it too complex a method for use by the public:

“there must be some doubt on the validity of a questionnaire to function simultaneously as an information device, as a means of soliciting preferences

and as a means to generate further issues for examination“ (Coventry, 1973 as quoted by Fagence, 1977).

Even though the questionnaire survey is usually seen as the principal means of participation in the village appraisal for the wider community, “it does not provide anything like the complete solution” (Hoinville, 1971: 34). To illustrate a commitment to the village appraisal process, public participation should be encouraged on a higher level, using techniques which have a greater impact on the decision making process (Fagence, 1977; Francis, 1982). Therefore, one million people may have participated in completing a questionnaire survey, but the effects of their participation and the representative nature of their participation may be restricted just by the particular technique that was applied.

4.5 Conclusion.

The foregoing review has concluded that the contemporary village appraisal is a diverse mechanism that lacks both clarity and definition. The evidence suggests that it is an initiative that can be encouraged within the community for a number of reasons, but that it is open to the vagaries of the key actors that now exist in the planning process, with the potential for regulation (or manipulation) according to a particular agenda. Additionally, there is an absence of critical evaluation in the available literature about the village appraisal, which for such a widely applied mechanism raises considerable concern. Indeed, the evidence has demonstrated that an uncertainty remains about who benefits from the introduction of the village appraisal in the rural locality and thus whether key aspects of local governance are being delivered through the appraisal at the grass roots. The remaining chapters of the thesis seek to provide some answers to these questions on the basis of detailed research both nationally and through case studies in Northamptonshire, a county which has been particularly active in the production of appraisals, yet where there have been wide variations in the ways they have been conducted or indeed whether they have been conducted at all.

Prior to undertaking the empirical analysis that enables a deeper understanding of how village appraisal activity and participation are determined the following chapter will discuss the methodological approach that has been undertaken in the conducting of this research.

The application of a realist philosophy is explained whilst its suitability to the study of the village appraisal is illustrated, together with a detailed description of the research methods used and the villages in Northamptonshire which provided the case studies for research.

Chapter five

Methodology

5.1 Introduction.

Although the village appraisal has been recently popularised in the academic and non-academic literature (for example, Moseley *et al* 1996 (a); Harris, 1993; Moseley, 1997), earlier chapters in this thesis have indicated that there still remains a shortage of in-depth analysis regarding this long established locality based planning initiative. The literature which does exist contains largely factual data about the village appraisal (see for example, Francis, 1982; Derounian, 1984, 1985; Williams, 1984 (a); Ashman, 1993; Bovey, 1993; Fisher, 1993; Sherwood and Lewis, 1994; Moseley *et al*, 1996 (b)), and that has been gathered with little reference to the wider concepts of local governance, active citizenship and de-regulation, concepts which are now seen as playing an important role in the provision of services to rural areas. The absence of a critical evaluation of the village appraisal provides a hole which this thesis can fill. The empirical analysis that is undertaken in this thesis explores the 'gaps' that remain in our knowledge concerning the village appraisal.

The following chapters of the thesis examine the key actors and their participation in the village appraisal initiative. In addition, the interactions between community members and planning professionals are examined and also any effects such relationships may have on the outcomes of the village appraisal. As an increasingly popular mechanism used to promote local governance and active citizenship, an examination of the effects, which participants have on the village appraisal process, is overdue.

Realism has been adopted as the most appropriate theoretical approach to this study in order to achieve an understanding of the engagement of rural people and localities in the village appraisal process at a variety of scales and intensity. Furthermore, the application of a multiple methodology facilitates an overview and a detailed interpretation of the process of village appraisals at the national and local level focusing upon the wider national

structures (what realism sees as ‘necessary relations’) and the ways these are shaped by the distinctive characteristics of individual localities and the people and groups who live there (the contingent relations). Divided into three sections, this chapter will first consider four strands of rural geographical research and the ways in which they impact upon the study of village appraisals both in terms of their content and their methodological approaches. This will lead on to a discussion of a realist perspective as an effective means of examining the interrelationships between wider structures, or sets of internal relations, and the contingent effects of particular conditions and circumstances. In turn, this will lay the basis for a multiple methodology which has been applied to three case studies of villages which at the commencement of this research were about to undertake an appraisal.

5.2 Approaches to the study of rural geography.

For many years, the study of rural geography in British Universities was dominated by what one might term the agricultural/land use interest. Indeed, it was only in 1974 that the ‘Agricultural Geography’ Study Group of the Institute of British Geographers changed its name to the ‘Rural Geography’ Study Group, not just to reflect a broader concern with the countryside as a whole but also to recognise important social changes taking place in Britain’s rural areas and the growing interest of social scientists (including geographers) in studying these changes. Of course this is not to say that geographers had never been concerned with the population and settlement characteristics of the countryside, either in their own right or as an element of the rural economy, and within these earlier studies it is possible to identify four distinctive strands which, to a greater or lesser extent, have continued through to the present day and which have a particular relevance for the study of the village appraisal. Each of these strands will be considered briefly.

The first is the study of the morphology of rural settlements, with an emphasis on their form and layout. Much of the early work in this area was conducted by German geographers such as Meitzen (Carter, 1990) which helps to explain the widespread use of German terminology to describe such general village layouts as the street village (Strassendorf), forest village (Waldhufendorf), compact irregular (Hufendorf) or the estate

village (Schachbrettdorf). This approach to the study of rural settlement morphology has been extended in Britain to produce a classification of village forms based on their shape, regularity or the presence/absence of a village green (Roberts, 1977, 1987) or to consider the detailed morphology of farms and farm buildings (Rapoport, 1969; Peate, 1944). Though this kind of research has attracted relatively little recent interest amongst academic geographers, two themes are of particular relevance to this study. The first is the centrality of the 'look' of the village to many village appraisals, whether it be those appraisals which have emphasised the historical aspects of the village or those which have incorporated an anatomy of the village into the proposals for the future. There is little doubt that the shape and form of the village, and the relationship of particular buildings to that shape and form, are becoming increasingly central to much of the local planning process. For example, there is a growing involvement of local authorities and parish councils in the designation of 'Conservation Areas' under the 1967 Civic Amenities Act, whilst a more recent and widely ranging initiative has been the co-operation of village organisations and the Countryside Commission in the production of 'Village Design Statements'. The second theme is the emphasis upon the distinctiveness of individual localities. Though much of the initial research sought to generate general typologies or classifications of village forms, an important element of this work was the relationship between the built environment and the locality such that the 'look' of the settlement in some way reflected the spirit of the place. Therefore, an important element of the village appraisal process, fully supported by ACRE, has been to emphasise the uniqueness of places and what contributes to their distinctiveness.

The second strand of academic research has been concerned with spatial organisation, whether of individual settlement units such as the farmstead, the hamlet or the village or the way in which they all fit into the rural settlement system. Whilst one tradition has focused upon the spatial organisation of particular settlement forms through detailed historical investigations in selected areas of Britain (Thorpe, 1964) others have attempted to explain the spatial distribution of all rural settlements but also the location of settlements of different sizes in a settlement hierarchy. Initial research in the 1940s and 1950s by Professor Smailes and Professor Bracey sought to identify an urban hierarchy in England and Wales (Smailes, 1944) or a system of rural central places in South West England

(Bracey, 1952) through the designation of particular types of functions to settlements of different sizes, whilst the development of a general theory to explain both the size and spatial distribution of settlements was accelerated by the research of Walther Christaller. His work is important methodologically in geography because it formed part of the quantitative revolution in the 1960s, using the scientific methods of positivism to seek universal laws. In terms of its importance to this study of rural settlements, there is no doubt that the concept of the hierarchy became a basic tenet of the rural planning system in Britain from the 1960s with many local authorities in England and Wales developing their Structure Plans around some form of differential growth in their rural areas matched to the size distribution of the settlement system (Cloe and Shaw, 1983). It follows, therefore, that the village appraisal can form an important part of this process, whether as a means of providing quantifiable information about the village facilities as part of the process of policy development or as a means of challenging the assignation of a particular village to a specific housing or population target by the local planning authority.

The third strand has focused upon population trends, usually drawn from census returns for parishes, districts or counties and analysed in terms of the ways such trends reflect or signal wider demographic changes taking place in society as a whole. Up to the 1950s and early 1960s much of the rural population debate focused on two contrasting processes, namely the continued decline in the population fortunes of many remoter rural areas and evidence of population and housing growth not just on the fringes of the large metropolitan centres, but also in parishes close to local, urban centres of employment in less accessible parts of Britain (Saville, 1957; Bracey, 1959; Jones, 1973; Sherwood, 1996). For many the revival of the population fortunes of rural areas led to a debate about the size and shape of the 'rurban' belt in England, particularly as it impacted upon what was seen as scarce agricultural land (Smailes, 1946), whilst for others the interest was:

"in the human effect [of] a drift of agricultural and rural populations to the towns, side by side with a flood of suburban and urban dwellers in the countryside, causing marked changes in the structure and distribution of some rural communities" (Vince, 1952: 55).

The importance of these studies to the present is that many contemporary investigations and analyses of population trends in rural areas have their origins in this earlier research. The

connections between the study of population trends and the village appraisal are numerous but can be summarised as follows. First, the changing nature of rural communities, implicit in these trends, has provided a basic framework within which appraisal activity has taken place. Regardless of the particular preferences of individual appraisal groups all, to a greater or lesser extent, have been concerned with the past, present and future of the village and in this sense information on population trends and the recomposition of rural communities is central to the debate.

The second argument is methodological. Many of the academic studies of population change have been positivist in their orientation, involving the gathering of numerical information from the census or questionnaire and its presentation and analysis using descriptive and inferential statistical methods. In this respect, much of the material at the heart of many appraisals follows a similar pattern and, indeed, in Northamptonshire several of the early appraisals of the 1980s in the local ACRE office are no more than (geography) student undergraduate dissertations or appraisals leaning heavily upon them. Virtually all contemporary appraisals include a heavy investment in statistical information, whilst the household questionnaires (particularly using the ACRE software) have been designed to facilitate easy numerical analysis and its presentation through graphs and tables. There is little doubt that most village appraisals are driven whether explicitly or implicitly by a positivist methodology familiar to any social scientist.

The third argument follows on from this and reflects a growing concern, for many human geographers, that a positivist methodology alone fails to understand how rural society is created and differentiated in line with cultural constructions of rurality. This emphasis upon the meanings attached to life (or living) in the countryside is at the heart of what has been referred to as the 'cultural turn' in human geography and has been used not just to study those who have moved to rural areas through choice (Halfacree, 1996) but also those (often the elderly and the car less) who appear marooned in the countryside through a decline in rural service provision or public transport. This switch of approach can be seen clearly in the study of rural deprivation, such that positivist approaches to measuring rural disadvantage (by amenity provision, income, accessibility for example) (McLaughlin, 1981) are now giving way or are being complemented by a greater emphasis upon 'rural'

ways of life (Cloke *et al.*, 1997). Such an approach, using qualitative methodologies including structured and semi-structured interviews, has been adopted to consider 'other' groups living in the countryside and marginalised by gender, age, race or disability (see for example, Cloke and Little, 1990; Philo, 1992; Cloke and Little, 1997). In this sense, the use of 'mixed' research (quantitative and qualitative) methods echoes the approach favoured by many of those writing the 'classical' community studies carried out in the remoter rural parts of Britain in the 1940s and 1950s. Although the precise details of these studies is not a central concern at this point, what is interesting is the ways in which the 'essence' of the community could be more effectively achieved by a combination of quantifiable information gathered from primary and secondary sources and qualitative data gleaned through observation, discussion and participation. Whether the researcher had come 'cold' to the rural community (for example, Williams in Ashworthy (1963)), or had been raised there (for example, Jenkins in Aberporth (1960)) all admit that the methods of observation and participation offer a unique opportunity to see inside the community. Emmet, in her study of Llan in North Wales, expresses this particularly succinctly:

"I tried to observe, understand and record what people did, rather than what they said they did; by living among them and joining in their activities rather than [just] sending out questionnaires" (1964: ix).

A fourth approach in human geography has tried to explain social change itself and to place this into wider macro-level processes. Such structural explanations have been particularly popular for examining the relationships between the migration of households to rural areas, the characteristics of the rural property market and the ways in which the rural housing market is contested and the role of the state, both nationally and locally, in this process. Initially much of this could be described as neo-Weberian in approach, and sought to classify population in the rural housing market on the basis of the relative power of particular social groups in the property market (for example, Pahl, 1965; Ambrose, 1974). These arguments were based upon detailed case studies in the emerging commuter areas of southern England (Pahl in Hertfordshire, Ambrose in East Sussex) but they gave rise to other studies focusing upon consumption cleavages in the rural housing market (for example, Shucksmith, 1990; Saunders, 1990). More fundamental, however, was the recognition of the role of the state, or rather the working capital within welfare capitalism,

in shaping access to housing resources for different social groups in the population, and the fact that in many parts of the British countryside the distinctive characteristics of the rural housing market led to the over-representation of certain housing classes in most rural communities. The role of the state, whether at the central or local level, in developing and strengthening these social changes has been at the heart of most politico-economy studies in rural geography, and such an approach helps to understand not just how views about the future of a particular rural community can be 'contested' by those living within it but also how they might be marshalled and articulated. In other words the need:

"to examine the linkages which exist between the locality and wider structural forces (is) a pre-requisite to understanding how change occurs in any given locale" (Dickens *et al.*, 1985: 146-7).

The importance of this quotation is two fold. First by laying emphasis upon the linkages between the locality and the 'wider structural forces', it draws attention to any changes which have taken place in the nature of this relationship: and this of course is at the heart of the shift from government to governance. The second point refers to the importance of given locales and the fact that, despite generalisations about village types, demographic trends and housing and property classes, each village will have its own unique and distinctive character and qualities. In other words, the relationship or linkages between wider structures and localities must be affected by the particular conditions and circumstances of a specific community. Any understanding or particular outcomes can therefore be achieved only by detailed investigation of these reciprocal relationships. For these reasons some geographers have looked to a realist approach as a preferred means of understanding the processes of change in rural communities, specifically the ways in which observable events can best be understood by closer examination of the contingencies of particular circumstances (of villages and villagers) and their relationships with wider structural processes and forces.

5.2.1 Realism.

Contemporary realist approaches constitute a critique of positivism. This critique revolves around the distinction that realists make between the identification of causal mechanisms

(what causes an event, which is usually investigated by intensive research) and the identification of empirical regularities (how widespread an event is, usually investigated through extensive research) (Gregory, 1994). This idea is usefully summarised by Sayer's oft-quoted statement that "what causes something to happen has nothing to do with the number of times it happens" (1985: 241). Positivism confused these two, assuming that statistical association and prediction could produce universal laws.

Positivists have also been criticised by realists for observing only events. Instead, realism emphasised mechanisms and structures. Structures are seen as sets of internal relations, which have characteristic and necessary ways of acting (causal powers and liabilities) which are realised through mechanisms. Realism, therefore, achieves a greater ontological depth than positivism, by looking beyond observable events themselves to the internal relations and mechanisms which give rise to particular events. Yet to identify structures and mechanisms is not a common sense undertaking, and requires a reciprocal relationship between theoretical perspectives and empirical materials. The need for theoretical perspectives, which identify underlying structures, has meant that realism has been closely associated with historical materialism (see Bhaskar, 1975, 1979). Indeed, the mechanisms to which realists usually refer are the systems of social practices (Williams, 1981). However, realists avoid the determinism of structuralism by arguing that human beings are knowledgeable and capable, whilst their actions are determined to a considerable extent by the structures and mechanisms they encounter, whether such mechanisms operate or not is contingent upon the particular condition and circumstances. Individuals are also seen to have effects that also depend on the circumstances in which they operate. The reconciliation of structure and agency made impossible by positivist or structuralist approaches is conceivable within a realist framework where relationships between structure and agency are seen as "complex, reproducing and transforming" (Cloke *et al*, 1991: 146). In this context, space makes a difference precisely because of its variability and differential contingency effects.

The purpose of realism is abstraction, which involves identifying the necessary causal powers and limitations of specific structures which are realised under specific contingent

conditions (Gregory, 1994). To achieve this, realists distinguish between three domains (Bhaskar, 1975):

1. The domain of the empirical which is concerned with experiences within the world as it is perceived;
2. The domain of the actual which is concerned with observable events;
3. The domain of the real in which (unobservable) structures and the mechanisms they produce give rise to observable events.

A valuable aspect of a realist approach is its openness to change within society. One of the criticisms made of positivism was that to achieve the identification of universal laws it had to assume that society was acting as a closed system in which conditions and circumstances producing events did not change. In contrast, realism, by concentrating on causal relationships can find out what produces change within society (Sayer, 1985).

Sayer (1984) suggested that the non-empiricist approach of realism can produce understanding which goes beyond that of positivism. First, realists recognise that knowledge can come through participation as well as from observation. This may involve political activism on the part of the researcher or interaction with the people concerned, whereby knowledge and resources are shared. Second, realism opens the doors to a broader definition of knowledge, going beyond what can be written or spoken to what can be felt and experienced (the everyday practical skills of knowing). Third, knowledge is not complete and waiting to be discovered, as something external to ourselves, rather it is an 'ever present condition' and 'a continually produced outcome' of human agency (Bhaskar, 1979). A realist methodology is therefore more participative, practical and reflexive than the methodology of positivism.

The value of a realist approach for the present study is fivefold. First, realism permits an investigation of not just the events surrounding the village appraisal process, but the structures and mechanisms which give rise to these events. Second, the openness to change represented by a realist approach is particularly suited to the study of a process which is evolving. Third, realism allows the geographical contingency within the process of the village appraisal to be explored. Fourth, realism offers a form of analysis which can

examine the way in which structure and agency interact and transform each other within the village appraisal process. Finally, through its participative, practical and reflexive methodology, realism provides a way to get close to the empirical material in a way which objective and logical positivism would not.

5.3 The use of realism in the present study.

5.3.1 Necessary and contingent relations in the village appraisal.

Central to a realist perspective is the need to identify ‘necessary internal relations’ which form structures giving rise to the mechanisms that produce events. These can be distinguished from the ‘contingent relations’ which provide for variability in the process in different localities. In the context of this study, Figure 5.1 identifies those internal relations (structures) which generate the mechanisms by which the village appraisal (the event) is produced. The village appraisal is really about resource allocation. As the discussions in earlier chapters have illustrated, the political process by which resources are allocated has shifted from one in which decisions are made by elected representatives and planning officers at local government level in a very ‘top-down’ manner, to a system in which there is a greater emphasis on the engagement of rural people through participation and local governance and the formation of flexible partnerships between a range of statutory and non-statutory organisations, voluntary agencies, and individuals. Central to this process and thus central to this study are a number of structures, which include central government, local authorities, funding bodies (for example, Rural Action) and the planning framework.

Contingent relations are also involved in the village appraisal process and are constituted by the particular characteristics of given localities. So, although the structures generate mechanisms by which the village appraisal can be executed, whether it is executed or not (and to what effect) is greatly determined by occupants of a given locality, such as individuals and groups or voluntary organisations who are willing and able to become involved in the process. A further set of contingent relations involves time-space factors such as employment levels and planning conditions.

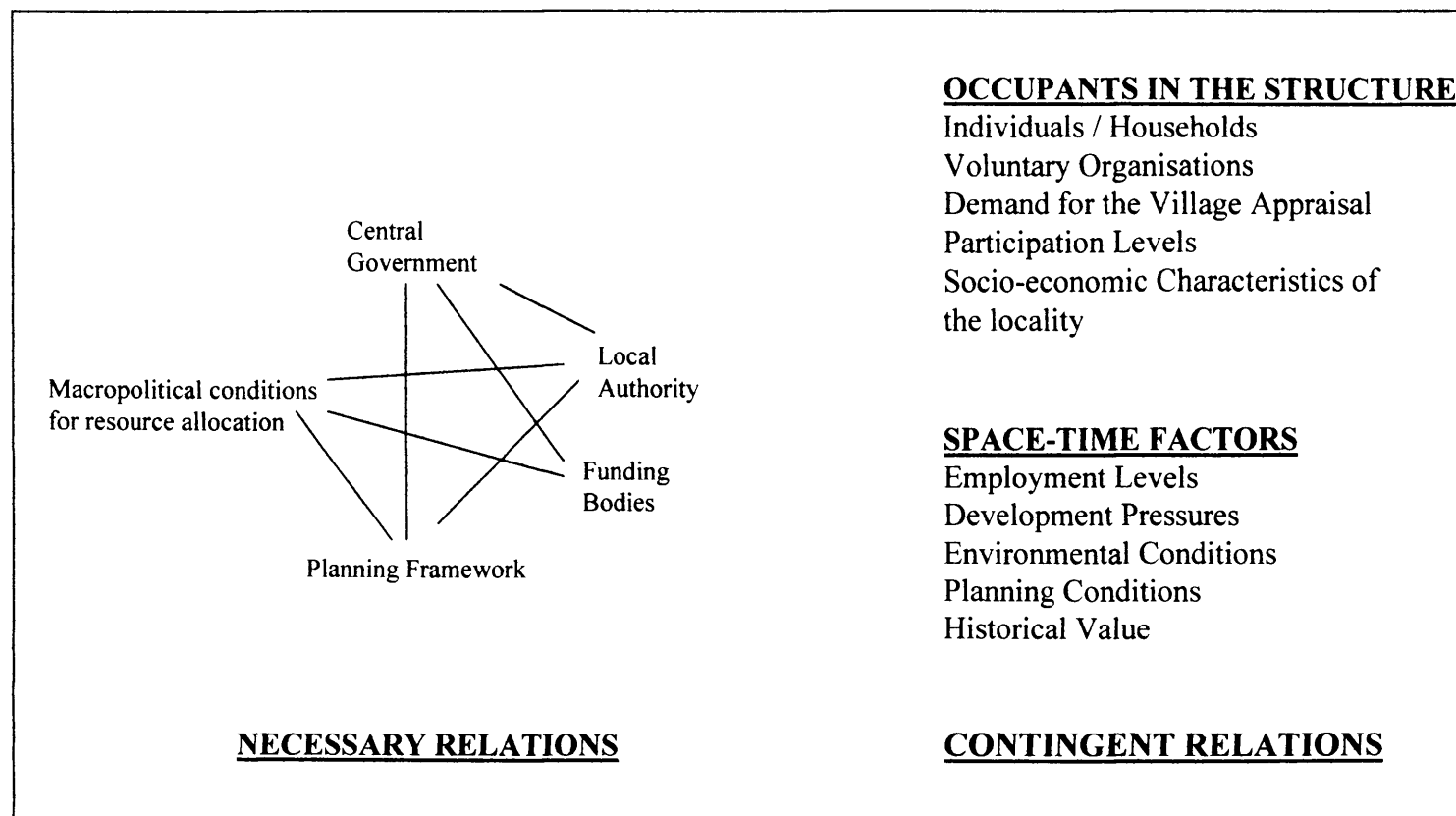


Figure 5.1 A diagrammatic representation of the Necessary and Contingent Relations within the village appraisal process

By applying realism to undertake a detailed study which operates at a variety of scales, the different levels in this diagram can be investigated, but particular emphasis is paid through this study to the contingent relations and an investigation of how the village appraisal operates (or fails to operate) in practice.

5.3.2 The case studies.

Northamptonshire offers an excellent case study for detailed investigation of the village appraisal process. The county has a long tradition of local involvement, much of it of a pioneering nature, whilst in many respects the changing social and demographic characteristics of its rural communities reflect many of the recent changes which have been observed in the more pressured areas of lowland 'shire' England. Moreover, at the time when the former Conservative government was publishing its views on the future of rural England (and Wales), the county of Northamptonshire had already laid much of the groundwork with its Village 2000 initiative, including the notion of partnerships in tackling rural needs and the centrality of the appraisal to this process (see chapters 6 and 8). However, in order to investigate in detail the processes involved in village appraisal activity in Northamptonshire, particularly in respect to the realist perspective, it was important to choose the case study villages against a range of criteria.

1. They should be drawn from more than one local authority.

The importance of this is that it would identify the attitudes of particular local authorities to the concept of the village appraisal, and the ways in which these were manifested in the interrelationships between its agents and the appraisal teams. Moreover, where more than one appraisal was being conducted in a single authority it would be possible to investigate and analyse any variations in these relationships.

2. They should include villages of differing sizes.

This is an argument that smaller villages, particularly those with little or no expansion, might demonstrate a more tightly knit community within which the population is known to each other, and where the appraisal can take place as a genuine community based activity. On the other hand, larger villages may contain a more diverse population, with distinct sub

areas, where the population clearly does not know each other and where issues of representativeness, delegation and participation may be more acute.

3. They should include villages with a substantial newcomer population.

This criterion will facilitate an investigation of the role of in-migrant households in shaping the future of rural communities and in particular the view, enhanced by the shift to governance, that articulate middle-class newcomers may become the new power brokers in village England, and that the village appraisal becomes a vehicle by which one rural voice is heard above others.

4. They should include villages which have experienced varying degrees of recent housing and population growth.

The importance of this criterion is that it draws attention to the desire, expressed by the Northamptonshire VAO, that appraisal activity should focus on the past, present and future of the village. In other words by focusing upon villages which have experienced recent growth and others which have not, it draws attention to the ways in which appraisal teams have addressed this agenda and have shaped the contents to meet their aims and objectives.

5. They should include villages about to embark upon a village appraisal.

Although this study does encompass some analyses of those villages which have completed appraisals and those who have no intention of starting, it was important that the case studies should give the opportunity, at least at the outset, for the author to track the appraisal from the outset to its conclusion. In other words, it was the intention to identify villages that had taken the decision to undertake an appraisal, but had yet to hold any meetings, and which intended to produce a completed appraisal document within two years. In discussion with the VAO for Northamptonshire, it was decided that of those villages about to commence, three would meet this and the other criteria: Brixworth, Stoke Albany and Dingley.

5.3.2.1 Brixworth.

Brixworth is one of 74 rural parishes which comprise the Daventry District of Northamptonshire. As Figure 5.2 illustrates, Brixworth is situated on the A508 main road, six miles north of Northampton and 25 miles from Leicester. Brixworth, with a population of nearly 4,000 people is the largest parish of the district by population, (with Long Buckby (3,744) and Moulton (3,047) being the second and third largest) as a consequence of being allocated to growth status, whether as a 'key centre' or 'rural source centre' under a succession of post-war rural development and County Structure Plan proposals for Northamptonshire. Indeed, the post-war expansion of Brixworth can be traced specifically to the policy introduced in 1964 whereby the village was earmarked for expansion as part of the county council's attempt to cope with the rapid population growth in the county as a whole, and the inability of the County Development Plan, introduced in 1951, to cope with it. Brixworth was chosen as part of this 'constraint' strategy because it was:

“at a distance of about six miles from the centre of Northampton, where there is an established nucleus of industry, good public services, education establishment and an expanding viable community [so] it would not only provide attractive places of residence, but be outside the area likely to be affected by the expanding town” (Northamptonshire County Council, 1964: Chapter 3).

Between 1961 and 1991 the population of the parish has increased by 141 percent whilst the number of households in the parish has increased by 185 percent (Table 5.1). The higher rate of household growth was a function not just of a decline in the average size of family, nationally and locally, in this period but also of the decision by the county council to place its homes for the elderly into these larger villages with a greater range of services and facilities.

Table 5.1 Population characteristics in Brixworth.

	1961	1971	1981	1991
Population	1,578	1,810	3,007	3,789
Households	523	625	1152	1488

(OPCS, 1961, 1971, 1991 (a); Northamptonshire County Council, 1980).

Figure 5.2: The geographical location of the three study villages.

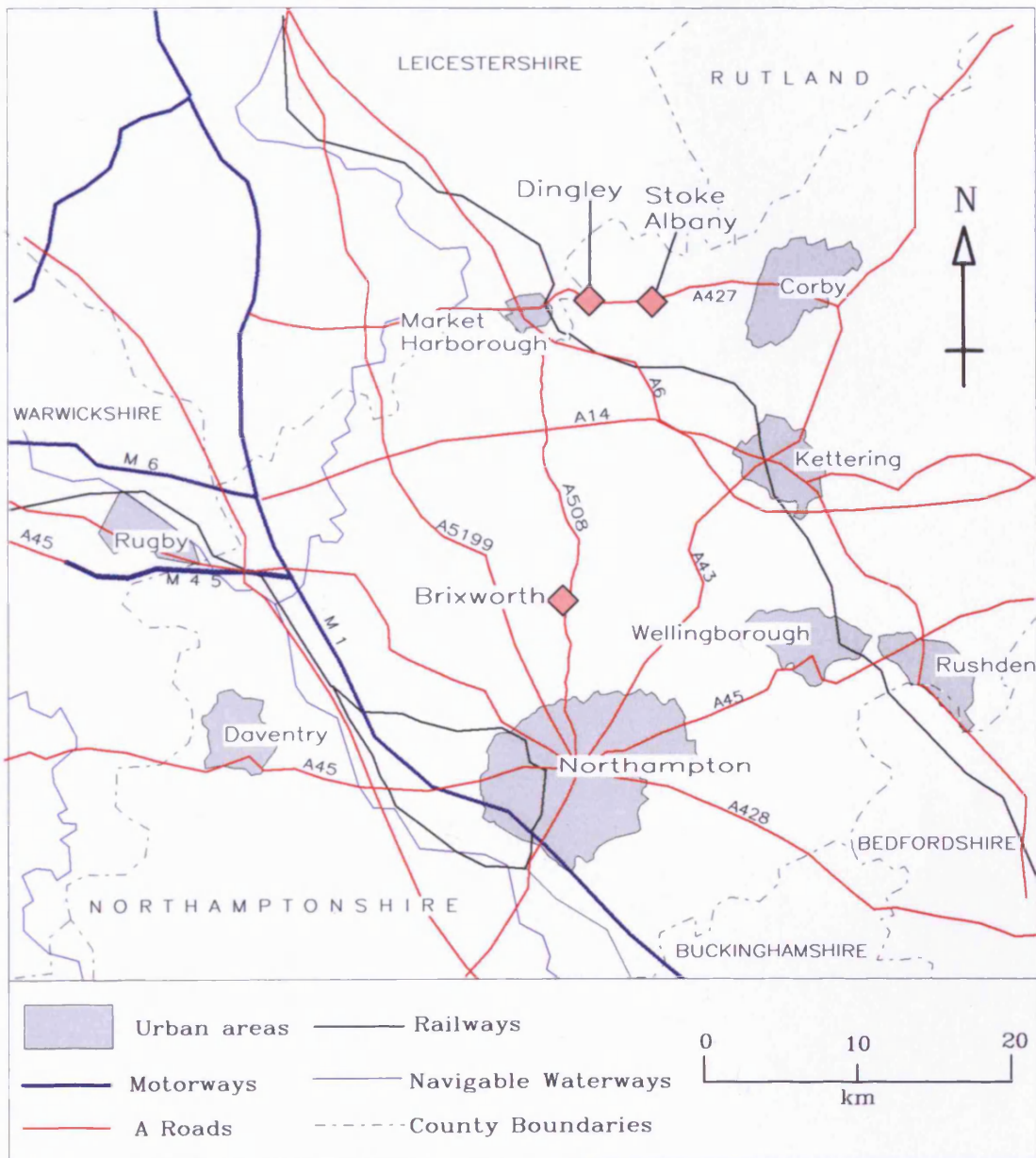
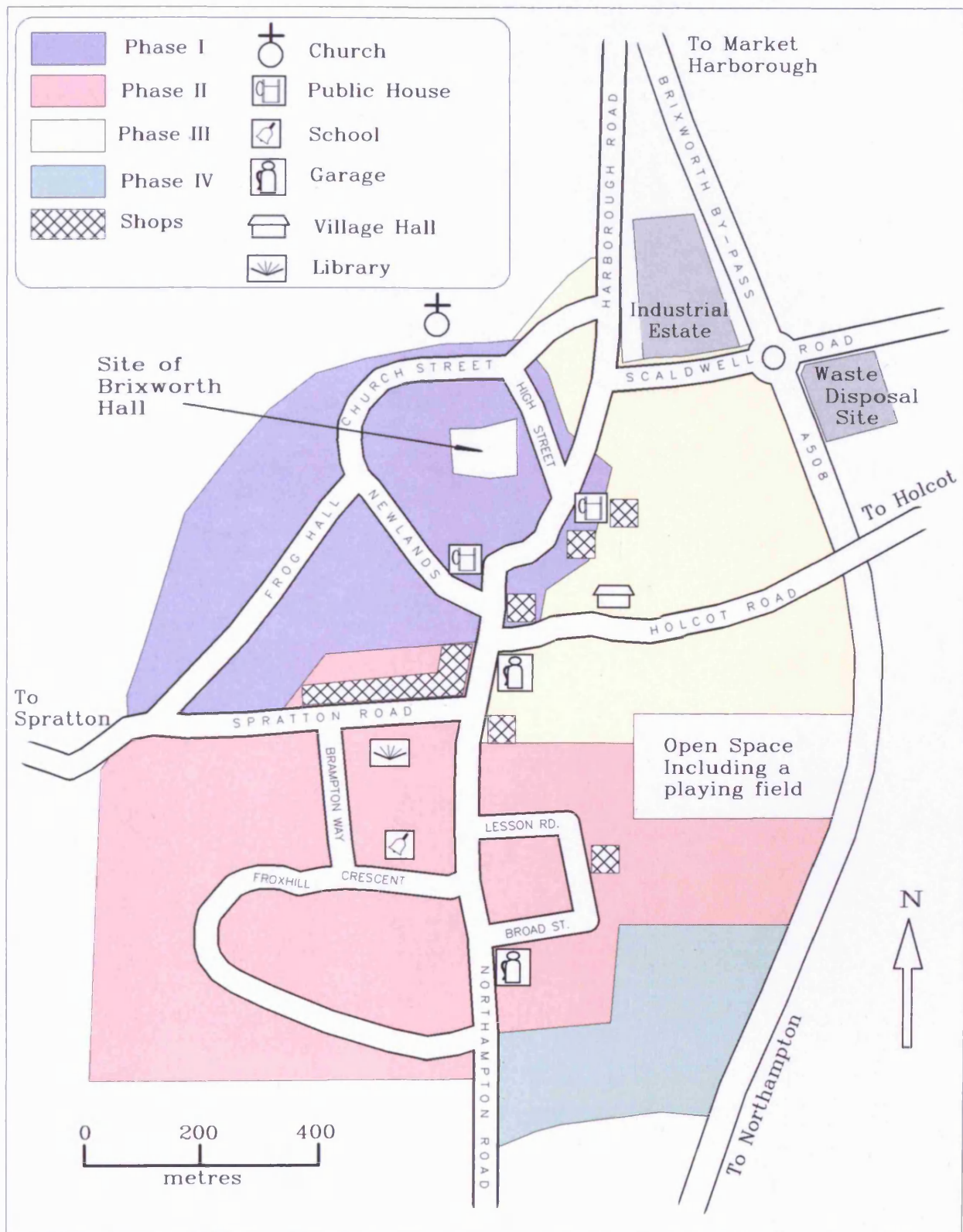


Figure 5.3: A plan of Brixworth



Indeed, the emphasis upon households is important because this is reflected in the increases in housing units to accommodate them; and because of Brixworth's development, it is relatively easy to divide the village into distinctive sub areas (Figure 5.3).

The historic core of the village (phase I of development) consists of the vernacular stone cottages which are characteristic of much of the 'ironstone belt' of Northamptonshire, though brick homes with slate roofs constructed between the 1930s and 1950s can be found on the eastern side of the old A508 through the village. The historic core of the village also contains the church, whose history can be traced back to the Saxon period, and the site previously occupied by Brixworth Hall – demolished in 1954 and now partly occupied by recent infill. In the area to the south west of the core of the village, roughly bounded by the main road to the east and Spratton Road to the south, is a substantial development of local authority housing dating from the period immediately before and after World War Two when local authorities were particularly active as housebuilders, either coping with private housing condemned as unfit for habitation or housing which was grossly overcrowded. In both cases new council estates were seen as local solutions to these social problems though the fact that they were built to standard designs and in standard building materials did little to enhance the quality and look of the built environment.

Phase II represents the first of the recent phases of expansion in the village, when housing was constructed in the Froxhill Crescent area of the village from the mid 1970s. For the most part these are detached three and four bedroomed family dwellings for owner occupation, and their construction helps explain not just the need for a new primary school but also its location close to this new development. The old school close to the church now functions as a community centre.

Phase III is also dominated by larger detached properties dates from the later 1980s and is located on the eastern side of the village between the old main road, the lane to the village of Scaldwell and the new by-pass – completed and opened in 1989. Indeed, this has now become the building line on the eastern side of the village and the area to the south of the 'Scaldwell Road' development (Phase III) is currently being developed as Phase IV. Once more, these are substantial family houses for owner occupation and will help give the

village a population close to 5,000 by the year 2000 (Northamptonshire County Council, 1980). Figure 5.4 illustrates the four phases of development through a series of photographs.

Notwithstanding the rapid population growth in the village, the service sector has been slow to change and although a small rake of shops (including, Post Office, newsagent, fish and chip shop, dry cleaner, hardware greengrocer) and three other general food shops are found in the village, most people tend to look elsewhere (Northampton or Market Harborough) for their needs. The village does now have a new purpose built library (opened in 1999) and two petrol stations, but the community facilities promised in the various Structure Plans have not been forthcoming. However, Brixworth has been successful in attracting over 20 firms to the small industrial estate to the northern end of the village: these include Watson Petroleum and Bran and Luebbe (suppliers to the oil and gas industry), Ilmor Industries (the production of hi-tech racing car engines), Hymo Lifts (the construction of lifts), Ashbourne Pharmaceuticals and CPL (the development of pharmaceuticals), and Haddonstone (the production of ornamental stoneworks). Moreover one of Daventry District Council's domestic waste sites is located on the eastern side of the by-pass in the parish of Brixworth, whilst at the southern end of the by-pass is Brixworth Country Park (next to Pitsford Reservoir) and connected to the village by a public footpath.

Table 5.2 Tenure and economic positions between 1981 and 1991

Tenure	1981 (%)	1991 (%)
Owner Occupied	83.6	86.1
Public Rented	9.4	8.1
Private Rented	6.8	5.7
Housing Association	0.2	0.1
Economic Position	1981 (%)	1991 (%)
Employees (FT / PT)	86.6	81.0
Self Employed	9.9	14.7

(OPCS, 1991 (a)).

Figure 5.4 A photographic illustration of the four phases of development in Brixworth village.

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Phase I Old Town



Phase II Froxhill Road area



Phase III Scaldwell Road area

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Phase IV New development



Despite the high rates of expansion in Brixworth, the demographic and social characteristics of the village have changed little over the past decade, reflecting the fact that most of the development has proved attractive to the smaller types of households. The village has a higher proportion of owner-occupiers than in previous years, this reflecting not just the popularity of the right-to-buy policy for council tenants under the 1980 Housing Act but also the fact that virtually all the housing in Phases II to IV has been speculative development for owner-occupiers (Table 5.2). Indeed, although Brixworth is not as socially exclusive as some of the smaller villages in rural Northamptonshire, by comparison with the county as a whole it has a much higher proportion of high status, multiple earner, car owning households living in detached, owner-occupied properties – though this should not hide the fact that there are many in Brixworth who do not fit this description (Table 5.3).

Table 5.3 Social characteristics of the population in the ward of Brixworth compared to Daventry District and Northamptonshire as a whole.

	Northamptonshire	Brixworth	Daventry
Middle Class ¹	30.0	39.22	37.1
Households with no car	26.9	12.86	19.79
Lone parent households	3.5	1.94	2.4
Households with pensioners and no car	51.5	39.69	40.3
Population over 75	6.3	5.31	5.7
Multiple earner households	57.0	61.46	60.0
Young unemployed	20.0	4.0	17.5
The wealthy (Z-Score) ²	0.68	5.69	4.46
Index of local conditions ³	-5.0	-9.08	-26.46

(Northamptonshire County Council, 1995).

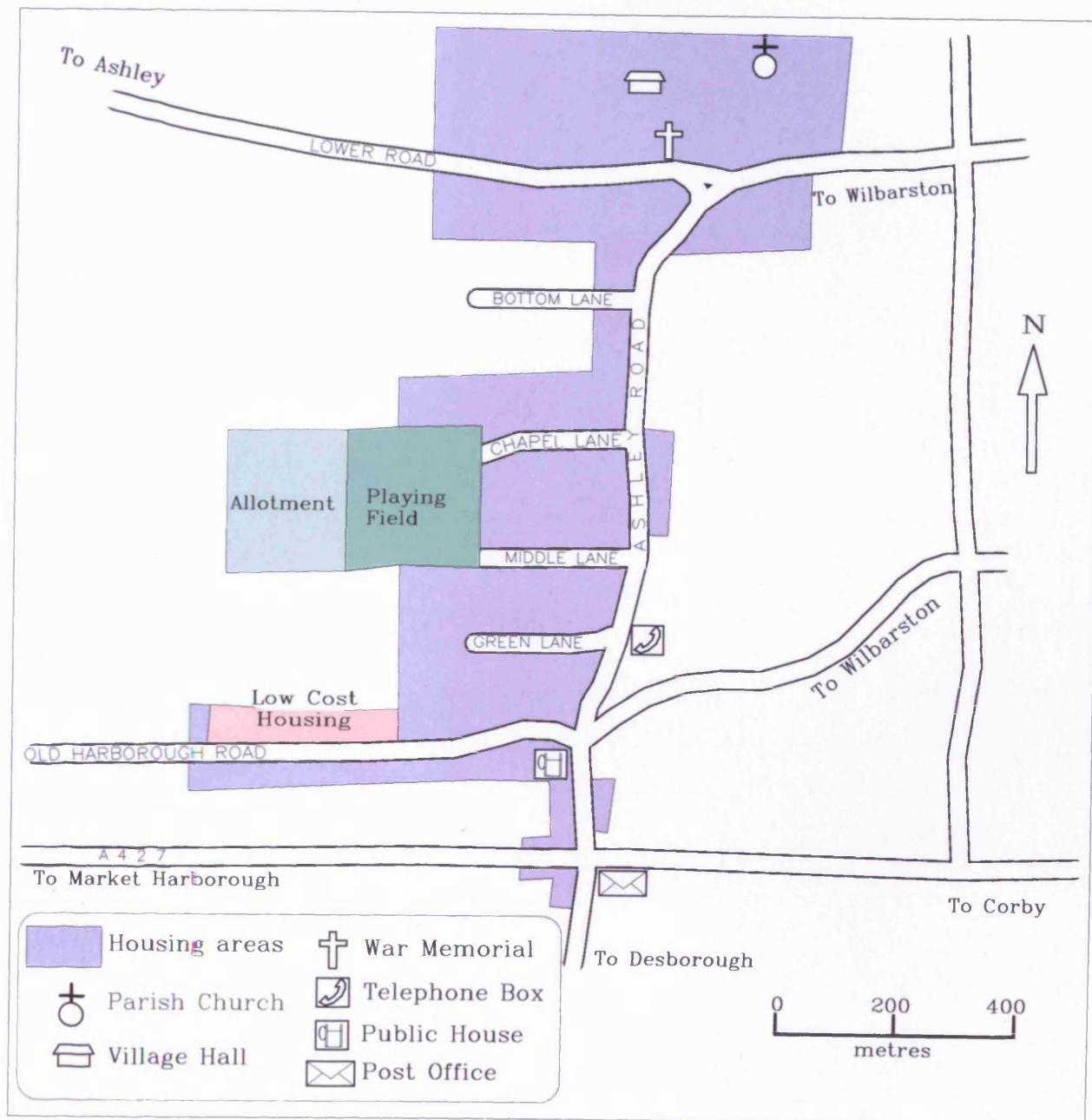
Figures in percentages.

¹ Middle class is calculated by the percentage in standard occupation classes 1-3, i.e. by professional and associated occupations with relatively high pay.

² The wealthy Z-Score is calculated by combining four variables: homes with 7 or more rooms; dual income; no children households; households with 2 or more cars; those in occupations with annual income above the higher tax rate threshold (£23, 705 in 1991). Weightings were applied to balance their relative importance and each ward was calculated relative to a county average of zero. The higher the score the greater the above average wealth.

³ Index of local conditions refers to an index produced by the DoE to measure relative deprivation across all areas of England. It is based upon 13 variables, including unemployment, overcrowding, educational qualifications and standardised mortality rates. Scores of 0 are the national norm, positive scores indicate higher deprivation than nationally, negative scores indicate lower levels of deprivation.

Figure 5.5: A plan of Stoke Albany.



5.3.3.2 Stoke Albany.

Stoke Albany is one of 25 rural parishes which comprise the predominantly urban borough of Kettering and had a population of 253 in 1991 (Table 5.4). As Figure 5.2 illustrates (p. 157), Stoke Albany lies on the Northamptonshire-Leicestershire border and is situated just off the A427 main road, six miles from Market Harborough and 12 miles from the town of Corby. The parish of Stoke Albany also lies close to the local towns of Wilbarston, Desborough, Rothwell, and Kettering all being within two miles of the village (Figure 5.5).

Today, Stoke Albany still retains the character of an agricultural community, with nine farming concerns on approximately 2000 acres of land in or associated with the parish. To a certain extent this can be attributed to the planning legislation outlined by Northampton County Council and written into the Kettering Local Plan during the 1980s. The planning policy for the parish of Stoke Albany ensures that it remains a restricted infill village (RIV): restricting development to a small scale within the confines of the existing village and according to strict environmental controls laid out by the planning officers. As the Local Plan states:

“proposals for development which may have an adverse affect on the usual character and amenity of the special landscape area would not normally be granted permission” (Kettering Borough Council, 1991: no page).

It was also the view that by designating the village as ‘restricted infill’, it would discourage large-scale inward migration (the result of new housing development) though, of course, newcomers can come in simply as a result of the turnover of households within the existing housing stock. Nevertheless, the population of the village has remained relatively static over the past three decades (Table 5.4), though the gradual decline in household size (from 2.72 in 1981 to 2.25 in 1991) does hide the fact that a small number of new houses and a few barn conversions have been added in the past 15 years or so. Indeed, the demand for houses in what is a very attractive area of rural Northamptonshire has pushed prices beyond the means of many local, lower-income households and this, coupled with the sale of local authority homes in the village, has led to the construction of a small ‘housing association’ development of affordable dwellings for rent in the mid 1990s.

Table 5.4 Population in the parish of Stoke Albany 1961 to 1991.

	1961	1971	1981	1991
Population	257	292	256	253
Households	84	100	94	112

(OPCS, 1971, 1991 (a)).

However, the restrictions on population growth within the parish of Stoke Albany regulate the number of services that can be adequately maintained by a small population. There is one public house and a post office (open in the mornings), but the village store has, like many other village stores across rural England, recently closed due to the lack of business being generated. The low numbers attending the village church has led the vicar to join a church cluster and he therefore only holds a service once every four Sundays. However, there are nine additional businesses which exist in the village which are economically supported by customers from all over Northamptonshire: for example, there is a builder, a plumber, a cabinet maker, a carpenter, a company that designs and installs broadcast equipment for radio stations, an equestrian centre, a press relations and writing agency, a hair and beauty training centre and salon and a stud farm.

The impression of Stoke Albany, therefore, is of a 'traditional' English village. There is a higher proportion of owner-occupied dwellings than in recent years (and as Figure 5.6 illustrates these are predominantly quaint thatched cottages) and a lower number of local authority properties in the village, reflecting the popularity of the right to buy policy introduced to council tenants in 1980. The remainder of the properties in the parish are tenanted properties attached to Rockingham Estate, the largest single landowner in the parish (Table 5.5).

Table 5.5 Tenure and economic positions in Stoke Albany (OPCS, 1991 (a)).

Tenure	1981	1991
Owner Occupied	63	80.9
Public Rented	25	6.4
Private Rented	12	12.7
Economic Positions	1981	1991
Employees (FT / PT)	76.2	66.9
Self Employed	13.5	30.1

Figure 5.6 A photographic illustration of Stoke Albany village showing the rural character and the quaint thatched cottages typical of the village.



Figure 5.7: A plan of Dingley.

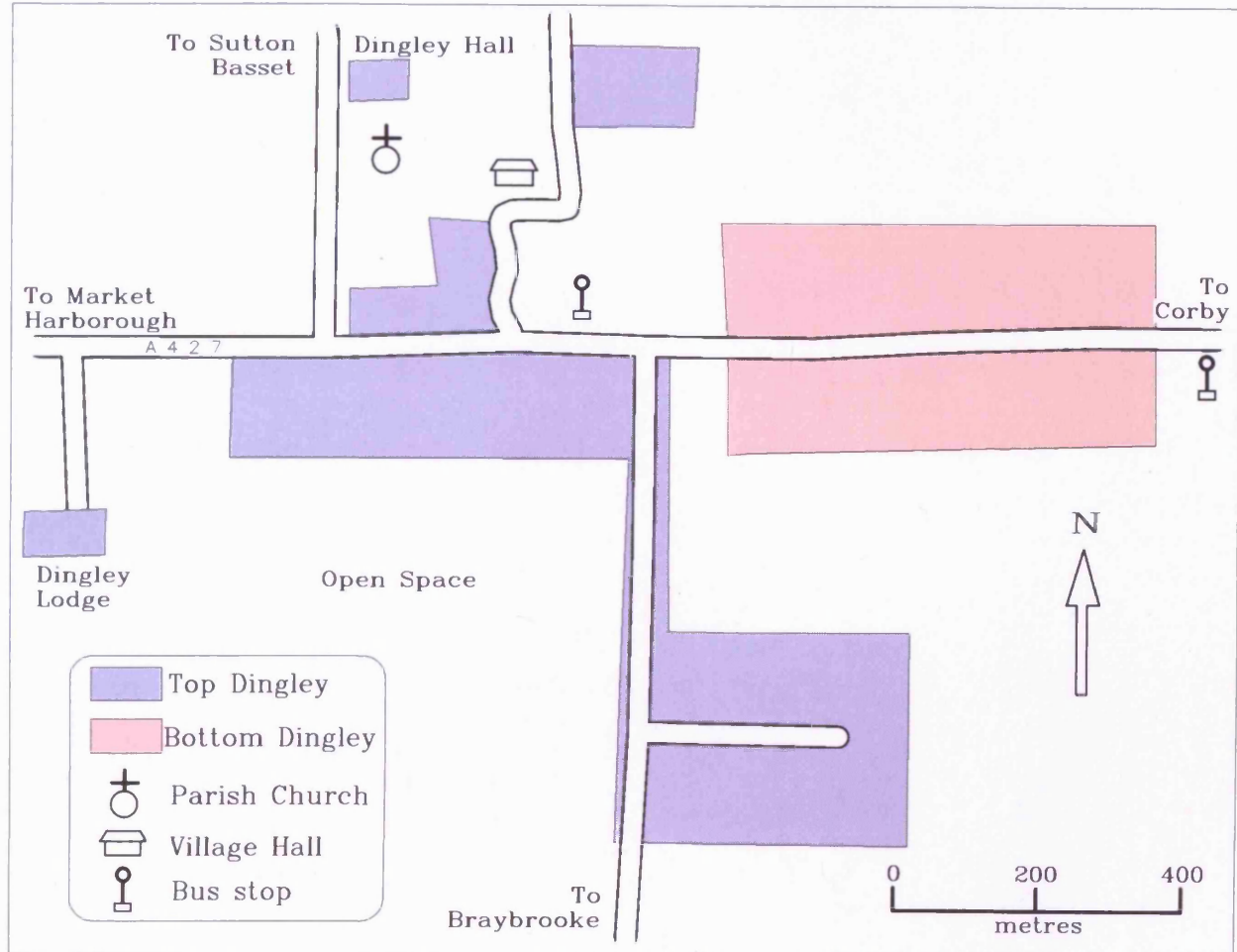


Table 5.6 Social characteristics of the population in the ward of Welland compared to Kettering Borough and Northamptonshire as a whole.

Social Characteristics	Northamptonshire	Welland	Kettering
Middle Class	30.0	56.07	29.9
Households with no car	26.9	13.35	27.9
Lone parent households	3.5	2.17	3.1
Households with pensioners and no car	51.5	33.83	52.5
Population over 75	6.3	5.30	7.4
Multiple earner households	57.0	58.35	57.1
Young unemployed	20.0	11.11	16.0
The wealthy (Z-Score)	0.68	8.14	-0.43
Index of local conditions	-5.0	-3.06	-22.45

(Northamptonshire County Council, 1995).

Figures in percentages. The calculations for the wealthy (Z-score) and the index of local conditions are the same as for Table 5.3).

Figure 5.8 A photographic illustration of Dingley taken from the A427 main road between Market Harborough and Corby



Moreover, the available census data for the ward of Welland, in which the parish of Stoke Albany is situated, demonstrates that the village is representative of the “middle class territory” described by Buller and Lowe (1990: 27) and, by comparison with Kettering Borough and the county as a whole, has a much higher proportion of middle class, multiple earner, car owning households (Table 5.6).

5.3.3.3 Dingley.

Dingley is the smallest of the three study villages with a population of 188 in 1991 and although it lies in close proximity to Stoke Albany on the Northamptonshire-Leicestershire border in the borough of Kettering (Figure 5.2 (p. 157)) the two villages are very different. The parish of Dingley also lies on the A427 main road between Market Harborough and Corby, but being dissected by the road it appears as an elongated village without a typical ‘village centre’ (Figure 5.7). This topographical development has created two distinctly separate parts of the parish, known locally as ‘Top’ and ‘Bottom’ Dingley, and is blamed by its residents for the apparent absence of a community spirit. Furthermore, although the parish of Dingley remains one of the most rural parishes in Kettering Borough and is made up of 1,317 acres of farmland, it gives the appearance of a recently developed village, either through the small scale building of new housing or the adaptation of older buildings (Figure 5.8), and very few traces of the original rural settlement still exist (Kettering Borough Council, 1991).

Over time, the parish of Dingley has experienced changes in its population size and thus in the level of rural services available in the village. At the turn of the twentieth century the village had a thriving school and a high street which included a village shop, a Post Office, and a laundry, but today such buildings have been converted into houses and the only services that are supported in the village are the village hall, which is described by residents as a pre-fabricated ‘tin hut’ and the church, which dates back to the Domesday Book. The absence of local rural services is not only a reflection of the small population⁴ in the village

⁴ The population figures for 1991 include the population of a housing estate formerly part of the parish of Sutton Bassett until recent boundary changes saw it included into Dingley parish.

(see Table 5.7) which is able to support such initiatives, but also the close proximity of the town of Market Harborough (just 3 miles away) with its large supermarkets and leisure and recreation concerns and the fact that 90 percent of residents in the parish have access to a car in order to make the journey into the town (OPCS, 1991 (a)).

Table 5.7 Population in the parish of Dingley 1961 to 1991.

	1961	1971	1981	1991
Population	85	75	78	188
Households	27	27	30	74

(OPCS, 1961, 1971, 1991 (a)).

Moreover, like Stoke Albany, Dingley enjoys the status of a RIV and is a site of environmental significance because of its geographical location in the Welland Valley (Kettering Borough Council, 1991). Consequently, only small planning projects are given permission and the population characteristics as they stand at present are likely to remain stable.

Therefore, if Table 5.6⁵ and 5.8 are referred to, it would seem that Dingley, like Stoke Albany, is likely to remain a prime example of middle class rural England, with its higher than average proportion of middle class, multiple earner, and owner-occupied households.

Table 5.8 Tenure and economic positions in Dingley (OPCS, 1991 (a)).

Tenure	1981 (%)	1991 (%)
Owner Occupied	80	85.1
Public Rented	-	4.1
Private Rented	20	10.8
Economic Position	1981 (%)	1991 (%)
Employees (FT / PT)	76.9	64.2
Self Employed	17.9	31.2

⁵ The figures for the ward of Welland have been used to explain the situations in both Stoke Albany and Dingley because as small villages there is a problem with the small area statistics (parish or enumeration district) particularly where they have used 10 percent samples, as is the case for social class. Obviously a 10 percent sample for households of 112 and 74 (11 and 7 respectively for Stoke Albany and Dingley), split into 6 social class divisions I, II, III, NM, IIIM, IV, V, is going to be unreliable. Therefore, using the larger ward presents a clearer picture of the situation.

In summary, therefore, what these villages demonstrate is the variety of histories, experiences and socio-economic characteristics which typify this part of 'shire' England. In general terms what this study is examining is the village appraisal process within a belt of countryside extending from the Wash through Northamptonshire to Dorset which has been characterised by continued growth over the last two decades and, in social class terms, constitutes what Gordon and Forrest describe as a 'crescent of wealth' (1995).

5.4 Multiple methodology.

A number of researchers working within a realist perspective have emphasised the benefits combining extensive and intensive research in the study of structures and agents at a macro and a micro scale (Sayer and Morgan, 1985; Morgan and Sayer, 1988; Pratt, 1994). Extensive research methods allow a wide range of data to be collected on a macro scale. All members of the population, or more realistically a sample population, can be examined using questionnaire surveys, to produce a representative set of empirical data. General patterns and common properties of the sample population are discovered through this method and related to the population as a whole. However, extensive research is often seen as descriptive and synoptic, with the danger of inferring causal mechanisms from observed relationships. In contrast, intensive methods involve the examination of an individual or group of individuals and so it is argued intensive methods have a greater ability to tease out relationships demonstrated by the aggregated data and so begin to identify the causal processes. Johnston (1991) argues that intensive research investigates:

"as the complex interactions of necessary relations with contingent conditions:
the goal of intensive research is to tease out those necessary relations"
(Johnston, 1991: 224).

Within this combination of quantitative and qualitative methodologies a range of research methods were used. These included participant observation, semi-structured interviews, questionnaire surveys delivered at a macro scale, in addition to the analysis of documentation pertaining to village appraisals, local planning, Women's Institute meetings, and Rural Community Council meetings (see Table 5.9 (p.175) for an explanation of the methods that were applied to the study of the participation process in the village appraisal).

Furthermore, 'reliability' checks were implemented between data sources to explore the different interpretations that exist which in turn tell us much about the process of the village appraisal. This was important for two reasons. First, it highlights the value of a realist approach to investigating the contingencies and structures in the village appraisal process. Second, with regard to the concept of governance, it emphasises partnership between different 'bodies', yet where effective partnership is critically dependent upon a consistent message/view/strategy between the different groups involved. It was found through the reliability checks that it was not possible to take for granted the conclusions found from one data source, because they formed only one interpretation of events. For instance, the information that was collected during the participant observation of the village appraisal steering groups was compared with the behaviour of groups that had previously completed appraisals, the opinions of the wider community in the case study areas and the recollections of the VAO. Using a diversity of methods enabled the researcher to investigate the contingency effects to find that the village appraisal is not an absolute phenomenon, but depends upon the perceptions and interpretations of those individuals involved.

The diversity of research methods and their emphasis on participation, practical experience and reflexivity are consistent with a realist approach.

5.4.1 Qualitative methods.

The study used three main qualitative research methods to investigate the village appraisal process: participant observation, semi-structured interviews and documentary analysis. This section will discuss each method in turn explaining why each method was adopted and the nature and extent of its use. Finally, there is a discussion of how the data were interpreted.

5.4.1.1 Participant observation.

According to Lofland and Lofland (1984: 12) participant observation can be defined as:

Table 5.9 The diversity of methods applied during the research into participants in the village appraisal in rural Northamptonshire.

-	Participant Observation	Semi-structured Interviews	Documentary Analysis	Questionnaire Surveys
Wider Community	-	-	-	YES
Steering Groups (3 study areas)	YES	YES	YES	-
Retrospective Steering Groups		YES	YES	YES
Parish Council	-	YES	YES	YES
RCCs	-	-	YES	YES
Local Authorities	-	YES	YES	-
Planners	-	YES	YES	-
Village Appraisals Officer (Northants)	-	YES	-	-

“the process in which an investigator establishes a many sided and relatively long term relationship with a human, associated in its natural setting for the purpose of developing a scientific understanding of that association”.

It is a methodology that is suitable for observing a wide range of social situations and allows a researcher to become associated with the participants in the event; focusing on human interactions from the insider's point of view. According to Bryman (1988), participant observation also permits the researcher to understand people by observing them within the environment in which they operate so the application of participant observation can provide useful information upon which to focus additional research. This latter point is argued by Blalock (1970: 45-6) who believes that this method is:

“extremely useful in providing initial insights and hunches that can lead to more careful formulations of the problems and explicit hypotheses”.

The application of such methodology in this research project involved observing and experiencing the meanings and interactions of the individuals participating in the steering group of the village appraisal within the locality. The evidence through the literature, which includes the ‘pioneering’ community studies undertaken in rural England and Wales during the 1940s and 1950s, suggested that it was possible to do this using one of two methods (Rees, 1950; Davies and Rees, 1962; Williams, 1963; Frankenberg 1966; Spradley, 1980; Bryman, 1988; May, 1993; Bryman and Burgess, 1994; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). The first method would involve becoming fully integrated in the process and activities of the village appraisal through a covert study as a ‘complete participant’. Although, as research undertaken by Rees (1950) in Llanfihangel illustrates, whilst covert methods of participation are not required per se, complete participation does entail a period of living within the community and becoming integrated in village life (in Rees's case he lived in Llanfihangel for prolonged periods between 1944 and 1946). However, whilst Spradley (1980), Bryman (1988) and May (1993) suggested, through their own experiences, that this would yield unprejudiced, accurate information it was felt by the author that the monitoring of just one case study would have been detrimental to the objectives of this thesis. There was also the danger of going ‘native’, whereby the researcher becomes too involved with the community and finds it difficult to undertake academic analysis. In addition, it is difficult to observe all of the groups within the process, which was a vital part

of the thesis in order to increase the understanding of the village appraisal process at both a micro and a macro scale.

Therefore, the second method of participant observation, which involved using a combination of the procedures associated with ‘complete participation’ (as described above) and observation (a situation which involves the researcher being within, but separate from the study group) was adopted by the author. By using this method, as adopted by Williams in the study of ‘Ashworthy’ in rural England (1963), and by Jenkins in Aberporth, it enables the researcher to “be free to choose [her] own paths of investigation and to follow them wherever they led” (Davies and Rees, (Eds.) 1962: ix). Thus, the researcher became familiar with the surroundings, actions and processes of the village appraisal steering groups in the study villages and formed relationships through “direct face-to-face interaction” which is the overt role of participant observation (Frankenberg, 1966: 250). This, it is argued by May, creates a “reflexive rationalisation” of conduct, which is a situation in which the interpretation of information is undertaken by the researcher on a continual basis and new knowledge is added to the study by the agents as an on-going process (1993: 114). An overt approach of this kind, by the researcher, provided detailed material of the participants involved in the village appraisal process. Moreover, the application of this combined method of participant observation allowed multiple case studies, providing a greater insight into community participation in the village appraisal on a micro scale.

The method of participant observation. The author attended all the meetings held by the village appraisal steering groups in the three case study villages. Table 5.10 illustrates the number of meetings attended at Brixworth, Stoke Albany and Dingley.

There was no set agenda for the frequency of meetings, hence there is a wide difference in the number of meetings that were held in each village in the 32 month period of data collection. As the data shows, there were no particular patterns to the meetings but the differing urgency with which the steering groups in Brixworth and Stoke Albany wished to complete the appraisal is evident because 17 meetings were held in both villages: in Brixworth this was over a 13 month period and in Stoke Albany a 30 month period.

Table 5.10 The dates of village appraisal steering group meetings in the three study villages from October 1993 to July 1996.

	Dates of Meetings
Brixworth	10.11.93, 01.12.93, 09.02.94, 10.02.94, 02.03.94, 23.03.94, 13.04.94, 04.05.94, 08.06.94, 11.06.94, 14.09.94, 05.10.94, 19.10.94, 01.11.94, 09.11.94, 23.11.94, 07.12.94
Stoke Albany	24.01.94, 08.02.94, 11.03.94, 13.03.94, 04.05.94, 20.05.94, 01.06.94, 09.06.94, 08.08.94, 24.11.94, 17.01.95, 06.06.95, 12.09.95, 17.11.95, 27.03.96, 16.05.96, 09.06.96
Dingley	05.02.94, 25.02.94, 05.03.94, 21.05.94, 18.06.94, 21.11.94, 08.04.95

The steering group meetings were not tape recorded because they took place in local parish halls which were considered unsuitable for recording purposes. There was an average of six persons to a study group, and for this reason too, taping was problematic (Burgess, 1992). Concise but detailed notes were taken regarding the nature of the meetings, attendance of participants, agendas of the participants, management strategies involved in the appraisal, development of the village appraisal process, and the involvement of the wider community. All of this involved spending time in unfamiliar surroundings, forming and maintain relationships of varying strengths with individuals involved with these groups with whom there was often little in common.

Advantages and problems of participant observation. Participant observation is characterised by a flexible, open-ended strategy for defining a problem for study by reference to people's everyday lives (Bryman, 1988). According to Atkinson (1981) and May (1993) this provides the basis for constant reflection and redefinition of the research problem once the researcher is in the field. It also ensures that the issues central to the interaction of the study group are always monitored and fully appreciated, even when changes occur.

Three main problems are associated with implementing this methodology. Dalton (1959), Schwartz and Schwartz (1969) and Burgess (1983) discussed the first as the problem of reactivity, and how the study group perceived the researcher. The presence of an observer is believed to create the awareness in the agents that they are being studied. Consequently,

their observed behaviour may differ from their normal behaviour. Judd *et al* (1991: 270) suggested that the behaviour of the participants in the process might be:

“shaped by such desires to impress the researcher or a belief that certain behaviours will help support the research hypothesis”.

This was true to varying degrees in the three case study villages. The researcher's presence in the village affected the relationship between the steering group and the VAO, and affected the village appraisal process. In Brixworth, the steering group wanted the village appraisal to be completed in 12 months and the author's presence was seen to provide an added incentive to achieve this goal. However, throughout the process of the appraisal, the author was referred to as the 'expert' amongst the group and was constantly being asked to be the judge of whose opinions were correct and how to approach certain aspects of the process (Hammersley and Atkinson warn of the dangers of being classed as an expert and evaluator within the study area 1995: 77). This was also true in Stoke Albany, perhaps more so than in Brixworth because the steering group comprised relatively inexperienced people. A contributing factor to the 'expert' problem was the absence of the VAO who stayed away from the case study sites because the author was present. The VAO felt that the steering groups were in 'good hands'. In Dingley, the chairperson of the village appraisal was certain that a researcher would increase the likelihood of an appraisal being completed. Unfortunately, as the empirical chapters will illustrate, this was not the case!

Spradley (1980), Jackson (1983) and Bryman (1988) all experienced the second problem. It concerns selectivity and the way in which decisions are made about what to observe. Furthermore, May (1993) suggested that it is possible for the researcher to omit a whole range of data in order to confirm pre-established beliefs leaving the method open to the charge of bias. During the first observed meetings of the village appraisal it was difficult for the researcher to select which points were important. Despite using ideas presented by qualitative researchers such as Oakley (1994) and Burgess *et al* (1994) on the principles of data recording in the field, sorting information about the village appraisal and participation proved problematic. In this instance, the advice offered by Abrahms and McCulloch (1976) was used:

“initially, keep your eyes and your ears open, but keep your mouth shut” (as quoted in McNeill, 1990: 77).

Whilst doing this, a great deal of data was gathered and it soon became possible to identify points which required a more detailed understanding during the periods of observation. The selection was based on priorities drawn from the literature as well as the recurring themes generated by participants.

The third problem relates to the belief by Spradley (1980) and Jackson (1983) that, because participant observation is performed at the micro scale, it is open to the charge that the findings are local, specific and not generalizable. This criticism is made particularly by positivists for whom generalisability is conflated with causality. Nevertheless, realists would argue that causality has little to do with how often something happens and generalisability is therefore not a high priority.

5.4.1.2 Semi-structured interviews.

A number of semi-structured interviews were carried out throughout the project with people who participated in, or had responsibility for, the village appraisal process in Northamptonshire. Table 5.11 below, illustrates the four groups of people that were interviewed.

Table 5.11 The respondents to the semi-structured interviews.

	No. of Interviews
Steering group members	25
Retrospective steering group members	7
Planning and council officials	9
Village Appraisals Officer (Northamptonshire)	1

The interviews that were undertaken had a common structure and set of questions which allowed for comparability within the groups of interviewees; however, the order and depth of questions asked varied between individuals (see Appendix 1 for a brief outline of the interview questions that were used).

Steering group members. It was necessary to gather further information regarding the participants in the steering groups in Brixworth, Stoke Albany and Dingley. Therefore, the interviews were conducted with four aims in mind:

1. To investigate the recruitment and dynamics of the group in order to better understand the process of participation in the steering groups.
2. To understand how the participants defined the process of the village appraisal and how they wanted it implemented in the locality.
3. To understand how the individual participants interpreted the process of community participation in each of the localities
4. To find out how successful they believed the village appraisal would be as a planning aid.

Using a common skeleton of questions the interviews were conducted (as listed in Table 5.12) to allow a comparison of the patterns and processes exhibited between the three study villages.

Table 5.12 The interviews with the steering group members.

Village	No. of Interviews
Brixworth	15
Stoke Albany	7
Dingley	3

Planning officials and councillors. The interviews with the planning officials and county or district councillors were conducted for two broad reasons. The first was to explore the issue of community participation generally in the planning process. This involved an assessment of the attitudes of the planners and councillors towards community participation, an examination of the purpose of its adoption, and the implications that it has for the local authority and the statutory framework. The second reason was to explore the issues relating to the village appraisal that had been raised through the earlier work in the project. The issues of importance here related to the role of the appraisal in statutory

planning at both the local and the strategic planning level, the origin and funding of the village appraisal initiative in the county, and any future prospects for the scheme.

Retrospective steering groups members. The objective for undertaking semi-structured interviews with members of past steering groups was to compare the “active” case studies with village appraisals that were already complete. They provided an opportunity to ascertain whether the processes occurring in the case study villages were shared elsewhere.

The selection of the villages in which to conduct the intensive research was based on the results from an extensive questionnaire survey distributed to either the chair person of the village appraisal steering group or the chair person of the parish council in each of the Northamptonshire villages where a village appraisal had been completed. The criteria for selection of the villages provide the headings for Table 5.13:

1. Village appraisals which occurred in villages of different sizes;
2. Village appraisals which took a variety of time spans to complete;
3. Village appraisals located in a variety of administrative districts;
4. Village appraisals which had different effects in terms of planning outcomes;
5. Village appraisals undertaken for different reasons.

The Village Appraisals Officer. At the outset of this project the only VAO in the whole of rural England was based in Northamptonshire. Ian Nelson was appointed in 1990 to oversee the production and implementation of village appraisals across the County. Therefore, a study of his role was crucial to an understanding of the spread of village appraisals across the County.

Two main issues were investigated through the interview with Ian Nelson. First, the nature and context of his position was investigated. Second, an examination was made of his views on the village appraisal, and how he actively interpreted his role, both in terms of the content of appraisals and where they were best done.

Table 5.13 The features of the villages that were used in the study of the retrospective steering groups in Northamptonshire.

Villages	Population 1991	Date of village appraisal	Length of village appraisal (yrs)	Administrative District	Effect on local planning	Reason for the village appraisal
Wootton	9,095	1991	2	Northampton	Limited	Planning
Little Houghton	335	1989	2.5	South Northamptonshire	None	History & Planning
Moulton	3,600	1991	3	Daventry	A lot	Planning
Bulwick	152	1983 & 1993	1 & 2	East Northamptonshire	None	Interest & Planning
Pattishall Parish	1,399	1988	1.5	South Northamptonshire	None	Interest
Croughton	1,116	1993	2.5	South Northamptonshire	A lot	History

Advantages of semi-structured interviews. There are three advantages to conducting semi-structured interviews. The principal advantage according to May (1993) and Bryman and Burgess (1994) is that although there is a common framework of questions, the interviewer is free to probe further to seek clarification and elaboration. In this way, May (1993: 93) believes that this type of interview “allows people to answer more on their own terms”, still allowing for comparability but enabling the interviewer to tackle more sensitive issues. For example, it was possible to examine why participants became involved in the village appraisal and if they had any hidden agendas. In the case of the planning officials, the interviews were undertaken to analyse if they were in favour of participation and community development. This is linked to the second advantage as indicated by Burgess (1992). She found that semi-structured interviews were flexible and diverse; useful for when the situation requires adaptability. The third advantage is that this type of interview enables a more holistic approach to be taken (Burgess, 1992; May, 1993). The interviewer can gain an understanding about the personality and individual circumstances of the interviewee, which may be reflected in their opinions about the village appraisal.

Disadvantages of semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews also have three recognised disadvantages. The first is that by asking questions the researcher may cause an alteration to the event under investigation. It is certainly possible that, through interviewing people, changes may have occurred in how the community conducts a village appraisal or how policy is implemented. The second disadvantage is recognised by Fielding, in that the interviewer can over-identify and sympathise with the interviewee:

“so one must maintain a certain detachment in order to take that data and interpret it” (1993: 158).

In this thesis, the researcher interviewed a variety of groups of people and an array of different viewpoints was obtained. Under these circumstances, it was easier to prevent over identification. Finally, respondents may mislead an interviewer whether consciously or not. Such a problem was alleviated during this research project by the triangulation of different sources and statements, but since people’s interpretations of an event may honestly differ, identifying a dishonest approach is problematic.

5.4.1.3 Documents.

Three types of documentation were used as source material through this study: the informal village appraisal documentation; the officially produced Local and Structure Plans; and the minutes from the formal Northamptonshire RCC meetings.

Village appraisal documents. The village appraisal process frequently culminates in the production of a document (a tangible outcome), although the production, quality, contents, and value of the document vary between villages. As chapters 2 and 3 indicated this document can contain a prescription for the future development of the village and as such is used to influence the planners and council officials. In order to ascertain the outcome and benefits experienced by a village because of the appraisal, the documentation has to be analysed. Therefore, a comprehensive review of completed village appraisals in Northamptonshire was undertaken from those held by the VAO at Northamptonshire RCC. In addition, an insight was gained into appraisals undertaken in other counties from those held by ACRE at their library in Cirencester (see Appendix 2 for a list of the appraisal documents considered).

Local Plans and Structure Plans. A variety of Structure Plans, Local Plans and environmental plans were examined to understand the general approach of Northamptonshire County Council and its district planning departments particularly with regard to detailed planning proposals which affected the villages of Brixworth, Stoke Albany and Dingley (see the bibliography for a complete list). This was necessary, especially in the case of Brixworth, in order to understand any grievances which the community had against the planners. The information also provided background knowledge of the patterns of development within each of the case study villages.

Minutes of Northamptonshire Rural Community Council (NRCC) meetings. Of interest to this study were the historical minutes of the 1953 & 1954 Northamptonshire RCC meetings that existed in the Northamptonshire Records Office and in particular, the information regarding the Coronation Village Scrapbook Competition, as described in chapter 2.

5.4.2 Quantitative methods

5.4.2.1 Questionnaire surveys.

Questionnaire surveys were conducted with four groups of participants in the village appraisal process: the wider community in the three study villages; the youth in Brixworth; the parish councils in Northamptonshire; and the RCCs nation-wide (see Appendix 1 for an outline of the questionnaires that were used).

The questionnaire surveys were completed for three main reasons, although each individual survey was undertaken to satisfy particular objectives.

1. To broaden the scale of analysis to enable a comparable study to take place between the three study villages and the county of Northamptonshire and rural England as a whole.
2. To gather empirical information about the general patterns of uptake of the village appraisal process at the district and national level.
3. To undertake an extensive research programme to define the issues which should be explored through the intensive research phase.

The household survey in the three study villages. In order to evaluate to what extent the village appraisal was 'representative' it was necessary to initiate communication with people in the wider community of each study village (see Table 5.14). An extensive questionnaire survey was chosen to investigate if local people were aware of the village appraisal and to investigate their interests in the village. By comparing the priorities promoted by the village appraisal with those of the wider community, a measure of representation could be obtained.

Table 5.14 The household survey in the three study areas.

Study Area	No. of households	Households in sample	Respondent households
Brixworth	1421	375	175
Stoke Albany	112	58	22
Dingley	76	76	33

(OPCS, 1991 (a)).

The survey of the youth in Brixworth. The results of the household surveys in combination with the actual village appraisals identified a minority group who was being consistently under-represented in the rural community. The village appraisal which is organised by the adult population, and aimed initially at the head of household, provides little opportunity for the youth to participate and co-operate with the local planning authority to express their views and ideas about the village in which they live. Therefore, a questionnaire survey was undertaken by the researcher aimed specifically at the youth (11 to 18 year olds).

The questionnaire survey of the youth had two main objectives. First, the intention was to verify whether the youth actually felt that they had participated in the village appraisal in order to discover whether the process was representative of the wider community. This included identifying the section of youth who felt they were not only being disregarded by those in authority but also those who felt they were succumbing to adult pressure when completing the village appraisal. The second objective was to investigate if there were issues that the youth felt should be tackled by the village appraisal. Combined with the data collected through the household survey, this information was intended to examine if the village appraisal was representing the issues of the wider community. This is considered especially important if the village appraisal is going to be used as the tool for future planning.

Brixworth was the only village that had an identified and significantly large youth population that could be targeted away from the home environment. Stoke Albany and Dingley were too small. The questionnaire survey was distributed in Moulton Secondary School, Northamptonshire, the school that holds the catchment area for Brixworth's youth population. The school was unsure of the exact number of Brixworth's youth who attended⁶, so the sample was obtained by distributing the questionnaires to form teachers who then asked the Brixworth youth to complete the questionnaire. All the samples were

⁶Exact numbers would have taken the school time to collate. This was an unnecessary burden on the teachers of a school already giving time to help the project.

completed under the supervision of the teacher to prevent plagiarism. 118 completed questionnaires were returned to the author.

The survey of Northamptonshire parish councils. In general terms, the survey of Northamptonshire parish councils was undertaken to see if the activities occurring within the study villages of Brixworth, Stoke Albany and Dingley were unique to those villages, or if they were prevalent throughout Northamptonshire. The implementation of the survey had six further objectives that would add to the wider understanding of the village appraisal initiative. These were:

1. To provide a data base of information regarding the number of village appraisals undertaken or completed within the county;
2. To discover the spatial distribution of village appraisals within the administrative districts of the county;
3. To evaluate the reasons for the implementation of the village appraisal (or not);
4. To investigate the degree to which the village appraisal is affected by the individuals within the steering group;
5. To compare the processes adopted in the different village appraisals and examine these in relation to the outcomes achieved;
6. To empirically analyse the levels of community participation in village appraisals;

The questionnaire survey was undertaken in two parts. The first part was based on the information received from the VAO. 45 villages in the County were identified by the VAO as having undertaken and completed a village appraisal since the 1970s. In contacting these villages, it was hoped to gain comparable information about the individuals who participated in the steering groups.

Part two of the survey was initiated to validate the information provided by the VAO. There is always the possibility that information can be denied to those in authority, or that those in authority can interpret the information provided in a different manner. To ensure that a complete picture of village appraisal activity in Northamptonshire was obtained, a further 210 villages contacted through the parish councils formed the sample for stage two of the survey; 192 parish councils responded (91percentage return).

The survey of the Rural Community Councils in England. The important role of the RCC in village appraisals has already been established in chapters 2 and 4. To investigate their views and opinions all 36 RCCs in the country were contacted in a follow-up survey to the two previous surveys conducted by the charity ACRE. Just 29 of the RCCs responded.

This survey was undertaken for four main reasons:

1. To construct a national database showing the spatial distribution of village appraisals;
2. To discover if the village appraisal was widely promoted throughout England as a planning tool and as a means of community development;
3. To ascertain if the RCCs believed the village appraisal to be an appropriate method of encouraging community participation in the planning system and achieving widespread, 'bottom-up' community development;
4. To investigate the issue of standardisation of the village appraisal.

5.4.3 Interpretation.

With the application of a realist epistemology the interpretation of the data started in the early stages of the research process. The analysis performed on the earlier phases of the study informed the later stages (Oleson *et al*, 1994; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). This process is central to the theory of 'grounded theorising' (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), where theory is developed from the analysis of data and additional data collection is guided by the emergent theory. Furthermore, the adoption of this style of initial interpretation also enabled the quantitative and qualitative data to be linked together at an early stage in the research, a problem that Mason (1994) recollects from a study of family obligations.

The interpretation of the data was generally undertaken using the classic 'ethnographic' or 'qualitative' methods in which descriptive and conceptual categories were developed from the creative analysis of the information; the statistical information gathered through the

extensive surveys was then used to further develop the analysis⁷. In so doing, the analysis of the data was undertaken in two stages.

The first stage entailed searching the data for themes in order to develop descriptive and conceptual categories for the key issues through the study of participation in the village appraisal (Strauss, 1987; Mason, 1994; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). The formulation of the two categories was a combined process and, in total, 29 categories were developed. The categories were used to index the transcripts from the participant observation, the interviews with all the participants and the qualitative data in the questionnaire surveys. From the cross tabulation and indexing of the categories and the data, a matrix was produced to indicate the data sources that illustrated the main issues questioned through the research. This is shown in Table 5.15.

The second stage involved the interpretation of the data on a thematic and a temporal basis. This involved pulling together statements, actions and interview material to assess whether a consensus existed in the process of the village appraisal between the three case studies. Furthermore, time is particularly significant to the village appraisal process, so a temporal framework of actions and events, based on the information gained from the participant observation and through interviews with the individual steering group members, was created. This developed a sequence of social interaction and revealed events that had an impact on the village appraisal, but which occurred outside of the steering group meetings.

⁷ Using techniques associated with ethnography or intensive research accounted for the complications that existed because of the nature of the data (as explained above).

Table 5.15 A matrix of issues that were found through the empirical analysis.

Categories	Participant Observation	Parish Survey	Steering Group Members	The planners and Council Officials	Retrospective Steering Group Members	Village Appraisal Officer	Village Survey	Youth Survey
1. Success of the appraisal	-	1	1	1	1	1	-	-
2. Representation	2	2	2	2	2	2	-	2
3. Barriers to participation	-	-	3	3	3	3	-	-
4. Levels of participation	4	4	4	-	4	4	4	-
5. Personal involvement	5	-	5	-	5	5	5	5
6. Community Spirit	6	6	6	6	6	6	-	-
7. Outcomes	-	7	7	7	7	7	-	-
8. Benefits	-	8	8	8	8	8	8	-
9. Definition of the village appraisal	-	9	9	9	9	9	9	9
10. Advantages of the appraisal	-	10	10	10	10	10	10	-
11. Disadvantages of the appraisal	-	11	11	11	11	11	-	-
12. Spread of uptake of the appraisal	-	12	-	12	-	12	-	-
13. Process of participation	13	-	13	13	13	13	-	-
14. Process of the village appraisal	14	14	14	-	14	14	-	-
15. The software package	-	15	15	-	15	15	-	-
16. Limits of the software package	-	16	16	-	16	16	-	-
17. Role of the RCC	-	17	17	17	17	17	-	-
18. Role of the planning authorities	18	18	18	18	18	-	-	-
19. Process versus product	19	-	19	19	19	19	-	-
20. Members of the steering group	-	20	20	-	20	-	-	-
21. Role of the steering group	21	21	21	21	21	21	-	-
22. Use as a planning aid	-	22	22	22	22	22	-	-
23. The power of the steering group	-	23	23	-	23	-	-	-
24. Role of the parish council	24	-	24	24	24	-	-	-
25. Community awareness	25	25	-	25	-	25	25	25
26. Knowledge of the origins of the appraisal	26	26	26	-	26	-	26	-
27. Positive achievements of the steering group	27	27	27	-	27	-	-	-
28. Negative achievements of the steering group	28	28	28	-	28	28	-	-
29. Reasons for uptake of the appraisal	29	29	29	-	29	29	-	-

5.5 Conclusion.

In this chapter, it has been shown that the geographer's interest in the village appraisal can be seen as drawing together a number of themes which have characterised the geographical study of rural communities over many years. Furthermore, the recent revival in the fortunes of many rural areas, largely the result of the in-migration of professional households, whether in retirement or employment, has coincided with the opening up of the planning system, in which local people are now actively encouraged to engage in the decision making process. Allying this switch to the approaches of realism and by adopting a multiple methodology, it has been possible to examine the process of the village appraisal from a number of different perspectives and at different scales. In this way the contingent effects of local circumstances and agents can be examined. The methodology enables an exploration of the ways in which the structures and agents involved in the village appraisal transform each other, so determining whether a particular village undertakes an appraisal and what the nature and outcome of that appraisal might be.

It follows, therefore, that a realist approach sits very comfortably with the shift towards local governance and the selection of villages chosen for detailed investigation. That is, it is possible to explore the detailed arrangements between the wider national and local structures and individuals and groups in each village, and the ways in which these flexible partnerships, which are at the heart of governance, are affected by the contingent effects of local people, local situations and the local interpretations of the wider macro-structures. In the next chapter, these ideas are explored more fully by reference to the Rural Community Councils (RCCs) across rural England and the local situation in Northamptonshire.

Chapter six

The village appraisal: 1970 to present day

6.1 Introduction.

Earlier discussion has revealed how the previous Conservative government saw the village appraisal as instrumental not just in its policy of deregulation but also in its view that the active participation of all citizens in partnerships with the statutory and other agencies was a far more effective and efficient means of delivering resources to local communities than the top down style of planning which had operated hitherto. At the heart of this shift to local governance are a number of dilemmas, all of which impact upon a whole series of issues associated with the village appraisal, including what is at the centre of this chapter, namely the actual take-up of village appraisals over the past twenty five years.

The use of a realist perspective allows us to make more sense of these dilemmas since what this approach does is to examine the links both within and between the necessary internal relations (which form structures giving rise to the mechanism which produce the event – in this case the village appraisal) and the contingent relations (which provide variability in the process in different localities). In this case the contingent relations can be distinguished between the occupants of a given locality (such as individuals, groups and organisations) and space time factors (such as employment levels and planning conditions). Moreover, following Sayer's dictum, what we see as a numerical count of village appraisals distributed across geographical space cannot simply be explained by statistical association; we need instead to emphasise the structures and the mechanisms, the relationships between them and the ways in which these provide a deeper understanding of the take-up (or not) of village appraisals in rural England.

In order to develop this understanding, the village appraisal is explored at both a macro scale to gain a picture of uptake at a national level, and a micro scale at the local level. Therefore, the chapter is divided into two sections, the first focusing upon information provided by the Rural Community Councils (RCCs) on village appraisals produced for each county of England since 1970, the second focusing upon Northamptonshire, where the

village appraisal initiative has been taken up with particular enthusiasm.

The national picture has been heavily dependent upon data provided by four surveys conducted over the past ten years. The data raise two specific questions concerning the response not just to the shift to local governance, but also the tensions this creates between particular agencies and between them and the contingent relations of specific localities. First, what is the national picture of village appraisal uptake since 1970? Exploring this provides an opportunity to analyse the data gathered during the four surveys, it also explores whether the RCCs, in their role as intermediaries between the planning structures on the one hand and rural communities on the other, are best placed to monitor the uptake of village appraisals effectively. Second, how does the existence of key voluntary organisations impact upon the uptake or distribution of village appraisals? Of particular concern here is whether this group of 'contingent relations' are responsible for promoting 'uneven community development' given that, since deregulation, there has been a greater emphasis on a more competitive approach to the allocation of scarce resources (Goodwin and Painter, 1996). The discussion will focus on the roles played by ACRE, the RCCs and the Training and Enterprise Council (TEC).

In the second section of the chapter, the use of a multiple methodology has enabled the author to explore these relationships more closely with reference to Northamptonshire, a county which has espoused the principle of village appraisals from a very early stage and in 1990 became the first in England to have a dedicated Village Appraisals Officer to facilitate the process. What this detailed study does is to investigate the complex interplay not just between the agencies which have created the mechanisms by which the appraisals have been done, but also the ways in which the contingent effects of particular localities (villages) have engaged (or not) with the process. This section will review the roles of particular agencies (for example, the chief executive of Northamptonshire county council, Northamptonshire RCC (now called Northamptonshire ACRE) and the seven district councils) and, through analysis of semi-structured interviews carried out with them, will examine the varying degrees to which they have created the necessary mechanisms to facilitate village appraisal production.

Furthermore, by assessing the views of the residents of the villages themselves and the ways they have interacted (or not) with the various agencies it will be possible to begin to understand not just those factors which help to explain the spatial and temporal take-up of appraisals, but also some of the problems and issues raised by the previous government's commitment to this kind of partnership and its view that rural Britain was the optimal environment within which such activity should take place.

6.2 What is the national picture of village appraisal uptake since 1970?

Table 6.1 contains the data collected from the RCCs in three surveys which sought to establish the number of village appraisals that had been completed in England over the 25 year period since 1970. Greeves and Taylor (1987) and Gaskell (1990) conducted the first two surveys through ACRE, whilst the third survey was undertaken by the author and presented in two sections. The first section recorded those appraisals undertaken in the period 1991-1994, whilst the second section records those village appraisals that were in progress in 1995-1996. In theory therefore the data ought to provide a complete picture of village appraisal activity over a 25 year period, though, as Table 6.1 illustrates, any detailed analysis is compromised by four substantial issues.

The first issue is that no 'quality audit' has been incorporated into the discussion. All that is provided is the numerical response from the respective RCCs, so all issues associated with the nature, quality, size and character of the village appraisal document have been set to one side. Equally, information was not forthcoming on the location of the village within each RCC area. Second, six RCCs, representing substantial rural tracts of England, failed to respond to any of the surveys (Staffordshire, Somerset, Yorkshire (North, South, and West), Cambridgeshire, Hereford & Worcester and Surrey) and in the case of the author's two surveys in the mid 1990s each failed to respond to a number of telephone and written prompts. Third, complete information on village appraisal uptake exists for just 14 RCCs and even here there is no pattern of responses between the four surveys. Indeed, the Greeves and Taylor and the Gaskell surveys have continuous information for 19 counties, and whilst the author's 1991-94 survey provides information for 24 counties, there is nothing for Shropshire

(which did respond to the two earlier studies). For comparative purposes, therefore, there is information for just 21 RCCs in the author's final survey. Fourth, the information provided is based upon that supplied by the respective RCCs. At the time of the author's two surveys in the 1990s it was decided in discussions with ACRE at Cirencester that this was the best approach since no national directory of village appraisal activity exists, nor is there a national (or for that matter local) repository where a copy of each appraisal is kept. Indeed, in personal correspondence with Professor Malcolm Moseley (formerly Director of ACRE) it is clear that there is a fundamental principle which recognises the autonomy of the village appraisal process and that ownership resides firmly with the community. In this sense, therefore, a complete record of village appraisal activity lies beyond the prime concern of ACRE and its constituent county organisations, though as will be discussed later, the views at the local level as to what does and does not constitute a village appraisal are equally important.

In summary, therefore, what is being analysed here are those figures provided by each RCC on what they define as village appraisals; and such definitions may well vary from one RCC to another, or within a single RCC from one survey to another. Such inconsistencies became apparent during the author's 1996 survey when each RCC was asked to provide the number of village appraisals completed in the period 1970 to 1996. This was then compared to the information gathered in the three earlier surveys. As Table 6.2 indicates there was agreement only in six of the 15 counties for which information was available. A further three counties varied by no more than three either way but in three other counties there was a difference of over 20, with the author's 1996 survey consistently recording less activity than that cited by the earlier studies.

Table 6.1 The number of village appraisals undertaken in rural England since 1970.

*(Greeves and Taylor, 1987) ** (Gaskell, 1990) *** (Bradley, 1995)

County	1970-1986*	1987-1990**	1991-1994***	1995-1996***
Avon	-	-	10	4
Bedfordshire	-	17	6	3
Berkshire	4	0	4	-
Buckinghamshire	2	4	13	5
Cheshire	5	4	3	0
Cornwall	1	3	4	-
Cumbria	-	27	25	5
Derbyshire	1	10	7	-
Devon	32	22	21	-
Dorset	26	7	4	-
Essex	-	31	5	-
Gloucestershire	-	-	76	-
Hampshire	-	-	5	0
Hertfordshire	5	7	7	0
Humberside	5	3	4	2
Isle of Wight	-	-	5	3
Kent	39	74	15	15
Lancashire	-	2	4	9
Leicestershire	6	6	8	2
Lincolnshire	-	7	46	26
Norfolk	-	5	20	5
Northamptonshire	3	20	33	16
Northumberland	4	2	7	13
Nottinghamshire	-	-	13	1
Oxfordshire	2	10	33	41
Shropshire (p)	4	5	-	-
Suffolk	4	12	10	2
Sussex	25	7	2	-
Warwickshire	4	18	15	0
Wiltshire	12	11	10	5
TOTAL	184	314	415	157

- indicates no data available

Table 6.2 The variations in the number of village appraisals undertaken across rural England in the successive surveys of the RCCs between 1970-1996 and in 1996.

County	Results of the surveys between 1970 – 1996 (Table 6.1)	Results of the follow- up survey in 1996	Variations
Bedfordshire	26	24	-2
Cumbria	57	58	+1
Derbyshire	18	6	-12
Hertfordshire	19	19	0
Kent	143	150	+7
Lancashire	15	14	-1
Lincolnshire	79	35	-44
Norfolk	30	30	0
Northumberland	26	26	0
Nottinghamshire	14	14	0
Oxfordshire	86	41	-45
Shropshire	9	9	0
Suffolk	28	11	-17
Warwickshire	37	37	0
Wiltshire	38	18	-20

What this preamble indicates, therefore, is that any statistical analysis of the data in Table 6.1 needs to be conducted with care. Clearly, given the variations in response, any statistical analysis of appraisal activity between surveys could be seen as meaningless and pointless, though it should be possible to examine patterns within each survey, and to see if patterns emerge which reflect earlier work. In this sense the data do suggest particular temporal trends and geographical concentrations, which give some insight into those factors that have contributed to at least a partial explanation of village appraisal take-up.

First, for those counties (14) where complete information exists for all four survey periods, all but three (Cheshire, Humberside, and Northumberland) are located in southern England, contained in an arc extending from East Anglia through Leicestershire and Northamptonshire to Wiltshire. Whilst it is somewhat ironic that the modern village appraisal, based on the Stocksfield (Northumberland) model, should be taken up so substantially in the south of England, it does seem that the greatest pressures on the countryside, at least in terms of population growth associated with the urban-rural turnaround, have been in this part of England. According to information from the 1981 and 1991 censuses, it is this belt of

countryside which has experienced the most rapid population growth (Lewis, 1998) and where it is also likely to be the greatest in the period to 2016 (DETR, 1999).

Second, it is possible to relate the pattern of take-up to 'levels of rurality', calculated from the 1991 census for each county on the percentage of its land area given over to urban and rural areas (ONS, 1997). In Table 6.3 this level of rurality has been correlated with the numbers of village appraisals, using the Spearman Rank correlation test.

Table 6.3 Spearman correlation coefficients for percentage rurality and village appraisal activity.

Correlation	Spearman Value	Significance Level	Number of paired values
% rural and total village appraisals	+0.44	P<0.01	30
% rural and village appraisals 1991-4	+0.47	P<0.01	29
% rural and village appraisals 1995-6	+0.39	P<0.05	21
% rural and village appraisals 1991-6	+0.60	P<0.01	21
% rural and village appraisals 1987-90	+0.20	P>0.05	25
% rural and village appraisals 1970-86	-0.19	P>0.05	19
% rural and village appraisals 1970-90	+0.13	P>0.05	19

The calculations reveal two interesting points. First, there are statistically significant correlations between appraisal activity and percentage rurality for each of the periods since 1990, whereby the more rural the county the higher the proportion of village appraisal activity. Second, in the period before 1990 a much more variable relationship was revealed, but with none of the correlations strong enough to be statistically significant. In the period between 1970 and 1990 there was a weak positive relationship between the level of rurality in a county and the amount of appraisal take-up though this was largely the result of appraisals undertaken towards the end of the period. Indeed, the underlying trend revealed by these correlations is a closer and stronger relationship between rurality and numbers of appraisals being done which suggests that there has been a more focused approach to village appraisal uptake in the more rural areas in recent years, in line with the approach taken by the RDA and the European Union (LEADER Objective 5b) which have become primary sources of funding for the economic and social regeneration of deprived rural areas. The promotion of village appraisals by RCCs is frequently targeted specifically at the deprived remoter areas (for

example, Cumbria RCC, 1995; Derbyshire RCC, 1995) because they are often guaranteed funding for community development projects identified through the village appraisal (see section 6.2.1.2 for further detail). This relationship is illustrated by the high level of village appraisal uptake in those counties which qualify for funding from these two organisations. From the 1,070 village appraisals reportedly undertaken across rural England (Table 6.1), there are 733 (68 percent) that have been undertaken in counties with a designated RDA and 514 (48 percent) in counties that qualify for European LEADER Objective 5b project funding (Table 6.4 and 6.5). In the absence of detailed data on the actual location of appraisals, it is uncertain what percentage of these appraisals have been undertaken inside or outside the designated areas in the identified counties.

Furthermore, despite the high level of uptake within these areas, there is a broad swathe of ten counties in the central region of rural England, which do not qualify for external funding of this nature, yet have yielded 325 village appraisals over the last 25 years, implying that the existence of these funding initiatives is not solely responsible for the increased uptake of village appraisals in the more rural areas since 1990 (Table 6.6).

Table 6.6 Counties across rural England that do not qualify for funding assistance but have experience of village appraisals.

Counties of rural England not eligible for development funding	Total village appraisal uptake
Oxfordshire	86
Northamptonshire	72
Warwickshire	37
Sussex	34
Bedfordshire	26
Buckinghamshire	24
Hertfordshire	19
Avon	14
Berkshire	8
Hampshire	5
TOTAL	325

Finally, it is important to stress the role of individual activity and initiative for leading to buoyant numbers of village appraisals. For example, in Northamptonshire, the introduction of the 'Parish 2000' guidance package for village appraisals in 1987 was clearly a bench mark for increased village appraisal production (from just 3 appraisals pre-1987 to 20 appraisals between 1987 and 1990), whilst the appointment of Ian Nelson as village appraisals officer in 1990 further fuelled the interest in village appraisals countywide (see section 6.3.2 for a more detailed discussion). Village appraisal activity in Gloucestershire has been undoubtedly aided by the presence of ACRE's headquarters in Cirencester, the role played by Ros Leigh, an active community development worker at Gloucester RCC, and the work of the Countryside Unit at Cheltenham and Gloucester College of Higher Education which initiated the production of the initial software for the ACRE village appraisal model. In Northumberland, Dr. Rosemary Lumb, an academic who became a community development worker, successfully promoted the application of the village appraisal both at the grass roots and in academic publications until her death in the early 1990s, although David Francis currently in that position has continued to promote appraisal activity within the county. In a similar vein, James Derounian, in Devon RCC helped contribute to the high number of village appraisals undertaken in the county pre-1990, since when he has joined the academic team in the Countryside Unit at Cheltenham and Gloucester College of Higher Education. Finally, in Lincolnshire, village appraisal activity increased considerably when the Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) incorporated it into their Rural Challenge initiative in 1993 and appointed a village appraisals officer to promote appraisals within the county (see section 6.2.1.4 for a more detailed discussion).

Additionally the existence of key voluntary organisations is found to impact upon the geographical uptake of village appraisals. As such, the following discussions will consider the roles played by ACRE, the RCCs and the Training and Enterprise Council (TEC).

6.2.1 How does the existence of key voluntary organisations impact upon village appraisal uptake?

The Conservative government's approach to deregulation in the early 1990s and to the delivery of local governance through active citizenship involved the development of

'partnerships' between key voluntary sector agencies and the public/private institutions. The recognition of the importance of the voluntary sector increased their powers in the process of community development. It was believed, however, that voluntary organisations would:

"not replace public services, but should supplement and complement them because [they are] localised and specialised" (Kearns, 1992: 22, emphasis added).

It is the purpose of this section to examine whether voluntary sector agencies merely 'supplement and complement' the main service providers through the process of community development using the village appraisal or if their role has more importance and thus a greater impact on the 'uneven shift to local governance' as measured by spatial variations in village appraisal uptake. In so doing, the discussion will consider in detail three key agents involved in village appraisal production:

- ACRE's national model for village appraisal production;
- The role of the RCCs;
- The role of the TEC (a case study from Lincolnshire).

6.2.1.1 A national model for village appraisal production

ACRE encourages the uptake of the village appraisal through the national model introduced in 1991 (see Table 4.2). As section 4.3.3.1 explained, by using the software program a local steering group can choose up to 80 questions from the subject areas in Table 6.7 for inclusion in a household questionnaire survey. The program can then be used to analyse the information gathered and produce graphs to summarise the results.

Table 6.7 The subject areas in the ACRE (1991 (b)) village appraisal programme.

People	Housing
Employment	Education
Countryside / Environment	Health & Social Services
Emergency, Environment & other Services	Information & Communications
Retail Services	Transport & Highways
Religion	Sport, Social & Entertainment
General	Local Government

The publication of a model for village appraisal production may well affect the way in which uptake is recognised. In other words a judgement may be taken in the collation of appraisal activity within a county whereby only those appraisals which have used the software are counted. Indeed, for several county RCCs it may be the only way in which they know an appraisal has taken place. Not only does this have an effect on the numbers given when surveys are taken, but it is also a worry when it appears to threaten the notions of flexibility, partnership and active citizenship which are at the heart of governance. For example, Northamptonshire ACRE was either not aware of, or failed to recognise that, several village appraisal projects had been undertaken without the use of the ACRE model. In the village of Dingley, the village appraisal was so different from the 'recommended' model that it was excluded from the information supplied by Northamptonshire ACRE in the author's survey (see 6.3.1.1). Additionally, in Sibbertoft, Orlingbury, the Bramptons, and Woodford, village appraisals had been undertaken according to a process developed within the community rather than by ACRE and were omitted from the list of completed appraisals provided by the VAO¹.

The evidence from the author's survey of the RCCs in 1994 revealed that up to 50 per cent of them do not actively promote the use of ACRE's village appraisal program, an argument reflected in the fact that only 71 computer program packages were sold through the RCCs in 1995, although 157 appraisals were undertaken (see Table 6.1). Even in circumstances where the computer program is used, a village may choose not to follow precisely the structured process as indicated in Table 6.7. More usually, villages 'dip' into the process at the stages which they believe are the most appropriate for their locality. For example, while most steering groups will hold an initial public meeting to establish interest levels and discover people's needs, not all steering groups feel the need to draw up a funding plan (for example Little Houghton in Northamptonshire which produced the village appraisal documents free of charge). The desire of people to modify systems to their own agenda is only natural. As the village appraisal is a tool through which the participating individual has the opportunity to

¹ This danger was highlighted through the work by Moseley *et al* (1996 (b)). The author of this thesis guarded against this eventuality by undertaking a countywide survey of all rural parish councils independent to Northamptonshire ACRE, as explained in section 4.4.2.1.

increase their capacity for learning and personal development, the individual's personal experiences must encourage them to adapt the structure of the process.

The primary reason for participating villages wishing to alter ACRE's village appraisal structure is the inability of the computer program to be adapted fully to the unique and individual village environment. The designers of the software program (Cheltenham and Gloucester College of Higher Education, Gloucestershire RCC and Stroud District Council) built into the original model a set of questions that would be appropriate to all villages (for example, family size, age structure, workplace etc.) or themes, which again would have general applicability (for example, housing, retailing etc.). This limitation of the package, however, means that participating villages that wish to tailor the appraisal for their own environment and agenda have to use other methods². This is argued by Northumberland RCC who:

“have found the Cheltenham and Gloucester package too restrictive. It is confusing in its presentation. It is also limited in the sorts of reports and tables which can be generated” (1995).

Consequently, the rural officers in Northumberland now (1996) promote the use of a market research program called SNAP. This enables the community to become much more active in

² As this research culminates, the introduction of a “completely revamped software pack” which uses Microsoft Windows (Moseley, 1998: no page) is indicative that ACRE and other voluntary sector organisations and public/private institutions (notably, the Rural Development Commission, the Countryside Commission, English Partnerships, and the Council for the Protection of Rural England) recognised the shortcomings in the original village appraisal model. Having taken 18 months to complete, the new software pack is intended to “celebrate local distinctiveness and to put together community action plans” through the use of the village appraisal (Leigh, 1998: 1). However, from the information that is circulated with the new software pack it appears (at least on the surface), that there is little difference between the old original ACRE model (Table 4.2) and the new one. Indeed, the new model suggests that starting work on the appraisal is a matter of appointing a steering group “to ensure that the village appraisal process is a catalyst for community action” (ibid.: 2) and identifying the important issues through researching those matters that are current in the locality, a list of possible issues is conveniently provided (for example, employment, transport, education, and housing). Then the “village appraisals for Windows software package joins the action” (ibid.: 4) and the questionnaire, to contain a maximum of 100 questions (rather than 80 like the old package), is created, written and delivered. The next stage is the data entry, made easier with the new ACRE model because it is Windows friendly and multiple machines can be used to enter the data at one time. This is quickly followed by an opportunity for the steering group to demonstrate what information they have accumulated not forgetting to make “recommendations for further action [rather than] just present[ing] the tabulated data” (ibid.: 9). The penultimate stage of the process involves making the community aware of the village appraisal results. This can be achieved through an exhibition, a written report or public meeting. In the final stage “the real work begins” by forming local community-based action groups, forging partnerships with statutory or other agencies or using the appraisal as a lobbying tool (ibid.: 10).

a key stage of the village appraisal process and have freedom of choice in the construction of the village appraisal survey.

The questions contained within the original software program are also believed to restrict the choice of topics that can be investigated. The program “only allows up to 10 ‘new’ questions” which are particular to the individual community (Northumberland RCC, 1995). This does not really compare to the flexibility that is available within a ‘custom made’ survey. Table 6.8 illustrates the subject areas that were most commonly used by steering groups in Northamptonshire which have used the ACRE software program (see chapter 4 for a more detailed explanation of the subject areas).

Table 6.8 The main subjects used in the ACRE questionnaire in Northamptonshire and the percentage of villages using each subject area.

Subject Area	% of villages that used each subject area
Education	85
Household	85
Housing	85
Employment	80
Retail Services	80
Personal	75
Transport and Highways	75
Countryside / environment	70
Health and social services	70
Emergency	65
Sport social and entertainment	65
Communication	35
Local Government	35
General (likes and dislikes etc.)	30
Religion	30

In contrast, Table 6.9 outlines the subject areas for questions that were designed by those villages using a ‘homemade’ questionnaire. This indicates areas of overlap, but also the opportunity to develop themes of interest to the steering group or appropriate to that particular village.

Table 6.9 The main subjects used in the homemade questionnaires in Northamptonshire and the percentage of villages using each subject area.

Subject area	% of villages that used each subject area
Employment	100
Local facilities (leisure, services etc.)	83
Education	66
Population	66
Housing	32
Shopping	32
Transport	32
Under 18s	32
Entertainment	16
Family connections in the village	16
Footpaths and bridleways	16
Health care	16
Likes and dislikes about the village	16
Rural crime	16
Senior citizens	16
Village appearance	16
A1/M1 Link Road	8
Car ownership	8
Planning	8
Utilities	8
Village organisation membership	8

As these fundamentally 'bottom-up' innovations do not require any systematic quantification by the planning authority or any voluntary organisation, awareness of their progress does not always occur³. Recognition for such projects is more problematic if the village appraisal process differs from that laid out by ACRE. More importantly, the agencies involved in the process are unlikely to acknowledge the outcomes that are achieved from such projects if they do not recognise that what has taken place is a 'proper' village appraisal. Therefore, the imposition of a national model for the production of village appraisals by ACRE can impact not only on the uptake of the initiative, but also on the geographical distribution that is recorded. The implications of the imposition of a national model stretch much further

³ The exception of course is when the community approaches the planning authority for action to be taken as a result of the household questionnaire survey.

however. The empowerment of individuals and the delivery of active citizenship are not equal across rural communities and, as such, ACRE contributes to the uneven shift to local governance. Furthermore, the ACRE model provides a certain standard which allows comparison - a useful adjunct for planning authorities and voluntary sector organisations - whereas the bespoke village appraisal meets the specific requirements of the village/steering group but may have less use outside the village. This is of course a dilemma, and a classic problem for those encouraging the flexible individualised post-modern agenda of governance.

6.2.1.2 The role of the RCCs in village appraisal production.

The uneven distribution of the village appraisal can be further explored by examining the role of the 38 RCCs in aiding and encouraging the deregulated process of rural community development through the village appraisal. Three issues affect how the individual RCCs implement the village appraisal process within their locality. These are funding, interpretation and the promotion of the village appraisal process⁴. The constraints placed on the village appraisal process by the RCCs ultimately determine where the appraisal is undertaken, why it is undertaken, and who participates in the appraisal process.

This section of the chapter will use examples from rural England to discuss the following issues that are important within the RCCs:

- the nature of funding of the village appraisal;
- how is the village appraisal interpreted;
- the promotion of the village appraisal within the locality.

Although these issues are discussed separately below, they are inter-related. For example, the extent of the resources available for funding the village appraisal will affect the method chosen by RCC officers to promote the process. Moreover, the resources made available will

⁴ The funding restrictions that influence the village appraisal are frequently imposed by public/private institutions that control the funding of the RCCs, whilst the further two constraints are imposed at the discretion of the RCC officers.

be a reflection of the importance placed on the village appraisal by the RCC as a tool to deliver local governance and rural community development.

Funding. The Rural Development Commission (RDC) guarantees half of the funding of the RCCs with the remainder coming from a combination of local authority and voluntary sources. Local authority funding is subject to the vagaries of political and practical priorities whilst funds from voluntary sources are rarely permanent. RCCs therefore vary in terms of the funds available to them, the staff they employ and the amount and type of work they can undertake.

There is no national fund available to help RCCs encourage the implementation of the village appraisal process nor to undertake any action proposed by completed village appraisals. The main bodies that operate funding for the village appraisal are the RDC, local government, Rural Action and local Rural Initiative Funds. The types of grants available to start the initiative in the community vary from £50.00 from the RCC, to a maximum of £500.00 from Rural Action although, as chapter 4 illustrated, this latter grant is to implement action that has the specific intention to improve environmental quality within the community. Recent cuts in local government funding in Northamptonshire have resulted in cuts to Northamptonshire ACRE and thus to communities wishing to undertake a village appraisal. Previously, Northamptonshire ACRE was able to give a community a start-up grant of £150.00, a copy of the software program from ACRE (priced at £50.00) and a further £150.00 at the report stage of the village appraisal but “county council budget cuts have cut this” (Nelson, 1995) and communities now only receive a small grant at the start of the initiative to pay for administration costs (approximately £50.00). However, all the services that Northamptonshire ACRE can offer (for example photocopying) are provided free of charge.

Limited resources influence the ways in which RCCs make decisions about when and where to encourage village appraisals. For example, in Hertfordshire, the rural officer only promotes the village appraisal and offers the village appraisal software program from ACRE free of charge (normally it would cost £50.00) to villages in the East Hertfordshire area which fall within the Rural Enterprise Project Area (Hertfordshire RCC, 1995). In Cumbria village

appraisals are only encouraged within the RDA where funding for community development will follow to aid affordable housing projects, play schemes and village hall improvements (Cumbria RCC, 1995). Similarly in Leicestershire, the RCC have just secured a 'support package' for parishes wishing to undertake an appraisal in the RDA. This provides funding for community development proposed through the village appraisal. Throughout the rest of Leicestershire, funding for such development is 'uneven' (Leicestershire RCC, 1995). Thus, the constraint of funding is seen to affect and in some ways contribute towards the uneven distribution of village appraisal uptake in rural areas.

Interpretation. The extent to which the village appraisal is promoted and implemented by an RCC is critically dependent on the interpretation it places on the village appraisal. Those RCCs which believe that it is a worthwhile exercise will actively seek to promote and implement the appraisal. For instance, Kent RCC believe that the village appraisal is worthwhile because:

“it identifies needs, wishes, and aspirations of local people, and can unlock local solutions to local problems” (1995).

This interpretation is reflected in the widespread uptake of the appraisal within the county. Over 140 villages have completed an appraisal in Kent since 1970. Village appraisal activity is promoted within the county in a range of ways including information and training days attended by local councillors, schools and amenity groups.

In contrast, Derbyshire RCC interprets the village appraisal as a process:

“which raise[s] community expectations unrealistically”.

They seek to target promotions of the appraisal into:

“parts of the county where funding structures offer the greatest opportunity to follow through appraisal outcomes” (1995).

By believing that the outcomes of the village appraisal are the primary concern, Derbyshire RCC is limiting the uptake of the appraisal and the participation of villages not only outside of targeted areas but potentially those within target areas that do not wish to pursue

development projects. The RCC is the primary medium through which villages become aware of the village appraisal process. If the RCC does not circulate promotional material to villages, they are unlikely to be aware of opportunities to participate. Over the last 25 years only 18 appraisals have been undertaken in Derbyshire (based on the survey results in Table 6.1). These examples illustrate the ways in which the RCCs view of the village appraisal can affect the uptake of the village appraisal.

Promotion. RCCs can implement a range of strategies to promote community development and the village appraisal is not always the one chosen. Even where the village appraisal is encouraged, there is a range of promotion tactics employed by the RCCs depending on the amount of available resources. Only 55 percent of the RCCs that responded to the author's survey use their resources to promote the village appraisal extensively through the widespread distribution of leaflets, news articles, letters to communities, presentations and press releases and in some cases county-wide conferences (for example, Kent). Other agencies like Cumbria RCC seek only to:

“promote appraisals in the communities where we think they will be useful such as: when a community lacks direction; when a parish council is forward planning; when a number of key or conflicting proposals occur in a community; when new community facilities are proposed” (1995).

In a similar vein, Bedfordshire RCC admit that although:

“we feel it is the best community development tool, we do not have the time to actively promote village appraisals” (Bedfordshire RCC, 1995).

The promotion strategies of the RCCs influence the uptake of the village appraisal to a large extent. The value placed on the village appraisal process by the RCCs is evident in their promotional techniques. For example, in Cheshire, the RCC intends to re-launch the village appraisal but it wants to limit the data gathering and collation of information in order to focus on future planning and development in the villages concerned. To achieve this it intends to distribute the new leaflet to just six parishes within the county. In this way it can devote its time to working closely with other agencies to effectively implement planning proposals made as a result of the village appraisal (Cheshire RCC, 1995).

6.2.1.3 Summary.

A realist framework identifies the ways in which structures within society can give rise to different processes and outcomes in different places and at different times because of contingency effects. The foregoing discussion illustrated that, even with a national policy for community development and a national model (ACRE's) by which it can be undertaken, decisions made by the RCCs at the local level can influence the nature and extent of the village appraisal process long before it becomes a community decision. Thus, the influence of the RCCs is greater than just supplementing and complementing the service providers. Through deregulation, the RCCs have emerged as 'powerful' actors in the quest to deliver a policy of active citizenship and local governance, and, therefore, they contribute largely to the uneven distribution of the village appraisal.

6.2.1.4 How has the TEC impacted upon village appraisal production: a case study of Lincolnshire?

In the final part of this section, it will be shown that the nature and outcomes of the village appraisal process can be altered by the intervention of voluntary agencies other than the RCCs. For example, the Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) in Lincolnshire has modified the village appraisal in an attempt to make the process more widespread throughout the county.

The 'Rural Challenge' initiative was first launched in February 1993 and is conducted by the Lincolnshire TEC in association with the county and district councils in Lincolnshire, the RDC and the Community Council for Lincolnshire. These agencies have jointly provided £500,000 over a three year period to encourage the production of Rural Challenge projects (Barden, 1994). Rural Challenge is loosely based around the village appraisal, whilst the development of a Rural Challenge software program was undertaken to work alongside the computer package devised by ACRE. Rural Challenge differs from the ACRE programme in that it concentrates on the issues that are important to the TEC; it contains questions on

people, employment, barriers to employment, transport, training, starting and running a business, and economic development in the village.

Rural Challenge encourages the village to follow a three stage process:

- 1. undertake a village appraisal;**
- 2. devise a Business Plan;**
- 3. compete for the implementation of the Business Plan through the award of a grant.**

An appraisal is interpreted by the TEC to be a mechanism that can:

“gather factual information and opinions. It is a method of stock-taking, of identifying the assets, problems/deficiencies, solutions/opportunities and most importantly the needs of the community” (Rural Challenge, 1993: no page).

The process of the village appraisal is standardised by the Rural Challenge initiative. A survey is undertaken but the agreed format includes:

- **Map of Town/Village;**
- **Introduction/background** - general information of the area;
- **Acknowledgements** - thanking those who have helped both with time and funding;
- **Objectives** - why the appraisal was undertaken;
- **Methodology** - how the appraisal was carried out and the time scale;
- **Results** - rate of return and short statements outlining the findings;
- **Summary** - summarises the key issues;
- **The Way Forward** - conclusion and statement of the options available (for example, move on to Stage 2);
- **Appendices** - statistics, accounts and comments.

An important aspect of the Rural Challenge initiative is “the acquisition of skills that could be transferred and used again” (Barden, 1994: 1) a process which is aided by the appointment of a Community Appraisals Officer. The Community Appraisals Officer promotes Rural Challenge through news letters, training events, press releases, presentations and her attendance at conferences. The number of village appraisals produced since the introduction

of Rural Challenge (over 70 villages had completed appraisals by 1995) is a sign of the success of this agency led initiative.

For the community to successfully qualify for stages 2 and 3 of the Rural Challenge programme any projects, initiatives or desirable action identified through the village appraisal need to have an economic element to be eligible for subsequent funding. Villages compete against each other by submitting business plans to the Rural Challenge Management Group. If a plan fails to attract funding then the villages are directed to alternative sources of funding.

The Lincolnshire example illustrates how the action of an agency can substantially affect the uptake of the village appraisal and as such the delivery of local governance and active citizenship. On the one hand, it is clear that the partnerships created between agencies, the availability of funding and clear guidelines to villages have encouraged the village appraisal process (70 villages have completed an appraisal). On the other hand, by imposing an agenda for economic development on the process and requiring the production of business plans in the latter stages, the Rural Challenge initiative favours those villages where there is business expertise. Indeed, only six villages progressed through all three stages between 1995 and 1996. Therefore, whilst the Lincolnshire TEC were seen to be delivering the policies of Thatcher's 'new right' government in terms of effective service provision, they were responsible for promoting uneven community development through the Rural Challenge initiative in order to satisfy their own agenda.

The following discussion will take this theme one step further and will investigate the interplay of different actors in Northamptonshire to determine the ways in which key decision makers at the local level promote or discourage uptake of the village appraisal.

6.3 The distribution of village appraisals: the local picture (a case study of Northamptonshire).

It has already been discussed (chapters 1 and 5) that Northamptonshire has been a prime mover in involving local people to record their own rural community and play a part in the

decision making process concerning the allocation of resources. Though this process can be traced back, at least to the 1920s, there was a quickening in the pace of local participation in 1987 with the publication of the 'Parish 2000' guidance package for village appraisals, this representing the commitment of the county not just to the concept of flexible partnerships (a key element of local governance) but also to the centrality of the village appraisal to the delivery of ideas and views concerning particular localities. Not surprisingly, therefore, the county was the first to appoint an officer (working through the RCC) with a specific role to facilitate the production of appraisals. In keeping with a realist perspective, it is important to examine the relationships between the key elements in the 'necessary relations' against which the production of village appraisals has taken place. What follows, therefore, is a discussion of the role of involvement of three such elements:

- the county council;
- the Village Appraisals Officer;
- the seven district councils of Northamptonshire.

6.3.1 The county council.

As the Chief Executive of the county council, Jeffrey Greenwell has been a strong advocate of what he terms "rural self governance" (1995). By encouraging village appraisals, which "seems to be an important component of rural policy for Northamptonshire", Jeffrey Greenwell can be seen as a strong advocate of the concept of local governance. He recognises that village communities are vulnerable and "village life is under a number of threats, whether it's lack of transport and people leaving the village in search of work, or whether it's the closure of the village school, shop or post office" and explains that it is the county council's wish to promote a policy for rural planning which will encourage individuals and communities to actively participate to "preserve the beauty of the rural landscape and quality of life in the villages" (Jeffrey Greenwell, 1995).

Jeffrey Greenwell feels that to achieve these plans for rural localities the support of Northamptonshire ACRE has been vital. In particular, the county council has shown its support for ACRE:

“in activities which will maintain the vitality of village life and encourage people to want to stay in villages and not to desert them” (Jeffrey Greenwell, 1995).

The county council also make financial contributions to ACRE to help finance the post of the Village Appraisals Officer on a five year, part-time (20 hours per week) contract, support the Village Halls Committee and the National Association of Local Councils (of which Jeffrey Greenwell is President).

Jeffrey Greenwell himself is a believer in a ‘bottom-up’ approach to community development and the ideology of active citizenship. His confidence that the village appraisal is a useful tool to deliver this is expressed in the following statement.

“The people who have done appraisals have had a wonderful time. They’ve had tears and up hill struggles, but the sense of achievement when they complete the appraisal, ...they’ve had a great time and it has revived the interests of a lot of people outside the appraisal groups in the village. I haven’t met anyone who hasn’t said it was an enjoyable and rewarding process if at no other level than as a community activity”.

Furthermore, Jeffrey Greenwell sees the village appraisal as a spontaneous activity which comes from the community, albeit facilitated by a positive view on the county council’s part and the support from the village appraisals officer. For this reason, there is no argument that he would put forward to explain a particular pattern. Indeed, it is how others might impose their views that might produce a pattern:

“there is no uniform pattern. Village appraisals are carried out for different purposes and those purposes are settled by local people...it’s right that the agenda is set by the local people who’ve produced the appraisal”.

However, despite his obvious regard for the village appraisal process, Jeffrey Greenwell is cautious about the quality of information gathered by village appraisals in the county.

“It is not the only or ideal way to gather information about local needs, because of the different ways that people approach them... the fact that you don’t get strictly comparable information because of the individual way they are prepared”.

He considers that the usefulness of the village appraisal is limited to being:

“valuable source documents for planners...in terms of giving additional information on patterns of settlement and history”.

Whilst this reflects his conviction about the benefits that are gained by collecting historical accounts of the villages, it does suggest that he sees the village appraisal as providing additional information rather than providing the basis for future planning. This suggestion is substantiated by Mr Greenwell’s admission that by describing the historical developments of a village, the village appraisal has two distinct advantages (which have only marginal concerns with planning). The first advantage is that historical research helps people to “understand their heritage and the place they’ve come to live in”. The second advantage is that:

“where you get commuters coming to live, [the village appraisal] helps them understand and integrate with the village in its traditions and history”.

Mr Greenwell sees the information generated through the village appraisal as adding to the production of additional volumes of the Victoria County History for Northamptonshire. It is his opinion that if the village appraisal achieves nothing more than a contribution to the Victoria County History for the county, it has been a worthwhile undertaking. However, this objective of the village appraisal may not be fully realised because not all village appraisal documents contain historical information about the locality, and it is more than likely that those engaged currently on the volumes for the Victoria County History in Northamptonshire will go to the primary sources rather than to the village appraisal. At best, the village appraisal may provide an additional source for reference material. It is important to remember that the Victoria County History (devised in the 19th/early 20th century) is written to a particular model which authors are required to follow.

In his role as Chief Executive, Mr Greenwell clearly has the power to shape agendas and influence opinions although this may be marginal given the lack of conviction of many district planners (see later). Nevertheless, he suggests that the village appraisal is an appropriate process through which to engage local people and communities and generate local governance, although it is perhaps lacking in planning application. By definition, this interpretation may inhibit the uptake of village appraisals by communities who understand the process to be something other than a contribution to the Victoria County History. There is

also the danger that village appraisals undertaken to a different agenda may not be recognised by the county council, thus affecting the outcome and distribution of the process.

6.3.2 Northamptonshire ACRE and the Village Appraisals Officer.

Village appraisal activity in Northamptonshire was officially launched in 1987 when the customised village appraisal guidance pack, 'Parish 2000', was published. 'Parish 2000' epitomised the ethos of the conservative governments rural White Paper (DoE/MAFF, 1995) being a partnership between selected public institutions and voluntary sector agencies in Northamptonshire, specifically the county and district councils, the Northamptonshire Wildlife Trust, and the RCC. It was intended that the 'Parish 2000' guidance package would stimulate the production of village appraisals and help ascertain the level of 'need' for resources within rural localities. The 26 page 'Parish 2000' document provided detailed information about how to develop, analyse, interpret and produce the village appraisal, with details of published sources of information on how to undertake a field survey and questionnaire survey and also the scope of local knowledge which may be available.

The package defined a village appraisal as an ideal approach to encouraging active citizenship in rural communities:

“so that we all have a say in the development of our futures” (Northamptonshire County Council, 1987: 1).

Specifically this would be achieved by including the following three elements that were believed 'essential' to undertaking a village appraisal in Northamptonshire:

1. an historical record which provides an opportunity to discover the past;
2. an up-to-date 'check list' of what the village has in the present. The check list would take the form of a stocktaking exercise and would include information about the natural and physical environment of the parish as well as the characteristics of the population that lived there;
3. a plan for the future so that the village had a view of what kind of developments and changes (if any) it wished to see implemented in the succeeding years. (Northamptonshire ACRE, 1987).

Ian Nelson was headmaster of a small primary school in rural Northamptonshire until December 1990 when he was appointed as the VAO for Northamptonshire to work 20 hours a week to promote the 'Parish 2000' initiative and village appraisals across the county. Ian Nelson has taken a pro-active approach towards the village appraisal. He has seen the village appraisal as a 'bottom-up' initiative for which the community has control and ownership:

"it is a survey which is done by the community, for the community and which the community owns" (1994).

In conjunction with the 'Parish 2000' documentation he has promoted the village appraisal as:

"a way to discover the past, document the present and debate the future"
(Northamptonshire County Council, 1987: no page).

At the time of Ian Nelson's appointment, Northamptonshire was the only county in England to employ a person with a specific responsibility for encouraging village appraisals (Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire now (1996) employ a VAO). The county council partly funded his post although his base was at the headquarters of Northamptonshire ACRE at Northampton. In meeting his brief of encouraging village appraisal activity in the county, over and above that provided by any branch of the parent organisation, Ian Nelson has been responsible for:

- addressing parish councils or village meetings, either in response to their invitations to him or his requests for an item of village appraisals to be placed on a parish council meeting and for him to speak to it;
- publicising village appraisal activity, including the publication of a village appraisal document in the local press;
- publicity and articles in the county's ACRE in house magazine 'Village Viewpoint', which is circulated to all parishes in the county;
- encouraging village appraisal activity by the dissemination of best practice by successful village appraisal groups making contact with other villages about to start the process;
- organising conferences within the county. For example in June 1994 a meeting was convened at Northamptonshire RCC, hosted by Ian Nelson and including presentations by three village groups at different stages of the village appraisal process. Representatives of

over 25 villages attended. In September 1995, a national conference was organised at Northampton, drawing on the expertise of those involved in appraisal work from Gloucestershire, Lincolnshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire.

During 1993, the RCC for Northamptonshire changed its name to Northamptonshire ACRE in an attempt to identify itself with the RCC umbrella agency.

Not surprisingly, there has been considerable acceleration in village appraisal activity following Ian Nelson's appointment, though as the geographical distribution of completed appraisals in the county demonstrates (Table 6.10) there are considerable variations both in completions and the intentions to complete, or even to undertake an appraisal. In order to understand these variations there appears to be three distinct factors at work.

1. the role and perception of the VAO himself;
2. the view of the parish council;
3. the view and role of the various officers of the district council within which the village is located.

Table 6.10 Village appraisal activity within Northamptonshire.

NUMBER OF APPRAISALS EITHER COMPLETED OR UNDERWAY	
1970-1986	3
1987-1990	20
1991-1994	31
1995/1996	16
TOTAL	70
Number of appraisals which are reported to have lapsed over time (not previously recorded as being underway)	7
Number of villages targeted in promotions	78
Number of villages that still <u>WISH</u> to do a village appraisal	17
Number of villages that <u>DO NOT WISH</u> to do a village appraisal	80
Number of villages that <u>MAY WISH</u> to do a village appraisal in the future	30
Number of villages not targeted in promotions	42
Number of villages that were not targeted in promotions and <u>WISH</u> to do a village appraisal	4
Number of villages that were not targeted in promotions and <u>DO NOT WISH</u> to do a village appraisal	44
Number of villages not targeted in promotions that <u>MAY WISH</u> to do a village appraisal	7

In interviews with Ian Nelson, it became evident that he adopted a clear strategy in encouraging village appraisal activity. More specifically promotional material prepared by him to increase awareness of village appraisals (leaflets, information packs and newsletters) was only targeted on villages with a minimum of 100 households and a maximum of 1000 (or a maximum of 5000 people). The details of this process are discussed in chapter 7, but by arguing that there is an optimum size of village which, on the one hand, is large enough to protect the confidentiality of individual responses (to the questionnaire survey for example) but small enough to be manageable must have some effect upon the distribution of published appraisals. Even amongst those villages that were targeted, there are other factors at work which impact upon eventual take-up. Thus, for example, there were many, often smaller villages, which saw an appraisal as tantamount to a signal to the planning authorities that the village was prepared to consider 'development' and so would turn down Ian Nelson's initial proposals outright (for example the village of Winwick in Daventry District). In other instances an invitation would be extended to him to attend a parish council meeting, but only a very limited amount of time would be conceded for him to speak, or he would be placed last on the agenda, or at worst as 'any other business'. In other instances, Ian Nelson's view of what an appraisal was about would clash with those of a parish council and could produce either a rejection of the whole notion or, in other circumstances, an appraisal which did not fit the 'Nelson' model. As has been indicated earlier in this chapter, this meant that an appraisal could be excluded from a count of appraisal activity in the county. Since rural Northamptonshire (currently) does not fall within an RDA or Objective 5b area status, there is little interference from other outside bodies in the way in which an appraisal has to be written. On the other hand, many villages in the county have used funding from Rural Action to support the 'environmental' elements of an appraisal, in which case there is a requirement on the way it is written and how the production and sales costs are calculated.

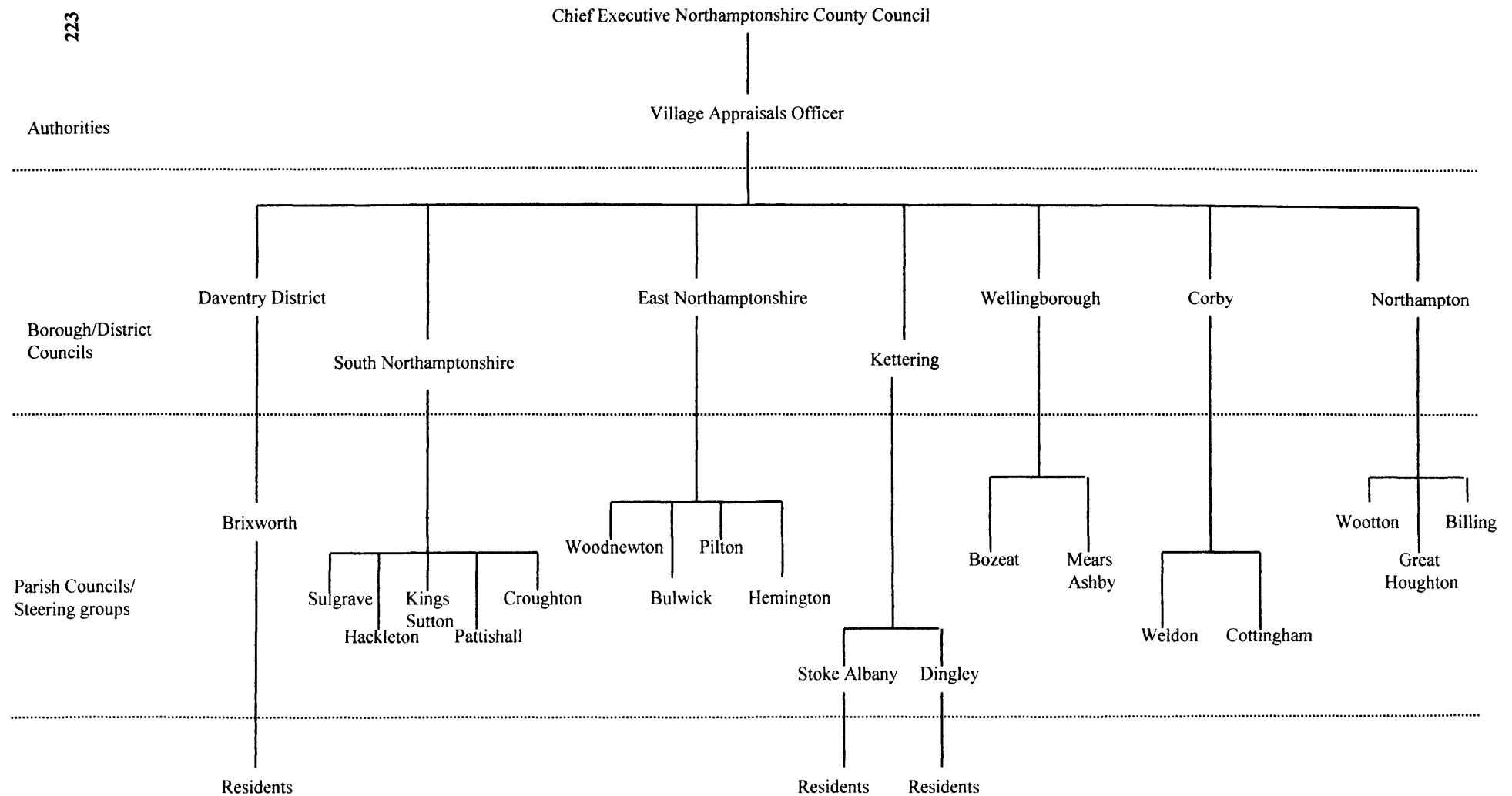


Figure 6.1 A diagrammatic representation of the localities and the key participants interviewed in the village appraisal process in Northamptonshire.

The significance of these arguments is that the relationship between the parish council and facilitators such as the VAO can have a major impact upon which villages take-up the appraisal process and which do not. This also applies to the role of the local authorities in this partnership, as will be shown by a detailed examination of each of the district councils of Northamptonshire in turn.

6.4.3 The seven district councils.

Through discussions with officers from the seven planning districts in Northamptonshire and key actors in rural localities in the county, the processes by which community participation and the village appraisal is encouraged or inhibited are investigated (see Figure 6.1). This will determine the wider impact upon local governance, community development and active citizenship. The districts will be studied in the order of the proportion of their population living in parishes of under 3000 people: in other words, from most rural to least rural.

6.4.3.1 South Northamptonshire.

South Northamptonshire is located in the south west of the county, bounded on its western side by Oxfordshire and its south by Buckinghamshire and by Northampton on the east (Figure 6.2).

The M1 and M40 motorways pass through the east and west of the district respectively and, together with the main railway lines give access both to London and Birmingham less than one hour away. In 1991 the district had a population of 68,797 people, of which 80.3 percent lived in parishes of under 3000 population (OPCS, 1991) making it the most rural of Northamptonshire's seven districts. The remaining population lives in the two market towns of Brackley (8,113) and Towcester (7,006). The district contains 76 rural settlements and is characterised by gently undulating countryside, which in geological terms represents an extension of the Oxfordshire uplands. Many of the villages possess thatched cottages, built in the local sandstone. The district contains many Estate villages; several such as Courteenhall (the Wake family) and Easton Neston (the Hesketh family) are still in the hands of major

landowners, whilst other national attractions in the district include the Formula One Grand Prix circuit at Silverstone and the Waterways Museum at Stoke Bruerne.

Despite South Northamptonshire having the highest proportion of rural based population in the county only eight village appraisals had been undertaken prior to 1995 though a further eight were in the process of being completed. Undoubtedly the approach of the district council has contributed to this rise in activity. Thus, although:

“the council is unable to provide direct financial assistance in the form of grants and sponsorship, it is keen to offer support in other ways” (David Southron, head of Strategic Planning 1995).

These include support in providing statistical and other information, together with free printing facilities and access to OS maps of the area (South Northamptonshire Council, 1993).

David Southron, the head of Strategic Planning for South Northamptonshire Council, has also provided enthusiastic support for the village appraisal. He considers that the appraisal is a process whereby a:

“village can identify its past, present and future and seek to identify their priorities, the needs of the village, to meet the way in which it sees itself growing in the future and come up with some of the solutions we can meet” (1995).

In a similar way to Ian Nelson, David Southron emphasises the importance of the past, present and future as elements of the village appraisal although he also recognises the unique nature of the localities involved in the process. Moreover, he believes the village appraisal is one of the most effective tools for community development because it encourages community participation and “aims to build a sustainable community in the long term” (David Southron, 1995). This positive approach to the village appraisal is also demonstrated by the district council’s wish to encourage uptake through:

“newsletters to the villages. We will provide them with the opportunity to use our print machines if they want to do questionnaires. We will give them time to talk to any officers here about planning matters, engineering, and background information on environmental health...all we can do is say what a wonderful thing it is to do and the best we can do is to congratulate them and support them”.

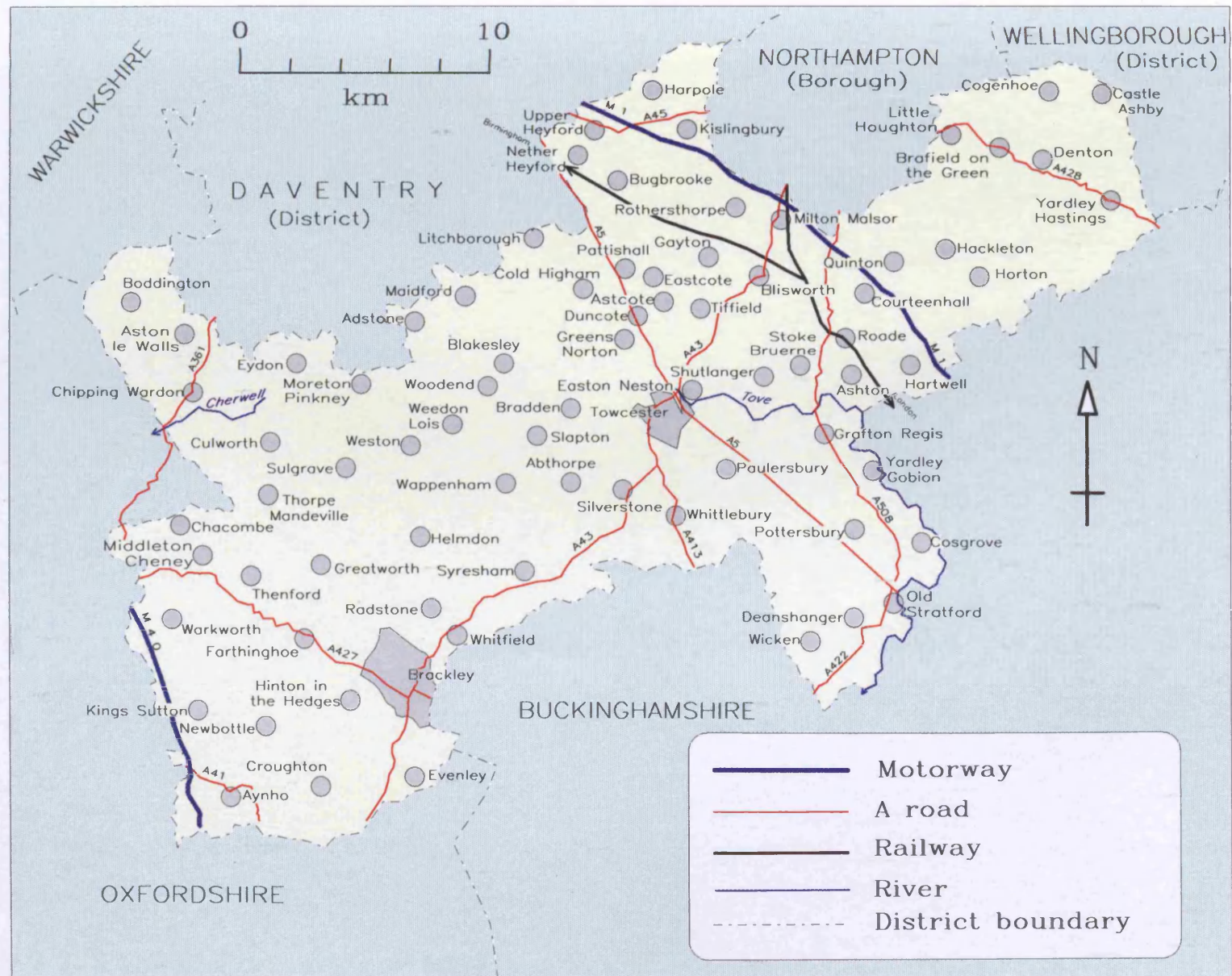


Figure 6.2: South Northamptonshire District

The evidence suggests that the recent increase in the popularity of the village appraisal process can be attributed to the supportive measures offered by South Northamptonshire Council and its sincere approach to community development from the 'bottom-up'. Yet a closer examination of the practice of local authority officers revealed that the planning officers, specifically in the Leisure Services Department, were embarking on a project that used the village appraisal as the basis for a 'top-down' information gathering exercise (Gary Hammersley, Leisure Officer South Northamptonshire District Council, 1995). The communities were being asked to distribute household surveys devised by planning officers in order to ascertain local needs for leisure facilities, housing provision and rural services. Thus, although such a process might generate an apparent increase in village appraisal activity in the district, this behaviour by the planning officers is evidence that the agenda is driven as much by the local authority trying to respond to a shift in the relationship between the state and the public (what Cloke has termed planning by opportunism) as by the local community itself.

There are also discrepancies between the views held in the villages that have undertaken an appraisal in the district and the views expressed by planners from the district council. In spite of a concerted effort to encourage the village appraisal as a tool for community development, according to the author's survey of 1995, only four out of the eight completed appraisals in the district have succeeded in achieving this goal whilst the other four appraisals have experienced no positive, tangible or intangible outcomes. For example in the village of Hackleton, 'recommended' action contained in the village appraisal referred to improving street lighting, and to increasing housing to meet the needs of the locals. South Northamptonshire Council planners did show some support towards implementing the needs especially in conducting a housing needs survey, although it is significant that Joanne Wilde from Northamptonshire ACRE was the chairperson of the village appraisal steering group. In another case there was support from South Northamptonshire Council planners for the village appraisal at King's Sutton because of the large development programme that was proposed as a result of information gathered through the village appraisal. The data in the appraisal suggested that a new health centre and village hall was required which needed funding, planning permission and the subsequent support of South Northamptonshire District Council (see section 7.2.3.3 for a further explanation).

In the villages which carried out a village appraisal but where concern was not with issues which involved planners, the appraisal was undertaken primarily to satisfy local interest about the history of the village and not to implement community development initiatives. Pattishall Parish, which includes the settlements of Astcote, Dalscote, Eastcote and Pattishall, is one example. The parish council decided to undertake:

“a survey of the parish as it exists at this time, and to produce a record of some aspects of the lives, environment and activities of the inhabitants” (Pattishall Parish Council, 1990).

The village appraisal in Sulgrave, which took six years to complete, is a second example. The appraisal was undertaken because the village was:

“intrigued by the idea of a Domesday type statement” (Sulgrave Parish Council, 1995).

The village considered this was particularly important since each year it attracted hundreds of American tourists to Sulgrave Manor, which is the ancestral home of George Washington, and where numerous pageants and other ‘historical’ events are staged.

Similarly, the village appraisal in Roade was undertaken:

“to detail the village’s immediate past and present” (Roade Parish Council, 1995).

Consequently, the village failed to suggest any future requirements for community development despite the positive support offered by planners at South Northamptonshire Council.

In summary it is evident that the notion of village appraisal has the broad support of South Northamptonshire Council, though there is clear ambivalence, not so much in the less contentious areas of the level and type of support, but in the ways in which council officers engage with those involved in village appraisal activity. It is clear in the attitudes of the two council officers interviewed that the council is sending very conflicting and perhaps

confrontational information to its local communities. For this reason many villages have steered clear of the engagement and have sought refuge in more historical surveys and studies.

6.4.3.2 Daventry District.

Daventry District is the largest district in Northamptonshire, occupying an area of 666 sq km. To its east and south it is bounded by the districts of Kettering, Wellingborough, Northampton and South Northamptonshire, whilst to the west and north it is bordered by Warwickshire and Leicestershire (Figure 6.3). Daventry District is an amalgamation of the former Daventry Rural District, Daventry Borough and Brixworth Rural District and comprises 74 rural settlements, which are home to 71 percent of the districts' 62,886 people (Northamptonshire County Council, 1993). The district is largely rural in character, whilst its many attractive Northamptonshire stone villages have proved particularly attractive to high status professional households over the past twenty years, so much so that its housing market, in terms of tenure and house prices, shows characteristics closer to those of the South East region than to the East Midlands of which it is a part. Most of this popularity can be contributed to its location. All the major lines of communication between London and Birmingham are squeezed through the 'Watford Gap', which is located in the district, whilst its central location to the national motorway system has led to the growth of firms focusing upon distribution services such as at Daventry (a Birmingham overspill town of the 1960s) and the new Daventry International Freight Terminal (DIRFT) located next to the M1 motorway and providing direct rail links to elsewhere in the UK and mainland Europe via the channel tunnel.

The village appraisal process is widespread in the district; to date (1995-1996) 22 villages have completed or are completing a village appraisal.

In communications with the author, the head of planning policy explained, on behalf of Daventry District Council, that the village appraisal:

“should ensure that all villagers are permitted to express their views and it should not be based on subjective, unsubstantiated comments of a few in the village” (1994).

Figure 6.3: Daventry District.

Whilst this statement underlines the importance to Daventry District Council that the village appraisal process should not be elitist, it also hints at the possibility that consultation is their main priority rather than full community participation. By implication, people are entitled to an opinion but the actual decision to implement policy is firmly in the hands of the planning authority. There is evidence to support this consultation perspective in Daventry District Council. From the ten responses gained from parish councils with completed appraisals in the author's questionnaire survey (1995), all but one claimed to have had no reaction to their village appraisal from the planners and councillors at Daventry District. Moulton was the exception where planners from the district and county council attended the launch of the village appraisal and were enthusiastic about the results that were achieved suggesting that it was "useful, excellent, favourable" (Moulton steering group, 1994).

The person responsible as head of planning policy in the district is Colin Wootton. His responsibilities as a professional planner include the preparation and submission of proposals for the Local Plan process in the district according to the guidelines laid down by central government. Despite this remit, he has not used a village appraisal to aid the production of the Local Plan. More importantly perhaps, Colin Wootton has not even viewed an appraisal that has been produced within the district claiming "a set of unfortunate circumstances" have prevented appraisals of participating villages from reaching his office. The irony of this situation is that Colin Wootton lives in Sulgrave in the adjoining district of South Northamptonshire, where as has been shown, an appraisal has been completed and where he was actively involved in its production. Given his overall view that "the village appraisal has not been of much use to planning" (1995), it is not surprising that the Sulgrave appraisal ended up as a (largely) historical study of the village; the fact that Sulgrave had such strong links with the Washington family simply lent support and provided a convenient additional argument for 'steering' the study in a particular direction which would be "of much use", albeit not to planning.

What is clear is that Mr. Wootton advocates the principle of a representative democracy, whereby parish councils and district councils are the only parties able to input into the planning system. Thus, by keeping power and leadership within the confines of the

democratically elected it “reminds people of how they are governed, in case we all forget” (Colin Wootton, 1995).

The tensions in the relationship between the planners, the local parish councils and the wider community with concern for the use of the village appraisal as a contribution to the rural planning process can be illustrated from Brixworth, another village in the district. As a ‘key settlement’ village, Brixworth has just undergone a period of rapid change (as explained in chapter 5) and the steering group implemented the village appraisal in an attempt to promote community cohesion and bring the newcomers together with other long-term residents of the village. Keith Parrot, the chairman of the steering group, believed that the village appraisal was:

“going to have an effect on decisions made by the parish and district councils and by some groups within the village, because there is no information at the moment on which to base certain decisions. We just don’t know what people want in the village just sort of guessing...at what’s needed” (1994).

In addition, Susan Verallo another member of the steering group (and a parish and district councillor) claimed it was important for her to have relevant information gathered through the village appraisal about the wishes of the wider community. Indeed, Susan Verallo believed in the concept of community participation, if only:

“just be able to say ‘well 78 percent of people believe we should have....and therefore we can give it to them’” (1994).

The village appraisal was considered by other members of the steering group to be a reaction to poor planning policy (Linda Parrot, 1994). They hoped that the village appraisal would stimulate action within the community and help people to ask for what they want for the village now that the development is ending.

The wider community also acknowledged the problem with the degree of development in Brixworth. Over 11 percent of the respondents to the author’s household survey considered that development was an appropriate concern for the village appraisal. One resident believed the appraisal was a “form of planning for future developments” (1994). Additionally, the

wish to assess the present and future needs of the community were recognised as a high priority, with nearly 20 percent of respondents stating that this was what they felt the village appraisal was about. Below are a few examples of the wider community's definitions of a village appraisal:

“assessing how residents are accepting development;
a survey to monitor village requirements and the effects of development;
snapshot of present facilities and future needs;
the residents' views and opinions;
a survey to find the concerns of people”.

The desire of the steering group to gain recognition from the district council planners was compromised by the agenda set by the planners, including Colin Wootton. Indeed, Colin Wootton claimed to have no knowledge of either the Brixworth village appraisal or its findings. In a general comment about the village appraisal process, Colin Wootton commented that:

“often the village appraisals reveal aspirations. If they reveal anything, they reveal aspirations from the parish that the planning system simply can't satisfy. It can do very little, it exists to say yes or no to planning applications and policies beyond that are very difficult” (1995).

This statement suggests that Colin Wootton believes that the village appraisal can achieve nothing of relevance to the planning authority. Moreover, from his previous experiences within the planning process, he argued that community participation was too frequently “motivated by a little group of self-interest” and felt that public opinion “ought to be achieved through the parish council”. He indicated that the lack of parish council support for the village appraisal in Brixworth might have contributed to its neglect by the district council. At best therefore, the implementation of the village appraisal as a tool to promote rural community development within Daventry District appears to be conditional upon the process being controlled by the democratic representatives in the village (the parish council) rather than the wider community. In this way, the district council demonstrates its response to the Conservative government's attempts to widen community involvement. Clearly at a personal level Colin Wootton has no problem with the village appraisal per se, so long as it was

defined and carried out in a way which did not challenge the established planning process, of which of course he is a part and where his professional qualifications and competencies would be challenged. His views on the more policy oriented village appraisal appear more ambivalent, reflecting the issues raised for professional planners by more participatory approaches. Thus, as in the case of Brixworth, the absence of the legitimised community (in his eyes the parish council) from the village appraisal provides the 'get-out' opportunity for him, that the planners may have looked at it, though in reality they feel it has nothing to add to the job they do.

6.4.3.3 East Northamptonshire.

The district covers an area of 510 sq km and is located in the north of the county, bounded by Peterborough, Huntingdon, Kettering, Wellingborough and Corby. In 1991 it had a population of 75,454 people, 57 percent of whom lived in the 'shoe towns' of Rushden (23,592), Higham Ferrers (5,949), Raunds (7,493) and Irthlingborough (6,310) located in the west of the district (OPCS, 1991). Much of the remaining area is agricultural and rural in character, drained by the rivers Nene and Welland and characterised by the small market towns of Oundle (4,033) and Thrapston (3,996) and many attractive villages with properties built in the local limestone and Collyweston slate (Figure 6.4). During the 1980s, much of the district (with west Huntingdonshire) formed a RDA, though in the reassessment of RDAs in the early 1990s, this area lost its RDA status. In large part this was due to population growth in the area, following decades of decline, and largely due to newcomer professional households moving into the area and taking advantage of its attractive countryside and the fact that main line stations at Peterborough and Kettering (adjacent to the district) gave it easy access to London only one hour away (Lewis and Sherwood, 1998). More recently the completion of the A1-M1 link (the A14) which passes through the southern half of the district has led to rapid employment growth, particularly in Thrapston.

Figure 6.4: East Northamptonshire District



Of the 53 rural settlements in the district, (containing a population of 32,110) 20 had undertaken a village appraisal by 1995 (the highest concentration of village appraisals within any district in Northamptonshire), though this rate had slowed somewhat in the year 1995-1996: only 12.5 percent of the county's total uptake of village appraisals in that year were in East Northamptonshire District.

It was during the period 1989 to 1991 that the majority of village appraisals in East Northamptonshire District were produced; a time during which East Northamptonshire District Council planning officers enquired of all the individual parishes:

“if they were producing an appraisal [because East Northamptonshire District Council] thought it would be a useful input to the preparation of the District Local Plan” (Karen Horner, 1995).

The village appraisal was used by East Northamptonshire District Council as a ‘top-down’ mechanism to aid Local Planning in the sense that they:

“actively encouraged it, but as far as participating in the preparation of village appraisals we weren’t heavily involved with that. We basically asked them if they had anything to say, received it and looked at it” (Karen Horner, 1995).

The council specifically used the village appraisal because:

“members [the councillors] wished the documents produced [Local Plans] to match local feeling as much as possible...at a political level we need to be seen to be doing things for the local community” (Karen Horner, 1995)

This reflects the opinions of East Northamptonshire District Council during the 1980s when they objected to the blanket policies of the County Structure Plans initiated by Northamptonshire County Council and wished for a more flexible approach, reflecting the particular needs/issues of their locality, for which they felt they knew best. For this reason, they were obviously in favour of supporting local opinion (i.e. through the village appraisal) as part of their statutory job of producing the Local Plan. It is true, also, that the village appraisal in Nassington was held up as a model of its kind when it was produced in 1989 and was used inter-alia as a means of challenging the county council’s proposal to give Nassington ‘Limited Growth Status’ under the 1989 County Structure Plan. Thus, the village

appraisal has been used in the district as a tool to encourage community participation although, rather than operate from the 'bottom-up', the district council have retained control of the outcomes of the initiative from the 'top-down' (Horner, 1995). Furthermore, whilst East Northamptonshire District Council has advocated the principle of community participation, the view of, Karen Horner, a senior planner, illustrates her belief in a process in which appraisals are undertaken through the parish council. This strategy enables the district council to actively use local citizens to gather opinions, albeit through what may be termed the 'representative democratic' process. How the parish council then involves or activates its citizens is yet another issue for discussion and one which is considered further in chapter 7. On the other hand, Karen Horner is sympathetic to the views of local people yet, in line with their statutory policy, feel much more comfortable with views articulated through or by (or both) the elected representatives in the legitimated political process because she:

“wishes for something that the parish council would go out with, a questionnaire that had been thought through before hand to gain a good idea of the individual feeling about what the village lacked, what may not be necessary or acceptable”.

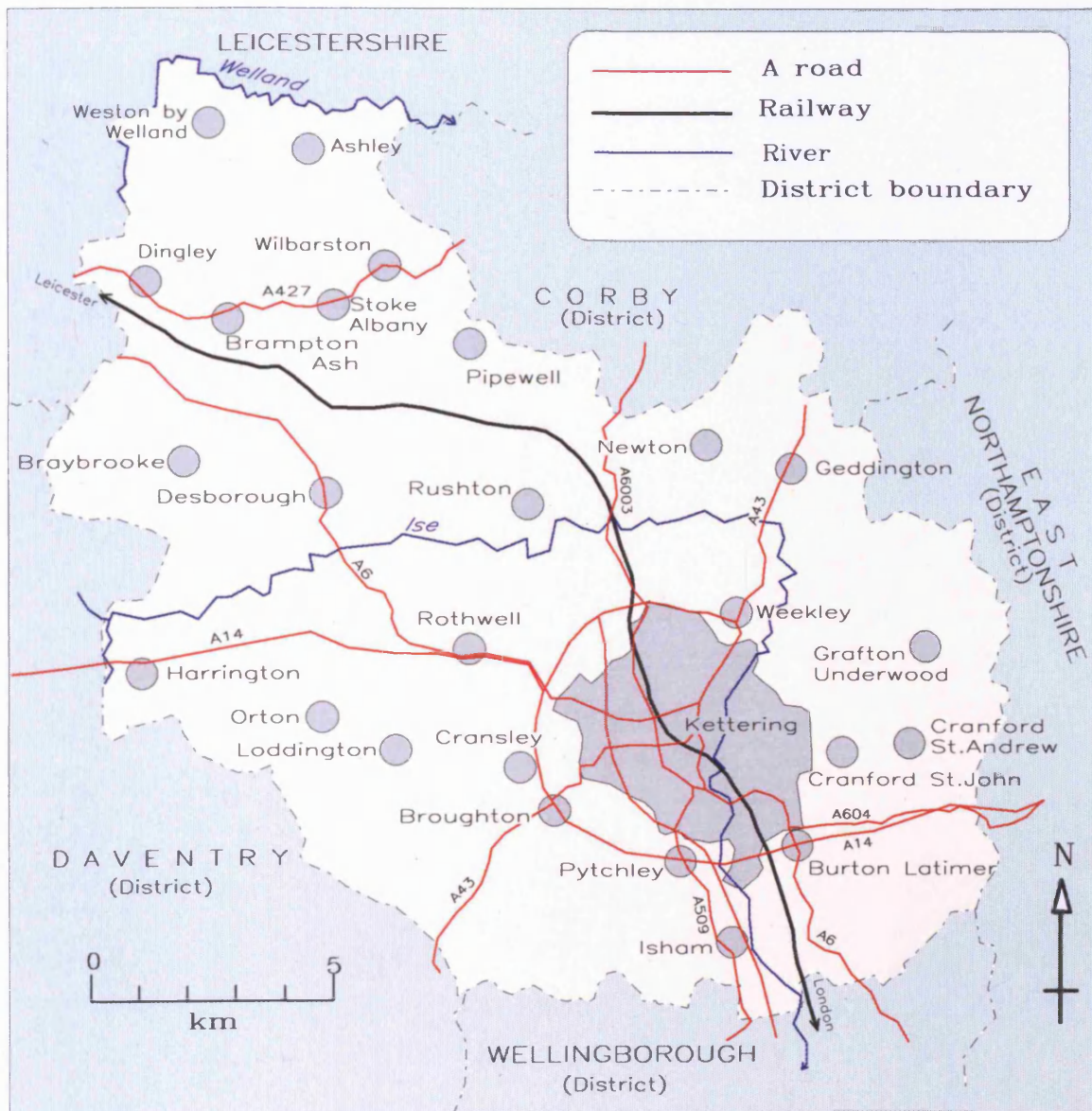
However, evidence gathered from several of the 18 village appraisals completed during the period 1989 to 1991 and which were undertaken by the elected parish council suggests that the district council only pays lip service to this process. For example, Pilton parish council (1995), which includes representatives from the settlements of Stoke Doyle and Wadenhoe, formed a steering group to undertake a village appraisal after being actively encouraged to do so by East Northamptonshire District Council. With considerable help from the RCC the appraisal took less than one year to complete and, according to the chairperson of the parish council, only received “polite thanks and approval” from the planning authority (1995). No outcomes (tangible or intangible) were actually achieved for the parish by undertaking the appraisal. Furthermore, in Hemington parish, which includes the settlements of Luddington and Thurning, the appraisal only took “a couple of months” and was undertaken initially because “we were asked by East Northamptonshire District Council” (Hemington parish council 1995). Once again, no specific outcomes were achieved for the parish, though the parish council conceded that:

“at least they [the district council] are aware of our village and deficiencies in public utilities” (Hemington Parish Council, 1995).

However, what these two cases illustrate are that even in villages where an appraisal has occurred with the support and approval of the district council (i.e. through the elected representatives on the parish council) there was no evidence of actual achievements in terms of additional facilities and services for example as a result. Nevertheless, there was a feeling that, at least, the district council did have information about the views of the local people which could be fed into the Local Plan process and that in this sense the parish had participated in a way which was rather more pro-active than that envisaged in the normal planning process. However, here are the dangers. For example, in the village of Woodnewton the village appraisal was used by the district council as part of its Local Plan proposals for the council to discover that the conclusions presented in the village appraisal only represented a (small) proportion of the population – certainly not the views of the community as a whole, as implied by the village appraisal. What this does is to raise a whole series of issues, including not just the ways in which information is gathered, but also how it is manipulated by the village appraisal steering group (whoever that might include) in the presentation process. From a local governance perspective what it also does is to confirm the scepticism of the planners within the district council and to justify their support for and defence of the statutory planning process.

6.4.3.4 Kettering Borough.

Kettering Borough is located to the north of the county, and is bordered by the districts of Corby, East Northamptonshire, Wellingborough and Daventry and by the county of Leicestershire to the north (Figure 6.5). It is a predominantly urban district, with 90 percent of the population of 76,150 people (Northamptonshire County Council, 1993) living in the four towns of Kettering (47,000), Desborough (7,500), Rothwell (7,500) and Burton Latimer (7,000). The remaining 7,150 people are spread across the 22 rural settlements which range from the large communities of Broughton and Geddington to the tiny hamlets of Newton and Pipewell and which are characterised by quaint thatched cottages built in local stone. Once famous for its plush and silk weaving crafts in the eighteen-century and its leather goods in the nineteenth century, Kettering is today known for a wide variety of products as diverse as breakfast cereals, computer software and printing presses.

Figure 6.5: Kettering District

Only seven villages had undertaken a village appraisal within Kettering Borough prior to 1996, but this represents nearly a third of rural settlements in the district.

The planning officers in Kettering Borough have a positive opinion of the village appraisal, as the following statement indicates (taken from a personal communication with the Borough planning department):

“the village appraisal is a valuable vehicle for communities to raise awareness about the needs and identity of local areas” (Kettering Borough Planning Office, 1991).

Interestingly, the village appraisal process in the borough is facilitated not through the planning department but through the Leisure and Recreation Department and particularly its senior officer Tim Bellamy. Indeed in discussions with Tim Bellamy it became clear that even this commitment came through his own initiative and belief in the whole process of consultation and participation, rather than an additional role given to him by his superiors. In this sense of course, Tim Bellamy has moved much closer to the principles of governance than has been the case in the other districts discussed so far, though in the process it has cast doubts about his own position and role. Thus, whilst he has been an enthusiastic advocate of the village appraisal and the need to “talk to a wide cross section of people [to ascertain local needs because] district councils and county councils like this, like facts and figures” (1995) his statutory position as a council officer, and the political decision making system that represents, leads him to add:

“that if you are working with them [the community] then there is the chance that you can point them in the right direction. That’s the important thing without wasting time” (1995).

What he precisely means by the ‘right direction’ is not entirely clear, except his determination to get local people to use the village appraisal to look to the future and not at the past and encourage thoughts about “what we want this village to have later on...and what the hell is this village going to be like in ten years time” (1995). However, Tim Bellamy claimed that his job to fulfil this agenda was frustrating because “people seem very, very good at the good old days” (1995). He does not object to people discovering the historical aspects of the village through the village appraisal as it is a non-contentious process that “will bring people

together” (1995). It is for this reason that he would like the ‘past, present and future’ structured process encouraged by the county council and Northamptonshire ACRE through the Parish 2000 document to be changed. He believes that the future should be given precedence over the past. Whilst he recognises that the village memory is an important aspect of village life, he believes that the untapped information about the past that is available about a village will frequently distract people such that the more debatable, problematic but important needs of the future are overlooked.

This two-sided approach to the village appraisal that is taken by Tim Bellamy epitomises the two-sided approach of the planning system towards community participation as argued in section 3.3.2. Tim Bellamy is clearly in tune with the ideals of governance by encouraging community development through participation from the ‘bottom-up’, but his attempts to tailor the process to satisfy his own agenda impacts on the delivery of local governance and the promotion of active citizenship. The results of village appraisals in Kettering Borough illustrate this.

For example, in Stoke Albany the steering group initially followed an agenda that closely reflected the views of Kettering Borough Council and Tim Bellamy. Their aim was:

“to discover the needs of the present community as well as looking at the past”
(Stephen Harding, steering group member, 1995).

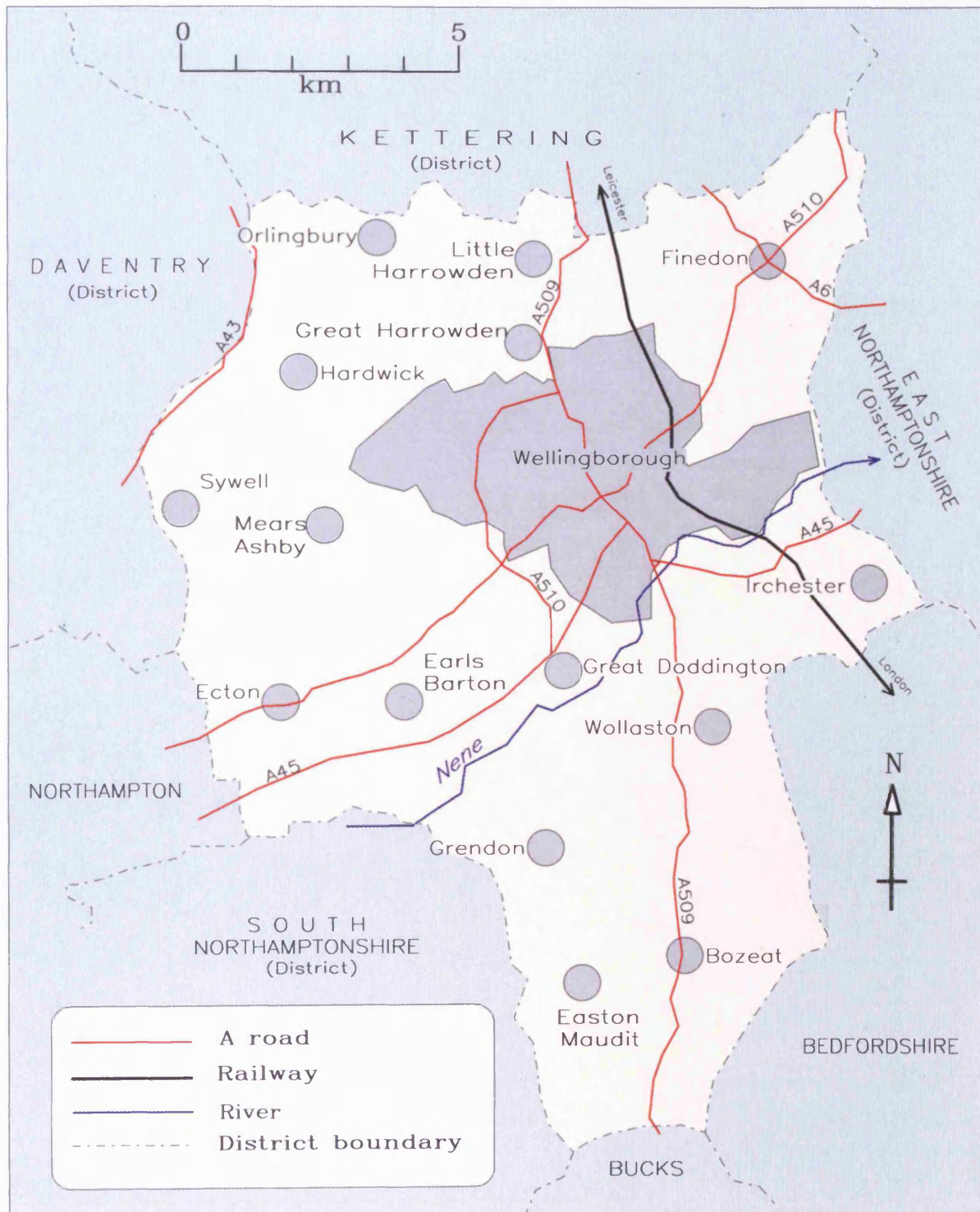
By the end, however, the village appraisal lacked any substantive insight about the wishes of the community for the future development of the village with the exception of a few questions in the household questionnaire survey which discussed overhead wires, noise and the local environment. Not surprisingly, therefore, little has been achieved in terms of actual improvements in Stoke Albany, whilst the Borough Council planners have shown little interest. Clearly this represents a problem for people such as Tim Bellamy, who on the one hand wishes to encourage village appraisal activity which involves the greatest participation of the community to what they conceive as their agenda, yet on the other hand (wearing his official hat) knows that unless it is done the ‘right’ way (using his words) there is little chance of it having any impact upon the planning and decision making process. Indeed, the eventual appraisal in Stoke Albany was “a documented account of the past and present situation of the

village which serves as a valuable historical record” (respondent to the author’s survey, 1994): in other words a non-contentious, relatively harmless record of village life, a good seller locally but with little to add to an understanding of the needs of the village in the future.

In Great Cransley the village appraisal was implemented to specifically “find out any outstanding problems and difficulties” (Great Cransley steering group, 1995). The report culminated in the identification of four issues that should be tackled in the village. Off street parking was provided and the street lighting was improved, but the village was unsuccessful in its attempts to become connected to the main’s gas supply and the borough and county council planners have not yet implemented the requested traffic calming measures (see section 8.5.2 for a further explanation). Thus despite the fact that the village appraisal in Great Cransley has followed a process advocated by the planners in Kettering Borough Council, only the recommended action points (RAPs) that could be implemented by the parish council have been done so, a point which is argued in more detail in chapter 8. Although most people would recognise that the action points raised in an appraisal represent a ‘wish list’ of needs and requirements, some of which are more likely to be achieved in the short term than others (if at all), there are dangers in raising a community’s expectations too high, resulting in a feeling of disillusionment about the whole process and a message to other villages contemplating an appraisal either not to bother or to stick to an historical document.

6.4.3.5 Wellingborough District.

The district of Wellingborough is located in the south of Northamptonshire and is bordered to the north, east and west by the districts of Kettering, East Northamptonshire, South Northamptonshire, Northampton and Daventry and to the south by the county of Bedfordshire (Figure 6.6). It covers an area of 163 sq km with a population of 67,789 (Northamptonshire County Council, 1993), 62 percent (42,242) of which live in and around the town of Wellingborough. There are 15 rural settlements in Wellingborough District, nine to the north and six to the south by the A45, a major trunk road which links Coventry to Cambridge, and eventually to Harwich and Felixstowe on the east coast. Despite the demand of the urban area, which dominates this district, rural initiatives are important and five villages have completed village appraisals.

Figure 6.6: Wellingborough District

The planners at Wellingborough Borough Council claimed to be in favour of the village appraisal in principle, and were willing to consider using the information generated through those initiatives:

“which are well written and researched...in discussing its policies and proposals at appropriate stages [of its Local Plan]” (Wellingborough Borough Planning Officer, 1991).

Despite acceptance for this ‘bottom-up’ process, by 1994 and the completion of its draft Local Plan consultation period, the planners had to admit that:

“to date [we] have not used any village appraisals when preparing the Local Plan” (Wellingborough Borough Planning Officer, 1994).

To be fair, only a few appraisals had been completed by the time the Local Plan was being prepared, and this raises another issue for all districts, but particularly for those such as Wellingborough with a relatively small number of rural parishes. In an ideal world planners would like all appraisals available at the time of the Local Plan preparation, though they only have a value if written in a form and to a standard which meets their criteria. If any of these requirements are missing, it is easy for appraisals to go unnoticed. Similarly, from the village perspective, there is little point in writing to the council’s agenda if the ‘deadline’ has already passed and so the tendency is to revert to (largely) historical surveys or contemporary stocktaking exercises. Thus, for example in Bozeat, the village appraisal was not undertaken to stimulate community development, but rather to:

“ensure that there was a fully documented report on all aspects of the village in its present state” (Bozeat Parish Council, 1995).

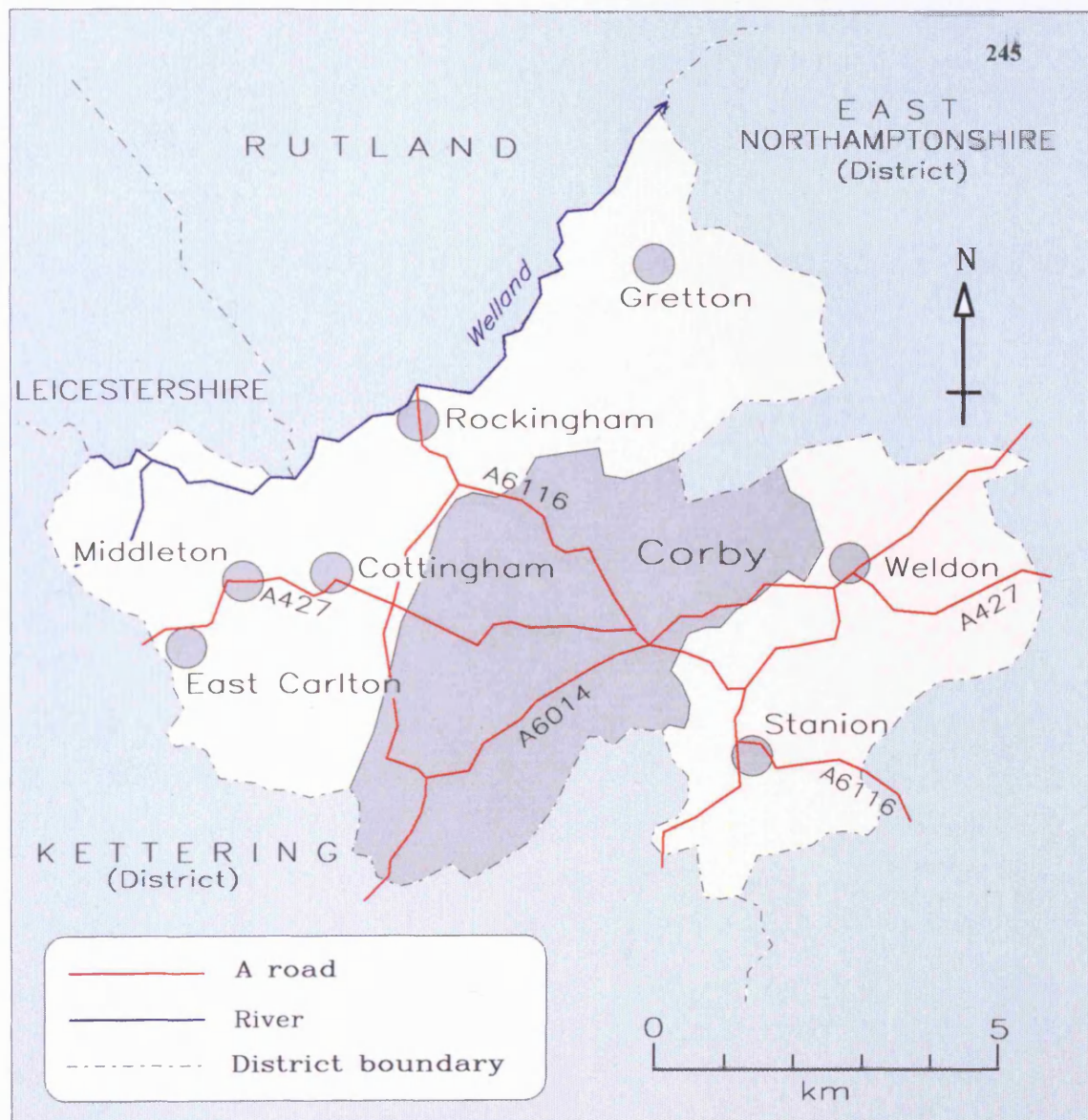
Similarly, in Mears Ashby the steering group wanted to undertake an appraisal to:

“provide a historical document on the past and present life in Mears Ashby” (Mears Ashby Parish Council, 1995).

There was no interaction with the planning officers at Wellingborough Borough Council because:

“it was intended to be more of a snapshot of time” (Mears Ashby Parish Council, 1995).

Figure 6.7: Corby District



6.4.3.6 Corby District.

Corby Borough is located in the north of Northamptonshire, and is bounded by East Northamptonshire and Kettering and the counties of Leicestershire and Rutland (Figure 6.7). Corby is the smallest of the seven districts in the county, occupying just 80 sq km, and also has the smallest population at 53,044 (Northamptonshire County Council, 1993). Again, it is a district dominated by one town, Corby (population 47,129), which was established as a New Town in 1950 largely as a result of its growth as a steel town after the Scottish firm of Stewart's and Lloyds developed an integrated iron and steel works in the town and brought several hundred families from Scotland to live and work there. Today, after the decline of the steel industry over the past twenty years, Corby has successfully attracted new business into the town aided by its proximity to good road and rail links (including the A14, M6 and M1). Outside of the large urban area are seven rural settlements, which are home to a population of just 5,915. At the time of the author's survey (1995-1996) there was no village appraisal activity within the rural areas of the district and no initiatives on the part of the borough council to encourage community participation within its rural areas. This is not to say, however, that the borough is against the principle of village appraisals for, as the Director of Development Services at Corby Borough Council suggested:

“provided that they are properly structured and carried out, these appraisals can provide useful information and can supplement our own Local Plan work” (1991).

This opinion is confirmed through the responses from five of the rural parishes in the district during the author's countywide survey (1995). They suggested that the main reason for not undertaking a village appraisal was either “general apathy” rather than a lack of support from Corby Borough Council (Weldon Parish Council, 1995) or a “shortage of time” available with which to undertake the initiative (Cottingham Parish Council, 1995). The principal planner at Corby Borough Council also noted that “the concept of the village appraisal is not very far advanced in this borough” and villages in the district have (largely) become commuter adjuncts of Corby town “due to the proximity of the villages to the town of Corby and the extent to which village residents commute into Corby to work” (1994).

Table 6.11 The deprivation in Corby District in relation to Northamptonshire, South Northamptonshire and England.

Variable	Corby (%)	Northamptonshire (%)	South Northamptonshire (%)	England (%)	National ranking ¹
Households with dependent children and no car	11.5	5.2	1.6	6.1	-
Lone parent households	5.8	3.5	1.9	3.7	16
Male unemployment ²	12.5	8.0	5.0	10.9	68
'Working class' ³	82.7	69.2	61.30	-	1
Men 'on the scrap heap' ⁴	15.6	-	5.7	11.2	81
Children in households with no earners	18.2	12.3	5.1	14.3	88
'Wealthy' households ⁵	-3.28	0.68	4.6	0.0	300
Index of local conditions ⁶	7.09	-	-30.63	0.0	78
Jarman Index ⁷	7.70	-	-23.70	0.0	-

Sources: OPCS, 1991; Northamptonshire County Council, 1993; Gordon and Forrest, 1995.

¹ Ranking out of 366 districts in England.

² Unemployed males as a percentage of economically active males.

³ Percentage not in standard occupational classes 1-3.

⁴ Percentage of men aged 55-65 who are unemployed or on a government scheme.

⁵ As described in chapter 5.

⁶ Based on unemployment, overcrowding, lack of basic amenities, no car, higher education, long term unemployed, income support, SMRs, derelict land.

⁷ Based on elderly, lower social classes, unemployment, single parent households, overcrowding, mobility, and ethnic minorities.

The positive comments from the planners at Corby Borough Council towards the village appraisal process are made within the context of a positive approach to community development in the borough itself. Indeed, the Director of Development Services Keith Webster and the newly appointed (1996) Community Development Officer, Bob Dylan, see the ethos of community development as desirable especially in a borough which has suffered enormous social deprivation in the wake of the declining steel industry and has required a focus on community development issues – but in an urban rather than rural context. Table 6.11 illustrates the relatively ‘deprived’ condition of Corby District in relation to Northamptonshire, South Northamptonshire (the most ‘rural’ of the districts) and England. The figures are drawn largely from the 1991 census and indicate why much of the community development in Corby has focused on the town rather than its more affluent villages. The figures in Table 6.11 show that of the 366 districts in England, Corby is placed in the top quartile for male unemployment, ‘men on the scrap heap’ and children in households with no earnings, in the top 20 for lone parent households and first for ‘working class residents’. Composite measures (whether of wealth, local conditions or relating to the potential workloads of the GPs (the Jarman Index), also indicate that the district performs poorly whether in comparison to the county or nationally. It is not surprising, therefore, that the borough council gives much greater attention to its urban rather than its rural areas. Indeed, since the figures quoted so far are for the district as a whole, it is clear that the ‘better’ rural areas are raising some of the average scores and that in some of the urban wards, therefore, conditions are even worse (Table 6.12).

Through the work of Bob Dylan, Corby Borough Council has gained funding from the Social Regeneration Budget, the National Lottery and a grant aid support system from within the borough to implement community led development projects within the urban areas. The initiatives include the support of resident controlled management committees for the community centres, a Sport Accessible for All project and the annual Highland Gathering⁵. Foremost in the minds of Bob Dylan and Keith Webster is to encourage community consultation which then leads to the empowerment of local residents and their control of the

⁵ This reflects Corby’s strong links with Scotland and the migration of thousands of families from Scotland in the 1940s and 1950s to the new steel works in the town.

development projects within the urban areas (Bob Dylan, 1996). However, according to Keith Webster, there has been a perceived resistance from within the individual communities in Corby, which, it is claimed, have a 'New Town Syndrome' from the 1950s and 1960s, and have argued that everything should be provided for them.

Table 6.12 Socio-economic indicators for selected urban wards in Corby.

Variable	Central		Hazelwood		Kingswood	
	Score	Rank ⁺	Score	Rank	Score	Rank
Households with dependant children, no car	13.60	6	16.23	2	18.91	1
Lone parent households	6.32	15	8.35	5	10.41	1
Male unemployment ⁶	18.79	2	14.56	7	19.10	1
'Working class' ⁷	85.42	7	89.24	2	84.72	10
Men 'on the scrap heap' ⁸	21.80	3	19.35	5	22.03	2
Children in households with no earners	26.51	8	23.04	15	29.99	4
'Wealthy' households ⁹	- 5.32	142	-4.53	139	-4.63	140
Index of local conditions ¹⁰	5.31	5	3.96	7	6.83	4
Jarman Index ¹¹	19.27	13	6.44	30	13.98	23

+ ranking out of 148 wards in Northamptonshire.

Source: Northamptonshire County Council, 1993.

6.4.3.7 Northampton Borough.

Northampton is the most populated urban district in Northamptonshire with a population of 180,567 people in an area of just 81 sq km (Northamptonshire County Council, 1993). The borough is located in the middle of the county (Figure 6.8) with Daventry, Wellingborough and South Northamptonshire sharing its border and is dominated by the market and county town of Northampton which boasts a population of 160,849 (OPCS, 1991). Northampton lies in the heart of shire England, 68 miles from London, 55 miles from Birmingham and 50 miles from Cambridge with immediate access to the M1 and from there to the M5, M6 and M25

⁶ Unemployed males as a percentage of economically active males.

⁷ Percentage not in standard occupational classes 1-3.

⁸ Percentage of men aged 55-65 who are unemployed or on a government scheme.

⁹ A Z-score based on homes with 7+ rooms; two incomes no children households; 2 or more cars; occupations with salary above the higher tax threshold (£23,705 in 1991).

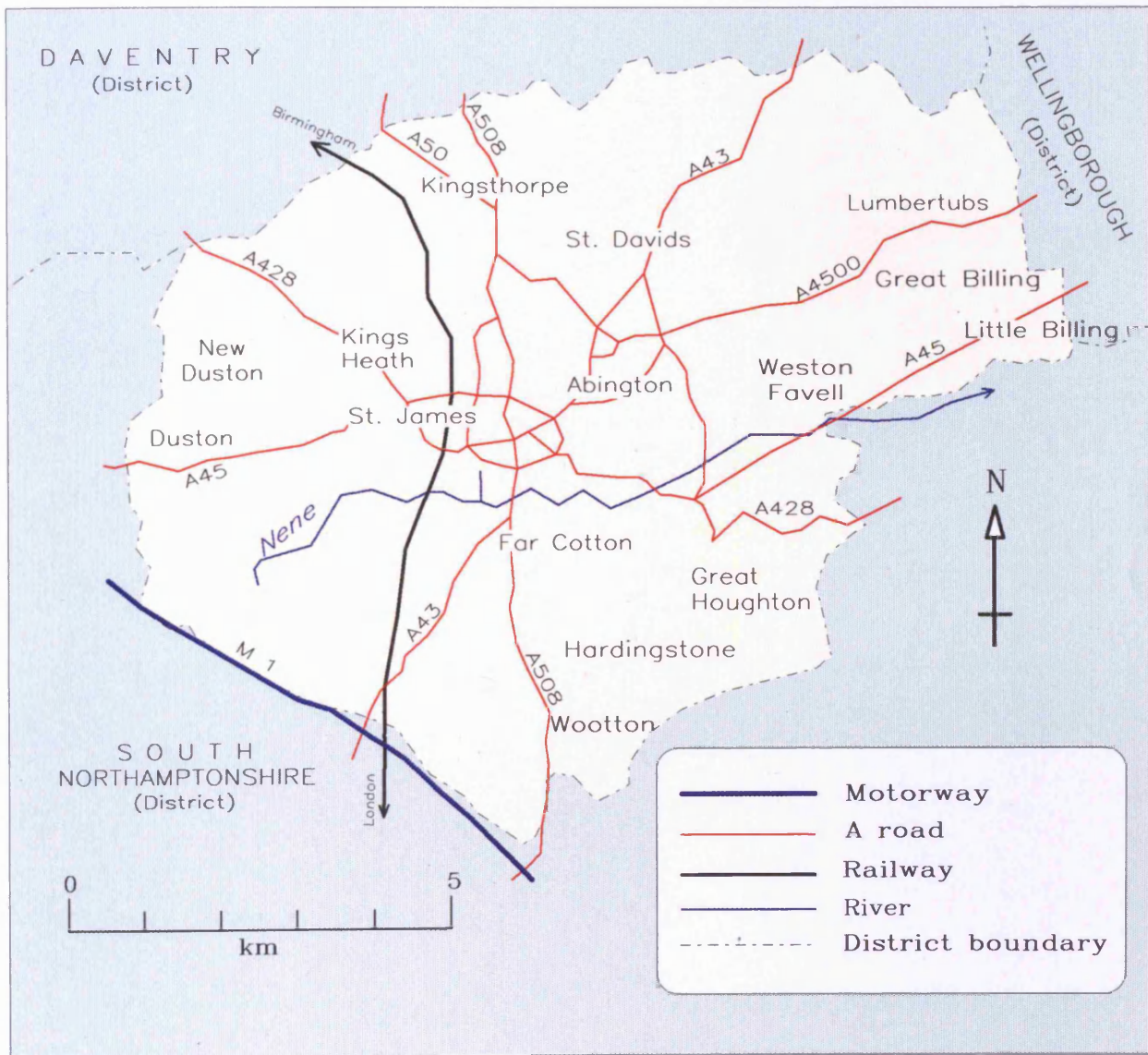
¹⁰ Based on unemployment, overcrowding, lack of basic amenities, no car, higher education, long term unemployed, income support, SMRs, derelict land.

¹¹ Based on elderly, lower social classes, unemployment, single parent households, overcrowding, mobility, and ethnic minorities.

motorways. Other strategic routes such as the A43 to Oxford, the M40 and A14 further enhance the borough's communications links. The town has grown rapidly in recent years, largely the result of its designation as a 'New Town' in 1965 and which has led to a near doubling of the population in the past 30 years. Rapid employment growth has accompanied this process and the town's once heavy dependence upon the boot and shoe industry has given way to a much more diverse local economy in which engineering, brewing and distribution trades dominate. However, what has been of particular importance has been the movement of company headquarters to the town, such as Carlsberg UK (brewing), Barclaycard (banking) and Cosworth (motor engineering), taking advantage of the town's excellent connection to the motorway network, its proximity to London and the wide range of high quality properties in its neighbouring villages. Within Northampton Borough there are just seven rural settlements including the larger settlements of Wootton (9,095) and Billing (7,671) and the smaller village of Great Houghton (508). Two villages have completed an appraisal in the district, Great Houghton and Wootton.

The rural areas in the borough of Northampton have rather different requirements to those of other rural parts of the county due to the housing pressures introduced by the expansion of Northampton into those parts of the rural hinterland within the boundaries of the borough. Thus, a process which absorbed the neighbouring villages of Kingsthorpe in the nineteenth century and Dallington and Duston, for example, in the early twentieth century, has accelerated from the 1960s not just with the designation of Northampton as a New Town (1965) but a succession of County Structure Plans which, increasingly, have channelled new housing developments in the urban areas, but particularly Northampton. The expansion of Northampton has been particularly rapid on its eastern side where the 'eastern district' formed the first phase of the New Town expansion. Consequently, rural parishes, which until recently lay outside the built area of Northampton, have now been absorbed within it and no longer see themselves as rural. As Billing parish council suggested:

"Billing parish is a wholly urban parish within the boundaries of Northampton. It is almost impossible, and certainly impractical to identify the limits of either village (Great Billing and Little Billing) and it is the current policy of the county council to lose the identity of either village" (1995).

Figure 6.8: Northampton Borough

Nevertheless, the borough council appears committed to the concept of the village appraisal and its role in the plan making process. As the Technical Services Officer for the borough argued “a well written and researched parish appraisal document will be most valuable and will be taken note of by both officers of the council and the members (1991), though this was tempered somewhat by the planning manager who added:

“if any village appraisal findings are relevant in the review of existing or proposed policies in the Local Plan I am sure these will be submitted by the parish councils as part of the ongoing consultation” (1994).

In other words, there still remains little doubt, at least in the planner’s eyes, as to who controls the planning process at the local level.

The tension between, on the one hand, the relentless expansion of Northampton and, on the other, the views of the borough council is evident in the comments concerning those few appraisals that have been completed. For example, the aim of the appraisal in Wootton (a village now physically joined to Northampton) was:

“to record the village as it moved in to the final stages of urbanisation and to discover the needs and interests of the community” (1995).

Although only 13 percent of the residents responded to the village appraisal questionnaire survey, this represented over 1,000 people. The results led directly to an upgrading of street lighting, and the development of recreational facilities including a community centre with facilities for the under sevens. In completing the village appraisal, Wootton Parish Council compiled a report on the leisure and recreation in the area “because that’s what the council were looking for” (1995). In so doing:

“they [the parish council] asked questions [in the appraisal] that they probably already knew the answer to” (1995).

In Great Houghton a village on the south eastern side of Northampton, the pressures of urban expansion are somewhat less given the barrier of the low lying and flood prone Nene Valley between the village and the town. Great Houghton (population 508) is a much smaller community than Wootton (population 9,095) and physically separate from Northampton, yet

the need to place on record the history of the village remains uppermost in the minds of the appraisal team. Thus, their view was:

“to record the history of village into one publication, as a great deal of research had been done for an exhibition, and it would also be of use to future residents” (1995).

Perhaps because of its relative isolation, the pressure to respond to the borough council’s agenda was less: not surprisingly therefore, the borough had made no response to the appraisal findings once the document had been sent to them.

6.4.4.8 Summary

The foregoing discussion has indicated that within the seven district councils in Northamptonshire, only four indicated they actively supported the undertaking of the village appraisal initiative (South Northamptonshire District, Kettering Borough, Wellingborough Borough and Corby Borough). However, within these four districts the evidence indicated that the support of the planning officer for the village appraisal was conditional, depending on the agenda through which the initiative was undertaken. In the remaining three districts (Daventry District, East Northamptonshire District and Northampton Borough), planning officials still supported the idea of a representative democracy despite the emergence of a national policy to implement community development and empowerment of individuals from the ‘bottom-up’ using community participation. Within these three districts, the application of the village appraisal as a planning tool to aid community development, has been limited as a consequence: only those undertaken by the democratically elected parish council were acceptable.

There is a further point. It is clear from this discussion that, if the planners and the views they or their representatives hold on the importance and status of a village appraisal, has an impact upon the take-up of an appraisal in a particular village then the location of that village within the confines of a particular district is of some importance. However, what is even more important in Northamptonshire, is that all the districts have villages within them, yet their significance in the overall image of the district and, therefore, in their contribution

to district policy varies enormously. It could be argued that, given the social problems in Corby, no appraisals have been undertaken in any of its villages and yet, if they had been allocated to a more rural district in 1974, say East Northamptonshire, a very different picture and approach may have emerged. It is in these ways, therefore, that local geographers have an important role to play in explaining the relationships between structure and agency and the variable take-up in appraisal activity.

6.5 Conclusion.

This chapter has examined the uptake and distribution of those village appraisals completed over the past twenty years and based upon evidence drawn from a number of national surveys and one undertaken in Northamptonshire. In the absence of any centralised system, whether nationally or locally, there is no firm basis on which a detailed statistical analysis could be carried out, whilst it is also evident that decisions taken by agencies which do collate information such as the RCCs, as to what constitutes an appraisal and what does not, simply adds to the confusion. Nevertheless, where it was possible to gain some consistency in the data, what did emerge from the national survey was a growing tendency for village appraisals to be more strongly associated with the 'more rural' counties. Since these tend to be the counties where RDAs and Objective 5b areas have been created in the past decade it could well be that the agendas of these agencies, in which funds are matched against the strength and quality of the bids, are pushing villages within these areas to carry out appraisals or related activities.

Within Northamptonshire, a much more accessible rural county and currently without any RDA or Objective 5b designation, no such 'rules of engagement' apply and yet it is a county which has taken on appraisals with a particular vigour, even to the extent of appointing an officer with the local RCC to promote the initiative. What has been of interest in Northamptonshire, therefore, are the ways in which the interplay of the various agencies, such as the county council, village appraisals officers and the seven district councils' officers has shaped the take-up of appraisals. Indeed, one of the themes which has emerged from this analysis is that all the agencies listed above support the concept of the village appraisal and have backed important county-wide initiatives, such as Parish

2000. Yet, despite this support, it is evident in detailed discussion with them that their views on what an appraisal is, how it should be done and who should do it are far apart – and this is a source of confusion and disillusionment amongst many villagers who have become involved and where they have sought to use the appraisal as a pro-active document in order to engage in partnership with planners and others to bring benefits to their village.

Equally, of course, confusion is a source of opportunity for many villages, whether to shun the process altogether, to hide behind an inactive district council (as in Corby) and blame disinterested or apathetic residents, or to conduct an appraisal in such a way that the approach and content are not recognisable as an appraisal in the eyes of important agencies such as the RCCs or the district councils. Unlike many of the ‘appraisal type’ activities being carried out in the remoter counties under the clearer guidelines provided by the TEC, RDA and LEADER initiatives, the evidence from Northamptonshire indicates that participating in the production of an appraisal involves unravelling a complex web of interactions or contingencies between the various agencies and villages involved. Indeed, it is only in this way that any understanding of the take-up of appraisals can be gained at the local level.

Of course, participation in village appraisals involves much more than the decision to carry one out. Beyond this there are other decisions within a village as to who participates, how they participate and how these impact upon the form and structure of the appraisal and upon the key agencies outside the village. These issues of participation are addressed in the following chapter.

Chapter seven

Participation in the village appraisal

7.1 Introduction

Chapter 6 illustrated how the geographical distribution of village appraisals, whether nationally or within Northamptonshire, could not be explained by statistical association alone, but required an examination of underlying structures and mechanisms and how these impact upon local communities. Within these communities, the ways in which the appraisals are carried out are similarly affected and these processes have a major impact upon the nature and form of participation in village appraisal activity. Given the discussion in chapter 3 about the problematic nature of citizen participation, it is important to explore the extent to which the village appraisal gives local communities more control over participation at the local level. This chapter addresses this issue in three ways. First, the role of the parish councils is examined to explore how their gate-keeping activities prevent, manipulate or encourage the participation of the wider community in the village appraisal process. Second, the steering group are investigated to establish whether they are constituted by elites within the local community. Third, a comparison is made between the interests represented through the village appraisal process and the expressed interests of the local community to investigate instances of exclusion.

7.2 Participation by the parish council.

The parish council consists of democratically elected representatives from the community. As the shift to governance occurs, the effect on the parish council is two-fold but with potentially conflicting outcomes. The first is to develop some power and responsibilities to the parish councils. It has already been pointed out (chapter 4) how a few district councils, notably in Devon and Wales, have involved parish councils in planning decisions normally made at the district level, whilst the rural 'White Paper' reinforces the need to:

Table 7.1 Patterns of involvement in the village appraisal by parish councils in rural Northamptonshire.

Participation	Criteria	No. of villages	Examples
Full participation	1.Parish council forms the steering group. 2.Parish council controls all aspects of production. 3.No involvement of non parish council members. 4.Villagers complete a questionnaire survey	7	Middleton Braybrooke
Parish council in control	1.Parish councillors initiate the village appraisal. 2.Parish councillors are members of the steering group. 3. Non parish councillors on the steering group. 4. Steering group manages the village appraisal process but the parish council retains ownership of the appraisal. 5.Parish council manipulates and controls the agenda. 6.Villagers complete a questionnaire survey.	33	Croughton Brington Stoke Albany Brixworth Little Houghton
In partnership with the wider community	1.A small number of villagers form the steering group. 2. The steering group creates the agenda. 3. Parish council supports the village appraisal. 4. Parish council manipulates the process to retain a certain level of control. 5.Villagers complete a questionnaire survey.	27	King's Sutton Moulton Nassington Pattishall Parish
Non-participation	1.Parish council declines to undertake a village appraisal.	80	Wicken Abthorpe Barby

“encourage delegation by means of agency agreements between authorities where these would be practical and cost effective. In general, the consultative framework between parish and town councils and principal authorities should include a formal assessment of the functions which will be delegated to parish and town councils” (DoE/MAFF, 1995: 22).

The second effect is for parish councils themselves to involve rural communities, and the people they represent, far more in the decision making and taking process rather than making all the decisions themselves on the parish's behalf. In other words, parish councils increasingly become enablers, encouraging local communities to become involved in participatory activities, including the village appraisal. There is certainly much evidence for the involvement of the parish council in the village appraisal but their role is not necessarily enabling. Information about the village appraisal, which is circulated, by the RCC or VAO is targeted at parish councils in the first instance, and their response is critical in determining whether a village appraisal occurs at all and what form it takes. The data collected from the author's survey of Northamptonshire parish councils in 1995 give a fascinating insight into this 'gatekeeping' role of the parish councils, and suggest that two requirements are necessary in order for a council to respond positively and support an appraisal taking place. First the parish council must believe that a village appraisal is a 'worthwhile' activity and would bring benefits to the village concerned. Second, the parish council must be convinced that some body or organisation in the village would be willing to undertake the appraisal. In other words, not only is it highly unlikely that any contemporary village appraisal would take place or have any merit without the open support of the parish council, but also that the council can use this 'gatekeeping' role to shape the composition of the appraisal team and how the project is undertaken.

7.2.1 Participation or non-participation.

Research conducted by Francis (1982), Ashman (1993), Moseley (1996), and Moseley *et al* (1996 (b)), has suggested that the involvement of the parish councils in rural England in the production of village appraisals can be of two basic forms: either their full participation and domination of every aspect of the process to the point where the wider community is excluded (except by completion of a household questionnaire survey), or where the parish council declines to be involved so that no appraisal is undertaken or it is done by others but

with no support or recognition whatsoever. In a survey of parish councils in Northamptonshire, the author found that both these situations applied though, as Table 7.1 indicates, other forms of involvement could also be identified. Indeed, even within these additional categories there were important variations, suggesting that the role of the parish council is far from straightforward. It is the purpose of this section to investigate each of these categories in more detail, drawing upon information from the survey and discussions within the villages¹.

7.2.1.1 Full involvement.

The number of village appraisals in which the steering group consists entirely of parish council members appears to be falling. Research undertaken over 15 years ago in Kent villages by Francis (1982) established that parish councils were responsible for managing 68 per cent of village appraisals in the county (18 from 27). Today, evidence from research across rural England suggests that this figure is much lower. For example, Moseley *et al* (1996 (a)) in Gloucestershire found only two instances where the parish council wholly undertook the village appraisal. This situation is similar to that in Northamptonshire where just 11.9 per cent (8 out of 67) of completed village appraisals have been wholly undertaken by the parish council (Middleton, Braybrooke, Byfield, Hemington, Church & Chapel Brampton (which undertook an appraisal together), Ringstead, Wilbarston and Woodnewton).

The low numbers of village appraisals managed solely by the parish council would seem to indicate that the processes of producing the village appraisal and the priorities of the parish council have changed over the last decade. The evidence suggests that the expectations of the planning process are no longer for the parish council, as the democratically elected representatives, to conduct rural planning initiatives in the locality but rather to empower the wider community to manage community development from the 'bottom-up'. It could be, therefore, that many parish councils are shifting towards the notion of 'partnership' inherent in the concept of governance and tapping into the resources and expertise of the local community. On the other hand, there is evidence of a clear and substantial resistance to these

¹ According to the author's survey 70 village appraisal have been completed in Northamptonshire (1996). The following discussion however, only includes details on 67 appraisals: three villages were excluded.

trends, apparent not just in the fact that many district councils are willing to accept only the views of the legitimised local community (the parish council) but also in the returns from the author's survey which found 80 parish councils indicating that they would not participate in producing a village appraisal (see section 7.2.1.4).

7.2.1.2 Parish council with the involvement of the wider community.

The evidence collected by the author indicated that in nearly half the villages with a completed village appraisal in Northamptonshire (31 from 67) the parish council retained control over many of the key aspects of appraisal activity, such as initiating the project and determining its management and agenda, but that other non-members of the parish council (residents of the village) did play an important role in its production, particularly through membership of the steering group (Table 7.1).

In Stoke Albany for instance, the parish council in its role as 'gatekeeper' to the village initiated the appraisal after receiving information sent from the VAO. Similarly, in Brixworth, the parish council considered that it was important that it initiated the village appraisal and was seen to actively support the process. However, in both villages the parish council considered that it was an appropriate project to undertake, but only if members of the council were prepared to participate on the steering group. Indeed, in Brixworth the desire by the parish council to be involved in the process in this manner delayed the initiation of the village appraisal for two years because of a lack of willingness by council members to participate. This need to remain involved during the process was summarised by Stephen Harding, a parish councillor and member of Stoke Albany village appraisal steering group who said:

"it was felt there ought to be at least one member of the parish council on the steering group so that the parish council were in full knowledge of what was going on" (1995).

As Table 7.2 indicates this view is reflected by ten other parishes, where one person was deemed sufficient amongst the steering group to provide the necessary contact between the activities of the appraisal team and the parish council. Quite what form this contact and feedback took varied from parish to parish. Thus whilst Stephen Harding in Stoke Albany

was there to keep the council “in full knowledge of what was going on”, a rather different approach was adopted in Croughton, where Trevor Davies “took on the job of representing the parish council”. It was evident from the outset that he was very much a delegate of the parish council throughout the appraisal process so that the parish council not only retained control, but also asserted their ownership of the village appraisal through, for example, the gathering of the statistical information via the household questionnaire survey. As Trevor Davies commented:

“It was all set up to be a parish council directed appraisal...it was a parish council endorsement. We [the steering group] kept the parish council aware and ensured that they had full ownership of it” (Trevor Davies, 1995).

What is also interesting about both these cases, and originally true of Brixworth also, is that parish councils agree to the principle of a village appraisal and wish to remain involved in it, but then have great difficulty in getting someone to do it. In Croughton, Trevor Davies “took on the job” (hardly a recommendation) whilst in Stoke Albany Stephen Harding felt that he got the job through “Hobsons’ Choice (and the only councillor) who was prepared to do it”. This is not to say that the appraisal was not worthwhile, though nevertheless that lack of enthusiasm was “regrettable and someone from the parish council had to give their time to it” if it was to have value in the eyes of the district council. It is clear, therefore, that the deregulation of power brings with it responsibilities, though the evidence so far is that many parish councillors are feeling stretched by these responsibilities and reluctant to extend their duties as active citizens. This is not always the case, however. The reluctance by Stephen Harding to participate in the village appraisal was in sharp contrast to that of parish councillor Susan Verrallo of the Brixworth steering group. Indeed, she was eager to use the statistical information generated through the village appraisal in combination with her other capacity as district councillor to make appropriate representations on behalf of the wider community.

Nevertheless, this type of control by the parish council can be used, as it was in Brixworth, to manipulate the steering group in order to control the agenda of the village appraisal. Parish councillors made up 50 per cent of the steering group members (Keith Parrot, Susan Verrallo, John Dawkins, Jane Neill, and Harvey Fox) and although they considered themselves to be working at a distance from the parish council, they frequently exercised their powers as parish council members in order to shape the village appraisal and, periodically, to manipulate the

process to achieve set objectives and agendas. For example, without the participation of parish councillors, the steering group would not have been provided with a grant for £3,000 to enable the production of the appraisal document. Furthermore, the parish councillors on the steering group used their council membership to ensure that, if the loan could not be repaid in full, the parish council would be in no position to demand that the steering group personally fund the shortfall.

Table 7.2 Parish council membership on village appraisal steering groups in Northamptonshire.

Villages with parish council participation	No. of councillors participating	Size of steering group	Villages with parish council participation	No. of councillors participating	Size of steering group
Earls Barton	8	11	Mears Ashby	2	7
Brington parish	6	11	Weston-by-Welland	2	3
Orlbury	6	10	Wilton	2	12
Badby	6	7	Woodford Halse	2	5
Roade	6	8	Wootton	2	12
Brixworth	5	10	Aldwincle	1	5
Easton-on-the-hill	5	7	Bulwick	1	5
Hackleton	4	8	Croughton	1	7
Pilton parish	4	6	Great Cransley	1	7
Arthingworth	3	8	King's Cliffe	1	11
Great Addington	3	14	Overstone	1	14
Little Houghton	3	16	Ravensthorpe	1	2
Sibbertoft	3	8	Stoke Albany	1	4
Yardley Hastings	3	11	Warmington	1	8
Cold Ashby	2	8	Whittlebury	1	6
Great Houghton	2	7			

Finally, as Table 7.3 demonstrates, all the appraisals conducted in villages where the parish council played a dominant role in the appraisal process included a questionnaire survey as part of the data gathering process; and in 24 of the 31 villages represented, and for which information exists, the response rate was in excess of 60 per cent. What this suggests, therefore, is that the absence of widespread participation amongst non-parish council members on the steering group does not appear to generate disinterest or apathy on the part of the wider community when invited to provide questionnaire responses. Indeed, it could be argued that, having been elected to make decisions on behalf of the parish, they are simply being asked to do exactly that. Moreover, they appear to be going further, both by asking

villagers to comment through the questionnaire and inviting other non-councillors to participate as steering group members.

Table 7.3 Village appraisal response rates where the parish council were in control of the village appraisal.

Village	Response Rate %	Village	Response Rate %
Little Houghton	99	Whittlebury	72
Cold Ashby	99	Mears Ashby	70
Orlingbury	98	Great Addington	70
Stoke Albany	97	Braybrooke	68
Weston-by Welland	94	Whilton	65
Cransley	90	Braunston	65
Brington*	85	Brixworth	64
Badby	84	Yardley Hastings	55
Pilton*	83	Warmington	52
Sibertoft	80	Croughton	40
Great Houghton	80	Aldwincle	40
Easton-on-the-Hill	80	Roade	32
Arthingworth	80	Earls Barton	30
Overstone	75	Wootton	14
Bulwick	75	Woodford Halse	-
Ravensthorpe	74	King's Cliffe	-
Hackleton*	74		

* the village appraisal was undertaken within a parish.

Even so, there is a clear reluctance in these villages to 'put power in the hands of the people'. The parish council, despite the national shift from a representative democracy towards a participatory democracy and local governance under the Conservative government, appears eager to retain its power in the decision making process. To this end, the parish council will attempt to maintain a strong influence over the village appraisal process and even forego the opportunity to undertake an appraisal, as in the case of Brixworth, if a councillor is not willing to participate. Whilst the participation of the wider community is not entirely jeopardised in this situation, their empowerment in the decision making process will never be maximised and they may be considered as merely undertaking the exercise on behalf of the parish council who inevitably retains ownership of the appraisal and the information generated.

7.2.1.3 Shared partnership with the wider community.

In 40.2 per cent (28 from 67) of appraisal villages in Northamptonshire (Table 7.4), the parish council from the outset sought to forge partnerships with the wider community in order to complete a village appraisal.

Table 7.4 Villages in which parish councils formed a partnership with the wider community.

Ashley	East Farndon	Kings Sutton	Polebrook
Barnwell	Eydon	Moulton	Silverstone
Benefield	Flore	Naseby	Sudborough
Bozeat	Hargrave	Nassington	Sulgrave
Braunston	Hartwell	Nether Heyford	Titchmarsh
Charwelton	Hellidon	Newnham	Woodford
Crick	Islip	Pattishall*	West Haddon

*The appraisal was undertaken in a parish.

However, whilst the parish councils in their position as gatekeepers should encourage the whole of the community to participate in the partnership, the evidence through this thesis has demonstrated that usually it is just a small number of the community members who form the steering group and take responsibility for completing the appraisal. This was certainly the case in Nassington where four women formed a steering group and were responsible for completing the appraisal, and also in Pattishall parish where four people formed a steering group, and in Moulton where just three people managed the process. However, despite the fact that a number of villagers took day-to-day responsibility for these appraisals, the passive participation of each parish council was evident and illustrates that the parish councils in fact maintained some control over the process.

In Pattishall parish for example, in the district of South Northamptonshire, the parish council not only recognised the benefits of actively supporting an appraisal from the outset but also the advantages of empowering the wider community to participate in a partnership alliance. Thus on receipt of information about the village appraisal process from the VAO, according to Mike Bailey, the parish council:

“decided to undertake the survey, but wanted to get someone else to do it” (Mike Bailey, steering group member, 1995).

To do this, the parish council organised a meeting at which a steering group was formed from a small number of wider community members. Whilst the village appraisal was being completed, the parish council actively encouraged the steering group and supported its agenda, including gathering the necessary statistical information about the needs of the population to initiate development within the parish. As a result of this partnership, the steering group was happy to relinquish ownership of the village appraisal to the parish council, once it was completed, together with all the statistics gathered from the household questionnaire survey; in return, the parish council supported the proposals for development which were contained in the published appraisal document. Through the whole process, therefore, there was a comfortable and trusting relationship between the parish council and the steering group (which had no council representatives on it). During the course of the process, meetings took place between the appraisal team and the parish council, to advise on progress or problems, but at no stage was there any intervention whereby the council insisted upon a particular agenda being followed. At all times the appraisal team was seen as the delegated and legitimised group, representing the parish council and, therefore, the parish.

The village appraisal was undertaken by a similar partnership arrangement in the village of Moulton, in Daventry District. However, whilst being managed on a daily basis by a steering group of three, the parish council supported the appraisal and many members participated during the household survey. In fact, "about 14 all together were involved in distributing and collecting the questionnaires" and they wrote several articles about the historical aspects of the village for inclusion in the village appraisal document (John Campling, 1995). Significantly, the statistical analysis of the household questionnaire survey was completed by Ray Hobby, who was not a parish councillor and nor was he a member of the steering group. Even so, in their role as parish officials the council needed to approve an application for funds for doing the village appraisal from the steering group and so, although they were playing the part of passive partners in the appraisal, it used its position to support the steering group where it was needed. Whilst there is no evidence to suggest that this financial power came with conditions (that certain things had to be done in certain ways), it does indicate the different ways in which partnerships can be forged. There could be accusations of 'hired hands' to use Goodwin's words (1998), in which the parish council simply provides the financial wherewithal for a particular job to be done. However, what is evident here is that

the best expertise was used, wherever it happened to be. Thus the council was able to use its position to provide money, the steering group worked with the parish council members when and where that was most appropriate and the computing expertise of a non-council and non-steering group person was used where needed.

The evidence has illustrated, that in its role as 'gatekeepers', the parish council is in a powerful position within the community which, on the one hand, enables it to develop partnerships with members of the wider community to deliver the village appraisal, but on the other permits it to retain some degree of control in what is seen as their legitimate role as the democratically elected members of the parish. Therefore, the role of elites in rural society is seen as a contingent process which affects the ways in which the village appraisal is conducted at the local level. Indeed, the thesis has already shown that the parish council comprises people from the higher social groups in society and this, combined with the social elite steering group (see later), indicates that a small number of people are involved in undertaking a large part of the village appraisal process. Furthermore, it is such people who are responsible for managing or using the process in order to achieve their particular agenda, whether it is to gain statistical information, development in the village or just to achieve a completed village appraisal. Therefore, although the parish council may encourage partnerships with the wider community like those envisaged by the Conservative government in the rural White Paper (DoE/MAFF, 1995), there is no actual devolution of power or control to the majority of citizens in rural society, since most of those who are empowered are drawn from similar backgrounds as the parish councillors. The majority of the community is still only provided with the opportunity to participate in the household questionnaire survey, which as Arnstein (1969), England (1974) and Fagence (1977) argued in chapter 3 is generally seen as an ineffective mechanism of participation.

7.2.1.4 Non-participation.

Since Francis undertook his study of village appraisals in Kent during the early 1980s, there appears to have been a change in parish council attitudes towards village appraisals. The decline in the number of parish council dominated village appraisals, as discussed in section 7.2.1.1, has been accompanied by an increase in the number of parish councils declining the opportunity to undertake a village appraisal. Only one Kent parish council declined to

undertake an appraisal during the time of Francis's study in 1982 due to the lack of interest amongst the parish councillors. In Northamptonshire, 80 of the parish councils that responded to the author's survey in 1995 indicated that they would be unlikely to support the undertaking of an appraisal in their village.

The 80 villages are geographically widespread across rural Northamptonshire. Table 7.5 shows the non-participating villages as a percentage of the total number of respondents to the author's survey in each district. The data indicates that Kettering has the highest proportion of non-participating parish councils for the number of respondents to the author's survey (52.9 per cent) despite the borough council declaring its support for community based initiatives like the village appraisal. On the other hand, Corby District, which currently has no appraisal activity (1996), has the lowest proportion of non-participating parish councils for the number of respondents to the author's survey (20.0 per cent), although it must be acknowledged that the borough council do take a positive approach to community development even if it is urban focused.

Table 7.5 The percentage of respondents with non-participating parish councils.

District	% of parish councils not wanting to undertake a village appraisal
Kettering	52.9
Wellingborough	46.1
South Northamptonshire	40.9
Daventry	31.2
East Northamptonshire	25.6
Northampton	25.0
Corby	20.0

The parish councils in the 80 non-participating villages suggested a number of reasons for their non-participation in the village appraisal (Table 7.6).

Table 7.6, based upon the actual answers given by the respondents themselves, indicates that the main reason for non-participation by the parish councils in the village appraisal was a judgement they made about the widespread disinterest in appraisal from the wider community. Thus, Cottingham parish council believed that "a degree of apathy exists" in the village, whilst Broughton parish council stated that they would not entertain the idea of

undertaking an appraisal because of the “lack of public response to previous surveys/questionnaires”. Grafton Regis parish council also claimed that “no interest has been shown by members of the village”, whilst Blisworth parish council was more pragmatic in its response, and suggested that, because there was apathy amongst villagers:

Table 7.6 Reasons for parish council non-participation in the village appraisal in rural Northamptonshire².

Reasons for parish council non-participation	Number of parish councils
Apathy from the wider community.	38
The village is too small.	21
Lack of volunteers.	19
Time constraints.	13
It is inappropriate.	12
Parish council disinterest.	8
No information has been received about the village appraisal.	6
The village is too big.	3
A needs survey has been undertaken.	2
Lack of vision.	1

“the task would fall on a very few interested parties and to carry out an effective appraisal would need the participation of many”.

The second most common reason for not undertaking an appraisal was the size of the village, though interestingly this contains 21 villages which considered themselves too small and three respondents who suggested the village was too big to undertake an appraisal, Rothwell (7,500), Billing (7,671) and Deanshanger (2,699)). There were two main concerns for those small communities wishing to undertake a village appraisal. The first was keeping questionnaire responses anonymous, as the parish clerk in the village of Wakerley pointed out:

“with only 55 electors, 35 dwellings, we all know the whole extent of the village, we all know each other by sight and name”.

The second was finding a variety of people to participate and contribute to the village appraisal which, as Yarwell parish council suggested, would be difficult:

² The reasons for parish council non-participation were suggested by the parish council's and not the author.

“being a small village we do not have anyone at the moment willing and able (because of other commitments) to undertake it”.

Many small villages also argued that status as a non-growth village under the district and county council’s Structure and Local Plans meant that any development proposed through the appraisal was unlikely, whilst some small villages took the opposite view, namely that there was no need to undertake an appraisal. As Winwick parish council was eager to point out:

“because it is a very small village it has everything it needs (except a pub)”

Additionally, it was the opinion of 19 non-participating parish councils that there would not be enough volunteers in the village to help with the appraisal if one were undertaken. In Maidford, the parish council was concerned particularly, about the “lack of interested people with time to spare” to undertake an appraisal (emphasis added), whilst in Wicken the parish council admitted to assuming (rather than knowing for definite) that “nobody is able or willing to take on the task”. In the villages of Duddington-with-Fineshade and Shutlanger the parish councils believed that the village appraisal would not attract a large number of volunteers, based on previous experience of community activities. In Shutlanger, the village has “a small population without a well developed sense of community...thus no-one will volunteer”, whilst in Duddington-with-Fineshade:

“the ‘doers’ in the village – about 15 out of the population of 210- are either heavily committed to their work or other activities and are unable (rather than unwilling) to prepare an appraisal”.

There were two different problems highlighted with regard to the importance of time in conducting the village appraisal. First, some of the 13 parish councils that cited this reason for their non-participation in the process (for example, East Carlton and Denton) considered that the appraisal itself was too time consuming and the process, in order to complete it satisfactorily, tended to be drawn out over too long a period and this was frustrating. The second concern was that people who were interested enough to spend time completing a village appraisal “lacked sufficient time to devote to the project” (Abthorpe parish council) “because they all have jobs” (Chacombe parish council). This was considered especially difficult in Brockhall, which is a hamlet in Daventry District and only has 11 residents in total to undertake all community activities.

Other parish councils argued that the village appraisal was 'inappropriate' though the reasons varied. For example, Wicken parish council concluded that the appraisal would "potentially be intrusive" to some people in the village and to avoid an appraisal would be to avoid this problem. On the other hand, the parish council in Billing claimed that the actions of the borough council in Northampton, within which Billing is located, had made an appraisal an impossible task to undertake because:

"the mass residential developments over nearly thirty years have...made it impossible to identify the limits of either village (Great Billing and Little Billing)".

In the village of Paulerspury, however, the parish council believed it was inappropriate and "just not necessary" for the community to undertake a village appraisal. Similarly, Hinton-in-the-Hedges parish council stated that, "unless it is a statutory requirement there does not seem any reason for it". Seemingly, the ideas of governance and community empowerment appear to have by-passed this tiny village in South Northamptonshire. It could also be argued, of course, that their non-participation is an attempt to keep power in the hands of the democratically elected elite, a similar strategy to that used by the district council which believes planning matters should be dealt with by the elected representatives or 'power brokers' in the community. Indeed, this view was apparent in a further eight villages where the parish councils admitted that it was their lack of interest in the appraisal which prevented one being undertaken in the village. In other words, when the parish councils of Culworth, Ecton, Farthingstone, Guilsborough, Holcot, Marston-St-Lawrence, Paulerspury and Slapton decided not to participate what they have done is to deny the wider community in the village the opportunity to participate. As gatekeepers to the community, the parish council is in receipt of information about the village appraisal almost exclusively in the first instance, but by withholding the information they are presenting barriers to the participation of the wider community in the decision making process.

Finally, six parish councils argued they had not participated since they had not received information from the VAO. In three of the cases, Great Harrowden, Laxton and Grendon this would have been because of the VAOs strategy not to target villages below a certain size, though other villages in this category did know about the initiative and a few had actually

completed an appraisal. Indeed, it could be argued that this response is one of many which appear to assign the reasons for non-participation on other factors, usually outside their control. What all these replies do indicate, however, is that non-participation is still the predominant response in rural Northamptonshire though, somewhat surprisingly, the main reasons given (apathy and disinterest) are cited just as frequently in those villages which have taken up appraisal activity. In this sense, therefore, the key to take up is the availability of a critical number of dynamic, charismatic and determined individuals amongst the parish councils, a positive response amongst these to the idea of an appraisal, and their readiness to enthuse others to join them on the steering group.

7.3 Participation by the steering groups.

The steering groups consist of groups of people who take primary responsibility for the planning and implementation of the village appraisal. These groups have an important role in determining the extent to which the wider community will be involved in the process and the main issues which will dominate the village appraisal. To investigate the extent to which the steering groups may be seen as representative of the wider community it is important to examine who constitutes the steering groups, to what extent are they an elite from the local community and what choices they then make about who else becomes involved and in what way.

This section examines the procedures by which community members are enabled to participate on the steering group of the village appraisal and the effects such procedures have on the participation of the wider community. Initially, it is important to establish who becomes a steering group member.

7.3.1 A social classification of steering group members.

Table 7.7 shows the social class distribution of steering group members based upon the author's survey responses from 67 parish councils. Although some of the replies could not be classified (housewives and parish councillors), it is still possible to make broad comparisons with the overall social profile for rural Northamptonshire and with that of the recent movers identified by the 1991 census. What the table shows is the dominance of the professional,

managerial and executive groups (Social Classes I and II) in the appraisal process and the close similarities between this distribution and those identified in the 1991 census as recent movers into rural Northamptonshire. In this sense it is clear from the table that the middle class element is becoming dominant amongst in-migrants to the county and that it is beginning to make its presence felt in village activities such as the appraisal. It follows, therefore, that there is clear evidence here, similar to that expressed by Buller and Lowe (1990), Murdoch and Marsden (1994) and Hoggart (1997), that rural lowland England, at least, is becoming increasingly the territory of the middle class population and that they are beginning to play a greater part in rural politics and other decision making forums. This is consistent with results from the work undertaken by Stringer and Ewens (1975), Goldsmith and Saunders (1976), McLaughlin (1987), Rogers (1987), and Cloke and Little (1990). These authors have claimed that the majority of participators in village organisations are the educationally elite, middle class, and mobile people within rural society. Furthermore, Cloke and Little found through their investigation of public participation in the planning process that:

“aspects of public participation in the planning sphere tend to be dominated by the middle classes” (1990: 245).

Table 7.7 The social class distribution of steering group members³ compared to the general social class distribution in rural Northamptonshire.

Social Class	% of steering group members	% total in rural Northamptonshire *(OPCS, 1991)	% total in-migrants (1990-91)
I	20.7	6.5	15.6
II	35.6	32.6	34.7
III(nm)	3.8	24.0	8.0
III(m)	4.9	8.1	18.5
IV	1.8	9.3	6.3
V	0.9	3.2	2.7
Retired persons	10.6	16.2	14.2
Housewife	14.3	-	-
Parish councillor	7.4	-	-

*Please Note that the definition of 'rural' is based on wards which have a population density of less than 500 people per sq. km (Northamptonshire County Council, 1995).

³ The data included in Table 7.8 is for those steering group members in Northamptonshire who responded to the author's survey of the parish councils and steering groups undertaken in 1995.

The studies by Rogers and McLaughlin also indicated that, despite the initiatives to increase participation of the average citizen in society, the middle class elite dominates participation exercises especially in the rural locale. Indeed, Rogers suggested that the “voluntary sector is at best the plaything of the middle class” (1987: 354). McLaughlin on the other hand highlighted the plight of the “poor and deprived” who have become a significant minority group in the planning process and who can no longer “influence policies which affect their lifestyles and living standards” (1987: 363).

It is also the widespread belief amongst those local authority officials at the local level that the elite middle classes will be the main participators in village activities. Tim Bellamy, the Leisure Services Officer at Kettering Borough Council, expects participators to be people who “commute, have got jobs out of the village, are busy people and come back and are probably used to participating in organisations” (1995), whilst Ian Nelson, the VAO in Northamptonshire, admits that the “articulate, middle class people” have dominated the village organisations where he has been involved (1994).

This pattern of participation demonstrates that, despite the apparent increased opportunities that have been presented to people to participate in the planning process at the grass roots, a rural social elite is beginning to dominate the participation process. Many would argue that this is due to the skills which this section of the rural community has acquired; a good education, an abundance of social contacts and experience and competence (Taylor and Stringer, 1973; Stringer and Ewens, 1975; Goldsmith and Saunders, 1976). Additionally, Arnstein (1969) argued that the rural elite is socially adept people who can articulate their views and thus participate more effectively than the average citizen. What remains to be investigated is how these people are recruited onto the village appraisal steering groups, and this is examined by reference to events in the three case-study villages of this thesis.

7.3.2 Procedures for recruitment.

Academics and practitioners alike recognise that the village appraisal steering group should be:

“a reasonable cross section of the community...to avoid alienating, or discriminating against particular social groups” (Francis, 1982; 349).

However, as section 7.3.1 has argued this appears not to be happening, so that the higher social classes are dominating participation in the steering group, based on the skills which they have to offer the village appraisal process. The evidence suggests there are two main selection criteria that determine recruitment procedures on to the steering group. The first criterion is based on how beneficial an individual's participation is for the village appraisal. Indeed, rather than offer all citizens the opportunity to learn new skills through participation in local initiatives, as Beresford and Croft (1993) suggested would be most appropriate to all members of the community, it is the citizens who have a large amount of experience and a wide range of skills who would appear to be more attractive as members of the steering group. Such skills are likely to reflect the education and experience that are characteristic of those in the higher social groups.

The second criterion for the recruitment of steering group members is based upon the chosen agenda for the village appraisal. The freedoms that residents have to determine levels of community development within the village are reflected in the agenda chosen for the village appraisal. Different characteristics are required of the steering group members whatever agendas are chosen. For example, if the emphasis of the appraisal is the production of a high quality, glossy, historical document then those with expertise in writing local history and publishing tend to dominate the steering group. If on the other hand, greater emphasis is placed upon the process of community participation, then the steering group will include those with strong community ties, such as long standing residents, those with expertise in working with people to gather and analyse statistical information, and so on.

In order to examine the recruitment procedures of the steering group members, evidence will be considered from the three study villages of Brixworth, Stoke Albany and Dingley. The following information gathered through participant observation and in-depth interviews of the steering group members in the villages, will demonstrate the highly selective nature of the recruitment procedures and consider the implications for the participation of the wider community.

7.3.2.1 Brixworth.

The village appraisal in Brixworth began on 1st December 1993 with a steering group consisting of two men and four women. It culminated with the production of a document on 5th December 1994 by a steering group that had grown in size to consist of five men and five women. The steering group members who initially planned and implemented the village appraisal process were closely linked to the parish council. The recruitment of the steering group members was achieved in two stages.

Parish councillor, Keith Parrot initiated the village appraisal in Brixworth because no one else had “been prepared to make that commitment” (1994). Despite the fact that he and his wife Linda were active members of the local Liberal Democrat party, vociferously campaigning on their behalf during local elections, Keith Parrot did not want the appraisal to be regarded as a political activity so that sections of the wider community would not be alienated. The chosen agenda for the village appraisal was the production of a village appraisal document that was “marketable” and of which the wider community could be proud (steering group meeting 10.2.95). Thus, Keith Parrot planned the selection of steering group members accordingly. Table 7.8 below lists the members and the principal reason for their invitation from Keith to join the steering group.

Table 7.8 Brixworth steering group members and the reasons for their invitation.

Group Member	Reason for their invitation
David Hymas	A retired accountant, managed the financing of the appraisal
Harvey Fox	A parish councillor / Local business man
Jane Neill	Independent parish councillor
John Dawkins	Secretary of the History Society
Keith Howells	A computer expert
Keith Parrot	A parish councillor
Linda Parrot	Initiator/Liberal Democrat fund raiser
Mandy Dawkins	A member of the History Society / Active member of the community
Pam Petit	A countryside enthusiast / Active member of the community
Sue Verrallo	Independent parish councillor

Stage one of the recruitment of steering group members began with Sue Verrallo and Jane Neill. They were both aware of the village appraisal as active Independent representatives on

the parish council. As Sue recalls, they were ideal members for Keith Parrot's steering group. Her invitation to join the group by Keith and Linda Parrot was:

"because I think they were anxious as they were fairly heavily into politics themselves and bearing in mind they wanted to get an even balance on the steering group instead of having lots of people from one particular party" (1994).

For Jane, her presence as an Independent member of the parish council was just one quality that she could offer the steering group. Furthermore, she believed her invitation was because she was:

"working on the community newspaper, I can publicise things and use my contacts that way. My contacts will be an asset" (1995).

The invitation extended to John and Mandy Dawkins was for two reasons. Their participation ensured that the wish of Keith Parrot, to produce the village appraisal as a historical record of the village, would be easier to achieve. As the secretary of the local History Society, John Dawkins was selected by Keith Parrot because he wanted:

"to find people that were interested in the history, the groundwork, and I did not commit myself until I 'd got some support on the history side" (Keith Parrot, 1994).

More importantly, John and Mandy were believed to exert some degree of influence over the History Society, since it was probable that all members of the History Society would participate if the Dawkins did so. Additionally, Mandy Dawkins' leadership skills, developed as an active member of the Village Hall committee and chairwoman of the Wives' Guild, would be invaluable to the steering group (Mandy Dawkins, 1994). Therefore, their agreement to participate was crucial to the continuation of the appraisal in Brixworth. There was some disappointment, however, because the History Society as an organisation was not interested in participating in the appraisal due to the time commitment that would have been necessary (steering group meeting 1.12.93).

Sue Verrallo prompted the second stage of the recruitment process. There was a consensus that more people were needed to "help steer other people", but she was concerned about having "too many people on the steering group" which would make it difficult to conduct meetings (steering group meeting 10.2.94). The recruitment of further members for the

steering group began as a direct result of the public meeting on the 9th February 1994. Held in the village hall, the village appraisal public meeting only attracted 25 people from a population of about 3,800 people.

Three extra people were recruited on to the steering group from the 25 who attended this village meeting. It was believed that the three people would be eager to get “their teeth stuck into something” since they all had an abundance of skills to offer the participation process (Sue Verrallo, steering group meeting 10.2.94). David Hymas, Harvey Fox and Pam Petit were invited to join the steering group and the remaining 22 people who attended were asked to help with the “leg work” (steering group meeting 10.2.94).

As a retired chartered accountant, David Hymas became the treasurer of the village appraisal. With time to spare, David was able to commit himself entirely to ensuring that the appraisal was completed as a cost effective exercise, including the production of a business plan (David Hymas, 1995).

Local businessman and parish councillor Harvey Fox was already aware of the village appraisal through his position on the parish council, but he joined the steering group full of scepticism as to its viability as a village funded process. Despite such negative opinions, his close affiliation with the local business community and the opportunities this offered to attract funding from local business people were considered an important asset to the steering group.

The invitation to Pam Petit was extended because of her active interest as a countryside enthusiast and her knowledge of the local wildlife and plants and the local Countryside Park. The steering group had already made the decision to allow a large section in the village appraisal document to be dedicated to the study of the flora and fauna, so, they needed to recruit a member who was able to undertake the task of investigating and documenting this information. Her invitation to join the group came as a surprise to Pam, who like Mandy Dawkins had a long history of involvement in village affairs; she had participated extensively in village activities both in Brixworth and Moulton where she was previously a resident (for example, as chairwoman of the Moulton Women’s Institute). However, Pam believed that, in

this case, her invitation was to a further public meeting rather than to be a member of the steering group.

“I turned up to the parish hall and everyone was sitting around the table and I thought this is odd, but I sat down and the meeting began. It wasn’t a public meeting, I was part of the appraisal team. Moreover, how that happened I still don’t know. Anyway having sat down and not said anything I thought I’d better stay and listen. And I was involved” (1994).

The final member to join the group was Keith Howells. His main contribution was in producing the village appraisal household questionnaire survey and the final village appraisal document. Keith was recruited through his association with David Hymas, after he answered an advertisement placed by David for computer tuition. When David became involved in the appraisal, Keith’s invitation to join the steering group soon followed. As he recalls:

“I’ve had experience in computers for a number of years, I’m a bit sympathetic and all that. Word got around and David got roped into the appraisal, and I joined in a bit later on in the production stage rather than the planning stage” (1995).

Keith believes that he was invited to participate because of his computing skills. There are obvious benefits for the village appraisal in having a computer expert on the steering group to facilitate the analysis of the questionnaire survey and production of the village appraisal document.

Of interest also is the geographical distribution of the steering group members in the village. As Figure 7.1 indicates, eight of the ten steering group members live in the older part of the village (Phase 1), either in one of the stone cottages which survive in this area (Kennel Terrace, for example) or in the newer, substantial detached properties built on the site of the former Brixworth Hall. Of those two who live outside this cluster, both were already involved with other people who were on the steering group - Keith Howells (7) with David Hymas (1); and Pam Petit (8) with Mandy Dawkins (4) and Linda Parrot (5) through membership of the Wives’ Guild, the Flower Guild and the Women’s’ Institute. In other words, not only was the steering group formed by people who lived in close proximity to each other (with many parts of the village such as the local authority estate or the private ‘Brackenborough’ development on the Scaldwell Road excluded), but it was also constituted by groups of people who were already well acquainted with each other through other activities in the village.

Figure 7.1: The geographical distribution of steering group members in Brixworth.

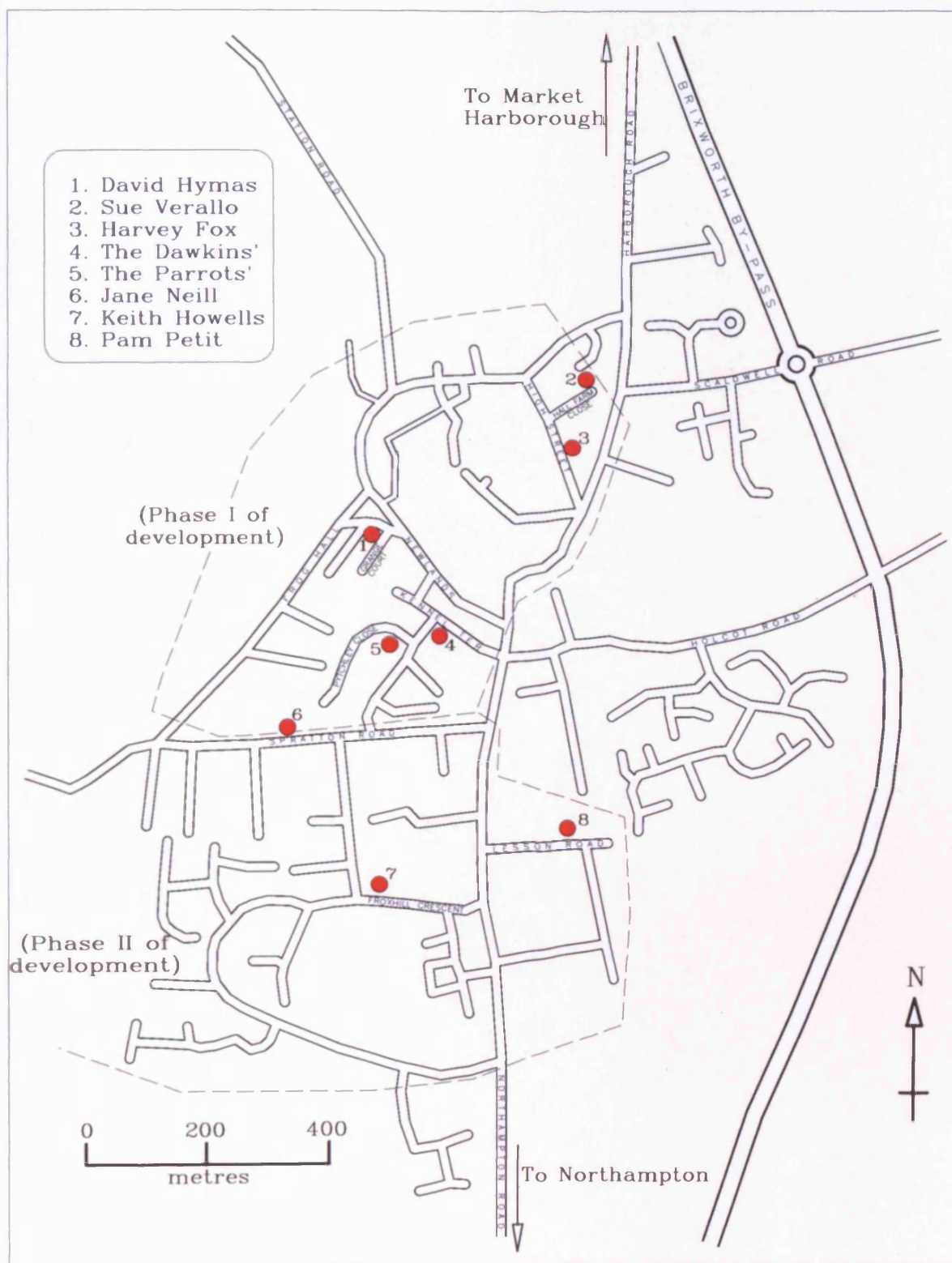


Table 7.9 Issues voiced as important by the community, compared to the questions included in the appraisal survey in Brixworth.

Issue	Community Opinion (%)	No. of Questions	Issue	Community Opinion (%)	No. of Questions
Development	11.72	1	Roads	2.75	0
Housing	8.27	1	The Future	2.75	0
The School	7.58	1	The Past	2.07	0
Facilities	6.20	0	Wildlife	1.38	0
Public Transport	5.51	3	Community	1.38	0
Needs	4.82	0	The Present	1.38	0
Leisure	4.82	3	Open Spaces	1.38	2
Social/Demographic	4.82	3	The Local Council	1.38	2
Crime	3.44	0	Employment	1.38	4
Everything	3.44	0	Footpaths	1.38	10
Quality of Life	3.44	0	Planning	0.68	0
Youth	3.44	1	Poverty	0.68	0
Traffic	2.75	1	Organisations	0.68	0
Amenities	2.75	2	Improvements	0.68	0
Health	2.75	2	Feelings	0.68	0
Services	2.75	3	The Village	0.00	3

There was one major effect of this ‘hand picked’ steering group on Brixworth’s village appraisal and the participation of the wider community. The members of the steering group were recruited specifically for the task of producing what they considered to be a ‘first class’ village appraisal document. This process can be defined as ‘product participation’. Based on this agenda, Keith Parrot recruited steering group members who had skills developed through years of experience. Keith Parrot believed that if the job was “going to be done, it was going to be done properly”. He also hoped that the village appraisal document was going to be “big and glossy”, and a ‘quality’ product (steering group meeting 10.2.94). Without doubt the final appraisal document was completed to a high standard though, given the ways in which the information was assembled by the steering group, itself the product of Keith Parrot’s own views, it is unlikely that the appraisal reflects the wider views of the community. For example as Table 7.9 illustrates, only 50 per cent of issues (16 from 32) which the wider community believed to be important were included in the questionnaire survey, whilst those issues that were perceived as important by the community (as measured by the level of community opinion voiced in the author’s survey) were given a cursory coverage in the household survey. For example, 11.7 per cent of respondents felt that community development was an important issue, although just one question on the subject was included in the household survey. On the other hand, 1.3 per cent of respondents considered footpaths to be an important issue but ten questions were included in the survey. In creating a

questionnaire survey specific to the concerns of the steering group, a further barrier to the participation of the wider community was created.

7.3.2.2 Stoke Albany.

The village appraisal in Stoke Albany began in February 1994 with a steering group of four people, two men and two women. By March 1995 the household questionnaire survey was completed, but the village appraisal document was only published in late 1997.

As section 7.2.1.2 explained, parish councillor Stephen Harding commenced the village appraisal as a result of a directive from the parish council. He was responsible for initiating the process on behalf of the parish council so that control stayed in the hands of the democratically elected members in the village. He admits that:

“it was felt there ought to be one member of the parish council on the steering group and I was the only one prepared to do it” (1995).

However, to ensure that the wider community was encouraged to participate in the village appraisal process, Stephen Harding recruited the parish vicar to be the chairman of the steering group.

“Well what happened was that I as a member of the parish council could get Frank Scuffham [the local vicar] to chair the steering group. So as a parish councillor I approached him and got his agreement to set up a steering group” (1995).

Through Stephen Harding using his influence as a parish councillor and in the knowledge that the appraisal had the full and active support of the parish council, Canon Frank Scuffham accepted the invitation. It then became Frank Scuffham’s responsibility to select further members to join the group.

Although the procedures for the recruitment of the steering group were very similar to those in Brixworth, the characteristics required of the steering group members in Stoke Albany differed markedly. Whilst the group intended to produce a village appraisal document, the impact of the village appraisal upon the community was more of a consideration when selecting the steering group members. Indeed, it was expressed by Stephen Harding that the

community in Stoke Albany is “what makes the village live and thrive” (steering group meeting 11.3.94). Therefore, the selection criteria for membership of the steering group were based upon an agenda which was intended to involve the whole community and gain high levels of participation in the village appraisal. Thus, rather than the steering group act as representatives of the wider community, the aim was to make the appraisal a truly community-led process: it was an opportunity to empower people, increase citizen involvement and the level of skills within the community. Table 7.10 below lists the members and the principal reason for their invitation to join the steering group.

Table 7.10 Stoke Albany steering group members and the reasons for their selective invitation.

Member	Reason for Invitation
Stephen Harding	Initiator/parish councillor
Peggy Hulme	Active, long term elderly member of the community
Christine Prince	Active member of the community / Women’s Institute member
Frank Scuffham	Parish vicar
Bob Austin*	A printer/editor
Gordon Headly*	An accountant
Mike Parish*	A computer expert

* Associate steering group members.

The decision to invite Christine Prince and Peggy Hulme to join the steering group was made because of the positions they held within the community. Whilst they would not be considered as typical community leaders with executive positions within the various organisations of which they were members, the two women have long been active participators in village organisations and local activities and for this reason commanded a great deal of respect from the wider community. In this sense, they provided important qualities for those producing the appraisal, lending credibility to the process in the eyes of the wider community.

Peggy Hulme was an active participant on the committee of the Village Hall and the Evergreens (an over 60’s club) and strongly believed in the spirit and sense of community and continuity found in a rural locality. This was reflected in her reason for wanting to undertake an appraisal.

“It will be nice in years to come. I think it will be lovely for future generations to have this book to read” (1994).

Her inclusion in the steering group was quite a simple procedure.

“Frank Scuffham came up one afternoon and asked if I’d mind being on the steering group. He told me who else would be on it, and I said yes”.

Peggy believed she was an asset to the group:

“because I’ve lived in the village so long and I know about the village and all that goes on... being an old villager”.

With Christine Prince the scenario was very similar. Although a busy housewife, she was committed to participation in many aspects of village life, being involved with the Women’s Institute, on the board of trustees of the community day care centre, and the organiser of the Stoke Feast festival (an annual event in the village). Christine has lived in Stoke Albany for 25 years and openly admits to being a “village person” (1994). This, she believes, is the reason for being invited to join the steering group by Frank Scuffham.

“Really because I know a lot of people in the village. I’m always doing things, going around houses, I like old people so I always chat to them. I think it’s mainly that I’ve been in the village for a long time, I know everybody and I’m a chatter, I chat to anybody”.

However, the participation of Peggy Hulme and Christine Prince could have been interpreted as ‘tokenism’ to lend legitimacy to the village appraisal and ensure that the community remained the focus of the village appraisal process. The two women had little significant involvement in the production of the village appraisal household questionnaire survey and could be considered merely as important props to what the steering group was doing rather than instigators of change.

Despite the importance of selecting steering group members who were perceived as ‘community’ people, the selection of the three associate members of the steering group (as listed in Table 7.10) reflected a hidden agenda in producing a village appraisal document. No member of the steering group had the business acumen or the skills required to produce a book about the village so the selection of Bob Austin, Mike Parish and Gordon Headly was a deliberate ploy to achieve the desired outcome.

The recruitment of the three associate members to the steering group was straightforward. Stephen Harding approached them in his official capacity as a parish councillor because of their particular skills and their perceived high social position in the community. They were all successful, local businessmen (a printer/editor, a careers officer, and an accountant) and, using their expertise where necessary, the steering group aimed to produce a village appraisal document that would be a popular, tangible product with which the wider community could identify (steering group meeting 11.03.94).

The effects of this 'hand-picked' steering group on the village appraisal in Stoke Albany and the participation of the wider community were twofold. The first was concerned with the village appraisal household questionnaire survey. A response rate of 97 percent to the questionnaire could be seen as a positive response by the community to the selection of questions on their behalf by the steering group, but it is more likely the effectiveness of selecting community minded people for the steering group (particularly Peggy and Christine), who were better placed to chase people for a response to the questionnaire survey because they were well known and trusted by the wider community.

The second effect concerned the delay in publishing the appraisal; although a village appraisal document was published (1997), it took a year longer than planned to produce (resulting in a village appraisal that took 2.5 years). By concentrating all their efforts on the selection of steering group members who would ensure the process of the village appraisal stimulated the participation of the wider community, the eventual completion of the village appraisal document or product was jeopardised. This can be defined as 'process participation' in the sense that the steering group in Stoke Albany placed a special emphasis on the intangible benefits to be achieved through the process of conducting the village appraisal. As chapter 8 will demonstrate, the intangible benefits of the village appraisal can be effective for the whole community and have been found to empower the individual, improve the awareness of the community to local issues and problems and thus develop the notion of active citizenship. Concentration on the process, however, does not necessarily eliminate the opportunity to produce a village appraisal document. The obstacle that delayed this outcome in Stoke Albany was the lack of leadership within the group. Despite the selection of associate

members to the steering group who already had well developed skills associated with the 'typical participator' (of the type briefly outlined in section 7.3.1), their participation was irregular and infrequent and had to be arranged around the pressures of their work. This was also true for Stephen Harding, who managed his own farm and would often miss meetings or arrive late. Consequently, much of the village appraisal was often left to the two women to undertake, despite the admission by Christine Prince that, rather than taking a pro-active approach to community development, "they liked being told what to do" (1994).

7.3.2.3 Dingley.

Tony Lucas, a parish councillor and active member of the community initiated the village appraisal in Dingley on February 5th 1994 with a public meeting attended by eight people. In April 1995, the process culminated with the publication of a document entitled 'The History of Dingley'. It had been written and produced by Tony Lucas with minimal help from the wider community. There was no indication that the parish council was either aware of, or in support of, the village appraisal being undertaken, although there is no evidence either suggesting the parish council were opposed to it.

The recruitment procedures of key members of the appraisal team in Dingley were different from those experienced in Stoke Albany or Brixworth, primarily because no steering group was formed! The format of the village appraisal and the decision to involve additional members of the wider community were determined entirely by Tony Lucas. Tony was adamant that there would be no formal mechanism such as a steering group to control the process since, in his view, this would stifle the entrepreneurial spirit needed to undertake the village appraisal. He also felt that there should not be a long-term agenda culminating in just one village appraisal document, rather a number of short-term projects on a variety of themes that would stimulate village interest⁴. These 'rules of participation' created a pattern of non-participation within Dingley. Less than 10 per cent of the village (15 people from a population of 196) actually participated in the village appraisal by helping with the collection of information and the research for the historical document; and from this number, just two

⁴ The 'History of Dingley' was the first in the series. Since the end of the research phase of this thesis, a second publication has been produced entitled 'The Wildlife of Dingley' also by Tony Lucas and again with minimal help from the wider community.

people participated on a regular basis. Even in the absence of a steering group or any real community participation, it is important to examine the procedures in Dingley if only to demonstrate the potential power afforded to the individual in the deregulated planning system and the impact that this might have on the participation of the wider community in matters associated with community development. In the sense that the 'appraisal' in Dingley was only a history of the village this might not be so important but, if the document includes proposals for the future development of the village, the involvement of one person in shaping every stage of the process has major implications for its role as a statement about the village by villagers. Perhaps what is more important in this respect is not so much the product but the relationship between its author, Tony Lucas, and the rest of the village community.

According to Tony Lucas he "gets involved in practically anything that's going on in the village" (1995). In discussions with the author he claimed he became aware of the village appraisal through material distributed by the RCC to Dingley Parish Council. Initially interested in undertaking the village appraisal because of the opportunity it offered to uncover the history of the village, Tony also believed that an established village appraisal that considered the past, the present and the future, as encouraged by Ian Nelson, the Northamptonshire VAO, was not appropriate to Dingley. According to Tony:

"Dingley is a funny village because there is not a lot that people need, there may be things they want, but they don't need them".

Thus, Tony arranged a village meeting to present his agenda for the village appraisal and determine the level of enthusiasm from the wider community. In the event, Keith Browne and Melissa Osbourne became helpers on the village appraisal in the absence of steering group participators, but only took part when Tony requested their help.

Keith Browne first became aware of the village appraisal through Tony. As he recalled:

"what normally happens in Dingley is Tony gets a bit of paper and sends it around to all the houses with a date and time of what's going on, and would we like to be involved" (1994).

As someone who had never been involved in any village activity, Keith Browne was interested to become involved in the village appraisal not only because of the skills he himself would gain, but also for the benefits that it would bring to the whole community:

“it was something about Dingley, rather than a band concert or Christmas party. I wanted to find out where Dingley came from, where it originated from and who was part of Dingley”.

However, his participation was brief. It was his understanding that the appraisal was poorly managed. Additionally he was given no guidance or direction as a novice participator. Consequently he became disillusioned and became involved in other activities outside Dingley. His view of the appraisal was that:

“it was a nice idea that didn’t grow. We had meetings, but I came away feeling that nothing had been done and I really didn’t know where I was going to go or whether the information that I was going to collect was going to be relevant”.

Furthermore, Keith was very critical about the procedures of participation, and the lack of any formal structure to the process. In fact, he blamed Tony and the overbearing control which he seemed to have over the community.

“Invariably Tony controls it if we have anything like this. He’s a very charismatic man, very endearing but if he says something it’s never wrong”.

Melissa Osbourne’s participation in the village appraisal was the opposite to that of Keith Browne. Whilst she also became aware of the project through information disseminated by Tony her participation in the process was conditional. Indeed, she stipulated that:

“I don’t mind being involved to a degree. I’ll dig through some stuff at the Records Office, I don’t mind doing that sort of thing. But I don’t want to be involved to produce a whole piece of appraisal or whatever” (Melissa Osbourne, 1994).

By participating in this manner, Melissa was doing something which ultimately gave her pleasure. However, by wanting to ensure that her own small contribution to the village appraisal process was satisfied, it highlights the problems which might arise if appraisal effectively become the sum of the various parts which a variety of people have written and no one, or group, claims responsibility for the whole thing. This is not to say that people who

contribute do not feel rewarded or satisfied, nor that their particular contribution will not provide anything of benefit to the community. As Melissa states, her participation was:

“just for the satisfaction of finding things. It has been self-satisfying” (ibid.).

However, after discovering a copy of an old map of the village in the County Records Office she was convinced that her participation was of benefit to the village. Indeed, the map could provide a focal point for the wider community, upon which it was hoped that a common interest could be shared.

“Hopefully we will want to have this map copied and photographed and we would then like to produce it if we can, and hopefully a lot of people in the village would want to have a copy of this. If that wasn’t there we wouldn’t have anything really to be able to go at that was going to be of interest to everybody” (ibid.).

This type of ‘conditional’ participation by Melissa Osbourne was a characteristic that was common throughout Dingley. According to Melissa, the wider community in Dingley would only participate:

“if there is anything going on that would benefit them. But they don’t really want to give a lot” (Melissa Osbourne, 1994).

Consequently, one man conducted the village appraisal. With what he considered as only the best interests of the village in mind, Tony Lucas prepared the village appraisal document based on his agenda of what he felt the village wanted to gain from participating in the exercise. However, the effects of this behaviour on the village appraisal and the participation of the wider community were twofold.

The first was that the dominance of Tony Lucas established barriers which prevented the participation of community members. By enforcing his own agenda for the village appraisal and his rules for other people’s participation, he excluded potential participants who either did not recognise or believe that his particular agenda would be of benefit to themselves or did not agree with his methods. Indeed, chapter 8 will argue that Tony’s agenda for the future of Dingley did not reflect the wishes of the wider community who felt that development in some form was necessary for the survival of the community.

The second effect in Dingley was the failure to produce a village appraisal document which is recognised as such outside the community. With no wider community participation nor the completion of a household questionnaire survey, the RCC and local planning authorities do not consider the process undertaken in Dingley to be a village appraisal and so it has been largely ignored. The document that was produced is just one individual's interpretation of life in Dingley during the last 100 years.

7.3.2.4 Summary

In summary, although the process of the village appraisal was clearly different in all three of the study villages, in each case it is evident that decisions about who participates in the steering group, and to what end, affects not only the participation of the wider community, but also the type of village appraisal that is achieved (and the relevance it has to the wider community). The selective participation of steering group members (or not in the case of Dingley), has resulted in three distinctive village appraisals. Indeed, in Brixworth, the wish to create a 'worthwhile' product led Keith Parrot to select members for the steering group who were business minded and capable of producing a prestigious enviable end product which of course would make money. In Stoke Albany, Stephen Harding expressed a wish to maximise community participation and thus selected members for a steering group who were community minded and would relate well to the majority population. The achievement of a 97 per cent response rate to the household questionnaire survey is evidence of this and also suggests that the group focused on the process of the appraisal and the intangible benefits which every participator could achieve. In Dingley, however, the participation of Tony Lucas limited the role played by the wider community because his sole agenda to write a history of the village did not require a steering group and no household questionnaire survey was undertaken. In these circumstances, it has been the view that such a document does not meet the requirements of parish council involvement and a household questionnaire survey which the Northamptonshire RCC and the district council deem as essential in any appraisal exercise, and so they have largely ignored it.

However, what is clear from all of these studies is that appraisals happen because individuals in the village, and ideally on the parish council, want them to happen. Nothing could be further from the truth than the image of a community united in its wish to complete an

appraisal and (metaphorically speaking) rolling up its sleeves until it was done. The reality is very different. The detailed evidence from the three case-study villages and the other written evidence suggests that most steering groups are constituted by three types of people:

1. one person who drives the process of initiating the appraisal and calling a first meeting;
2. others who are added, normally through friendship or membership of other village organisations and often for their particular skills and expertise;
3. those who are co-opted for particular reasons and cease to participate once their specific contribution is completed.

Table 7.11 A summary of participation procedures in the three study villages.

Criteria	Brixworth	Stoke Albany	Dingley
Was there a key figure who instigated the appraisal process in the village?	Yes	Yes	Yes
Did that person select members of the wider community to form a steering group?	Yes	Yes	No
How many people formed the steering group?	10	4	-
How many parish councillors were involved?	5	1	-
Was the emphasis on 'process' or 'product' participation?	Product	Process	-
Was a household questionnaire survey undertaken?	Yes	Yes	No
What was the response rate to the household questionnaire survey?	64%	97%	-

It follows, therefore, that the local elite responsible for the appraisal is largely a self-selective process, built around key groups of people known to each other, and for the particular skills they hold, and supported where necessary by others who are elected to the elite for short periods of time, ironically (as in Stoke Albany), to give credibility to the elite.

7.4 Participation by the wider community.

The final section of this chapter focuses on the participation of the wider community. Previous discussions have demonstrated that there are actors in the village appraisal process who have more control over the participation of the wider community than the community itself. The aim of this discussion is to investigate *if* this is truly the case and if barriers to participation do exist for the wider community despite a planning strategy which supposedly puts power back into the hands of the individual.

Three aspects of community participation in the village appraisal are investigated in detail to establish the extent to which the village appraisal process involves and/or represents the wider community. The three aspects are:

- questionnaire response rates;
- interests neglected by the questionnaire;
- participating elites and awareness of the village appraisal.

As a context to this the discussion will focus first on the views of the RCCs to determine if these key agencies believe the village appraisal is representative of the wider community. Particular emphasis is placed on the village appraisal household questionnaire survey, the usual mechanism through which the wider community is provided with an opportunity to participate.

7.4.1 The view of the Rural Community Council.

The author's survey of the RCCs nationally revealed what their opinions were of the representative nature of the village appraisal and the household questionnaire survey. Only 11 of those RCCs which responded to the survey (from 29 in total) felt that the village appraisal was representative of the whole community, though the reasons they gave were varied. In two RCCs the conditions under which the village appraisal is initiated were deemed to be critical to its representative nature. Indeed, in Kent, the field officer suggested that in theory the appraisal should be representative, but that it does:

“depend on how it's planned, what issues it addresses and how it is distributed and collected” (1995).

The Patchwork Community Development Officer in Suffolk expressed a similar view, that the village appraisal is representative but only if it is:

“handled from the very beginning in a way which will encourage everyone to participate. From the ones undertaken this seems to be true except for one which was solely overseen by the parish council and not by a cross section of the community” (1995).

Both of these RCCs, however, did admit that other actors in the village appraisal process have the power to control the initiative, exclude the wider community and prevent full community participation.

Of the remaining nine RCCs, the village appraisal was considered to be representative of the community though this view was based on the belief that “all persons in the village have the opportunity to answer the questionnaire” (Avon RCC, 1995) as “each household receives a copy” (Wiltshire RCC, 1995). In Oxfordshire, a county with a high level of village appraisal production, it was believed to be representative because “those who do not answer a survey often make their views heard in other ways” (1995). Nevertheless, this clearly raises major questions on the one hand about the balance between those responding to a survey and those articulating their views (free of specific questions) in other arenas, and on the other about how one summarises such views in a policy statement. Indeed, it might be argued that such a process produces a less representative view of local opinion.

Many RCCs take the view expressed by Leicester RCC that “you can not force people to participate” (1995), whether as an active member of a steering group or in completing a questionnaire survey. Nevertheless, the response rate gained in the household questionnaire survey is interpreted as a direct manifestation of people’s own choice and the village appraisal is deemed to be offering an equal opportunity to participate to all members of the community.

18 of the RCCs considered that the village appraisal is not representative of the wider community and would take issue with Leicestershire RCC. Rather they suggest that the opportunity to participate is not equal for all members of the community, and the participation of the ‘elite’ members of the community dominates. As the Community Development Officer in Humberside stated:

“ the village appraisal tends to involve the more articulate and those with some established power” (1995).

David Francis, a Community Development Worker in Northumberland, also believed this to be the case. He suggested that:

Table 7.12 Village appraisal response rates and total populations in those villages with completed appraisals in Northamptonshire.

Village	Population 1991	No. of respondents	Response Rate %	Village	Population 1991	No. of respondents	Response Rate %
Aldwincle	301	120	40	Mears Ashby	408	285	70
Arthingworth	220	176	80	Middleton	316	252	80
Ashley	203	196	96.8	Moulton	3051	1922	63
Badby	664	557	84	Naseby	449	-	-
Barnwell	370	-	-	Nassington	654	483	74
Benefield	341	-	-	Nether Heyford	1678	-	-
Bozeat	1814	870	48	Newnham	520	-	-
Braybrooke	404	274	68	Orlingbury	331	324	98
Braunston	1615	1049	65	Overstone	676	507	75
Brington*	458	389	85	Pattishall*	1384	1038	75
Brixworth	4000	2560	64	Pilton*	111	92	83
Bulwick	146	109	75	Polebrook	363	-	-
Byfield	1205	397	33	Ravensthorpe	611	452	74
Charwelton	190	146	77	Ringstead	1404	210	15
Church/Chapel Brampton	629	194	31	Roade	2176	696	32
Cold Ashby	267	264	99	Sibertoft	306	244	80
Cransley	257	231	90	Silverstone	1612	-	-
Crick	1308	-	-	Spratton	1117	-	-
Croughton	1107	442	40	Sudborough	131	-	-
Earls Barton	4810	1443	30	Sulgrave	357	339	95
East Farndon	227	-	-	Stoke Albany	282	269	95
Easton-on-the-Hill	1024	819	80	Thorpe Mandeville	176	-	-
Eydon	401			Titchmarsh	503	-	-
Flore	1101	-	-	Warmington	726	377	52
Great Addington	303	212	70	West Haddon	894	-	-

Great Houghton	508	406	80	Weston-by Welland	139	130	94
Hackleton*	1797	1329	74	Whilton	259	168	65
Hargrave	232	-	-	Whittlebury	496	357	72
Hartwell	1762	1321	75	Wilbarston	787	708	90
Hellidon	173	-	-	Woodford	1207	663	55
Hemington*	174	139	80	Woodford Halse	1952	-	-
Islip	721	-	-	Woodnewton	404	0	0
Kings Sutton	2091	1442	69	Wootton	9095	1273	14
Kings Cliffe	928	-	-	Yardley Hastings	637	350	55
Little Houghton	338	334	99	Yarwell	246	-	-

***Indicates that the village appraisal was conducted by the Parish.**

- information was unknown.

“participants tend to be the people active already in the community. They determine the issues (usually pretty comprehensively) and formulate the questions on a survey” (Northumberland RCC, 1995).

Moreover, it is felt in Northamptonshire that getting “access to the disaffected is difficult because of their belief that it is nothing to do with them” (Northamptonshire ACRE, 1995). Even so, as Warwickshire’s Community Development Field Officer is at haste to point out:

“of course it is not representative because not everyone responds to it. But it is the best we will get” (1995).

These views of the RCC officers who support and enable rural localities to undertake community development initiatives differ somewhat from those expressed by ACRE which has argued that, by using the “simple and effective survey technique” as the foundation for the village appraisal process, “everybody’s views can be collected and taken into account” (ACRE, 1991 (a): 1). Of course it could be argued that by selling the questionnaire as a ‘simple and effective survey technique’, particularly when supported by the dedicated software produced by ACRE, it is seen as an important means of encouraging local communities to gather the views of its inhabitants. But what it has also done, despite the opinions of individual RCCs, is to propagate the notion that high response rates in some way or other become the way by which participation is measured and defined.

7.4.2 The community view.

7.4.2.1 Questionnaire response rates.

According to the evidence collected in the author’s survey over 23,000 people have participated in the household questionnaire surveys associated with village appraisals in Northamptonshire in the past 25 years, thus indicating the opportunity that appraisal activity offers to the community to provide grass roots views and opinions (Table 7.12). Such a conclusion however, needs to be qualified in a number of ways. First it is evident that there are wide variations not just in the numbers of respondents in individual villages (from 92 in Pilton to 1,443 in Earls Barton) or in the percentage response rates (14 per cent in Wootton, to 99 per cent in Little Houghton and Cold Ashby) but also in the fact that 22 of the appraisals (31 per cent) provided no information at all on numbers of completed surveys and, therefore, on response rates. It is unlikely, too, that all questionnaires give totally usable responses on

all questions, though this is rarely raised in any analysis. Second, the pattern of responses appears to be related to the size of the village. The application of the Spearman Rank correlation test to those 48 villages with information on response rates reveals a correlation co-efficient of - 0.6 ($p < 0.01$) indicating a statistically significant relationship between response rates and village size, whereby the higher rates are in those localities that have a small population and vice versa. This reflects the findings of the research by Sadler *et al* which found that in five villages in Scotland response rates to the village appraisal questionnaire survey were “closely related to the size of the village” (1995: 38) and that an inverse relationship existed between response rates and population size within the villages (see Table 7.13).

Table 7.13 Results of research conducted in Scotland on the relationship between population size and village appraisal response rates (Sadler *et al*, (1995)).

Area Studied	Population	Response Rate %
Tomintoul	500	76
Drummuir	300	70
Cove and Kilcreggan	1,600	60
Comrie	1,500	55
Cree Valley	4,000	20
Rosneath and Clynder	1,200	?

Somewhat surprisingly, on the basis of this research, Sadler *et al* concluded that only those villages which fit within the ‘optimal size’ rule, with a population of between 200 and 2,000 people, should be encouraged to undertake the village appraisal since beyond this range (particularly the higher value) response rates fall off dramatically. With the knowledge that Ian Nelson, the Northamptonshire VAO, adopts a similar strategy (as explained in chapter 6 (section 6.4.2)) it is interesting to note that, if this was strictly adhered to in Northamptonshire, then 12 villages would not have undertaken village appraisals and 8,401 people within these villages would not have been given the opportunity to participate (see Table 7.14).

Additionally, the available data indicates that villages with populations or household numbers beyond the ‘optimal size’ still had high levels of participation, and it was only in Wootton, now almost a suburb of Northampton, that the response rate fell below 30 per cent. Indeed, in

the villages below 200 population the response rate was consistently above 75 per cent and higher than the two smallest villages in the Scottish sample.

Table 7.14 The villages outside of the 'optimal size rule' in Northamptonshire.

Village	Population	Response Rate (%)	No. of actual participants
Wootton	9095	14	1273
Earls Barton	4810	30	1443
Brixworth	4000	64	2560
Moulton	3051	63	1922
Roade	2176	32	696
Charwelton	190	77	146
Thorpe Mandeville	176	-	-
Hemington	174	80	139
Hellidon	173	-	-
Weston-by-Welland	139	94	130
Sudborough	131	-	-
Pilton	111	83	92

Clearly on the basis of this evidence there is little to support the view that appraisal activity should be limited to that size band of villages where the highest return rates can be in some way guaranteed. In one sense, it is not surprising that response rates should be higher in the smaller villages, since it is here that the process is much easier to manage, but the argument does miss three further points of some importance. First, although the larger villages show the lower rates, they also have the highest number of responses. Sampling errors are calculated on numbers, not percentages, so a return of 1273 as in Wootton, albeit on a response rate of 14 per cent, will have a small sampling error associated with it so long as the returns are a true representative sample of the village. This leads on to the second point. It is rare for any appraisal to talk in detail about the survey methods, particularly the patterns of response from individual streets or areas of the village – the council estate, the new private development, the sheltered accommodation for example. This does become an important issue where low response rates are apparent but rarely does an appraisal discuss this and never in the Northamptonshire examples studied. It is here, therefore, that bias may be introduced into the analysis, particularly if (as in larger villages) certain groups or areas become disaffected or disinterested in an appraisal which they see as marginal to their lives. The third qualification concerns the use of response rates as a measure of the quality and value of the

questionnaire survey and the statistical analysis applied after its completion. The usual process for completion is to deliver one questionnaire to each household and then to arrange its collection, normally by a return visit or arranging a collection point (such as a shop) somewhere in the village. The questionnaire is filled in by the 'household', though as Table 7.12 indicated, the usual calculation of response rates is in terms of population – calculated by adding the members of each household and expressing this as a percentage of the (estimated) total population. Built into this system are two assumptions: that the 'household' and all its members complete the survey and that the survey has 'target' questions to the range of people who can constitute a household. Exactly how the questionnaires are dealt with by the household has rarely been considered in studies of village appraisals, and yet figures are given and response rates published assuming that all members of a household have been consulted and have participated. Of course, where single person households have responded, this will be true but in a household constituting, say, two adult parents and three children (aged 16, 12 and eight) it is much less likely. In order to explore evidence of non-representation, a survey was carried out by the author of the young people living in Brixworth, one of the case-study villages.

7.4.2.2 Neglected interests of the youth in Brixworth.

Nationally, the RCCs have expressed concern about the lack of representation offered to the youth (11 to 18 year olds) through the village appraisal household questionnaire survey. It was acknowledged by Buckinghamshire's Rural Officer that the youth were often only included in the appraisal survey "through their parents, which is not fully representative" (1995). However, the only solution in these circumstances is to:

"actively target young people...by using 'neutral' premises and language" (Humberside RCC, 1995), or "have separate youth surveys for the seven year olds upwards" (Kent RCC, 1995).

Nevertheless, despite the fact that the problem is recognised by some RCCs and rural communities, others react as though the youth do not exist. Through a detailed investigation of the participation of the youth in the village appraisal in Brixworth, it was found that little attempt was made to facilitate their inclusion in rural issues through the household questionnaire survey. The village appraisal survey distributed in Brixworth contained three

sections that were concerned with 1) the household (which one member of the family had to complete), 2) personal views and opinions, 3) additional written answers. In total, there were 44 questions in the survey. Table 7.15 shows the main subjects covered in the survey and the number of questions that were asked.

From the range of questions that were asked through the survey, it could be argued that the youth in Brixworth were given ample opportunity to participate. However, the omission of any questions that were specifically related to the youth illustrates that the steering group members were biased towards the issues that affected the adult population in the village rather than the youth. The matter of youth representation was discussed during the steering group meeting of 25th May 1994. The group debated the merits of an 11-year-old 'child' and tried to ascertain the ability of people that age to think for themselves and comprehend the questions. The reaction was mixed, and the group was divided on whether the youth should be given the opportunity to participate. Eventually Jane Neill persuaded the group not to include any specific questions for the youth, since she did not see the importance of including the future generation of the village in this community project. Ironically, the steering group as a whole appeared to recognise the needs and anxieties of the youth in Brixworth and the clear frustration they felt at living in a rural society which failed to include them. Despite these concerns and the fact that the village had become a place that was experiencing vandalism, youth gangs, drugs and crime, specific questions targeting the youth were excluded.

To examine in more detail the issues of non-participation of the youth through the household questionnaire survey and the village appraisal process in Brixworth, a questionnaire survey was undertaken by the author. The survey was circulated to Moulton Comprehensive School, which serves the catchment area of Brixworth. It was distributed after the village appraisal household questionnaire survey had been undertaken. 113 responses were gained from those pupils aged 11 to 18 who lived in Brixworth.

Table 7.15 The main subjects covered in the Brixworth village appraisal.

Subject	Number of questions asked
Local Countryside & Environment	10
Sport, Social & Entertainment	5
Employment	4
Transport & Highways	4
Emergency, Environment & other Services	3
General	3
Retail Services & other Facilities	3
Health & Social Services	2
Household	2
Information & Communication	2
People	2
Education	1
Housing	1

The author's survey demonstrated that over 70 per cent of the youth in Brixworth had not participated in the household survey of the village appraisal whether to fill in particular sections or to be consulted on their views, and, furthermore, did not understand the concept of the village appraisal. When compared to the level of general participation undertaken by the youth in other village organisations, the high level of non-participation in the village appraisal was surprising, especially since it is often argued that participation in one village activity increases the awareness of additional opportunities to participate (Kearns, 1992; Malpass, 1994). 74 per cent of the respondents to the author's survey participated in village clubs and organisations (see Table 7.16 below) and over 30 per cent attended a youth centre on a regular basis in the village.

On this evidence alone it could be argued that the young people of Brixworth would want to be involved in the village appraisal. Indeed, if David Francis of Northumberland RCC (1995) is correct in his belief that "the young people who are not involved in organised youth activities are seldom represented" then the youth in Brixworth, because of their levels of involvement should be experiencing a high level of representation. However, 55 per cent of the young respondents were frustrated by the lack of opportunity to participate in the village appraisal. They believed that they were being under-represented within the village. Table

7.17 provides an indication of the issues that were found to be important to the youth in the village.

Table 7.16 Organisation membership amongst the youth in Brixworth.

Organisation	Membership	Organisation	Membership
Football	23	Judo	2
Cricket	12	Gym	2
Trampolining	4	Choir	2
Scouts	4	Tennis	2
Rugby	4	Orchestra	2
Radio-Controlled Cars	4	Badminton	2
Mountain Movers (a Christian group)	3	St.John's Ambulance	2
Swimming	3	Netball	1
Athletics	3	Church	1
Girls Brigade	3	Keep fit	1
Sailing Club	3	Pony Club	1

Table 7.17 Issues of importance to the youth of Brixworth.

Issue	% of youth concerned
Development of the village	35.0
Entertainment for the youth	26.4
Facilities in the village	22.6
Litter	7.5
Bad publicity about the youth	3.7
Crime	3.7

The results of the author's survey can be compared to the actual village appraisal household survey in Brixworth. By calculating the numbers of young people from the completed questionnaires, it could be expected that 234 young people aged between 11 and 16 answered the questionnaire survey (64 per cent of all 11-16 year olds in Brixworth). This information, however, appears to contradict that which was found through this research project. The author's survey of Brixworth school children attending Moulton School found that only 34 people from 113 responses in this age group were aware of the village appraisal and understood the concept of the appraisal process. However, if the information about participation in the village appraisal was correct, then it would be expected that at least 64 per

cent of the respondents to the author's survey should have been aware of the village appraisal (70 people). The difference between the two sets of figures can be explained by the suggestion that the village appraisal may have been completed on behalf of the young person by the head of household, parent or guardian, in which case, although the village appraisal registered that young people were responding, their participation may be more apparent than real. Therefore, not only did the steering group actively exclude the youth in Brixworth from the village appraisal, but so it would appear did the person(s) who completed the household questionnaire survey: the youth would appear to be at the bottom of a power hierarchy of actors in the village appraisal process.

7.4.2.3 The participating elite and awareness of the village appraisal.

The evidence discussed in chapter 3 suggested that, in general, a social and educational elite is increasingly dominating participation in community-based activities. Since these represent the characteristic features of many newcomer households to the countryside (particularly in lowland England), it would follow that participation would tend to be greater for these groups rather than amongst those who work out of the village. It might also be argued, therefore, that notions of participation and awareness are highly concentrated amongst particular groups in villages and that, with regard to the village appraisal, if you are not a participant in other village organisations you are less likely to know about it or be involved in its production.

It follows, therefore, that of particular interest to the investigation was the effect that the variables of journey to work and length of residency had on the opportunity for individuals to become active citizens and to participate in village activities. These two variables have been considered in research projects by authors such as Rees (1950), Crichton (1964), Pahl (1965), Goldsmith and Saunders (1976), Newby (1979) and more recently Cloke and Thrift (1990), Thomas and Finch (1990), Lynn and Smith (1991), Voluntary Action Research (1991) and Murdoch and Marsden (1994) and have been found to be related to the participation of an individual in village organisations. The variables are used as social indicators in order to determine the characteristics of a particular village and the individuals that live there. For example, newcomers or recent migrants to a rural community are seen to be part of a new middle class elite living a certain kind of lifestyle, enabled by education and affluence (Cloke

and Thrift, 1990; Murdoch and Marsden, 1994). Crichton, Newby and Lynn and Smith suggested that newcomers to the village quickly take control of village organisations, whilst their participation will subsequently dominate village activities and replace the importance of others such as the local vicar, squire or Women's Institute. In contrast, Goldsmith and Saunders (1976) found that the longer term residents were the principal participants in the community and that such people were the rural elite.

The importance of the journey to work upon an individual's participation was also seen to be mixed. Pahl suggested that those people who commuted to London from the village of 'Dormersdell' in Hertfordshire were as likely to participate in village organisations as those who worked in the next town. Lynn and Smith produced similar findings in their correlation of public participation in village organisations with the actual time spent travelling to work. On the other hand, Crichton noted that in the village of Mortimer there was a 50 per cent chance that the journey to work affected the decision to participate in a village organisation. In addition, Crichton also found that journey to work affected the level of leadership that was assumed within the organisation in the sense that those travelling long distances were less likely to take on key roles.

With such conflicting evidence through the literature, it is useful to investigate the effects of journey to work and residency length to understand who participates in village organisations in Northamptonshire and how this influences participation in the village appraisal.

The data presented in Table 7.18 are based upon a survey of the wider community in the three study villages of Brixworth, Stoke Albany and Dingley conducted by the author in 1995 and indicate that participation in village organisations (as measured by membership) tends to be greater amongst those who have lived in the village for over ten years. All three villages follow this general trend, though in Brixworth there is a higher percentage of non-participants than participants in all categories of length of residence.

Table 7.18 The relationship between the residency length of respondents in the three study villages and their participation in village organisations⁵.

Residency Length (Years)	Brixworth (%)		Stoke Albany (%)		Dingley (%)	
	P	NP	P	NP	P	NP
Under 2	0.0	100.0	33.3	66.7	25.0	75.0
2 - 5	18.5	81.5	0.0	100.0	33.3	66.7
5 - 10	29.5	70.5	25.0	75.0	0.0	100.0
10 - 20	34.5	65.5	62.5	37.5	70.0	30.0
20 +	42.5	57.5	80.0	20.0	85.7	14.3

(P=Participator, NP=Non Participator)

A similar pattern is evident in the membership of the 'steering groups' of the village appraisals in each village and, as Table 7.19 shows, 94 per cent (16 from 17) have been a resident in the village for over ten years; 35 per cent of this total have been a resident for over 20 years. The one exception is Keith Browne of Dingley who had lived in the village just four years, though, as section 7.3.2.3 demonstrated Keith was a non-participator (in the wider real of village activities) and his participation in the village appraisal was very brief.

Table 7.19 The residency length of the steering group members in the three study villages in Northamptonshire.

Residency Length (Years)	Brixworth	Stoke Albany	Dingley
Under 2	0	0	0
2 - 5	0	0	1
5 - 10	0	0	0
10 - 20	7	3	2
20 +	3	4	0
Total	10	7	3

The data in Table 7.20 shows that journey to work also affects the decision to participate in village organisations across the three study villages.

⁵Table 7.18 adopts the classification system used by The Volunteer Centre in order to ascertain the relationship between residency length and participation rates within village organisations (Lynn and Smith, 1991).

Table 7.20 The relationship between journey to work and membership of village organisations.

Journey to Work (Miles)	Brixworth (%)		Stoke Albany (%)		Dingley (%)	
	P	NP	P	NP	N	NP
Under 2	39.4	60.6	33.3	66.7	25.0	75.0
2 - 10	24.5	75.5	50.0	50.0	27.2	72.8
10 - 20	33.3	66.7	75.0	25.0	33.3	66.7
20 +	9.0	91.0	28.5	71.5	33.3	66.7
Unemp/Redundant/Retired/Housewife	38.7	61.3	100.0	0.0	81.8	18.2

(P=Participant, NP=Non Participant)

In general terms those travelling greater distances have lower levels of participation than those making shorter journeys, particularly those with return journeys of over 40 miles. Even so the pattern is by no means clear since in Dingley the lowest rates of participation are amongst those making the shortest journey to work whilst in Stoke Albany the highest participation rates are amongst those travelling between 10 and 20 miles in a single journey. It appears from this evidence that journey to work is a weak indicator, suggesting that people's commitment to an organisation, which clearly represents a strong interest on their part, overrides other factors such as their work journeys. On the other hand, what is clear in all the villages is that those with no journey to make (the unemployed, retired or housewives) show the highest participation rates, though in Brixworth this is still well under half the respondents.

This pattern is also reflected in membership of the village appraisal steering group (Table 7.21), except in so far as the 'non-employed' element shows a strong representation in all villages, as do the locally employed members in Brixworth and Stoke Albany.

The evidence illustrates that there is no clear pattern between journey to work and participation. As such, it cannot be considered to alter the participation rates of an individual. Length of residence, however, does appear to affect the decision to participate or not in village activities. The data show that longer-term residents of the three villages were more likely to participate in a village organisation and this was confirmed through the characteristics of the steering group members. In other words participation is, in general

terms, higher amongst newcomers than others but particularly so amongst those newcomers who arrived up to 10 years ago and have shown intention to stay. Since these newcomers are generally characterised by educated, professional and younger households, they appear to have ousted other older, local people from village organisations and key decision making posts, whilst those other professional households who have moved to the village in the past year or so appear to have made little impact, either waiting their time to become involved or seeing themselves as short term residents and so not bothering to become involved. Either way, therefore, it could be argued that participation in village organisations, participation in the appraisal and awareness of the appraisal are closely linked, such that most in the village have little involvement in any of them and a few in the village have involvement in all.

Table 7.21 The journey to work made by the steering group members in the three study villages in Northamptonshire.

Journey to Work (Miles)	Brixworth	Stoke Albany	Dingley
Under 2	2	2	0
2 - 10	2	0	0
10 - 20	0	0	1
20+	2	0	1
Retired/Housewife*	4	2	1
Total	10	4	3

*Please note that the steering group members were known not to be redundant or unemployed.

One way of looking at participation is to examine the extent to which an awareness of the appraisal, and involvement in its production, might be related to an individual's membership of other organisations within the village. The argument here, therefore, is that since appraisals tend to be multi-faceted activities drawing on a range of individuals and experiences, this will be reflected by networks of people and organisation within the village. The fact that the previous section identified steering groups (broadly) characterised by longer-established villagers, many of whom spent most of their current life within the village, would tend to support this argument. As part of this study, the author gathered information on membership of organisations from a sample of residents in each of the villages and their 'awareness' of the appraisal being conducted in the village. In this case the awareness was measured simply by whether the individual knew of the appraisal. The findings are presented in Table 7.22 and show, in broad terms, that awareness of the appraisal increases with the level of participation (membership) in village organisations. Indeed, in Brixworth further

analysis of the data in terms of actual organisations involved, revealed that these coincided in several instances with those organisations to which members of the steering group belonged; for example the Wives' Guild, the Flower Guild, the Women's Institute, the History Society, the Brixworth Bugle (local newspaper), the Playgroup and the Wednesday Club (for the over 60s). The importance of this is not just to widen awareness of the appraisal but also to draw other people (societies) into its production. According to Mandy Dawkins (steering group member):

“the involvement of societies in the appraisal will hopefully widen the interest groups and spread the word around” (1994).

A similar overall pattern was evident in Stoke Albany, though in contrast both to Brixworth and Dingley, the awareness of the appraisal for non-members of village organisations was considerably higher: indeed, there was a higher proportion of non-members who knew about the appraisal than those who did not know.

Table 7.22 The relationship between participation in village organisations and the awareness of the village appraisal.

Membership	Brixworth (%)		Stoke Albany (%)		Dingley (%)	
	A	NA	A	NA	A	NA
Non-member	13.0	87.0	60.0	40.0	16.7	82.3
Membership of one organisation	31.5	68.5	66.7	33.3	57.0	43.0
Membership of more than one organisation	87.0	13.0	75.0	25.0	44.5	55.5

(A=Aware, NA=Not aware)

In Dingley however, the pattern is much more confused. In common with Brixworth, awareness of the appraisal is lowest amongst those who are non-members of village organisations, though for those that belong to one or more than one organisation awareness and non-awareness are evenly split. Tony Lucas, the organiser and author of the Dingley 'appraisal' is a member of four organisations in the village though, given the unusual way in which he tends to operate and in which the few individuals were co-opted onto the production team, it is not surprising that no clear pattern of awareness emerges from those who did belong to village organisations. Indeed, even amongst those organisations to which Tony

Lucas did belong there were as many as did know about his 'appraisal' document as those who did not.

7.6 Conclusion.

It is evident from this analysis of the process of participation in the village appraisal at the grass roots in rural Northamptonshire that it is an activity in which the minority elite is provided with the majority of opportunities to participate. Despite the evidence which would suggest high numbers of responses to household questionnaire surveys or high response rates, it is clear that considerable barriers exist in reality which prevent the participation of the average citizen, excluding them from, or misrepresenting them in the decision making process. Statisticians may argue that high levels of returns to a survey may make questionnaire responses statistically representative of the community in which it was conducted, but it is clear from this study that no evidence exists to reveal possible geographical bias in the patterns of responses in villages with lower response rates (usually the bigger ones) whilst the structure and organisation of the questionnaire remains very much the property of the steering group – to manipulate in whatever way they wish. Additionally, whilst the surveys may provide a reasonably accurate statistical profile of the population (such as the age characteristics of households, migration details, and work place patterns) the likelihood that they reflect the views and opinions of each member of the household is extremely low. Indeed, a detailed survey of the 'youth' of Brixworth revealed that this group was largely excluded from the village appraisal process and the same may apply to others who for one reason or another saw no need to respond (for example the elderly).

The relationship between the parish council and the community it represents remains very ambivalent, suggesting that the 'road to governance' is littered with pitfalls and problems. Indeed, one of the major concerns of this study is the evidence that 80 parish councils would not be prepared to undertake an appraisal in the future. Of course, some councils may be persuaded to do so, or an appraisal could be done without their support or approval, though both avenues imply major problems of co-operation and legitimacy. What is a particular concern are the reasons put forward for non co-operation (Table 7.6) since these tend to reflect the parish councils' views of its residents rather than what the residents

themselves felt. Clearly there is a feeling of unease about the appraisal process since, if it is completed to the 'Nelson' model, it provides a statement about the future and this may imply development or change. Since most newcomers have moved to villages, in particular the smaller ones, because they are unlikely to change or grow, then citing 'apathy', 'disinterest' or 'not needed', are titles of convenience to avoid undertaking an appraisal at all and with it the risks of airing other views about the future of the village. Of those parish councils that have been involved in village appraisal production most have taken the partnership route, though, as the study demonstrates, this raises major issues about the degree of control held either by the parish council or the steering group. Not only does this put a particular pressure on those parish councillors on the steering group and the extent to which they are representatives or mouth pieces (only stating views which represent parish council policy) for the council, but it also raises questions about the legitimacy of the village appraisal process in the eyes of those district councils who only consider village appraisals undertaken by the parish council as being statutory. Quite how this squares with the evidence of this study is more difficult to argue, not only in the largest village of Brixworth, but also in the smallest, Dingley. What is evident in Brixworth, is the emergence of an elite who are in the process of becoming the new power-brokers of rural society, controlling the decision making in a paternalistic kind of way on behalf of the rest. This is clear not just in those who became members of the steering group but the ways in which they were selected and the narrow geographical area as well as social group they represent. Even in Dingley, the smallest of the three villages in the author's detailed survey and, therefore, where one might expect the community to be highly involved in the appraisal process, it has been hi-jacked through the charismatic personality of one person. Since this appraisal has become very much a history of the village the 'let him get on with it attitude' might seem acceptable, though if the appraisal had been more a statement of village policy then it raises major concerns about representativeness and the whole business of governance. Indeed, one of the key areas concerning the whole discussion of the village appraisal is the relationship between the publication of the appraisal and the outcomes of it, for if the appraisal is the product of the activities of an elite then the outcomes will also reflect these interests and the elite will have become the true power brokers of rural society. It is this theme which will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter eight

The village appraisal: an evaluation of outcomes

8.1 Introduction.

In essence, the village appraisal is a statement by the community and about the community at a particular point in time, though as this study has shown exactly what form this statement takes and who says it (and why) is a much more complex issue.

Clearly this debate about the precise nature of the village appraisal raises important questions, not just in terms of its content and ambitions but also, by extension, about how its outcomes can be evaluated. Obviously all appraisals are conducted for a reason (or reasons) and these can be directly related to the outcomes. Thus, for some, the appraisal is an opportunity to produce a village or parish history to mark a particular event (such as the millennium) (Fish and Phillips, 1999), in which case the outcome is a product produced to an agreed standard and deadline and, possibly, to provide a profit which can be fed back into the community. In other situations the appraisal may give an opportunity for the village to produce a policy statement for its future development, drawing upon information taken from a wide range of sources, including a questionnaire survey of the local population, and incorporating the results into a 'business plan', often to the structures proposed by outside funding organisations such as the Countryside Agency or the European Union. In such cases, the outcomes may have been formulated in terms of targets or a wish list of concrete proposals (for low cost housing, for example) which could then be evaluated in terms of whether they were achieved. It could also be that the appraisal process is both a reason for, and an outcome of, such locality based activities. In other words the intangible aspects of village appraisal production, such as individual and community confidence, participation and involvement are seen as being as important as the product.

It is the purpose of this chapter to consider these 'product and process' outcomes in the light of the research conducted both in Northamptonshire and elsewhere, but there is

another 'level' at which the outcomes of village appraisal activity need to be evaluated and that concerns what has been described as the shift from government to governance. As has been outlined in chapter 1, governance is a term adopted largely by academics to label a series of broad changes in state structures and the processes of government in the United Kingdom. It refers to a change in the ways in which the population is governed, or as Rhodes explains:

"governance signifies a change in the meaning of government, referring to a new process of governing; or a changed condition of ordered rule; or the new method by which society is ruled" (1996: 1-2, original emphasis).

Alternatively, according to Murdoch and Abram, governance is:

"a shift from state sponsorship of economic and social programmes and projects, to the delivery of these through partnership arrangements which usually involve both government and non-government organisations" (1998: 41).

Through the shift to local governance, the allocation and delivery of essential resources have been decentralised, and alliances and partnerships between external agencies, voluntary organisations and local people have been promoted as forms of 'government at a distance'. As a result, networks have become an increasingly prominent part of governmental structures, and public participation has been employed in order to satisfy a perceived 'public interest' and provide greater power to people at the 'grass roots' level in the decision making process. Through the provision of a new 'partnership role' and increased opportunities for participation in issues of local concern, 'active' citizens are encouraged to advise agencies and organisations of their aspirations for the future. Indeed, rural society, which according to the previous Conservative government's 'White Paper' on rural areas was described as being made up of many small, tightly knit communities with self reliant populations (DoE/MAFF, 1995), was considered the most effective place for this flexible form of government to be introduced, and rural citizens, who, described as being quite used to providing for themselves after years of neglect by planning agencies, have emerged as key actors in the shift to governance. As Murdoch and Abram suggest, rural citizens are the new "partners of government" (1998: 41). Of course, the emerging relationships between local communities and the structures of local and national

government, which lie at the heart of governance, also resonate with the philosophy of realism, which provides the methodological underpinning for this study. In other words, the complex events and phenomena, which comprise the social world, are transformed by social actors whose actions have causal properties. In this respect, they become the 'objects of analysis' and help us to structure scientific knowledge. More specifically there is the process of rational abstraction which allows us to isolate the components and relations which are necessary for the object to exist from those which are contingent and frame a particular temporal and geographical manifestation. Put into the language of governance as it applies to the village appraisal, what we are able to observe and evaluate are the relationships between, on the one hand, the necessary structures which have brought the village appraisal to the point where it now has some importance as a means of providing information locally which can shape the resource allocation process, and, on the other, communities of appraisal groups with their own distinctive structures and agendas distributed throughout rural England.

Returning to the governance thesis, researchers now have begun to investigate this more closely and to consider whether the shift both of responsibility and power has really taken place in the ways suggested, particularly with regard to the relationships between local communities and the statutory structures of local government. Indeed, there is evidence to suggest that, rather than adopting a strategy of planning by opportunism as suggested by Cloke over a decade ago (Cloke, 1988), many local authorities have retained significant control over the planning process, whilst central government still manages the allocation of key resources to those agencies and organisations responsible for co-operating with locality based groups (Hogwood, 1997; Murdoch and Abram, 1998; Goodwin, 1998). In other words the shift to governance is more apparent than real.

Despite these qualifications, the concept of governance is an important one to pursue in the context of appraisal activity and, indeed, it seems likely to remain on the political agenda for some time. In a recent discussion paper which will form the basis of the Labour government's proposed 'White Paper' on the countryside (DETR, 1999), the themes of 'participation', 'vibrant, active community organisations' (p.5), 'decentralised decision-

making' and 'partnerships between the public, private and voluntary sectors' (p.6) dominate the agenda. Therefore, it seems appropriate to evaluate the outcomes of village appraisal activity in terms of three key questions.

- How successful have the key actors been in establishing partnerships between private and public organisations and local people through the village appraisal process? In examining this question, three issues are raised. The first considers the role of the Rural Community Councils and, in particular, those officers who have been charged with a duty to encourage and deliver village appraisals. Specifically, it raises the more complex argument whereby the RCCs can be seen as a facilitator for enhancing the role of local communities in the new partnership arrangements which are at the heart of local governance, yet can also be seen as using their position as facilitators or intermediaries to impose their own views on what the village appraisal should be and how it ought to be done. In this sense, therefore, there is a subtle shift in the structural framework whereby the statutory structures of local government and the local planning system are now being challenged by the structures of non-elected agencies such as ACRE and the RCCs. The second investigates the response of the statutory planning system to village appraisals. This investigates the planners' view of the competence of those participating in the village appraisal process, the degree of trust conferred by planners upon those producing village appraisals and the ways in which planners mediate or control their new partners in governance. The third theme considers whether the village appraisal is used as a vehicle by local people to inform statutory agencies about their resource needs and, if so, whether they are implemented. This tackles the issues surrounding the actual engagement of local people in the planning process and how effectively the wish list of concrete proposals formulated through the appraisal is converted into tangible outcomes.
- Does the village appraisal enhance the power of the minority elite in rural communities or is there evidence of a new 'magistracy' emerging? Here the emphasis is on the contingency effects of particular localities or villages, specifically as they relate to the behaviour and motivations of those who compose the steering groups generating the appraisal document. Not only does this shape, in governance terms, the character of their partnership arrangements with the statutory structures and agencies, but also the

power relationships within the village. What this means, therefore, is that the appraisal can create an opportunity for these steering groups to become the new ‘power-brokers’ of rural society or it can extend involvement and participation to the community as a whole – the new magistracy.

- What have been the achievements of conducting village appraisals? In this context, the focus is upon the physical, tangible gains which have resulted from appraisals (additional housing and improved street lighting, for example) and upon the less tangible gains in terms of closer co-operation within the village. This approach explores what has been achieved within the community and how this engages with the concept of partnership, which is at the heart of governance. This enables further investigation to understand whether appraisal activity stimulates a more informed and participatory rural citizenry. Specifically, the issue here is whether the village appraisal is a one-off process, to deliver a particular product to a defined timetable and programme, or whether it is a catalyst for other themes which are at the heart of local governance. This considers whether the village appraisal process has ‘empowered’ citizens to become the new partners of government. This would appear to involve two related themes. Does the village appraisal act as a vehicle to increase the awareness of rural people in issues which affect their locality? Second, does the village appraisal act as a vehicle to extend opportunities for greater participation amongst those involved in its production?

Prior to evaluating the outcomes of the village appraisal it is necessary to explain the nature of outcomes that can be achieved through the village appraisal.

8.2 A classification of outcomes to the village appraisal.

The outcomes that have been achieved through the village appraisal can be classified in four different ways. First, some outcomes can be defined as community specific; a label that has been adopted here to describe those outcomes that can be implemented either by individuals within the community, by the parish council or by other village groups and organisations. They were considered by Moseley *et al* (1996 (b): 320) as the outcomes which “were, in effect, directed at the local community itself”. In this sense, the implementation of community specific outcomes by rural communities is an example of rural community development (Butcher *et al*, 1993; Abbott, 1995) whereby active citizens in the community foster creative and co-operative networks of people or groups to identify an agenda for the future and then make provision for their needs. Examples of such outcomes are the provision of a community shop (run by community members with profits being made available for community projects), the formation of new village organisations, improvements to the local environment and community policing in the form of neighbourhood watch. In many respects such outcomes reflect the purest form of citizen control in Arnstein’s ladder of participation (1969) in that all aspects of the process of problem identification, response and the management of ensuring schemes are dealt with by the community and for the community. However, as some of the examples considered in this chapter will show, many such outcomes reflect the narrow needs of particular groups in the community and/or are operated by a small group on behalf of the community.

Second, authority specific outcomes may be applied to those outcomes that have to be realised in partnership with statutory authorities and voluntary sector organisations or private sector institutions. This grouping is primarily concerned with the physical planning needs of the rural locality, and raising awareness of such needs amongst the planning agencies. In many instances, a community action group is formed to lobby the appropriate agencies responsible for implementing desired outcomes within the locality. For example, to obtain a grant for environmental improvements in the locality, Rural Action has been lobbied (Martin, 1994; Bovaird *et al*, 1995) and the European Union would be approached for the funding of an economic regeneration project under the LEADER 5b initiative (Ward

and Woodward, 1998). In other instances, local planning agencies have been lobbied on issues regarding health, education or transport (Derounian, 1984; Moseley *et al*, 1996 (b)).

Outcomes can also be classified as tangible or intangible, as previously described by authors such as Lumb (1990), Fisher (1993) and Moseley *et al* (1996 (b)). The tangible outcomes of village appraisals are frequently associated with the multiple products of the village appraisal that can be seen and experienced by all members of the community. This type of outcome is concrete and would result in physical changes within the locality. Examples of such outcomes are the building of recreational facilities, and improvements to the village hall and parish church. Intangible outcomes are identified with the process of the appraisal, more specifically with the experiences or personal achievements of those individuals who have participated. For instance, citizens may benefit educationally or socially by their participation, which in turn may lead to an increase in community spirit and community participation. Intangible outcomes can often be the incentive to undertake additional self-help exercises that would further develop the community.

8.3 How successful have the key actors been at establishing partnerships between private and public organisations and local people through the village appraisal process?

This section is divided into three parts in order to examine the nature of the partnerships that have been developed between the key actors in the village appraisal process both in Northamptonshire and across rural England. The three parts will consider the context in which the partnerships are formed from the perspectives of each key actor in the appraisal process, to include the RCCs across rural England, the Village Appraisals Officer (VAO), the statutory authorities, and the wider community in Northamptonshire.

The first of the three discussions will consider the roles of the RCCs in encouraging the delivery of local governance through the village appraisal process.

8.3.1 Do RCCs encourage the delivery of local governance through the village appraisal process?

The rural White Paper introduced by the Conservative government in 1995 stated that:

“RCCs play a valuable part in strengthening rural communities and helping them to develop local solutions to local problems...RCCs co-ordinate voluntary work in rural areas across most of England and provide advice and support to rural communities” (DoE/MAFF, 1995: 18).

This statement is a reflection of the role that the RCCs have played since the 1920s. It is an organisation that works in partnership with statutory authorities and rural communities to provide a support network and encourage development in rural communities without being a formal part of the planning system (Williams, 1984). What is also explicit in this statement is the neutral, objective role of the RCCs, helping, co-ordinating, advising and supporting. However, in light of their heightened status in the new de-regulated system of planning it is clear that the opportunity now exists for RCCs, whether through ACRE, the parent body, or its county representatives, to shape the appraisal process in order to reflect their integration of the changing rural agenda. Given this ‘new’ role, it is necessary to examine the ways in which the RCCs and its officers provide advice and support to encourage the delivery of local governance and effective partnerships between itself, statutory authorities and rural communities.

To achieve this aim, the discussion will use data collected at the national level across rural England to gain a broad understanding of the role of the RCC, together with evidence collected at the local level in Northamptonshire to examine more closely the nature of the partnerships being developed by the Village Appraisals Officer, as the representative of the RCC in the county.

The use of ‘best practice’ models by RCCs, in an attempt to standardise the process of the village appraisal, has already been shown to be widespread across rural England (chapters 4 and 6). Undoubtedly, the ACRE computer software programme, first introduced in 1991,

not only has encouraged what ACRE sees as best practice across the often disjointed voluntary sector but has also provided the many rural communities which use it with a 'model' to follow during the process of the village appraisal (see Table 4.2, p.116). In theory it is believed that the use of a model of this nature enables rural communities to remain both enthusiastic and single minded about the village appraisal "keeping firmly in their sights the end-product of tangible action" (Moseley, 1996: 14-15).

Further evidence collected by the author confirms the idea that the RCCs actively support the use of best practice models to retain the focus of the community and positively encourage them towards achieving an 'end-product', but what it also reveals is that individual RCCs are generating their own particular models that reflect what they see as the 'ideal' village appraisal. The two most popular characteristics of an ideal village appraisal identified through the author's survey of the RCCs were full community participation and the production of a community action plan (outlined in Table 8.1). This suggests that the RCCs are, at least in principle, eager to encourage steering groups to forge partnerships both with the wider community through the appraisal questionnaire survey, and with the statutory authorities through the community action plan, designed to identify and implement the stated needs of the community.

Table 8.1 The characteristics of an ideal village appraisal as defined by 29 RCCs across rural England.

Characteristics	No. of RCCs that agree
Full community participation	12
The publication of a community action plan	12
It raises awareness of local issues and local people	5
A good response rate to the questionnaire survey	3
The consideration of statutory authorities and external agencies	3
The publication of a pro-active document	2
That it is a mechanism for achieving desired action	2
That it enables change in the locality	1
That it enables community consultation	1
That it generates a debate about the future of the village	1
It is a well planned exercise	1

In practice, however, evidence both from survey work in England as a whole and Northamptonshire in particular would suggest that the notions of full participation and the creation of 'community action plans' are problematic to say the least. For example, if response rates to a questionnaire survey in the village are taken as one indicator of participation (Table 8.2) the evidence suggests variations both between and within counties for the maximum and minimum percentage of responses gained. Moreover, even within these patterns there are many questions which remain unanswered and, in most cases, unaddressed. Thus for example, there is no evidence that appraisal teams have discussed and published variations in response rates between different areas of the village (a particular issue where low overall response rates are found in some of the larger villages), or whether response rates are based on questionnaires where all questions have been answered or on questionnaires returned and only partially completed. Finally, the rate is based upon the number circulated, usually one per house, and so bears little relationship to the response rate within the population. As has been discussed elsewhere there are major issues here to do with representation and the processes whereby certain individuals or groups may be excluded in the appraisal process.

Similarly, with regard to the second village appraisal objective, the community action plan this is considered by RCCs as a tool necessary to bridge the:

"gap between top-down planning strategies...and bottom-up involvement in policies and decisions" (Sussex RCC, 1996).

In so doing, it is a document that:

addresses the local environmental, social and economic issues in a comprehensive and integrated way...embraces the principles of sustainable development...identifies the key priorities...produces action, including how action is undertaken by external agencies...and is prepared by the local community" (ibid.).

However, evidence from Northamptonshire and Lincolnshire suggests that villages are reluctant to take on board the concept of an 'action plan' as part of the appraisal process.

Table 8.2 Maximum and minimum response rates to village appraisals in counties across rural England.

The RCC	Maximum Response Rate	Minimum Response Rate
Wiltshire	96	75
Kent	95	14
Lincolnshire	95	26
Norfolk	95	66
Buckinghamshire	94	30
Oxfordshire	93	47
Bedfordshire	92	57
Warwickshire	90	30
Suffolk	90	30
Cumbria	90	30
Lancashire	87	52
Avon	75	-
Hertfordshire	70	-
Isle of Wight	67	-
Northumberland	62	46
Hampshire	60	-
Humberside	60	30
Shropshire	60	15
Leicestershire	54	12
Cheshire	28	-

- Not known.

First, although the community action plan is a means through which communities can produce a 'wish list' of desired outcomes for use by the statutory authorities, it has been found that it frequently results in falsely raised expectations for development which may not materialise. For example, community action groups were formed in the village of Overstone in Northamptonshire to lobby for traffic calming devices to be installed on an accident blackspot and in Woodford Halse (also in Northamptonshire) to provide a doctor's surgery. However, as the evidence in section 8.2 will illustrate, these 'wishes' were not fulfilled, leaving the community feeling discouraged rather than empowered.

Second, it is inevitable that one outcome of the community action plan is to generate competition for limited resources between neighbouring villages, and this can be seen as

both contentious and divisive. For example, villages in Lincolnshire were encouraged through the 'Rural Challenge' initiative launched by the local TEC to write a business or action plan as an adjunct to the appraisal, which outlined their 'wishes' for future development. The action plans, however, were required to have a 'business plan' in order to qualify for funding of any description and were submitted to a 'Rural Challenge Management Group' made up of representatives from the public and private sectors, to assess their eligibility. Despite the fact that this was one way in which appraisals had the guarantee of financial support if the plan and appraisals were endorsed by the management group, the scheme was not popular with the rural communities themselves and only six villages in the county, from the 70 which undertook appraisals, completed a business plan.

Another way in which local rural communities councils are shaping the village appraisal agenda is to target activity in those villages which they consider to have the necessary conditions which will lead to effective and realistic action plans in which partnerships with other groups and agencies are likely to emerge. In the language of realism, what we are seeing are the 'contingent effects' of particular localities and individuals shaping the pattern of response to these structural processes. In the words of Abram *et al*, many RCCs are now focusing upon those villages where there are the "social, technical and communicative assets" (1996: 355).

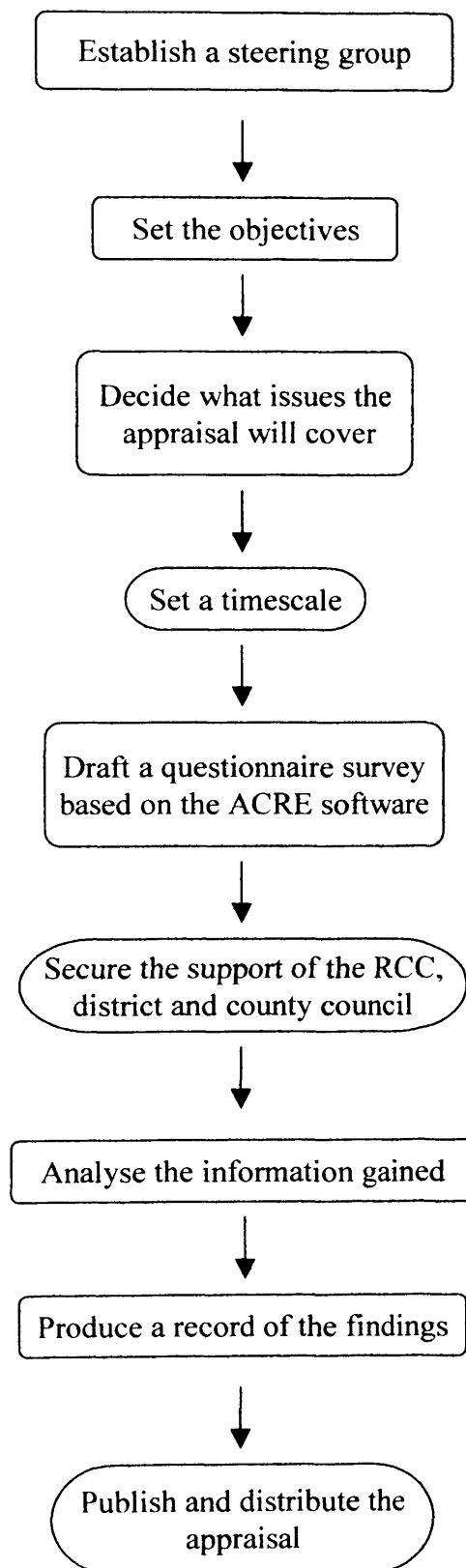
In particular the RCCs have started to target the village appraisal in two types of community which are more likely to be successful at promoting partnerships between the community and statutory authority. The first type of community is those which lie in the geographically marginal areas of England and which, for various structural reasons, are seen as unable to generate social and economic redevelopment programmes from their own resources and so have been allocated to areas for which external aid is available whether from Britain (through RDAs) or the EU (through LEADER projects in Objective 5b areas). Though the designation of RDAs and 5b areas is the result of various 'statistical rules of engagement' which may mean that certain 'deserving' villages are excluded and less deserving ones are included, the allocation of a village to a development area is often seen as a good reason for targeting by local RCCs. Thus for example, in Cumbria all other rural communities were

excluded from the targeting process because success is easier to achieve in the RDA and 5b areas where an outcome is both needed and wanted and, to some extent, guaranteed (Cumbria RCC Officer, 1995). The second type of community where the appraisal has been targeted, for example, by Northamptonshire ACRE and Buckinghamshire RCC, are those dominated by the middle class elite who are seen as comfortable participating in the decision making process because they have the social and material wherewithal to engage in the planning process. In such cases, the steering group is most likely to comprise socially competent individuals who are able to undertake a community action plan and subsequently forge partnerships, perhaps based on previous associations, with the statutory authorities.

In this respect, therefore, the RCCs can be seen as a key agent in the delivery of local governance, using their position as an intermediary between the statutory agencies of government and the local community to create partnerships which can deliver resources where they are required. However, it is clear that such a process has the potential to convey considerable power to the RCCs and their representatives, not just in terms of the charismatic nature of the individual involved but also in terms of their ability to shape the agenda in their own image. The result of this process, therefore, is a geographical distribution of appraisals or business plans which, in general, meets the structural frameworks imposed by the statutory agencies but in the detail reflects the aspirations and wants of particular individuals rather than the needs of particular communities. Just how this process can operate in detail is illustrated by the activities and behaviour of one VAO in Northamptonshire. The following section examines in more detail his role between the rural communities and the statutory authorities.

Figure 8.1 A model of the village appraisal process by the Village Appraisals Officer for Northamptonshire

(Source: Nelson, 1995)



8.3.1.1 The role of Ian Nelson, the Village Appraisals Officer for Northamptonshire.

Ian Nelson has been encouraging the uptake of village appraisals in Northamptonshire since his appointment as the VAO in 1990, though his view that Northamptonshire's rural communities differ from "proper rural counties, like Dorset and in Scotland where you get some real community action" (1995) suggests that there is a clear difference in philosophy between the kind of appraisal he wants and the kinds that are being completed. Indeed, he believes that Northamptonshire rural communities were becoming dominated by wealthy, in-migrant professional households and as a result most village appraisals being produced are an historical study of the village or they focus on the implementation of community specific outcomes which tackle non-controversial issues such as the re-organisation of the library or the introduction of new clubs and societies in the village (see section 8.4). In trying to broaden this approach, Ian Nelson has encouraged communities to maximise the potential of the village appraisal and engage in the planning process to achieve positive rural development and, whilst doing so, to forge flexible partnerships with the statutory authorities, because it is his belief that:

"if a village is successful at doing a village appraisal, it can be successful at doing other things".

In other words, Ian Nelson's approach to the 'ideal' village appraisal can be seen as loosely hung around his own definition of governance. However, it is his opinion that steering groups should always utilise the services of Northamptonshire ACRE and himself in order to produce what he calls a "textbook appraisal" or one which is structured either to the ACRE model or his own version of it (see Figure 8.1). It is in these situations that he would feel best able to 'supervise' communities to undertake village appraisals. Moreover, Ian has argued that forging partnerships with the communities should enable him to influence the village appraisal and thus allow him:

"to talk the steering group through what they hope to achieve, set some objectives, attend their meetings and monitor their progress...and support the majority of their meetings".

It is also Ian's opinion that an appraisal should always include some type of tangible

outcome that would aid community development, preferably to be implemented through community action plan completed by the community but in partnership with the statutory authorities. However, whilst he recognises that communities in Northamptonshire tend to focus on small, community specific projects which can be managed by the community, he considers that in order to achieve authority specific outcomes the steering group must “believe in their ability to do it”. Like the RCCs nationally, Ian considers that for such outcomes to be obtained, there has to be a genuine wish for it.

“The appraisals that are successful, are the ones where the group is led by a successful leader/chairperson who has a strong belief in their ability to get a job done. The ones that struggle are the ones where the belief has been knocked for whatever reason”.

In this respect, therefore, Ian Nelson reinforces the view of Moseley *et al* (1996 (c)), that the personality of the steering group is paramount and that “the articulate middle class people... women bringing up their families, retired people, men who hold full time jobs, or run businesses...” have the wherewithal to produce a community action plan and participate in the decision making process with the statutory authorities (Ian Nelson, 1995).

In an attempt to steer rural communities towards maximising the potential of the village appraisal, Ian Nelson has formulated a ‘best-practice’ model which is intended to alleviate the obstacles often experienced whilst undertaking the appraisal (for example, losing enthusiasm and momentum through the long process of data collection, analysis and interpretation) and to help communities reach the intended goal of rural development (Figure 8.1).

Figure 8.1 is Ian’s own interpretation of the ACRE model introduced in 1991 and whilst it confirms his commitment to the work of this voluntary organisation, he suggests that this revised model is a more appropriate mechanism by which he can direct communities to “make a record of their findings of the village appraisal” and promote rural community action without affecting uptake of the appraisal at the local level. What his model indicates is a much more interactive process between himself as VAO and the appraisal team, rather than the more ‘menu-driven’ model of ACRE which provides a procedure which the

community can operate for itself without intervention if it wishes. Of course what the 'Nelson' approach signals is an opportunity for the VAO to manage the engagement of local people through the appraisal and control the way in which the steering group operates and forges partnerships with both the wider community and the statutory authorities. The guidelines are an aid to the steering group to identify specific tasks that require attention, the people who will subsequently be responsible for those tasks and the time scale for their completion. In doing this, Ian is not only outlining the programme for completion, but he is also shaping the process of the village appraisal. Ian maintains, however, that he is merely undertaking to help the community to help themselves and that he uses the model to harness the educative function of the village appraisal and its ability to create active citizens. In other words, he would argue that his role is that of facilitator, not so much shaping the content or issues which an appraisal wishes to address, but realising the potential of a village community to shape its future by providing support and advice when needed. Indeed, he sees the appraisal as a means to an end, rather than an end in itself. It will:

“give the village a higher profile, which then encourages the village to take on other projects, which will raise the profile again”.

By initiating a “whole cycle thing, of success breeding success”, Ian Nelson considers himself to play a pivotal role both in the village appraisal process and the delivery of local governance. Thereby he can help to strengthen rural communities and develop local solutions to local problems by encouraging them to use the village appraisal as a spring board for other development so that they may realise their identified needs. It is clear, therefore, that the shift to governance raises a number of issues which relate to the changing relationships between local communities and the statutory structures and agencies, on the one hand, and those organisations such as the RCCs and their representatives on the other. What is clear from this discussion is that strong minded appraisal officers can begin to claim the middle ground between the community and the local authority and attempt to shape the agenda in their own image. Given the looseness of the definition as to what a village appraisal might be, and the criticisms aimed at the initial attempts by ACRE to generate a universal model to gather questionnaire data, such opportunities are

considerable. Yet this same looseness may work to the VAO's disadvantage in that communities may shun his overtures and reject the whole notion of an appraisal 'Nelson' style, or they may still prefer to take him on board but retain their own agenda as to what the appraisal is for. In these instances, there emerges a looser relationship in which the VAO becomes more of a facilitator, providing support and encouragement and becoming proactive on request. In these situations, of course, the creation of effective partnerships with local communities becomes much less predictable, as does the achievement of specific outcomes. The following section, which considers the relationships between the statutory planning authorities and those communities producing village appraisals, illustrates this issue further.

8.3.2 What has been the response of the statutory planning system to village appraisals?

Establishing partnerships between the seven local planning authorities in Northamptonshire and its rural communities has been a key theme within the county and has been presented:

“to build on and strengthen the partnerships to improve the access of the public to the services they need” and “develop closer working arrangements” (Northamptonshire County Council, 1995: no page, emphasis added).

According to Jeffrey Greenwell, chief executive to the county council, the village appraisal has an important role to play in this process, whatever form it takes. Thus:

“some people have wanted to use the village appraisal in order to set down an historical record and that is valuable, purely to do with the historical research to help people to understand their heritage and the place they've come to live in. They are probably fairly important where you get villages with commuters coming to live. It helps them understand and integrate with the village in its traditions and history, and prevent those records being lost” (1995).

In this respect, the chief executive's view of the appraisal, in terms of the shift to governance, is extremely narrow. First, appraisals in his opinion are largely confined to historical documents, specific to the locality, and of value to planners in the sense that they provide a context within which planning decisions might be made. In the context of wider

strategic planning they might provide a useful database but no more, though if the concept of Village Design Statements becomes established within the English countryside then such appraisals may have real value to planners. Second, Greenwell's view of partnership does not seem to extend far beyond the fact that village groups can do little more than provide information, useful as it is, to the professionals – planners and councillors alike. In this sense those producing village appraisals are doing a valuable job both for their own community and the local authority, though from the latter's point of view they may be seen as little more than 'hired hands' (Goodwin, 1998). In the words of Jeffrey Greenwell, himself a professional bureaucrat:

“village appraisals are all valuable source documents for planners both at district and county council level in terms of giving additional information on patterns of settlement and history and the people writing local and structure plans. The professional planners couldn't possibly have the amount of knowledge that resides in the village and the people of the village, about the reasons why the village has developed in the manner it has, about aspirations for employment and recreational facilities.. As a starting point [the village appraisal provides] an appreciation of the circumstances of the village and its history and that is invaluable material”.

Nevertheless, despite Jeffrey Greenwell's status as chief executive, and his role in launching the 'Northamptonshire 2000' initiative in 1996, the reality of the relationships between rural communities and the planning authorities is played out within the districts in which the villages are located. An examination of the views on partnership as expressed by local authority representatives reveals how complex and multifaceted this relationship can be.

All the council representatives interviewed across the seven district councils of Northamptonshire suggested that they were most comfortable with the village appraisal when it focused on non-controversial issues, such as the history of the village where the primary aim was to “bring people together” (Tim Bellamy, Leisure and Recreation Officer Kettering Borough, 1995) or “because they are a wonderful approach towards getting a community together” (David Southron, Head of Strategic Planning, South Northamptonshire District 1995). According to Colin Wootton, Head of Planning Policy at

Daventry District Council the village appraisal is at its most useful when produced either as a harmless, historical document which unites the whole community through interest (as was the situation in Sulgrave, his home village), or where it forms part of a continuous process of gathering, recording and presenting information about different facets or aspects of the life of a parish or village. Therefore, according to Colin Wootton:

I think it is better that they [the community] never finish one [a village appraisal], travel hopefully and be united in lots of coffee mornings

Only when the community wants to consider large scale development do the planners have a problem with the village appraisal. According to the planners, expectations are unduly raised within the community by the production of a document that contains a 'wish list' of tangible proposals, as many proposals are unlikely to reflect the total agreement of the village:

"something happens that they didn't really want. It's a bit like bypasses isn't it, communities all want bypasses and strive for years to get one, they are all united until the line is announced and half the village don't want it anymore because it affects them, the other half drop out so all you get then is opposition" (Colin Wootton, 1995).

It is because of circumstances such as this that the planners see the village appraisal as a divisive mechanism, which has the potential to destroy the partnerships created both within the community and between the community and the statutory authorities. Indeed, many planners then see themselves subsequently responsible for smoothing over the problems which the appraisal creates, which in turn establishes mistrust between both groups of actors based on the perceived inability to implement the identified planning proposals successfully. As an alternative to this unsatisfactory situation, many of the planners interviewed indicated that their partnership with rural communities in the appraisal process should enable them to have more influence in terms of offering "a broader input from the planning point of view" (Karen Horner, Senior Planner East Northamptonshire District Council) and be able to suggest questions for inclusion in the household survey which can aid the process of information gathering and thus provide valuable information for the Local Plan process. Indeed, Karen Horner believes that, to date (1995):

“there has been nothing wrong with the document or anything, but to us they didn’t really have much practical benefit...in many cases it has the potential to be a lot more valuable than what we have generally seen”.

This particular form of partnership would also ensure that the planners exerted some degree of top-down control onto the appraisal process, thereby retaining substantial amounts of influence in a system of planning. However, by its very nature, this partnership is open to manipulation and, by retaining control in this manner, the planners are in a position to influence communities through the household survey and ensure that the appraisal satisfies their particular agenda.

Clearly, this form of partnership is very reassuring to the planners who are able to maintain their otherwise threatened positions as professional planners. Obviously there is a concern amongst planning authorities in Northamptonshire as to the impact of a more devolved system of planning, involving these ‘new partners of government’. To planners the Local Plan is still considered the true basis of local planning and the democratically elected parish council is deemed the most appropriate channel for discussions regarding the village appraisal. Hence, according to John Watts the planning manager at Northampton Borough Council:

“if any village appraisal findings are relevant in the review of existing or planned proposals in the Local Plan I am sure these will be submitted by the parish councils as part of the ongoing consultation process” (1994 emphasis added).

Quite how relevance is defined is not made clear, but what is evident from this comment is that the local authority is the final arbiter. ‘You tell us and we will decide’ appears to be the view, but the council will not necessarily go looking for opinions.

In the absence of any rules of engagement, other than that village appraisal and partnership are a ‘good thing’, it has been left to each authority to work out for itself how to proceed, though what has emerged is a complex pattern of relationships which impact upon successful outcomes of the appraisal process. The next section examines some of these in more detail.

Table 8.3(a) Positive outcomes experienced through the village appraisal in rural communities in Northamptonshire

Positive Outcomes	No. of occurrences
<u>Community Specific</u>	
The sale of the village appraisal document	5
An increased awareness of issues affecting the village	4
An increased the sense of community	4
Environmental improvements	3
New groups and organisations	3
Village leaflets	3
A play area	2
Dog bylaws	2
Interest in the history of the village	2
Creation of a 'village reading room'	1
Development of computer skills	1
Discovery of old photographs in the village	1
Identified needs of the elderly	1
Increased participation	1
Library re-organisation	1
Off street parking	1
Parish council better able to represent views of the community	1
Parish map	1
Purchase of a playing field	1
Seats on the green	1
Village Hall improvements	1
<u>Authority Specific</u>	
Housing needs	6
Street lighting improvements	3
Traffic calming measures	3
A health centre	1
A pocket park	1
An increased police presence	1
Limited bus service restored	1
Linked to the Gas supply	1
New sports facilities	1

8.3.3 Is the village appraisal used as a vehicle by local people to inform statutory authorities about their resource needs and if so, are the needs implemented?

From the author's survey of 50 parish councils/steering groups that had completed village appraisals in Northamptonshire between 1970 and 1996 it was possible to establish a 'wish list' of tangible and non-tangible proposals. These proposals can be further divided between those which produced a positive outcome, i.e. those that have been implemented or are still in the active stage where actual implementation (or not) has yet to be determined (Table 8.3 (a) and (b)), and those where there was a negative outcome, i.e. where nothing has happened or a proposal was turned down or the community was seen to be worse off as a result (Table 8.4).

As Table 8.3(a) indicates, the positive outcomes were predominantly community specific in nature. That is to say, the majority of projects implemented as a result of the village appraisal in Northamptonshire were managed by the community or its members - for example the re-organisation of the library, environmental improvements, or the provision of seats on the village green. Whilst this is seen as evidence of a community's wish to focus on issues which are largely non-controversial, very much in line with the views of the statutory planning authorities as to what the village appraisal is about, it also suggests that difficulties exist in implementing authority specific projects in the county in the absence of a common policy to encourage the engagement of local people in such implementation. Consequently, rural communities are better placed to satisfy their own resource requirements by undertaking projects that do not require the participation of the planning authorities. Indeed, when compared to Northamptonshire, both Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire, have a much higher rate of authority specific outcomes as a result of the village appraisal (48 percent and 46 percent respectively, compared to just 20 percent of all outcomes in this evidence from Northamptonshire) (Moseley *et al.*, 1996). It is clear, therefore, that the development of partnerships between rural communities and the planning authorities remains an issue across the county in terms of large scale projects such as affordable housing needs schemes or the building of new health centres. It can be further argued that this is the situation envisaged by Edwards when he questioned whether self

help was becoming “a regulated product shaped by ‘enabling’ partnerships” rather than an avenue to “genuine emancipation” (1998: 75-76). Therefore, the issue of which actor retains the ‘power through partnership’ in the village appraisal is one to be explored. What follows is an examination of several case studies from across Northamptonshire. Six case studies will be considered: two villages where there were positive outcomes, three villages with negative outcomes and one village which has identified a RAP yet to be implemented. This will illustrate the patterns of partnerships which have developed between rural communities and the relevant statutory authorities in the county and will show that attempts to form partnerships have had mixed results.

Table 8.3(b) Recommended action points yet to be implemented identified through the village appraisal in rural communities in Northamptonshire.

RAPs	Village
To have a second school in the village	Brixworth
The purchase of a playing field	Badby
The need for a play area established	Braybrooke
Some low cost housing may be acceptable in the village	Braybrooke

Table 8.4 Negative outcomes experienced through the village appraisal in rural communities in Northamptonshire.

Negative Outcomes	No. of occurrences
Failure to have traffic calming measures implemented	2
Housing needs were ignored	2
A doctor's surgery was not provided in the village	1
A low response to the questionnaire survey was experienced	1
A need for more frequent pavement cleaning was ignored	1
A resident policeman was not provided	1
Failure to be linked to the gas supply	1
Housing needs project implemented despite protest against it	1
Lost 2 members of the steering group	1
Some issues were not acted on because they were not feasible	1
The chair of the parish council was upset	1
The old memorial hall would have to be demolished to make space for a new one	1

The first case study involves the village of Woodford Halse in the west of the county where an appraisal in 1989 identified a need for transport provision to enable villagers, particularly the car-less elderly, to get to the main medical centre in Byfield, two miles away. As a result, a group was established within the parish council to consider the provision of a community bus, funded by an addition to the parish rate (precept), but a feasibility survey indicated that this would be uneconomical. Instead the local community decided to launch a voluntary driver scheme (Rural Wheels), supported by a combination of agencies including: the medical centre in Byfield, which provided a room for meetings and placed the practice manager on the committee; the parish councils of Woodford and Byfield which gave money to purchase answerphone and other facilities; Northamptonshire County Council, whose transport division subsidised 'Rural Wheels' at 30 pence per completed journey and facilitated the reimbursement of expenses for those clients on income support. There were other inputs from specialised agencies such as Age Concern and Help the Aged (Sherwood, 1993). By 1998 'Rural Wheels' had carried over 10,000 passengers and has spread to six other villages in the locality. Indeed, since 1993, when the Oxford Regional Health Authority withdrew financial support from a community development project (Right Angle) which had included 'Rural Wheels' as one of its ventures, their voluntary transport scheme has gone from strength to strength. The voluntary driver scheme continues and, whilst 'Rural Wheels' co-ordinators work directly with the agencies to ensure its smooth running, the agencies see the scheme as a means of taking some pressure off their own activities, (such as the ambulance service), and maintaining access to primary health care at a time when many services, particularly those of rural general practitioners, are being centralised into fewer medical centres. In this sense, therefore, there has been a coincidence between the agendas of the local community and the statutory agencies, such that all are determined that the scheme should succeed. What it does raise, however, is the much wider issue, closely related to the shift to local governance, that partnerships are rarely equal in their share of power, responsibility and workload. In the case of 'Rural Wheels', there is little doubt that the financial power, in terms of the funding support, lies in the hands of the local authority, but that the day-to-day responsibility for running and working the scheme is in the hands of the local community, specifically two elderly co-ordinators and 17 drivers, many of whom are also deep into their retirement (Sherwood and

Lewis, 2000).

The second case study considers King's Sutton where a community action group was formed immediately after the village appraisal in order to work in partnership with South Northamptonshire Council, Northampton County Council, local businesses and grant funding bodies to build a new health centre in the village. The village appraisal identified the need for these new health facilities that these would be placed alongside a new sports complex in a new 'Memorial Hall'. However, the community has been divided by the prospect of the development because the new building would be established on land currently occupied by the Memorial Hall, a possibility not even considered in the village appraisal. Although the partnership between the community action group, the statutory authorities and other voluntary organisations is still working to raise funds for the new health centre, and has recently secured lottery funding, the consensus within the community has been lost because of the threat posed to the old building. In this respect the situation in King's Sutton is close to that predicted by Colin Wootton, a planner with Daventry District Council, that the appraisal can raise expectations only for the reality to present an outcome which many people really do not want. Not only does such a situation divide a community, but it also challenges the competence of a village, through its appraisal, to propose outcomes which in every respect are the true view of the whole community. In turn this threatens the trust which even the most supportive district council would wish to invest in the parish appraisal process whilst, from the village perspective, there is a clear expectation that all those who expressed their views through the privacy of the questionnaire survey are then required to 'stand up and be counted' in public. It follows, therefore, that there is an expectation that successful partnerships can only be built upon clear evidence of competence in the appraisal process. This is particularly true for partnerships with local authority, where the village has to provide unequivocal evidence that a proposal reflects in all its aspects the view of the community.

The third case study is Overstone. A community action group approached and subsequently formed a working partnership with the Highways Agency in Northamptonshire in an attempt to have traffic calming devices installed at an accident

blackspot in the village after support for such a solution was expressed through the village appraisal. The community action group completed extensive traffic surveys and monitored accidents through contact with the local police force, but despite the evidence that was produced and presented to the Highways Agency it has failed (to date, 1998) to recognise or acknowledge the work that has been done. It seems, therefore, that regardless of a wish on the part of the community to create a partnership with the Highways Agency to implement desired change within the locality, success of such a partnership, at least in terms of tangible outcomes, has been seen very much as conditional upon the commitment, whether financial or otherwise, of the agency to the scheme. Effectively therefore, the outcomes of the partnerships between local communities and statutory agencies has as much to do with a particular combination of circumstances as with the quality of the partnership or the value of the proposal. This is particularly the case where significant costs are involved, or, in this instance, where the Highways Agency has been evaluating a range of traffic calming measures in local villages and wishes to complete this process before it makes any final decisions in Overstone or elsewhere.

Great Cransley provides the fourth case study. After the completion of the village appraisal, a community action group was established in the village to complete a traffic census and to carry out speed checks as evidence for the Highways Agency of a traffic problem in the village which, as in the case of Overstone, they felt would only be solved through the installation of traffic calming measures. However, once again the Highways Agency has failed to take any immediate action on the information produced, leaving the community feeling that “nothing has been achieved” and the work that was undertaken has been in vain (Great Cransley Parish Council, 1995). Additionally, British Gas rejected the wishes of the community that Great Cransley should be linked to the mains gas supply, arguing that the financial costs involved in supplying the gas outweighed any benefits that could be accrued to them. The problem here was that Croughton village in South Northamptonshire had been connected to the mains gas supply as a direct result of evidence provided in their village appraisal survey and so was seen as a precedent for other villages to be treated similarly if the demand was there. The difficulty here, it seems, is that many appraisal exercises are ‘sold’ to village communities on the evidence of the achievements

gained in other villages in the area. This is particularly poignant in Northamptonshire where an organisation such as ACRE has taken upon itself the role of facilitator and where the value of appraisal activity, specifically with regard to measurable outcomes, has been highlighted through county-wide conferences or visits by successful appraisal teams to other villages considering such an exercise. In the case of Overstone and Great Cransley the attitude of the Highways Agency was consistent in both cases, encouraging co-operation yet recognising, albeit insensitively, the need to respond to other agendas, whilst the role of British Gas, supporting one scheme yet rejecting another, demonstrates the confusion and disillusionment that can be created in villages, even though its arguments may be perfectly reasonable and justifiable.

The fifth case study is that of the two neighbouring villages of Church and Chapel Brampton and that of Little Houghton, and concerns the issue of affordable housing, a theme which has featured directly or indirectly in many appraisals and which has led to follow-up 'housing needs' surveys in several villages (Lewis and Sherwood, 1998). Whilst the need for affordable housing is not the prime concern here, what is of interest is the way in which the view and the role of the local community with regard to the provision of 'local needs housing' impacts with those organisations responsible for its supply. In some instances such housing can be offered as part of a larger housing scheme provided by a local developer, but more usual, particularly in Northamptonshire, has been the construction of small numbers of dwellings built by housing associations, normally for rent on sites outside the planners' village envelope and therefore on cheaper land which does not have a development value. In both situations, the provision of housing is subject to the identification of a local need, but also to the wider strategies of the district councils' own housing policies and the bidding process for funding to support the housing associations. In the case of Church and Chapel Brampton, the appraisal did not highlight a housing need, yet the construction of a small number of affordable dwellings has gone ahead in Chapel Brampton. In the case of Little Houghton a need for affordable housing was identified in the village appraisal but the village has been unsuccessful in its dealings with South Northamptonshire District Council in persuading the local authority to prioritise the village in its own strategic planning. In both cases, therefore, the outcome, in housing terms, has

been the reverse of that indicated in the appraisal exercise, highlighting not only the highly unpredictable relationship between appraisal aspirations and delivery, but also the evidence that as far as authority specific outcomes are concerned the agendas of the statutory agencies still remain paramount. In this sense, at least, there is little evidence to suggest that the empowerment envisaged by appraisal activity has done little more than scratch the surface in circumstances where the delivery of tangible outcomes involving outside agencies are concerned.

The final case study is that of Brixworth, where one recommendation of the village appraisal was that an additional school in the village would be welcomed to enable the present primary school to be split into either a separate junior or infant school. Indeed, questions in the household survey, conducted as part of the appraisal, indicated that the local education authority would support such an initiative given the degree of expansion currently (1996) underway in the village and so the appraisal was used to test village opinion on this issue. To ensure that this RAP was pursued, a community action group called Brixworth Recreational Amenities Group (BRAG) was formed from village appraisal steering group members, parish councillors and other interested personnel to work in partnership with the local education authority. However, the education authority refused to accept the results of the village appraisal, based on the belief that it was inappropriate for people who were not involved in the education system in the village (for example, the elderly and childless members of the community) to give their view on the role that a second school should play. Indeed, it was their view that the survey should only be conducted amongst parents of children currently attending the primary school in Brixworth. Regardless of the arguments in favour or against this particular strategy, it raises important question marks against the relationships between local authorities and local communities. Thus, in a specific area which the appraisal team thought was of interest and importance to the whole community and, therefore, worthy of inclusion in the survey for the appraisal, the agency involved (in this case the local education authority) decided that the only constituency it would listen to was the one involved directly in the primary education experience in Brixworth. Clearly the concept of partnership, which might imply working together on schemes of mutual interest, requires certain rules of engagement to be agreed at

the outset; and what the village appraisal team felt was the community in this particular case was very different from the community envisaged by the local education authority.

8.3.4 Summary.

In conclusion, this review of case studies in rural Northamptonshire has indicated that the achievement of 'authority specific' outcomes is a highly variable and unpredictable process, where success can neither be judged on the quality of the argument, or the nature of the bid or the character of the relationship between the community and the agency or agencies. Those outcomes most likely to be achieved tend to occur not just where the agendas of the community and agency(ies) coincide but also where the resources to support them, both human, financial and political are also in place. Where the agenda, particularly of the statutory sector differs – to a greater or lesser extent – the outcome is more likely to match that of the agency than it does the community. The effect of this on the process of governance and partnership is to question if real and tangible changes can be achieved through the appraisal process. Indeed, whilst there is evidence of a shift towards governance and towards the concept of partnership, in many ways power over the village appraisal process still remains in the hands of the statutory system.

Table 8.5 How successful has the village appraisal been in establishing partnerships and alliances between private and public organisations and local people?

Criteria	RCCs	VAO	Statutory Authorities					
			CC	D	EN	K	N	SN
Do they actively encourage the uptake of the village appraisal?	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Do they use the village appraisal as a tool to target limited resources from the 'bottom-up'?	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No
Is the village appraisal used as an adjunct to the statutory Local Plan process?	-	-	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Do they encourage the formation of flexible partnerships through the village appraisal?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Are the partnerships that are encouraged conditional?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

CC = County Council, D = Daventry District, EN = East Northamptonshire,
K = Kettering Borough N = Northampton Borough, SN = South Northamptonshire.

Finally, it is evident from Table 8.5 that broad agreement exists across the county in terms

of the value of conducting village appraisals and the role of partnership arrangement in certain areas of delivery. What is also clear, however, is that despite the strong endorsement of appraisals by the chief executive of Northamptonshire County Council, their actual delivery is contingent upon the relationships between the agencies, such as the seven planning authorities, and the communities themselves, with the Village Appraisals Officer acting (on occasions) as an intermediary between the two. In the absence of any clear structure, what has emerged has been a confused, often haphazard arrangement in which all three (the VAO, the councils and the communities) have their own agendas which might appear to be shared, yet in reality are often in conflict and confrontational.

Thus, whilst all agree that appraisals should be bottom-up and come from what the community wanted, several villages have produced non-controversial historical narratives which avoid the need to raise questions about what sort of village the community may wish to see in the future. In most cases this coincides with the views of the planning departments, yet it avoids the more aggressive stance taken by the VAO. All the key actors agree also, that the notion of working together is a 'good thing' for fostering local co-operation and community spirit, and if this leads to partnerships with agencies such as planners to inform them of the unique characteristics of a village as a basis for the Local Plan preparation, so much the better. Partnerships to deliver more high key resources such as local, affordable housing or traffic calming schemes become problematic. Villagers appear keen to engage in such debates, and to use the appraisal process as a means of gathering local opinion, but the planning authorities appear more guarded, seeing not just a threat to their own professional status but also the reality of having to match resource bids against other requirements in an increasingly competitive market. In the meantime, the VAO, keen to make appraisals more issue based, has sought to sell the concept of appraisals to curious, even sceptical villages on the basis of 'concrete' achievements that have been gained elsewhere. Yet, as has been indicated above, such achievements cannot be measured against a predictable formula in which certain inputs guarantee actual outcomes. In this sense, therefore, the concept of flexible partnerships which is at the heart of governance takes away the structured coherence of government and replaces it with a much looser and less coherent framework within which much greater volatility and

unpredictability is assured and where the guaranteed outcomes (whether there would be development or not) which were very much part of an earlier planning system are no longer the case. Furthermore, there is also the view that the process of devolved power, in which local communities have a much greater say (such as through the village appraisal) is simply a means of empowering a particular elite in a village rather than a village as a whole. This issue is addressed in the next section.

8.4 Does the village appraisal enhance the power of the minority elite in rural communities or is there evidence of a new ‘magistracy’ emerging?

In order to explore this issue, information was gathered from the author’s survey of the wider community in the three study villages of Brixworth, Stoke Albany and Dingley, which enquired about an individual’s expectations for the outcome(s) of the village appraisal, and from evidence obtained from the author’s participant observation of the steering group meetings. From this information it is possible to examine if and indeed how the members of the steering groups manipulated the village appraisal process in order to enhance their own power within the community. In other words, it is possible to evaluate the function of the village appraisal as a tool to empower rural communities through partnership and the view held by Goodwin (1998) that a new ‘magistracy’ is emerging through local governance in rural society whereby all citizens are considered to play an equal part in deciding the future of rural settlements regardless of race, age, gender or class.

The section will be divided into three parts in order to discuss the situation in the individual study villages followed by a summary, which will attempt to draw together the various strands with some more general observations.

8.4.1 Brixworth.

The thesis has previously demonstrated in chapters 6 and 7 that the ‘hand picked’ steering group in Brixworth was responsible for setting the aims and objectives of the village appraisal, and that these reflected the needs of this minority elite rather than the majority, or

indeed even a cross section of the population in the village. Additionally, evidence emerged to indicate that the steering group was not only responsible for the content of the household questionnaire survey (the tool through which the appraisal outcomes were determined) but also for the analysis of the data gathered and the form in which it was presented to the wider community. In the sense that no evidence was presented or discussed at the various steering group meetings to suggest that the wider community had been consulted in the construction of the survey it could be argued that, at best, the members of the steering group felt able to reflect the community (a rather patronising if understandable view) or, at worst that there was a deliberate attempt to mobilise bias in their favour. Further analysis of the process gives a clearer insight into the motives of the group.

44 questions were asked through the household survey, all chosen by members of the steering group between February and May 1994. The key areas for consideration were determined by the steering group to be the countryside and environment, health and social services, emergency and environmental services, retail services, sport, social and entertainment with a few questions to be included on the parish council, population changes, local employment and low cost housing (steering group meeting, 12.1.94). To select the questions, each member of the group was loaned a copy of the ACRE computer software package, which contained a list of all the questions available, and they were left to make an initial choice of their preferred questions. A master list of questions was then drawn up and those that the majority of members selected were used in the survey (steering group meeting, 4.5.94). All the questions (apart from three questions at the end of the survey which were unique to Brixworth village) were taken straight from the ACRE software so the phraseology used is that chosen by the authors of the ACRE package.

Analysis of the author's own research (Table 8.6) indicates that whilst 15 key issues were included in the household survey the number of questions selected by the steering group to consider a particular issue varied from the interest and the expectations of the wider community (for example, the upkeep of footpaths and the village in general or current levels of development in the village, housing, or the school).

Table 8.6 The number of questions for each key issue included in the household survey by the steering group in Brixworth compared to the number of respondents to the author's survey who felt the issue to be important.

Issue	No. of questions in the survey	No. of respondents who felt the issue to be important*
The upkeep of footpaths	10	2
Employment in the village	4	2
Public transport	3	8
Leisure	3	7
Social/demographic issues in the village	3	7
The village in general	3	0
Amenities	2	4
Health provision	2	4
The provision of open spaces	2	2
The local council	2	2
The development of the village	1	17
Housing	1	12
The school	1	11
Youth	1	5
Traffic problems	1	4

*n=67

Furthermore, through the author's own questionnaire survey conducted on a representative cross-section of households in Brixworth an additional 13 issues (Table 8.7) were considered of such importance by the wider community to warrant inclusion in the appraisal survey, but had not been considered directly by the steering group members. Clearly what this indicates is a general failure of the steering committee to reflect the wider views of the community, both in the range of themes covered and in the detail required on particular aspects. In a sense, of course, village appraisals are caught between two stools, trying to capture on the one hand the overall views of the community with a limited and manageable number of questions, yet, on the other hand, trying to explore the details of specific issues which can only be obtained through a number of specifically targeted questions. The Brixworth appraisal demonstrates this dilemma very clearly, with only one question on housing (where a detailed follow-up survey on local housing needs, for example, would be particularly appropriate) yet ten questions on footpaths. It is in this respect that the steering committees can be seen to be manipulating the appraisal process through a series of decisions which reflect their own views as to what is important and

manageable. Indeed, given the danger that any questionnaire can become unmanageable and off-putting if it attempts to explore all the subtleties associated with the local issues identified by the steering group, decisions have to be taken as to which to emphasise and which to play down. These were fully discussed in the steering group meetings, though in the process it was evident that their views were far removed from those of the wider community and it is this which raises questions about the appraisal as a means of channelling a consultation process to reflect the preferences of a minority elite. This is not to suggest any deliberate attempt to manipulate the process, since all the decisions were made in an open forum and as the result of a full discussion amongst steering group members. However, what could have been more reassuring was some evidence that the group had conducted some consultation with residents as a basis for establishing a framework for the questionnaire. In addition, the publication of a 'results' booklet, which contained little more than the aggregate data gathered through the questionnaire survey, was considered by the steering group as an appropriate means by which to publicise the village appraisal, though, in an attempt to save on production costs, only 50 copies were printed (for a population in excess of 4000 and over 1500 households). Though copies were made available at central points such as the library, the fact that the steering committee was in control of the whole process meant that the subtleties of data analysis, such as cross tabulating the findings against particular sections of the population or areas of the village, were avoided. It is in these ways that steering committees become effective 'gatekeepers' to the information provided and how it is presented. Such a process is also reflected in the interpretation of the results and the identification of the RAPs.

Based on the author's survey of the village, many people in the wider community were anxious to see a range of developments in Brixworth, including improved sports facilities, public transport and housing (Table 8.8), yet the appraisal was restricted to a campaign to appropriate a playing field on a four acre plot of land provided by a building company and to pursue the prospect of a second school in the village.

Table 8.7 The issues not included in the village appraisal survey in Brixworth and the number of respondents to the author's survey who felt the issue to be important.

Issue	No. of respondents who felt the issue to be important
Facilities in the village	9
The needs of the community	7
Crime and crime prevention	5
Quality of life in the village	5
Roads	4
The future	4
The past	3
The community	2
The present	2
Wildlife	2
Improvements to the village	1
Village organisations and groups	1
Planning	1
Poverty	1

Under the guidance of a community action group (formed as a spin-off from the appraisal steering group), the four-acre plot of land has been appropriated for use as a playing field. However, this was not an option suggested through the author's survey by wider community members. Furthermore, 80 percent of respondents to the actual village appraisal survey in Brixworth suggested the land should be used for the development of a leisure/sports centre. In addition, both the author's survey and the village appraisal found that a larger proportion of the wider community would have preferred a children's play area to be constructed (57.8 percent in the author's survey and 10 percent in the village appraisal (168 people)), or a community centre to be built (59 percent in the author's survey and 9 percent in the village appraisal (164 people)) on the plot of land, rather than a playing field. Clearly in this situation, power exerted by the steering group and the community action group has resulted in the manipulation of the village appraisal whereby both groups of participants have managed to by-pass the wider view of the community to try and ensure that the outcome is their preferred option of a playing field, rather than the other ideas more widely supported by the population as a whole.

Table 8.8 The developments that the wider community wished for in Brixworth as an outcome of the village appraisal.

Suggested developments	Respondents who wanted the changes (%)
Leisure/sports centre	80.8
Public transport	67.0
More open spaces	63.6
A community centre	59.0
A children's park	57.8
Low-cost housing	53.3
Sheltered accommodation	40.3
Shops	37.0
Council housing	27.6

A second point of interest concerns the issue of social housing, which was raised by so many people through the author's survey as a potential area in which the village could develop in the future (to include low-cost housing (53.3 percent), sheltered accommodation (40.3 percent) and council housing (27.6 percent)). The level of concern from the wider community mirrored that of Sue Verallo, a district councillor and member of the steering group, who lobbied not only for an increase in the number of places available in sheltered accommodation in the area, but also for the building of low cost houses in the parish for local individuals who wished to remain in the area but who could not afford to purchase private accommodation. However, despite her presence at all the steering group meetings, she was either out-voted or out-manoeuvred by arguments such as "Brixworth has already had too much housing development" or "the village appraisal should take a broad approach to a wide range of issues rather than a narrow focus" or "housing strategies are best dealt with by the parish and district councillors in their meetings with the various planning authorities" or "a detailed housing needs survey should be done outside the appraisal exercise". One housing question was put onto the appraisal questionnaire, but such evidence indicates that the majority rule was at play within the steering group itself.

In summary, this examination of some aspects of the appraisal process in Brixworth reveals a wide gap between the perceptions of the steering group and the preferences of the wider

community in terms of the outcomes, whether in terms of the construction of the questionnaire or the processing and presentation of its findings. In this sense, the concept of partnership becomes something of a charade, though ironically, whereas there is evidence that the minority (as represented by the steering group) outweighs the majority (as represented by the community) in the production of 'outcomes', within the steering group the reverse appears to be the case.

It is in just this type of situation that statutory authorities (for example, the local education authority) can justify their application of 'top-down' surveys that seek to create partnerships deemed appropriate to the particular constituency and which are, according to Goodwin (1998), used to 'protect' the least active citizens and deliver what is believed to be in the best interest of the population. However, if this is the case, the village appraisal is merely being encouraged for the sake of 'political correctness' by statutory authorities who want to be seen to be doing the 'right thing' in promoting partnership through local governance, whilst being reassured that they can determine resource requirements in their own way if necessary.

8.4.2 Stoke Albany.

Although the steering group in Stoke Albany was composed of 'elite' members of the community who were individually selected to participate, the evidence thus far has demonstrated that the participation of the wider community has been the primary concern of the group throughout the village appraisal, especially in getting as many people within the community to respond to the questionnaire survey - a 97 percent response rate was achieved. However, whilst the steering group was responsible for deciding the content of the household questionnaire survey, the participation of Tim Bellamy, the Leisure and Recreation Officer at Kettering Borough Council, combined with contributions in the publication of the village appraisal document from the wider community, has ensured that the steering group has not become the sole determinant of the appraisal in Stoke Albany though, as the evidence will illustrate, it is uncertain as to whether a new magistracy has yet to emerge within the village.

The four members of the steering group, using the ACRE computer software package, designed the questionnaire survey. Like Brixworth, the group decided that the best method for choosing the questions to be included in the survey was to examine the list provided with the ACRE package. However, over a series of six meetings it took the group ten months to reach the stage where the questionnaire survey was distributed. Although it contained just 45 questions (from a possible total of 80), the group was conscientious in its approach and wanted to include issues that not only were important to the community but might also provide a way forward for planning in the future. The techniques applied to the designing of the questionnaire survey may have been laborious and time consuming but the group tried to ensure that the best interests of the community were met and that the questionnaire was as representative of the needs of the wider community as possible. In the absence of a public meeting to decide the questions, the steering group held informal consultations with their friends and neighbours and with participating members of other community groups, such as the WI and the bowling club, both of which Christine Prince and Peggy Hulme were members. As a result of this drawn out process of preparation, discussion (within the steering group) and quiet, informal consultation with the community, the questionnaire survey achieved a very high household response rate despite the fact that there were a number of issues included in the survey which were not raised as being particularly important in the wider community and others which were seen as important by the wider community but which were not included. In the case of public transport there was a further complication since the steering group was not keen to include questions in the appraisal on this issue, even though it had a high priority amongst the community at large (Table 8.9).

Table 8.9 The developments that the wider community wished for in Stoke Albany as an outcome of the village appraisal.

Suggested developments	Respondents who wanted the changes (%)*
Improvements to public transport	77.7
Low-cost housing	50.0
Shops	28.5
Leisure facilities	25.0
More open spaces	25.0
A children's park	16.6
Sheltered accommodation	13.3
A community centre	7.6
A golf course	7.6
Council housing	6.6

*n=22

The decision to include eight questions on public transport was the result of pressure from Tim Bellamy, who saw the opportunity to provide evidence to the borough council which might lead to improvements to the existing service. In this instance the steering group considered the partnership with Tim Bellamy (and thus the statutory authority) to be important to the appraisal process within the village even though, to do so, was to compromise on their control over the contents of the questionnaire. What this also does, of course, is to strengthen the argument developed by the statutory authorities that partnership through the appraisal should enable them to have more influence to suggest questions for inclusion in the household survey which can only aid the process of information gathering for the Local Plan process. Interestingly, however, the steering group chose to exclude the majority of the 'transport' information gathered by the survey in the final appraisal document, arguing that it was inappropriate to the style of publication they wished to produce and that, in any case, the information had been made available to the borough through Tim Bellamy and that its purpose had been served. This was also true of 22 other questions, including information on housing and the local council, illustrating again the ways in which a steering group may shape the appraisal document (the product) and therefore the outcomes of the appraisal process. However, just because the information has not been published does not mean that it has not been used, though in such instances the

covert conveyance of information to policy makers does raise questions about the openness of the appraisal process and the potential for manipulation of such data between provider (the community) and receiver (the planner) where the steering group, or individual members of it, act as intermediaries. Thus, despite the evidence, it is hard to judge whether a new 'magistracy' emerged through the appraisal in Stoke Albany because there is little evidence that the steering group encouraged partnership with the community in the way described by Goodwin (1998). Certainly, there are many ways in which the steering group 'appears' to have engaged the wider community, whether through informal discussions locally or through consultation with the local authority, acting on the community's behalf. Furthermore, in the process of preparing the appraisal, 12 members of Stoke Albany's community were recruited to make their special contribution to it, largely the result of their distinctive skill or area of knowledge, but in all these cases the invitations were the gift of the steering group and so under their control, both in terms of who was asked and for what purpose. Thus despite a considerable number of indicators which would suggest the emergence of a 'new magistracy' in the production of the appraisal in Stoke Albany closer examination reveals that much of it is still being manipulated, whether covertly or overtly, by the small minority in the steering group and in this sense the real power still lies in their hands.

8.4.3 Dingley.

The evidence presented thus far concerning Dingley has established that the village appraisal process was dominated by one person, Tony Lucas, who chose not to conduct a household questionnaire survey, but instead to publish an historical document of the village which was completed principally by himself. As a member of the community who actively participated in a number of village organisations (for example, the parish council, the parochial church council, 'Music at Dingley'), Tony believed he was being perfectly reasonable in his approach to the village appraisal, although in actuality it could be seen as another mechanism to enhance his own power in the community.

Tony Lucas's justification for the exclusion of the wider community was based on his

belief, evidently gleaned from his involvement with village organisations and/or his own prejudices, that the community was averse to change and development of any kind, and that the gathering of information about future resource requirements was unnecessary. However, the information gathered from the author's survey (Table 8.10) challenges this suggestion and indicates that at least half of the wider community felt that the future development of the village, such as the provision of shops and an increase in public transport, were the outcomes they would have wanted from an appraisal exercise.

Table 8.10 The developments that the wider community wished for in Dingley as an outcome of the village appraisal.

Suggested developments	Respondents who wanted the changes (%)*
Shops	59.2
An increase in public transport	57.6
More open spaces	36.8
A children's park	34.7
Leisure facilities	30.4
Low-cost housing	20.0
Sheltered accommodation	7.4
Council housing	7.1

n=33

Of course this is not to suggest that Tony Lucas's views are not shared by others in the community, for, as Table 8.10 indicates, approaching half the village did not mention further shopping and public transport provision as a result of an appraisal exercise. Indeed, without the detailed analysis of the pattern of responses amongst the many groups or 'factions' (Cloke and Thrift, 1987, 1990) who currently live in so many villages of rural England, it is very difficult to produce any document using aggregate data which does not appear to threaten the way of life of some who have chosen to live in a particular community. If disaggregated data is to be published (a rarity amongst appraisals) then all it does is further reveal the evident differences and divisions within rural society and the entrenched positions about 'development' which all may hold. For these reasons one can begin to see Tony Lucas's argument in providing a non-controversial agenda, avoiding the issue of change by denying an arena for discussion about the future of the village. He

stated that:

“I think they are very proud of what they’ve got and they don’t want to see anything ruin it. They are quite happy to leave it that way. You know they had the shop, they are all reasonably active, you know there are half that are older and still need the bus, but most of them have a car, at least one, most of them no matter what their age are mobile so they can go to (Market) Harborough to do their shopping so they don’t need a shop. So it’s difficult to do an appraisal from the point of view of saying, “what do you need”, you ask them and they say they need to be left alone” (1995).

In terms of outcomes, this attitude illustrates three points. First, the charismatic nature of Tony Lucas’s personality and his involvement in so many areas of Dingley life, together with the fact that his anti-development views will coincide with other recent, middle class movers to Dingley, has meant that he represents a powerful, maybe minority lobby of ‘stoppers’ in Dingley for whom the prospect of any form of change is a threat to their rural idyll. The fact that he is a newcomer, a professional, car owning commuter (to Sussex on a daily basis) merely confirms the image emerging in much of rural geography literature that the negative idyll, the absence of shops, public transport, schools and new housing development, is as much of an attraction to newcomers as the other perceived benefits of rural life such as neighbourliness and open countryside. Related to this process is a need amongst newcomers to maintain the roots of the village and this is why so many appraisals are turned into historical documents about the village and the disposition of properties within it. It is also manifested in the way in which so many newcomers rediscover the previous use of their dwelling and incorporate it into its name – ‘The Old Bakehouse’, or ‘The Old Hare and Hounds’ for example. According to Newby (1980), this forms part of the process of ‘rural, retrospective regret’, a search for a rural past and the need to hang on to what were seen as the virtues of rural living. There is no doubt that to some people such as Tony Lucas the fascination with local history is a part of the decision to move to the countryside and what better than to hijack the appraisal process to complete the task, particularly when there are so many local people willing and prepared to contribute. Ironically, of course, their participation in an agenda shaped by others denies them the chance to contribute to a process which could produce outcomes of value to them. Much of the research produced by Paul Cloke and others as part of the ‘Rural Lifestyles Project’ in

England and Wales has drawn attention to the need to explore both the qualitative and quantitative aspects of the lives of people living in the countryside and the impact of changes in service and amenity provision upon their lifestyles (see for example Cloke *et al*, 1997). Such research has highlighted the changes implicit in the sweeping statements such as those given by Tony Lucas, but what is of greater concern is that where an appraisal might provide an opportunity for people to raise such issues they are being denied the chance to do so. In other words, the support of the wider community for the kind of appraisal which Tony Lucas wants to produce (as interpreted by their participation in its production), has been seen as support for his point of view about what the outcomes of the appraisal should be. Clearly there are dangers here if the appraisal is to be presented as the voice of the community and its needs, yet it is being shaped by someone who is convinced that 'he knows best' and where there are many, both newcomers and locals, who would appear to agree.

8.4.4 Summary.

The evidence has demonstrated that the process of the village appraisal has been very different in the three study villages and that there is no simple answer as to whether the village appraisal enhances the power of the minority elite or if there is a new magistracy emerging. What has emerged is a complex picture of a process, which is being promoted as a straightforward mechanism to help communities define their priorities for the future, yet is producing a whole series of situations that appear to be individual to a locality depending on the contingent characteristics of the steering group and the specific agenda which is followed. Indeed, the only thing which appears to be clear about the situations in the three study villages, according to the summary of evidence in Table 8.11, is a question mark against the idea introduced by Goodwin (1998) that a new magistracy is emerging across rural England through the process of local governance, based on the evidence that the appraisals in each village failed to empower all citizens within the community to play an equal part in deciding the future of their locality. There is no doubt that the process of appraisal production has involved some devolution of involvement or participation to the local community. Thus in all cases:

1. The appraisal has been produced by people within the village, to an agenda where they had an input;
2. The appraisal has widened the involvement of local people, whether through completing a questionnaire survey or writing some of the sections or contributing to the production process.

Table 8.11 Some aspects of steering group activity in the appraisal process in Brixworth, Stoke Albany and Dingley.

Criteria	Brixworth	Stoke Albany	Dingley
Was a steering group formed to produce the village appraisal?	Yes	Yes	No
Was there a dominant character that pursued the appraisal alone?	No	No	Yes
Were the steering group hand picked?	Yes	Yes	-
Did the steering group have authority over the choice of questions in the household survey?	Yes	No	-
Was a partnership formed with the statutory authority to enable a broader input from the planners in the survey?	No	Yes	No
Was the steering group responsible for analysing the questionnaire survey?	Yes	Yes	-
Did the steering group interpret the needs of the community because of the questionnaire survey?	Yes	No	-
Did the survey reflect the wishes of the wider community?	No	Yes	-
Did the steering group/dominant character demonstrate the power they held over the community?	Yes	Yes	Yes
Was the steering group representative of the wider community?	No	Yes	-
Was there evidence of a new magistracy emerging?	No	No	No
Did the village appraisal enhance the power of the minority elite?	Yes	No	Yes
Did the village appraisal give 'power to the people' and enable them to control the decision making process as envisaged by Arnstein (1969).	No	No	No

However, only in Stoke Albany was the idea of governance implemented to any degree through the partnership between the steering group and the statutory authority to deliver a questionnaire survey that was both appropriate to define the needs of the community and also aid the process of information gathering for the Local Plan process. In Brixworth, the steering group took sole responsibility for defining the questionnaire, analysing the results and interpreting the needs of the community, retaining the majority of information and thus enhancing the power of the group rather than sharing responsibility with the wider community and the statutory authorities through partnership. In Dingley, Tony Lucas did

not facilitate the participation of the wider community through the creation of a steering group or the production of a household survey and ensured that his agenda for the appraisal was satisfied and that he remained in control of the appraisal process in the village.

8.5 What have been the achievements of conducting village appraisals?

At a national level, the data gathered from the author's survey of the RCCs found that the number of outcomes achieved as a result of the village appraisal were fairly equally divided between the two categories of community specific and authority specific. 54.1 percent of the outcomes were found to be community specific and 45.9 percent were found to be authority specific (from the 41 identified outcomes (Figure 8.2)). This information corresponds with the evidence found by Moseley *et al* (1996 (b)) in the study of 422 village appraisal outcomes in 44 villages across Gloucestershire and Oxfordshire; 54 percent of appraisal outcomes in Gloucestershire and 52 percent in Oxfordshire were community specific, representing an agenda for rural community action in southern England in the mid 1990s. However, in contrast to the findings outlined in this thesis, the research by Moseley *et al* (1996 (b)) was based exclusively on the outcomes as suggested by the steering group members rather than by "a reasonable cross section of the community..." (Francis, 1982; 349), so the outcomes can only be regarded as a reflection of the steering groups agenda for rural community action. The presence of networks of actors (as explained in chapters 6 and 7) with multiple agendas in local governance means that many different outcomes will be both expected and experienced, and as such the formulation of an agenda for rural community action which satisfies all participants is perhaps unlikely. In exploring the outcomes or achievements of communities through the village appraisal in Northamptonshire, this final section of the chapter will analyse how such achievements engage (or not) with the concept of partnership, given the potential conflict which is inevitable in local governance, whereby one actor's opinion of an outcome may not necessarily be accepted as such by another.

For the purposes of this section and in keeping with the realist approach to this study, evidence will be used from the macro scale survey of the RCCs in order to provide a broad

overview of the situation across rural England, and from the local level survey of the steering groups and parish councils in Northamptonshire. In doing this, this section will examine whether the village appraisal successfully acts as a vehicle to:

- increase the awareness of rural people to issues that affect their locality;
- heighten opportunities for greater participation.

8.5.1 Does the village appraisal act as a vehicle to increase the awareness of rural people to issues that affect their locality?

Most RCCs believe that the village appraisal increases the awareness of local people to issues affecting their locality because it alleviates the problems associated with non-participation, and can, provide all members of a community with the opportunity to participate in the household questionnaire survey (Oxfordshire RCC, 1995). Indeed, in a national survey of 29 RCCs, over 90 percent believed that the appraisal increased community awareness and none considered that it had made no difference at all.

Of course the varying nature of the appraisal will have an impact on this conclusion and the degree of awareness for local issues would ultimately “vary from community to community” (Kent RCC, 1995) “depending on the particular parish” (Norfolk RCC, 1995). As Hertfordshire RCC pointed out, the level of local awareness would very much:

“depend on the type of appraisal carried out, whether it is a historical document or a local action plan” (1995).

This view was based on the understanding that an historical appraisal would focus on the past life of the community rather than tackling the controversial issues that affected the community in the present or which may do so in the future. In such cases, the ability of the appraisal to increase awareness of local issues would be limited. Furthermore, since the use of the village appraisal to increase local awareness depends on the agenda of the steering group, a group which did not wish to encourage debate about important local issues would not include this as an outcome of the appraisal and consequently the awareness of individuals would not be increased.

Within Northamptonshire, however, there has been an emphasis upon more historical type appraisals, particularly in the smaller villages, which has also stifled local debate about future resource requirements. However, there is other evidence which indicates that the lack of awareness for local issues also stems from the citizens themselves and their attitude towards the community and community life in general. Indeed, Stephen Harding of Stoke Albany steering group remarked that:

“there are factions within the village that take no notice of what’s going on and always feel that people have to go to them as opposed to them going to other people” (1995).

Likewise, John Dawkins of Brixworth steering group was of the opinion that:

“some people use Brixworth as a dormitory, they sleep here and don’t do much else, they won’t have any interest. There are also those people who were born and bred here and will think of the appraisal as an intrusion in their privacy... they will resist the appraisal” (1995).

However, according to Keith Howells, also of Brixworth steering group, it is just:

“a case of sticking it out, making yourself as much a pain in the backside as necessary and just keep on at them”. Keith believes that “the village is quite mobilised now in the sense of awareness because of such a tactic” (1995).

By contrast, in the village of Wootton, the majority of residents resisted an intense campaign to increase local awareness through the village appraisal. Eunice Brownlee, of Wootton steering group believes that even after the village appraisal:

“a few do the work and everyone else is prepared to sit back and watch because it is a dormitory area and they aren’t aware. Generally they don’t think there is anything to do – they get up, go to work and come back” (1994).

What emerges from this evidence is a general frustration concerning the ability of the appraisal to generate awareness. Of course this is not to suggest that people are apathetic to local issues or local campaigns to support a by-pass, resist development or object to a closure of a school or pub or shop, but that the appraisal is seen as rather remote and failing to engage their interest and attention. If someone, or a group, is prepared to take on the

task of producing the appraisal and one is only asked to complete a questionnaire survey, then let them do it. Indeed, except where issues impact directly on their lives, the view seems to be that people do not wish to become too involved in local issues and in this sense the broad parish based approach adopted by many appraisals not only reinforces this view but also the view of several local authorities (like Northamptonshire LEA on the Brixworth school issue) that only those directly involved (i.e. with children at the school) should have their views canvassed.

8.5.2 Does the village appraisal act as a vehicle to heighten opportunities for greater participation?

According to Ian Nelson, the VAO for Northamptonshire, the village appraisal is a 'gateway' to further opportunities for participation in local organisations and that the completion of the appraisal should merely act as a springboard for further involvement. This view was supported in the national survey of RCCs, where over three quarters (78 percent) stated that village appraisals had led to greater levels of participation amongst those involved in their production.

Evidence for Northamptonshire suggests a more complex process at local level, particularly in the three villages, where in general terms a low level of post-appraisal participation was found. The data collected would suggest that the development of active citizens in the county is not as widespread as hoped.

The research has previously indicated (chapter 7) that more than half (56 percent) of all participators in the appraisal steering groups in Northamptonshire were from the middle or upper social class groups and many of these individuals were active citizens prior to their participation in the village appraisal. Indeed, as Table 8.12 illustrates, almost all the 'elite' steering group members of the three study villages were actively involved in at least one organisation within the village prior to their involvement in the appraisal. However, what the data also shows is that most were just members or representatives as opposed to leaders of the organisations (the minority within the elite) and as such their membership of the

village appraisal steering group gave them a power which they may not have had in their previous roles as members. Even so, as 'typical participators' in the planning process, the village appraisal has made little difference to their overall rates of participation (Abram *et al*, 1996; Kearns, 1992; Malpass, 1994).

Table 8.12 The nature of the participation of the steering group members in village organisations in the three study villages.

Steering group member	Village	Organisations in which they participated	Nature of their participation
John Dawkins	Brixworth	Parochial Church Council The Thomas Row charity History society Parish council	Member A trustee A member Representative
Mandy Dawkins	Brixworth	Village hall committee History society	A member A member
Harvey Fox	Brixworth	Parish council	Representative
Keith Howells	Brixworth	None	None
David Hymas	Brixworth	The village organisations list	Author
Jane Neill	Brixworth	Parish council The community newspaper	Representative Distribution manager
Linda Parrot	Brixworth	The local Liberal Democratic Party Wives guild	A member A member
Keith Parrot	Brixworth	Parish council The local Liberal Democratic Party	Representative A member
Pam Petit	Brixworth	WI The Wednesday club The flower guild	A member A member A member
Sue Verrallo	Brixworth	Parish council District council Community centre committee Village hall committee	Representative Representative A member A member
Stephen Harding	Stoke Albany	Parish council	Representative
Peggy Hulme	Stoke Albany	WI WRVS Village hall committee Bowling club The evergreens committee Stoke feast	A member A member A member A member A member Organiser
Christine Prince	Stoke Albany	Community car scheme WI The board of Marlow House Stoke feast	A volunteer driver A member A trustee Organiser
Frank Scuffham	Stoke Albany	Local vicar	
Tony Lucas	Dingley	Music at Dingley Parochial Church Council Church Parish council	Organiser A member A member Representative

There are exceptions, of course. Keith Howells, a former non-participator in Brixworth, became involved with the village appraisal and this has certainly changed his level of participation and his attitude towards community life. Indeed, until he met District Councillor Sue Verallo, a fellow steering group member, and:

“she dragged me into things...” the only thing Keith “knew about Brixworth was the next door neighbours and that was it”, now, he is “quite involved and on the whole I enjoy doing it, it’s nice to put something back into the village” (1995).

Indeed, he is now actively involved in the publication of a village information booklet and the BRAG (Brixworth Recreational Amenities Group) committee which was created as a result of the village appraisal.

In sharp contrast to this, Linda Parrot’s involvement in the village appraisal made her realise that her participation in community activities was taking up more of her time than she wished and it would be difficult for her to sustain such active participation. Consequently, Linda believed that further involvement “was not necessary...I don’t need to get involved with everything” (1995).

Evidence gathered relating to the wider community also demonstrates, that contrary to the findings of the author’s survey of the RCCs, there is little to suggest that the village appraisal heightens an individual’s willingness for greater participation in local organisations.

Indeed, the view in Brixworth prior to undertaking the village appraisal was that people “just haven’t bothered, just don’t want to know...don’t go to the village get-togethers and there’s not much of a community spirit” (Keith Parrot, 1994), but that by implementing the appraisal, Keith Parrot hoped to “inspire some community theory”, foster a sense of community togetherness and get people more involved in community life. Likewise, Jan Neill (also of Brixworth) believed that the village appraisal would be an opportunity for people to “contribute something and be part of the village” (1994). Since its completion however, the village appraisal has generally been regarded as an “historical document”

(Keith Howells, 1995) and has not, according to Sue Verrallo, increased the levels of community participation amongst members of the wider community because:

“it’s very hard to do that. I know people who have lived here for four or five years and haven’t even been into the post office...they dash off in the mornings to town, shop at the big hyper-markets on the edge of town and go away at weekends” (1995).

The situation is very similar in the parish of Pattishall also in Northamptonshire, where, according to Mike Bailey the chairman of the appraisal steering group, whilst “it’s difficult... my inclination is to say that I don’t think participation did increase” after the village appraisal (1995). This was not so much due to the historical document that was produced, as there was enough interest from community members to sell 500 copies of the appraisal documents, but more to the nature of the people living within the parish who were essentially non-participants. As Mike Bailey stated:

“50 percent of the village is run from Hodge Close...the WI is run from here, the parish hall is and the parish council [because] 1 in 10 households travel 20 miles or more and 50 percent of those travel to London”.

In contrast, the village appraisal in Little Houghton, despite its historical bias, was considered to have had a positive influence on the levels of community participation. Jim Welsh, chairman of the appraisal steering group indicated that a “tremendous amount of community spirit and a greater awareness” was gained because of the village appraisal (1995). Indeed, the appraisal was perceived to be:

“...a great social occasion. It created a tremendous feeling and atmosphere in the village”.

However, Little Houghton was seen as a close-knit community where citizen participation was frequently very high and where “most activities in the village were very well supported”. Hence, there was little surprise when the appraisal encouraged further active citizenship and:

“focused interest on the community...bringing the community together” (1995).

The village of Croughton on the other hand, produced an appraisal that specifically targeted local planners. Trevor Davis, parish councillor and person in charge of the appraisal (not chairperson, because “quite purposely, I refused to be chairperson”), saw the initiative as an opportunity for “producing visionary things that are not to do with repairing pot holes” (1995). In this way, the appraisal would be considered a good example of local governance in action; it was conceived as a community-led initiative, which resulted in the implementation of a number of tangible development projects. For example:

“the village has retained ownership of the old school, there is a parish room which has come out of it...the second one was bringing of gas to the village...we are looking at the possibility of a village hall. We’ve also been invited to participate as an outpost in the integrated information services project which the county has running”.

Nevertheless, there was a major problem within the village that Trevor Davies described as “inertia” and regardless of “the couple of follow ons, the village appraisal still hasn’t been able to generate momentum and participation”. This is because there was a general perception of a history of failed initiatives within the village which, it seems, gave Trevor Davies a problem “convincing people that we were serious about producing a quality product and process”. Moreover, there were:

“a lot of people in the village who have their own lives and have a lot of things on...and those people don’t actually take an interest in the village”.

Consequently, the village appraisal has not increased the levels of community participation because those non-participants in the community are either unaware that opportunities exist to participate in village activities or they choose not to because of the image of failure amongst those initiatives which have been introduced.

In Bulwick, a village in East Northamptonshire, two appraisals have been undertaken over the last ten years, both of which aimed to safeguard the existing shops and services in the village and show support for new low cost housing to enable young local people to remain living in the village. The parish council wanted to increase the sense of community in the village and get people to participate in community activities, and believed that attracting newcomers to the village was the best way because newcomers were most:

“likely to be socially minded, you know join in and support local things”
(Reverend Wilson, chairperson of Bulwick steering group, 1995).

However, when the second appraisal was undertaken it was realised that “the situation hadn’t really altered, in fact, it’s rather separated us all at present”. As Reverend Wilson explained:

“for one reason or another...practically all the people that appeared haven’t joined in very much...you tend to get people coming who don’t contribute very much”.

Consequently, Reverend Wilson is quite cynical about the impact that the village appraisal can have upon community participation and the ethos of ‘community togetherness’. As he stated:

“I’m doubtful whether that sort of thing could have an immediate effect. My own feeling is that if you produce something like this it may take some people time to think and find other ways of doing things together. One of the problems with village life is that the more dynamic ideas tend to rest in a fairly limited number of persons and it so happens that in this village most of them got passed over and most of the socially aware newcomers are quite young and involved with young children...and you tend at that stage in life to be more concerned with your own life”.

Although the extracts presented above are from just five villages that have undertaken appraisals in Northamptonshire, they illustrate that the impact of the village appraisal on community participation and active citizenship is mixed. Moreover, it is apparent that it is not so much the nature and process of participation nor the type of village appraisal produced which inhibits further participation by the wider community; rather, it is the characteristics of the individuals within the village and their wish to be empowered to participate in the planning process. Thus, it would seem that, contrary to the general views of the RCCs, the village appraisal may have little impact upon community participation unless the participants were either previously active in other village activities, in which case the appraisal is charged with mobilising bias in favour of the participating rural elite, or the participants are the type to have the social, technical and communicative wherewithal to engage in the planning process – “the critical arena for middle class...activity” (Abram

et al, 1996: 355). For the wider community, or the 'typical non-participator', their involvement with local governance is considered to be short lived and limited to their rather passive participation in the village appraisal questionnaire survey, in which case the village appraisal fails to heighten their opportunity for greater participation and they are seldom motivated to become active participators.

8.6 Conclusion.

This chapter set out to explore the notion of outcomes associated with village appraisal activity, distinguishing between those which are the tangible products and those less-tangible outcomes associated with the process of conducting an appraisal. Information was presented from the three study villages, placed in the context of wider survey information from Northamptonshire and nationwide.

It is evident that village appraisals in Northamptonshire are being undertaken in a wide variety of ways and to a wide variety of agendas, often resulting in the culmination of a 'wish list' of tangible, community specific and authority specific recommended action points. However, because the majority of villages/parishes have actually opted out of the appraisal process in the county, many problems are being created for those planning authorities who may wish to incorporate appraisal findings in their Local Plan process when they are only getting a partial or very variable response from the districts they represent. Additional problems are caused because communities undertaking the village appraisal are not required to consider the wider strategic contexts within which the local authorities are bounded (for example, the Local Plan and Structure Plan process which are dictated largely by central government) and within which their so called 'wish lists' are placed. Consequently, expectations for community development are falsely raised and rural communities become disenchanted with the processes of governance and apprehensive about forming subsequent partnerships with statutory authorities. This perhaps explains why many planners and, indeed, local communities in Northamptonshire are most comfortable with the process of the village appraisal when they tackle non-controversial issues, either producing historical studies or gathering useful statistical information or

factual data about the community. In this case, effective partnerships can be formed in which the planners recommend the addition of questions to the household survey that are of benefit to them in their decision making and policy documents. Nevertheless, because many villages/parishes are wary of the village appraisal process, and see it not as a policy document at all, but as a means of recording the history of the village, they are avoiding its potential role of developing partnerships for resource delivery, particularly in those smaller villages where any proposals for change (usually seen as development) are viewed as a threat to the community in which so many newcomers have chosen to live. Invariably, other methods have been chosen by which communities can satisfy their limited agendas, especially in rural Northamptonshire (which is not an RDA and does not qualify for European LEADER 5b funding), such as housing needs surveys or bids to Rural Action to undertake environmental improvements in the village. In doing this, rural communities consider themselves as better placed to satisfy their own resource requirements by undertaking projects that do not require the participation of the planning authorities whilst also ensuring that the community, albeit often under the auspices of an 'elite' steering group, remain in control of the development.

What the research has also suggested is inconclusive evidence that village appraisals have achieved anything in concrete, tangible terms for rural communities in Northamptonshire. For example, the Rural Wheels project in Woodford Halse highlighted the imbalance of power through partnerships developed in this case, between Oxford Regional Health Authority, Northampton County Council, voluntary organisations such as Help the Aged and the local community. The evidence indicated that, whilst this voluntary driver scheme was a success for the local community, with the day-to-day responsibility for running and working the scheme remaining within their hands, the financial power in terms of the funding support remains firmly in the hands of the local authority. In King's Sutton, the village appraisal may have led to the formation of partnerships between the community, the statutory authorities, the voluntary sector and local businesses to obtain funds to build much needed (as identified through the appraisal) health facilities and sports centre combined, but in so doing the community has been divided and the consensus lost because the new building is to be built on the site of the current Memorial Hall which would be

demolished. Furthermore, the village appraisal raised expectations amongst the community in the village of Overstone, because despite the wish to install traffic calming devices in the village no partnership has been formed with the Highways Agency. This is similar to the situation in Great Cransley where the appraisal also indicated the wish for traffic calming measures in the village. A community action group attempted to form a partnership with the Highways Agency, but the Agency has (to date) failed to take any action of the information and the community feels their work on the appraisal and subsequent traffic monitoring has been in vain.

Finally, there has been clear intention expressed both in the previous Conservative government's White Paper (1995) and the present Labour government's strategy prior to the publication of its White Paper (1999) that the appraisal is one means by which local people can engage as active participants in the decision making process at the local level, thus creating what is seen as a 'new magistracy'. The evidence here suggests that there is still a long way to travel along this path, and that active citizenship, at least in appraisal terms, tends to be centred in the hands of a small elite already active in local organisations, surrounded for the most part by apathetic and disinterested individuals. This raises a number of issues. First, the shift towards local governance is generating not so much a new magistracy but new power brokers in rural society who, through mechanisms such as the village appraisal, are able to set agendas for developments within the village which can be achieved outside the planning process. This is becoming increasingly evident in much of rural Britain, such as in environmental schemes developed through Rural Action, or affordable housing schemes on exceptions sites (outside the planning envelopes) under Planning Policy Guidance, Note 3. In many cases these new power brokers can be the parish council, in other cases they are not and, indeed, the two may be quite separate bodies, evidently representing a single village. The second concern is how these new brokers may be seen to be reflecting the community as a whole, thus achieving a new magistracy by default. However, as this study has indicated, detailed analysis of the appraisal process questions such a conclusion and reveals the potential for a small elite, for whatever purpose, to impose its views on all aspects of the appraisal from the construction of the survey to the participation of local peoples in its compilation and to the presentation

of conclusions. Whilst this is not to suggest any form of conspiracy to deceive, what is of concern is the somewhat patronising view of some that they know best, that they know what a community thinks, or that they view the community as apathetic or disinterested and that they are best placed, therefore, to shape the appraisal in their image. What this has done, it appears, is to raise the suspicions both of many statutory authorities and local communities so that appraisals are either ignored or not even carried out. Not surprisingly, therefore, the outcome for many has been the production of a historical study, non-controversial and acceptable to all and where newcomers and locals can all have a contribution to make.

Chapter nine

Conclusions

9.1 Introduction.

A key development in the decision making process in recent years has been the increased involvement of the local community. The village appraisal has been a particularly popular means of stimulating such activity, with evidence that over 1500 have now been carried out in Britain in the last 15 years (Moseley, 1997). Given the scale of appraisal production there is much to be gained by an analysis of the distribution of appraisals at a variety of scales and an examination of those factors which help explain why appraisals have been carried out in some places and not others. By the same token, appraisals can be studied in terms of their content, and their outcomes and recommendations. But there is another agenda, which raises the study of village appraisals to a higher level, and that is the one which sees the appraisal as a device for engaging local people in a process of participation and partnership in the resolution of local issues. In this sense appraisals are seen not just as surveys 'of the people, by the people, for the people' but also a means of empowering local people with the opportunity to shape the future of their rural communities. The term 'governance' has been coined to describe these new relationships between the statutory system, voluntary associations, agencies and individual actors, though what it begs are a whole series of questions concerning how participation actually takes place within rural communities and how all the agencies interrelate with each other under these new arrangements. Given the fact that many rural areas are only just beginning to realise the impact and significance of 'governance', many issues are raised which point to the need for further research activity in this area. It is the purpose of this chapter to indicate particular avenues for such research, though it is also important to reflect on the findings of the work which has been conducted in this thesis. For these reasons the chapter is divided into four sections:

- summary of findings;
- implications of findings;
- future research;
- reflections on the research methodology.

9.2 Summary of findings.

In Chapter 1 the author identified six objectives to be targeted in the thesis.

1. To place the village appraisal within the debate concerning the shift in the relationship between the state and locality under the 'New Right' agenda of the 1980s in order to understand how the village appraisal 'fits' into the philosophy of local governance and to examine the rise in the importance of the village appraisal as a means of empowering rural communities and promoting active citizenship.
2. To examine the meanings attached to the definition of a village appraisal and the ways in which these meanings are shaped by the various actors in the appraisal process and how these in turn shape the appraisal as a product.
3. To analyse geographical variations in the uptake of village appraisals nationally and with local case studies and to explore the role of the contingent effects of local people in shaping this distribution.
4. To explore the meanings attached to the concept of participation and to investigate, through detailed case studies of three villages, the process of participation in the village appraisal with a critical evaluation of:
 - the representation of the community through the selection, role and function of the elite and powerful steering group;
 - the structure and content of the final document.
 - the representation of the wider community (households and individuals) and their empowerment through the village appraisal questionnaire survey;
5. To evaluate the success of the flexible partnerships, which are central to the concept of local governance, and examine if the village appraisal can be used as an effective tool to promote rural community development.
6. To evaluate the power of participation in the village appraisal and its ability to convert rural citizens into the new partners of government.

It is appropriate, therefore, to revisit each of these objectives in turn, and to review and reflect on them in the light of the findings of the research.

In response to the first objective, the examination of the uptake of the village appraisal both nationally and in the study area of Northamptonshire has revealed that this initiative fits neatly into the 'New Right' agenda of the 1980s Conservative government. A lessening of government intervention in the rural planning process, in favour of more locally based procedures, placed much greater emphasis on the role played by rural citizens in the decisions affecting resource allocation. In redefining the rural planning process in this way, the Conservative government wished to harness what it saw as the long nurtured resources of rural communities, using tactics such as self-help and active citizenship to introduce a strategy which could reduce direct expenditure in rural areas. This formalisation of active citizenship 'put power in the hands of the people' and encouraged them to develop flexible 'bottom-up' partnerships between public bodies, private organizations and the voluntary sector in order to identify and meet their needs. At the same time, this shift from local government to local governance made professional planners and elected representatives more accountable for their actions. The village appraisal is one mechanism that fits into the philosophy of local governance, and has been encouraged to:

"help communities to define their priorities, identify what they can do to meet them and target limited resources effectively" (DoE/MAFF, 1995:17).

Recent research by Moseley (1997) found that more than 1500 appraisals had been undertaken in England and Wales since 1977 involving over one million rural people. Despite evidence that appraisal type activities have been undertaken in rural areas since the turn of the twentieth century, the recent growth in the popularity of the village appraisal is testament to its supposed ability to foster community participation and active citizens in rural areas. At its best, the village appraisal enables each individual over the age of 11 the opportunity to express their views and opinions confidentially about the present and future of their village through the completion of a household questionnaire survey. Additional opportunities for participation are also available, be it on the steering group, at public meetings or as a contributor to the appraisal document. Support for the village appraisal from two leading 'rural' organizations, the RCCs and ACRE, has also boosted delivery of village appraisals as a means to empower rural people, whilst the development of a new

version of the computer software programme for village appraisals, devised by ACRE, Gloucestershire Rural Community Council and Cheltenham and Gloucester College of Higher Education, is indicative of the long-term commitment of key national agencies to this initiative, as a tool for rural planning and grass roots development.

The second objective required an examination of the meanings attached to the village appraisal by the various participators in the process. A review of the literature during the early stages of this thesis revealed the existence of a multitude of definitions for the village appraisal, each one seeming to represent the agenda of a given actor or set of actors in the process. Nevertheless, a widely held view is the one offered by Sulaiman who described the village appraisal as a:

“type of ‘stock taking’ of the village or community. Villagers, parish councils and local societies can get together, to collect information about the village, which can be used to assess life today, how it has changed and look forward to future prospects” (1988: 76).

Subsequent evaluations by the author, based upon national and local evidence, has suggested that a diverse array of actors are active in the village appraisal process (statutory authorities, public and private institutions, voluntary sector agencies, and community members) and each actor involved may have a particular agenda for development based on their assessment of needs for the future. Where appraisals have been conducted as part of a bid for structural funds from an outside agency, such as the Rural Development Commission or the European Union, some degree of agreement has been reached, if only because the bids (appraisals) have to be conducted in a particular way, but in counties where structural funds are not available to help rural development, such as Northamptonshire, no such rules apply. It would be expected, therefore, that no single agenda would exist which exactly defines the village appraisal process, primarily because one actor will not necessarily accept what another determines as a definition of the village appraisal. This was demonstrated by Wellingborough Borough Council. The planning officials defined a village appraisal as a document pointing to the future that was “well written and researched” (Wellingborough Borough Planning Officer, 1991). However, to Mears Ashby parish council, a village within this mainly urban borough, an appraisal was considered to be “a historical document documenting the past and present life in Mears Ashby” (Mears Ashby Parish Council, 1995).

Moreover, the case studies from Northamptonshire used through this thesis have suggested that the definition or agenda of the village appraisal is influential in shaping its product. The evidence has indicated the existence of a small number of actors in the village appraisal process, who are competing to set their agenda. The information gathered from participant observation in the three study villages, and interviews with key individuals, revealed that the agendas of the planning authority, the Village Appraisals Officer or the community itself may appear to be shared, yet in reality they are often in conflict and confrontational. In other words, whilst all three may agree that the appraisal is a 'good thing', involving local people in stocktaking exercises in their own localities, exactly how this was to be done revealed considerable disagreement, particularly where the wills of strong-minded individuals were concerned. Notwithstanding the strong support from ACRE and the RCCs, including the provision of questionnaires and supporting software for their analysis, the view of the national body is that each village should decide for itself how it should be done. And yet there is clear evidence from Northamptonshire that appraisals are not recognised unless they adhere to the national model, or the interpretation of it as defined by the county's VAO, whilst the various district councils also have their own views as to what the appraisal should contain and the standards by which they should be conducted before they are even prepared to consider the evidence within their planning processes.

The third objective was to consider the geographical uptake of village appraisals and, in doing this, the author outlined the uneven distribution of the village appraisal activity. At the national level 1,070 village appraisals were recorded by RCCs across rural England between 1970 and 1996. Over this period a growing number of appraisals were undertaken, from 184 between 1970 and 1986 to 415 appraisals between 1991 and 1994, though the pattern of development varied from one county to another: some (for example, Bedfordshire, Essex and Kent) reached a peak in appraisal production during the late 1980s followed by a reduction in more recent years. Such national trends are the result of a number of external forces which play a part in encouraging the uptake of village appraisals in particular localities. The absence of returns from several counties made detailed statistical analysis impossible, though the use of the Spearman correlation did reveal

statistically significant positive associations between the take-up of appraisals and levels of rurality, a relationship recently reinforced by the designation of many remote rural areas to Objective 5b status or Rural Development Areas and the use of village appraisals in such areas to attract external funding. In addition there was evidence that several rural counties in southern England which have experienced rapid population growth as part of the recent 'rural turnaround' had high levels of appraisal activity, whilst a further key factor was the presence of charismatic individuals or 'animateurs' in stimulating the appraisal process at the local level.

Northamptonshire, for example has long been seen as a particularly active county in the development of initiatives to encourage rural people to play a part in local decision-making process. In more recent years, this commitment to local participation was reinforced through the publication in 1987 of the 'Parish 2000' guidance package for village appraisals. The additional recruitment of a Village Appraisals Officer in 1990, to encourage uptake of village appraisals and the empowerment of rural people, further illustrated the commitment of key structures in the county to community participation and local governance. However, despite these mechanisms being in place to encourage uptake of the appraisal, contingent effects are really important in shaping the distribution of village appraisals. For example, a parish-wide survey conducted by the author revealed that issues concerning community participation and local demand for the appraisal are key to the uptake of the appraisal. It was found that 80 villages had no interest whatever in undertaking an appraisal at any time in the future. Several reasons suggested by respondents demonstrated the contingent role of local people, including the apparent apathy from the wider community towards participation, a lack of volunteers to participate, disinterest on the part of the parish council and a lack of vision generally, within the community. Nevertheless over 65 appraisals have been completed in Northamptonshire since 1970 though with noticeable concentrations in the 'more rural' districts of the county and towards the smaller villages. Such a distribution reflects not just the approach of particular local authorities, such as the positive support in East Northamptonshire and a much less committed view in Corby, but also the enthusiasm of particular individuals or groups, in which the zeal of Tony Lucas in Dingley was especially crucial. What was also significant in shaping the geographical distribution was the role of Ian Nelson, the Village

Appraisals Officer for Northamptonshire ACRE. He maintained a clear strategy for encouraging village appraisal activity and this involved targeting promotional material at villages with a minimum of 100 households and a maximum of 1000. He argued that there was an optimum size of village that could protect the confidentiality of individual responses but be small enough for the community to manage. As a result, the Village Appraisals Officer had an important impact on the distribution of the appraisals in the county.

The fourth objective was to explore the meanings attached to the concept of participation. The critical evaluation of the participation process in three study villages found that participation was a selective process, dominated by the elite and powerful steering group. Indeed, the village appraisal process in Brixworth started with the recruitment of 10 steering group members, five men and five women. This 'hand picked' group, half of whom were parish councillors and the other half members of the community, were selected by Keith Parrot, an active member of the local liberal democrat party. Keith Parrot's agenda was to produce a 'big and glossy' marketable product so his selection of key participators reflected his wish for 'product participation'. Once established the steering group was responsible for setting the aims and objectives of the village appraisal and composing the household questionnaire survey. The survey was completed by 64 percent of the community, though as the follow-up survey of households and individuals in Brixworth indicated there are major doubts as to whether the survey contained questions on those issues of wider concern to the community as a whole or whether it specially excluded the views of significant elements of that community, such as young people. Of course, this is not to argue that the steering group deliberately manipulated the process to meet their own needs, rather that certain views shaped the conducting, completion and publication of the appraisal. In other words, a high response rate to a questionnaire survey can give spurious authenticity to its findings if that questionnaire has been shaped and structured by the steering group rather than the community as a whole. In this sense, the author would support the view of Arnstein (1969) that questionnaires represent little more than token evidence of participation in any decision-making process.

In Stoke Albany, the steering group was once again hand picked, this time by parish councilor Stephen Harding and the local vicar Reverend Frank Scuffham. However, with

just four members, its main priorities were to empower local people, to increase community participation and community spirit and to widen the level of skills within the community. For this reason, two of its members (who were women) were recruited because they were active participants in village affairs and commanded a great deal of respect from the wider community: thus they provided what were considered as important qualities to the appraisal, giving it an authority and status to unconvinced locals. With a focus on 'process participation' the steering group members ensured that informal discussions on the appraisal content and structure took place between its members and their friends and neighbours and with other participating members of community groups, such as the WI or the bowling club. This, together with the involvement of a representative from the borough council during the creation of the questionnaire survey, and contributions to the final appraisal document from 12 members of the wider community, meant that the appraisal remained close to the ideal of a project conducted 'of the people, by the people and for the people', yet with evidence of an active partnership arrangement with the local authority. Not surprisingly, therefore, the questionnaire survey which formed part of the process of participation and which was the result of considerable local consultation achieved a response rate of 97 percent.

The case study of Dingley illustrated the contingent role of one individual in the community and the potential power afforded to him in any deregulated planning process. The village appraisal was dominated by, Tony Lucas, who used the appraisal as a mechanism to impose his own personality, effectively by excluding the wider community. It was his opinion that the appraisal would only be successful in the village without the formal mechanisms associated with a steering group and a household questionnaire survey. Thus, what emerged from Dingley was a document produced by one individual that detailed the history of the village and nothing more. Examination of the situation in Dingley revealed that the anti-development views held by Tony Lucas were not widespread through the village, but served as a reflection of his and other middle class newcomers' need to preserve an image of the rural idyll and for this to be articulated in future plans for the village. In terms of local governance, Tony Lucas failed to form partnerships either with the wider community or statutory authorities. In so doing, therefore, Tony Lucas denied people the opportunity to raise important issues through the appraisal.

What these three case studies have shown, therefore, are the complexities associated with the notion of partnership. Not only has the investigation exploded the notion strongly articulated in the Rural White Paper in 1995 that involvement, self-help and participation are integral to the rural lifestyle, but it has also shown that even where participation is evident in the take-up of appraisals its actual characteristics are very much dependent upon the views of key individuals who trigger appraisal activity. Even so, the research would suggest that evidence of high levels of participation through high response rates to questionnaire surveys should be treated with a healthy scepticism.

The fifth objective was to evaluate the success of flexible partnerships which are developed in the village appraisal process. In Northamptonshire, a number of mechanisms have been employed to demonstrate that the key institutions in the county are wedded to the notion of partnership. As was previously discussed, the introduction of the 'Parish 2000' guidance package and the recruitment of the Village Appraisals Officer are both used to encourage partnerships between the statutory authorities, voluntary sector agencies and local communities. Additionally, a local government protocol developed by the chief executive of the county council aims to establish partnerships between the seven local planning authorities in Northamptonshire and its rural communities to:

“improve the access of the public to the services they need” and “develop closer working arrangements” (Northamptonshire County Council, 1995: no page, emphasis added).

However, the foregoing review has found inconsistencies between what is written in the local government protocol in terms of creating flexible partnerships, and what is happening at the grass roots level. Table 9.1 presents evidence gathered through my interviews with key actors in local government and illustrates their attitudes towards the notion of bottom-up participation and the ideal of flexible partnerships in the village appraisals.

Table 9.1 How do the statutory authorities affect the uptake of the village appraisal in Northamptonshire?

Criteria	CC	C	D	EN	K	N	SN	W
Do they support the uptake of village appraisals?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Have village appraisals been undertaken in the district?	-	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Is the village appraisal encouraged as a tool to target limited resources from the bottom-up?	No	-	No	No	No	No	No	No
Is the village appraisal used as an adjunct to the Local Plan process?	Yes	-	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Do they encourage the formation of flexible partnerships through the village appraisal?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Are the partnerships that are encouraged conditional?	Yes	-	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

CC = Northampton County Council,
EN = East Northamptonshire,
SN = South Northamptonshire,

C = Corby Borough,
K = Kettering Borough,
W = Wellingborough.

D = Daventry District,
N = Northampton Borough,

It is evident from the above table that a broad agreement exists within the local planning system with regard to the value of village appraisals and the role they play in the planning process as a tool to target limited resources. Furthermore, the authorities are consistent their views on the formation of flexible partnerships through the appraisal process. However, it is also quite clear that whilst the councils agree that the appraisal needs to be a bottom-up initiative and that flexible partnerships must be built and strengthened in order to create a closer working relationship between their planning representatives and local people, in reality there is an absence of any clear structure for village appraisals. Instead, the planning authorities can use their power and influence over the village appraisal process and any partnerships that are created. In this way, therefore, the professional planners are able to retain some degree of control over local planning despite deregulation and the subsequent emphasis on local governance and all that it entails. This resistance to accept the shift from a representative democracy to a participatory democracy can be illustrated by Colin Wootton, Head of Planning Policy at Daventry District Council. According to him, “due to a set of unfortunate circumstances”, he had not viewed an appraisal produced within the district. Consequently he was unable to include any information generated in the preparation of the local plan. Furthermore, Mr. Wootton argued that public opinion should be obtained through the parish council, as the elected representatives of the parish; he was very much an advocate of the system of representative democracy.

Such evidence begs the question about the ability of village appraisals to act as an effective tool to promote rural community development. At issue is the response of statutory

authorities to village appraisals generated from the 'bottom-up'. The information gathered by the author suggests that key individuals within the statutory system are uncomfortable with the village appraisal process and, rather than use the initiative to generate community development, would prefer it to be used in other ways. Indeed, Jeffrey Greenwell, the chief executive of the county council and a strong advocate of the principle of the appraisal, sees it as an opportunity for local people to generate background information about a village to be used by professional planners in the local plan process. Other key individuals believed the village appraisal to be a 'wonderful approach to getting communities together', until a community wanted to tackle issues of real substance, for example, low cost housing when many surveys tended to reveal divisions within the locality. The planners were more comfortable with appraisals that were non-controversial or based on the historical aspects of the village. This way, the community was less able to challenge the established planning process and the qualifications and competencies of the planners. For example, Colin Wootton was a firm believer that it was 'better for local communities to travel than to arrive', in other words to engage in a long term process of locally based research projects; at least whilst gathering information the community were focused as a group and not divided by contentious issues uncovered in the survey. Such an approach limits not only the impact of the village appraisal as a tool for development but also the extent to which effective partnerships can be created with statutory authorities. Some evidence in support of such a notion emerged in the analysis of outcomes, particularly where the appraisal had identified a specific objective, such as a new school, playing field, low cost housing or mains gas. According to Moseley et al's (1996) research in Gloucestershire and Oxfordshire, for example, they argued that where the projects were small scale and could be managed and delivered by the village population alone, they were more likely to be successful. This research supports this view, since when local people used the evidence of a parish appraisal to argue their case with a statutory authority, the most common outcome was delay, obfuscation and bewilderment, leaving the local population confused and disappointed: this was especially the case when the appraisal had been 'sold' to them on the basis of success elsewhere. Clearly there is still much to be learned about the process of partnership, including trust between partners and a need for certain rules of engagement so that all parties are clear about what might be achieved and how.

This point links well with the final objective which involved evaluating the role of participation in converting rural people into 'new partners of government'. The foregoing review has revealed that, unless people see participation in a positive light, they are likely to be discouraged from any involvement in appraisal activity, and this raises doubts about the community's role as a new partner of government. Furthermore, it has been established that participation in the village appraisal is contingent upon the relationships formed between the various actors in the process and that the statutory authority is one of the most powerful in these relationships. As such, one of the key themes for the future of rural governance is how statutory authorities establish procedures and processes which facilitate the conversion of rural people into these new partnerships. Indeed, the data in Table 9.2 gathered from interviews with key individuals in the planning process demonstrates the impact that the authorities have, not only on community participation in the appraisal itself, but any participation that will occur subsequent to the appraisal process. Once again, the statutory authorities were consistent in their views, considering active citizenship to be beneficial. However, the evidence suggested that they limit the extent to which participation can impact on the decision making process. The priority appears to be for planners to conserve their professional status above encouraging rural citizens to engage in the planning process as the new partners of government. If rural people are consistently treated as information providers in the appraisal process rather than effective partners who have some degree of power on the decision made then they are less likely to participate in local governance initiatives.

Table 9.2 How do the statutory authorities affect community participation at the local level?

Criteria	CC	C	D	EN	K	N	SN	W
Do they encourage active citizenship?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Is the extent of public participation within the decision making process limited?	Yes	-	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Do they practice the principles of a participatory democracy?	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Do they encourage rural residents to be the new partners of government?	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No

CC = Northampton County Council,
EN = East Northamptonshire,
SN = South Northamptonshire,

C = Corby Borough,
K = Kettering Borough,
W = Wellingborough.

D = Daventry District,

N = Northampton Borough,

The democratically elected parish council is also seen as an influential agency within the appraisal process and can play a key role in effecting the participation of the local

community. It does this in one of four ways. First, by using its position as 'gatekeeper' to the village, it can conduct the entire village appraisal itself. Second, by having elected members on the appraisal steering group it can ensure that it maintains ownership of the initiative and all the information gathered and so retain its power in the decision making process. Third, it can actively support a steering group comprised of other residents in the community. Fourth, it can advocate non-participation in the appraisal. In all cases, rather than 'place power in the hands of the people' through participation from the 'bottom-up' as suggested by the shift to local governance, there may be no actual devolution of power or control by the parish council to the majority of residents in the community. Undoubtedly some residents participate effectively on the steering group (often those from a similar social background to the councilors), but the majority are only provided with the opportunity to participate in the household questionnaire survey, a mechanism of participation generally seen as the least effective of those available. This indicates a situation of 'hired hands' whereby the parish council tends to use the best expertise available in the community to get the appraisal done, without affording people the benefit of effective participation or the opportunity to become the new partners of government.

The third element in the appraisal process is the middle class fractions which, increasingly, are seen as the dominant elements of rural society, not just in the proportionate share of the local population but particularly in their take-over of those local institutions such as parish councils where key decisions are taken. By encouraging the participation of the entire community, the village appraisal could be seen as extending involvement beyond such elite groups. There is little evidence that such a process is happening and, drawing upon the detailed case studies in Northamptonshire, it is clear that the steering groups are drawn from particular sections of the local community, usually involving (especially in the key areas) people who are already active in local affairs. Whilst there is some evidence that people drawn into the appraisal do go on to further involvement in the village, there is little to suggest any substantial expansion or widening of participation and the creation of a new rural magistracy.

9.3 Implications of findings.

In a key paper by Edwards, which traces the chronology of community action in rural areas, attention is drawn to the fact that it is only in recent times that “an interpretive, more evaluative and critical commentary has started to develop” (Edwards, 1998: 66). In the process, he describes four phases of research. The first was concerned with documenting the process and practice of community involvement, followed by the second phase in the early 1990s by attempts to contextualise community action and identify its strengths and weaknesses. Through the later 1990s, the third phase of research has drawn attention to the complexities involved in the process of community participation, particularly what Edwards terms “the competing and complementary discourses that are present within the strategy” (page 68). It is this, he argues, which should provide the driving force for a future fourth phase.

In this respect this fourth phase has been given an increased momentum by the emergence of governance as a principle for advancing the processes and procedures of decision taking and for embedding community action in the development process. It is now widely recognised, by practitioners and academics alike, that participation is now a mainstream part of planning and development projects, with the expectation of involvement of local people in the making, implementing and monitoring of decisions taken (see for example, Countryside Agency, 1999; Goodwin and Painter, 1996).

With this in mind this research has come at an opportune moment to respond to some of the questions raised by these commentaries on governance. For example, much of the discourse concerning participation and partnership focuses on community action (through initiatives such as village appraisals) as ‘arenas of contestation’ between the various groups involved or, in much of this study, between statutory authorities such as planners and local communities. To some, therefore, “participation can be seen both as an answer to the lack of faith in democratic and other institutions and a response from those institutions to regain trust and credibility” (Countryside Agency, 1999: 2), though in both points of view there is absence of certainty as to how such positions can be resolved and disentangled.

From the evidence of this research there is no doubt of the county council's commitment in Northamptonshire to "build on and strengthen the partnerships to improve the access of the public to the services they need...and to develop closer working arrangement" (Northamptonshire County Council, 1995: no page). However, when it comes to the views of the seven district councils and their officers concerning the role of the village appraisal as a means of encouraging the views of the local people and as a procedure for establishing partnerships to meet local needs, the response is much more equivocal implying that, as far as the statutory bodies are concerned, institutional and practical barriers still need to be overcome before participation can be fully realized. Thus, planners seem happiest when appraisals are left as basic data gathering exercises or as historical surveys, and only prepared to become more directly involved when they are able to shape or even construct the agenda.

There is also the issue raised by the looser, more flexible and less hierarchical structures associated with governance and the fact that these challenge the rigid but easily understandable routes which, in pre-governance times, channeled decisions through the democratic process and their legitimised representatives. One of the major implications of this study is how this shift might be resolved. Indeed, just as many district councils were not prepared to recognise any appraisal recommendations unless they had support for the village's elected representatives, its parish council, so many parish councils found themselves in the same position when deciding how to manage and deliver the appraisal process; whether to control the whole procedure themselves, to ensure that people were delegated by, or representatives of, the council on the appraisal steering group, or to hand the whole process to an independent group of people. At the heart of this issue, whether from the planner or community perspective, is not just a lack of trust or competence but also an institutional rigidity and unwillingness to change, all of which can reduce the effectiveness and value of participatory action.

What is also at stake, of course, is what many see as the ethical right of people to participate in decisions which shape their lives and, through participation and partnership, to reduce division within society. The other side of this coin is that, in the more flexible systems of governance, there is now a much greater opportunity for the local agendas and

participatory mechanisms to be dominated by those ‘class fractions’ who have invested social capital in the countryside and see the appraisal process as one mechanism by which that capital can be secured. In other words, according to Edwards “much more needs to be known about the people who participate and those who do not. Who leads and who follows, who gains and who loses, who is empowered and who is disenfranchised, and what expectations drive the process?” (ibid.: 75). What is really being suggested, therefore, is that participation tends towards heightening divisions in rural communities, to strengthen the power base of some and to weaken the position of others.

There is little doubt that this study lends force to this argument. Frequently, community participation in Northamptonshire’s appraisals extends to little more than a questionnaire survey, usually sent out as one per household and with no real evidence of any iterative process of discussion on the content of the questionnaire between the steering group and the community. Most steering groups tend to comprise small numbers of people in which certain individuals hold greater sway than others in the way decisions are taken over content, approach and analysis. This is not to suggest that appraisals are politically motivated documents, deliberately created to enlarge the power base of some. Rather, what is clear is that in the developed mechanisms of governance there is an opportunity for bias to be mobilised and for certain groups to be disenfranchised in the process.

Given the growing emphasis in contemporary cultural geography upon the geography of ‘others’, there is very little evidence in the appraisals produced in Northamptonshire that a voice has been given to the many ‘others’, such as the young or the elderly, let alone other groups such as ethnic minority populations, gays or new-age travellers who have attracted the research interests of some rural geographers. By their very nature appraisals tend to emphasise consensus, searching for what most people want or how most people feel but without really investigating what this means or how such views have been produced. This raises the issue of what, if anything, is done about the views of significant minorities or of others disenfranchised by this process. Furthermore, as was found in the survey of education needs in Brixworth, the constituency which the LEA wished to consult for its views of educational provision in Brixworth (families with children of school age) was much narrower and more specific than the constituency used in the appraisal.

Finally, the overwhelming evidence from this study is the fact that many villages and most people did not want to become involved in the village appraisal. Although this research was not primarily concerned with non-participation, many people see themselves as too old to become involved, or as ‘birds of passage’ with no long term commitments to village based activities such as appraisals. But there is also evidence of a more deep-seated concern, that many lack faith in public bodies and in themselves and remain to be convinced that becoming involved is worth the effort. Given the many negative views expressed in this study and the frustrations in converting wish-lists to realities, it is clear that there are major difficulties ahead if fuller participation is to be achieved. In this respect it is necessary to return to the nature of partnerships between community based groups and statutory agencies and to the questions raised by Edwards.

“Can the expectations raised by community participation be accommodated and delivered by institutions of local government and agencies of governance? If not, what will be the consequences for future involvement of people in the development process? To what extent is community action as self-help to genuine participation or is it, rather, a regulated product shaped by ‘enabling’ partnerships?” (Edwards, 1998: 75-76).

9.4 Future Research.

There is little doubt that the participation of local people in decisions about the future of their rural localities is likely to be a feature of rural governance for some time, though whether the village appraisal as a ‘catch all’ statement about the past, present and future of the village will remain in its present form is much less likely. The relaunch two years ago of the village appraisals package reflects important shifts in the view of this community initiative, whilst in Northamptonshire the recent reassessment of its own approach to the appraisal has been a response to a need to place a greater focus on targeted community plans, focusing upon particular needs and aspirations. Underpinning this approach, both nationally and locally, has been a more ‘business-like’ attitude, shifting away from the cosy, non-contentious (yet popular and worthy) local histories to a real engagement with issues which face the future of all rural communities and their residents.

Recognising this shift, many local authorities have begun to take on staff experienced in community based initiatives, including village appraisals. Indeed, one of the ACRE staff in Northamptonshire is now working with Stratford-upon-Avon District Council, in Warwickshire, and this if nothing else reflects the importance that many local authorities are attaching to the need to accommodate other views in the formulation of policy.

For these reasons, therefore, there is much to be gained from continued research into appraisal activity, with the following being seen as particularly appropriate.

The first area for future research concerns those areas of the country where village appraisal take-up has been highest and where there is a strong association with Rural Development Area (RDA) and Objective 5b initiatives. Research in such areas to consider the patterns of village appraisal take-up would be in sharp contrast to the study in Northamptonshire where there is no RDA or Objective 5b area. It would allow study of how villages are dealt with when participation is not on their chosen agenda but where they are placed in the geographical area for development (RDA or 5b) and how this would affect resource allocation when funding for both social and economic development is available. Furthermore, how would the relationship between the statutory agencies and the independent appraisal groups compare, since unlike Northamptonshire, where despite the efforts of the VAO, appraisal groups frequently went their own way and produced their own appraisal documents, RDAs and Objective 5b areas are more structured in their approach to development initiatives and expect all appraisals to be conducted in a particular way?

Second, the evidence gathered suggests the need for greater investigation of the ways in which statutory agencies are adjusting to the new forms of governance. This study has revealed enormous variation within Northamptonshire and there is a need to know more about the fine detail of partnership arrangements, particularly with regard to the statutory sector. For example:

- Do planners feel threatened by their change in status and how are they responding to these changes?

- Is there evidence that grass roots opinion can strengthen the position of local people and views in the local plan process?
- Are there 'best practice' models being developed and are these being evaluated?

Third, the appraisal process can place considerable power in the hands of parish councils or their appointed appraisal teams. The evidence from this study suggests that there are many ways in which the process could be manipulated in order to strengthen the case of a particular group of local people. Further study in this area could adopt an 'action research' perspective whereby the researcher becomes an active element of the appraisal process by shaping the agenda and placing another view on the approaches and decisions of the steering group. This could produce a very useful piece of research on how groups respond to these inputs and so investigate notions such as the mobilization of bias in favour of particular fractions in the rural community.

The fourth area of possible research stems from what has become a competitive means of resource allocation. An ever increasing reliance on community involvement and self-help in rural areas, which may be construed as the abdication of the state's responsibilities to meet the needs of rural communities, has resulted in the village appraisal not only becoming a means of identifying local needs, but also a necessity within rural communities wishing to plan for future development. It would be beneficial to understand, however, what happens in villages, where for one reason or another no appraisal is done, particularly when this is the decision taken by a small minority. Are the needs of the disenfranchised ignored? Do planners disregard the long-term needs of the village in the absence of an appraisal?

Finally, the village appraisal is considered to be an opportunity for capacity building whereby skills, strengths and the abilities of individuals are increased or improved through the process. However, there is little evidence that this is the case. A further piece of research could be to determine whether the appraisal introduces new people to community development and if that participation is sustained beyond the village appraisal. The issue of upward mobility could be investigated to understand if there is a progressive empowerment from village appraisal worker to parish councillor to parish chair to county councillor or if

people simply consider the village appraisal as yet another means of protecting their interests. The empowerment of neglected 'others', particularly the youth, should also be examined given that, on the one hand, the evidence of this study suggests youth involvement in the village appraisal is a token gesture by the steering group in terms of extending the questionnaire survey, whilst on the other there has been a push towards more active participation in structures such as youth councils.

In summary, of course, what this study has done, and what is also implied by these suggestions for further research, is to continue to question the myth of community (and the rural community in particular) and its related concepts of self-help, voluntarism and active participation, on which so much of the 1995 White Paper was built. Given the close connections between these images of the countryside and the ideas contained within the concept of governance, the danger is that governance is seen as having its natural home in rural communities. Yet, as this research has suggested, many rural people and communities do not want to participate and can justify such inaction in a variety of ways. The danger, of course, is that in a situation where multiple actors decide and provide certain views become articulated and these become the basis for future action. For these reasons it is essential that the study and evaluation of participation and partnership in rural communities remains high upon the research agenda of the rural geographer.

9.5 Reflections on the research methodology.

During the five years in which this research was conducted, the village appraisal has remained a key mechanism whereby rural communities can express a view about the future of their locality. In May 1998 ACRE launched its updated computer based programme for the preparation and analysis of questionnaire surveys as part of process to reinvigorate appraisal activity at the local level, and evidence of the uptake of this initiative can be seen in the renewal of interest in Northamptonshire, with the launch of its Community Action Plans (in 1999), and in other counties such as Sussex where a recent newsletter published by the RCC signaled that 'the next wave of parishes to rise to the village appraisal challenge is forming on the horizon' (17th March, 2000). In this sense, therefore, the village appraisal remains a legitimate area of study, but what has deepened the interest of

academics in this community development mechanism has been an accelerating interest in the concept of governance, particularly as it relates to rural localities.

At the heart of this ideology is a new discourse of rural development based upon notions of individual and community responsibility which mobilize the skills, resources and expertise of local people to identify a locality's needs and which consequently 'empower' it from the structures of government programmes. At the outset of this research, academic discussion about governance and the many questions it raised was sparse within the social sciences, and even rarer within rural geography. This was, for example, evidenced by Moseley et al's (1996) research on village appraisal which, though focusing on outcomes, makes no mention of the ideological shift from government to governance which, above all, has raised the entire profile of appraisal activity in rural areas. Indeed, the first conference on the theme of rural governance, organized by British geographers, did not take place until 1997, whilst it was not until January 1998 that the *Journal of Rural Studies*, arguably the flagship for geographical research in this country, published a special issue on rural governance and community participation. In this sense, therefore, a focus on the theme of participation within the specific context of the village appraisal can be justified even more powerfully now than five years ago, though reflection on the research experience is coloured not just by the specific context of my research design and methodology, but also the wider emerging debate about (rural) governance which is now beginning to dominate so much contemporary rural research.

Unlike many remoter areas of England where village appraisals have been linked to external funding from the Rural Development Commission (now Countryside Agency) or European Union (and where the appraisals have had to be written to guidelines laid down by these agencies), Northamptonshire has been free from such constraints and so appraisals have emerged, in theory at least, from the community, for the community and by the community, though at each stage the success of the process has depended not just on participation, but also on partnership. In other words, the shift from government to governance is not so much one from state 'control' to *laissez-faire* but rather a shift towards managing and steering new techniques through which state ambitions are realized. This is the case for all rural localities, regardless of whether they qualify for external funding, and

so the key question is more to do with 'how' power is exercised as opposed to who possess it. This being the case, therefore, with hindsight I would have given less emphasis to the detailed surveys, particularly at national level, of the take-up of village appraisals and more to the detailed issues of partnership especially as they refer to the relationships between local communities and statutory authorities. Amongst other things this would have speeded the research and eased the pressure of waiting for the completion of the three appraisals I monitored (a period of three years). Any research, which depends on the pace of other groups to complete a particular process, is vulnerable: by giving greater attention to partnership issues would have reduced the burden of attending over 30 meetings of appraisal steering groups and given a better focus to the parallel meetings of local councillors and planners.

Of course, such an argument should not diminish the centrality of participation or, more significantly, non-participation. At the heart of governance is the notion of governing through communities, though what this research has revealed both nationally and locally is the unwillingness of most localities to get involved in appraisal activity and, even where they do, for it to be conducted by relatively few individuals. If appraisals are to be seen as a mechanism for the delivery of services to rural localities, then the non-participation of villages or of substantial elements of the community is of critical importance. Though the research did give some attention to non-participation, there is a need to give this a higher profile. The survey of villages in Northamptonshire depended on questionnaire returns and would have benefited from detailed structured interviews with respondent parish councils. Equally, the research challenged the notion of the questionnaire as an effective measure of participation and revealed that, at least in Brixworth, there were 'significant others' such as young people who had little or no knowledge of appraisal activity and felt far from empowered in local decision making. However, what was just as significant was that even amongst the newcomer, middle class households who are widely seen as the new power brokers of rural society there is a significant and substantial majority who do not participate in local activities and have no intention of doing so. In other words, there appears to be a particular element or fraction within the rural population that does participate, though there are many others who, appear to share the same demographic and social characteristics, but who do become involved. This, too, with hindsight would have been an important area to

study, to see non-participation as the other side of the coin and to have given attention and focus to those villages and people who have chosen not to get involved in the production of village appraisals.

Finally, the research was conducted within a realist framework, which lays particular emphasis on the relationship between structure and agency, particularly as delivered by the distinctive and unique characteristics of individual localities. There is little doubt that the detailed analysis of the three village experiences has reinforced the value of such an approach, and particularly the way in which the shape and structure of the appraisal can be influenced by certain charismatic individuals or groups. However, the interpretation which lies at the heart of this research has been built upon a largely qualitative methodology dependent on face-to-face interviews or attendance at meetings, and the transcription of conversation. As geographers have moved more and more towards this form of methodology, especially as the 'cultural turn' in human geography has placed emphasis upon 'differences' within populations, such as insiders and outsiders, so attention has turned to the 'position' of the researcher vis à vis the researched. This has two implications which should form part of further research in this area. The first is the 'positionality' of the researcher and the need for a statement within the research methodology signalling the research position of the researcher and how this might shape the study's objectives and conclusions. The second is the 'position' of the researched. This is of particular importance, especially in the activities of the steering groups, where the opportunity existed for the 'mobilisation of bias', whether consciously or otherwise, in a variety of ways. The observation process adopted in the research methodology made it difficult to investigate this concept, except where there were differences of view within the steering group and where these differences were developed and resolved at meetings. An alternative route would have been to have taken an 'action research' approach whereby the researcher becomes part of the process, a member of the steering group and with an opportunity, therefore, to affect the actions and motives of participants. Since the action research process requires a 'political' statement on the part of the researcher, for example a declared commitment to the concept of governance, it provides the opportunity for the researcher to declare her position in terms of the approach to the research and the opportunity to intervene in decision making processes undertaken by the steering group.

Appendix 1

- 1 (a) Questionnaire survey to the parish councils in Northamptonshire.
- 1 (b) Questionnaire survey to the village appraisal steering groups in Northamptonshire.
- 1 (c) Questionnaire survey to the youth in Brixworth.
- 1 (d) Questionnaire survey to the 32 Rural Community Councils across rural England.
- 1 (e) Questionnaire survey to the three study villages; Brixworth, Stoke Albany and Dingley.

QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY

- 1. Please state the name of the village/parish?
- 2. How many Parish Councillors are there?.....
- 3. Has the village completed a village appraisal either recently or in the past? **Yes/No**

If ‘No’ go to question 5

If ‘Yes’ answer questions 4A - 4N below:

- 4A.** What was the starting year for the appraisal?.....
- B.** How long did the appraisal process take? (Years).....
- C.** How did the village become involved with the appraisal?.....
.....
.....
- D.** What was the main reason for undertaking the appraisal within the village? _
.....
.....
.....
- E.** How many Steering Group Committee members were involved?.....
- F.** How many parish councillors were involved?.....

Please fill in the table below regarding the steering group members:

Male	Female	Occupation

G. Did the village carry out a questionnaire survey?

Yes/No

If 'Yes'

H. Did you use the package provided by the Rural Community Council?

Yes/No

I. What response rate from the questionnaire survey did you achieve?

.....%

J. Did you have any contact with the Rural Community Council Officer during the appraisal process? (Please explain the level of help received).....

.....

.....

.....

K. Did you formulate any policy statements or development goals through the process of the appraisal? (Please explain).....

.....

.....

.....

L. What reaction(s) did you receive from the planners and local councillors about the appraisal you undertook?.....

.....

.....

.....

M. Has anything been achieved for the village through the appraisal process? (Please specify)
Positive.....

.....

.....

Negative.....

.....

.....

N. Are there any plans to update the appraisal?

.....

.....

GO TO THE END

5. Is the village currently undergoing a village appraisal?

If 'No' go to question 7

If 'Yes' answer questions 6A - 6L below:

F. Has the village carried out a questionnaire survey? **Yes/No**

If 'No'

G. Are there any plans to carry out a questionnaire survey? **Yes/No**

If 'Yes'

H. Did you use the package provided by the Rural Community Council? **Yes/No**

I. What response rate from the questionnaire survey did you achieve?%

J. Did you have any contact with the Rural Community Council Officer during the appraisal process? (Please explain the level of help received).....

.....
.....
.....

K. Have you experienced any problems whilst carrying out the village appraisal?

.....
.....
.....
.....

L. Can you possibly estimate a completion date for the village appraisal?.....

GO TO THE END

7. Do you think the village will undergo a village appraisal in the future? **Yes/No**
8. Have you received any information about village appraisals from the Rural Community Council? **Yes/No**

If 'Yes'

9. What form did the information take? (Please explain)

.....

.....

.....

10. Has the Rural Community Council Officer approached the parish council in any way about undergoing a village appraisal?

.....

.....

.....

11. What is the main reason for not carrying out an appraisal in the village?

.....

.....

.....

THE END

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME IN FILLING OUT THIS QUESTIONNAIRE.

1 (b)

QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY

1. Please state in which village/parish the appraisal is taking place?

2. How many Steering Group / Committee members are involved?.....

2a. How many of those involved are Parish Councillors?.....

(Please fill in the table)

Male	Female	Occupation

3. What was the starting year of the village / parish appraisal?.....

4. How long has the village / parish appraisal process taken so far? (Years).....

5. How did the village become involved with the village /parish appraisal?.....

.....
.....
.....

6. What was the main reason for undertaking the village / parish appraisal within the village?

.....
.....
.....

7. Has the village carried out a questionnaire survey yet? Yes/No

8. If 'Yes' have you used the package provided by ACRE or the Rural Community Council? Yes/No

9. What response rate from the questionnaire survey did you achieve?%

10. Have you had any contact with the Rural Community Council Officer during the village / parish appraisal process? (Please explain the level of help received).....

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

11. Has the appraisal process been successful within the village/parish? Yes/No

If 'Yes' answer section A questions 12 - 16

If 'No' answer section B questions 16 - 24

Section A

12. Did the village formulate any policy statements or development goals through the process of the appraisal?.....

.....

.....

.....

13. What reactions have you received from the planners and local councillors about the appraisal you undertook?

.....

.....

.....

.....

14. Has anything been achieved for the village through the appraisal process? (Please specify)

Positive.....

.....

.....

.....

Negative.....

.....

.....

.....

15. Are there any plans to update the appraisal after a certain time period?.....
.....
.....
.....

Section B

16. Are there any particular areas of the village / parish appraisal presenting problems for the appraisal group?.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

17. What or whom is responsible for creating the problems being experienced by the steering group in completing the village/parish appraisal?
.....
.....
.....
.....

18. Has the Rural Community Council Officer played any role in solving these problems?

Yes/No

19. If ‘Yes’ what exactly has he done?.....
.....
.....
.....

20. If 'No' what do you think are the reasons for this lack of involvement?.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

21. Do you think these problems can be overcome? Yes/No

22. How do you think they could possibly be overcome?
.....
.....
.....
.....

23. Do you think the village / parish appraisal will eventually be completed? Yes/No

24. What do you think will need to be done in-order to complete the village / parish appraisal
successfully?.....
.....
.....
.....

25. Can you possibly estimate a completion date for the appraisal project?.....

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE

Questionnaire

How old are you?

How long have you lived in Brixworth?.....

What is the name of the road in Brixworth where you live?.....

Spare Time Activities

AT HOME

What activities do you do in your spare time?

(Fill in the activity and tick the correct box for when you do it)

Summer Time	Daytime	Evenings	Weekends
Winter Time			

What is your favourite indoor activity?

.....

What is your favourite outdoor activity?

.....

Do you attend a youth club

Yes/No

Where is it? (Please tick one).

In Brixworth

Outside Brixworth

Do you attend any clubs or societies

Yes/No

Which ones do you attend?

Club/Society	In Brixworth	Outside Brixworth (please name..)

Would you like to have any activity provided for you in Brixwrth?

Yes/No

If 'yes' what activity?.....

Spare Time Activities

AT SCHOOL

Are you involved in any clubs/societies at school which take place outside of classroom time?

Club/Society/Activity	Is it organised for you by teachers	Is it organised by you or other pupils

Are there any clubs/societies/activities that you would like provided in school?

.....
.....

The Village Appraisal

You may find it difficult to answer some of the questions in the following section but only because you don't know about the village appraisal. Please do not let this put you off answering questions you can.

Have you heard about the village appraisal in Brixworth Yes/No

Can you please write in your own words what you think the village appraisal is?

.....
.....

If a village appraisal was completed at home, were you involved? Yes/No

If others filled it in, would you have liked to given your views Yes/No

Do you feel strongly about any issues in Brixworth. Can you tell me about it?

.....
.....

Is there any way in which you can let people know about how you feel about these issues?

.....
.....

If you wanted something changed in the village, who would you tell?

.....

Do you know the names of any of the parish councillors in the village?

.....
.....
.....
.....

The Future

Do you enjoy living in a village? Yes/No

Why?

.....

.....

.....

.....

Do you think you would like to settle down in a village when you are older? Yes/No

Why?

.....

.....

.....

.....

Do you think a village is a good place in which children can grow up? Yes/No

Why?

.....

.....

.....

.....

As a young person in Brixworth, how well do you feel that your views about the village are made known?

Not at all	
Not very well	
Don'y know	
Well	
Very well	

Thank you for your time completing this questionnaire survey.

1 (d)

**A Questionnaire regarding Village Appraisals to the Rural Officers of the
Community Councils in England.**

Please state in which county you are working _____

Please state your post and describe your role in the county.

Is there a Village Appraisal Officer in the county?

Yes / No

If 'No' who in particular deals with the Village Appraisal?

How many Village Appraisal schemes are currently being undertaken? _____

How many Village Appraisal schemes have been completed county wide

Between 1970 and 1987? _____

Between 1987 and 1991? _____

Between 1991 and 1995? _____

What are the main outcomes (in the categories provided) of those appraisals which have been completed?

Benefits to the Community: _____

Issues Raised: _____

Actions Taken: _____

Are the villages in the county encouraged by you to use the ACRE software package when undertaking the Village Appraisal? Yes / No

Approximately how many computer software packages have you sold over the last 4 years? _____

What is the maximum response level a community has had to the Village Appraisal questionnaire? _____%

What is the minimum response level a community has had to the Village Appraisal questionnaire? _____%

Do you actively promote the Village Appraisal scheme in the county? Yes / No

If 'Yes', how do you promote the Village Appraisal scheme?

If 'No' are there reasons for this?

Do you believe that the Village Appraisal is fully representative of all members of the community? Yes/No

If 'Yes' can you please explain why you believe this to be the case?

If 'No' can you please explain why not and how would you make it more representative?

Do you provide communities with funding to implement the Village Appraisal scheme?

Yes / No

If 'Yes', what level and type of funding do you provide?

Is there funding available for a community that wishes to carry out further work after the completion of a Village Appraisal? Yes / No

If 'Yes', what format does the funding take and from where is it available?

If 'No', can you explain why?

Have you encouraged the community to include a planning policy statement within the Village Appraisal document? Yes / No

Have the results from any Village Appraisal been incorporated into the county planning policy?

Yes / No

If 'Yes' please explain in what ways this has been achieved?

Do you think the Village Appraisal scheme increases the awareness of the community with regards to their village? (Please tick the correct box).

No	
Negligible amounts	
Moderately	
Greatly	

Do you think the Village Appraisal scheme, on the whole increases community involvement? (Please tick the correct box).

No	
Negligible amounts	
Moderately	
Greatly	

How would you define a successful Village Appraisal?

Do you believe there are any common factors behind the success of the Village Appraisal scheme county wide?

Please list three advantages and three disadvantages of the Village Appraisal scheme?

Advantages: _____

Disadvantages: _____

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY.

Questionnaire

Personal

A. Can you please tick the appropriate box below for each member of your household (except yourself) and place a CROSS in the box for which YOU belong.

Age Group	Male	Female
Under 5		
6 – 13		
14 – 16		
16 – 24		
25 – 44		
45 – 49		
60 – 74		
75 & Over		

B. How long have you lived in Brixworth?

.....YearsMonths

Ci Do you belong to any groups or organisations in Brixworth (Please circle one).

YES

NO

ii. If ‘YES’ please state to which one(s) you belong.

.....
.....
.....

Di. If you are employed, what is the location of your work place? (please tick one).

Brixworth

Northampton Town

Leicester

Elsewhere in the county of Northamptonshire (please specify).....

Outside the county

ii. How far in miles do you travel to work each day? (a one way journey).

.....

Issues of importance

The following questions are concerned with particular issues which are common in rural areas of Britain. In some cases they may not apply to Dingley, but your comments would be helpful anyway.

Ei. What do you believe are the advantages of living in Brixworth?

.....
.....
.....
.....

ii. What do you believe are the disadvantages of living in Brixworth?

.....
.....
.....
.....

Fi. What do you consider the level of crime to be in Brixworth (Please circle one).

Non existent

Low

Medium

High

Very High

ii. Have you experienced rural crime in Brixworth (Please circle one)

YES

NO

Comments

iii. How would you like to see your village tackle the problem of rural crime?

.....
.....
.....
.....

Gi. Do you need to meet regularly with people of your own age? (Please tick one).

Never

Once a year

Once a month

Once a week

Three times a week

All the time

Other please specify.....

If 'never' please go to H

ii. If you do, where in the village can you meet with these people?

.....
.....
.....

iii. If there is nowhere to meet, would you like somewhere provided? (please tick one).

YES

NO

I DON'T KNOW

H. Do you feel there is a support network of any kind in Brixworth? (please tick one).

YES

NO

I DON'T KNOW

If yes please specify.....

I. Would you like the addition of any of the following items listed below to improve your quality of life in Brixworth village?

	YES	NO
Shops		
Public Transport		
Leisure Facilities		
Open Spaces		
Childrens Park		
Community Centre		
Golf Course		

Other.....

J. Would you like to see more of any item listed below to enable people to live in the village?

	YES	NO
Support groups		
Low cost housing		
Council housing		
Sheltered accommodation		

Other.....

K. Is there any issue that has not been covered that you feel strongly about?

.....

The Village Appraisal

The following questions are concerned with a nationwide initiative called the village appraisal. If you do not understand the questions below, for any reason, PLEASE write it down.

Li. Have you heard about the Brixworth village appraisal? (please circle one).

- YES
- NO

If NO please go to part iv

ii. Where did you hear about it?

- In the village newsletter/newspaper
- Through the parish council
- Through a friend or neighbour
- Elsewhere (please specify).....

iii. Can you please write in your own words what you believe the village appraisal survey is?

.....

.....

.....

.....

(If you have answered part iii, please ignore part iv and go to part iv)

iv. What do you think the village appraisal survey might be?

.....

.....

.....

.....

v. What do you think should be included in the village appraisal?

.....

.....

.....

.....

Thank you for your time completing this questionnaire survey.

Questionnaire

Personal

A. Can you please tick the appropriate box below for each member of your household (except yourself) and place a CROSS in the box for which YOU belong.

Age Group	Male	Female
Under 5		
6 – 13		
14 – 16		
16 – 24		
25 – 44		
45 – 49		
60 – 74		
75 & Over		

B. How long have you lived in Stoke Albany?

.....YearsMonths

Ci Do you belong to any groups or organisations in Stoke Albany (Please circle one).

YES

NO

ii. If 'YES' please state to which one(s) you belong.

.....
.....
.....

Di. If you are employed, what is the location of your work place? (please tick one).

- Stoke Albany
- Market Harborough
- Leicester
- Elsewhere in the county of Northamptonshire (please specify).....
- Outside the county

ii. How far in miles do you travel to work each day? (a one way journey).

.....

Issues of importance

The following questions are concerned with particular issues which are common in rural areas of Britain. In some cases they may not apply to Stoke Albany, but your comments would be helpful anyway.

Ei. What do you believe are the advantages of living in Stoke Albany?

.....
.....
.....
.....

ii. What do you believe are the disadvantages of living in Stoke Albany?

.....
.....
.....
.....

Fi. What do you consider the level of crime to be in Stoke Albany (Please circle one).

- Non existent
- Low
- Medium
- High
- Very High

ii. Have you experienced rural crime in Stoke Albany (Please circle one)

- YES
- NO

Comments

iii. How would you like to see your village tackle the problem of rural crime?

.....
.....
.....
.....

Gi. Do you need to meet regularly with people of your own age? (Please tick one).

Never

Once a year

Once a month

Once a week

Three times a week

All the time

Other please specify.....

If 'never' please go to H

ii. If you do, where in the village can you meet with these people?

.....
.....
.....

iii. If there is nowhere to meet, would you like somewhere provided? (please tick one).

YES

NO

I DON'T KNOW

H. Do you feel there is a support network of any kind in Stoke Albany? (please tick one).

YES

NO

I DON'T KNOW

If yes please specify.....

I. Would you like the addition of any of the following items listed below to improve your quality of life in Stoke Albany village?

	YES	NO
Shops		
Public Transport		
Leisure Facilities		
Open Spaces		
Childrens Park		
Community Centre		
Golf Course		

Other.....

J. Would you like to see more of any item listed below to enable people to live in the village?

	YES	NO
Support groups		
Low cost housing		
Council housing		
Sheltered accommodation		

Other.....

K. Is there any issue that has not been covered that you feel strongly about?

.....
.....
.....
.....

The Village Appraisal

The following questions are concerned with a nationwide initiative called the village appraisal. If you do not understand the questions below, for any reason, PLEASE write it down.

Li. Have you heard about the Stoke Albany village appraisal? (please circle one).

YES

NO

If NO please go to part iv

ii. Where did you hear about it?

In the village newsletter/newspaper

Through the parish council

Through a friend or neighbour

Elsewhere (please specify).....

iii. Can you please write in your own words what you believe the village appraisal survey is?

.....
.....
.....
.....

(If you have answered part iii, please ignore part iv and go to part iv)

iv. What do you think the village appraisal survey might be?

.....
.....
.....
.....

v. What do you think should be included in the village appraisal?

.....
.....
.....
.....

Thank you for your time completing this questionnaire survey.

Questionnaire

Personal

A. Can you please tick the appropriate box below for each member of your household (except yourself) and place a CROSS in the box for which YOU belong.

Age Group	Male	Female
Under 5		
6 – 13		
14 – 16		
16 – 24		
25 – 44		
45 – 49		
60 – 74		
75 & Over		

B. How long have you lived in Dingley?

.....YearsMonths

Ci Do you belong to any groups or organisations in Dingley (Please circle one).

YES

NO

ii. If 'YES' please state to which one(s) you belong.

.....
.....
.....

Di. If you are employed, what is the location of your work place? (please tick one).

Dingley

Market Harborough

Leicester

Elsewhere in the county of Northamptonshire (please specify).....

Outside the county

ii. How far in miles do you travel to work each day? (a one way journey).

.....

Issues of importance

The following questions are concerned with particular issues which are common in rural areas of Britain. In some cases they may not apply to Dingley, but your comments would be helpful anyway.

Ei. What do you believe are the advantages of living in Dingley?

.....
.....
.....
.....

ii. What do you believe are the disadvantages of living in Dingley?

.....
.....
.....
.....

Fi. What do you consider the level of crime to be in Dingley (Please circle one).

Non existent

Low

Medium

High

Very High

ii. Have you experienced rural crime in Dingley (Please circle one)

YES

NO

Comments

iii. How would you like to see your village tackle the problem of rural crime?

.....
.....
.....
.....

Gi. Do you need to meet regularly with people of your own age? (Please tick one).

Never

Once a year

Once a month

Once a week

Three times a week

All the time

Other please specify.....

If 'never' please go to H

ii. If you do, where in the village can you meet with these people?

.....
.....
.....

iii. If there is nowhere to meet, would you like somewhere provided? (please tick one).

YES

NO

I DON'T KNOW

H. Do you feel there is a support network of any kind in Dingley? (please tick one).

YES

NO

I DON'T KNOW

If yes please specify.....

I. Would you like the addition of any of the following items listed below to improve your quality of life in Dingley village?

	YES	NO
Shops		
Public Transport		
Leisure Facilities		
Open Spaces		
Childrens Park		
Community Centre		
Golf Course		

Other.....

J. Would you like to see more of any item listed below to enable people to live in the village?

	YES	NO
Support groups		
Low cost housing		
Council housing		
Sheltered accommodation		

Other.....

K. Is there any issue that has not been covered that you feel strongly about?

.....
.....
.....
.....

The Village Appraisal

The following questions are concerned with a nationwide initiative called the village appraisal. If you do not understand the questions below, for any reason, PLEASE write it down.

Li. Have you heard about the Dingley village appraisal? (please circle one).

YES

NO

If NO please go to part iv

ii. Where did you hear about it?

In the village newsletter/newspaper

Through the parish council

Through a friend or neighbour

Elsewhere (please specify).....

iii. Can you please write in your own words what you believe the village appraisal survey is?

.....
.....
.....
.....

(If you have answered part iii, please ignore part iv and go to part iv)

iv. What do you think the village appraisal survey might be?

.....
.....
.....
.....

v. What do you think should be included in the village appraisal?

.....
.....
.....
.....

Thank you for your time completing this questionnaire survey.

Appendix 2

Village Appraisals

Northamptonshire:

Aldwincle	Ashley	Badby
Braunston	Brington Parish	Brixworth
Bulwick	Charwelton	Chelveston-cum-Caldecot
Cold Ashby	Collingtree	Cranford
Croughton	Dingley	Earls Barton
Easton-on-the-Hill	Great Addington	Great Houghton
Great Cransley	Hackleton	Hartwell
King's Sutton	Little Houghton	Mears Ashby
Middleton	Moulton	Naseby
Nassington	Pattishall Parish	Roade
Stoke Albany	Sudborough	Warmington
Weston-by-Welland	Wootton	Whittlebury
Yarwell		

Nationwide:

Aston Abbots, Buckinghamshire
Beyton, Suffolk
Clun and Chapel Lawn, Shropshire
Cranham, Gloucestershire
Liverton Mines, Cleveland
Metheringham, Lincolnshire
Woodcote, Oxfordshire

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