

**Local Government Reform,
Urban Expansion and Identity:
Nottingham and Derby, 1945-1968**

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by

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Abstract

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This study examines changes in the governance of Nottingham and Derby in the period 1945-1968 from a local and national perspective. In so doing it foreshadows the changes wrought by the Local Government Act 1972, which usually receives greater academic attention. Post-war, local authorities became the nation's principal landlords, while utilities, such as electricity and gas, were nationalised. In fulfilling their new responsibilities, urban authorities were forced to build estates on the periphery of, or outside, their boundaries. The relocation of residents resulted in an exportation of urban identity and greater urban-ness, but was not accompanied by a corresponding redrawing of administrative boundaries.

Nevertheless, when urban authorities sought boundary extensions they were fiercely contested by county authorities, local associations, and residents' groups. Such associations and groups claimed to possess characteristics distinct from the authorities that wished to incorporate them. There was also a fear that democratic accountability would be lost in the creation of larger units of governance. The local feelings aroused by boundary extension proposals demonstrate that local government is more than merely an agent of central government. It is a living organism: changes to it affect not only services, but also the identity of that place.

The expansion proposals of the county boroughs of Nottingham and Derby differed markedly. Uniquely amongst county boroughs nationwide, Nottingham sought no expansion under the review initiated by the Local Government Act 1958. The thesis assesses the political motivations behind this and the wider reactions to reconfiguration proposals for both county boroughs. The role of conurbations is considered in terms of local governance, including the extent to which Nottingham and Derby could be classified as one. The thesis concludes that the maintenance of existing party political strengths outweighed local sentiment, and that only those proposals for reform which benefited the former were enacted.

Keywords: Local government reform; county borough; Nottingham; Derby; urban expansion; conurbation; identity; belonging; housing; party politics.

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List of Abbreviations

DCB	Derby County Borough
DLSL	Derby Local Studies Library
DRO	Derbyshire Record Office
GRA	General Review Area
HLGC	Hancock Local Government Commission
NCB	Nottingham County Borough
NCC	Nottinghamshire County Council
NRO	Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Record Office
PC	Parish Council
PRO	Public Record Office, the National Archives, Kew
RD	Rural District
SEDRD	South East Derbyshire Rural District
SI	Statutory Instrument
SRA	Special Review Area
TLGBC	Trustram Eve Local Government Boundary Commission
UD	Urban District
VACDWB	Volunteer Action Committee for the Defence of West Bridgford
YNMGRA	York and North Midlands General Review Area

Chapter One

Introduction

The death of Baroness Thatcher in April 2013 resulted in a unique occurrence within *The Northern Echo*, the regional daily newspaper that covers North Yorkshire, County Durham, and Teesside. For the first time in its 143-year history, the newspaper published two alternate front pages: ‘one which capture[d] the respectful tribute paid by political leaders in London; and one which show[ed] former County Durham miners unfurling a banner condemning her economic record’.¹ Its present editor, Peter Barron, explained that, although the newspaper ‘argued against public celebrations of Lady Thatcher's death’, the depth of feeling concerning Baroness Thatcher’s death was so extreme and so contrasting in differing parts of the *The Northern Echo*’s distribution area, it was necessary to provide an option for newsagents ‘to choose which of the pages they wish to display on their shelves’.² Barron observed that newsagents in County Durham were likely to sell the paper which depicted the miners’ banner, while those in North Yorkshire were likely to stock the version that showed the coffin borne aloft at St Paul’s Cathedral, London.³

Notwithstanding issues pertaining to the political traits of individual purchasers and newsagents, the intention and reasoning behind Barron’s decision was clear: revenue implications led to newsagents being given the opportunity to display the front page which they felt would be more appropriate to local sensitivities. Individual residents

¹ P. Barron, ‘Two front pages for the two sides of the Thatcher debate’, *The Northern Echo*, 17th April 2013.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

in former coal-mining areas, regardless of whether they had previously been employed in mining or had even been born at the time of pit closures, were considered more likely to choose to identify with the hostility expressed by union representatives. Although party politics played a role, those who viewed themselves as being apolitical nevertheless are likely to have identified with their immediate communities.⁴

That the editor of a major regional daily newspaper should feel both a commercial and reader necessity to differentiate not merely on the basis of political belief but also on local kinship for events that had occurred three decades before, pinpointing precise geographical locations in which he perceived each front cover would be adopted,⁵ illustrates several points that are relevant to the issues addressed in this study. First, the experiences of an individual locality shape not only the collective identity of that place but also the nature of relationships and societal expectations therein.⁶ St Ann's, in Nottingham, is a case in point. Slum clearance precipitated changes in community association; the layout of the redeveloped area compounded this fracture and facilitated the emergence of unanticipated social problems.⁷ Secondly, the way in which a community perceives itself affects how that community is presented outside its boundaries.⁸ This can be seen in the study, for example, through Nottingham County Borough's efforts to improve its reputation after the failure of its 1919 boundary extension application, in order to achieve

⁴ R. Sennett, *The Uses of Disorder* (London, 1973), pp. 27-28.

⁵ Barron gave as examples Easington in Co. Durham, and Richmond, in North Yorkshire. 'Two front pages', *The Northern Echo*, 17th April 2013.

⁶ J. Stobart, 'Regions, Localities, and Industrialisation: Evidence from the East Midlands circa 1780 – 1840', *Environment and Planning A*, 33:7 (2001), pp. 1305-1325, p. 1306.

⁷ L. McKenzie, 'A Narrative from the Inside, Studying St Ann's in Nottingham: Belonging, Continuity and Change', *The Sociological Review*, 60:3 (2012), pp. 457-475, p. 472.

⁸ K. Mee and S. Wright, 'Editorial: Geographies of Belonging', *Environment and Planning A*, 41 (2009), pp. 772-779, p. 772.

territorial expansion.⁹ Thirdly, the area in which one lives, whether through choice, accident of birth, or as a result either of planned social housing relocation or boundary reconfiguration, carries with it the potential to be viewed in a particular way – whether or not such a portrayal is accurate.¹⁰ Thus, as the English local historian, Keith Snell, notes in *Parish and Belonging*, ‘each place, and the many ways in which a person may be attached to it, has different cultural and subjective connotations’.¹¹

The desire by some to be seen as ‘not of a place’ may be just as strong. Concepts of locality ‘otherness’ (or ‘insider-outsider’ status, as Snell refers to them)¹² are not only noticeable in rivalries between neighbouring towns or villages. They also arise within the context of local government – especially with reference to proposed boundary modifications or authority amalgamations or takeovers. In such instances, as this study notes, the wish to preserve independence and to create a distance from the otherness of neighbours may manifest itself when a community’s members fear a loss of what they regard to be ‘their voice’, ‘their local representation’, and ‘their system of governance’ based in ‘their town hall’.¹³ The process of legislated and organic urban expansion that gathered pace from the late nineteenth century onwards placed issues of urban governance and urban need above those of surrounding rural areas. Thus, as county boroughs increasingly subsumed, or sought to subsume, parts (or all) of their immediate urban or rural neighbours, both in the Victorian period and

⁹ J. Giggs, ‘Housing, Population and Transport’, in J. Beckett (ed.), *A Centenary History of Nottingham* (Chichester, 2006), p. 440.

¹⁰ R. Johnston, *A Question of Place: Exploring the Practice of Human Geography* (Oxford, 1991), p. 187.

¹¹ K.D.M. Snell, *Parish and Belonging: Community, Identity and Welfare in England and Wales, 1700-1950* (Cambridge, 2006), p. 1.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 28-31.

¹³ This can be seen most clearly in the study with regard to West Bridgford.

that of this study, there was apprehension that the ‘voices of local representation’ would be muffled or silenced as communities were devoured by centralising reforms.

The study approach

In evaluating the effects of local government reform upon both urban expansion and identity in the period 1945-1968 with reference to the county boroughs of Nottingham and Derby, this study nevertheless should be placed within the wider body of regional and national studies, so that it may add to existing knowledge and not represent merely an exercise in parochial narcissism. The need to combine an understanding of both local and national perspectives, therefore, was a critical consideration in undertaking this study. If the contention of the historian, Keith Robbins, is accepted – that historians ‘cannot point unambiguously to an in-between spatial entity where the local and national meet’¹⁴ – then it follows that a number of problems may arise if either a local or national perspective is singularly adopted within a study that is focused upon a specific locality. The purely local historian may, for instance, place too much emphasis upon local customs and practices, giving a narrow and ineffective account of history that is ‘too parochial and inward-looking’.¹⁵ Conversely, the national historian may present too generalised an interpretation, oversimplifying complex ideas and patterns of behaviour that exist solely at a local level, and accordingly advance conclusions that ‘bear little relationship to the actual historical experience of a given area’.¹⁶

¹⁴ K. Robbins, ‘Local History and the Study of National History’, *The Historian*, 27 (1990), pp. 15-18, p. 15.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

With particular regard to early locality studies, W.G. Hoskins, founder of the Leicester School of English Local History, noted that works which employed only a narrow approach

were not reasoned accounts of municipal development but more or less valuable collections of documentary and archaeological materials... presented as more or less undigested compilations... the materials for a history, not the history itself, the uncooked potatoes and not the finished meal.¹⁷

Accordingly, three academic approaches – historical, political, and, to a lesser extent, sociological – are combined in this work to facilitate a more holistic understanding of local government and the way in which changes to it influence wider issues of the urban experience. Local government reform, therefore, is not viewed as an issue that affects only issues of bureaucracy and rateable values (regardless of how Whitehall may wish to portray it), for the impact of boundaries and the culture of authorities upon concepts of identity can be profound.¹⁸

Though opposition to centralising reforms is a key theme of this work, it was not merely a phenomenon specific to the study area. Thus, a further dominant theme is the contextualisation of that which was occurring in Nottingham and Derby with national political developments. In addition, the study chronicles the tension that persisted between existing historic identities, both of counties and smaller units such as villages and towns, and how these units were challenged and changed through the reform of local government boundaries, the state-mandated relocation of people, and post-war national policy drives towards the creation of ever wider units of governance. In discussing matters pertaining to individuals' sense of belonging to a given place and the extent to which expansions in urban governance altered

¹⁷ W.G. Hoskins, *Local History in England* (London, 1959), pp. 19-20.

¹⁸ M.J. Hatch and M. Schultz, 'Introduction', in M.J. Hatch and M. Schultz (eds), *Organizational Identity: A Reader* (Oxford, 2004), p. 3.

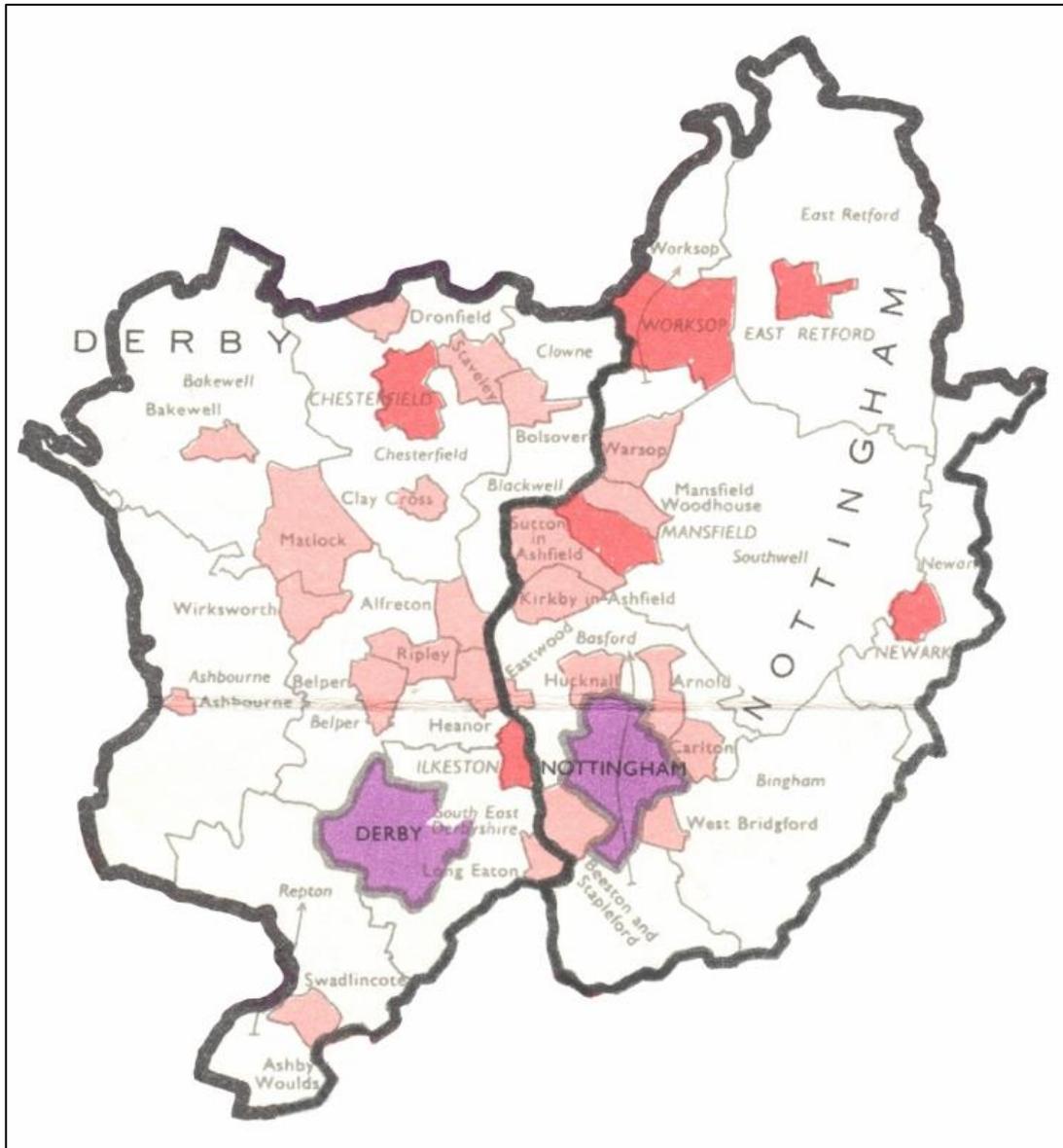
perceptions of what constituted local representation, this is a study that, ultimately, assesses whether national political priorities shaping reform triumphed over local sentiment.

In addressing these primary issues, a number of penumbral themes is also commented upon. Chief amongst these is the battle within government circles between those who sought to ensure that any reform to the inherited nineteenth century system of local government had at its heart the sanctity of local representation, and those who sought greater centralised powers at regional and national levels. This is also, therefore, to some extent, a study of national administrative change viewed from a local perspective, as this was where its effects were most acutely felt with regard to how it impacted upon the day-to-day lives of citizens. Concurrently, different theoretical academic developments are explored, including that of ‘conurbations’ as advanced by Patrick Geddes in 1915,¹⁹ and its application by other academics to the study area. Conceptual approaches to the shape and nature of urban models of governance are important to this study even though neither Nottingham nor Derby was at any stage in the study period officially designated as a conurbation.²⁰ This is because a substantial body of academic opinion maintained that the future governance needs of the area could only be addressed adequately by approaching the question from the perspective that a conurbation existed. With regard to the Hancock Local Government Commission (HLGC), for instance, acceptance of such an academic viewpoint, as subsequent chapters note, would have radically altered the scope of its proposals for reform.

¹⁹ P. Geddes, *Cities in Evolution* (London, 1915). Sir Patrick Geddes was a Scottish geographer, town planner, sociologist, and biologist.

²⁰ For the purposes of the Hancock Local Government Commission (1958-1967) the areas reviewed as conurbations were those so defined by the Registrar General in 1951 – though the Commission did possess the (unused) power to review the future governance needs of additional areas.

Figure 1.1: Map of the study area, 1968



The areas shaded purple are Derby County Borough (to the left) and Nottingham County Borough (to the right). Areas shaded dark pink are municipal boroughs; those in light pink are urban districts. White areas are rural districts; the county boundary is a heavy black line.

Source: Royal Commission on Local Government in England, 1st April 1968, Map 1.

That Nottingham, in particular, was not designated a conurbation is part of what made the study an attractive and challenging research prospect.²¹ Though both political and geographic familiarity with the region was a factor in the decision to base this study upon Nottingham and Derby, it was not the primary motive. Nottingham and Derby were chosen for four specific reasons: first, unlike an area such as the South-West or the North-East where there is a single dominant regional centre, the area of this study is not so clearly endowed. At the time of the HLGC review of the York and North Midlands General Review Area (YNMGRA),²² Sheffield, Nottingham, and Derby were all contenders for dominance but none had established itself in the manner of a Bristol or Newcastle.²³ Secondly, because of their geographic location within their respective counties (see Figure 1.1), there exists a complex set of interlocking and interplaying patterns of identities (recreational, residential, and occupational) that criss-cross the Nottinghamshire-Derbyshire county boundary. As a consequence of Nottingham County Borough (NCB) being but 14 miles to the east of Derby County Borough (DCB), the former's zone of economic influence traversed the county boundary. This meant that the latter did not exert primacy over residents of the county even in its immediate hinterlands. Thirdly, the political position adopted by NCB within the process of local government boundary reviews established by the 1958 Local Government Act, was unique. Since their collective formation in 1888,²⁴ county boroughs had seemingly used every available opportunity to press their need for more land; yet, in the 1958

²¹ The HLGC termed conurbations as 'Special Review Areas'. They were: the West Midlands (Birmingham and the Black Country), Greater Manchester (Manchester, Stockport, Bolton, Salford, and Oldham), Merseyside (Liverpool, Birkenhead and the Wirral), West Yorkshire (Bradford and Leeds), and Tyneside (Newcastle, Gateshead, and South Shields). London and Wales were reviewed under separate provisions.

²² The HLGC review of YNMGRA was between April 1960 and June 1964.

²³ See C.B. Fawcett, *Provinces of England: A Study of Some Geographic Aspects of Devolution* (London, 1919), p. 113; and J. Le Patourel, 'Is Northern History a Subject', *Northern History*, XII (1976), pp. 1-15, pp. 11-12.

²⁴ As a consequence of the Local Government Act 1888 (51 & 52 Victoria c.41).

review process nationwide, NCB did not seek to extend its boundaries, a fact deserving of enquiry. Finally, although other areas, such as North Oxfordshire, were the focus of considerable comment and research during the study period,²⁵ substantially less research has been undertaken on the geographical area that is the central focus of this thesis. In its methodological approach and the geographic area chosen for study, this thesis therefore makes an original and distinct contribution to existing knowledge pertaining to the processes of local government reform in the period 1945-1968, and more specifically how these processes were related to urban expansion and issues of identity and belonging in the Nottingham-Derby area.

Present-day studies of regions and localities contain within them a multitude of analytical concerns: how aspects of localities compare and contrast with each other; how regional identities and structures alter over time; and how they, as ‘place-specific’ studies, fit into wider national and international contexts. There is also, as the social geographer, Doreen Massey, notes, an academic expectation that such studies will include acknowledgment and analysis of the different levels of change experienced at an intra-regional level, and comment upon

notion[s] of spatial synthesis, on the relation[s] between general processes at national level and specific local outcomes, and on the analysis of places in the wider context of [issues such as the] national spatial division[s] of labour... [to] give these studies a rigorous theoretical underpinning.²⁶

It was not always so. The methodological and contentual approaches adopted in early embodiments of the locality study genre, such as parish, town, city and county-based

²⁵ See M. Stacey, *Tradition and Change: A Study of Banbury* (Oxford, 1960); and M. Stacey, E. Batstone, C. Bell and A. Murcott, *Power, Persistence and Change: A Second Study of Banbury* (London, 1975).

²⁶ D. Massey, ‘Industrial Location: Some Thoughts and Observations’, *ESRC Newsletter* 51 (1984) supplement, p. xv.

antiquarian studies,²⁷ were largely written as descriptive historic narratives.²⁸ Frequently, they tended to accept the opinions and findings of their predecessors with neither question nor analysis,²⁹ and were little more than ‘futile etymologies, verbose disquisitions, crowds of Canterbury stories and legends, incorrect pedigrees, lying epitaphs, lists of landowners and such farrago’.³⁰ Further, such studies often adopted a formulaic approach to presenting the history of their locality. The result is that, in the scope of their contents, histories written about Nottingham and Derby were little different to those pertaining to, for instance, the cities of Durham, and Norwich.³¹ Each described its nominated locality’s established antiquity, its ancient and contemporary styles of governance, charities, parish churches, and ancient buildings. Consequently, such publications are, from a modern perspective, chiefly of value ‘as a source of information on [their] own time’.³²

The narrative approach to the study and presentation of the history of regional and sub-regional areas has been increasingly redundant since the late Victorian period, though examples of the essentially ‘antiquarian’, curiosity-based approach can still

²⁷ Such as Charles Deering’s *Nottinghamia Vetus et Nova* (Nottingham, 1751), and Robert Thoroton’s *Antiquities of Nottinghamshire* (London, 1677).

²⁸ M.W. Greenslade, ‘Introduction: County History’ in C.R.J. Currie and C.P. Lewis (eds), *A Guide to English County Histories* (Stroud, 1997), pp. 9-25.

²⁹ Henstock notes with regard to the 1796 revised edition of Thoroton (compiled by John Throsby): ‘Throsby made no attempt to revise Thoroton, but under each town or village entry reprinted Thoroton’s text verbatim, and then added his own contemporary comments under a separate heading’. A. Henstock, ‘Nottinghamshire’, in C.R.J. Currie and C.P. Lewis (eds), *A Guide to English County Histories* (Stroud, 1997), p. 316.

³⁰ Circular written by George Allan requesting information for a history of County Durham (1774), cited in N.J. Tringham, ‘County Durham’, in C.R.J. Currie and C.P. Lewis (eds), *A Guide to English County Histories* (Stroud, 1997), p. 134.

³¹ For example, George Allan and Robert Hegg, *Historical and Descriptive View of the City of Durham and its Environs Bound with the Legend of Saint Cuthbert* (Durham and London, 1824); and Francis Blomefield, *The History of the City and County of Norwich: containing its original rise and increase, its ancient and present government, with the various accidents that have happened to it; the foundations of the Cathedral, Castle, Parochial Churches, Monasteries, Hermitages, Hospitals, and other Publick Buildings* (London, 1806).

³² Henstock, ‘Nottinghamshire’, p. 314.

be found.³³ Two primary forms of localised historical study developed thereafter. The first, like its predecessor, had a traditional narrative approach still ‘concerned largely with political, religious and administrative matters’,³⁴ but additionally utilised contemporary research techniques so that subject matter was not solely presented in a static historic fashion. The archivist, Adrian Henstock, suggests that the result was a ‘book academically sound, yet eminently readable’, citing A.C. Wood’s *A History of Nottinghamshire*.³⁵

The second form embraced what were promoted at the time of their publication as far more pioneering and innovative approaches and may therefore be seen as a bridge towards current practice. The post-war *Surveys* by the British Association for the Advancement of Science were an example of this more advanced genre and offered an analytical approach to regional study.³⁶ The *Surveys* presented, within separated chapters, a portrait of both geo-historical as well as socio-political developments in individual towns and their regions; they also commissioned subject-specific experts to provide extended analysis. Viewed collectively, the *Surveys* permit the reader to make an assessment of the linkages between, for instance, the nature of *A Survey of Southampton and its Region* and its contemporary economic situation, compared to that experienced within *Leeds and its Region*.³⁷ However, the series is not without its limitations. There is no facility for inter-regional comparisons within the individual volumes; each was a stand-alone unit of study. Thus, while the series declared itself

³³ Exemplified by paperbacks that literally and metaphorically present snapshots of the given place under study printed under the banners of ‘town memoirs’ and ‘then and now’ compilations of historic and contemporary views of the same place.

³⁴ Henstock, ‘Nottinghamshire’, p. 321.

³⁵ *Ibid.* A.C. Wood, *A History of Nottinghamshire* (Nottingham, 1947). Wood lectured in history at the University of Nottingham.

³⁶ Covering the period 1949-1972. W.G.V. Balchin, ‘Regional Surveys of the British Association for the Advancement of Science’, *Geography*, 58:3 (1973), pp. 237-241, p. 237.

³⁷ F.J. Monkhouse (ed.), *A Survey of Southampton and its Region* (Southampton, 1964); and M.W. Beresford and G.R.J. Jones (eds), *Leeds and its Region* (Leeds, 1967).

to be ‘of great utility to students of local British regions, whether field-scientists, geographers, historians, or economists’,³⁸ the individual volumes may be characterised as ‘idiosyncratic portraits of individual regions’.³⁹ This is because they fail ‘to link the fortunes of the local area to the wider national and international scene, which is part of the explanation for the changes taking place’.⁴⁰

Just as historical and locality studies have evolved, so too have studies on the history and processes of local government. Four distinct approaches may be noted. The first features collections of archive sources from both municipal bodies and county forms of government, and replicate, at a local level, that produced (at a national level) by the series *English Historical Documents*.⁴¹ They are invaluable sources of primary data, for they ‘make generally accessible a wide selection of the fundamental sources of English history’⁴² and have been published for cities, counties and municipal bodies nationwide from the late Victorian period onwards.⁴³ The second approach tends either to recount the formation, growth and demise of a particular local authority, or to chart its development over a defined period of time.⁴⁴ The third tackles issues affecting local governance through a national perspective and usually highlights one of four predominant periods: municipal government before 1888/1894; the period 1888/1894 to 1974; Thatcher’s reforms (and in particular the changes to metropolitan governance); and policies post-Thatcher. Finally, the fourth approach examines a specific national policy topic and the manner in which local

³⁸ M.W. Beresford and G.R.J. Jones, ‘Editors’ Preface’, in M.W. Beresford and G.R.J. Jones (eds), *Leeds and its Region* (Leeds, 1967), p. v.

³⁹ D. Massey, ‘The Political Place of Locality Studies’, *Environment and Planning A*, 23 (1991), pp. 267-281, p. 271.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ D.C. Douglas, ‘General Preface’, in W.D. Hancock (ed.), *English Historical Documents: XII(II) 1874-1914* (London, 1977), p. iii.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ For instance, J.C. Cox, *Three Centuries of Derbyshire Annals: As Illustrated by the Records of the Quarter Sessions of the County of Derby, from Queen Elizabeth to Queen Victoria* (Derby, 1890).

⁴⁴ Such as C. Hargreaves, *Ilkeston as a Borough* (Ilkeston, 1974).

government performs within that arena. Though these four approaches may cumulatively mention the effects of changes in the mechanics of an area, too frequently they make little mention of the effects of those changes on the spatial awareness and identity of the social structures therein.⁴⁵

While Britain is a predominantly urban society, it does not mean that differentiation between the urban histories of different places is not relevant, or that such histories are little more than urban biographies. Changing spatial patterns within cities give them discrete identities. As the economic and social historian, Martin Daunton, notes:

From the 1950s, British towns and cities underwent rapid change, introducing new variations on the debates of the previous hundred years. A sense of locality, the nature of the ecology of the city and the way that processes intersect to create a balance of economies and diseconomies are as relevant in the later twentieth century as in the late nineteenth century. The issues of urban externalities, of systems of governance, of contesting claims on the urban environment are still important issues in contemporary Britain.⁴⁶

The period addressed by this study (1945-1968) is pivotal both to an understanding of the local government reforms of the 1970s and twenty-first century issues of governance and social interplay within England's cities, especially with regard to community disengagement, housing, and welfare. While the study focuses on Nottingham and Derby, the experiences of these two cities nevertheless have national resonance. This is because a number of the solutions to existing social ills enacted in the study period brought with them unforeseen societal consequences which are still being addressed at both local and national political levels.

⁴⁵ H.J. Dyos, 'Urbanity and Suburbanity', in D. Cannadine and D. Reader (eds), *Exploring the Urban Past: Essays in Urban History by H.J. Dyos* (Cambridge, 1982), p. 34.

⁴⁶ M.J. Daunton, 'Epilogue', in M. Daunton (ed.) *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain, Volume III: 1840-1950* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 833-834.

The political scientist, John Dearlove, notes that in 1972 the Conservative government ‘redrew the local government map of England with a vengeance, replacing some 1,300 directly elected local authorities in England with just 401 authorities’.⁴⁷ Taking effect from the 1st April 1974, the Local Government Act 1972 dismantled the Victorian system of local government.⁴⁸ All counties and county boroughs, non-county boroughs, urban districts and rural districts were disbanded, replaced by either district or borough councils that combined urban and rural areas into single administrative entities. In addition, though counties were retained, they were recast geographically and functionally. Thus the 1972 Act eliminated the counties of Cumberland, Herefordshire, Rutland, Westmorland and Worcestershire, and created 45 new counties. These included 39 non-metropolitan counties of which Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire were two (along with five entirely new entities: Avon, Cleveland, Cumbria, Hereford and Worcester, and Humberside), and six metropolitan counties: Greater Manchester, Merseyside, South Yorkshire, Tyne and Wear, West Midlands, and West Yorkshire.

Such is the nature of the dramatic changes wrought by the 1972 Act that many local government studies concentrate on the workings of the Royal Commission on Local Government (1966-1969) and the party political battle that followed between the Labour and Conservative governments in the period 1969-1972. As a consequence, the decade of work undertaken by the HLGC (1958-1967) is either overlooked or assessed as being largely an exercise in futility – for its demise ushered in the Royal Commission. Similarly, the work of the Trustram Eve Local Government Boundary Commission of 1945-1949 is also generally condensed. This reduced academic focus

⁴⁷ J. Dearlove, *The Reorganisation of British Local Government: Old Orthodoxies and A Political Perspective* (Cambridge, 1979), p. 2.

⁴⁸ Local Government Act 1972 (Elizabeth II c.70).

on the ‘ill-fated’ commissions of 1945-1949 and 1958-1967 ignores the extent to which both periods (and indeed the reforms enacted through the Royal Commission of 1923-1929),⁴⁹ witnessed the development of the ideological approaches that would come to fruition in the reforms of 1969-1972. Accordingly, this study foreshadows the revolution that was set to occur in English local government in the following decades.

Context of the study

In the 23-year period that is the primary focus of this work, England and its people underwent a series of substantial changes.⁵⁰ Adjustment from war to peace; changes in social, familial and living expectations; increased automation at home and work; the growth of the welfare state; the relocation of citizens *en masse* from slum dwellings to utopian council houses with their ‘pastel-coloured bathrooms and neat front gardens’;⁵¹ the resumption and escalation of consumerism;⁵² and the heightened mobility of citizens brought by improvements in transportation⁵³ are merely some of the transformative factors that impacted upon the issues discussed within this study. It would be wrong, however, to try to portray all of these upheavals as by-products of war. Enhanced expectations were evident in a longer-term shift in public attitudes that was ideologically mirrored in the rise of the Labour Party. This societal change was part of a process that, with regard to local government, saw beliefs in local self-determination and sufficiency give way to a belief in the merits of central planning

⁴⁹ Royal Commission on Local Government (Onslow Commission).

⁵⁰ This study does not address issues related to Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland, or the governance of London.

⁵¹ R. Colls, *Identity of England* (Oxford, 2002), p. 347.

⁵² I. Zweiniger-Bargielowska, ‘Consensus and Consumption: Rationing, Austerity and Controls after the War’, in H. Jones and M. Kandiah (eds), *The Myth of Consensus: New Views on British History 1945-1964* (Basingstoke, 1966), p. 80.

⁵³ B. Harrison, *Seeking a Role: The United Kingdom 1951-1970* (Oxford, 2009), pp. 146-147.

and co-ordination in which the central state was expanded at the expense of local initiatives.

The revolution in roles and expectations was epitomised by the development of council housing. The urban historian, H.J. Dyos, suggested that, because the Victorian measure of a successful society was not in its housing but in its economic growth, its slums were ‘necessary so as to not to dissipate too many resources in housing... [and thus] the slums helped to under-pin Victorian prosperity’.⁵⁴ Such precepts were already crumbling by the outbreak of the First World War, in part to defy the burden on taxes on land and housing.⁵⁵ They did not withstand the peace of 1918⁵⁶ and were even more distant by 1945.⁵⁷ After the Second World War, people were again to be rewarded by the promise of better housing, echoing the ‘homes for heroes’ programme subsequent to the First World War. This time, however, there was a greater impetus for that promise to be delivered.⁵⁸ The expansion of the urban environment undertaken by local authorities through the construction of suburban fringe estates and, later, high rise developments as a means to try to check urban sprawl, not only brought societal problems but, in many instances, failed to result in the desired replication of the existing patterns of neighbourliness and senses of belonging that had been prevalent in the slums.⁵⁹

While this thesis primarily addresses the period 1945-1968, it also provides a background to the development of the system of local government that existed at the

⁵⁴ H.J. Dyos, ‘The Slums of Victorian London’, *Victorian Studies* 11:1 (1967), pp. 5-40, p. 27.

⁵⁵ See M.J. Daunton, ‘Introduction’, in M.J. Daunton, (ed.), *Councillors and Tenants: Local Authority Housing in English Cities, 1919-1939* (Leicester, 1984), pp. 4-5.

⁵⁶ P. Wilding, ‘The Housing and Town Planning Act 1919 – A Study in the Making of Social Policy’, *Journal of Social Policy*, 2:4 (1973), pp. 317-334, pp. 317-321.

⁵⁷ Ministry of Health, *Local Government in England and Wales during the Period of Reconstruction, 1945* [Cmnd 6579], p. 3.

⁵⁸ Lord Woolton, diary entry, 1st November 1940, Woolton MS 2, Department of Western Manuscripts, Bodleian Library, Oxford, cited in P. Hennessey, *Never Again* (London, 1992), p. 163.

⁵⁹ P. Leese, *Britain since 1945: Aspects of Identity* (Basingstoke, 2006), pp. 24, 35-36.

end of the Second World War and comments on specific local government initiatives and developments in the 1920s and 1930s.⁶⁰ These are relevant, as later chapters note, because they directly affected not only the condition of local government inherited nationally in 1945 but also why county borough extension of NCB and DCB had become more urgent. In addition, the national party political repercussions of local government boundary reform are noted, as is the rise to power of the Labour Party. Regardless of the individual merits of proposals for reform, only those deemed politically acceptable to the party in power in Westminster were enacted.

Structure of the thesis

In considering the reform of local government, and concomitant issues of urban expansion and identity, as well as the ancillary themes that underpin them, this thesis is divided into eight chapters. Each has been informed by the examination of primary sources at both local and national levels, including Cabinet and parliamentary papers, the formal submissions of individuals and bodies to the various local government commissions, records and minutes of councils, and newspaper coverage of the period. This approach is buttressed by the extensive use of secondary sources.

Commenting on the manner and passing of the Local Government Acts of 1888 and 1894⁶¹ and the development of the system of local governance thereby established, Chapter Two analyses the extent to which the Victorian model of local government enshrined a structural divide between rural and urban areas that became increasingly irrelevant to day-to-day living in the first decades of the twentieth century. The chapter suggests that the system of mutual antagonism that existed between county boroughs and county councils could not be overcome within the existing local

⁶⁰ In particular the three local government acts that followed the reports of the Onslow Commission.

⁶¹ Local Government Act 1894 (56 & 57 Victoria c.73).

government framework. Therefore, while the reforms of the 1920s and 1930s eased immediate tensions, they merely delayed, rather than resolved, the need for wider structural reforms. The failure of NCB's expansion scheme of 1919 is scrutinised for it demonstrates central government's burgeoning expectations of local service delivery, and provides an explanation of how Nottingham sought to remedy the faults revealed in the expansion process.

The period between 1894 and 1945 nevertheless witnessed a steady rationalisation of authorities nationwide. Amalgamation of rural and urban districts was the most common form of this, especially where the former was deemed too small to carry out its legislated duties effectively and the latter was hungry for land. While such rationalisation and amalgamations of areas improved service efficiency, they were not substantial enough to ensure that each individual authority was sufficiently rateable or territorially endowed to cope with the increased demands placed upon them after the Second World War.

Chapter Three further considers the tensions underlying expansion introduced in the previous chapter, with particular reference to housing. It focuses on three specific issues. First, it appraises the changed, and heightened, material expectations of English citizens after the Second World War. Secondly, the role of local government in housing is critically examined in the light of both local and national experiences, and argues that the solutions proffered by central government were not always in accordance with the wishes of those affected, and often brought unforeseen societal consequences. Thirdly, in commenting upon council housing provision, it is noted that although there existed a broad consensus between successive Labour and Conservative governments of the immediate post-war period as to the urgent need for

more housing, the approaches taken by the two parties were different, as was the extent to which individual local authorities adhered to central government guidelines. The chapter therefore considers the expansion of the spatial parameters of urban centres as well as the effects of the resulting dislocation between places of work and residency.

The quest of county boroughs for expansion was related to the greater amount of land required to facilitate the better and wider accommodation of council tenants. To check urban sprawl, central government – and politicians of all hues – promoted high-rise developments, but such schemes did not necessarily fulfil the wants of those who were scheduled to be rehoused as a result of slum clearance. In the St Ann's district of Nottingham there was, as the chapter discusses, spirited resistance. Residents feared that the essence of the communities in which they had grown up would not survive geographic transplantation. Indeed, as Chapter Three concludes, many who were rehoused in the new periphery chose to return to the areas from which they had been moved.

Chapter Four focusses on approaches to the reform of local government as they developed at a national political level between 1945 and 1958. It notes how planning for peace, including the role that local authorities would play in housing, resulted in the establishment of the Trustram Eve Local Government Boundary Commission (TLGBC). Its powers were, however, insufficient to enable it to advance proposals radical enough to address the deficiencies in the inherited system of local government; when the Commission requested further powers, it was disbanded.

There developed within Cabinet and academia two distinct schools of thought with regard to the nature of local government which were echoed by the local government

associations nationwide, as well as their constituent members. The reforming school sought the establishment of ever greater service delivery units on the basis of efficiency. In contrast, the traditional school sought to ensure that democratic accountability and local access remained central to reform. While the reforming school would ultimately triumph ideologically, during the period 1945-1956 no proposals for reform (radical or otherwise) were implemented.

This stalemate was exacerbated by antagonism between the national local government associations.⁶² By 1954, the Conservative Minister for Housing and Local Government, Harold Macmillan,⁶³ suggested to Cabinet that, in light of the intransigent and diametrically opposed views expressed by the associations, it was better to do nothing.⁶⁴ This nonchalant approach to the issue of reform dissipated in 1956, when Macmillan's successor secured agreement between the warring national associations on the matter of reform. The result was the establishment of the Hancock Local Government Commission (HLGC).

With a remit wider than its predecessor, the TLGBC, the HLGC was empowered to review the local government of England (excluding London) under two sets of protocols, depending on whether an area had been designated a conurbation. In so doing it undertook a broad process of consultation that became progressively more protracted. Moreover, though the Commission had extensive powers of review, it had but an advisory role; the final decisions on reforms were at ministerial discretion. Chapter Four contends that this combination permitted national party political

⁶² The Association of Municipal Corporations, (which represented county boroughs and non-county boroughs), the County Councils Association, the Urban District Councils Association, the Rural District Councils Association, and the National Association of Parish Councils.

⁶³ The Rt Hon. Mr Maurice Harold Macmillan, later the 1st Earl of Stockton, was Minister of Housing from 1951-1954 (Conservative Prime Minister 1957-1963).

⁶⁴ PRO CAB 129/67/11, *Operation Round-Up: A Comprehensive Scheme for Local Government*: Memorandum by the Minister of Housing and Local Government, 24th March 1954.

considerations to outweigh parity of importance to the creation of more efficient and convenient units of local government.

Chapter Five focuses on the work of the HLGC in Derby. It evaluates the nature of Derby and its rural hinterlands in the period immediately prior to the commencement of the Commission's review and suggests, building upon the work of the statisticians, Theodore Cauter and J.S. Downham,⁶⁵ that it was more appropriate to view the external boundaries of the town as being where the continuous urban built environment gave way to rural pasture, rather than by strict adherence to the jurisdictional boundaries of DCB. In discussing DCB's case for extension, Chapter Five suggests that, despite the protestations of rural fringe residents and others opposed to the county borough's expansion, the demands of DCB were neither unrealistic nor exaggerated, as previous boundary expansions had failed to endow DCB with land sufficient to answer its longer-term industrial and residential development needs. As a proportion of the whole of greater Derby, urban residential shrinkage within DCB had been matched by suburban expansion in abutting rural districts, enabling urban influence to expand both through this process and the construction of large council housing estates.

Chapter Five also analyses the objections to DCB's proposals (and the HLGC's *Draft Proposals for Derby*)⁶⁶ from academics, the public, interested parties, and local authorities, especially South East Derbyshire Rural District, the authority that had most to lose. It also evaluates the merits of various counter-proposals and the extent to which the protocols under which the HLGC reviewed DCB's future governance needs were appropriate. The chapter concludes with an analysis of the *Derby Order*

⁶⁵ T. Cauter and J.S. Downham, *The Communication of Ideas: A Study of Contemporary Influences on Urban Life – A Social Survey of Greater Derby* (London, 1954).

⁶⁶ PRO T183/5, HLGC, *Draft Proposals for Derby*, September 1962.

of 1968,⁶⁷ and argues that the Minister's decision to double DCB's territory represented a victory for the reforming agenda.

Mirroring a number of the concerns addressed in Chapter Five with regard to Derby, Chapter Six focuses on the work of the HLGC in Nottingham. In the absence of substantive proposals from either NCB or Nottinghamshire County Council as to the form of future governance in the wider area, the Commissioners had to rely more heavily on their own investigations of the area as well as the views of individuals, interested bodies, and the other local authorities concerned. In the review process, academics reiterated that Nottingham was the centre of an existing (or developing) conurbation, and resultantly, the area's future governance needs should have been addressed by the HLGC in the context of a Special Review Area (used for conurbations, such as that of Leeds-Bradford, in West Yorkshire),⁶⁸ rather than a General Review Area.⁶⁹

Expanding upon the issues raised in the preceding chapter, Chapter Seven focuses on reactions to the HLGC's *Draft Proposals for Nottingham*.⁷⁰ The chapter evaluates the nature and strength of local opposition to the *Draft Proposals* and uses a range of hitherto unused primary sources that record the views from organisations as diverse as the Beeston and Stapleford Poultry and Rabbit Club and the Voluntary Action Committee for the Defence of West Bridgford, as well as comprehensive individual submissions such as that sent to the Commission by retired councillor Stan Woods. Party political changes within NCB also directly influenced the workings of the

⁶⁷ Ministry of Housing and Local Government, SI 44/1968, *Local Government, England and Wales, Alteration of Areas: The Derby Order 1968*.

⁶⁸ The West Yorkshire Special Review Area.

⁶⁹ Outside the five conurbations (SRAs) the rest of England was divided into eight separately reviewed GRAs.

⁷⁰ PRO T183/5, HLGC, *Draft Proposals for Nottingham*, September 1962.

HLGC. Thus, the chapter explores the extent to which the case for ‘no expansion’ was politically contrived for the maintenance of existing Labour Party electoral strengths at both city and county levels.

Chapter Seven untangles the pressures faced by the HLG, including the requirement to hold a statutory conference on the *Draft Proposals for Nottingham* in order to gauge local opinion. Throughout this chapter, accountability, conurbation status, and local claims of exceptionalism are contrasted with issues of identity, changing patterns of commuting, and the broader, political repercussions of boundary reform. Lastly, the chapter discusses the report of the public inquiry into the Commission’s final recommendations,⁷¹ and the deliberations of the Minister.⁷²

In evaluating the effects of local government reform upon both urban expansion and identity in the period 1945-1968 with reference to the county boroughs of Nottingham and Derby, Chapter Eight draws together the themes of the thesis, making a number of conclusions. Central to the range of interlocking issues of this thesis is how urban expansion can alter perceptions of locality. This could be seen, for instance, in the disparity between that which was viewed as desirable by central government and the views of local residents. In assessing how local government is an agent of change, influencing the lives of those who reside within its boundaries, the study demonstrates that it is also a living organism that itself may be altered – a factor that is as relevant today as it was during the study period.

⁷¹ E.H. Ritson, *Report of the Inspector Appointed by the Minister of Housing and Local Government to Hear Objections to the Proposals of the Local Government Commission for England for the City of Nottingham and the Surrounding Areas* (London, 1965).

⁷² At this time, Richard Crossman, Labour’s Minister for Housing and Local Government. The Rt Hon. Mr Richard Howard Stafford Crossman was Labour MP for Coventry East 1945-1974 and, variously, Minister for Housing and Local Government 1964-1966, Secretary of State for Health and Social Services, Leader of the House of Commons, and Chairman of the Labour Party.

Chapter Two

Local Government Reform prior to 1945

In contextualising the development of local government within England and Wales prior to 1945, this chapter highlights the formation of that structure of local government, as created by the Local Government Acts of 1888 and 1894.¹ Chapter Two analyses the extent to which the late Victorian model of local government was suitable only for the administrative needs of its period, and suggests that the failure to anticipate changing needs adequately in the early twentieth century meant that the structure could not cope with the demands placed upon it after the Second World War. Although it simplified existing nineteenth-century structures of local governance, with a uniform arrangement of authorities, it created a split system of governance. The administrative divide between town and country dwellers exacerbated competition between urban and rural areas, resulting in a system characterised by mutual antagonism.

Acknowledging that the Local Government Acts of 1888 and 1894 addressed many of the issues of the period with regard to governance, the second part of this chapter notes that the government's original proposals for reform were altered as a result of Commons pressure. This critically weakened aspects of the late Victorian model from its inception because it made it impossible to allocate functions based upon the rateable ability of individual categories of authorities due to the lack of symmetry between them. This meant that, in the decades that followed, the system repeatedly needed to amalgamate areas considered too small for effective service provision

¹ Respectively, the Local Government Act 1888 (51 & 52 Victoria c.41) and the Local Government Act 1894 (56 & 57 Victoria c.73).

(especially in rural areas) and paradoxically offered exaggerated possibilities of self-governance – not always realised – to towns of middling size. The dual-headed county borough/county structure saw the counties develop a ‘preserve and defend’ attitude, whereas both county boroughs and urban districts sought extension as a result of greater urbanisation; the territories of rural districts, accordingly, were increasingly sacrificed to urban authorities. The need to address such problems within the system became increasingly pertinent from the end of the First World War, whereupon, in the reforms that followed, the level at which self-governance could be sought through the attainment of county borough status was raised to a prerequisite population threshold of 75,000.²

In addressing the problems that the Acts presented, the third part of Chapter Two explores the ambitions of Nottingham County Borough (NCB) for expansion of its boundaries in 1919. Thereafter the reasons for rejecting NCB’s request for extension are considered, and contemporary academic opinions concerning settlement coalescence briefly noted, as both shaped the nature of NCB’s local governance needs in the study period.

Finally, the fourth part of the chapter analyses the mechanisms by which central government attempted to reform the structure established as a result of the Local Government Acts of 1888 and 1894. Such efforts included the appointment in 1923 of a Royal Commission on Local Government to investigate optimal means of promoting efficiency through the extension and creation of larger local government units. The Royal Commission’s findings culminated in the Local Government Acts

² The Local Government Act 1929 (19 & 20 George V c.17).

of 1926, 1929 and 1933.³ Special attention is given to the county review process enshrined in the 1929 Act (as it applied to the study area), for the process required county councils to make recommendations as to how local governance could be improved within their respective areas. This resulted in a further diminution of both the size and number of rural authorities, while the reach of urban authorities was increased through the absorption of parish areas that had previously been rural in identity, in good part as a consequence of considerably expanded council housing programmes. The chapter concludes by suggesting that, while the reforms of the 1920s enabled the late Victorian model of local government to be adapted to meet some of the changed realities of everyday life, it could not be adapted sufficiently to meet the legislated and social challenges thereafter.

The Local Government Acts of 1888 and 1894

Within England, developments in local governance did not owe their existence to grants of devolved power by central government;⁴ rather they emerged in a piecemeal manner in answer to a succession of separate needs and demands. Keith Snell notes that,

rather than adopt the older parish to new needs, as a fundamental local unit of belonging still largely commensurate with the lived ambit of everyday life, and one that was compatible with democracy, alternative administrative areas now escalated in an alarming manner... Senses of

³ Respectively, the Local Government (County Boroughs and Adjustments) Act 1926 (16 & 17 George V c.38), commonly known as the Local Government Act 1926; the Local Government Act 1929 (19 & 20 George V c.17); and the Local Government Act 1933 (23 & 24 George V c.51).

⁴ The historic development of the English system of local government can be contrasted with that in France. Whereas in France the powers of local authorities were conceded by the centre to the locality, in England individual localities enjoyed relative administrative independence over a range of functions (for instance, parish responsibility for roads) until the need for centralist intervention was realised as a consequence of the Industrial Revolution. See J. Lagroye and V. Wright, 'Introduction', in J. Lagroye and V. Wright, (eds), *Local Government in Britain and France: Problems and Prospects* (London, 1979), pp. 4-9; and G. Massard-Guilbaud, 'French Local Authorities and the Challenge of Industrial Pollution, c.1810-1917', in R.J. Morris and R.H. Trainor, (eds), *Urban Governance: Britain and Beyond since 1750* (Aldershot, 2000), p. 150.

belonging were weakened because [people] now had less connection with administrative districts, the latter having become so disparate, multi-layered and confusing to come to terms with.⁵

Thus, prior to the 1888 and 1894 Local Government Acts, a gallimaufry of manorial, parochial, town, and borough institutions existed. Each was blessed with its own unique and peculiar mix of areas, boundaries, methods of election, and issues of finance, as ‘nearly every public authority divides the country differently, with little or no reference to other divisions; each authority appears to be unacquainted with the existence, or at least the work, of the others’.⁶ Though the creation of the ‘farraginous bureaucratic districts of the nineteenth century’⁷ was to be welcomed for the clarity that each brought to their respective individual arena of administrative responsibility at that time, their creation also led to an unprecedented rise in the number of local administrative authorities. By the 1870s, ‘the total cures in the country [were] estimated at about 18,000’⁸ with, in addition, no fewer than 27,069 differing rating authorities, and 18 different types of rate.⁹

These bodies were, collectively, increasingly ill-equipped to deal with the social and health problems of England’s ever-growing and more densely populated urban

⁵ K.D.M. Snell, *Parish and Belonging: Community, Identity and Welfare in England and Wales, 1700-1950* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 445-446.

⁶ House of Commons Papers, Select Committee on Boundaries of Parishes, Unions and Counties, (1873) *Report*, 308, Appendix 4: Letter from the Registrar-General to the Home Secretary, the Rt Hon. Mr Henry Bruce MP, 17th July 1873, p. 198.

⁷ Snell, *Parish and Belonging*, p. 446.

⁸ House of Commons Papers, Letter from the Registrar-General, 17th July 1873, pp. 75-76. In his evidence Dr William Farr, of the statistical department of the Office of the Registrar-General, further noted the existence of: 647 unions, 626 registration districts, 1,042 hundreds (comprising 818 hundreds, wards, sokes, rapes, wapentakes and liberties, with 224 boroughs), 893 petty sessional divisions, 2,195 registration sub-districts, 15,416 civil parishes, 721 local board districts, 404 highway districts (representing 8,000 highway parishes), and 2,302 school district boards.

⁹ Local Government Board, *Eleventh Annual Report*, 1882 [Cmnd 3337].

society.¹⁰ Sir John Simon, the Medical Officer of the Privy Council, noted in his evidence to the 1869 Royal Sanitary Commission that

the state of the law, in relation especially to local authorities, is chaotic... we may say that in all county districts there is one authority for every privy and another authority for every pigsty; but also... with regard to the privy, one authority is expected to prevent its being a nuisance, and the other to require it to be put right if it is a nuisance.¹¹

As a consequence of the 1888/1894 reforms, such bureaucratic confusions were diminished. The 1888 Local Government Act abolished, for the purposes of local governance, all the registration counties,¹² and the 52 ancient counties of England and Wales,¹³ replacing them with 62 administrative counties.¹⁴ This difference is accounted for by the splitting of ancient Lincolnshire into its three historic constituent Parts (Holland, Kesteven, and Lindsey), with each becoming a separate administrative county; the administrative separation of the Soke of Peterborough, and the Isle of Ely (from Huntingdonshire); the administrative separation of the Isle of Wight from Hampshire; the division of Suffolk and Sussex both being split into two administrative counties;¹⁵ the three ridings of Yorkshire being made into separate administrative counties; and the creation of a separate county of London (derived

¹⁰ Snell, *Parish and Belonging*, p. 387, additionally notes that ‘rural out-migration and urbanisation... [within England] was at a pace that exceeded any other European country’.

¹¹ House of Commons Papers, *First Report of the Royal Sanitary Commission*, 1870 [4218], Evidence given by Sir John Simon to the Royal Sanitary Commission 1868-1869, 31st May 1869, p. 98.

¹² From 1851 groups of registration districts were united into registration counties for the purpose of civil registration and census reporting. Though the individual shire names of the historic/ancient counties were adopted by the registration counties of England and Wales, these did not refer to the same geographic entities, for individual registration districts (and therefore registration counties), tended to transgress the boundaries of the ancient counties, as noted within the chapter. See M. Nissell, *People Count: A History of the General Register Office* (London, 1987), pp. 6-10.

¹³ The Normans introduced historic (ancient) counties into England. They were territorial divisions with administrative, political, and legal functions and superseded the Anglo-Saxon ‘shires’. The term refers to the traditional geographical areas of counties in England as they existed prior to 1888. Though retained for some ceremonial purposes, the ancient counties were abolished as geo-political administrative units by the Local Government Act 1888.

¹⁴ Each administrative county was governed by a separate and singular executive authority – the county council.

¹⁵ Suffolk was split along the lines of the two existing quarter sessions, whereas the boundaries of the new counties of East Sussex and West Sussex were those of the historic administrative subdivisions of the county – respectively, the three eastern rapes of Sussex and the three western rapes of Sussex.

from various parts of Hertfordshire, Middlesex, Essex, Kent, and Surrey). In contrast, the boundaries of the new administrative counties of Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire were markedly similar to those of the ancient counties of the same name that had preceded them, except for the removal of Derbyshire's detached parishes¹⁶ and the transference of Burton-upon-Trent from Derbyshire to Staffordshire.¹⁷

The administrative county structure of local government was supplemented by the creation – also in 1888 – of a parallel and jurisdictionally distinct system of county boroughs and non-county boroughs. The former were wholly separate from the administrative counties in which they were sited and were, in essence, akin to the former county corporates.¹⁸ In contrast, non-county boroughs had more limited powers of self-government and shared power with their respective county councils. Within the administrative counties of Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire, Chesterfield, Glossop, and Ilkeston, became non-county boroughs in 1889.¹⁹ The county towns of Nottingham and Derby became county boroughs.

As the 1888 Local Government Act dealt with the formation of administrative counties and county boroughs, the 1894 Local Government Act completed the overhaul of the local government system outside London.²⁰ The 1894 Act cemented the place of parishes within local government, and augmented the top-tier county

¹⁶ Detached parishes (or 'county exclaves') were outlying parts of a county that were not geographically attached to the main body of the county. Such parishes were entirely surrounded by the territory of another county. Most county exclaves were abolished through the provisions of the Counties (Detached Parts) Act 1844 (7 & 8 Victoria c.61).

¹⁷ F.A. Youngs, *Guide to the Local Administrative Units of England: Volume II: Northern England* (London, 1991), p. 655.

¹⁸ County corporates (towns or cities that were counties of themselves) were created in the Middle Ages and included those towns or cities that were seen to be sufficiently important as to merit being independent from their counties. They were independently governed with their own sheriffs and lieutenants. Prior to the reforms of 1888/1894 there were 20 county corporate towns or cities within England and Wales; Nottingham, 'The County of the Town of Nottingham' was created in 1448.

¹⁹ As a newly formed non-county borough, Burton-upon-Trent was transferred from administrative county Derbyshire to administrative county Staffordshire on 1st January 1889.

²⁰ The London Government Act 1899 (62 & 63 Victoria c.14).

council structure of local government by establishing, solely in those areas that the county councils governed, a system of second-tier administrative units: urban districts and rural districts.²¹ There were two primary differences between rural and urban districts. First, urban districts tended to contain a single parish and covered the area of a town (usually with a population of less than 30,000), whereas rural districts were based upon a number of parishes. Secondly (and in part as a consequence of the sanitary districts upon which they were based), the urban districts had greater powers and more funding, for they were seen to have to contend with more public health problems than their rural counterparts. These two new forms of authority replaced the existing system of sanitary districts. Their boundaries were remodelled through the Local Government Act 1894, so that they conformed to those of the new administrative county in which they were predominantly sited – with those smaller parts of the former sanitary districts that were geographically situated in alternative counties being formally separated. Though this simplified the governance arrangements for those new authorities in the predominant host county, the ramifications of this ‘separation’ were still being addressed in the local government reforms of the 1930s.

The 1888 and 1894 Local Government Acts resulted in a rationalisation of administrative territories. Accordingly, any local authority established under the Act fell entirely within the territory of the local authority directly above it in the local government hierarchy. This meant that, from 1894 onwards, no parish could transgress the external boundaries of the district in which it was located. Similarly, neither rural nor urban districts could breach the defined boundaries of the administrative counties of which they were part. The total scope of each new

²¹ The 1894 Act established 1,013 urban districts and 787 rural districts.

administrative county was therefore comprised of the sum of all of its respective sub-county level administrative units, in the same way that the total geographic mass of all rural and urban districts was identical to the mass of all of their component parishes.

However, while this governance solution meant that all authorities within one county were geographical multiples of lower-level units, it did not address the governance needs of those remnant parts of sanitary districts sited in different counties to those in which the dominant new rural districts were located. Thus, within the study area, in addition to the ‘unnamed’ rural district centred on Shipley in Derbyshire being administered, as a separate entity, by the Basford Rural District in Nottinghamshire, the Shardlow Rural District in Derbyshire was also responsible for the administration of an unnamed ‘rump’ rural district in Nottinghamshire totalling some 2,466 acres, centred upon the parishes of Kingston-on-Soar and Ratcliffe-on-Soar, and comprising 400 people.²² Nationwide, and as part of the process of rationalisation and the creation of larger administrative units, any remaining ‘rump’ districts were abolished and subsumed into larger districts within the county in which they were sited, through the provisions of the Local Government Act 1929.²³

²² In 1927 this unnamed district was subsumed into the small rural district of Leake. The latter was, in turn, abolished in 1935 and integrated into Basford Rural District.

²³ Local Government Act 1929 (19 & 20 George V c.17).

Notwithstanding such anomalies, the 1888 and 1894 Local Government Acts established a uniform and simplified system of local government throughout England and Wales. In so doing they made a reality of the desire of the Registrar General (Major George Graham) to reform the local governance of England, so that there would be ‘no overlapping of jurisdictions, no confusion of boundaries, [and] no entanglement of masses of population grouped for different purposes in different sections and proportions’.²⁴

The reforms of 1888 and 1894 created powerful and effective units of urban and rural governance with broad (rather than single-purpose) social and economic, as well as judicial and political, functions, and removed much of the existing ‘confusing geographical miscellanea’²⁵ regarding where power and responsibility lay within local governance. In county boroughs, local government was unitary and administered from a single town hall, whereas in the administrative counties, functions were shared between the town hall and county hall with, in rural areas, a third tier of parishes with minor functions.

Shaping the new structure

The principles that led the Government to promote the Local Government Bill 1888 (with particular reference to the size of population required for an urban centre to be granted county borough status) were watered down in the legislative debates of the Commons. The result was that the Local Government Acts of 1888 and 1894 represented a compromise between the desires of central government and the aspirations of MPs of urban constituencies. While it had been envisaged by the chief

²⁴ House of Commons Papers, Letter from the Registrar-General, 17th July 1893, p. 197.

²⁵ Snell, *Parish and Belonging*, p. 445.

architect of the 1888 Local Government Bill, Charles Ritchie (President of the Local Government Board),²⁶ that there should be an urban hierarchy of only ten county boroughs (Birmingham, Bradford, Bristol, Hull, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle upon Tyne, Nottingham, and Sheffield),²⁷ the number of county boroughs created by the Local Government Act 1888 was significantly greater. This was because the pre-requisite population threshold for consideration of attainment of such status was lowered from the 150,000 originally envisaged – a decision that would have repercussions throughout the study period.

Though superseded by the Act, the reasons behind the original ‘desired’ 150,000 threshold advanced in the Bill were twofold. First, the ten cities and towns were ‘so large and so important that they point[ed] themselves out for removal’ from the jurisdiction of the new administrative counties in a manner akin to that of the larger county corporates.²⁸ Secondly, to extend the list of county boroughs beyond ten – for instance, by reducing the pre-requisite population threshold of 150,000 – ‘[it] would have been most undesirable to take out of our county councils the representatives of all the large and prosperous boroughs within their compass’.²⁹

Neither sentiment withstood the parliamentary scrutiny of Borough MPs, who argued that the relegation of so many towns that had hitherto enjoyed degrees of jurisdictional and administrative independence into being merely being parts of a larger administrative whole was an affront to notions of civic pride. In referring to

²⁶ The Rt Hon. Mr Charles Thomson Ritchie MP (later 1st Baron Ritchie of Dundee) was Conservative MP for Tower Hamlets, St George and was President of the Local Government Board in Lord Salisbury's second administration. See also Figure 2.1.

²⁷ The governance of London was dealt with separately.

²⁸ Of the original ten envisaged county boroughs, Bristol, Hull, Nottingham, and Newcastle upon Tyne were, by 1888, the largest of the county corporates by population (excluding London).

²⁹ Charles Ritchie, 19th March 1888, *Hansard*, Commons, 3rd series, vol. 323, col. 1657.

the system of separately governed county corporates that had previously existed, members such as Samuel Hoare argued that ‘from time immemorial Norwich had been accepted as a county of its own... its organisations were entirely independent of the county... [It should] be allowed, in the future, the management of its own affairs’.³⁰ Others, such as Hugh Childers, asserted that even a reduced population threshold of 100,000 would ‘choke the municipal life of a great portion of this country [for it would] leave many flourishing towns of less [*sic*] than 100,000 inhabitants in quasi subservience to the counties’, and that, consequently, a population threshold of 40,000 was more appropriate.³¹

In furthering both lines of argumentation, Sir William Harcourt,³² chided Ritchie, suggesting that the latter

must be aware that the municipal boroughs of England do not desire to be mixed up with the counties in the manner in which this Bill proposes to mix them up. It is not only the Representatives of boroughs sitting on this side of the House who have urged that fact upon him; it has been urged upon him with equal force by the Representatives of boroughs sitting on his own side of the House.³³

³⁰ Samuel Hoare, 13th April 1888, *Hansard*, Commons, 3rd series, vol. 324, col. 1286. Elected as the Conservative MP for Norwich in the by-election of April 1886, he served as one of the city’s two MPs until he retired in 1906; he also served as Home Secretary from 1937-1939. He was ennobled as the 1st Baronet of Sidestrand Hall in 1899.

³¹ Hugh Childers, 17th April 1888, *Hansard*, Commons, 3rd series, vol. 324, col. 1548; Liberal MP for Pontefract, the Rt Hon. Mr Hugh Culling Eardley Childers MP respectively served, between 1872 and 1885, as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Secretary of War, Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Home Secretary.

³² As was required under the parliamentary protocols of the time, the Rt Hon. Sir William Harcourt, as the re-elected Liberal MP for Oxford (General Election 1880), had to elicit the permission of his constituents to continue as their MP having accepted Gladstone’s offer of becoming Home Secretary. In the subsequent, mandatory ‘re-election’, Harcourt was defeated by Alexander William Hall by 54 votes (defeat in such elections being unusual). Though Hall was subsequently de-seated in the same year (having been found guilty of political corruption), Harcourt did not return to the Oxford seat. Rather, through the voluntary resignation of Samuel Plimsoll (one of the two MPs returned by the county borough of Derby) Harcourt became one of the two MPs for Derby until 1895 (while also being Home Secretary). Defeated in the General Election of that year, he subsequently found a seat in West Monmouthshire. See also Figure 2.1.

³³ Sir William Harcourt, 20th April 1888, *Hansard*, Commons, 3rd series, vol. 325, col. 82-83.

Pressure against the subsumption of such municipalities was not, however, a matter related solely to issues of civic pride, for their absorption into larger single county-based administrative units also brought rateable consequences. Harcourt additionally noted:

I know the difficulty which the Rt Hon. Gentleman [Mr Ritchie] has to contend with. The Rt Hon. Gentleman says – ‘It is necessary for me to pay Paul, and therefore I must rob Peter.’ I have no doubt that Paul will be satisfied... but we who represent Peter must protest against it: and we must ask from the Government that these great municipalities, some of which have for centuries, and all for the greater part of a century, conducted their own municipal government independently of the Counties in which they are situated, shall not be forced into contribution with the Counties, but that the rates which are collected within their own boundaries shall not be given to other districts.³⁴

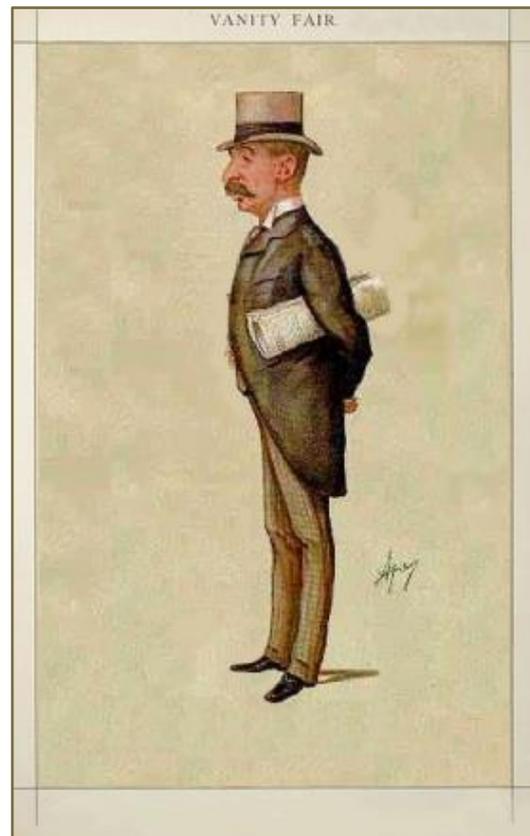
Though members such as William Gully and Theodore Fry made representations for the population threshold to be lowered to 25,000³⁵ (a proposal that would have increased the original envisaged ten county boroughs to 89), the 1888 Local Government Act set the population threshold for attainment of county borough status at 50,000. Additionally, the Local Government Act 1888 contained – as a consequence of the Government acknowledging the will of the House – a clause through which substantially smaller ancient towns and cities that had formerly been ‘counties of themselves’ would be afforded county borough status because ‘their antiquity, their associations, and ancient usage gave them a very strong claim to be included’.³⁶ Thus, the total number of county boroughs created in 1888 was 59.

³⁴ Sir William Harcourt, 20th April 1888, *Hansard*, Commons, 3rd series, vol. 325, col. 112-113.

³⁵ William Gully, 8th June 1888, *Hansard*, Commons, 3rd series, vol. 326, col. 1574; and Theodore Fry, 8th June 1888, *Hansard*, Commons, 3rd series, vol. 326, col. 1575. The Rt Hon. William Court Gully was the Liberal MP for Carlisle from 1886-1905; a former Speaker of the House (1895-1905), he was elevated to the House of Lords as the 1st Viscount Selby. The Rt Hon. Sir Theodore Fry was the Liberal MP for Darlington from 1880 to 1895 and was made the 1st Baronet of Woodburn in 1894.

³⁶ Charles Ritchie, 8th June 1888, *Hansard*, Commons, 3rd series, vol. 326, col. 1556. Canterbury, as a former county corporate with a population of 20,000, became the smallest of the new county boroughs (despite its having fewer than half the number of residents required to qualify on the basis of

Figure 2.1: Sir William Harcourt and the Rt Hon. Charles Ritchie



Sir William Harcourt

Source: *Vanity Fair*, 4th July 1870

Charles Ritchie

Source: *Vanity Fair*, 31st October 1885

The abandonment of the government's original population threshold of 150,000 (and its replacement with a figure of 50,000, along with the caveat through which other lesser settlements could become county boroughs on the basis of their antiquity),³⁷ did not merely represent a triumph of historic sentiment over the adoption of a uniform nationwide system based upon social and economic facts and a strict population criterion. It also rendered aspects of the 1888/1894 local government

population). The former county corporates of Exeter, Lincoln, Chester, Gloucester, and Worcester were also included in the schedule of places to be given county borough status, although each was populated with fewer than 50,000 residents. Of the 20 county corporates that had existed prior to 1888, only six did not become county boroughs (Berwick-upon-Tweed, Lichfield, Lincoln, Poole, Carmarthen, and Haverfordwest).

³⁷ Bath, Dudley, and Oxford also became county boroughs on the basis of their antiquity, although they had not previously been county corporates and did not have populations of 50,000.

reform effectively obsolete from the moment of its creation, for the status of county borough, which had been intended to be a rare exception (in terms of governance), became a far more prevalent element of the new system. This amplified the inclination to attain such status as a characteristic of civic competition. Furthermore, this change from the original principles for reform enabled authorities that were miniscule in terms of population and rateable value to become multi-purpose authorities free from administrative interference from any county structure, regardless of the extent of their ability to discharge satisfactorily the legislated duties of a county borough. Additionally, it made a proper allocation of functions to differing types of authority impossible, due to the sheer divergence of size within each category of local government authority.³⁸ Within the study period, the need to overcome this obstacle became a key theme of the reforming agenda, as is discussed in Chapter Four.

A divide between county boroughs and county councils also developed with regard to how each evolved after 1888. Whereas the 1888 Act envisaged a need for both towns and counties to alter their areas over time,³⁹ between 1888 and 1945 no administrative county sought to expand its boundaries at the expense of another county, and there were no requests for amalgamations between counties. Instead, there developed a determination on the part of the county councils collectively (through the County Councils Association)⁴⁰ to preserve the settlement of 1888 for all time, in relation to their boundaries with other counties.

³⁸ P. Self, *Regionalism: A Report to the Fabian Society* (London, 1949).

³⁹ The Local Government Act 1888, Section 54.

⁴⁰ The County Councils Association was formed in 1890 (by an initial seven county councils) and disbanded in 1974. It sought to represent the interests of county councils collectively, especially to central government. It was succeeded by the Association of County Councils.

In marked contrast to the ‘preserve and defend’ attitude of the counties, both boroughs and urban districts revealed themselves to possess little sentimental attachment to the boundaries that they had been awarded in 1888/1894. In the period between 1888 and 1926, 23 new county boroughs were created,⁴¹ and the areas of 107 municipal boroughs were extended, along with 297 urban districts.⁴² The effects of the ‘constitution of new urban districts and the promotion of urban districts to become boroughs’ were not constrained merely to ‘gratifying aspirations to a higher dignity and civic status... [or] to obtain certain functions which were confined to boroughs... [or] an essential step on the road to county borough status’ (and legislative independence from the county).⁴³ The urban historian, Jon Stobart, suggests that such changes were ‘a political rather than merely a demographic process’.⁴⁴ They were perceived by residents of the authorities that ‘disappeared’ to be more akin to takeovers. The contemporary historian, C.B. Fawcett, notes that this was evident in ‘local and county jealousies... [and the] sentimental, but very real dislike of many inhabitants of other villages to absorption [by a neighbour]’,⁴⁵ which chimes with Snell’s account of local xenophobia.⁴⁶ Accordingly, though such amalgamations offered service rationalisation and potential for greater efficiency, they were often vehemently opposed by local residents.⁴⁷ Indeed, Fawcett further asserted, with reference to the study area, that the expansion of Long Eaton Urban

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 170.

⁴² V.D. Lipman, *Local Government Areas, 1834-1945* (Oxford, 1949), p. 187. Vivian David Lipman was a civil servant and historian, particularly eminent in the field of British Jewish history.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 187

⁴⁴ J. Stobart, ‘Identity, Competition and Place Promotion in the Five Towns’, *Urban History*, vol. 30:2 (2003), pp. 163-182, p. 163.

⁴⁵ C.B. Fawcett, ‘The Long Eaton District: Geographical Conditions and Problems of a Growing Industrial District’, *The Geographical Teacher*, vol. 8:1 (1915), pp. 14-26, p. 26. Charles Bungay Fawcett lectured at Oxford, Southampton, Leeds, and University College London, where he was Professor of Geography for 21 years, until his retirement.

⁴⁶ Snell, *Parish and Belonging*, Chapter Two.

⁴⁷ Fawcett, ‘The Long Eaton District’, p. 26.

District to include six surrounding rural parishes and one rural district,⁴⁸ which he advocated on the basis that it would be ‘in sympathy with the redistribution of population and the changed conditions of modern life’,⁴⁹ would have been more acceptable to those living within such areas if, ‘instead of absorption, the project was, as it should be, one of union, and the new town came into existence under a new name, say “Trenton” instead of under the name of the... upstart town of Long Eaton’.⁵⁰

The period up to the passing of the 1926 Local Government Act was thus one in which county boroughs continually sought to extend their boundaries while urban districts and municipal boroughs sought respectively either county borough or non-county borough status on their own merit, or sought amalgamation with other authorities in order to realise that goal. Such civic ambitions continued unabated into the study period.

The Nottingham County Borough Expansion Scheme of 1919

Locally there were two examples of municipal expansion requests between 1888 and 1945 that are of note: the Nottingham County Borough (NCB) expansion scheme of 1919, and the Nottingham Corporation Act 1932.⁵¹ The former is noted at this juncture because the issues that arose relating to NCB’s case are closely aligned to the national concerns of efficiency noted both in this chapter and Chapter Four, and

⁴⁸ The Derbyshire parishes of Draycott, Sawley, Breaston, Sandiacre, and Risley, the Nottinghamshire parish of Toton, and the Stapleford Rural District.

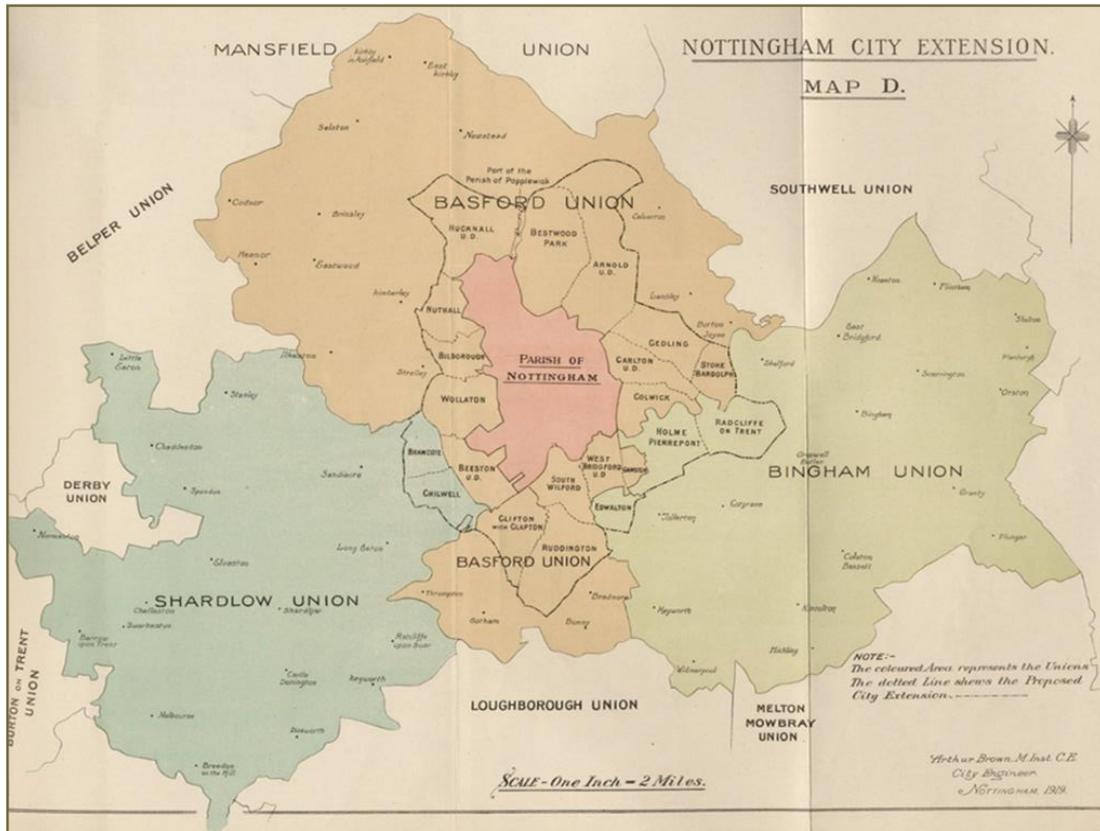
⁴⁹ Fawcett, ‘The Long Eaton District’, p. 24.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 26. The areas to which he alluded – Sawley, Wilsthorpe, and Sandiacre – were partially subsumed into the Long Eaton Urban District in 1921; Ministry of Health Order (1921/67306), The County of Derby (Long Eaton U[rban] D[istrict]) Confirmation Order.

⁵¹ The Nottingham Corporation Act 1932 (22 & 23 George V c.53).

because the result of the 1919 expansion scheme directly shaped the nature of NCB's governance, and its portrayal of itself before and during the study period.

Figure 2.2: Territorial ambitions of Nottingham County Borough, 1919



Source: NRO CC/CL1/BL07.11 Maps.

The territorial ambitions of NCB in 1919 were ‘unprecedentedly large,’ given its size relative to that of the other great cities of England,⁵² and would have resulted in its becoming ‘one of the most sparsely populated boroughs in the Kingdom’ (see Figure 2.2).⁵³ NCB sought: some 39,579 additional acres (an increase of 362 per cent);⁵⁴

⁵² NRO CC/CL1/BL07.01, Brief on behalf of Nottingham County Council, 12th February 1920, p. 1. At the time Greater Birmingham had a population of 900,000 and acreage of 43,718; whereas Nottingham County Borough was asking to be expanded to 50,514 acres with an estimated expanded population of only 339,398.

⁵³ NRO CC/CL1/BL07.01, Memorandum of Clerk of the County Council, March 1920. Such a transformation in the acreage and nature of Nottingham’s land mass could be seen as even more remarkable given that Nottingham had previously been ‘the most closely-wedged and densely populated town in England’, with ‘just under 9 acres... containing 883 houses and 4,238 persons – an

total absorption of five urban districts (Arnold, Carlton, Beeston, Hucknall and West Bridgford); partial absorption of three rural sanitary districts (incorporating some 19 parishes and the jurisdictions of two burial boards); and a population increase of nearly 80,000 (from 259,904 to 339,398).⁵⁵

In advancing its case for expansion, in its *Report to the Minister of Health*,⁵⁶ NCB argued that the amenities that it provided for its own citizens were increasingly enjoyed by the inhabitants of its urban and rural hinterlands. The *Report* noted that, for instance, of a total number of 350 girls attending Nottingham High School, 50 came from surrounding districts; further,

the inhabitants of all the surrounding districts use the City's institutions, its University College, its High Schools and School of Art, the Castle Museum and Art Gallery, the reference libraries and reading rooms, the markets, the parks and balls, the philanthropic institutions, places of amusement and social institutions of all kinds.⁵⁷

NCB contended that this was unfair on its residents given that the former received no financial rateable contribution from these external people who, though not inhabitants thereof (in either an administrative or rateable manner), were nonetheless denizens of NCB's wider community.⁵⁸ NCB further asserted that the surrounding districts were incapable of satisfactorily carrying out the legislative duties with which

average of under 10 sq. yards per person'. Respectively, W.H. Wylie, *Old and New Nottingham* (London, 1853), p. 70; and A.C. Wood, 'Nottingham 1835-1865', *Transactions of the Thoroton Society*, 59 (1955), pp. 1-83, p. 7.

⁵⁴ NRO CC/CL1/BL07.01, Notes for Nottingham County Council in relation to the Nottingham City extension inquiry, 12th February 1920.

⁵⁵ NRO CC/CL1/BL07.01, Letter to the Clerk of Nottingham County Council, 8th August 1919, and Brief on behalf of Nottingham County Council, 12th February 1920. In using the terms 'sanitary districts and burial boards' the language of the council is outdated and potentially confusing. This is because the sanitary districts alluded to had become the three rural districts of Shardlow, Basford, and Bingham (in 1894). Burial boards also ceased to exist in that year; their powers and responsibilities were transferred to the new urban and rural districts.

⁵⁶ NRO CC/CL1/BL07.015, *Report of the Nottingham City Council to the Minister of Health* (1919). The Ministry of Health was in charge of local government until 1951 and the creation of the new ministry, the Ministry of Housing and Local Government.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

they had been charged by central government, and failed to provide their inhabitants with many of the ‘necessities and conveniences of life’.⁵⁹ Within the *Report*, Arnold, Beeston, and Carlton Urban Districts were criticised for failing their citizens by holding neither balls nor markets, and because they did not possess separate sewerage systems (the latter was cited as the sole failure of the Hucknall Urban District). In addition, Beeston and Carlton Urban Districts were reproached for providing neither a library nor a park respectively, whereas West Bridgford Urban District (while notably benefiting its citizens by the provision of a market) failed to hold balls, owned no civic cemetery, provided no recreational parks, and was devoid of a railway station.⁶⁰

In NCB’s opinion, therefore, there were three reasons why its boundaries should be extended to incorporate the five urban districts noted. First, it would make both economic and administrative sense for all such areas to be combined under the jurisdiction of a single administrative body, especially given the extent to which the surrounding urban authorities were dependent upon NCB for the provision of essential services such as water and gas (Figure 2.3).⁶¹ Secondly, the inclusion of such districts into the rateable pool of NCB would allow ‘for greater amenities to be provided [by the latter] in the future’.⁶² Finally, only through the absorption of these ‘failing’ administrative areas into a larger more economically powerful authority – itself – could all of the expectations of citizens in the wider Nottingham area be satisfied.

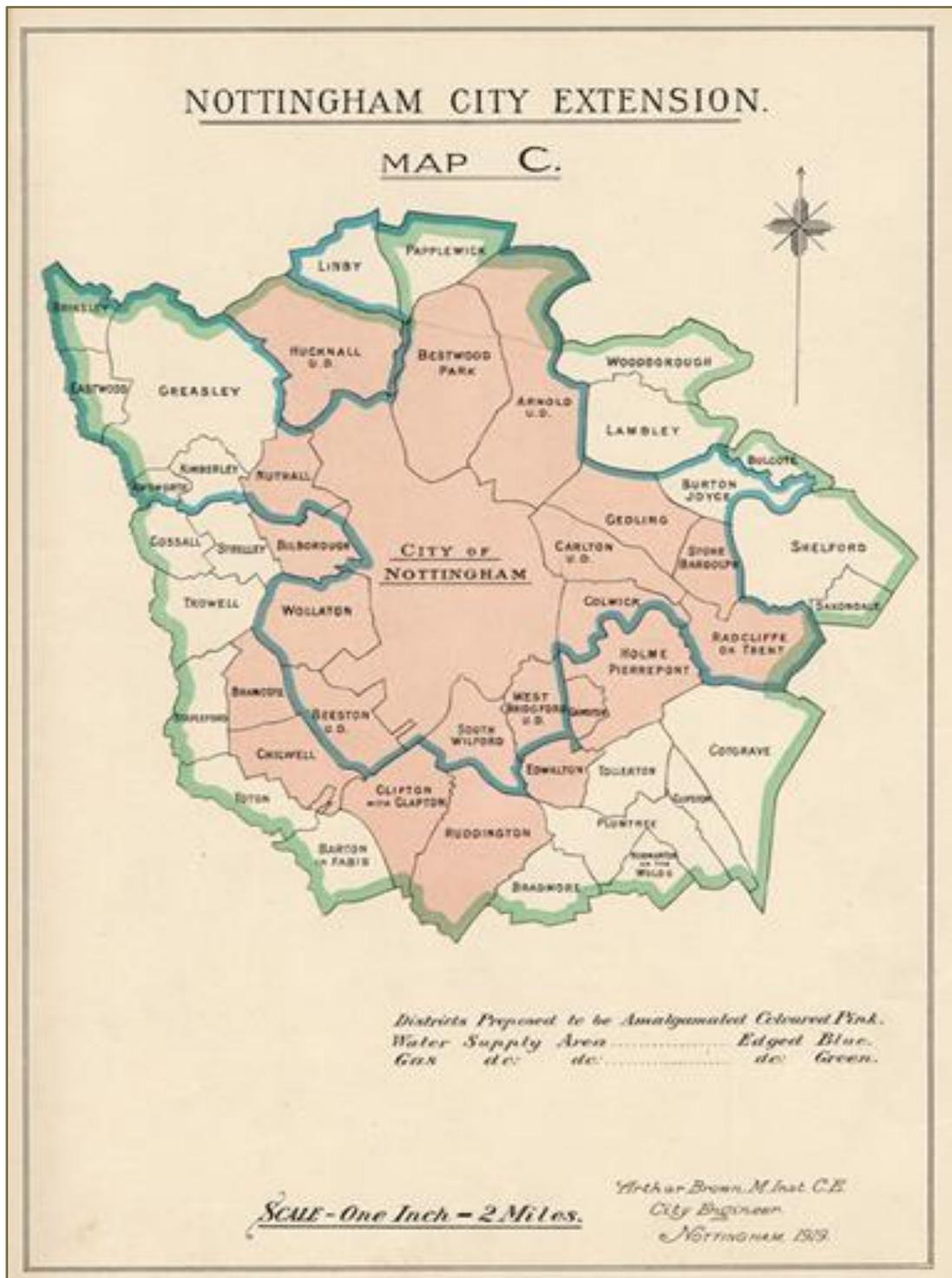
⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* The rationale behind the criticism levied at authorities by Nottingham City Council with regard to the failure to hold balls is not explained in the *Report*. Moreover, it is a criticism that does not appear to have been common.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 100.

Figure 2.3: Districts to which Nottingham Country Borough supplied gas and water, 1919



Source: NRO CC/CL1/BL07.11 Maps.

The arguments deployed by NCB regarding its influence in commerce, housing, and associated services and utilities were also applicable to issues of transport. While the pull-effect of the city for workers was already well established prior to the twentieth century, technological advances resulted in a further breakdown in the traditional urban-rural divide, as, more commonly, persons worked in a different authority to that in which they resided. These advances included rising car ownership,⁶³ the improvement of municipal bus services, and the growth in roads and auxiliary routes feeding urban centres. Such was the extent of the ‘commuting’ phenomenon in Nottingham that by, 1921, in terms of the daily inward movement of population into urban centres that employed in excess of 10,000, Nottingham was ranked seventh in the country (behind London, Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham, Newcastle, and Leeds) in the proportion of workers who travelled into the city each day from surrounding authorities’ areas.⁶⁴ It was estimated that, by 1927, the expansion of bus services enabled some 24,000 persons to commute into NCB weekly from the West Bridgford Urban District by bus alone.⁶⁵ By the time of the post-1945 reforms, such was the latter’s dependence upon NCB for employment, that it was, regardless of the perceptions of its own citizens, widely acknowledged to be little more than a dormitory suburb.⁶⁶ Moreover, the envisaged expansion of NCB’s tramway into Hucknall and through Beeston to Chilwell⁶⁷ (see Figure 2.4), which bordered the Long Eaton Urban District in Derbyshire (bar a third of a mile unpopulated stretch of Toton civil parish), and portrayed by NCB as being ‘intimately connected with the

⁶³ Between 1901/1904 and 1911/1913, and 1911/1913 to 1921/1922, the number of personal cars registered within England and Wales rose from 8,400 to 105,700 and 314,700 respectively. Steeper rises were recorded in motorcycle ownership; the number of hackney vehicles (not including trams) rose almost fifteen-fold. K.B. Smellie, *A History of Local Government* (London, 4th edn, 1968), p. 61.

⁶⁴ R.E. Dickinson, *The City Region in Western Europe* (London, 1967), Chapter Four.

⁶⁵ See West Bridgford Urban District Council (Passenger Transport Department), *Golden Jubilee: 1914-1964: Fare and Timetable: All Routes* (Nottingham, 1964).

⁶⁶ See Chapter Six.

⁶⁷ Itself a civil parish of Stapleford Rural District.

city',⁶⁸ would have acknowledged NCB's commuter pull-effect into Derbyshire, even before post-war developments in car ownership.

While NCB presented arguments for economies of scale and common interest in its application to absorb its five immediately surrounding urban districts, the arguments deployed were weaker when applied to the outer-lying rural areas it wished to absorb. In particular, NCB's wish to absorb Bramcote and Chilwell civil parishes required expansion to include territories with which it shared no common border.⁶⁹ Each was also separated from NCB by the presence of a lesser-ranking urban authority. In response to NCB's proposals, these rural parishes pointed to their already being served by established urban centres (such as Beeston and Long Eaton, in the cases of Bramcote and Chilwell respectively) which, though not as economically significant as Nottingham, not only served their own rural hinterlands but were also notably closer than the city centre of Nottingham.⁷⁰ Thus, in January 1920, each of the parishes sought by NCB passed resolutions against NCB's proposals.⁷¹ In the commentaries attached to the resolutions, they presented themselves as geographically removed from NCB, and as distinctive and individual settlements with characteristics of their own, an assertion echoed by the urban districts in their respective resolutions.⁷² These were sentiments that reverberated throughout the study period.

⁶⁸ NRO CC/CL1/BL07.015, *Report of the Nottingham City Council to the Minister of Health*, p. 100.

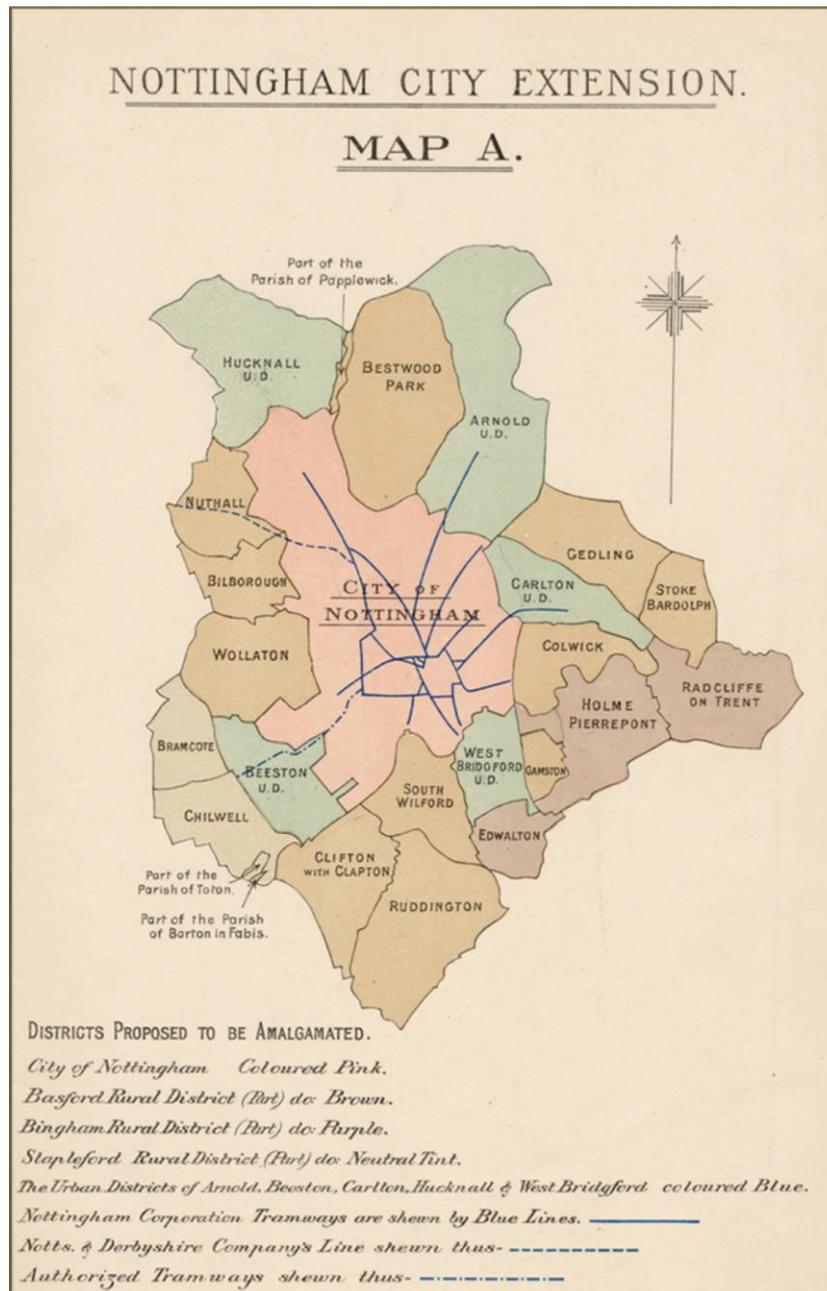
⁶⁹ Along with Edwalton, Holme Pierrepont, and Radcliffe-on-Trent, all of which were to the west of NCB and thus beyond the study area.

⁷⁰ NRO CC/CL1/BL07.01, Letters from Bramcote and Chilwell Civil Parishes, January 1920.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² *Ibid.*

Figure 2.4: Major bus and tram routes provided by Nottingham County Borough, 1919



Inspection of Figure 2.4 reveals that Nottingham County Borough did not run buses into the West Bridgford Urban District, though citizens of the latter were predominantly dependent upon the former for employment. In 1912 it was proposed that NCB should run trolley buses over Trent Bridge into West Bridgford, but this attracted fierce opposition from its residents. A year later, West Bridgford Urban District became the first urban district in the country to be allowed to run its own bus service (West Bridgford Urban District Council Act 1913, 3 & 4 George V c.53).

Source: NRO CC/CL1/BL07.11 Maps.

In May 1920, the Minister of Health, Christopher Addison,⁷³ refused NCB's application for boundary extension. In so doing, he made two substantive points. First, with regard to service provision, he stated that he would 'not be justified in granting any extension of the city boundaries until substantial improvements [had been] made in the sanitary and housing conditions of the existing city'.⁷⁴ Secondly, Addison suggested that, had NCB's provision of services been better, he 'would have been disposed to consent to the inclusion in [NCB] of the urban districts of West Bridgford and Carlton and parts of the urban district of Arnold', given the case that had been presented to him by NCB.⁷⁵

Addison's comments highlighted that, within a fragmented system of local government, standards of service provision could vary markedly within comparatively small areas. Addison recognised that large towns were over-spilling their 1888-prescribed geographical limits, and that centres of urban populations that had previously been separate and independent were not only growing in contact with each other but also potentially developing common character. In 1915, Patrick Geddes coined the word 'conurbation' for this process.⁷⁶ With specific regard to West Bridgford Urban District and NCB, Fawcett would also, six years after the

⁷³ Previously the Liberal MP for Hoxton (seat abolished 1918), the Rt Hon. Dr Christopher Addison was the MP for Shoreditch in 1918 and was appointed to the position of President of the Local Government Board, serving from January 1919 until its abolition in June 1919. As a doctor of medicine, Addison was a keen proponent of the view that there was a direct link between ill health, poverty, and poor sanitation and campaigned for the Local Government Board to be transformed into a Ministry of Health. Established in June 1919, he was the first Minister of Health; the department retained responsibility for local government issues until 1951. Addison served as Minister until 1921. Losing his seat in the General Election in 1922, he returned to the Commons as the Labour MP for Swindon in 1929. In 1937 Addison became Baron Addison of Stallingborough.

⁷⁴ NRO CC/CL1/BL07.01, Letter from H.O. Stutchbury, Assistant Secretary to the Minister of Health, to Nottingham County Borough, May 1920.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ P. Geddes, *Cities in Evolution* (London, 1915), pp. 12-13.

Minister's decision, propose the existence of a conurbation centred upon the two.⁷⁷ As is discussed later in this study, such observations, along with advances in communication, gave rise to calls for greater regionally based co-ordination of transport and other public services (such as housing, health and planning), and contributed to the development of a more common lifestyle between communities that had previously been geographically and administratively separate. This was because, as the urban nature of cities extended beyond their formal jurisdictional boundaries and continuously built-up areas 'to include a penumbra of satellite settlements',⁷⁸ it became 'no longer meaningful to talk about a distinctively rural or a distinctively urban way of life, but, rather, of differing degrees of urban-ness'.⁷⁹

The results of the Minister's refusal of NCB's proposal may be surmised as threefold. It led to Nottingham County Borough (NCB) embarking upon, as is discussed in Chapter Six, a sustained programme of civic improvement and Ratzelian 'raum'.⁸⁰ In line with the mutual antagonism established by the 1888/1894 Local Government Acts, Nottingham County Council (NCC) continued to oppose any geographical extension of NCB's territorial boundaries. Secondly, the refusal deprived the wider area of any form of 'joined-up' governance with regard to transport and housing requirements and culminated in NCB increasingly needing to build council housing on land that belonged to other authorities in order to fulfil its

⁷⁷ C.B. Fawcett, 'British Conurbations in 1921', *The Sociological Review*, 14:2 (1922), pp. 111-122, p. 113.

⁷⁸ L.J. Sharpe, 'Modernising the Localities: Local Government in Britain – Some Comparisons with France', in Lagroye, J. and Wright, V. (eds), *Local Government in Britain and France: Problems and Prospects* (London, 1979), pp. 42-74, p. 53.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ F. Ratzel, *Politische Geographie* (Munich, 1897). Friedrich Ratzel was a German geographer who introduced the concept, 'lebensraum', which was distorted by Adolf Hitler to encompass racial principles; however, the primary concept, 'raum', is here used in Ratzel's original term of reference, whereby borders are not static, and thus is used with relation to issues of cultural, spiritual and geographic expansion and empathy with the environment of the urban place.

legislated objectives.⁸¹ Thirdly – and this could be applied nationally – it showed that the jurisdictional structure of individual units of local government was not being adapted quickly enough to take into account the fact that an increasing number of those administrative areas designated as being rural in 1894, were becoming urban in nature. Further, neighbouring urban centres were more frequently merging together due to outward economic and housing growth, and there was an increased blurring in the divide of what was meant by rural and urban lifestyles, both with regard to service expectations and identity.

Reviewing local governance: The inter-war years

The 1919 extension proposal made by NCB, and its subsequent failure, epitomised the national battle between county boroughs and county councils. The former wished to extend their boundaries to include more of those population areas that comprised their daily workforce, while the latter sought to repel all such incursions into their rateable territories.⁸² Given these conflicts, a Royal Commission on Local Government (excluding London) was established in February 1923 under the chairmanship of the Earl of Onslow.⁸³ Its brief was

to inquire into the existing law and procedure relating to the extensions of county boroughs and the creation of new county boroughs in England and Wales, and the effect such extensions or creations on the administration of the councils of counties and of non-county boroughs, urban districts and rural districts; to investigate the relations between these several local authorities; and generally to make recommendations as to their constitution, areas and functions.⁸⁴

⁸¹ See Chapter Six.

⁸² Between 1888 and 1922, of 198 county borough requests for extensions, 109 were successful – taking from the administrative counties some 250,000 acres, a population of approximately 1,700,000, and a rateable value of nearly £8 million. Lipman, *Local Government Areas*, pp. 170-171.

⁸³ Prior to his appointment to the chairmanship of the Royal Commission, the Rt Hon. Richard William Alan Onslow, 5th Earl of Onslow, a former diplomat, had served in various capacities.

⁸⁴ *The London Gazette*, 16th February 1923, p. 1147.

The result of these enquiries was the publication of three reports, published in August 1925, October 1928, and December 1929.⁸⁵ They led, respectively, to the Local Government Acts of 1926, 1929, and 1933.

Beyond legislating upon matters of rate relief and compensation, the Local Government Act 1926 changed the process by which county boroughs could be created or extended. In so doing, it increased to 75,000 the minimum population threshold that an existing urban district or non-county borough needed before it could seek county borough status.⁸⁶ Increased urbanisation had meant that, according to the 1921 census, there were 22 municipal boroughs and urban districts (in addition to the extant 78) that would qualify for county borough status at the 50,000 population threshold. This would remove too much rateable value from the counties whereas ‘the number of urban areas (other than county boroughs already constituted) that have 75,000 or more inhabitants is only seven’.⁸⁷ Thus, as Onslow further noted, in introducing the Local Government (County Boroughs and Adjustment) Bill to the House of Lords:

The figure of 75,000 – as indeed was the case in 1888 with regard to the figure of 50,000 – [was] intended only to prevent unreasonable proposals being put forward. It [was] by no means suggested by the Government, nor... the Commission... that every town with a population of 75,000, or more, has *ipso facto* the right to come to Parliament and ask to be made a county borough. On the contrary, it is the quality of the administration by

⁸⁵ Respectively, House of Commons Papers, *First Report of the Royal Commission on Local Government: Constitution and Extension of County Boroughs*, 1925 [Cmnd 2506]; *Second Report of the Royal Commission on Local Government Areas and Functions*, 1928 [Cmnd 3213]; *Final Report of the Royal Commission on Local Government: Functions and Constitutions*, 1929 [Cmnd 3436].

⁸⁶ Though Doncaster had a population of only 60,000, it was promoted to county borough status in 1927. The population threshold was not rigorously applied to Doncaster because its application for consideration had been made prior to the enactment of the 1926 Act. No further county boroughs were created until 1964, at which time an entirely new process was initiated with regard to the attainment of county borough status.

⁸⁷ Earl of Onslow, 18th March 1926, *Hansard*, Lords, 5th series, vol. 63, col. 691; of the seven only one was outside Greater London.

the local authority that is of far more importance than the extent of the population of the town.⁸⁸

Mindful of the stated need for ‘quality administration’, the second of the Local Government Acts (that of 1929) required county councils to review the boundaries of urban districts, rural districts, and non-county boroughs within the former’s jurisdiction.⁸⁹ Additionally, the Act permitted the abolition of both urban and rural districts that were perceived to be too small to undertake service provision effectively, and for their respective territories to be subsumed into those of neighbouring authorities. The rationalisation in service provision, however, was not extended either to county or non-county boroughs. As a result, though county-based authorities were reduced in number, municipal boroughs were not. Nationally, between 1932 and 1938, 189 municipal boroughs were extended; 236 rural districts abolished and 67 created (a net decrease of 169); 206 urban districts abolished and 49 created (a net decrease of 159); and 42 urban districts incorporated into surrounding rural districts, thereby also concluding the process of removing ‘rump’ districts.⁹⁰ Such consolidation not only expanded urban-ness at the expense of rural authorities, but also demonstrated that the desire to optimise service delivery was not merely a post-1945 phenomenon.

The review carried out by Derbyshire County Council, (and subsequent *Derbyshire Review Order*)⁹¹ had a number of consequences for the administrative units within

⁸⁸ *Ibid.* The difficulties associated with increased urbanisation and the resultant issues of governance that arose were not unique to England. It is interesting to note, therefore, that in 1927 a similar Act was passed in Germany: the Prussian *Gesetz über die Regelung verschiedener Punkte des Gemeindeverfassungsrechts*. Under its terms, the previous provision by which towns would automatically achieve administrative independence from their host county (upon attainment of a specified population threshold) was removed.

⁸⁹ The proposals made by the county councils were, thereafter, given legislative form as Ministry of Health Orders.

⁹⁰ Lipman, *Local Government Areas*, pp. 200-205.

⁹¹ Ministry of Health Order (1934/77674), *The Derbyshire Review Order*.

Derbyshire. Urban districts and municipal boroughs (both county and non-county) were enlarged through the absorption of neighbouring parishes and the less frequent administrative phenomenon by which a small urban district was abolished and its territories subsumed into a rural district. Though there were changes throughout Derbyshire, this study notes only the four pertinent to the study area. First, Derby County Borough (DCB) was enlarged by gaining the boundary-adjacent and partially-industrialised parts of the parishes of Chaddesden and Spondon (both within the Shardlow Rural District and amounting to 166 acres); parts of the parish of Mackworth; and the entirety of the parish of Markeaton (both within Belper Rural District and amounting to a total of 833 acres).⁹² Secondly, the geographically small and sparsely populated (132 acres and 3,280 persons respectively) Alvaston and Boulton Urban District was abolished,⁹³ and its territories subsumed by Shardlow Rural District, which enveloped it on all sides. Thirdly, and in contrast to its gaining territory from Alvaston and Boulton, Shardlow lost territory to the Long Eaton Urban District.⁹⁴ Finally, Ilkeston Municipal (non-county) Borough was similarly enlarged at Shardlow's expense, reaping some 409 acres (absorbing Kirk Hallam) and an additional 82 acres by its formal adoption of the parish of Shipley, which had previously been an unnamed, 'rump' rural district administered by Basford Rural District.⁹⁵ Shardlow Rural District thus not only lost more land than it gained, but the land that it lost was adjacent to existing urban authorities. Endowed with such extra under-developed land, the urban districts, in turn, expanded their urban townscapes

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ *Ibid.* Long Eaton Urban District subsumed into its jurisdiction those urbanised parts of the Sawley and Wilsthorpe civil parish that bordered its territories and that it had not been granted in 1921; Ministry of Health Order (1921/67306) The County of Derby (Long Eaton U[rban] D[istrict]) Confirmation Order.

⁹⁵ Ministry of Health Order (1934/77674), *The Derbyshire Review Order*.

through the construction of council housing. As a result of the ensuing urban sprawl, a cycle whereby the urban districts would seek to expand began again.

In Nottinghamshire, the process of the county review was slightly complicated by the fact that NCB had been enlarged as a result of the Nottingham Corporation Act 1932 by some 5,236 acres.⁹⁶ As a result, the boundaries of NCB were not further augmented in the *Nottinghamshire County Review* for, as is explored in Chapter Six, this expansion provided NCB with sufficient housing development land to address its immediate needs. Nevertheless, within the remainder of that part of the county with which this study is concerned, a number of boundary changes was enacted, effective from 1st April 1935. The most significant were those that affected the Basford Rural District, Beeston Urban District, and Stapleford Rural District.

As a result of the *County of Nottingham Review Order* of 1934, Basford Rural District was enlarged through the absorption of sundry smaller rural districts such as Leake, and parts of Skegby (respectively 19,358 acres and 439 acres), and lost territory to three of the four urban districts adjacent to NCB: Carlton (2,559 acres), Hucknall (747 acres), and West Bridgford (1,548 acres). Further, it lost 226 acres to Eastwood Urban District (nine miles to the north of NCB and on the Nottinghamshire-Derbyshire border), and 15 acres to the urban district of Kirkby-in-Ashfield, approximately 20 miles to the north of NCB.⁹⁷ Thus, while Basford Rural District ultimately gained more territory than it lost, the land that it gained was primarily rural in nature and of a lower rateable value. Moreover, the increasing

⁹⁶ This was comprised of some 107 acres from Arnold Urban District, the entirety of the Bilborough and Wollaton civil parishes, parts of both Bestwood Park and Colwick civil parishes (all from within Basford Rural District and totalling 4,956 acres), and some 173 acres from Beeston Urban District; the Nottingham Corporation Act 1932 (22 & 23 George V c.53); effective 1st April 1933.

⁹⁷ Ministry of Health Order (1934/78578) *The County of Nottingham Review Order*.

urbanisation of the period meant that it lost areas that were chiefly urban in character and bordered existing urban authorities.

In a further rationalisation of districts, the *County of Nottingham Review Order* abolished Beeston Urban District and Stapleford Rural District, creating a new singular authority: the Beeston and Stapleford Urban District. Though presented within the review as a new authority, it was more akin to a takeover of Stapleford by Beeston. The newly formed Beeston and Stapleford Urban District boasted an acreage of 6,462 acres, and a population of approximately 42,000.⁹⁸ This was an administrative ‘marriage’ that subsequently enabled opponents of creeping urbanisation to argue that NCB should not be expanded further westward, and is examined in greater detail in Chapter Six.

The final of the three Acts was the Local Government Act of 1933. For the purposes of this study, it contained three salient points. First, councils (of all types) could purchase land outside of their area for the purposes of performing their legislated duties. This provision therefore enabled local authorities (such as the county boroughs of Nottingham and Derby) to expand their urban influence through the purchase of land for municipal housing from neighbouring authorities. Consequently, throughout the nation, swathes of land in rural districts became *entrepôts* for the surplus of residents that urban authorities needed to house.⁹⁹ This was an important development that, as time progressed, brought with it an array of jurisdictional complications, as well as issues of place and belonging, as is explored in later chapters. Secondly, as a consolidating Act, the Local Government Act 1933 repealed much of the Local Government Acts of 1888 and 1894, and re-established the

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ A. Power, *Hovels to High Rise: State Housing in Europe since 1850* (London, 1993), pp. 180-181.

existing councils and their administrative areas. Through the provisions of the 1933 Act, 33 urban district councils were upgraded to non-county borough status, making the total number 309; the number of urban districts fell from 783 to 572, and the number of rural districts from 652 to 475. Finally, the Act included a definitive list of all administrative units within each class of authority: these were the local authorities that the nation would inherit at the end of the Second World War.¹⁰⁰

Conclusion

Though the Local Government Acts of 1888 and 1894 established units of local governance that were, as the political scientist, Helmut Wollman, observes, politically strong and multi-functional¹⁰¹ (in contrast to the ‘single purpose agencies managed by boards that were appointed or elected in various ways’ that had previously existed),¹⁰² the manner of their formation was not faultless. The boundaries of the newly created administrative counties had not been decided upon by a ‘systematic or rational manner to the distribution of the people or the natural features of the county’ that reflected Victorian societal or economic realities,¹⁰³ but were rather, as V.D. Lipman evaluates, ‘essentially the historic counties of almost a thousand years’ standing’.¹⁰⁴ In addition, the ‘separating-out’ of significant urban centres and the trend thereafter for urban expansion and annexation of rural

¹⁰⁰ Part I of the First Schedule of the Local Government Act 1933 listed all of the administrative counties then in existence (50 in England and 12 in Wales). Part II of the First Schedule of the Act listed all the county boroughs in England and Wales (80 in England – including Derby and Nottingham – and three in Wales); Part III of the First Schedule of the Act listed the non-county boroughs of England and Wales (244 in England and 27 in Wales). These included Buxton, Chesterfield, Glossop, and Ilkeston within administrative county Derbyshire, and East Retford, Mansfield, Newark, and Worksop in administrative county Nottinghamshire.

¹⁰¹ H. Wollmann, ‘Local Government Reforms in Great Britain, Sweden, Germany, and France: Between Multi-function and Single-purpose Organisations’, *Local Government Studies*, 30:4, (2004), pp. 639-665, p. 643.

¹⁰² C. Skelcher, ‘Governing Communities: Parish-Pump Politics or Strategic Partnerships?’, *Local Government Studies*, 29: 4, (2003), pp. 1-16, p. 10.

¹⁰³ C.B. Fawcett, *Provinces of England: 1883-1952* (London, 1960), p. 49.

¹⁰⁴ Lipman, *Local Government Area*, pp. 163-164.

hinterlands meant that the system bred mutual antagonism in which there was little incentive, if any, for county and county borough authorities to work together for the betterment of their constituents. Such split governance meant that there was a potential for substantial variations in the level of service provided by neighbouring authorities, as noted, for instance, in the Minister's refusal of NCB's expansion request of 1919.

Between 1894 and 1926, a seemingly never-ending series of boundary extension requests were sought by urban districts, non-county boroughs and county boroughs, as communication, transportation, and suburbanisation progressed. The result was that the boundaries enforced by the administrative division of town from country were increasingly out of touch with the realities of everyday living. Moreover, the reduction in the government's original population threshold for county borough status to 50,000 meant that attainment of self-governing status became a legitimate policy objective of a growing number of authorities.

While the establishment of the 75,000 population provision of the 1926 Local Government Act effectively halted the successful attainment of county borough status, reducing the immediate pressure on counties as institutions of governance, the revised population provision did little to address wider and underlying problems. After the revision of units in the reforms of the 1920s, there remained a considerable diversity of scale. Although there were 11 boroughs and two urban districts with populations over 100,000 and four rural districts with populations between 50,000 and 100,000, 95 boroughs, 299 urban districts and 149 rural districts had populations lower than 10,000.¹⁰⁵ Similarly, while 173 boroughs, 152 urban and 109 rural

¹⁰⁵ Lipman, *Local Government Areas*, p. 207.

districts had rateable values in excess of £100,000, 72 boroughs, 234 urban districts and 161 rural districts had rateable values of less than £40,000.¹⁰⁶ This meant that functions could not be assigned to one particular type of authority in a meaningful manner due to the lack of symmetry between the authorities, in geographic size, technology, population density, or rateable value.

The reforms brought about by the 1926, 1929, and 1933 Local Government Acts resulted in the creation of a number of larger authorities, and a reduction in the total number of urban and rural districts (from a national figure of 1,606 to 1,047 in 1940). Yet, by 1940, still there remained an excess of small units: at the outbreak of the Second World War, nearly 450 urban and rural districts had populations of fewer than 10,000.¹⁰⁷ In planning for peace, Lord Reith, the Minister of Works and Planning, stated that while ‘the importance of maintaining the character and independence of local authorities is recognised, it will probably be found necessary to readjust their present functions to enable certain of their powers to be exercised on a wider basis’.¹⁰⁸ As part of the wider shift in central government policy to the centralisation of responsibilities, services such as energy and health were transferred away from local authorities to newly nationalised industries.¹⁰⁹ Stripped of such enterprises, local authorities instead became, especially within the arena of social policies (council housing, slum clearance, and education), the ‘principal vehicles of

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 231.

¹⁰⁸ Lord Reith, 26th February 1941, *Hansard*, Lords, 5th series, vol. 118, col. 508. The Rt Hon. Lord John Charles Walsham Reith was general manager and subsequently chairman of the BBC from 1922-1938. Briefly MP for Southampton, he was appointed as Minister of Works and Buildings in October 1940 and thereafter transferred by Churchill to the House of Lords, by being created Baron Reith of Stonehaven. He was dismissed as Minister of Works by Churchill in February 1942.

¹⁰⁹ See Chapter Three.

delivering policy in the post-war period'.¹¹⁰ The structure of local government was thus once again 'adjudged due for recasting'.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ K. Young and N. Rao, *Local Government since 1945* (Oxford, 1997), p. 11.

¹¹¹ Lipman, *Local Government Areas*, p. 2.

Chapter Three

Building Expectations

After the Second World War, Britain became increasingly urbanised through a variety of processes, including the resumption of middle-class suburbanisation.¹ Urban areas also became larger because of the greater planned relocation of urban dwellers post-1945, either to ‘new towns’² or council estates on the fringes of extant towns and cities. As a consequence of their pressing need for further land for housing development – thus complying with the commands of central government – urban authorities were compelled to expand their building programmes into the territories of neighbouring authorities. These processes intensified the previously noted tensions between county and urban authorities, as the latter sought to address their ‘landlocked’ status.

Accordingly, as Chapter Two dealt with the formation, structure and reform of local government prior to 1945, and Chapter Four discusses the opposing models for further structural innovation on a national scale leading up to the 1958 Hancock Local Government Commission, this chapter gives an overview of housing throughout the period as well as public perceptions and reactions to it. In the immediate post-war period, local authorities became the primary building agents and landlords of the country. As Martin Daunton notes, by 1950 the result was that ‘the

¹ S. Gunn and R. Bell, *Middle Classes: Their Rise and Sprawl* (London, 2002), pp. 54-55.

² Under the New Towns Act 1946 (9 & 10 George VI c.68), 14 new towns had been established by 1950: ‘in conception, new towns were the apotheosis of inter-war thinking and migration: they were designed to arrest migration to existing cities, to disperse the population of those cities, to spread industry, and to create an aesthetically pleasing environment and new urban communities. The new town was the planners’ riposte to the suburb.’ D. Feldman, ‘Migration’, in M.J. Daunton (ed.) *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain, Volume III: 1840-1950* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 205.

volume of local authority housing was one of the most striking and peculiar features of British towns, and only the socialist states of Eastern Europe could rival the level of public housing found in Glasgow or Birmingham'.³

Changing society: Changing services

In 1945, 'the great task of re-planning and physical reconstruction' began, for 'many towns [had] suffered grave damage from enemy attack, and great difficulties [had] been caused by large-scale movements of population and by economic and financial disturbance'.⁴ Rationing was still in force, and would remain so (for some items) until 1954. Housing was in critically short supply. The wartime coalition government estimated, in March 1945, that at least 750,000 new homes would be required 'to afford a separate dwelling for every family desiring to have one'.⁵ The policy promise of families having their own home echoed the desires of the electorate. As the Mass Observation survey *People's Homes* reported in 1943, 'above all, people dislike sharing a house with another family or even with one person, as many have to do'.⁶ Lord Addison asserted that

the great majority [of people]... wanted a house rather than a flat... they want them light, dry and warm... they want good washing facilities and cooking facilities, and they want something much better than they have had hitherto in the provision for keeping food... people want a shed in which they can keep things, a place for storing coal and a place for hanging up wet clothes when they come in out of the rain. They want somewhere to keep boots and odds and ends of that kind.⁷

³ M.J. Daunton, 'Introduction', in M.J. Daunton (ed.) *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain, Volume III: 1840-1950* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 36.

⁴ Ministry of Health, *Local Government in England and Wales during the Period of Reconstruction, 1945* [Cmnd 6579], p. 3.

⁵ Ministry of Reconstruction, *Housing. The Government's Policy and Organisation for Carrying It into Effect, 1945* [Cmnd 6609], p. 2.

⁶ Mass Observation, *People's Homes* (London, 1943), p. xiv.

⁷ Lord Addison, 8th February 1944, *Hansard*, Lords, 5th series, vol. 130, col. 693. Addison referred to an unnamed 'census of 25,000 people'; it is presumed that he was speaking of the Mass Observation survey of 1943, *People's Homes*.

This was echoed by the Ministry of Health in 1944, which stated that technological improvements enjoyed by women during war service would make them ‘intolerant of inferior conditions in their own homes’.⁸ Additionally, as Quintin Hogg noted, evacuees might have seen, ‘for the first time in their lives, better standards of housing and conduct’, which they would wish to emulate upon their return.⁹

Regional cultural variations too had been blunted by the erosion of local ‘custom and community as well as local loyalties’,¹⁰ particularly during the war, through the vast movements of personnel and families.¹¹ Family units had been altered as a result of social upheaval and war: changing social mores contributed to a marked increase in secularisation, along with steep declines in active participation in church affairs.¹² Rates of divorce and illegitimacy rose appreciably.¹³ Brian Harrison, the social and political historian, suggests that pragmatism prevailed ‘over the older and principled restrictive morality’.¹⁴ The official historian of the National Health Service, Charles Webster, concurs, noting that ‘by 1950, about one third of local health authorities were providing birth-control clinics, a third were making grants to voluntary agencies... while one third took no action’.¹⁵ Indeed, in the previous year, the *Report* of the Royal Commission on Population (the Henderson Commission) had noted that, ‘in all relevant branches of policy and administration the population factor will

⁸ Ministry of Health, *Temporary Accommodation: Memorandum for the Guidance of Local Authorities* (London, 1944), p. 11.

⁹ Quintin Hogg, 4th May 1943, *Hansard*, Commons, 5th series, vol. 389, col. 64. The Rt Hon. Quintin McGarel Hogg was Conservative MP for Oxford, 1938-1950; later Baron Hailsham of St Marylebone.

¹⁰ P. Leese, *Britain since 1945: Aspects of Identity* (Basingstoke, 2006), p. 16.

¹¹ R. Titmuss, *Problems of Social Policy* (London, 1950), p. 440.

¹² G. Davie, *Religion in Britain since 1945: Believing without Belonging* (Oxford, 1994), p. 18.

¹³ A.H. Halsey and J. Webb, (eds), *Twentieth-Century British Social Trends* (Basingstoke, 3rd edn, 2000), pp. 55, 61-62. In 1936 only 6% of marriages ended in divorce after twenty years; by 1966 this had risen to 24%.

¹⁴ B. Harrison, *Seeking a Role: The United Kingdom 1951-1970* (Oxford, 2009), p. 248.

¹⁵ C. Webster, *The Health Services since the War, Vol. II: Government and Health Care: The National Health Service 1958-1979* (London, 1996), p. 245.

be taken into account', including the social services delivered by local government and associated agencies.¹⁶

A further change in home life that can be attributed to the Second World War was the continued employment of women. As the social historian, Wendy Webster, records, a Central Office of Information campaign in 1947 entitled *Women Must Work* exhorted employers to develop options for women with families (such as part-time and shift work).¹⁷ Facilitated by improvements in transport (whereby it had become possible to 'commute from [the] estate into the centre of town'),¹⁸ the number of married women employed more than doubled as a proportion of the total in the period covered by this study.¹⁹ Thus, as the contemporary sociologist, Ferdynand Zweig, concluded, many women were compelled to 'realise what a great blessing to a working mother a good granny can be'.²⁰ This was an acceptance that, paradoxically, accompanied both the shrinkage and displacement of a more kin-extended family, for many women were physically more distant from relatives and sought companionship at work, leaving those who remained on the estate more isolated. Changed patterns of association, support, community, and identity were particularly prevalent in lower socio-economic groups, such as those found upon the new council estates.²¹ Concurring, Harold Macmillan noted, during his tenure as Minister of Housing and Local Government, with reference to the preponderance of younger people in such communities, that 'the shortage of old people threw exceptional burdens upon the young married groups... [I] was much struck when I

¹⁶ House of Commons Papers, *Royal Commission on Population Report*, 1949 [Cmnd 7695], p. 233.

¹⁷ W. Webster, *Imagining Home: Gender, 'Race' and National Identity, 1945-64* (London, 1998), p. 20.

¹⁸ Harrison, *Seeking a Role*, p. 295.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ F. Zweig, *Women's Life and Labour* (London, 1952), p. 71.

²¹ H.E. Bracey, *Neighbours on New Estates and Subdivisions in England and the USA* (London, 1964), pp. 51-53.

heard of a complaint of the shortage of ‘aunties’ and ‘grannies’, which made the arrangements for baby-sitting almost impossible’.²²

Post-war upheavals ‘confused old certainties’²³ and meant that, ‘while the fractured bones of society could be set once again in common proximity, they would not fuse in the old way’.²⁴ A wider appreciation of living conditions (both abroad and within different regions within the UK) and political rhetoric meant that the ‘standards and expectations were higher than twenty years before’.²⁵ It was apparent within leading circles of central government not only that victorious Britons craved reward for the hardships that they had endured during the war, but that fearful consequences would be wrought if they were not rewarded sufficiently and expeditiously. As Lord Woolton warned:

When the war is over [Britons] will demand the rewards of heroism; they will expect to get them very soon and no power on earth will be able to rebuild the homes at the speed that will be necessary... there’s going to be grave trouble, and the danger is that if the machine of government which can spend money so recklessly in engaging in war, fails to be equally reckless in rebuilding, there will be both the tendency and the excuse for revolution.²⁶

Thus, the Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, announced during a broadcast to the nation on 26th March 1944 that ‘soldiers, when they return from the war, and those who have been bombed out and made to double up with other families, shall be restored to homes of their own at the earliest possible moment’.²⁷ It was intended

²² H. Macmillan, *Tides of Fortune* (London, 1969), p. 419.

²³ Leese, *Britain since 1945*, p. 32.

²⁴ S. Bruley, *Women in Britain since 1900* (London, 1999), pp. 128-129.

²⁵ A. Ravetz, *Council Housing and Culture: The History of a Social Experiment* (London, 2001), p. 95.

²⁶ Lord Woolton, diary entry, 1st November 1940, Woolton MS 2, Department of Western Manuscripts, Bodleian Library, Oxford, cited in P. Hennessey, *Never Again* (London, 1992), p. 163. Elevated to the peerage in 1939 for services to commerce, Baron Woolton was, among other posts, Minister of Food, Minister of Reconstruction, and Chairman of the Conservative Party.

²⁷ Winston Churchill, ‘The Hour is Approaching’, *The Listener*, XXXI (794), 30th March 1944, p. 359.

that such accommodation would involve not only the repair of damaged houses but also the construction of ‘prefabricated or emergency houses... to make up to half a million’.²⁸

The rising expectations of Britons were evident not only with regard to housing, but also in the growth of a more consumerist society in general. The historian, Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska, observes that, ‘by the early 1950s consumers’ expenditure per head at constant prices had returned to the level of the late 1930s, and thereafter went on rising fast’.²⁹ Material concerns were matched by a belief that the state would not only do more *per se*, but would also ensure that there was no return to the regional (and national) destitution evident in the England of the 1930s.³⁰ A change in how society perceived the role of the state echoed the ideological shift that had occurred between the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, from one of laissez-faire liberalism to paternalistic social democracy.³¹ In county boroughs such as Derby, the Labour Party began to rise to municipal prominence, displacing the Liberals as the second party in the municipal elections of 1920.³² As the psephologists, Sam Davies and Bob Morley, note, this resulted ‘in the formation of a defensive and anti-Labour alliance between the two older parties’.³³ Thus, in Derby, Conservatives and Liberals stood united as Municipal Association candidates between 1921 and 1929. Having failed to block the rise of the Labour Party, which took control of DCB in 1928, the Alliance was disbanded and the Conservatives

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ I. Zweiniger-Bargielowska, ‘Consensus and Consumption: Rationing, Austerity and Controls after the War’, in H. Jones and M. Kandiah (eds), *The Myth of Consensus: New Views on British History 1945-1964* (Basingstoke, 1966), p. 80.

³⁰ Titmuss, *Problems of Social Policy*, pp. 506-507.

³¹ M. Goldsmith, ‘The Changing System of English Local Government’, in J. Lagroye and V. Wright, ‘Introduction’, in J. Lagroye and V. Wright (eds), *Local Government in Britain and France: Problems and Prospects* (London, 1979), pp. 13-15.

³² S. Davies and B. Morley, *County Borough Elections in England and Wales, 1919-1938: A Comparative Analysis, Vol. III, Chester-East Ham* (Aldershot, 2006), p. 279.

³³ *Ibid.*

became the leading opposition (holding 19 seats compared to the Liberals' five in both 1929 and 1930 against Labour's 38).³⁴ The fortunes of the Liberal Party never recovered and throughout the study period Derby's municipal and parliamentary politics were overwhelmingly a two-party affair. Promulgated by party politics, and supported through the ballot box, welfare policies became more often centrally conceived rather than emanating from individual civic improvement programmes. The contemporary social researcher, Richard Titmuss, surmised that, 'the philosophy and practice of localism, by which every neighbourhood was held responsible for the support of its own poor and sick people... collided with the need for social help on a national scale during the Second World War'.³⁵

In commenting upon this changing relationship between central and local government, contemporaries such as Alderman J.W.F. Hill (Mayor of Lincoln) maintained that local authorities had ceased to be individual policy-making bodies, and instead the relationship was epitomised by 'reference[s] to control and direction. It is the language of principal and agent'.³⁶ The policies thereafter enacted transformed the nature of local governance from one of municipalism to statism. In terms of its role, therefore, local government increasingly bore 'new limbs stretch[ing] downwards from the swollen trunk of national administration', with some services transferred to higher tiers of local government, 'instead of being a healthy upward growth from below'.³⁷

³⁴ Between 1919 and 1929, 'Labour's share of the vote only once fell below 47% of the vote... [and] only the bulwark of sixteen Alliance aldermen kept Labour out of power from 1926 to 1928', *Ibid.*

³⁵ Titmuss, *Problems of Social Policy*, p. 234.

³⁶ Alderman J.W.F. Hill, Association of Municipal Corporations Conference; *Report of Proceedings of Conference on Local Government: September 25th – September 26th 1946*, (London, 1946), p. 37.

³⁷ P. Self, *Regionalism: A Report to the Fabian Society* (London, 1949), p. 28.

Through such changes, responsibilities were handed over to regional or county-based authorities that central government saw as more capable of being able to deliver nationally standardised levels of service.³⁸ For example, prior to the Second World War, approximately two-thirds of the electricity industry was owned and operated by local authorities. Local authorities were wholly removed from the sphere of electricity provision by the Electricity Supply Act 1947,³⁹ while the Gas Act 1948⁴⁰ continued this centralising process, with 247 councils being relieved of their individual gas undertakings.⁴¹ The new gas and electricity authorities were not, however, established in a manner that ensured that their boundaries were consistent with each other or previous regional boards,⁴² despite the lessons learned in the late nineteenth century.⁴³ There was also a reconfiguration of services from district to county level. For instance, Butler's Education Act of 1944⁴⁴ eliminated the role of non-county boroughs and urban districts from the provision of education (which had formally been responsible for many areas of elementary education); the Fire Services

³⁸ See Harrison, *Seeking a Role*, pp. 428-429, for further discussion on how the need for national uniformity and the want for greater efficiency led to the erosion of both local discretion and role of local communities in the provision of welfare services.

³⁹ The Electricity Act 1947 (10 & 11 George VI c.54). The supply of electricity that had previously been under the administration of the Electricity Department of DCB was transferred to the East Midlands Electricity Board, as were those of Nottingham County Borough and Long Eaton Urban District. The private company, the Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Electric Power Company, which was incorporated in 1901 following the passing of the Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Electric Power Act 1901 (1 Edward VII c.121), was also nationalised and merged into the East Midlands Electricity Board.

⁴⁰ The Gas Act 1948 (11 & 12 George VI c.67).

⁴¹ This included Nottingham County Borough, Derby County Borough, the Ilkeston Municipal Borough, and Long Eaton Urban District, which were all subsumed into the East Midland Gas Board.

⁴² Thus, for instance, the East Midlands Electricity Board distributed power from Chesterfield in North Derbyshire to Newport Pagnell in the south, Skegness in the east and Coventry in the west, whereas the East Midland Gas Board supplied Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire, Rutland and parts of Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Northamptonshire, Staffordshire, and the West Riding of Yorkshire. The 'boundary' difficulties that arose as a consequence of differing services requiring different areas are further examined in Chapter Four.

⁴³ See Chapter Two.

⁴⁴ The Education Act 1944 (7 & 8 George VI c.31); it is commonly referred to as the Butler Act after the Rt Hon. Mr Richard Austen ('Rab') Butler MP (Conservative, Saffron Walden), President of the Education Board, who introduced it. In addition to the relocating of functions the Act also made a provision for free education for all pupils, especially at secondary level, and raised the school leaving age.

Act 1947 transferred individual borough and district fire brigades to county councils; and the Town and Country Planning Act 1947 reassigned the bulk of strategic planning powers from districts to county councils.⁴⁵

Local government became ‘delocalised... [and the] emphasis shifted away from democratic criteria... towards efficiency and the centre’, as a consequence of these processes of change.⁴⁶ Peter Self,⁴⁷ in his 1949 *Report to the Fabian Society*, echoed the concerns of others within the Labour Party⁴⁸ that local differentiation and opportunities for grass-roots political ‘apprenticeships’ were being lost on the altar of statism, and that ‘in place of the members of... important new boards [such as for hospitals, gas and electricity] being elected by, and accountable to, the consumers who it is their duty to serve, they will owe their position and allegiance to... Whitehall’.⁴⁹ Indeed, Self bemoaned ‘that the representatives of local government at its most local’ were left with ‘few functions of real significance and interest to the ordinary citizen’, for those ‘human’ services that had hitherto ‘operate[d] on the basis of a close personal relationship between the providing authority and the individual citizen’ were removed from the local arena.⁵⁰

Building a new future

Through this more overtly centrally planned, co-ordinated and controlled world of governance, the government believed a ‘better’ Britain would rise from the ashes of a ‘bombed’ Britain. The incoming Labour Government made promises in its 1945

⁴⁵ Respectively, the Fire Services Act 1947 (10 & 11 George VI c.41) and the Town and Country Planning Act 1947 (10 & 11 George VI c.51).

⁴⁶ Goldsmith, ‘The Changing System of English Local Government’, p. 15.

⁴⁷ Peter John Otter Self was Emeritus Professor of Public Administration at the London School of Economics and Professor of Urban Research at the Australian National University.

⁴⁸ For instance, the Home Secretary, James Chuter Ede. See Chapter Four.

⁴⁹ Self, *Regionalism*, p. 28.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 24, 25.

election manifesto,⁵¹ particularly with regard to housing, welfare and full employment.⁵² These not only reflected the previously noted changed expectations and wider societal wishes as to the role of the state, but also the Labour Party's own ideologically based legislative priorities as a social democratic party, created to represent working-class interests.⁵³ It was against this context that the government sought to tackle long-standing social and economic problems and introduced a tranche of measures aimed at better equalising the nation socially. In addition it conceived the structures of post-war town and country planning which still endure. Whereas pre-war planning had been essentially local in character, with central government having no effective powers of initiative or of co-ordinating local plans, post-war central government used planning as a means by which it could manipulate the distribution of population nationally and thereby alter individual areas' social dynamics.⁵⁴ It achieved this by making planning no longer merely a regulative function, for instance, through insisting that development plans were prepared for every area in the country outlining the ways in which the area was to be developed.

The Labour Party Manifesto pledge of 1945 – that 'housing will be one of the greatest... tests of a Government's real determination to put the nation first' – epitomised the mood of the times.⁵⁵ Responding to the ravages of war, and 'the forces of demography',⁵⁶ Aneurin Bevan⁵⁷ promised to build 'five million homes in

⁵¹ Labour Party Manifesto, 1945: *Let Us Face the Future: A Declaration of Labour Policy for the Consideration of the Nation* (London, 1945).

⁵² With regard to housing Donnison and Addison note that, in the 1945 General Election, there was a 'plan was to build between 3 and 4 million houses in the first ten to twelve years after the war', with 'a vague pledge to put up 300,000 new homes in the first two [years]'. Respectively, D.V. Donnison, *Housing Policy since the War* (Welwyn, 1960), p. 9, and, P. Addison, *Now the War is Over: A Social History of Britain 1945-51* (London, 1985), p. 56.

⁵³ Goldsmith, 'The Changing System of English Local Government', pp. 14-15, 17.

⁵⁴ G.D.H. Cole, *Local and Regional Government* (London, 1947), pp. 71-74.

⁵⁵ Labour Party Manifesto, 1945.

⁵⁶ Hennessey, *Never Again*, p. 169.

quick time'.⁵⁸ As the Minister of Health (with responsibility for housing)⁵⁹ Bevan relied on 1,700 local authorities to be his building agents.⁶⁰ The Labour Government, however, was determined not only to control the production of houses but also their allocation. To Britons, 'the ideal of the home became a kind of grail, the only possible way to rediscover emotional and psychological security' in the social confusion post-war.⁶¹ Offering security of domicile was therefore a priority for the Labour Party not only for ideological reasons but also for political expediency: for, as Zweig wrote in 1948, 'security is one of the basic differences between the working class and the middle class'.⁶² Further, Bevan increased the footage of standard three-bedroom council houses from 750 square feet of room space to 900 square feet plus 50 square feet for outbuildings, and insisted on lavatories being installed upstairs as well as down (see Figure 3.1).⁶³ Bevan's requirement that council houses exceed the minima established in the *Dudley Report 1944*⁶⁴ had a significant cost, for it increased the capital outlay for a house in 1947 by 25%; 'by putting quality first, Bevan was sacrificing output'.⁶⁵

⁵⁷ The Rt Hon. Mr Aneurin ('Nye') Bevan was the Labour member for Ebbw Vale from 1929 to 1960 (dying in office). He was, variously, Minister of Health and Minister of Labour and National Service.

⁵⁸ Cited in P. Addison, *Now the War is Over* (London, 1985), p. 57.

⁵⁹ A combining of roles for which Attlee has been criticised, as Bevan was ministerially busy building the National Health Service. See K.O. Morgan, *Labour in Power, 1945-1951* (Oxford, 1985), p. 163.

⁶⁰ These ranged, as mentioned in Chapter Two, from the mighty London County Council to miniscule rural districts with little or no public housing building experience.

⁶¹ A. Beach and N. Tiratsoo, 'The Planners and the Public', in M.J. Daunton (ed.) *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain, Volume III: 1840-1950* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 546.

⁶² F. Zweig, *Labour, Life and Poverty* (London, 1948), p. 59.

⁶³ C. Holmes, *Housing, Equality and Choice* (London, 2003), p. 3.

⁶⁴ Ministry of Health, *Design of Dwellings* (London, 1944). Usually referred to as the *Dudley Report* For further discussion, see Chapter Two.

⁶⁵ I. Cole and R. Furbey, *The Eclipse of Council Housing* (London, 1994), p. 98.

Figure 3.1: Living room of a three-bedroom Bevan house, Derby



Source: Derby County Borough (Estates and Development Committee), *Derby, England: A Portrait in Print* (Cheltenham, 1950), p. 91.

In the first eight years after the Second World War, all efforts were thus channelled into providing new houses at the direction of the central state and its local agents. This had a direct impact on the scope of urban local government in two distinct ways. First, local authorities became the dominant social housing landlords where previously this had been private landlords.⁶⁶ Secondly, it enlarged the geographic space over which they possessed an influence, for the specifications of council housing required greater tracts of land to be built upon than had been the case hitherto.

⁶⁶ It may be additionally noted that within DCB this was already the case prior to 1939, where between 1920 and 1939 some 58.2% of homes constructed were built by the council against a national figure of 27.7%. D.A. Bull 'An Analysis of the Residential Structure of Derby' (BA thesis, University of Liverpool, 1965), cited in Davies and Morley, *County Borough Elections, Vol. III*, p. 287.

In order to expedite both the housing drive and the need for the provision of immediate ‘emergency’ accommodation, the war-time powers that had been given to local authorities to requisition empty houses were extended, and war-time hostels and service camps were permitted to be adapted for temporary housing, along with pre-fabricated temporary houses and huts.⁶⁷ Nationally, the use of such a range of innovative housing solutions meant that, by the end of 1946, approximately 330,000 units of accommodation had been provided.⁶⁸ However, the number of permanent houses had failed to rise in the manner expected. Exacerbated by a combination of harsh winters and national shortages of construction materials, only 127,541 new council houses were built nationwide in 1947, and 206,559 in 1948.⁶⁹

Prime Minister Clement Attlee promised that ‘by reducing the number of licences issued for the erection of houses by private persons, [the Government] shall secure that the local authority programme for the building of houses to let can proceed without any marked reduction’.⁷⁰ As a result, the number of permits granted to private builders to construct private residences was slashed so that raw materials (as well as ‘private’ manpower) would be available for state-sponsored building projects. This was to avoid resources and manpower being ‘squirrelled’ towards private speculation, for only the state, rather than the private builder, was able to allocate houses on the basis of need. The Housing Act 1949 empowered councils to build houses not only for the working classes so that they might develop mixed

⁶⁷ B. Vale, *Prefabs: A History of the UK Temporary Housing Programme* (London, 1995), p. 119.

⁶⁸ J.A. Cook, *Policy Implementation in Housing: A Study of the Experience of Portsmouth and Derby, 1945-74* (PhD thesis, University of Nottingham, 1985), p. 92. Of these, 80,000 were prefabs, 45,000 conversions and adaptations, 107,000 were constituted from unoccupied and repaired war-damaged properties, 3,000 temporary huts, 9,000 units within service camps, 25,000 requisitioned houses and 52,000 new build permanent (non-prefab) homes.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 93.

⁷⁰ Prime Minister Clement Attlee, 24th October 1949, *Hansard*, Commons, 5th series, vol. 468, col. 1017. This was made reality in the Ministry of Housing Circular No. 102 (1949).

estates of houses of more varied types and sizes, attractive to all income groups.⁷¹ The purchase of newly constructed private housing was extremely difficult. This resulted in situations whereby individuals and families who could afford to buy their house, and strongly wished to do so, were ‘forced to occupy, through lack of any other type of house, a council house... subsidised by the Government and through the rates [of] many people who are living in far worse accommodation’.⁷² Yet, well before this, in 1946, the *Economist* had questioned the Government’s heavy subsidies for working-class rents and unwillingness to permit private sales:

Mr Bevan will also before long have to explain why he thinks it is right to provide houses at half-price for the wage-earners and no houses at any price for the middle-class... Everyone will admit that the middle-classes should not get more than their fair share of new houses. But why should their fair share be none at all?⁷³

Slum clearances also became a policy luxury postponed, with the result that those so housed had to suffer in housing unfit for human habitation for some years, until the passing of the Housing Repairs and Rents Act 1954.⁷⁴

The extent of the housing crisis can be seen within the study area, in Derby. Even though DCB’s waiting list had risen almost ten-fold, from 300 families in 1939, to 2,814 in 1945,⁷⁵ the primary focus of the authority’s housing policy remained the construction of permanent homes that were ideally constructed using its own direct labour.⁷⁶ By September 1949, DCB’s Housing Committee had determined that ‘the

⁷¹ The Housing Act 1949 (12, 13 & 14 George VI c.60).

⁷² Sir Otho Prior-Palmer, 24th March 1950, *Hansard*, Commons, 5th series, vol. 472, col. 2410. Brigadier Sir Otho Leslie Prior-Palmer was Conservative MP for Worthing, 1945-1964.

⁷³ ‘Housing Decisions’, *The Economist*, 6 July 1946, pp. 2-3, p. 3.

⁷⁴ Housing Repairs and Rents Act 1954 (2 & 3 Elizabeth II c.53).

⁷⁵ Derby County Borough (Estates and Development Committee), *Derby, England: A Portrait in Print* (Cheltenham, 1950), pp. 88-89.

⁷⁶ Within Derby, this was an issue of long standing political conflict between Labour councillors and Conservative and Liberal parties. While Labour councillors and aldermen claimed that direct labour had ‘saved thousands of pounds’, and that as a consequence ‘Derby had less [*sic*] unemployed than any large county borough in the country’, the Conservative (and Municipal Association) candidates

number of new houses required to cater for the housing register was 9,000, not including slum clearance or over-crowding'.⁷⁷ Thus, temporary housing was used in Derby, albeit reluctantly: several former army camps were converted for civilian housing, such as Markeaton Park Camp and Osmaston Camp. DCB repeatedly declined other offers of former military camps, even up to 1950, for example at Alvaston, Elvaston, Shelton Lock, and Stenson, on the basis that the quality of accommodation available within them did not meet DCB's standards, although they did comply with Ministry of Health minimum standards.⁷⁸ Anachronistically, when such camps were used, tenants occupying the 'hutments' were required to sign contracts of one, two or even three years' duration.⁷⁹ Nor was the option of acquiring aluminium houses met with enthusiasm. DCB declined offers from British Celanese of 60 aluminium houses (also refusing British Celanese's request to use two of the houses for key workers)⁸⁰ and 100 such houses from the Ministry, stating that they felt 'unable to accept [them, because of] uncertainty as to the attitude of the Government Departments and adjoining authorities'.⁸¹ However, some such houses were constructed, in the more immediate post-war period, with permission being granted for them to be erected alongside the town's trunk roads in 1947.⁸² By the end of January 1949, some 416 families were accommodated in 'hutments' of various

countered that direct labour had resulted in 'wild extravagances' and extra costs, such as an over-run of £3,935 with regard to the interwar housing development at Alvaston; further, they asserted direct labour was 'not as efficient and enterprising as privately conducted business'. Respectively, *Derby Daily Telegraph*, 3rd November 1925, 25th October 1928, 29th October 1926, and 24th October 1928, cited in Davies and Morley, *County Borough Elections, Vol. III*, pp. 290-291.

⁷⁷ DLSL BA352, Derby County Borough (DCB), Housing Committee minutes, 6th September 1949.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 3rd February 1948.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 11th February 1947.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 14th October 1949.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 13th October 1950.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 11th March 1947.

materials (see Figure 3.2 for an example of military Nissen huts converted to housing).⁸³

Figure 3.2: Post-war emergency accommodation like that constructed by DCB



Source:

B. Vale, *Prefabs: A History of the UK Temporary Housing Programme* (London, 1995), p. 36.

An example of the emergency accommodation in former military camps was that provided within the grounds of Markeaton Park and within Markeaton Hall, which had been gifted to the town in 1929.⁸⁴ Constructed within dilapidated, existing buildings, standards were extremely basic, with little privacy and few amenities.⁸⁵ In 1947, an application by tenants to rent one of the huts as a ‘licensed club’ was ‘not

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 23rd March 1949.

⁸⁴ Mrs Emily Mundy bequeathed the Hall to Derby County Borough in 1929, stating that the Hall and gardens were to be used ‘for the purposes of an Art Gallery or Museum or other municipal purpose... or as a recreation centre for the inhabitants of Derby’. Cited in D. Farnsworth, *A History of Markeaton and Mackworth, from Mearca to Clark-Maxwell* (Derby, 2006), p. 67.

⁸⁵ Nevertheless, accommodation was so desperately needed that some applicants gave false information to secure tenancy. In 1947, a Mrs Hammond attempted to bribe a housing official to this end, and was fined £2 (the equivalent of approximately two weeks’ rent in DCB) and struck off the housing list entirely. Similarly, in 1948, the residents of 62 Central Avenue, and 21 Central Avenue, Markeaton Park Camp, as well as the residents of 15 Plumpton Avenue and 46 Epsom Avenue, Osmaston Camp, were found to have given false information and subsequently evicted. Respectively, DLSL BA352, DCB, Housing Committee minutes, 8th July 1947 and 30th November 1948.

entertained' by DCB.⁸⁶ However, as a result of their continued complaints of having been 'forgotten', the residents were finally rewarded in the summer of 1951 when a temporary shop was opened within the development (by the Derby Co-operative Society).⁸⁷ Further pressure for better facilities thereafter continued to be applied by the residents to DCB's Housing Committee through both the press and a series of public meetings. As a consequence, in 1953 (six years after its original designation as a site for emergency accommodation, but still sooner than had been envisaged by DCB's Housing Committee), the temporary residents of Markeaton Hall and Park were rehoused to estates primarily outside or straddling DCB's boundaries, such as Mackworth and Chaddesden. Markeaton Hall and the former army camp within the grounds were abandoned.⁸⁸

While some prefabricated temporary houses were constructed by DCB, the Housing Committee preferred that the new permanent houses constructed should be predominantly of a traditional, three-bedroomed, semi-detached design (later modified to terraces), to serve the working class, though it did construct 'quick-build' Trusteel houses that utilised prefabricated components.⁸⁹ Indeed, DCB was one of the first authorities in the country to build Trusteel housing and, using its own direct labour, successfully assembled such houses in a record-breaking 21 days –

⁸⁶ DLSL BA352, DCB, Housing Committee minutes, refusal of permission for licensed club, 9th September 1947.

⁸⁷ A Co-op was finally opened in the former military guardhouse, constructed of corrugated iron.

⁸⁸ DCB had 'blatantly neglected' Markeaton Hall, and failed to use the funds given to it by the military for its maintenance, resulting in the Hall's demolition in 1964. Indeed, the disdain of some councillors for Mrs Mundy's gift could be seen at the final council meeting regarding the fate of the Hall on 6th February 1964, when demolition was eagerly sought because, as one alderman claimed, it represented 'a shibboleth of the oppressive capital-owning classes and... was better destroyed', cited in M. Craven and M. Stanley, *The Derbyshire Country House, Volume I* (Derby, 1982), p. 149. See also the *Derby Evening Telegraph*, 3rd February 1964 and 7th February 1964.

⁸⁹ Figures derived from DLSL BA352, DCB, Housing Committee minutes, 1945-1947. The requirement upon local authorities to provide housing only for the working class was rescinded in the Housing Act 1949.

from foundation to completion.⁹⁰ In light of the speed of construction that DCB had attained, and their use of land outside their boundaries, it was inevitable that the political and bureaucratic processes empowered with enacting boundary change were unable to keep up with this pace of urban expansion.

That substantial progress was finally made in the construction of large numbers of permanent houses was because DCB's Labour administration relaxed its unwillingness to use private, rather than only direct, labour, and accordingly, in March 1949, suspended Standing Order 56i so that 'from time to time, [DCB would] invite tenders from, or negotiate prices with [a list of private developers] in addition to the Building Works Department'.⁹¹ For example, the private builder, George Wimpey, was contracted in May 1950 to construct 150 houses of non-traditional, 'no-fines' construction by the end of 1951.⁹² Such building programmes, along with other construction programmes that it had commissioned, subsequently enabled DCB to proclaim that it had successfully constructed

many new schools and extensions to implement the 1944 Education Act; new health centres to implement the National Health Service scheme; new community centres and new recreational buildings... new fire stations, day nurseries and many smaller works.⁹³

Pride in such achievements was echoed nationally, with the Labour Party boasting in its 1950 General Election Manifesto that

Labour [had] honoured the pledge it made in 1945 to make social security the birthright of every citizen. Today destitution has been banished... the best medical care is available to everybody... Local authorities [have] perform[ed] essential duties, above all in the expanded

⁹⁰ DCB, *A Portrait in Print*, p. 76.

⁹¹ DLSL BA352, DCB, Housing Committee minutes, 11th March 1949.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 12th May 1950.

⁹³ DCB, *A Portrait in Print*, p. 73.

services of housing, education, town planning and health... Since the war more than a million new homes [had] been provided.⁹⁴

The Labour Party promised thereafter to ‘move forward until every family has its own separate home, and until every slum is gone’.⁹⁵ Bevan refused to submit to pressure from parliamentary colleagues to cut housing standards to speed construction. It was his belief (as previously enunciated at a conference of rural authorities in May 1946), that ‘while we [the Labour movement and Government] shall be judged for a year or two by the *number* of houses we build, we shall be judged in ten years’ time by the *type* of houses we build’.⁹⁶ The housing part of Bevan’s ministerial portfolio was removed in 1950 and Labour’s new Minister of Housing, Hugh Dalton, ‘surrendered to the clamour’,⁹⁷ for the number of applicants on council waiting lists had continued to rise exponentially since the cessation of hostilities and, in Derby, for instance, would start to fall only in 1958.⁹⁸ In keeping with this new central policy direction, in November 1950, DCB’s Housing Committee decided to modify the standards of council houses it built, opting, among other measures, to reduce the heights of rooms by 3”, omit the additional outside WC supplied for three-bedroom houses, and for terraced houses to be built in blocks of up to eight units (see Figure 3.3).⁹⁹

⁹⁴ Labour Party Election Manifesto, 1950, *Let Us Win through Together: A Declaration of Labour Policy for the Consideration of the Nation*.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ Cited in M. Foot, *Aneurin Bevan: A Biography, Volume II, 1945-1960* (London, 1973), p. 81. Italics in original.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 80. Dalton was appointed Minister of Town and Country Planning in Feb 1950. In 1951 a new ministry, the Ministry of Local Government and Planning was established (separating the roles of local government and health), with Dalton as Minister. The Rt Hon. Mr Edward Hugh John Neale Dalton was elected first as the Labour MP for Peckham (1924-1929) and succeeded his wife, Ruth, as the Labour MP for Bishop Auckland (1929-1931, and subsequently 1935-1959). He was elevated to the peerage and made Baron Dalton of Forest and Frith in the County Palatine of Durham in 1960.

⁹⁸ Figures derived from DLSL BA352, DCB, Housing Committee minutes, 1945-1965.

⁹⁹ DLSL BA352, DCB, Housing Committee minutes, 16th November 1950.

Figure 3.3: Council houses constructed by Derby County Borough, Chaddesden



On the left, a three-bedroom, semi-detached house in Perth Street, Chaddesden is shown, constructed before the new housing policy directive of 1950. Note the external outhouse; as the outhouse was positioned to the side of the house it increased the plot size for each dwelling. At the right is a block of four dwellings constructed by Derby County Borough after the 1950 policy directive permitted the construction of terraces of up to eight dwellings. Note the smaller footprint of the houses, the absence of outhouses, and the removal of ‘luxury’ items such as gates.

Source: Derby County Borough (Estates and Development Committee), *Derby, England: A Portrait in Print* (Cheltenham, 1950), p. 73.

The Labour Party stated in its 1951 General Election Manifesto that it would ‘maintain the present rate of 200,000 new houses a year... most of these houses will... be built for rent and not for sale, and for the benefit of those whose housing need is greatest’.¹⁰⁰ In the battle for votes, the Conservative Party countered with an undertaking that they would be

a government not biased by privilege or interest or cramped by doctrinal prejudices or inflamed by the passions of class warfare... housing [is] a priority second only to national defence. Our target remains 300,000 houses a year. There should be no reduction in the number of houses and flats built to let but more freedom must be given to the private builder.¹⁰¹

Upon the Conservatives’ return to power in November 1951, and in seeking to make a reality of their housing target, Macmillan, as Minister for Housing and Local Government, relaxed building controls. The result was that, nationally, private

¹⁰⁰ Labour Party Election Manifesto, 1951.

¹⁰¹ Conservative Party General Election Manifesto, 1951, *Britain: Strong and Free*.

development completions rose four-fold, from 21,000 in 1951 to 88,000 in 1954.¹⁰² Further, Macmillan replaced the system by which local authorities were allocated a maximum number of permitted units to be constructed each year with a policy by which authorities were given minimum targets.¹⁰³ In keeping with the new expansionist agenda, DCB's Housing Committee concluded in June 1952 that 3,250 more houses were needed across DCB as a whole to take account of both projected population figures and slum clearances. Accordingly, DCB purchased from South East Derbyshire Rural District 204 acres at Chaddesden, 54 acres at Sunny Hill, and 56 acres at Alvaston.¹⁰⁴ In 1953, the most productive year in the post-war housing drive nationally, some 308,000 new houses were completed, of which 238,883 were built by local authorities – including 858 by DCB.¹⁰⁵ Such construction expanded the visual urban environment of Derby and thereafter formed, with regard to borough-boundary areas such as Chaddesden and its relationship with Spondon, part of the local political backdrop to DCB's boundary extension proposals.¹⁰⁶

The Housing Repairs and Rents Act 1954 turned the attention of local authorities towards addressing the twin problems of slum clearance postponed by the Second World War, and the number of houses fast becoming slums for want of repair and improvement. Under the terms of the Act, the Medical Officers of all local authorities were required to complete a survey of houses unfit for habitation and in need of demolition. The subsequent report by DCB's Medical Officer identified

¹⁰² P. Balchin, 'Housing', in B. Cullingworth (ed.), *British Planning: 50 Years of Urban and Regional Policy* (London, 1999), p. 19.

¹⁰³ For further discussion see Macmillan, *Tides of Fortune*, pp. 416-418.

¹⁰⁴ DLSL BA352, DCB, Housing Committee minutes, 11th June 1952.

¹⁰⁵ Institute of Municipal Treasurers and Accountants, *Housing Statistics for 1953*, cited in Cook, *Policy Implementation in Housing*, p. 134; in DCB, however, the peak was 934 houses, in 1954.

¹⁰⁶ See Chapter Five.

some 1,500 properties as being ‘unfit’;¹⁰⁷ of these, under section 9 of the Act, 150 qualified for ‘patch repairs’ (thereby enabling them to be retained for a further five years), while 750 were located in areas of the town that had yet to be declared as ‘clearance areas’.¹⁰⁸ Accordingly, and despite having used the presence of slum properties as a mechanism through which to gain approval for the purchasing and residential development of land outside of its territories, only 600 houses were earmarked for demolition by 1959,¹⁰⁹ with their displaced residents relocated to both the Mackworth and Chaddesden estates.

Finally, in 1955, two years after the former army camp at Markeaton Park had been closed, and over four and a half years since construction had commenced at Mackworth (where the majority of the former army camp residents were relocated), plans for the estate’s community conveniences were unveiled. Centred upon Prince Charles Avenue, DCB granted planning permission for a Roman Catholic Church to be constructed, as well as 26 shops, a supermarket, health centre, cinema, petrol station, and a hotel.¹¹⁰ Although the church and shops were started soon after the announcement of the proposals, none of the final three eventuated, and it was not until the late 1960s that three public houses and a health centre were constructed. As the socialist historian, G.D.H. Cole, had foreseen in 1947:

It is not nearly enough simply to plan the siting of the houses in a decent and orderly way, to allow enough space for roads and gardens... If the new estate is to get a fair start, the early inhabitants must be enabled to

¹⁰⁷ DLSL BA352, DCB, *Medical Officer’s Report on Slum Clearance*, 7th July 1954.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ DLSL BA352, DCB, Housing Committee minutes, September 1955. Thereafter, the Housing Act 1957 (5 & 6 Elizabeth II c.56) required authorities to undertake a further survey of housing stock. Completed in DCB in 1962, the survey not only identified a further 2,900 houses as being unfit for habitation but also concluded that it would take until 1972 to clear them (DLSL BA352, DCB, Housing Committee minutes, 10th January 1962).

¹¹⁰ DLSL BA352, DCB, Housing Committee minutes, 11th February 1953. Despite repeated requests from Offilers Brewery for permission to build a public house in both 1952 and 1953, DCB refused each application.

move into it as a place already equipped with the apparatus for community-making.¹¹¹

This failure to realise infrastructure at an earlier point within the development created problems. When the shops were finally constructed in 1955, the estate's residents had already formed shopping and leisure patterns that did not include their immediate environment,¹¹² particularly as the town centre could be reached by trolley buses in fewer than ten minutes.¹¹³ Thus, it proved difficult for DCB to find tenants for the shops, and even harder to establish the tightly-knit communities envisaged by Bevan 'where the doctor, the grocer, the butcher and farm labourer all lived in the same street'.¹¹⁴ A possible solution to the problem DCB had created would have been to place temporary housing within the immediate vicinity of the housing estate under construction, so that proto-communities could be formed, as had been undertaken by some other authorities.¹¹⁵

High-rise development

Throughout the period of this study, county boroughs brought continual pressure upon the Ministry to extend their boundaries, so that they might, at the very least, 'reincorporate' all those residents whom they had deposited into the territories of neighbouring districts through the construction of extramural housing estates. A means by which such expansion could be avoided was the construction of high-rise developments, whether erected as either single blocks (for example, Rivermead House in Derby) or in groups (such as the David Lane estate of four, interlinked, 20-

¹¹¹ Cole, *Local and Regional Government*, p. 50. A Fabian socialist, George Douglas Howard Cole was the Labour Party's leading thinker on the subject of regional local government of the period and leader of the Nuffield Group on local government, as well as a prolific author of crime fiction, with his wife, Margaret.

¹¹² DLSL BA352, DCB, Housing Committee minutes, 17th November 1955.

¹¹³ Derby County Borough (Omnibus Department), *Official Time and Fare Tables*, April 1953.

¹¹⁴ Aneurin Bevan, 16th March 1949, *Hansard*, Commons, 5th series, vol. 462, col. 2126.

¹¹⁵ Vale, *Prefabs*, p. 119.

storey blocks in Basford, Nottingham). These developments are briefly noted for four primary reasons. First, suggested as a means by which ‘the greater part of the slum population of London and the other largest cities must be rehoused... at higher densities than cottages can possibly provide’, the adoption of high-rise living was a countermeasure against urban expansion, providing protection of the green belt.¹¹⁶ Secondly, although planners and politicians of all political hues favoured high-rise living, believing that residents could form new communities in an environment safe from the dangers of traffic, these views were not necessarily reciprocated by those destined to be tenants. Thirdly, the process whereby the blocks of flats accrued their tenants was, like the council housing estates already mentioned, arbitrary. Thus, where few or no amenities existed, the formation of new communities was challenging, as residents had fewer opportunities to socialise together at playgrounds, community centres, pubs, and so on. Finally, while initially welcomed as a solution to issues of overspill, the flats created their own problems of overcrowding, increased crime and isolation.

The disadvantages of high-rise estates were not, however, immediately apparent. In keeping with prevailing attitudes, in 1956 Anthony Crosland wrote, in *The Future of Socialism*, that he would be prepared to ‘pay any subsidy necessary to encourage more high building in cities in the interests of preserving the countryside’.¹¹⁷ Two

¹¹⁶ PRO ZLIB 17/157, *The First Report of the Council for Research on Housing Construction: Slum Clearance and Re-housing* (London, 1934), p. 73.

¹¹⁷ A. Crosland, *The Future of Socialism* (London, 1956), p. 526. A former Oxford academic, the Rt Hon. Mr Anthony Charles Raven Crosland was a prominent Labour socio-economic theorist and Labour MP for South Gloucestershire from 1949 until 1955. Crosland returned to the Commons in 1959 as the MP for Great Grimsby until his death in 1977; at the time he was Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs.

years later, upon visiting a new development of 14 flats in Bristol, his former tutee, Tony Benn,¹¹⁸ concurred, proclaiming that

to see the bright airy rooms with the superb view and to contrast them with the poky slum dwellings of Barton Hill below was to get all the reward one wants from politics. For this grand conception of planning is what it is all about.¹¹⁹

This belief encompassed the full political spectrum: the Conservative Minister for Housing and Local Government and heir to the Bovis construction empire, Sir Keith Joseph promoted industrialised building and the judicious use of high-rise developments.¹²⁰ Indeed, such was the embrace of the high-rise ideal that between 1953 and 1964 the percentage of planning approvals for public housing consisting of high-rise developments leapt from three per cent to 26 per cent.¹²¹ Moreover, such developments were seen as a means by which to answer perceived social and environmental needs. In Brian Harrison's summary, this was promulgated by a belief that

shared facilities and better accommodation would civilise the individual whilst nourishing a sense of community... domestic life would escape the noise and dangers of the street; health and amenity would gain, and accidents would decline through separating people from traffic, work from residence... [and] overcrowded Victorian slums would give way to light and airy apartments set within democratised equivalents of the eighteenth century aristocratic park.¹²²

¹¹⁸ The Rt Hon. Mr Anthony Neil Wedgwood Benn was Labour MP for Bristol South East from November 1950 until 1961, as a consequence of his automatic elevation to the peerage upon the death of his father; he subsequently resumed the seat after the Peerage Act 1963 enabled him to renounce his hereditary title (2nd Viscount Stansgate). After Bristol South East was abolished in boundary changes, Benn became MP for Chesterfield from 1983 until 2001, when he retired.

¹¹⁹ T. Benn, *Years of Hope – Diaries 1940-1962* (London, 1994), p. 289, October 1958.

¹²⁰ The Rt Hon. Sir Keith Sinjohn Joseph was MP for Leeds North East from 1956 until 1987. He inherited the baronetcy in 1944; in 1958 he became chairman of Bovis. Joseph was Minister for Housing and Local Government from 1962 to 1964, and introduced a programme to build 400,000 houses a year by 1965. He became a life peer, Baron Joseph of Portsoken, in 1987.

¹²¹ N. Timmins, *The Five Giants: A Biography of the Welfare State* (London, 1995), pp. 184-185. See also P. Nuttgens, *The Home Front: Housing the people 1840-1990* (London, 1989), p. 67.

¹²² Harrison, *Seeking a Role*, p. 151.

Given the widespread support in Westminster for high-rise developments, in November 1961 regional officials from the Ministry of Housing and Local Government suggested to the Housing Committee of Derby County Borough (DCB) that a solution to the authority's shortage of land would be the construction of residential tower blocks.¹²³ Somewhat reluctantly, DCB commenced planning for the Rivermead House high-rise following the meeting with ministry officials; construction was completed in 1965. Located next to the River Derwent, the site suffered from flooding and DCB had difficulty in finding tenants to occupy all of the flats, despite a still lengthy waiting list for council accommodation.¹²⁴

The failure of residents to welcome the prospect of high-rise living in DCB was mirrored in Nottingham County Borough (NCB), despite the latter's greater uptake of such developments. St Ann's neighbourhood had consisted of approximately 340 acres of back-to-back terraces and faded Victorian villas but had decayed into being one of the largest slums left in Britain.¹²⁵ Home to some 30,000 people, more than 100 public houses, 650 shops, and 40 churches, St Ann's was demolished in its entirety (see Figure 3.4). The original 10,000 houses were replaced with 3,500 properties and only a quarter of its former residents were re-housed in St Ann's. In the 1960s, the residents of Nottingham's St Ann's district resisted high-rise apartments and quasi-mansion blocks. Resident and campaigner, Ray Gosling, noted: 'we fought against having high-rise flats, budgie boxes in the sky, and we won'.¹²⁶ To opponents of high-rise living, such developments lacked character and were seen to bring with them the potential to deprive those who were resident within

¹²³ DLSL BA352, DCB, Housing Committee minutes, 8th November 1961.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 12th April 1965.

¹²⁵ R.I. Jones, *St Ann's, Nottingham: Inner-city Voices* (Warwick, 2002), pp. 221-222

¹²⁶ R. Gosling, *Personal Copy: A Memoir of the Sixties* (London, 1980), p. 219. Ray Gosling is a journalist, author and broadcaster, and is known as a 'grass-roots' activist in campaigns such as that against high-rise flats, and for gay rights.

them of their senses of identity, through the dissolution of the community in which they had grown up.¹²⁷ While planners sought to reduce urban sprawl, tower blocks did not give the people what they wanted because ‘children had nowhere to play... neighbourliness withered, [and the] convenience of garden and backyard [was] swapped for the privacy of loneliness and isolation’.¹²⁸

Figure 3.4: Shopping precinct, St Ann’s redevelopment, Nottingham



Marple Square shopping precinct in St Ann’s replaced 650 independent shops with fewer than 50, many of which remained unlet. The precinct and its surrounding low-rise flats were demolished in the early 2000s. R.I. Johns, *St Ann’s Nottingham: Inner-city Voices* (Warwick, 2002), pp. 142-143, 179.

Source: G. Oldfield, *Greater Nottingham* (Brighton, 2006), p. 48.

Successful resistance, however, was not widespread in Nottingham, and tower blocks were erected in Clifton, Lenton, Basford, Bramcote, Hyson Green and

¹²⁷ In 1943, Mass Observation noted that, ‘for every one person who said she would like to live in a flat, ten said they would like to live in a small house or bungalow’. Mass Observation, *People’s Homes*, p. 46.

¹²⁸ Harrison, *Seeking a Role*, p. 151.

Radford. Despite the planners' utopian vision of the future being that better houses 'developed healthy children and sober husbands',¹²⁹ the new estates 'that arose from the rubble and ashes of the old slums had their own problems'.¹³⁰ Indeed, even within neighbourhoods such as St Ann's, where redevelopment consisted of low-rise blocks of flats (fewer than five storeys), maisonettes and terraces with small gardens, narrow lanes and a Radburn-style layout,¹³¹ displacement and a lack of community cohesion was soon evident in higher rates of muggings, burglary and anti-social behaviour.¹³² Structural and societal problems were amplified in NCB's high-rise developments of the late 1960s, such as the Balloon Woods development (constructed in 1966, 647 flats), Basford (1967, 704 flats), and Hyson Green (1965, 593 flats; see Figures 3.5, 3.6, and 3.7). With flat abandonment common (over 30 per cent per annum in Hyson Green) and maintenance costs running at more than double the city average, all of the high-rise estates noted had been demolished by 1987.¹³³ Deprived of amenities (Basford had no shops, and the Hyson Green flats had only one play area made entirely of concrete; see Figure 3.6), and further hampered by large numbers of residents decanted from different areas and socio-cultural backgrounds, a sense of community failed to thrive in such environments.¹³⁴ Grave social problems ensued, such as those already mentioned, and, in the case of Hyson Green, repeated arson attacks within flats and common areas.¹³⁵

¹²⁹ J. Burnett, *A Social History of Housing: 1815-1985* (London, 1978), p. 337.

¹³⁰ R. Gurnham, *A History of Nottingham* (Andover, 2010), p. 178.

¹³¹ Such neighbourhood designs were modelled on the community of Radburn, in Fair Lawn, New Jersey, marked by the extensive use of pedestrianised areas, culs-de-sac, and twisting pathways.

¹³² L. McKenzie, 'A Narrative from the Inside, Studying St Ann's in Nottingham: Belonging, Continuity and Change', *The Sociological Review*, 60:3 (2012), pp. 457-475, p. 472.

¹³³ M. Carley, *Housing and Neighbourhood Renewal: Britain's New Urban Challenge* (London, 1990), p. 180.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 179-180.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 180.

Figure 3.5: Nottingham County Borough redevelopment of Hyson Green, 1969



Source: T. Ray-Jones, Royal Institute of British Architects Library Photographs Collection, 1970.

Figure 3.6: Playground of Hyson Green flats, c.1970



Source: T. Ray-Jones, Royal Institute of British Architects Library Photographs Collection, 1970.

Figure 3.7: Hyson Green flats before demolition, c.1982



Source: S. Derby-Cooper, *On the Flats* (Nottingham, 2012).

A degree of disillusionment set in, both with regard to the style of accommodation built and the social consequences thereof. In 1965, Richard Crossman, visiting a council housing scheme in Wigan in his capacity as Minister for Housing and Local Government, observed:

Wigan is enormously overcrowded... the council has undertaken an enormous building programme; and, as a result, thousands of council houses have been built... [but] the houses are of an appalling dimness and dullness... [including] an enormous cube of flats of very poor quality... I am afraid that they have built a Wigan that in 2000 will look just as bad as the old 1880 Wigan looks in the eyes of the 1960s.¹³⁶

The disquiet that Crossman expressed was even felt by those who were children at the time of relocation from town to housing estate; as the Marxist feminist journalist, Beatrix Campbell, recalled, upon being transplanted to a council estate, also in Wigan:

¹³⁶ R.H. Crossman, *The Diaries of a Cabinet Minister. Vol. I: Minister of Housing 1964-1966* (London, 1975), 2nd October 1965, p. 341. A similarly concerned assessment of the redevelopment being undertaken in Manchester was also recorded by Crossman upon his visit there on 8th January 1964; Crossman, *Diaries. Vol. I.*, pp. 124-125.

Happiness was an inside lavatory and built-in cupboards. Unhappiness was our cold bedrooms and condensation settling like dew. So, despite seeming to have all that space, you didn't. Our new houses were cold and uncomfortable. The rent, my dad reminds me, took a quarter of his wages.¹³⁷

Indeed, as the social historian, Julie O'Neill, notes with specific reference to Nottingham, the level of disillusionment was such that a number of tenants, 'missing the companionship... and burdened by higher rents on the new estates, returned to live in cheaper properties in the city centre'.¹³⁸

Conclusion

The move to build a better Britain therefore had mixed results among those who were intended to benefit most from the eradication of slums and the construction of council housing. In seeking to make a reality of the electorate's heightened desires and expectations after the Second World War, central government not only introduced new means of service delivery (for example, with regard to the regionalisation of electricity and gas supplies), but also reformed those institutions charged with effecting change. Local government had a critical role to play in this 'brave new world',¹³⁹ and central to its role was the construction of housing.

It was not, however, merely the number of council houses that were built and the reallocation of some services between tiers of authorities that contributed to the changing face of local government during the study period. The housing policies

¹³⁷ B. Campbell, *Wigan Pier Revisited: Poverty and Politics in the Eighties* (London, 1984), p. 32. Ms Campbell's parents were both Communist Party members.

¹³⁸ J. O'Neill, 'Family Life in the Twentieth Century', in J. Beckett (ed.), *A Centenary History of Nottingham* (Chichester, 2006), p. 519. See also Chapter Six.

¹³⁹ In this instance the phrase is applied in the ironic manner of Miranda's speech in *The Tempest*, Act V, Scene 1, by William Shakespeare (c.1610): 'O wonder! / How many goodly creatures are there here! / How beauteous mankind is! O brave new world, / That has such people in't.' (London: The Temple Shakespeare, J.M. Dent, 4th edn, 1895), p. 98.

pursued first by the Labour Government of 1945-1951, and thereafter by its Conservative successors from 1951-1964 (including the resumption by the latter of nationwide slum clearance programmes), directly expanded Britain's existing urban townscapes in two distinct ways. First, the construction of houses of a higher quality, larger size and with more amenities than those that had hitherto been the homes of the working class meant that a greater acreage was required. Secondly, the process of slum clearance necessitated the relocation of residents to other areas during the demolition and ultimately redevelopment of the slums (which, in some cases, was still ongoing in both the 1970s and 1980s).¹⁴⁰ Both of these factors had centrifugal effects upon the existing geographic scope of urban authorities and directly affected the day-to-day lives of those rehoused. Uprooted and moved to outlying estates, patterns of association were altered, along with journeys to work and the necessity to travel to the town centre for shopping or entertainment, in turn resulting in a further extension of ancillary council services, such as municipal buses.

Physical urban expansion was accompanied by significant social changes, as the first part of this chapter discussed. Men and women were exposed to technological advances as a result of war, as well as different lifestyles and geographic dislocation, and felt that their contribution to the nation was deserving of reward. Thus, there was a concomitant escalation in societal expectations at the end of the war. This was accompanied by a political consensus at a national level pertaining to the desirability of developing new estates (and subsequently high-rise accommodation) in the belief that improved surroundings would result in 'improved' citizens. However, there was not always, as noted, sufficient attention given to the internal infrastructure and

¹⁴⁰ For example, Carley, *Housing and Neighbourhood Renewal*, p. 180, with reference to Hyson Green in Nottingham.

conveniences that the estates needed. The new developments dissolved existing bonds and replaced them with neighbourhoods that were devoid of traditional and familiar interplays of relationships. As the contemporary sociologist, R.J. Hacon, noted in 1955, such developments resulted in a diminution of shared community values because the preconceptions upon which they had been constructed ‘had been based upon convenient statistics at the expense of sociological facts... [with the result that] neighbourhood units were a concept having administrative convenience rather than a basis in the knowledge of human relations’.¹⁴¹

Although the council housing built during the period brought with it mixed societal results, it enlarged the influence of urban authorities as they constructed estates on both their immediate borders and within the territories of their neighbouring authorities. As the Housing Committee of Derby County Borough (DCB) recorded in May 1959, the construction of Oregon Way upon the Chaddesden estate united DCB’s internally-sited estate with its development externally (within the territories of South East Derbyshire Rural District).¹⁴² The siting of such boundary-bridging estates, as well as those more deeply within the interiors of such neighbouring authorities, gave credence to the formal boundary expansion proposals of county boroughs nationwide as Chapters Five and Six discuss. Local authorities claimed that they were merely seeking to ‘repatriate’ those urban citizens whom they had relocated in the fulfilment of their housing obligations. Boundary extension requests exacerbated the historic hostility between county councils and county boroughs, to the degree that, as Chapter Four notes, a deadlock arose between the various local government associations nationally on the shape and substance of local government

¹⁴¹ R.J. Hacon, ‘Neighbourhoods or Neighbourhood Units?’ *The Sociological Review* 3:2 (1955), pp. 235-246, p. 235.

¹⁴² DLSL BA352, DCB, Housing Committee minutes, 14th May 1959. See also Chapter Five.

reform. This disharmony was echoed at a party political level. Such ideological differences overshadowed the reform of local government until the establishment of the Hancock Local Government Commission in 1958, by which time the need to re-structure local government, both in terms of area and function, had become more pressing.

Chapter Four

Differing Approaches to Reform

Concerns that local authorities would not be able to cope with the demands expected of them in the delivery of social services at the end of the war led to the wartime coalition government publishing, in January 1945, a White Paper entitled, *Local Government in England and Wales during the Period of Reconstruction*. Its proposals became law in the guise of the Local Government (Boundary Commission) Act 1945.¹ The Act contained one provision: the establishment of a Local Government Boundary Commission. The Commission was charged with four powers of executive recommendation: the extension and/or creation of county boroughs; the demotion of county boroughs to non-county borough status; the merging of contiguous county boroughs into single new administrative units; and the amalgamation of small administrative counties so as to form units of improved sustainability.² Though a seemingly wide brief, any decisions made by the Commissioners were subject to parliamentary review and the Local Government Boundary Commission was not imbued with sufficient powers to enable it to recommend the establishment of radical governance ‘solutions’ such as regional councils or other forms of regional body. This was because the Government was of the opinion (as stated in the Introduction to the White Paper) that ‘the time is not

¹ Local Government (Boundary Commission) Act 1945 (8 & 9 George VI c.38).

² PRO CAB 117/216. In so doing, the remit given to the Commission built upon the recommendations made in the Jowitt Reports of 1941 and 1942 to the War Cabinet: Reconstruction Secretariat. The need to establish a national commission rather than undertaking a selective review of the boundaries of counties and county boroughs was noted in the *First Report* (para. 50); the *Second Report* (para. 55) suggested that it should be possible ‘without completely recasting the local government map of England and Wales to effect certain amalgamations and adjustments which would be of definitive advantage’.

opportune for a general recasting of the local government structure',³ and aware that any wholesale reorganisation of local government could disrupt and delay, rather than expedite, the post-war reconstruction drive.⁴

In the first part of this chapter, the work of the Trustram Eve Local Government Boundary Commission (TLGBC) is explored, including, if meaningful reform were to be forthcoming, that it was a necessary prerequisite for any such commission to be empowered to comment upon both the structure of local governance as well as the functions performed by each tier. The chapter notes both the demise of the TLGBC and the existence – at a national level – of differing theoretical approaches to the question of local government reform. In so doing it analyses the difficulties associated with accepting the contentions advanced by both approaches. Further, it suggests that ultimately, at least within central governmental circles, the perceived traditional strengths of local government such as proximity to the electorate (and related issues pertaining to localism) came to be viewed as less important than the optimisation of service delivery through economies of scale. Though this represented a triumph for the reforming agenda, the 'victory' was tempered by the desire of central government (in practical political terms) to secure consensus between itself and the major local government associations before embarking upon any process of restructuring local government.

The latter part of the chapter considers that, faced with other legislative priorities, and the ingrained and diametrically opposed positions of the national local

³ Ministry of Health, *Local Government in England and Wales during the Period of Reconstruction*, 1945 [Cmnd 6579], p. 4.

⁴ *Ibid.* *The Economist* subsequently commented that there 'seemed to be little intention or wish to make the Commission a serious instrument of reform'. 'Counties and County Boroughs', *The Economist*, 24th February 1945, pp. 237-238.

government associations,⁵ it would not be until late 1955 that any such agreement would be forthcoming. Even then, this occurred only because of explicit assurances (given to each of the associations by the Minister of Housing and Local Government) that reform would not result in the eradication of any of the individual types of existing local authority that they represented – though individual units might be sacrificed. This was, therefore, an agenda of reform built upon three pillars – consensus, compromise, and assurance – and led to the establishment in 1958 of the Hancock Local Government Commission (HLGC). Though seemingly given a wider range of powers than its predecessor (the TLGBC), in General Review Areas (which comprised much of the geographic area of the country) the HLGC was still unable to recommend truly radical solutions to the problems faced within local government. In contrast, in Special Review Areas (conurbations), the HLGC could ‘tear up’ the existing map of local government. Accordingly it could propose a plethora of alternative structures tailored, as they saw fit, to each area’s individual future governance needs.

The Trufram Eve Local Government Boundary Commission

Following the Labour Party’s 1945 General Election victory, the new Secretary of State for Health, Aneurin Bevan, issued the Trufram Eve Commission (TLGBC) with a series of regulations by which its work was to be guided, the central of which was that any reform would be strictly limited in nature.⁶

⁵ These were: the Association of Municipal Corporations, (which represented county boroughs and non-county boroughs), the County Councils Association, the Urban District Councils Association, the Rural District Councils Association, and the National Association of Parish Councils,

⁶ This was enumerated in the Introduction to the Local Government (Boundary Commission) Act 1945. Knighted in 1943, Sir Malcolm Trufram Eve (later, Lord Silsoe) was, in addition to his role as Chairman of the Local Government Boundary Commission, Chairman of the War Damage

Other than charting the progress of the TLGBC in beginning its investigations across the country, the Commission's first report, *Report of the Local Government Boundary Commission for 1946*, said little as to the Commissioners' thinking beyond stating that their review of the existing structure had 'given cause for thought and afford[ed] a strong case on paper for fairly drastic alterations' to the *status quo*.⁷ The other major aspects of the report comprised the Commissioners' seeking enhancement of their powers so that they could divide municipal boroughs (both county boroughs and non-county boroughs) in the manner in which they were already endowed with regard to rural and urban district councils. In contrast to the limited scope of the *Report of the Local Government Boundary Commission for 1946*, the TLGBC's second report, the *Report of the Local Government Boundary Commission for 1947* lambasted the inadequacy of the powers which they had originally been given. The Commissioners asserted that their 'present powers and instructions [did not] permit the formation of local government units as convenient as in our opinion they should be... [because they had] no jurisdiction over functions'.⁸ It was, they further noted, citing the Minister of Health's own words, 'a nonsense to talk about functions and boundaries separately. They have to be taken together'.⁹ The Commissioners decided, therefore, to 'find a course which lies between the extreme views of the counties and the county boroughs [and through so doing]... make recommendations for alterations, whether or not these alterations are within the jurisdiction of the Commission'.¹⁰

Commission (1941-1949), Chairman of the War Works Commission (1945-1949), and Chairman of the Central Land Board (1947-1949).

⁷ TLGBC, *Report of the Local Government Boundary Commission for 1946* (London, 1947), p. 8.

⁸ TLGBC, *Report of the Local Government Boundary Commission for 1947* (London, 1948), p. 2.

⁹ Bevan, Minister of Health, Standing Committee B, Official Report, 16th December 1947, col. 157, and as cited in TLGBC, *Report of the Local Government Boundary Commission for 1947*, p. 2.

¹⁰ TLGBC, *Report of the Local Government Boundary Commission for 1947*, p. 20.

The *Report of the Local Government Boundary Commission for 1947* recommended five key reforms. First, ‘in future there should be three main types of local government units – [new] counties, [new] county boroughs, and [new] county districts’.¹¹ Secondly, ‘the whole of England and Wales,¹² *including* the areas of existing county boroughs, [should] be divided into new counties’ (to be comprised of two sorts: one-tier new counties; and two-tier new counties).¹³ As a result, the county towns of Derby and Nottingham would both become one-tier ‘new’ counties, whereas the rest of the administrative counties of Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire would be administered as two separate two-tier ‘new’ counties; their boundaries would be unchanged from those that had previously existed. Thirdly, in order to facilitate a proper delineation of functions between types of local authorities, the ‘new’ counties constructed should be established upon strict population criteria: a population in each two-tier ‘new’ county of between 200,000 and 1,000,000; and between 200,000 and 500,000 in each one-tier ‘new’ county.¹⁴ This was a proposal for population delineation that, had it been enacted, would have required that existing administrative counties with populations in excess of 1,000,000 were divided into separate units, whereas those with fewer than 200,000 inhabitants would have needed to be combined with others so as to establish practicable units of county governance.¹⁵ Fourthly, the *Report’s* new county boroughs should be established by

¹¹ *Ibid.* In order to distinguish the first two types from those units already in existence, the *Report* subsequently referred to them as, respectively ‘new counties’ and ‘new county boroughs’.

¹² Though they noted Wales, the Commissioners did not make full recommendations for the principality.

¹³ The *Report* further stated that ‘the bulk of these [new counties] would be the existing counties, with some combined and some divided; and they would be administered, as now, on the two-tier system’. The remainder of the new counties would [consist of 20] large cities and towns (with suitable alterations of boundaries where necessary) administered, as now, on the one-tier system’. These town-based new counties would therefore be akin to the existing system of county boroughs and would continue to manage all local government services in the areas for which they were responsible. Italics in original document; TLGBC, *Report of the Local Government Boundary Commission for 1947*, pp. 26, 31-36.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 31-34.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

population criteria which would conform broadly to those of existing ‘middle-size towns/boroughs with populations [of] between 60,000 and 200,000’.¹⁶ Finally, the ‘[artificial] distinction in title between urban and rural districts [should] be abolished’ and there should be an assimilation of autonomous functions between them.¹⁷ Historic identity was not, therefore, an issue of importance in the proposals furthered by the Commissioners.

Though the realisation of the TLGBC’s recommendations would have completely recast the structure of English local government, its net effect upon the number of local authorities in existence would have been more limited. Indeed, within England, only one additional local authority would have been created. This was because the 49 existing administrative counties (excluding London) would have been replaced by 67 new counties (20 of which would have been one-tier constructs and 47 two-tier), and the existing 80 county boroughs would have been replaced by 63 ‘most purpose’ new county boroughs (each being a part of the two-tier new county government system).

There is a number of problems, however, with accepting the assertions of the Commission. First, while the proposed ‘one-tier’ new counties could have resulted in greater levels of simplicity and efficiency within the structures of local government, their formation would have done little to resolve the inbuilt structural tension between town and country areas and could have exacerbated them. This is because, in perpetuating the administrative separation of larger towns from the regions surrounding them, the enactment of the TLGBC’s proposals would have resulted in one of two scenarios arising. First, the new ‘one-tier’ municipal authorities would have had to be sufficiently geographically greater than the territories of the county

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

boroughs from which they were spawned so that their boundaries related to the whole urban community rather than just the given settlement's central nucleus.¹⁸ Secondly, the authorities would have had to be kept wholly artificially constrained within a geo-administrative girdle which day-to-day life was considerably outgrowing.¹⁹ Adoption of the first scenario would have resulted in the emergence, according to G.D.H. Cole, of 'awkward [and] detached blocks of rural or small-town territory for which it would be impossible to devise satisfactory forms of [efficient governance]';²⁰ and could also have led to a loss of local identity as rural areas (and their inhabitants) were swallowed up into the maw of the towns.²¹ In contrast, the geographic 'straitjacketing' of the one-tier new counties in the second scenario would have preserved 'a number of purely unreal and vexatious divisions'²² and in so doing would have perpetuated the administrative gulf between town and country areas. Accordingly, therefore, neither scenario would have resolved the problem of 'empire building' county boroughs or the afore-mentioned conflict between borough and county administrations. The former would have continued to seek extensions to their boundaries so as to absorb (into their jurisdictions) those adjacent suburban areas into which their residents had over-spilled, whereas the two-tier new counties (formerly the administrative counties) would have continued to fear the loss of their richest rateable areas.²³

¹⁸ C.B. Fawcett, *The Provinces of England* (London, 1960), p. 71.

¹⁹ *The Economist*, 'Counties and County Boroughs', 24th February 1945, pp. 237-238.

²⁰ G.D.H. Cole, 'The Local Government Boundary Commission's Report', *Public Administration*, vol. 26:3 (1948), pp. 138-146, p. 141.

²¹ In making this point, Cole can be seen to have been building upon the comments previously made by C.B. Fawcett, 'The Long Eaton District: Geographical Conditions and Problems of a Growing Industrial District', *The Geographical Teacher*, vol. 8:1 (1915), pp. 14-26.

²² G.D.H. Cole, *The Next Ten Years in British Social and Economic Policy* (London, 1929), p. 325.

²³ For instance, the loss of valuable rateable property did eventuate in the incorporation of numerous parishes in South East Derbyshire Rural District into Derby County Borough, as noted in Chapter Five. Ministry of Housing and Local Government, SI 44/1968, *Local Government, England and Wales, Alteration of Areas: The Derby Order 1968*.

Secondly, while the Commissioners professed to offer a solution to the issue of matching functions to the size of authorities, this problem was not fully addressed. At one end of the scale, the TLGBC proposed the administrative demotion of the smallest county boroughs so that they became merely county districts within the two-tier new county system in which they were geographically sited. At the other end of the population scale, they chose not to split up the largest county boroughs but rather to make them units within a new conurban style of local regional authority which would be subject to a 'two-tier' mechanism of administration. The result of this would have been that while numerous individual towns (or indeed counties) were deemed to be too large or too small for the new 'one-tier' system, there would also have been left, paradoxically, a significant number of large towns which would have kept, undistributed by reform, their existing 'one-tier' style of administration.

The proposals published by the Commissioners in their second report²⁴ highlighted not only the existing limitations of the system by which local government administrative areas could be adjusted but also presented a case for more meaningful reform. Confronted by the TLGBC's demands for wider powers,²⁵ Bevan informed Trustram Eve that the Commissioners were 'entitled to expect a reply from the Minister only as regards matters within their statutory powers, and that they had no right to ask to know the Government's attitude on other matters or complain if they were not informed'.²⁶ Two weeks later Bevan replied to a written question in the House of Commons that 'it [would] not be practicable to introduce comprehensive

²⁴ TLGBC, *Report of the Local Government Boundary Commission for 1947*.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 2; and Bevan, Minister of Health, Standing Committee B, Official Report, 16th December 1947, col. 157.

²⁶ Silsoe Papers, 'Note of a meeting between the Minister of Health and the members of the Local Government Boundary Commission', 10th March 1949. Cited in K. Young and N. Rao, *Local Government since 1945* (Oxford, 1997), p. 92.

legislation on local government reconstruction in the near future'.²⁷ The Commissioners' recommendations were therefore ignored and, on 27th June 1949, the abolition of the TLGBC was announced by Bevan.²⁸

Though pressed even by members of his own party to form a Royal Commission with powers sufficient to consider the functions as well as the areas of local government,²⁹ Bevan also declared that neither 'a Royal Commission [n]or any other commission [would be] an appropriate instrument for [such a] purpose'.³⁰ Further, stating that 'the review of the structure and functions of local government is a constant preoccupation of the Government', Bevan refused to be drawn as to when any form of reviewing body would be initiated to replace the TLGBC.³¹ Having abandoned the Commission, the Labour Government resorted to restoring the pre-war Private Bill procedure for effecting alterations of areas.³²

Political differences towards reform

Despite orchestrating the abolition of the TLGBC, Bevan nevertheless accepted the need 'for radical reform of what was still nineteenth-century local government'.³³ Bevan was also of the opinion that such reform should not be founded 'on the strength of a report of a small executive body appointed for a limited purpose who

²⁷ Aneurin Bevan, answer to written question, 25th March 1949, *Hansard*, Commons, 5th series, vol. 463, col. 74. See also the Trustram Eve Local Government Boundary Commission, *Report of the Local Government Boundary Commission for 1948* (London, 1949), pp. 5-6.

²⁸ Aneurin Bevan, 27th June 1949, *Hansard*, Commons, 5th series, vol. 466, col. 758-761.

²⁹ Eric Fletcher, 27th June 1949, *Hansard*, Commons, 5th series, vol. 466, col. 760. Labour MP for Islington East 1945-1970, he became Baron Fletcher in 1970.

³⁰ Aneurin Bevan, 27th June 1949, *Hansard*, Commons, 5th series, vol. 466, col. 758-761.

³¹ *Ibid.* In passing comment, the *Manchester Guardian* not only noted that 'local government needs a major reorganisation' but also accused Bevan of 'running away from [reform] and throwing away the instrument with which he should be tackling it'. *Manchester Guardian*, 28th June 1949.

³² Aneurin Bevan, 27th June 1949, *Hansard*, Commons, 5th series, vol. 466, col. 760.

³³ Young and Rao, *Local Government since 1945*, p. 93.

[sic] have made recommendations on a wide issue without hearing evidence'.³⁴ As a consequence of this belief in the need for reform, Bevan brought forward to Cabinet, in July 1949, a proposal for full-scale 'root and branch' reform to existing local government structures. As well as the need for such reforms to take account of greater public consultation (a process that could also have helped mitigate against potentially damaging electoral consequences of individual reform proposals),³⁵ Bevan's proposals also furthered the suggestion that the existing county structure was no longer the optimal unit of local government for purposes of governance, administrative convenience, or service provision.³⁶

Had they been enacted, Bevan's proposals would have completely recast local government and resulted in the creation of local authorities which would have been, in territory and population, substantially larger than any unit of government then in existence except for that of the state itself. In advocating the establishment of about 300 all-purpose local government authorities within England and Wales (with populations ranging from 50,000 to over a million), Bevan's proposals would have destroyed the existing two-tier county model of local government.³⁷ In suggesting its replacement by a unitary system, however, his proposals did not advocate expanding the existing county borough system to blanket the entire nation. Rather, he envisaged the establishment of a new type of all-purpose authority. These, unlike the county

³⁴ PRO CAB 129/34/12, Local Government: Memorandum by the Minister of Health, 8th April 1949.

³⁵ Young and Rao, *Local Government since 1945*, p. 94. Young and Rao note that, for the Government, 'the Orders that the [Local Government Boundary] Commission proposed to make – extending the boundaries of Southampton, Plymouth, Liverpool, Hull and Bootle – would [have been] "deeply embarrassing" (in the electoral sense of the expression)'. The importance of electoral considerations with regard to local government reform and reorganisation (and the power of Ministerial discretion to direct such reforms) became, as noted in Chapters Five, Six, and Seven, of ever-greater party political importance in the post-1958 period.

³⁶ A point already proven within Bevan's department by its having expressly rejected the county model as the regional basis for the National Health Service. See Cole, *Local and Regional Government*, pp. 264-279.

³⁷ PRO CAB 134/470, Minutes of the Cabinet Committee on Local Government, 13th July 1949.

boroughs, would have encompassed both town and country areas. Bevan's mooted reforms thus cast aside the accepted doctrine that there existed separate urban and rural spheres of life that required differing structures of governance,³⁸ in favour of the establishment of a system whose overriding rationale was the optimisation of service delivery through expansion of economies of scale.³⁹ Accordingly, Bevan's proposals concurred with the principles of the 'natural administrative unit' as forwarded by R.E. Dickinson, on the grounds that they were 'more rational' than those 'artificial administrative units [such as counties] which have been imposed in the past and are ill adjusted to modern needs'.⁴⁰

Bevan's proposals for restructuring local government meant that existing rural and urban communities would have been administratively united in all-purpose authorities, and existing counties would have been abolished. This was not universally welcomed. At departmental level, the Home Office officially dismissed his plan as 'most unfortunate',⁴¹ while the Ministry of Town and Country Planning viewed the scheme as not bold enough. Instead, the latter sought the establishment of even larger geographical areas to enable the 'implementation of large-scale planning',⁴² which would have further de-localised the management and provision of such services.

³⁸ Enshrined as it was in the county and county borough structures established by the Local Government Acts of 1888 and 1894.

³⁹ See R.E. Dickinson, *City, Region and Regionalism* (London, 1947), p. 4; Dickinson was a Reader in Geography, University College, London.

⁴⁰ Dickinson, *City, Region and Regionalism*, p. 4.

⁴¹ Opinion of Home Office, cited in Young and Rao, *Local Government since 1945*, p. 98.

⁴² PRO HLG 68/13, Memorandum from Dame Evelyn Sharp to I.F. Armer, 8th September 1949 cited in Young and Rao, *Local Government since 1945*, p. 99. Note, however, that the PRO reference given by Young and Rao is incorrect. To date, the actual memorandum to which they refer has not been located. Evelyn Adelaide Sharp joined the Civil Service in 1926 and, in 1955, became the first female Permanent Secretary, in the Ministry of Housing and Local Government. She remained in this post until her retirement, in 1966. Sharp became a Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire in 1948, and was made a life peer in 1968, as Baroness Sharp of Hornsey.

Hostility to the proposals also came from a majority of Cabinet members, with only Silkin at the Ministry of Town and Country Planning, and Tomlinson at the Ministry of Education supporting it.⁴³ Others, such as the Home Secretary, James Chuter Ede,⁴⁴ who had served his political apprenticeship within local government, saw the proposals as endangering the founding principles of English local government: namely, a system based upon, and applauded for, its closeness to the people and resultant democratic strengths, as well as delivering localised services within small geographic areas that were based upon historic areas to which people possessed affinity. Such was Chuter Ede's hostility to Bevan's proposals that he accused Bevan of deliberately trying to do 'much violence to historic development and association',⁴⁵ and presented to Cabinet two memoranda on the future role and structure of local government.⁴⁶ In so doing Chuter Ede sought not only to have Cabinet dismiss Bevan's proposals but also to cement within Cabinet's collective consciousness the view that all present and future discussions of local government reform must have, as their primary objective, the strengthening of the existing localised structure.⁴⁷ Within his two memoranda Chuter Ede additionally stated that

The historic units of English local government are the parish, deriving from the manor and the county. There is a local patriotism attaching the individual to both... Examination of [Bevan's] map discloses that both these units disappear; parishes are combined in new aggregations and

⁴³ The Rt Hon. Mr Lewis Silkin was Labour MP for Peckham and Minister for Town and Country Planning from 1945 to 1950; he was raised to the peerage in 1950. The Rt Hon. Mr George Tomlinson was Labour MP for Farnworth from 1938-1952, until his death; he was Minister for Education, 1947-1951.

⁴⁴ The Rt Hon. Mr James Chuter Ede was (briefly) Labour MP for Mitcham in 1923; he was then Labour MP for South Shields from 1929-1931, and 1935-1964. Chuter Ede was Home Secretary from 1945-1951 and subsequently Leader of the House of Commons in 1951. He was ennobled as Baron Chuter-Ede of Epsom in 1964, and died a year later.

⁴⁵ PRO CAB 134/470, Organisation of All Purpose Authorities in England and Wales: Further Memorandum by the Home Secretary, 18th November 1949.

⁴⁶ PRO CAB 134/470, Chuter Ede's alternative paper took the form of two memoranda: Organisation of All Purpose Authorities in England and Wales: Memorandum by the Home Secretary, 15th November 1949, and Organisation of All Purpose Authorities in England and Wales: Further Memorandum by the Home Secretary, 18th November 1949.

⁴⁷ PRO CAB 134/470, Minutes of the Cabinet Committee on Local Government, 24th November 1949.

county boundaries are apparently regarded as of quite secondary importance... Historic association is not lightly to be disregarded and there are sometimes historic antipathies which have to be borne in mind... In some of the present large towns, the councils may be unwieldy in size, but the lower authority in the two-tier system enables a very large number of people... to participate actively in the development and control of their area. This is a valuable training ground, particularly for the Labour Movement, and I fear that many of these people must disappear as active participants if the new scheme goes forward.⁴⁸

Chuter Ede's memoranda presented an essentially evolutionary summary of the existing system of local government. In so doing Chuter Ede suggested that there would be three effects of Bevan's proposed reforms. First, they would result in citizens' feelings of duty to their local communities being sacrificed at a district level as areas without 'historic association' were forced to merge. Secondly, the replacement of the existing size of second-tier authorities by larger authorities would lead fewer people to participate in processes of local governance (thereby also weakening the strength of the existing democratic chain of command at local level). Finally, as a consequence of the delocalisation of local government, the calibre of national politicians would diminish as local government's role as a training ground for them was lost.

Though Chuter Ede successfully managed to block Bevan's proposals for reform through Cabinet, the picture of local patriotic harmony that Chuter Ede painted was not wholly accurate. Moreover, the establishment of significantly larger geo-administrative units would not necessarily have led to the eradication of all of Chuter Ede's implied positives of the 1888/1894 structure. First, it is debatable whether Chuter Ede took into account wider sociological issues such as class or shared life experiences, which impacted directly on citizens' perceptions of both themselves and

⁴⁸ PRO CAB 134/470, Organisation of All Purpose Authorities in England and Wales: Further Memorandum by the Home Secretary, 18th November 1949.

their psychological identification with their area. This is because, as the geographer Edward Relph suggests, the interplay of individual, social, economic and cultural factors shape individuals' senses of belonging, which includes complex structures such as class.⁴⁹ Secondly, with regard to county districts, Chuter Ede omitted to make reference to existing district authorities that contained competing urban centres, which was a key feature of all rural districts that possessed two lesser market towns where neither was sufficiently important in itself to merit designation as a stand-alone urban district. Such authorities exhibited, as noted in Chapter Six with regard to the Beeston and Stapleford Urban District in Nottinghamshire, multi-layered structures and feelings of belonging and association rather than the homogenous internal cohesion to which Chuter Ede alluded. Indeed, with reference to the time of his memoranda, 'many could recall a contrast between town and country which had been as much cultural as regional or demographic' – through lifestyles, social relations and values.⁵⁰ These varied local interplays are important to note because Chuter Ede made no suggestion that such administrative units did not function well, despite the divergent points of loyalty within them. Indeed, his subsequent contention that historic antipathy was sufficient reason not to amalgamate existing administrative units cannot readily be substantiated.

Within his memoranda Chuter Ede also failed to advance reasons as to why the boundaries of the administrative counties should be regarded as sacrosanct given that they were merely 60-year-old constructs, and that their adjustment had been anticipated from conception in order to take account of developing societal needs. Moreover, the loyalty towards counties to which he referred was not actually to the

⁴⁹ E. Relph, *Place and Placelessness* (London, 1976), p. 45.

⁵⁰ B. Harrison, *Seeking a Role: The United Kingdom 1951-1970* (Oxford, 2009), p. 164.

structure that he sought to save, because ‘county loyalty’ as a concept was not to the 1894 administrative counties but rather to geographic areas of the historic counties that had preceded them.⁵¹ Chuter Ede’s comments in relation to this specific point thus did not take account of the fact that county loyalty had already successfully survived one administrative upheaval. Consequently there was no evidence to substantiate his assertion that further boundary changes would somehow destroy that loyalty; indeed, the previous reforms had suggested exactly the opposite to be the case.

Finally, Chuter Ede’s concerns over the calibre of local and national politicians relied upon the assertion that smallness of scale within second-tier authorities ensured active participation, and the allied belief that the existing system was intrinsically good and democratic. The contemporary historian, D.N. Chester, concurred that the system responded well to local needs due to those engaged in the policy process being ‘in touch with the circumstances, feelings, and needs of their areas’.⁵² That the ‘local area and population [was] small enough for the officials as well as the councillors to know it intimately’ was advanced by the Fabian socialist, Herman Finer, as an inherent strength of the existing system,⁵³ in which ‘practically every

⁵¹ This point may be illustrated with reference to sporting loyalties, and how these not only still relate to the historic counties but also cut across the administrative counties formed in 1888 and subsequent local government structural alterations. Throughout the early twentieth century Derbyshire County Cricket Club continued to play test matches at grounds in Burton-upon-Trent despite the fact that the town had transferred from ancient Derbyshire to the administrative county of Staffordshire in 1888. In similar vein, Surrey County Cricket Club still plays at the Oval, despite the ground not having been in administrative Surrey since 1888. Another interesting example of retained loyalty towards an historic county through sport relates to Middlesex County Cricket Club. Not only has Lords been located within administrative London since 1888, but since 1965 Middlesex has existed neither as an administrative nor ceremonial county entity! Further, since 1974 Warwickshire County Cricket Club’s home ground has lain outside of Warwickshire, because of repeated changes to the governance of Birmingham and the wider West Midlands regional conurbation area.

⁵² D.N. Chester, *Central and Local Government* (London, 1951), p. 342.

⁵³ H. Finer, *English Local Government* (London, 4th edn, 1950), p. 85.

ratepayer knows at least one or two councillors or officials personally'.⁵⁴ Even though the existence of such contemporary views may have added to the 'self-referential nature of the urban place',⁵⁵ the occupiers of the urban place sought to define themselves rather than be defined by others. A contrary opinion existed as to the merits of such localism. The Trufram Eve Local Government Boundary Commission (TLGBC) itself noted, in recommending the establishment of larger units, that in 'their ability to attract officers of high capacity... their greater financial resources have obvious advantages'.⁵⁶

In the nineteenth century political and organisational structures were geared predominantly to the urban place, in concentric spheres of influence: from the village to the town, the town to the county town and city, and thence to London.⁵⁷ By the twentieth century, changes in technology (such as transport, or the piping of gas and water) had intensified this process so much that, according to the historian, R.J. Morris, systems of governance as well as perceptions of community (and its concomitant issues of loyalty and 'belonging') progressively dimmed the autonomy of rural areas.⁵⁸ Indeed, as noted in subsequent chapters, as the centripetal pull of cities and towns exerted ever greater influence upon the social and economic lives of those who but a generation earlier would have been deemed rural dwellers, particularly for reasons of employment (see Figure 4.1), there was an increasing blurring and levelling of the distinctions between rural and urban lifestyles. Increased communication and transport meant that amenities that had once only been available

⁵⁴ J.H. Morris, *Local Government Areas* (London, 1960), p. 103.

⁵⁵ R.J. Morris, 'Governance: Two Centuries of Urban Growth', in R.J. Morris and R.H. Trainor (eds), *Urban Governance: Britain and Beyond since 1750* (Aldershot, 2000), p. 5.

⁵⁶ TLGBC, *Report of the Local Government Boundary Commission for 1947*, p. 13.

⁵⁷ P. J. Waller, *Town, City and Nation: England 1850-1914* (Oxford, 1983), pp. 176-177. In his discussion, Waller alludes to the work of E. Howard, *Garden Cities of To-morrow* (London, 1902).

⁵⁸ Morris, 'Governance: Two Centuries of Urban Growth', pp. 3-5.

to town dwellers were now increasingly available to all. As a consequence of such advances, Cole had previously stated (in direct contrast to Chuter Ede's position) that such factors as better communication and more constant intercourse had

by no means destroyed the civic consciousness in the towns... [I]t is clear enough that there is nothing in improved means of communication to destroy the civic spirit. The tendency to widening of the urban area by the inclusion of the surrounding suburbs and ancillary urban aggregation is indeed stimulated, but it is not in the least the case that the citizen of Bristol or Manchester, because he can easily travel... or is 'not native' feels no keen sense of local solidarity.⁵⁹

In light of the dissension amongst Cabinet colleagues to Bevan's proposals, and the changed political position following the General Election of 1950 (in which the Labour Government's majority was slashed to five), Bevan's Party critics successfully buried his scheme and the Government announced that it would not be embarking upon any measure of local government reform 'for the time being'.⁶⁰

In the February 1951 Cabinet reshuffle, Bevan became Secretary of State for Labour and a new Ministry of Planning and Local Government was established under Hugh Dalton. In July of that year Dalton announced in the House of Commons that before any proposals for reform would be forthcoming the Government hoped, first, to reach agreements with the national local government associations. As *The Economist* concluded, 'Ministers' unwonted anxiety for proceeding by general agreement [was] a thin disguise for their wish to do nothing'.⁶¹ Three months later, in the October General Election campaign, the Conservative Party pledged to restore the defunct TLGBC and legislate its functions in such a manner as to ensure that local conditions

⁵⁹ G.D.H. Cole, *The Future of Local Government* (London, 1921), p. 25.

⁶⁰ PRO CAB 134/470, Minutes of the Cabinet Committee on Local Government, 24th November 1949.

⁶¹ 'Local Government Dilemmas', *The Economist*, 21st July 1951, p. 141.

Views of the local government associations

Against this backdrop of party political inertia discussions were held between mid-1951 and mid-1952 between the Association of Municipal Corporations,⁶³ the County Councils Association, the Urban District Councils Association, and the Rural District Councils Association, with the purpose of finding common ground upon which to formulate agreed proposals for the reform of local government. No agreements were forthcoming. This was for two principal reasons. First, the County Councils Association, Urban District Councils Association, and Rural District Councils Association had nothing to gain from any reform proposal that did not envisage an assured continuation of the existing two-tier local government system (of counties and county districts). Secondly, and in contrast, the Association of Municipal Corporations had everything to gain from its abandonment. In May 1952, the Association of Municipal Corporations withdrew from these multilateral talks.⁶⁴ Its place was taken by the National Association of Parish Councils, a body as dependent upon the continuation of the two-tier local government system for its existence as the County Councils Association, Rural District Councils Association, and Urban District Councils Association.

Given the near unanimity of purpose between these latter four national associations, they duly published a *Joint Memorandum* in 1953 outlining their proposals and recommendations for the future structure of local government.⁶⁵ Within the ‘Introduction’ to the *Joint Memorandum* the four associations asserted that ‘the

⁶³ Founded in 1873, the Association of Municipal Corporations represented the interests of both county boroughs and non-county boroughs.

⁶⁴ For a fuller discussion, see J. Brand, *Local Government Reform in England, 1888-1974* (London, 1974), pp. 108-112.

⁶⁵ County Councils Association *et al.*, *Joint Memorandum of the County Councils Association, the Urban District Councils Association, Rural District Councils Association, and the National Association of Parish Councils* (1953).

existing framework of local government [had] proved to be not only satisfactory but also *so* flexible as to be capable of modification and evolution without the necessity of any alteration of structure'.⁶⁶ The recommendations of the *Joint Memorandum* were not surprising, for they were based solely upon strengthening the existing two-tier county-based structure and weakening the position of county boroughs. It recommended that 'all existent county boroughs with populations smaller than 75,000 should revert to non-county borough status',⁶⁷ and that any local authority candidates for promotion to the status of county borough should have a population in excess of 100,000 before any consideration would be given to their request.⁶⁸ At the same time as seeking to secure the disbanding of all small county boroughs, the four associations asserted that there should be no fixed minimum population for urban or rural district councils.⁶⁹ Consequently their advocacy of the demotion of all county boroughs with populations less than 75,000 cannot be viewed as a gesture towards the reforming yen to eradicate unduly small authorities, though it may unintentionally have strengthened their case. This is because the associations' contention (that county boroughs with populations under 75,000 could not discharge their duties) highlighted the absurdity of powers being awarded to any type of local authority, including counties and district authorities, because of their administrative status rather than with reference to their population base or rateable value. Moreover,

⁶⁶ County Councils Association *et al.*, *Joint Memorandum*, paragraph 8b [italics in original].

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, Appendix to *Report*: paragraph 3. This would have resulted in nineteen existing county boroughs being demoted, being: Barnsley, Barrow in Furness, Burton-on-Trent, Bury, Canterbury, Carlisle, Chester, Dewsbury, Dudley, Eastbourne, Gloucester, Great Yarmouth, Hastings, Lincoln, Merthyr Tydfil, Tynemouth, Wakefield, West Hartlepool, and Worcester.

⁶⁸ This thereby put the attainment of county borough status beyond the reach of all but two authorities within England and Wales (not including those within the Greater London area), the Borough of Luton and the Urban District of Rhondda.

⁶⁹ Comment by W.R. Allerton, representative of the Rural District Council Association at the meeting between the County Councils Association, National Association of Parish Councils, Urban District Council Association, Rural District Council Association and the Minister, 10th February 1954. The official notes of the meeting, published by the County Councils Association, were reprinted within 'Local Government Reorganisation in England and Wales', *Public Administration* 32:3 (1954), pp. 331-349, pp. 339-340.

as the list of county borough relegation candidates included such noted historic entities as Canterbury, Chester, Gloucester, Hastings, Lincoln, and Worcester, the associations can be seen to have acknowledged that historic pedigree and associated issues of civic pride were not of themselves sufficient reason to retain administrative independence.⁷⁰ Application of the same logic had therefore to result in the conclusion that the retention of similarly antiquated and population-deficient administrative counties (such as Rutland or the Soke of Peterborough) or county districts was also counter-rational.

The four associations, however, purported to advocate measured reform to the administrative county model, for the *Joint Memorandum* stated that the boundaries and number of existing administrative counties should not be regarded as sacrosanct, and that the Minister should be authorised to amalgamate, divide, alter, or extend the latter. This apparent support for structural reform and innovation was illusory because the associations qualified the recommendation by stating that the governing structure in any reviewed administrative county area must be based on the existing two-tier structure.⁷¹ The extent of the four associations' embrace of reform was therefore strictly limited to self-serving recommendations that would, if implemented, bolster the positions of their own members.

The recommendations of the four associations were utterly unacceptable to the Association of Municipal Corporations. It was scathing in its response – refusing even to acknowledge that two-tier local government had any place in the future governance of localities, and identifying the reluctance of the administrative counties to allow county boroughs to extend their boundaries as the major weakness within

⁷⁰ V.D. Lipman, *Local Government Areas, 1834-1945* (Oxford, 1949), pp. 146-150.

⁷¹ County Councils Association *et al.*, *Joint Memorandum*.

the existing system.⁷² Nevertheless, as a consequence of the various national local government associations having published (in 1953 and 1954) their opposing demands as to the future structure of local government, the Conservative Minister for Housing and Local Government, Harold Macmillan, found himself in the unique position of being offered an entire raft of reform proposals. *The Times* exhorted Macmillan to grasp the opportunity presented to him,⁷³ while *The Economist* chimed that ‘local government reform ha[d] made notable reputations for statesmen in the past’ and urged Macmillan to join this elite band.⁷⁴ Instead of taking this option, Macmillan quipped that local government reform was merely another of the ‘large number of skeletons remaining in [his] ministerial cupboard ... [and that Cabinet might prefer,] after viewing the collection, to have it dusted and put away’.⁷⁵ He urged Cabinet in his paper, *Operation Round-Up: A Comprehensive Scheme for Local Government*, to retain the existing system of local government on the basis that it was ‘long established and everybody is used to it’.⁷⁶ This was hardly, of itself, a ringing endorsement of the system.

The appointment of Duncan Sandys as Minister of Housing and Local Government, following Macmillan’s promotion to Minister of Defence in October 1954,⁷⁷ broke the stalemate between the national associations. Sandys was, as the political scientist,

⁷² Association of Municipal Corporations, *Reorganisation of Local Government, AMC Report* (April 1954). Reproduced within ‘Reorganisation of Local Government in England and Wales’, *Public Administration* 32:3 (1954), pp. 331-349, pp. 346-349.

⁷³ ‘Editorial’, *The Times*, 22nd February 1954. The article also noted the general inaction of all governments since 1945 with regard to local government reform. Macmillan was Minister of Housing and Local Government from October 1951 to October 1954.

⁷⁴ ‘Mr Macmillan’s Opportunity’, *The Economist*, 27th March 1954, pp. 936-939, p. 939.

⁷⁵ PRO CAB 129/67/11, *Operation Round-Up: A Comprehensive Scheme for Local Government*: Memorandum by the Minister of Housing and Local Government, 24th March 1954.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ The Rt Hon. Mr Duncan Sandys (Baron Duncan-Sandys, from 1974), Conservative MP for Norwood 1935-1945; MP for Streatham 1950-1974. Sandys would remain as Minister of Housing and Local Government until 1957.

Jack Brand, notes, a man ‘prepared to dedicate himself to the task of reform’.⁷⁸ Meetings between Sandys and the associations began immediately; five months later agreement was reached.⁷⁹ Sandys succeeded where others had failed for two reasons. First, he set limited parameters for his discussions with the associations – his proposals for reform dealt with neither functions nor finance. Secondly, by having at the outset assured all the associations that their individual classes of authority did not face extinction, Sandys presented them with a political scenario of appeasement upon which they could ill afford to disagree. Of these, the foremost was to ensure that ‘all authorities are so constituted to be individually and collectively effective and convenient units of local government’.⁸⁰ None of the national associations could realistically dissent from wishing to see this objective fulfilled, for its attainment would preserve and strengthen the system, even though it would potentially result in the sacrifice of some individual authorities.

The concordat also dealt with the issue of desired local authority size. It was agreed that county districts with populations in excess of 100,000 would be adjudged as able to carry out the functions of a county borough.⁸¹ In contrast, any smaller county district attempting elevation to that status would not only need to have ‘a very strong case to justify it’ but also prove that such elevation would not be at the expense of the residual county area.⁸² In addition, the demand of the Association of Municipal Corporations that more districts be allowed administrative independence from the counties was met, while potential County Council Association fears were placated by

⁷⁸ Brand, *Local Government Reform in England*, p. 48.

⁷⁹ Statement by the Minister of Housing and Local Government to the House of Commons, 22nd March 1955, cited in Ministry of Housing and Local Government, *Report of the Ministry of Housing and Local Government for the Year 1955, 1956* [Cmnd 9876], p. 23.

⁸⁰ Morris, *Local Government Areas*, p. 15.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *Ibid.*

virtue of the fact that any such promotion was not automatic upon the attainment of the population threshold but dependent upon such county districts actively petitioning for status re-designation. The establishment of an agreed population threshold, under which there existed a *de facto* assumption that the additional duties required of a county borough could not be undertaken satisfactorily, also safeguarded against a scramble for administrative independence by second-tier county authorities whose size made such elevation impractical.

The concordat was reached by assurances being given for the retention of the overall structure of local government, tempered by acknowledgement that county boroughs that were inefficient or possessed inadequate resources would be demoted and that administrative counties could similarly be disbanded, divided, amalgamated, or extended. If carried out, this process would have had implications not only for structures of governance but also for issues of identity and the extent to which individual senses of belonging could be manipulated to the new geo-administrative, political construct. Moreover, the concordat offered the possibility of introducing new types of local government authorities: for, in noting the need ‘to improve the organisation of local government in the conurbations’,⁸³ no recommendations were given as to what form of administrative structures should be adopted within each such area.

In July 1956, the first of three White Papers was published: *Areas and Status of Local Authorities in England and Wales*; in May 1957 *Functions of County Councils and County District Councils* followed; and, finally, *Local Government Finance* in

⁸³ *Ibid.*

July 1957.⁸⁴ The three White Papers were given legislative form in the Local Government Bill introduced into Parliament by Henry Brooke,⁸⁵ Sandys's successor, in December 1957.

A new review process

The 1958 Local Government Act established two Local Government Commissions – one for England, chaired by Sir Henry Hancock, and one for Wales.⁸⁶ The former divided England into two types of review areas: Special Review Areas and General Review Areas. The Special Review Areas⁸⁷ were those areas defined as conurbations by the Registrar General for census purposes: the West Midlands, Greater Manchester,⁸⁸ Merseyside, West Yorkshire, and Tyneside.⁸⁹ The rest of the country was split into eight General Review Areas. The county boroughs of Derby and Nottingham, along with their respective administrative counties, formed the most southerly part of the York and North Midlands General Review Area (Figure 4.2).

⁸⁴ *Areas and Status of Local Authorities in England and Wales*, 1956 [Cmnd 9831]; *Functions of County Councils and County District Councils*, 1957 [Cmnd 161]; and *Local Government Finance*, 1957 [Cmnd 207].

⁸⁵ The Rt Hon. Mr Henry Brooke (Baron Brooke, from 1966), Conservative MP for Lewisham West 1938-45; MP for Hampstead 1950-1966.

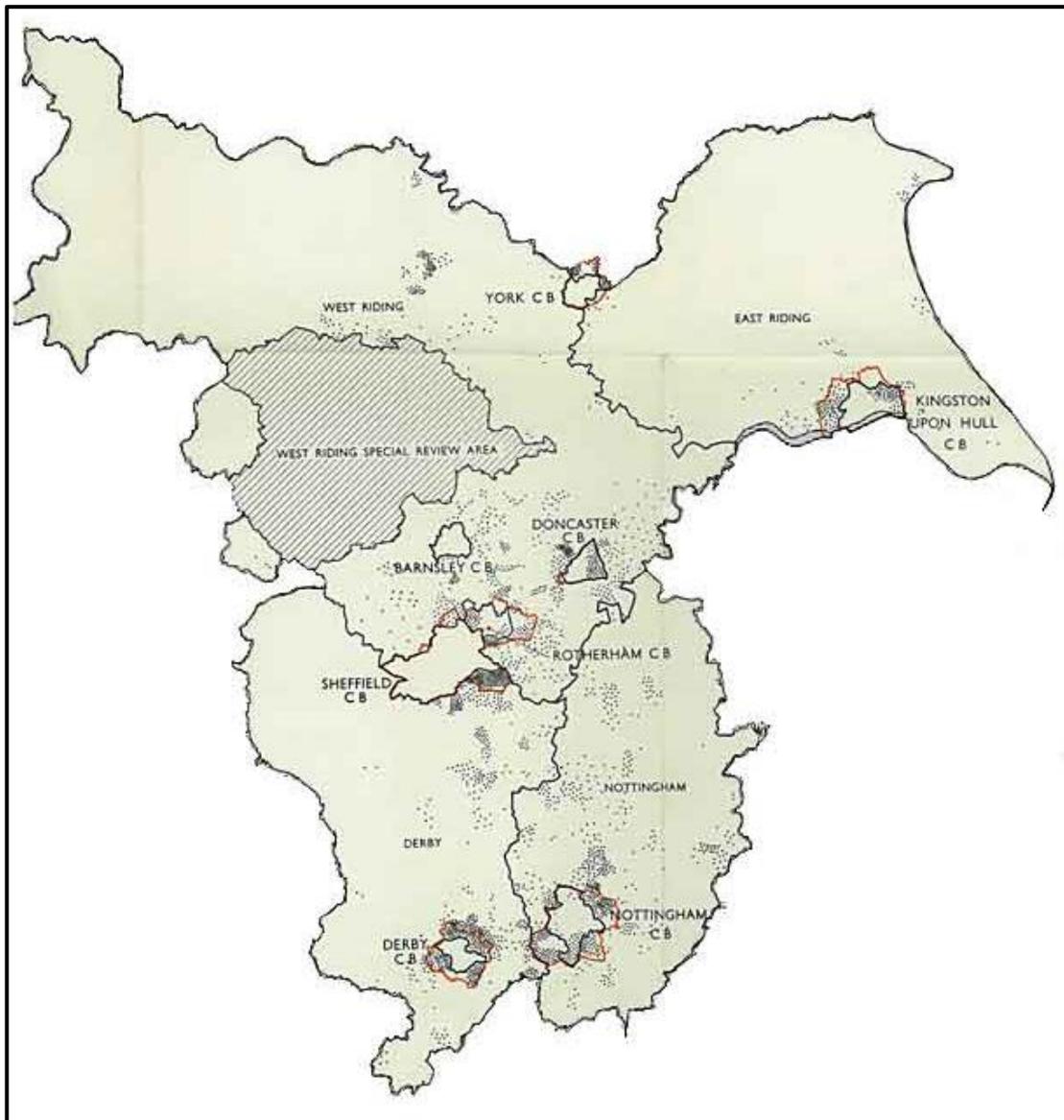
⁸⁶ Local Government Act 1958 (6 & 7 Elizabeth II c.55). Sir Henry Drummond Hancock, former Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Food and Chairman of the Board of Inland Revenue. The needs of London were reviewed separately by the Royal Commission on Local Government in Greater London (established 1957) and chaired by Sir Edwin Herbert. Although Wales is not within the ambit of the study, the Local Government Commission for Wales was chaired by Sir Guildhaume Myrddin-Evans; it reported in 1963, was dissolved in 1967, and none of its recommendations was adopted.

⁸⁷ So named because the Minister, Henry Brooke, disliked the term 'conurbation'; 29th July 1957, *Hansard*, Commons, 5th series, vol. 574, col. 914.

⁸⁸ The South East Lancashire Special Review Area.

⁸⁹ Henry Brooke, 29th July 1957, *Hansard*, Commons, 5th series, vol. 574, col. 914.

Figure 4.2: York and North Midlands General Review Area



As shown, the York and North Midland General Review Area also encompassed the East Riding of Yorkshire, those parts of the West Riding not included in the West Yorkshire Special Review Area (shaded in the diagram), and the county boroughs of Barnsley, Doncaster, Kingston-upon-Hull, Rotherham, Sheffield, and York.

Source: Hancock Local Government Commission, *Report No. 8* (1964), Map 2.

In Special Review Areas, the Hancock Local Government Commission (HLGC) was mandated with wide-ranging powers of review and could recommend an entire redrawing of the political administrative map as well as a redistribution of functions between tiers of local government. The Commissioners were effectively given *carte*

blanche, in the words of the Minister, to ‘work out really practical arrangements which [were] suited to the individual needs of each of these great areas’.⁹⁰ In contrast to the expansive powers of review afforded to the HLGC within Special Review Areas, those granted within General Review Areas were far more limited.⁹¹ It was under these regulations that the needs of the Greater Nottingham–Derby area were determined. Therefore, in practical terms, the work of the Commission in General Review Areas was far more akin to that of a Boundary Commission rather than a body charged with making strategic recommendations designed to enable lasting changes to be made to the structures and functions of local government.

The 1958 Act also required the Commission to undertake an elaborate process of public and institutional consultation. This made the work of the HLGC far more publically open and responsive than had been the case with the Trufram Eve Local Government Boundary Commission (TLGBC). Whereas the latter had taken the view that ‘the wishes of the inhabitants were most truly expressed by their elected representatives and their officials’,⁹² the 1958 Act required that the HLGC take far broader measures of public opinion into account. Not only local authorities but also interested bodies and individuals were given access to the review process at numerous points, enabling the HLGC to garner a fuller understanding of local sentiments with regard to how proposed changes to governmental structures would

⁹⁰ Henry Brooke, cited in K. Young, ‘The Party and English Local Government’, in A. Seldon and S. Ball (eds), *Conservative Century: The Conservative Party since 1900* (Oxford, 1994), p. 416.

⁹¹ Within General Review Areas the HLGC was specifically forbidden to propose any structural innovations and could thus only recommend amalgamations, extensions, creations, and demotions to the existing administrative counties and county boroughs. In addition, it was permitted neither to make suggestions relating to differentiation of functions nor to alter boundaries between rural districts, urban districts, and non-county boroughs. Such boundaries were thus altered only due to either county borough extensions impacting upon them, or because of their being affected as a consequence of administrative county boundary changes.

⁹² Morris, *Local Government Areas*, pp. 49-50.

impact upon their own sense of belonging and identity.⁹³ In addition, the HLGC was only a part of the overall process of review and ‘played not a decisive role but an informational and advisory one’.⁹⁴ Thus, whereas the TLGBC had had a ‘direct duty of making orders which were subject to parliamentary confirmation but not to rejection or modification by the department [in charge of local government] concerned’,⁹⁵ its successor, the HLGC, was not granted such political liberty. Instead the ultimate decision as to which reforms to introduce was left firmly in the hands of the Minister. This made the entire review process far more open to influence by party politics.⁹⁶ As suggested in Chapters Five, Six and Seven, the result was that regardless of the validity of the HLGC’s recommendations, only those proposals deemed politically acceptable by the party in power were put forward for Parliamentary approval.⁹⁷

Conclusion

During the period addressed by this chapter the focus of debates regarding local government reform began to change and, with it, acceptance of the traditionally held beliefs and ideals of local government advanced by Chuter Ede and others diminished. Contemporaneous politicians, political activists, commentators, and journalists contended that the services delivered by the existing system had fallen behind citizens’ expectations.⁹⁸ Additionally, the structural divide of urban and regional areas within the local government system had become increasingly detached

⁹³ See Chapters Five, Six and Seven.

⁹⁴ J. Stanyer, ‘The Local Government Commissions’, in H.V. Wiseman, (ed.), *Local Government in England 1958-1969* (1970), p. 18.

⁹⁵ W.A. Robson, *Local Government in Crisis* (London, 1966), p. 111.

⁹⁶ According to, amongst others, Young and Rao; Robson; and Stanyer.

⁹⁷ Stanyer, ‘The Local Government Commissions’, p. 33, questions, for instance, ‘what sort of additional information the Minister had obtained which would account for the decisions made’ and speculates on the role of party politics. See also Robson, *Local Government in Crisis*, pp. 113-118.

⁹⁸ For example, respectively, Bevan, Self, Cole, *The Times*, and *The Economist*.

from the way in which citizens lived their lives; although ‘the petrol engine, the telephone, vast shifts of industry and population [had] transformed the human map of England’,⁹⁹ the structure of local governance had remained largely untouched by such modern phenomena.

Reforming local government into larger units encompassing both town and country areas was presented as the means by which local government could update its structure – to mirror more accurately the changing social geographies of cities and patterns of population. This made it more reflective of, and relevant to, the day-to-day lives of the people it served.¹⁰⁰ This was a factor that would be of ever-increasing importance as a consequence of continued suburbanisation and the establishment of social housing estates on the periphery of urban centres and within the territorial lands of such authorities’ rural neighbours. It was also argued by distinguished parliamentarians such as Arthur Skeffington and the Jim Griffiths that such enlargement would bring about improvements in the services delivered.¹⁰¹ They contended that the smallness of some authorities had resulted in their having insufficient resources with which to discharge their duties efficiently.¹⁰² This was a scenario that had, according to *The Economist*, and in direct contrast to the view

⁹⁹ ‘Editorial’, *The Times*, 9th April 1948, and ‘Reorganisation of Basis for Local Government’, *The Times*, 9th April 1948.

¹⁰⁰ This was a point specifically noted by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing and Local Government, John Bevens, 30th July 1957, *Hansard*, Commons, 5th series, vol. 574, cols. 1189-1190, 1198. The Rt Hon. John Reginald Bevens was Conservative MP for Liverpool Toxteth from 1950 to 1964; he was appointed Postmaster-General in 1959.

¹⁰¹ The Rt Hon. Mr Jim Griffiths was the Labour MP for Llanelli (1945-1970), Chairman of the Parliamentary Labour Party (1948-1949), Deputy Leader of the Party (1955-1959), and first Secretary of State for Wales (1964-1966). Mr Arthur Massey Skeffington was the Labour MP for Hayes and Harlington (1953-1971), and Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Housing and Local Government (1967-1970).

¹⁰² Jim Griffiths, 29th July 1957, *Hansard*, Commons, 5th series, vol. 574, col. 991; and Arthur Skeffington, 30th July 1957, *Hansard*, Commons, 5th series, vol. 574, col. 1173.

espoused by Chuter Ede, additionally contributed to a decline in the calibre of both officers and councillors.¹⁰³

The creation of the welfare state, the adoption of various different regional structures within numerous government departments, and the nationalisation of industries had all resulted in larger units of operation being successfully established. The contemporary academic, W.A. Robson,¹⁰⁴ argued that local government would benefit from the lessons learned in these sectors. The fact that the positives of such economies of scale could be demonstrated further assisted in the political acceptance of the rationale that ‘just as the technique of industrial and commercial administration now requires far larger units of authority than formerly, so does the technique of efficient municipal administration now demand more extensive units of local government’.¹⁰⁵ The result was that, even though there remained deep divisions amongst those seeking reform (they were continually faced with the seemingly unanswerable problem as to whether ‘the requirement of the service needing the largest unit [should] dictate the size of [all] new authorities’),¹⁰⁶ the case for enlarged authorities became accepted as the majority view.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³ ‘Local Government Dilemmas’, *The Economist*, 21st July 1951, pp. 141-142. Later, Dame Evelyn Sharp noted that, ‘part of the trouble in getting enough good people to serve arises, I believe, from the fact that the areas and status of local authorities are often today too cramped and too small [and consequently] ... not enough people from business, from industry, from the professions are going into it [local government]’. Dame Evelyn Sharp, ‘The Future of Local Government’, *Public Administration*, 40:4 (1962), pp. 375-386, p. 383.

¹⁰⁴ William Alexander Robson was a Fabian socialist, lawyer, the first Professor of Public Administration in the UK, and founder of *Political Quarterly*.

¹⁰⁵ W.A. Robson, *The Development of Local Government* (London, 3rd edn, 1954), p. 125.

¹⁰⁶ B. Wood, *The Process of Local Government Reform, 1966-1974* (London, 1976), p. 58. Robson had previously noted that ‘there is no division of the country which [would] suit all municipal functions [because]... the determination of areas for land draining proceed on entirely different principles from that relating to public libraries’; W.A. Robson, *The Development of Local Government*, (London, 1st edn, 1931), pp. 130, 140. See also Herbert Morrison, 30th July 1957, *Hansard*, Commons, 5th series, vol. 574, col. 1132.

¹⁰⁷ Indeed, it came to be seen as the only solution to local government’s ills for while ‘substantial enlarge[ment] in size and rationalis[ation] in shape... may be a hard pill to swallow, what other

Though the argument for enlarged local government units may have been accepted within central government circles, it did not necessarily follow that local residents would embrace this view. Fearful of the loss of village identities, and not wishing to be ‘swallowed up’ into the maw of ever-increasing council estate developments, rural residents and their respective rural district councils fought a spirited campaign against incorporation. Though such resistance ran contrary to the reforming desires of central government, their right to be heard was, nonetheless, enshrined within the processes and protocols of the HLGC. Faced with such opposition, as well as the need to assess the validity of alternative reforming proposals submitted to it by regional academics, the progress of the Commission came to a juddering halt. It was further stymied by the fact that only those proposals politically acceptable to the government of the day stood any chance of being enacted. Moreover, as is noted in Chapter Five, with the appointment of Richard Crossman as Minister for Local Government and Housing in 1964, the HLGC and the process of reform established by the 1958 Local Government Act were confronted by a minister impatient for change, and with his own views on how reform should be enacted.

feasible alternative exists?’ W.A. Robson, *The Government and Misgovernment of London* (London, 2nd edn, 1948), p. 355.

Chapter Five

Derby and the HLGC

In the preceding chapter, the national processes and political context within which the 1958 Local Government Act came to be enacted were outlined. So too was the gradual shift towards the acceptance, at least in dominant central government circles, of the need for the structures of local governance to be reformed in such a manner as to deliver greater efficiency and improved services in keeping with the post-war changes noted in Chapter Three. Chapter Four described the belief that reform of the system should involve some elements of consensus between local government associations.

Chapters Five and Six shift the focus away from national politics and party ideology and bring the locality of the study area to centre stage. Though they were neighbouring county boroughs, the territorial ambitions of Derby County Borough (DCB) and Nottingham County Borough (NCB) were markedly dissimilar. So too were the reactions of their respective county councils and their neighbouring rural (and in the case of Nottingham, urban) district councils to the proposals that emanated from the county boroughs themselves, as well as the draft and final recommendations of the Hancock Local Government Commission (HLGC).

In the first part of this chapter, the nature and form of Derby (including the rural parishes lying immediately adjacent to DCB's territories) prior to and at the commencement of the HLGC process is discussed. Thereafter the justifications deployed by DCB (and other interested parties that concurred) in relation to its

territorial wants within both written and oral submissions to the HLGC are analysed. In addition, the opinions advanced to the HLGC by those who advocated an expansion to DCB's boundaries are considered. The second part of this chapter reviews the counter-cases claimed by the rural district councils, residents, and other opponents of DCB's plans. In so doing, it evaluates how issues of parish peculiarity were used by those opposed to increased urbanisation to argue against centrally-inspired moves to expand the influence of towns. Thereafter, the official visit of the Commissioners to the area, as well as their correspondence with the various local government authorities (and other associated interested parties), are appraised. Finally, Chapter Five presents the Commissioners' proposals for the future of DCB, as well as the final decision by the Minister of Housing and Local Government. Thus, the fate of DCB is placed within the wider regional and national-political context addressed by this study.

Derby on the eve of the Hancock Local Government Commission

In 1954, the area of Greater Derby was chosen for analysis by Theodore Cauter and J.S. Downham in their study, *The Communication of Ideas: A Study of Contemporary Influences on Urban Life*.¹ Their work is noted here because it was a wide-ranging, independent study of urban life published in 1954, immediately before the creation of the HLGC, against which to measure and analyse the validity of the arguments for enlargement subsequently put forward by DCB. Using analysis of shopping patterns, structured interviews and measurements of participation rates in activities such as religious activities, club membership, sports and hobbies, entertainment and recreation, public affairs and politics, Cauter and Downham concluded that, despite

¹ T. Cauter and J.S. Downham, *The Communication of Ideas: A Study of Contemporary Influences on Urban Life – A Social Survey of Greater Derby* (London, 1954).

DCB having been enlarged three times since its creation in 1889,² its present lands were still ‘insufficient to contain all the houses, parks, factories, shops, offices, and other facilities needed’.³ Furthermore, they asserted that more than one third of the town’s population ‘who [were] in all other respects citizens of Derby ha[d] been compelled to live outside the Borough boundary’.⁴ Consequently, Cauter and Downham argued that Derby should be defined not only by the 141,000 citizens contained within the Borough’s boundaries, but as a residential city and geographic territory encompassing a population of about 200,000. Further, they contended that the true geographic external boundaries of the town were where the built up areas of the Borough and its surrounding fringe parishes gave way to open countryside rather than where its formal administrative jurisdiction lay.⁵ Thus, they posited, the parishes of Allestree, Alvaston and Boulton, Arleston and Sinfin, Breadsall, Chaddesden, Chellaston, Darley Abbey, Littleover, Mickleover, and Spondon, had become intrinsic parts of the town (see Figure 5.1).⁶

² 1901; 1928; and 1934; Cauter and Downham, *A Social Survey of Greater Derby*, p. 12.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.* Davies and Morley concur, further noting that as most of the outward migration from DCB in the period 1931-1951 was into ‘neighbouring rural parishes, [it] was not an indicator of economic decline’. S. Davies and B. Morley, *County Borough Elections in England and Wales, 1919-1938: A Comparative Analysis, Vol. III, Chester-East Ham* (Aldershot, 2006), pp. 274-275.

⁶ Cauter and Downham, *A Social Survey of Greater Derby*, pp. 12-15.

Figure 5.1: Civil parishes, urban and rural districts, and non-county municipal boroughs surrounding Derby County Borough, 1936



County boundaries are denoted by the dash-dot line; borough and urban district boundaries by the black line; rural district boundaries by the dashed line; and parish boundaries by the dotted line.

Source: Adapted from DRO D5457/2/1, County of Derby map issued on the instructions of Derbyshire County Council, 1st April 1936.

The list of parishes that Cauter and Downham inferred should become part of DCB was almost identical to the list of parishes put forward by DCB for incorporation in its April 1960 submission to the HLGC.⁷ This may indicate, therefore, that DCB's aspiration to increase its territories by 162 per cent was neither exaggerated nor primarily inspired by civic aggrandisement.⁸ Given the 'division of responsibility' for the immediate Greater-Derby area between four existing local authorities,⁹ there were very real problems in the Derby area regarding issues of appropriate governance, which could be rectified only through substantial reform to its existing local government structure.¹⁰ Indeed, as Cauter and Downham subsequently noted, though their study was not focussed on local governance structures, the existing structure failed the needs of people because its fragmented nature made it impossible to properly 'carry out many activities (such as town planning), which involved Greater Derby as a whole'.¹¹

Notwithstanding Cauter and Downham's analysis of Derby, its environs, and its problems, the reforms to which they alluded had not been enacted by the time of the HLGC. This – along with the failure of central government to act upon the recommendation made with regard to Derby by the Local Government Boundary Commission in its *Report for the Year 1947*¹² – may have contributed to the

⁷ PRO T184/294, Proposal of Derby County Borough for expansion submitted to the Ministry of Housing and Local Government. DCB added Duffield to Cauter and Downham's list.

⁸ PRO T184/312, SEDRD, Comments on the proposals made by the County Borough of Derby, 30th June 1960.

⁹ The four local administrations were Derby County Borough Council, Belper Rural District Council, Repton Rural District Council, and South East Derbyshire Rural District Council. The latter three all abutted the jurisdictional boundaries of Derby County Borough.

¹⁰ Cauter and Downham, *A Social Survey of Greater Derby*, pp. 12-14.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

¹² The (Trustram Eve) Local Government Boundary Commission report had concluded that 'there should be a fairly substantial extension of the Borough (including the population living on its immediate periphery)'. Such an expansion would have 'increase[d] the population of the Borough to about 175,000, and we [the TLGBC] should in any case make proposals for this purpose'. TLGBC, *Report of the Local Government Boundary Commission for 1947* (London, 1948), Appendix B, p. 51.

demographic decline of Derby town. Such decline was evident by 1961, when the population of DCB had fallen to 132,325 from a peak of 143,500 in 1949.¹³ DCB's population loss was matched 'by an abnormal increase in the population of the peripheral urbanised portions of its neighbouring three rural districts'¹⁴ – South East Derbyshire Rural District (SEDRD),¹⁵ Belper Rural District, and Repton Rural District. While migration from county boroughs to adjacent rural districts was nothing new,¹⁶ its rate of outward migration was far greater than that of any other county borough within the York and North Midlands General Review Area (YNMGRA).¹⁷

The population growth within DCB's immediate rural district neighbours can be explained by two factors. First, the ripple effect of urban expansion resumed post-war, as 'the middle-classes embraced the suburbs'¹⁸ 'to live somewhere countrified... buying their own home[s]... [and becoming] garden ruralist[s]'.¹⁹ They continued the process of migration (that was begun in the inter-war period) from Derby town centre into the new suburbs, with their distinct (and 'better') identity, and beyond the town

¹³ Hancock Local Government Commission (HLGC), *Report No. 8, Report and Proposals for the York and North Midlands General Review Area* (London, 1964), p. 93; and J. Beckett, *City Status in the British Isles, 1830-2002* (Aldershot, 2005), p. 123.

¹⁴ PRO T184/312, T.F. Smith, *Commissioners' Brief and Report: The Derby Area* (January 1961), p. 1. T.F. Smith was the mandarin who prepared background reports on both NCB and DCB for the Commissioners. Alas, Smith's specific function is not found within the records of either the Ministry of Housing and Local Government or other documents relating to the HLG. The point had previously been made by DCB in its own letter to the Ministry of Local Government and Housing: PRO T184/294, 'Letter from DCB to the Ministry', 12th December 1958. See also T.W. Freeman, *The Conurbations of Great Britain* (Manchester, 1959), p. 259.

¹⁵ At the start of the 1958 HLG process, SEDRD was known as Shardlow Rural District. The change of name to South East Derbyshire was effective from 1st January 1959 onwards and was enacted under Section 147 of the Local Government Act 1933.

¹⁶ J.H. Warren and P. G. Richards, *The English Local Government System* (London, 8th edn, 1964), pp. 140-141.

¹⁷ HLG, *Report No. 8*, Tables I and II, pp. 133-135.

¹⁸ S. Gunn and R. Bell, *Middle Classes: Their Rise and Sprawl* (London, 2002), p. 75.

¹⁹ R. Colls, *Identity of England* (Oxford, 2002), p. 218. For more on the cyclical 'ripple' effect of outward migration to suburbia in the immediate post-war period and beyond, see Freeman, *Conurbations*, p. 353.

boundary.²⁰ The contemporary academic geographer, A.G. Powell, asserted that suburbia offered ‘a whole set of alternative values: family, stability, security, a place where people settle down, raise children, [and] become part of a community’.²¹ Secondly, the considerable growth of parishes both to the north of the River Derwent, and to the east of the town towards Long Eaton and the outer tentacles of Greater Nottingham, progressively became middle-class dormitories not only for Derby but also for Nottingham as general population mobility increased.²²

In this regard towns (such as Long Eaton) that lay within the Nottingham-Derby urban corridor displayed the conurban tendencies noted by the geographer, Richard Lawton, through both industrial linkages and daily population movements for purposes of work.²³ As Dickinson observed at the time, this resulted in ‘cities becoming increasingly inter-dependent... [with] the life and activities of cities and towns... making an ever deeper imprint on the countryside, so that the distinction between urban areas and countryside is becoming increasingly vague’.²⁴ Such inter-linkages had three distinct outcomes: first, the spatial expression of the centrifugal force of suburbanisation was partly as a consequence of ‘motor transport [having brought] the town and its amenities within reach of the countryside... [and] recognition of the fact that the interests of the country town and its surrounding

²⁰ Powell notes that from 1931-1951 Shardlow RD [SEDRD, from 1st January 1959 onwards] enjoyed an absolute increase in population through migration of 62.4 per cent, and ‘the highest natural increase of any district in Derbyshire (22.3 per cent) due, ‘in the main to movement from Derby [County Borough]’. A.G. Powell, ‘The 1951 Census: (1) An Analysis of Population Changes in Derbyshire’, *East Midland Geographer*, 2 (1954), pp. 13-22, p. 16.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Firey, Loomis and Beegle note that as a result of such movements ‘rural and urban have truly met, field and center are almost fusing’. W. Firey, C.P. Loomis and J.A. Beegle, ‘The Fusion of Urban and Rural’, in J. Labatut and W.J. Lane, *Highways in our National Life* (Princeton, 1950), p. 155. See also R.E. Dickinson, *City and Region: A Geographical Interpretation* (London, 1964), p. 428.

²³ R. Lawton, ‘The Daily Journey to Work in England and Wales’, *Town Planning Review*, 29 (1959), pp. 241-257, p. 255.

²⁴ R.E. Dickinson, *The City Region in Western Europe* (London, 1967), p. 13.

countryside are not diverse but complementary'.²⁵ Indeed, during the period covered by the HLGC review of Derby, the recorded traffic travelling between Nottingham and Derby almost doubled to 11,903 vehicles per day in 1965, compared to some 6,222 in 1954.²⁶ Secondly, the development (around towns) of service areas greater in extent than their immediate fringe areas was further enhanced by the processes of daily inward migration for work purposes (Figure 5.2). Thirdly, satellite settlements arose, each with their own micro-hinterlands, linkages to other similar sized urban settlements, and service areas,²⁷ with the result that 'area[s] of local consciousness [were] enlarged'.²⁸

The net result of these various inward and outward shifts in Greater Derby's population was that, whereas in 1921 the 'combined population of Derby County Borough and its three rural districts [had been] 209,000 of which [DCB's] share was 63 per cent, by 1960, the total population of the four authorities was 293,000 [with DCB's] share reduced to 44 per cent'.²⁹ Residential relocation from the town centre to the suburban areas immediately outside DCB's jurisdiction led to a proportionate increase in the commuter population and was, like the expansion of satellite residential suburbs and council housing overflows themselves, a common feature of a majority of county boroughs.³⁰ As an inevitable by-product of social plantation and suburban/village migration, existence of this phenomenon could not be used by DCB to justify its territorial expansion ambitions. This was because, within the guidance

²⁵ Ministry of Health, *Local Government in England and Wales during the Period of Reconstruction*, 1945 [Cmnd 6579], p. 13.

²⁶ P. McCullagh, *The East Midlands* (Oxford, 1969), p. 115.

²⁷ A.E. Smailes, 'Urban Hierarchy in England and Wales', *Geography*, 29 (1944), pp. 40-51. For a critique and expansion of the key themes discussed by Smailes, see Dickinson, *City and Region*, pp. 77-80.

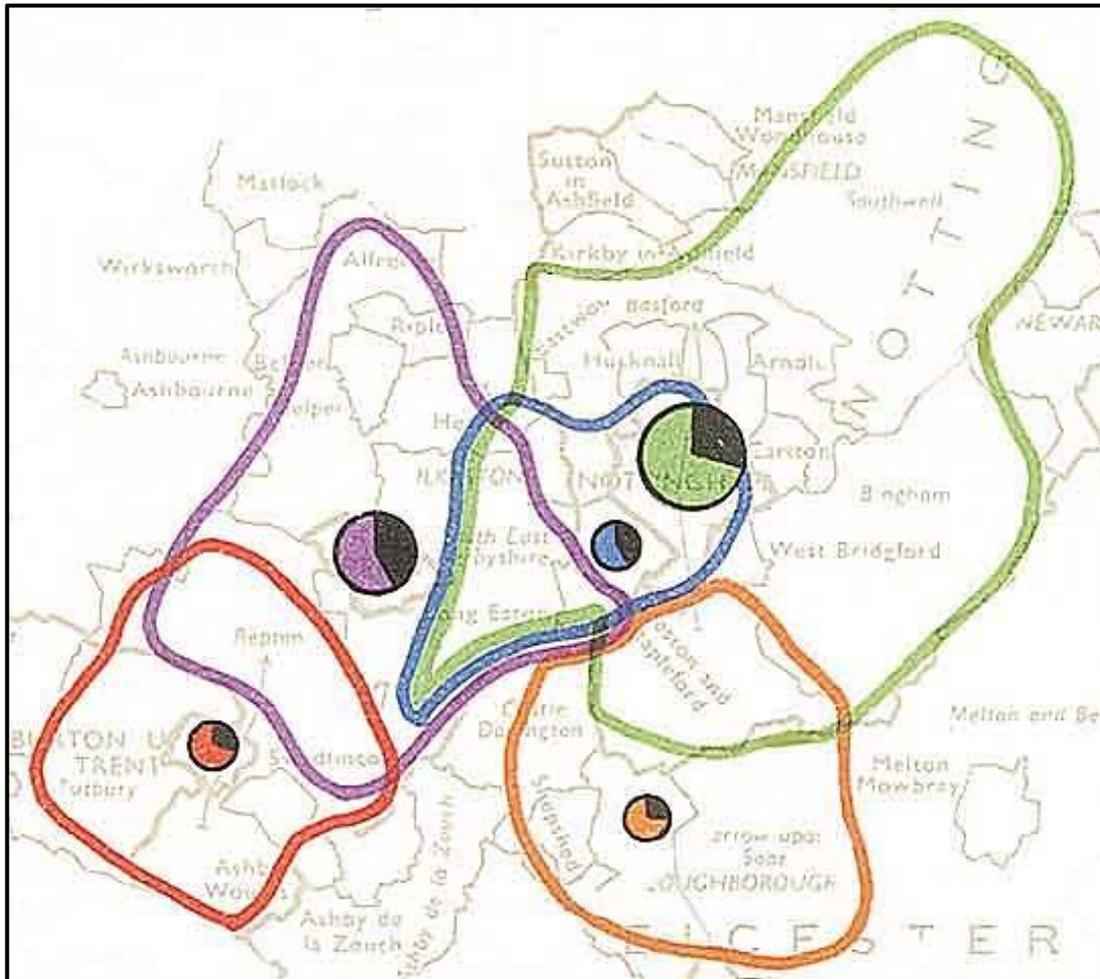
²⁸ W.A. Robson, *The Development of Local Government* (London, 3rd edn, 1954), p. 129.

²⁹ PRO T184/294, Smith, *Commissioners' Brief and Report: The Derby Area*, 2nd January 1961, p. 7.

³⁰ K. Young and N. Rao, *Local Government since 1945* (Oxford, 1997), pp. 106-107.

issued to the HLGC,³¹ it was expressly noted that extension to ‘take in neighbouring built-up areas required closer and more special links than those of mere proximity’.³²

Figure 5.2: Commuting flows into main employment centres



Derby: purple; Nottingham: green; Beeston: blue; Loughborough: orange; Burton-upon-Trent: red. Within the circles, the black part represents the proportion of the employed population living outside the centre but within its catchment area. The coloured part represents the proportion of the employed population living inside the centre.

Source: Adapted from Royal Commission on Local Government in England (1966), Map 15.

³¹ See Chapter Four.

³² G.W. Jones, ‘The Local Government Commission and County Borough Extensions’, *Public Administration*, 41:2 (1963), pp. 173-187, p. 175.

Derby County Borough's application for expansion

The HLGC review process afforded DCB an opportunity to recoup its 'lost' population, and to benefit from an increase in rateable value, by arguing that its boundaries needed extending to incorporate at least all of those areas within its adjacent rural districts in which a majority of its former residents now resided. This was a process that would also result in the retention of a predominantly Labour-voting electorate within electoral wards of DCB. Such party-political considerations for DCB's ruling Labour Party were not only relevant locally but also at a national level.³³ These areas included, at their most minimal, the council housing estates that DCB had built within the rural districts, and the newly and privately developed suburbs.³⁴ So that it might be endowed with land sufficient to address both its longer-term housing and industrial development needs,³⁵ and that its boundaries might more accurately reflect where its urban influence ended, DCB sought the incorporation of the entirety of ten existing administrative-boundary-abutting rural district parishes. They were: from Belper Rural District: Allestree, Darley Abbey, and Duffield; from Repton Rural District: Mickleover; and from SEDRD: Alvaston and Boulton, Breadsall, Chaddesden, Chellaston, Sinfyn and Arleston, Littleover, and Spondon. Each targeted rural parish and their 'host' rural district council opposed DCB's proposals and maintained (in their representations to the HLGC) that they were

³³ As Richard Crossman, Labour's Minister of Housing and Local Government (1964-1966), noted in his ministerial diaries: 'Come what may, no decision would be taken about a local government boundary without the parliamentary repercussions being fully considered and without my trying to shield the Labour position.' Crossman's diaries were the first such diaries published, offering a unique window into the machinations of government. R.H. Crossman, *The Diaries of a Cabinet Minister. Vol. I: Minister of Housing 1964-1966* (London, 1975), p. 621.

³⁴ PRO T184/294, Letter from Derby County Borough to the Ministry of Housing and Local Government, 12th December 1958.

³⁵ D.J. Rake, 'Spatial Changes in Industrial Activity in the East Midlands since 1945: Part (I) Changes through Movement and through Acquisition', *East Midland Geographer*, 41 (1974), pp. 1-16, p. 6.

‘independent places with lively community interests of their own’ and therefore ‘different from’ and ‘separate from’ DCB.³⁶

Of DCB’s proposed 13,163 acreage increase, some 9,132 acres (69 per cent) were claimed from SEDRD, with a further 2,408 acres (18 per cent) and 1,623 acres (12 per cent) sought from Belper RD and Repton RD respectively.³⁷ At first sight, these figures appear to represent a significant onslaught upon the lands and people of SEDRD by DCB, disproportionate to the potential losses that would be suffered by Belper RD and Repton RD. However, such a conclusion would be inaccurate, for DCB did not seek to carve deep territorial inroads into SEDRD. Rather, the scope of its potential losses was a consequence of consistent ‘border erosion’, as SEDRD almost entirely geographically enveloped DCB (Figure 5.3). Thus, despite the potential to conclude that there was an imbalance in DCB’s territorial demands upon SEDRD, they were in fact identical to those that DCB had made upon Belper and Repton in terms of context.

The rationale for enlargement of territory on the basis of current and future housing and industrial development needs was one deployed by a majority of expansionist county borough councils in their submissions to the HLG. It was both a central tenet of the reformers (on the grounds of administrative convenience),³⁸ and relatively straightforward for county boroughs to prove, given the ongoing and

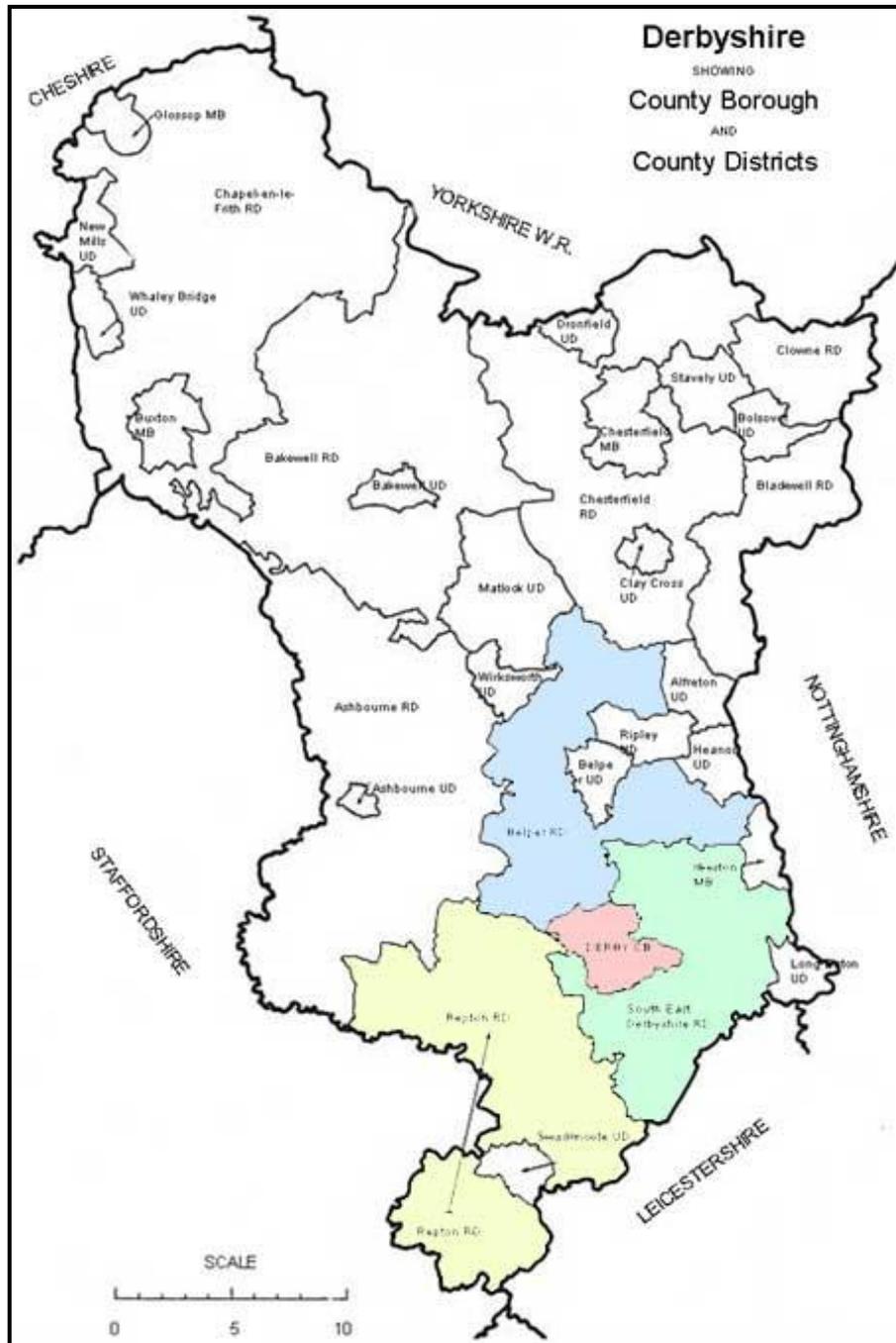
³⁶ These were the views of surrounding authorities to the suggestions of DCB, as summarised in HLG, *Report No. 8*, p. 94.

³⁷ PRO T184/294, Proposals of Derby County Borough, April 1960, p. 3. Percentages derived from the figures given within DCB’s submission.

³⁸ As Alexander notes, ‘it was hard to defend a situation where council tenants in, for example, Woodley, paid rents to Reading and rates to Wokingham and Berkshire’. A. Alexander, *Borough Government and Politics: Reading 1835-1985* (London, 1985), p. 130. In 1958 such administrative anomalies still awaited solutions and were as readily applicable to DCB and its surrounding rural districts as they were to Reading.

increased suburbanisation of Britain's cities and towns post-war, as the contemporary economic geographer, Thomas Freeman, noted.³⁹

Figure 5.3: The encirclement of Derby County Borough



In the diagram above, yellow represents Repton Rural District; green, South East Derbyshire Rural District; blue, Belper Rural District; and pink, Derby County Borough.

Source: Census of England and Wales, 1961, *County Report, Derbyshire*, (1964), p. xi.

³⁹ Freeman, *Conurbations*, pp. 347-348.

In addition to the future housing and industrial development needs previously mentioned, DCB cast its territorial aspirations in two ways in its submission to the HLGC. First, it claimed that the inhabitants of the surrounding rural parish areas all looked to Derby as ‘their town centre for employment, shopping, their social and cultural life and recreation [and that they therefore] formed a natural township [for] there were no other self-contained communities nearby to which these dormitory areas owed allegiance’.⁴⁰ Secondly, DCB contended that the incorporation of those parishes would allow their communities’ longer-term employment, infrastructural, and residential development needs to be addressed in a more holistic and integrated manner, in accordance with the wishes of central government. It was estimated by DCB that by 1978 77,600 additional people would have to be housed within it and the parishes that it sought to annex, resulting in a need for a further 3,000 acres to be developed outside of its territories for housing purposes and associated purposes such as drainage.⁴¹ The former justification for expansion maintained that, regardless of local facilities constructed on estates, the town acted as the main shopping destination for a majority of fringe-residents with some 56 per cent of residents living within the Greater Derby area visiting the central town at least twice a week for shopping purposes (as opposed to their immediate locality), and that Derby town was also their major focal point for both theatre and dancing.⁴² Furthermore, non-resident commuters to Derby used important services provided by DCB, such as

⁴⁰ In using this turn of phrase, the HLGC, *Report No. 8*, p. 93, paraphrased the opinion of the County Borough. PRO T184/294, DCB, Letter from Derby County Borough to the Ministry of Housing and Local Government, 12th December 1958.

⁴¹ *Ibid.* See also PRO T184/312, Smith, *Commissioners’ Brief and Report: The Derby Area*, pp. 1-4.

⁴² This contention by DCB was directly based upon the previous findings of Caunter and Downham, *The Communication of Ideas*, p. 116. See also PRO T184/294, Proposals of Derby County Borough, April 1960, p. 7, and, HLGC, *Report No. 8*, p. 93.

libraries, adult education, public transport,⁴³ public baths, the new ring road,⁴⁴ and medical, dental and optical services.⁴⁵ In addition, residents living on fringe estates continued to be reliant upon the town centre, despite the intentions of planners and politicians, as the estates were not ‘an urban counterpart to the villages’ because they lacked ‘conveniently sited community centres, shops, schools, [and so on]’.⁴⁶

Echoing the sentiments expressed by Caunter and Downham in 1954, Derby County Borough (DCB) claimed that because of slum clearance, an increasing population and the necessity of building more social housing, it faced a critical lack of suitable building land within its own territories. Indeed, between 1945 and 1958, the shortage of DCB’s residential development land was so severe that DCB had ‘built some 3,773 houses outside of the Borough’s boundary... [and was] now building a further 900 dwellings and preparing to build an additional 867 dwellings on sites which ha[d] been acquired outside the present boundaries’, a figure equating to 53 per cent of its post-war construction.⁴⁷

DCB illustrated its case for enlargement on residential grounds by referring to one of the largest of its externalised housing estates – that at Chaddesden. DCB noted how the residents of the Chaddesden estate, despite its being physically located within South East Derbyshire Rural District (SEDRD), were users of DCB’s amenities, as well as their tenants. Further, their workplaces were overwhelmingly sited within DCB’s boundaries. This ongoing borough-dependency enabled DCB to argue that

⁴³ This is a point that can be further illustrated via reference to transport links provided by the borough to such areas. See for instance with regard to the estates at Chaddesden, Derby County Borough (Transport Committee), *Time Table and Route Map*, April 1956 (Derby, 1956), Routes 70, 71.

⁴⁴ HLG, *Report No. 8*, p. 94.

⁴⁵ See PRO T184/277, Derby Executive Council (Health), Observations on the proposals of the County Borough of Derby, 22nd March 1960.

⁴⁶ R.J. Hacon, ‘Neighbourhoods or Neighbourhood-Units?’, *The Sociological Review*: 3:2 (1955), pp. 235-246, pp. 235-236.

⁴⁷ PRO T184/294, Letter from DCB to the Ministry, 12th December 1958, p. 1.

the process of planned social plantation that had occurred within each of its externalised council housing estates had weakened the validity of the traditionalists' contention (as noted in Chapter Four) that there existed distinct rural and urban communities that required different forms of governance. The siting of hundreds of council houses in concentrated areas deemed rural by dint of local authority categorisation resulted in such areas necessarily becoming more urban-focussed.⁴⁸ Further, the tenants of these council estates had been transferred *en masse* in an attempt not only to recreate the neighbourliness and sense of community which they had had to leave behind, but also to limit adverse outcomes such as juvenile delinquency and drunkenness, as these were perceived nationally as potential consequences of the arbitrary dispersal of slum tenants.⁴⁹

Neither a physical nor visual break existed between the council housing that DCB built (within both its own territories and the territories of rural districts), and that constructed by the rural districts. Each such development was sited adjacent to a similar estate constructed by the rural districts, with the sole exception of Mackworth, as was described in Chapter Three. DCB contended that their policy of residential plantation had resulted in an extension of the townscape well beyond its administrative boundaries. As a consequence of both continued infilling upon adjoining council housing sites (of those belonging respectively to DCB and the rural districts) and the absolute uniformity in building style adopted upon them, they had become, though jurisdictionally separate, singular visual entities. This was a central tenet of DCB's argument. These areas possessed but a sole physical characteristic –

⁴⁸ R.E. Dickinson, *The City Region in Western Europe* (London, 1967), p. 20.

⁴⁹ P. Leese, *Britain since 1945: Aspects of Identity* (Basingstoke, 2006), pp. 24, 35-36. See also Dickinson, *The City Region*, p. 20.

that of a townscape, whether comprised of council or private housing, rather than a rural environment – and were, therefore, in all but name, integral parts of the town.

DCB also drew the attention of the Hancock Local Government Commission (HLGC) to the economic aspects of its development needs, as well as those of its immediate surrounding county areas, particularly with regard to the occupational dependency of rural district residents upon the Borough. This was based upon the contention that the town was set to exert an ever-greater level of influence over the residential inhabitants of its rural hinterlands as industrial and other work opportunities continued to expand within its precincts. The expansion of DCB to encompass the entirety of the rural parishes would therefore, DCB maintained, reduce administrative confusion and, from a longer-term perspective, empower DCB to service the industrial development land needs of those industries already within its own locality. Mere issues of proximity between urban and rural areas, or burgeoning industrial development, were not, however, sufficient reasons by which county borough expansion could be granted; a majority of county boroughs nationwide were similarly ‘landlocked’ with regards to industrial development needs while retaining the core nucleus of their industrial sectors within their historic boundaries.

DCB’s decreasing residential population relative to its immediate rural neighbours, and corresponding increase in workday population from those self-same areas, like the expansion of satellite residential suburbs and council housing overflows themselves, was a common feature of a majority of county boroughs. Derby was an average-sized industrial town, long dependent upon a triquetra of industries: Rolls Royce, British Celanese and British Railways (formerly the London, Midland and

Scottish Railway).⁵⁰ Sam Davies and Bob Morley record, for instance, that, according to the 1931 census, 16,743 men, 35 per cent of Derby's male workforce, were employed in 'metal and engineering industries', with 6,500 of those employed in vehicle construction, 4,500 in the rail works, and approximately 6,000 in general engineering.⁵¹ Additionally, 2,700 men worked at British Celanese (which also accounted for 18 per cent of Derby's female workers).⁵² As a consequence, there was 'a substantial working class in Derby, mostly concentrated in a few major industries, and much of it employed in large-scale concerns'.⁵³ The town did not have an extensive middle-class: of the 83 county boroughs in England and Wales in 1931, DCB was ranked '74th in terms of the proportion of the work force with managerial or self-employed status, and 46th in terms of professional status' – respectively 9.2 per cent and 2.2 per cent.⁵⁴ Cumulatively, these factors were critical to the electoral rise and subsequent dominance of the Labour Party in municipal affairs, as discussed in Chapter Three.

Given its industrial base, geographic size, and population density, it would logically follow that DCB would have possessed, at best, an average inward daily migration of workers from surrounding districts.⁵⁵ Derby, however, was unique. It was without national equal; it had an inward movement of workers from its surrounding district authorities higher than that experienced by any other town within England and Wales

⁵⁰ The rail companies that merged and thereafter nationalised to form British Railways had been present in Derby since 1840; Rolls-Royce established a works in 1906; and British Celanese was founded in 1916, although Derby had been established in the textile industry since at least 1836.

⁵¹ Davies and Morley, *County Borough Elections, Vol. III*, pp. 275-276.

⁵² *Ibid.*, pp. 682-683.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 276.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 276, 682-683.

⁵⁵ See E. Rawston, 'The Employment Structure of Nottingham, Derby and Leicester', *East Midland Geographer*, 8 (1957), pp. 45-48, p. 48.

outside the six designated conurbations.⁵⁶ Of DCB's workforce, 48 per cent commuted from outside the Borough (Figure 5.3); of that figure, 73 per cent came from SEDRD, Belper and Repton, with SEDRD contributing almost half (34 per cent).⁵⁷ Two reasons are advanced as to why DCB's inward daily migration was exceptional: both strengthened DCB's territorial ambitions (particularly with regard to SEDRD). First, the boundary extensions that had been previously granted were inadequate.⁵⁸ Secondly, though seemingly less substantial than its larger urban neighbour Nottingham (in not being a multi-headed industrial and service-based employment centre), this was illusory. What Derby lacked in breadth, it made up in specialisms such as engineering. Thus, Derby benefitted from the phenomenon noted by Graeme Milne, the historian, whereby 'industries worked in complementary ways to produce a vibrant whole... [and in which] the economics of localisation produce[d] cumulative improvements in labour skills and capital investment'.⁵⁹

Reactions to DCB's proposals

Rurally separated villages and parts of parishes that were only partially suburbanised became key geographic and ideological battlegrounds in the fight by rural districts (and parishes) against incorporation by DCB. Moreover, even where there was an acknowledged visually united geographic area between DCB and the area that it wanted to claim (and this was not always the case), it neither inevitably followed that

⁵⁶ Smith notes that 'the total daytime population of Derby [was] increased 23 per cent by the inward movement of workers... equivalent to an increase in the working population of no less than 54 per cent'. PRO T184/312, Smith, *Commissioners' Brief and Report: The Derby Area*, p. 10.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 3. The Census, 1961, further notes (on a finer point than that noted above) that South East Derbyshire lost some 25 per cent of its resident population on a daily basis for work purposes and that when judged against its resident population, DCB gained some 31.5 per cent each day. Census of England and Wales, 1961, *County Report, Derbyshire* (1964), p. 49.

⁵⁸ Caüter and Downham, *The Communication of Ideas*, p. 12.

⁵⁹ G.J. Milne, *North East England, 1850-1914: The Dynamics of a Maritime-Industrial Region* (Woodbridge, 2006), p. 61. See also A. Rippon, *The Book of Derby: From Settlement to City* (Buckingham, 1980), p. 98.

their residents saw themselves as ‘being of one’ with DCB, nor that they wished to become so.

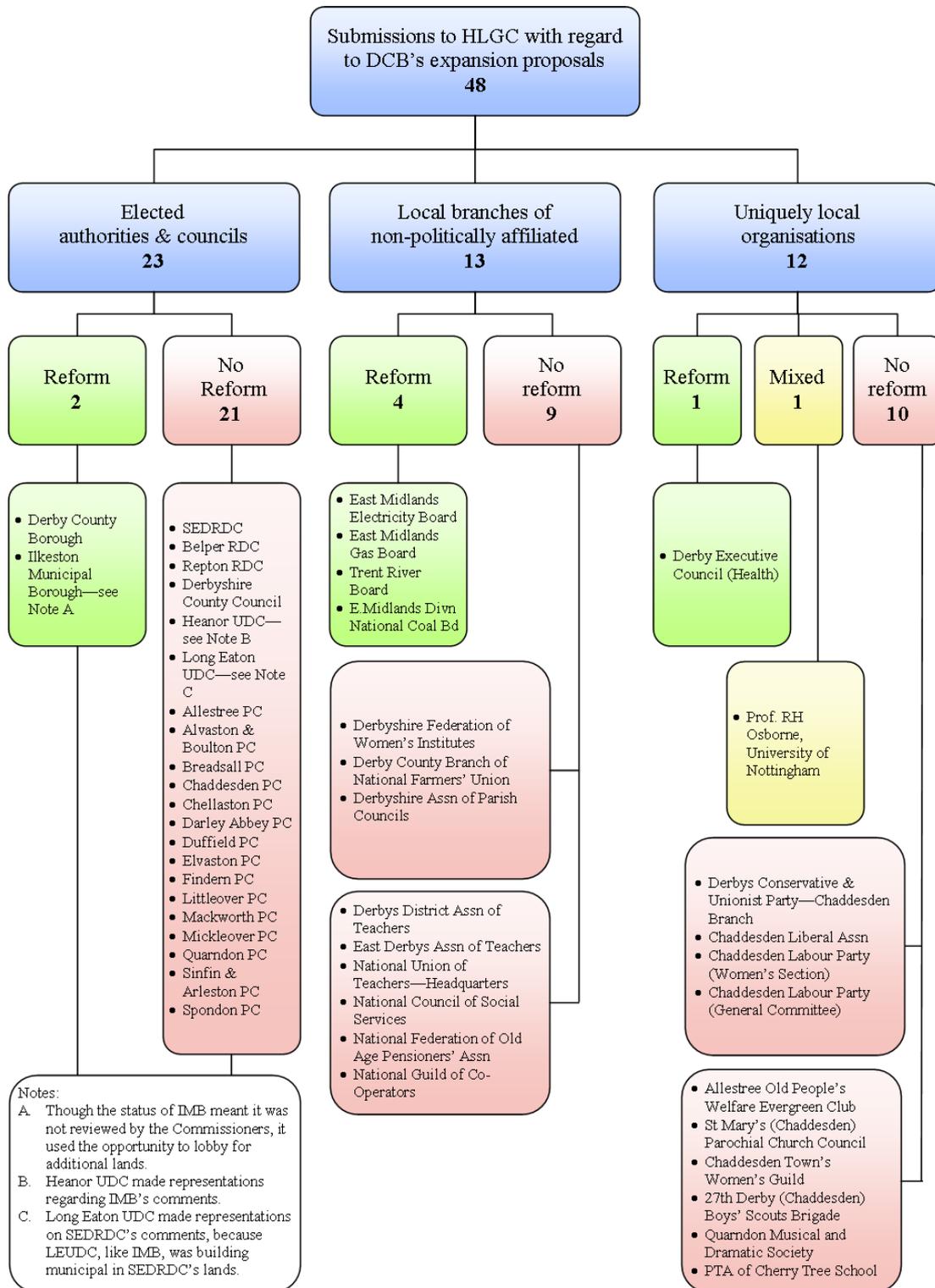
From the winter of 1960 the Commissioners held meetings with the county and county borough councils in the area, as well as the county district councils affected by the proposals furthered by DCB.⁶⁰ In accordance with the terms of reference originally given to the HLG, the Commissioners were also required to consult with interested parties from Greater Derby. The Commission invited submissions from 63 national bodies and 22 local bodies in Derbyshire. Responses were received from those approached as well as from those who corresponded of their own volition.⁶¹ Of the total number of responses received and recorded by the Commissioners in *Report No. 8* for the entirety of the YNMGRA, 48 were with specific regard to DCB (see Figure 5.4).⁶²

⁶⁰ HLG, *Report No. 8*, p. 2.

⁶¹ The bodies contacted in YNMGRA by the Commissioners numbered 154, not including Derbyshire County Council, county boroughs, borough councils, urban district councils, rural district councils, parish councils and parish meetings. *Ibid*, Appendix Two, pp. 139-142.

⁶² The official record (HLG, *Report No. 8*) states that responses were received (to this initial request) from 42 bodies, but further responses were received. These are contained within the records held at the National Archives; in this instance, PRO T184/277, Consultations with interested bodies, individuals, universities and local authority associations (1960-1962). The figures used in this thesis are derived from both *Report No. 8*, and the correspondence received by the Commission, held at Kew. The figure of 48 excludes those bodies and local authorities that subsequently made representations on the draft proposals, or did not attend the statutory conference held in Derby.

Figure 5.4: Categorisation of responses received by the Hancock Local Government Commission regarding Derby County Borough Council



Sources: YNMGRA Report No. 8, Appendix 3; PRO T184/277; PRO T184/294; PRO T184/295; PRO T184/302; PRO T184/305; PRO T184/308; PRO T184/311; PRO T184/312.

As Figure 5.4 illustrates, the individual branches of the three major national political parties favoured a continuance of the *status quo* – both in the areas of the extant authorities, and in terms of the existing delineation of functions between the differing tiers of local governance.⁶³ For instance, the Chaddesden Labour Party’s Women’s Section voiced not only ‘unanimous opposition to any extension of the County Borough of Derby for incorporation of the Parish of Chaddesden’, but also ‘high satisfaction’ with the existing three-tier system of local government under which they resided.⁶⁴ These local opinions may be considered surprising in view of the overt party-political electoral manipulation that some members of government expressed with regard to the review process.⁶⁵

In contrast, the four responses from utility-related boards that advocated reform expressed no explicit opinion beyond stating ‘that a reduction in the number of local authorities with whom [they] had to deal would be administratively convenient’.⁶⁶ The Derby Executive Council (Health) also supported reform – its reasons, like those voiced by the utilities, were service-provision derived. The reliance of the surrounding parishes on Derby for basic services such as supplementary medical provision (for example, pharmacists) can be seen in Table 5.1.

⁶³ Even this limited party political activist response should not be overestimated for, of the four responses, two came from the same Labour Party branch in Chaddesden – one from the General Committee, the other from the Women’s Section. The two political bodies not listed in the official YNMGRA Report but recorded at Kew (PRO T184/277) include the Chaddesden branches of the Liberal Association and the Conservative and Unionist Association.

⁶⁴ PRO T184/277, Resolution of the Chaddesden Labour Party Women’s Section forwarded to the Local Government Commission, 14th June 1960. No specific date is given for the other three items of correspondence received by the Commissioners.

⁶⁵ The need to safeguard Labour parliamentary seats and control within the boroughs seemed to be at least as important an issue for the Minister as the establishment of ‘effective and convenient’ local government units. For example, Crossman noted in his diary in August 1966: ‘All the way through [the review process] I think I managed to combine a sound local government policy with an extremely shrewd defence of Labour’s parliamentary interests.’ Crossman, *Diaries: Vol. I*, p. 621.

⁶⁶ PRO T184/277, The East Midland Electricity Board, East Midland Gas Board and Trent River Board replied to the Commission on, respectively, 27th January 1960, 8th February 1960, and 7th April 1960. Within the above records held at Kew, no copy of the response received from the East Midlands Division of the National Coal Board exists as alluded to in the HLG, *Report No. 8*, p. 145.

Table 5.1: Derby Executive Council (Health) analysis of medical service available within the fringe rural parishes

Parish	Pharmacies	Dentists	Opticians
Allestree	-	-	-
Alvaston and Boulton	2	-	-
Arleston and Sinfin	-	-	-
Breadsall	-	-	-
Chaddesden	2	1	1
Chellaston	1	-	-
Darley Abbey	-	-	-
Duffield	1	-	-
Littleover	3	-	-
Mickleover	1	-	-
Spondon	2	-	-

Source: Adapted from PRO T184/277, Derby Executive Council (Health), Observations on the proposals of the County Borough of Derby, 22nd March 1960, p. 7.

The Executive's promotion of expansion was based on issues of dependency upon DCB:

It follows that to a very great extent County residents in the foregoing districts requiring dental treatment or ophthalmic services and to a lesser extent, the dispensing of medicines, are forced to seek these services elsewhere, and they invariably gravitate to the facilities within the County Borough [see Table One]... Due to the scarcity of land available for housing development within the County Borough boundaries there has been a considerable exodus of population to the County residential

districts... extension of the County Borough boundaries would do much to eradicate the present confusion which exists.⁶⁷

Thus, the Executive Council added validity to DCB's contentions regarding expansion, and bolstered the reforming agenda for a simplification in boundaries (as discussed in Chapter Four).

The reforming agenda was also promulgated by the response from R.H. Osborne, of the University of Nottingham's Geography Department, who included his own proposal as well as providing a mixed critique of DCB's proposals. Osborne contended that DCB was justified in proposing an extension to their boundary as 'the present boundary seriously fails to reflect the geographical extent of the urban community of Derby'.⁶⁸ This was because the claimed areas were part of a continuously built urban environment, the residents of which were employed primarily within DCB, and that additional land should be included on the basis of future residential, recreational, and industrial development needs.⁶⁹ Osborne asserted that such development should 'be deflected away from the western and northern sides of the town to avoid large scale suburban development in attractive villages' situated therein,⁷⁰ preferring expansion of industrial eastern villages. In addition, Osborne advanced, in excess of the proposals put forward by DCB, that DCB's boundaries should embrace the more distant lying parish of Ockbrook (and within it

⁶⁷ PRO T184/277, Derby Executive Council (Health), Observations on the proposals of the County Borough of Derby, 22nd March 1960, pp. 8-9.

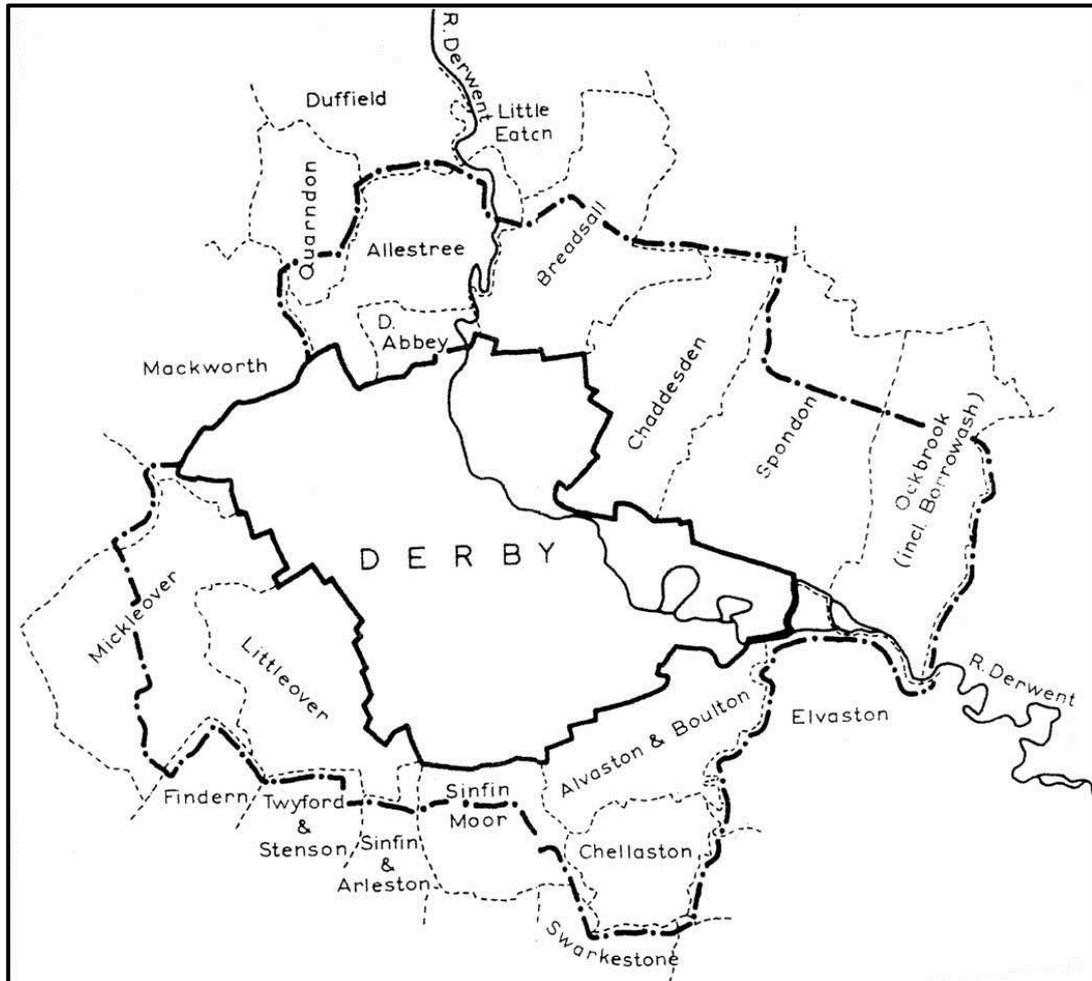
⁶⁸ PRO T184/277, R.H. Osborne, Recommendations submitted to the Local Government Commission, p. 1.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

the ‘semi-suburban villages of Ockbrook and Borrowwash’), which were wholly separated from DCB by the parish of Spondon (Figure 5.5).⁷¹

Figure 5.5: Osborne’s proposed extension of Derby County Borough boundary



The solid line represents the existing boundary of DCB; Osborne’s proposed extension is the dashed line; the dotted lines are parish boundaries; and the narrow black line is the River Derwent.

Source:

PRO T184/277, R.H. Osborne, Recommendations submitted to the Local Government Commission, pp. 6-7.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5. The areas that Osborne proffered should be incorporated by DCB belonged to the parishes of Elvaston, Swarkestone (which lay to the south of the most southerly part of Chellaston Parish and thus did not adjoin its existing territories), Twyford and Stenson, Findern, Radbourne, the suburban southern quartile and council estate within Quarndon parish (but not the village itself), and two-thirds of Ockbrook Parish.

In recommending this further expansion to DCB's desired territories eastward, Osborne concluded that his proposals would not pose 'any serious threat to the viability for the rural districts whose territories and populations would be reduced'.⁷² In so doing, Osborne's proposals not only reflected the historic industrial (and somewhat lop-sided) development of the town,⁷³ but also acknowledged that Derby's eastern parishes would benefit significantly from the 'extension northwards of the London-Yorkshire Motorway (M1)', which was soon to be completed. His was the only submission to the HLG – with regard to DCB – so to do.⁷⁴ The motorway was an infrastructural development that brought with it potential regional consequences upon, for example, housing, population mobility and industrial location. Such concerns could not be addressed by the Commissioners in a regionally holistic manner because the future governance requirements of the Derby-Nottingham urban area were reviewed under General Review Area (rather than Special Review Area) provisions.⁷⁵

There are two noticeable features about the local responses received: no individual wrote to the Commissioners in a personal capacity; and two-thirds of the responses received from uniquely local bodies emanated from a single parish area – Chaddesden. The submissions from Chaddesden equated to 16 per cent of the responses received by the Commissioners *in toto*. Three reasons are advanced as to why this was so. First, Chaddesden, as one of the larger parishes sought by DCB (in

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁷⁵ Under GRA provisions, as noted in Chapter Four, proposals and recommendations could only be made by the Commissioners on a county borough by county borough basis. With regard to the impact of the M1 and its consequential effects upon traffic in Derby and Nottingham, see McCullagh, *The East Midlands*, pp. 114-115.

acreage terms),⁷⁶ was also one of the richest in terms of rateable value to SEDRD – with the rural district set to lose some two million pounds in rates (over the course of a four-year term) if the parishes sought by DCB were indeed ceded to it.⁷⁷ Secondly, the parish of Chaddesden, as an already established residential area, had experienced (from the inter-war period onwards) a greater inward migration of DCB residents through planned social relocation than any other area, and contained the largest concentration of council housing in Greater Derby area.⁷⁸ Thirdly, Chaddesden enjoyed, as a village, a greater range of amenities than any of the other parishes sought by DCB.⁷⁹ The opposition expressed by Chaddesden suggested a backlash by rural communities against the imposition of – and absorption by – council housing estates as ‘essentially large isolated units of the urban landscape’, in which village concepts of community and identity were threatened by government-mandated, self-contained and transplanted macro-neighbourhoods.⁸⁰

In addition to the correspondence received from the previously noted bodies, the Commissioners also consulted with the rural district councils affected by DCB’s proposals. The Commissioners received objections from SEDRD, Belper RD and Repton RD, and the parish councils of Chellaston, Breadsall, Mickleover, Spondon, Sinfen and Arleston, and Littleover (all within SEDRD). Given the geographic focus

⁷⁶ It was comprised of some 1,257 acres, with only Alvaston and Boulton, Spondon and Littleover being larger. See also DLSL D711/14125, SEDRD, *Freedom Fighter, Volume One* (1965), p. 2.

⁷⁷ DLSL D711/36637, SEDRD, *Freedom Fighter, Volume Two* (1965), pp. 2, 5; HLG, *Report No. 8*, p. 95.

⁷⁸ Though the Mackworth Estate was the largest of DCB’s post-war social housing estates, its construction was upon land (bought and earmarked for housing by DCB in 1933) that had previously belonged to the Markeaton Hall Estate. Therefore, unlike the developments in Chaddesden, it did not encircle an entire village community and was also intended, in its construction, to be ‘an estate of itself’. PRO T184/312, Smith, *Commissioners’ Brief and Report: The Derby Area*, p. 5.

⁷⁹ PRO T184/277, Derby Executive Council (Health), Observations on the proposals of the County Borough of Derby, 22nd March 1960, p. 7; DLSL D711/36637, SEDRD, *Freedom Fighter, Volume Two* (1965), p. 4.

⁸⁰ C.J. Thomas, ‘Some Geographical Aspects of Council Housing in Nottingham’, *East Midland Geographer*, 26 (1966), pp. 88-98, p. 90.

of this study upon the Nottingham-Derby urban corridor, the responses submitted by Belper and Repton RDs to DCB's proposals are not central here. Note is made, however, of Repton's proposal after the Commissioners had published their *Draft Proposals for Derby* in September 1962,⁸¹ that in order to check Derby's urban sprawl and relieve congestion upon both Derby and Nottingham County Boroughs, high-rise accommodation should be built in DCB and a new town built somewhere between the two county towns.⁸²

In analysing the objections put forward by the various parish council/s (PC/s) repeated themes can be noted which stress the individuality of such areas. Thus, for instance, Littleover PC stated that it 'was not a dormitory of Derby ... [and had] its own organisations and village life'.⁸³ These were sentiments echoed by Breadsall PC,⁸⁴ while Spondon PC noted that 'many [workers at British Celanese] came from as far as Nottingham' and thus emphasised that 'geographically its situation [was] completely outside the urban area of Derby'.⁸⁵ In similar vein, Mickleover PC posited:

The residents of Mickleover do not identify themselves with those of Derby Borough, but consider themselves living in the country, just outside Derby. It is pertinent to mention here that it is only in local government connections that sharp distinctions arise between town and country, since all who live within the geographical county probably think of themselves as residents of Derbyshire – and, at the same time, a

⁸¹ PRO T183/5, HLGC, *Draft Proposals for Derby*, September 1962.

⁸² PRO T184/311, Repton Rural District Council, Submission to the Local Government Commission upon the Draft Proposals published by the LGC (n.d.).

⁸³ PRO T184/312, Littleover Parish Council, Written proposals in response to the proposals from Derby County Borough (n.d.), p. 3.

⁸⁴ PRO T184/312, Breadsall Parish Council, Comments to the Commissioners (n.d.), p. 1.

⁸⁵ PRO T184/312, Spondon Parish Council, Submission by Spondon Parish Council to the LGC against incorporation (n.d.), p. 2. The importance of British Celanese to wider, regional, aspects of employment is discussed further by Wells. F.A. Wells, 'Industrial Structure', in K.C. Edwards (ed.), *Nottingham and its Region* (Nottingham, 1966), pp. 409-410.

reference to “coming from Derby” in distinct places is quite likely to mean any place with perhaps 10 miles of the Borough boundary.⁸⁶

Chellaston reinforced the views expressed by Mickleover PC, noting that their identity as separate to Derby was long-standing,⁸⁷ and important to the parishioners. Such identity was attractive, the parish claimed, in drawing to Chellaston village ‘many former residents of the Borough... in order, as they themselves put it, to recapture their individuality – something they lost in the soul destroying atmosphere of Derby but can find again in the individual surroundings of the Parish’.⁸⁸

In its initial submission to the Hancock Local Government Commission (HLGC) in January 1961, South East Derbyshire Rural District (SEDRD) crystallised those opinions voiced by its constituent parishes, presenting the results of a plebiscite that it had organised in those parishes targeted by Derby County Borough (DCB). This showed, on an 81 per cent turnout, an objection rate of 86 per cent to the proposals for incorporation (Table 5.2).⁸⁹

SEDRD also made it clear that it ‘utterly reject[ed] the Corporation’s claim that the proposed added areas [were] mere extensions of Derby and almost entirely dependent upon Derby for their daily work, their shopping and their social and

⁸⁶ PRO T184/311, Mickleover Parish Council, Letter from the Clerk of the Parish Council to the LGC, Comments on the proposals of Derby County Borough to include Mickleover, 27th June 1960 [underlining in original text].

⁸⁷ The Parish Council specifically noted that the parish ‘has a recorded history dating back to Anglo-Saxon times’, PRO T184/312, Chellaston Parish Council, Comments to the Commission, objections to being in Derby County Borough (n.d.), p. 3.

⁸⁸ This individuality was apparently most prized by the parish council, as they further asserted that Chellaston’s 50 per cent increase in population since the end of the Second World War was due to the fact that the village had ‘attracted to itself more and more the type of person to whom ‘individualism’ [was] more than a dictionary word’, although, again, it should be noted that such increases were in good part a result of the DCB’s social engineering. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁸⁹ PRO T184/312, SEDRD, Plebiscite results as at 4th January 1961, documentation presented to the Commissioners, at London, 31st January 1961, pp. 5-6.

cultural activities'.⁹⁰ It did, however, assert that even if this were the case, such reasons had 'not hitherto been regarded as reason for the County Borough in the city centre to enlarge its boundaries... [and that] if accepted the whole country would be split into a series of county boroughs'.⁹¹

**Table 5.2: South East Derbyshire Rural District:
Local Government Commission plebiscite results as at 4th January 1961**

Parish	Cards		Returned	Against	For	Spoilt
	Delivered	Returned	%	%	%	%
Alvaston & Boulton	9,157	7,884	86.10	88.30	11.61	0.09
Breadsall	2,577	1,657	64.30	69.16	30.60	0.24
Chaddesden	9,694	7,430	76.64	82.56	17.28	0.16
Chellaston	2,247	1,933	86.02	90.43	9.47	0.10
Littleover	8,204	6,948	84.69	91.59	8.15	0.26
Sinfin & Arleston	404	358	88.61	94.69	5.03	0.28
Sinfin Moor	45	29	64.44	65.52	27.59	6.89
Spondon	6,918	5,554	80.28	88.13	11.80	0.07
Totals:	39,246	31,793	81.01	86.83	13.01	0.16

Source: PRO T184/312, South East Derbyshire Rural District, Plebiscite results as at 4th January 1961, documentation presented to the Commissioners, at London, 31st January 1961, pp. 5-6.

⁹⁰ PRO T184/312, SEDRD, Comments on the proposals made by the County Borough of Derby, 30th June 1960, p. 9.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

The Commission in action

In the same month that SEDRD presented its plebiscite results to the Commissioners, a brief for the Commissioners was prepared by T.F. Smith of the Ministry of Housing and Local Government. *The Commissioners' Brief and Report: The Derby Area* ('*Derby Brief*') made a number of points. First, Derby was primarily an industrial town as well as 'the shopping, distributional and recreational centre for a large surrounding area';⁹² it was heavily dependent on inward migration for its daily workforce; and, in accordance with the comments made by DCB, its population was continuing to extend into dormitory areas. Secondly, the boundary of DCB had 'remained unchanged since 1934... [and was] unrelated to any physical feature and for long stretches runs through built up areas which are substantially on the county side'.⁹³ The *Derby Brief* made specific reference to the parishes of Breadsall, Chaddesden, Spondon, and Alvaston and Boulton, concluding, for each, that there was continuous residential development between the parishes and DCB, and that each of these was entirely dependent upon the town.⁹⁴ Finally, the *Derby Brief* asserted that 'if the claimed areas were given to Derby the county would lose 10 per cent of its population rateable value but would still be a strong viable unit'.⁹⁵ Thus, in considering issues of effective governance, Smith's *Derby Brief* went further than the proposals of DCB, and implicitly suggested that despite the rateable value and population it would lose, SEDRD (as a constituent rural district of Derbyshire) would nevertheless maintain its viability.

⁹² PRO T184/312, Smith, *Commissioners' Brief and Report: The Derby Area*, p. 10

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 5, 11.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

Upon their visit to the area on 11th April 1961, the Commissioners agreed with both the case presented to them by Smith and the general arguments for expansion furthered to them by DCB. They noted that, with regard to Chaddesden and Breadsall ‘the extent of [DCB’s] own housing estates here, [and]... the completely artificial nature of the boundary, make the case for inclusion of these area into Derby [CB] very strong’.⁹⁶ They also concurred with the proposal to include Spondon on the grounds that ‘it [was] plainly completely dependent on Derby’.⁹⁷

The HLGC’s *Draft Proposals for Derby* recommended the extension of ‘the area of Derby from 8,120 acres to 19,970 acres, its population from 132,000 to 211,000 and its rateable value on the old assessments from £2,130,000 to £2,856,000’.⁹⁸ The *Draft Proposals for Derby* denied DCB its request for the incorporation of the village of Mackworth (on the basis that the awards of land suggested elsewhere negated the need for this territory),⁹⁹ as well as Osborne’s proposals for the incorporation of the parish of Ockbrook – though they followed his comments regarding the separation of the suburbanised parts of Mackworth from those of the village in their proposals. The proposed award of such an increase in territory to DCB by the HLGC was an overwhelming endorsement of the case made by DCB for the incorporation of its surrounding fringe parishes on the basis of future development needs, dependency upon the county borough, and efficiencies of service provision (in short, the reforming agenda, as discussed in Chapter Four).

Nonetheless, as required by the 1958 Local Government Act, between the publication of the *Draft Proposals for Derby* and the submission of the final

⁹⁶ PRO T184/278, HLGC Visit to the Derby Area, 11th April 1961, Minutes, p. 3.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁹⁸ PRO T183/5, HLGC, *Draft Proposals for Derby*, September 1962.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

proposals to the Minister (and, consequently, the making of any Order), a statutory conference was held.¹⁰⁰ Further submissions from interested bodies and the authorities involved were permitted both at that conference and in the form of written submissions.¹⁰¹ All the parties attending reiterated their previously stated positions, although some presented further reasons to consolidate their causes.¹⁰² Derbyshire County Council suggested that the Commissioners' proposals would result in the 'incorporation of some 80,000 persons against their wishes',¹⁰³ and disagreed with their view that all of the claimed areas were not 'physically separated from the town by open country'.¹⁰⁴ However, as the Chairman of the Conference concluded,

the case for extending Derby rest[ed] on the combination of two different grounds. The first ground is that some land around Derby is already built up in a way which amounts to a substantial continuation of building inside Derby. The second ground is that land is needed outside Derby for future housing needs.¹⁰⁵

In keeping with the obligations placed upon the Commissioners, subsequent to the conference they made 'an inspection of all the disputed places in the company of the authorities concerned'.¹⁰⁶ The Commissioners accepted the appropriateness of some minor changes,¹⁰⁷ and proposed a net reduction in the gain to DCB of 7.4 per cent (from 19,970 acres in their *Draft Proposals for Derby*, to 19,100 in their final recommendations). The latter figure still represented an overall net gain to DCB of

¹⁰⁰ In the Council House at Derby, on the 29th and 30th April 1963.

¹⁰¹ A list of those local authorities and bodies that made representations on the *Draft Proposals for Derby* is recorded in HLGC, *Report No. 8*, Appendix Four, pp. 148-155. An equivalent list of those who attended the conference in Derby is noted in Appendix Five, HLGC, *Report No. 8*, pp. 160-161.

¹⁰² HLGC, *Report No. 8*, pp. 97-98 provides a summary of the pertinent points raised in those submissions and at the conference. For a fuller account see PRO T184/284, HLGC, Transcript of the statutory conference held at Derby 29th – 30th April 1963.

¹⁰³ HLGC, *Report No. 8*, p. 97.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ PRO T184/284, HLGC, Transcript of the statutory conference held at Derby 29th – 30th April 1963.

¹⁰⁶ HLGC, *Report No. 8*, p. 98.

¹⁰⁷ For instance, the Commission accepted that the 'draft boundary at Breadsall Hilltop, Chaddesden and Chellaston went out rather too far'. HLGC, *Report No. 8*, p. 98.

11,017 acres, or 135 per cent.¹⁰⁸ The accompanied visit resulted in a reinforcement of the decisions that they had previously formed; they specifically noted, for instance, that there was a ‘continuity of physical development across the present boundary’ at Breadsall, Chaddesden, and Chellaston.¹⁰⁹ Indeed, they dismissed SEDRD’s contention that there existed a clear boundary between Chellaston and the town in the form of the Derby canal, for the latter remained, in their opinion, ‘overgrown [and] hardly noticeable’ and therefore was in no way a clear physical break in the claimed areas.¹¹⁰

The Commission submitted its final proposals for the York and North Midlands General Review Area (YNMGRA) to the Minister of Housing and Local Government in June 1964. For Derby, they proposed that the county borough should be extended to include

most of the parishes of Chaddesden, Alvaston and Boulton, Chellaston, Sinfin Moor and Littleover, parts of the parishes of Breadsall, Spondon, Sinfin and Arleston, and small parts of the parishes of Elvaston and of Swarkestone all in South East Derbyshire Rural District; most of the parish of Mickleover and small parts of the parishes of Findern, Radbourne, Twyford and Stenson in Repton Rural District; the parish of Darley Abbey, most of the parish of Allestree and small parts of the parishes of Quarndon, Duffield and Mackworth in Belper Rural District.¹¹¹

The Commissioners further asserted that although such reductions to the county of Derbyshire ‘would involve difficulties... [they were] confident that the county

¹⁰⁸ Figures and percentages derived from raw data as contained within HLG, *Report No. 8*, Table II, pp. 95, 102, 134-135.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 101-102.

council [was] fully capable of overcoming these ... and that with a population of over 650,000 [it] would continue to provide services of high standards and diversity'.¹¹²

Mandated urban expansion

Regardless of the reaction of the then Minister of Housing and Local Government, Sir Keith Joseph, to the presentation of the Commission's final proposals, the election of a new Labour government in October 1964 – and the appointment of Richard Crossman as the new Minister – hastened the acceptance of two conclusions. First, local government was expanding in scope and therefore the provision of an ever greater array of services (for example, in town planning, transportation, education and social services) 'made it impossible to cling any longer to the county/county borough framework on which the 1888 Act had been based'.¹¹³ Secondly, the changes required to the existing system of local governance could not be undertaken effectively by a Commission that had taken for instance, 54 months to conclude its review of YNMGRA.¹¹⁴ In addition, as required under the terms of the 1958 Local Government Act, the Minister had to initiate a public inquiry in the event that objections to the Commission's proposals had been lodged.¹¹⁵ Accordingly, Sir George Curtis¹¹⁶ was appointed to chair the public inquiry into the Commissioners' final recommendations for Derby, held in Derby in May 1965.

In the period immediately prior to that inquiry, South East Derbyshire Rural District (SEDRD) launched a last ditch attempt to persuade the Minister not to implement the

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 102.

¹¹³ C. Pearce, *The Machinery of Change in Local Government 1888-1974: A Study of Central Involvement* (London, 1980), p. 86.

¹¹⁴ J. Stanyer, 'The Local Government Commissions', in H.V. Wiseman (ed.), *Local Government in England 1958-1969* (London, 1970), Table V: The progress of the Commissioners' work and when it was completed, pp. 36-37.

¹¹⁵ See Pearce, *The Machinery of Change*, pp. 78-79.

¹¹⁶ Chief Land Registrar, HM Land Registry 1947-1963.

proposals forwarded to him by the Commissioners. In so doing, SEDRD became the ‘first council in Britain to launch a full colour newspaper’.¹¹⁷ The publication, which ran for two issues, was called *Freedom Fighter: The Official Newspaper of the ‘Save South East Derbyshire’ Campaign*, and was devoted solely to defeating the HLGC’s proposals. It sought to do so by encouraging local residents to petition parliamentarians, the Minister, and the local inquiry in order to reverse the proposals, suggesting that, in light of the results of the plebiscite,¹¹⁸ ‘[no] Minister [could] disregard the views of such an overwhelming majority of public opinion’.¹¹⁹ In seeking to defeat the proposals by which DCB would be extended, the campaign revived the imagery employed by the architect, Clough Williams-Ellis, in his book, *England and the Octopus*, and thus depicted DCB as an ‘octopus’ preying on distinctive parishes of the rural district.¹²⁰

Freedom Fighter reported on the activities of the campaign at parish (and district) levels, including the ‘Miss Freedom’ beauty pageant, a Freedom Ball, baby shows, parish gymkhanas, and whist drives. It also urged that individuals display a ‘personal octopus... [suitable for use] in windows, on fences or vehicles’ that was included in *Volume Two* (Figure 5.6). The coverage of *Freedom Fighter* implied that all of these events were inspired locally. However, upon inspection of the previously closed minute books of SEDRD, it is evident that the vast majority of the activities at parish level had in fact been centrally conceived and organised by the rural district.¹²¹

¹¹⁷ DRO D1374/14, SEDRD, Special Purposes and Establishment Committee Minutes: 1964-1968, 5th November 1964, and DLSL D711/14125, SEDRD, *Freedom Fighter, Volume One* (1965), p. 2.

¹¹⁸ See Table 5.2.

¹¹⁹ DLSL D711/36637, SEDRD, *Freedom Fighter, Volume Two* (1965), p. 1.

¹²⁰ Sir Bertram Clough Williams-Ellis, *England and the Octopus* (London, 1928).

¹²¹ DRO D1547/7/10, Minutes of South East Derbyshire Rural District Council, 21st January 1965.

Such editorial licence in SEDRD's campaign may also be seen with regards to the financial implications of DCB's proposals and the reactions of SEDRD residents to the proposals of DCB as recorded within *Freedom Fighter*. With regard to the former, the reported financial effects of incorporation were skewed towards those parishes that contributed a higher proportion of the district's total rateable value, particularly Chaddesden.¹²² Closer inspection of the 'Letters Page' within Issue One reveals the seven letters to have been editorially compiled rather than written by actual citizens of the district. They were apparently 'freely based on comments heard in and around the district' (though diligently allocated to differing socio-economic groups and geographic areas so as to appear representative of the population at large), and were signed: *Thankful*, Sinfin; *Young Married Couple*, Alvaston; *A Friend*, Derby; *Disgusted*, Chellaston; *Indignant*, Chaddesden; *OAP*, Spondon; and *Teenager*, Sandiacre.¹²³ Nevertheless, further to the work of SEDRD and *Freedom Fighter*, at the public inquiry some 93 speakers appeared, with only two speaking in favour of the Commissioners' final recommendations.¹²⁴ Unfortunately for SEDRD, its campaign advocated against issues that Crossman himself promoted: the need for units of local government administration that amalgamated rural and urban areas, and for planning to be conducted on a more regional basis.¹²⁵

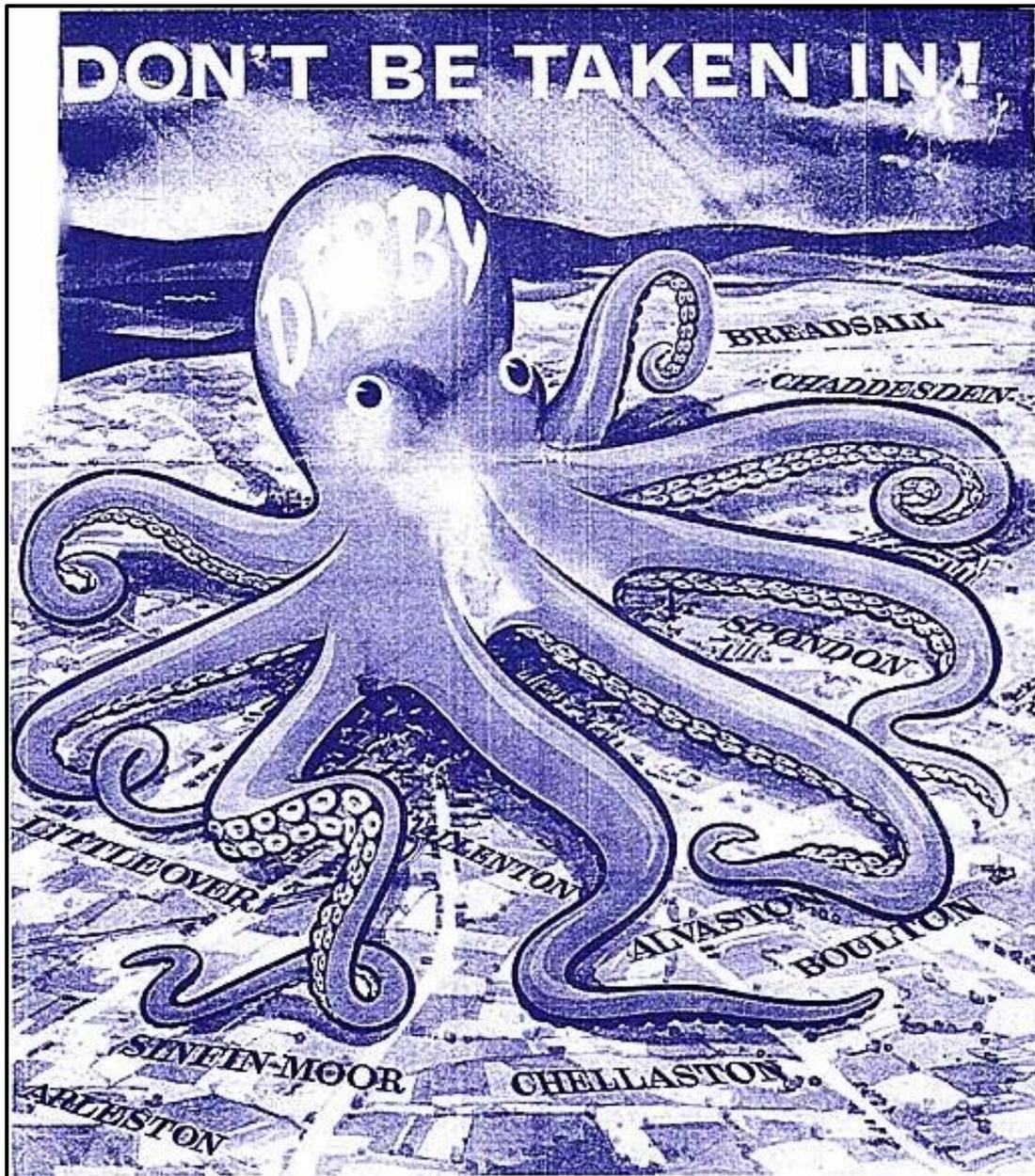
¹²² For example, housing loans to SEDRD residents that were not offered by DCB, and facilities for elderly residents that would not be continued under the proposals. See DLSL D711/14125, SEDRD, *Freedom Fighter, Volume One* (1965), pp. 1-3.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p. 5. The acknowledgement of the provenance of the letters was in somewhat smaller script to that deployed elsewhere in the paper.

¹²⁴ Trevor Park, 14th February 1968, *Hansard*, Commons, 5th series, vol. 758, col. 1480.

¹²⁵ Crossman, *Diaries: Vol. I*.

Figure 5.6: The South East Derbyshire ‘tear out and display’ octopus



Source: DLSL D711/36637, SEDRD, *Freedom Fighter*, Volume Two, April 1965 (in original blue shading).

Though local opinion (as voiced at the public inquiry) clearly showed a majority against the Commission's final recommendations, national political developments were overtaking events in Derby. Earlier in 1965 Crossman announced that the overall annual target for new housing units was to be increased from 400,000 to 500,000.¹²⁶ He also advocated that local authorities should build a higher percentage of the housing units than had been previously envisaged, using industrialised building procedures, which required larger tracts of land.¹²⁷ Such comments, with regard to housing and the role of local authorities, consolidated Crossman's hardening views on the ongoing appropriateness of the Hancock Local Government Commission.¹²⁸

By the time Curtis reported the findings from the public inquiry (which concurred with the Commission's final recommendations) to the Minister in the early summer of 1966, the government had already formally established a new Royal Commission on Local Government in England under the chairmanship of Sir John Maud; Hancock had died.¹²⁹ Formally dissolved in 1967 by the Local Government

¹²⁶ Ministry of Housing and Local Government, *The Housing Programme 1965-1970*, 1965 [Cmnd 2838].

¹²⁷ For example, industrialised building utilised prefabricated panels of concrete construction rather than traditional, smaller scale building processes. PRO CAB 129/120/17, The Housing Programme Memorandum by the Minister of Housing and Local Government, 8th February 1965.

¹²⁸ In his diary entry for 20th November 1964, Crossman commented on a report given to him relating to the workings of the Local Government Commission that he found its approach, 'very unsatisfactory since it means accepting the war between the county councils and the county borough authorities as endemic'. Crossman, *Diaries*, Vol. I, p. 65.

¹²⁹ The appointment of the Royal Commission was announced by Prime Minister Harold Wilson on 10th February 1966, with a subsequent statement on its functions and remit by Richard Crossman; *Hansard*, Commons, 5th series, vol. 724, col. 638-644, 644-651. The process of appointing the Commission had however begun in September 1965 with Crossman seeking first to have Alan Bullock (the historian and Master of St Catherine's College, Oxford) appointed as its chairman and thereafter (when Bullock refused), Sir Lynn Ungoed-Thomas (the former Labour MP and Solicitor General). The career civil servant and diplomat, Sir John Maud (later, Baron Redcliffe-Maud), eventually agreed to become the Commission's chairman in early April 1966. Crossman expressed that with this appointment he 'wouldn't have any great hopes for a really radical reform' and that he would have preferred the appointment of Norman Chester (the Warden of Nuffield College, Oxford). Hancock died in 1965. See respectively, Crossman, *Diaries*: Vol. I, pp. 366-367, 400, 453, 494, 491.

(Termination of Reviews) Act,¹³⁰ there was still, however, a requirement for the Minister to pass judgement of the proposals advanced by the HLGC with regard to the YNMGRA. This was because the Local Government (Termination of Reviews) Act stated that the Minister must still make decisions where recommendations had been presented to him before 10th February 1966.¹³¹ Consequently, in July 1967, the Minister for Housing and Local Government, by then Anthony Greenwood,¹³² came to a decision, subsequently making the *Derby Order* in January 1968.¹³³

Though the Minister had made his decision, the Derbyshire South East MP, Trevor Park,¹³⁴ in February 1968 made a ‘last ditch’ attempt to annul the *Derby Order*. Building upon the fact that a new Royal Commission had been appointed (and would make its report within 18 months) Park suggested that to continue with a process that was now defunct was ‘an example of totally irresponsible and completely irrational bureaucracy in operation’.¹³⁵ Park’s objections were supported by numerous other Derbyshire MPs,¹³⁶ who noted additionally that DCB was unable – fiscally or logistically – to undertake many of the services it would inherit upon the passing of the *Derby Order*.¹³⁷ Further, the high level of local opposition to the plan was reiterated, on the grounds of service provision (for example, the diminution of

¹³⁰ The Local Government (Termination of Reviews) Act 1967 (Elizabeth II c.18).

¹³¹ The date of the appointment of the Royal Commission.

¹³² Greenwood replaced Crossman as Minister of Housing and Local Government on 10th August 1966. The Rt Hon. Mr Arthur William James Anthony Greenwood was MP for Heywood and Radcliffe from 1946-1950; after boundary changes he served as MP for Rossendale, 1950-1970, when he was created a life peer, Baron Greenwood of Rossendale. He held a variety of posts, including Minister for Overseas Development and Secretary of State for the Colonies. Crossman became Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House.

¹³³ Ministry of Housing and Local Government, SI 44/1968, *Local Government, England and Wales, Alteration of Areas: The Derby Order 1968*.

¹³⁴ Mr Trevor Park, Labour MP for Derbyshire South East 1964-1970.

¹³⁵ Trevor Park, 14th February 1968, *Hansard*, Commons, 5th series, vol. 758, col. 1480.

¹³⁶ Mr James Scott-Hopkins, Conservative MP for West Derbyshire; Mr Peter Jackson, Labour MP for High Peak; Mr Raymond Fletcher, Labour MP for Ilkeston; and Mr Thomas Swain, Labour MP for North East Derbyshire.

¹³⁷ Peter Jackson, 14th February 1968, *Hansard*, Commons, 5th series, vol. 758, col. 1488.

education and elderly programmes offered by SEDRD)¹³⁸ and community identity. For example, Raymond Fletcher, the MP for Ilkeston, declared that ‘patriotism is... built up out of local feelings... [and that people] strive not for an abstraction called Britain, but for our local street, our local town or village’.¹³⁹ Only one speaker for the *Derby Order* came from Derbyshire.¹⁴⁰ Whipped, the annulment fell, 41 to 176.

A fortnight later, Lord Champion¹⁴¹ ‘pray[ed] that the *Derby Order* 1968... be annulled’,¹⁴² maintaining that it would cause ‘disastrous’ financial difficulties to Belper and Repton Rural Districts, and most particularly SEDRD. Speaking against his own Government, Lord Champion further asserted that the Order was ill-timed to the point of being disrespectful to the work of the Royal Commission. While he and all those who spoke affirmed the need for the reorganisation of local government, he nonetheless decried the Order as a ‘big blunder’, upon which the Government had ‘not the slightest justification... to proceed’.¹⁴³ Lord Somers also echoed the traditionalist school of local government reform (as exemplified by Chuter Ede),¹⁴⁴ putting it to the House that, as the considerable majority of those residents who would be affected were ‘violently opposed to it’, the passing of the *Derby Order* would amount to ‘totalitarianism’.¹⁴⁵

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, col. 1487.

¹³⁹ Mr Raymond Fletcher, MP for Ilkeston 1965-1983, 14th February 1968, *Hansard*, Commons, 5th series, vol. 758, col. 1493.

¹⁴⁰ Mr George Brown (later Baron George-Brown, from 1970), Labour MP for Belper 1945-1970. At the time of the HLG, he was Deputy Leader of the Labour Party, a post he held from 1960-1970.

¹⁴¹ Mr Arthur Champion (later Baron Champion, from 1962), Labour MP for South Derbyshire 1945-1950, South East Derbyshire 1950-1959.

¹⁴² Lord Champion, 27th February 1968, *Hansard*, Lords, 5th series, vol. 289, col. 722.

¹⁴³ Lord Somers (8th Baron Somers), 27th February 1968, *Hansard*, Lords, 5th series, vol. 289, col. 728.

¹⁴⁴ See Chapter Four.

¹⁴⁵ Lord Somers, 27th February 1968, *Hansard*, Lords, 5th series, vol. 289, col. 736.

In justifying the Government's position, Lord Kennet¹⁴⁶ reminded their Lordships that, in 1966, the then Minister of Housing and Local Government, Crossman, had announced that 'boundary changes on the basis of the Local Government Commission's recommendations on which [he] had already issued decisions would stand'.¹⁴⁷ Further, he stated that those that had not yet proclaimed would be considered on the basis of 'whether or not such recommendations were urgent enough to justify their implementation pending the Royal Commission's Report'.¹⁴⁸ Lord Kennet additionally asserted that the *Derby Order* was indeed such a case because of DCB's critical housing shortage and that therefore the Minister (Greenwood) had acted correctly in accordance with both the aforementioned protocols established and voiced by his predecessor (Crossman), as well as the stipulations of the Local Government (Termination of Reviews) Act.¹⁴⁹ Adjourned until the following day, the motion was then withdrawn by Lord Champion on the grounds that the matter had received a full and thorough airing and that to annul such Orders was of dubious constitutional legality. Parliamentary protestations respectively defeated and withdrawn, the *Derby Order* became effective from 1st April 1968.

The *Derby Order* made a legislative reality of the Commissioners' final recommendations and, in addition to ceding the aforementioned parishes (and parts of parishes) to the county borough, made a number of electoral alterations.¹⁵⁰ In

¹⁴⁶ Wayland Hilton Young was 2nd Baron Kennet and took his seat in the Lords in 1960. He was a Labour peer, serving as Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Housing and Local Government, under both Crossman and Greenwood. Later he vacillated between the SDP, Labour and the Liberal Democrats.

¹⁴⁷ Lord Kennet, 27th February 1968, *Hansard*, Lords, 5th series, vol. 289, col. 749.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ The pre-*Derby Order* county borough wards of the DCB were abolished and replaced by 18 new wards – thereby increasing the number of councillors from 48 to 54. At the same time, the number of county councillors was reduced (as a result of the territories lost to SEDRD, Repton RD and Belper

addition, though it was maintained by the Government that the changes would not disadvantage the rural districts of Belper and South East Derbyshire, there was nevertheless recognition of the fact that the two districts would suffer financially from their respective loss of areas. To that end they were awarded ‘transitional assistance’ which was to be paid by DCB to SEDRD and Belper RD. This was a diminishing figure of compensation over a period of four years, totalling £9,000 and £1,500 respectively.¹⁵¹ This figure was in sharp contrast to the estimates of rateable value that SEDRD and Belper RD would lose (respectively, £2,072,800 and £426,800), and shows that in addition to issues of civic pride, there were substantial financial implications to the decision.¹⁵²

Conclusion

The HLGC proposals and subsequent Ministerial Order represented a triumph for both the reforming agenda and the expansion of urban-ness. The jurisdictional territories of DCB were effectively trebled, endowing it with sufficient lands to internalise its envisaged housing and industrial development needs for a generation; thus, the concerns of rural residents who presented themselves as ‘separate and different’ to the town were swept aside. Regardless, therefore, of the expansive consultation process demanded of both the Commissioners of the HLGC and the Ministry, ultimately the public voice was but a secondary consideration to the attainment of greater service efficiency and economies of scale.

RD) from 77 to 74. In similar vein the number of aldermen appointed for the county borough was increased (from 16 to 18) and the number for the county council fell from 25 to 24. Ministry of Housing and Local Government, SI 44/1968, *The Derby Order*, p. 5.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 26. No such financial assistance was offered to Repton RD. HLGC, *Report No. 8*, Table II, p. 134.

¹⁵² HLGC, *Report No. 8*, Table II, p. 134. According to the HLGC, Repton would lose only some £226,700 of rateable valuable as a consequence of its recommendations.

This was a triumph of an urban-enlargement agenda that went further, however, than merely strengthening the urban centre of Derby. In addition to being stripped of its most profitable rateable areas, the decisions enacted in the *Derby Order* placed a question mark over the long-term viability of SEDRD as a separate administrative area for two primary reasons. First, the Minister was aware in making the Order that the newly appointed Royal Commission on Local Government (the Redcliffe-Maud Commission, 1966-1969) would be compelled, at a minimum, to continue Derby's new status. Secondly, as noted in this chapter (and within Chapter Six), the lands, territories, and resultant rateable values of SEDRD were not only highly desirable to DCB but to Ilkeston Municipal Borough to its north, and to NCB (across the county boundary to its east). Accordingly, as is discussed in Chapters Six and Seven, any Ministerial Order that expanded Nottingham westward (through Beeston and Stapleford) would result in SEDRD being the only rural authority separating the two urban centres of Nottingham and Derby, increasing the prospect of a formal acknowledgement of a Nottingham-Derby conurbation. The result, therefore, was that although the county-borough-by-county-borough approach adopted by the HLGC review process within the YNMGRA successfully expanded Derby's urban governance and identity, it left issues pertaining to wider regional identity and governance unanswered.

Chapter Six

Nottingham: Expansion and the HLGC

As Chapter Five assessed the work of the Hancock Local Government Commission (HLGC) with regard to Derby County Borough (DCB), Chapters Six and Seven bring Nottingham County Borough (NCB) to the forefront. In so doing Chapter Six first outlines the political processes of community image-building undertaken by NCB and thereafter makes brief reference to the effects of its failure to secure an adequate boundary expansion in 1919. These failures shaped not only NCB's image of itself but also its post-1945 boundary reforming agenda. The impact that the construction of council housing estates by NCB both before and after the Second World War had upon issues of governance, and their contribution to a physical expansion of urban-ness, are explored. NCB was only partially successful in achieving its housing goals (and the associated aspects of community desired by central government planners); the process of forming new community consciousness was, in reality, more difficult than that assumed by central policy planners.

In analysing the process of local government reform, this chapter proposes that, at a local level, party political machinations were placed above the future governance needs of the city.¹ The result, as noted by T.F. Smith of the Ministry of Housing and Local Government, was that as 'neither Nottinghamshire County Council nor Nottingham County Borough would make recommendations about what the future size of the county borough should be, the [HLG] Commission [was] forced to

¹ This is a contention that is explored, at a ministerial level, in Chapter Seven.

consider the question on the basis of more evidence'² from other interested bodies and persons, in accordance with the protocols noted in Chapter Four.

This chapter also posits that, as a consequence of both existing socio-economic realities at the time of the HLGC review, as well as a substantial body of contemporary academic literature noting Nottingham's conurban³ characteristics (which are themselves evaluated in this chapter), there was a *prima facie* case for the Commissioners to advocate a significant expansion to NCB's existing geo-administrative boundaries. This stance is based not only upon contemporary opinions that asserted the existence of shared communities of identity, but also complex inter-dependent relationships of work and housing between NCB and its four immediately adjacent urban districts (UDs) of West Bridgford, Arnold, Carlton, and Beeston and Stapleford. However, even though such a 'chorus of opinion' may ultimately have emerged by the time of the publication of the HLGC's *Draft Proposals for Nottingham* in September 1962,⁴ there was no guarantee that such proposals would be legislatively realised. This is because there was another elaborate consultation process between the publication of *Draft Proposals for Nottingham* and the issuing of a Ministerial Order, as was noted in Chapter Five with regard to Derby. Accordingly, this chapter addresses issues of conurban tendencies and the case for expansion (including the *Draft Proposals for Nottingham*), whereas Chapter Seven considers both reactions to the proposals and the extent to which the entire HLGC process (with regard to both Derby and Nottingham) represented a triumph of central government aspirations over local wishes.

² PRO T184/298, T.F. Smith, *Brief for Commissioners: Nottingham Conurbation* (1960), p. 3

³ Derived as the adjective of the word 'conurbation' by the Professor of Economic Geography, R.H. Osborne, University of Nottingham, in his article 'Population Concentrations and Conurban Tendencies in the Middle Trent Counties', *East Midland Geographer*, 2 (1954), pp. 30-37.

⁴ PRO T183/5, HLGC, *Draft Proposals for Nottingham*, September 1962.

The Nottingham Corporation *Guide Book for 1947* proclaimed that the people of Nottingham ‘have made their city a clean, healthy, happy and beautiful place in which to live and work... which has helped [the City] to earn the description ‘Queen of the Midlands’.⁵ This process of identity awareness and image-making had been begun by the Corporation in the late nineteenth century, as the city sought to distance itself from its former image as

one of the queerest cities in the provinces, [with] public buildings, private dwellings, and factories mixed up in endless confusion. Dirty warehouses and workshops face the Guildhall and loom up at the back of the University College. Furnace chimneys rise in the middle of the residential quarters and slums [are] within a stone’s throw of the market place.⁶

The cultural geographers, Stephen Daniels and Simon Rycroft, contend, with specific reference to Nottingham in the period from the 1920s to the 1960s, that the ‘careful planning, economic and social development’ undertaken in the city was integrated in order to construct a ‘framework for a prosperous, enlightened city and citizenry’.⁷ The result of such processes, as previously advanced by the economic historian, J.D. Chambers, was that both the Corporation and Nottingham’s people

⁵ C. Griffin, ‘The Identity of a Twentieth-Century City’, in J. Beckett (ed.), *A Centenary History of Nottingham* (Chichester, 2006), p. 423. Griffin additionally notes that this moniker was not coined by the Corporation but was in local currency from about 1870, and freely used at a national level by 1932.

⁶ *The Builder*, cited in R. Iliffe and W. Baguley, *Victorian Nottingham: A Story in Pictures* (Volume 20, Nottingham, 1983), p. 86. Though Iliffe and Baguley proffer no date for *The Builder* cited in their work, the reference to University College (now Nottingham Trent University) would suggest that the article must date from after 1877 (the founding date of University College). However, a comprehensive inspection of *The Builder* from 1843 to 1933 has not revealed this exact quote. Rather, the comment by Iliffe and Baguley may be based on three separate articles of *The Builder*: ‘Sanitation in Nottingham’, vol. XIX, 2nd March 1861, p. 147; ‘The Architecture of Our Large Provincial Towns, Part IX – Nottingham’, vol. LXXIII, 28th August 1897, pp. 161-165; and ‘Nottingham Municipal Buildings Scheme’, vol. CVI, 6th February 1914, pp. 151-152. Although the first article predates University College, it does note slums with ‘yard cesspools, which, overflowing, cover the ground with pestiferous matter... or oozes... to a common ditch of malignant filth’. Finally, the 1914 article declared that ‘the market place is neither picturesque nor worthy of an important city; it is rather suggestive to our minds, of a second-rate country town of no importance... the statue of the late Queen is surrounded by a collection of fish stalls which possibly is a delicate and sentimental allusion to the sovereignty of the ocean but which, aesthetically, has a less pleasant side’.

⁷ S. Daniels and S. Rycroft, ‘Mapping the Modern City: Alan Sillitoe’s Nottingham Novels’, in K.D.M. Snell (ed.), *The Regional Novel in Britain and Ireland: 1800-1990* (Cambridge, 1998), p. 288.

perceived its remodelling, in the twentieth century, as ‘a city for living in, not merely getting a living in’,⁸ with ‘well-proportioned buildings, and an entire absence of the smoke and grime usually associated with industry... creating a broad spaciousness that other cities envy and seek to emulate’.⁹

This was a civic reality with which people could identify and take personal pride, for, as the English regional historian, John Beckett, notes, ‘civic pride and civic status went together in a pecking order... reflecting where a town stood in the hierarchy [of the nation as a whole]’.¹⁰ The social policy researcher, Richard (‘Bill’) Silburn, for example, suggests that NCB ‘identif[ied] civic pride and identity with big, sometimes grandiose, municipal gestures’,¹¹ such as the 1928 opening of an airport at Tollerton which placed Nottingham at ‘the forefront in... matter[s] of aviation’,¹² the early embracing of rediffusion,¹³ and the building of a new Council House (1927-1929) on a site that ‘could be compared with no other in any provincial city in the country’.¹⁴ The effects of such civic efforts could, however, ‘hardly have been sustained in the popular consciousness had [they] not reflected and served to symbolise certain characteristics of the city in the twentieth century’.¹⁵ A central platform of both local civic and national political efforts to construct a ‘better’ society was local authority housing, which would bring to tenants ‘increased space,

⁸ J.D. Chambers, *The People of Nottingham, 1851-1951: A Souvenir of the Exhibition, Albert Hall Institute, 25th – 29th September, 1951* (Nottingham, 1951), p. 8.

⁹ City of Nottingham (NCB), *Nottingham: Queen City of the Midlands. The Official Guide* (Cheltenham, 1927), pp. 35-37.

¹⁰ J. Beckett, *City Status in the British Isles, 1830-2002* (Aldershot, 2005), p. 5.

¹¹ R. Silburn, *People in their Places, One Hundred Years of Nottingham Life* (Nottingham, 1981), p. 31.

¹² City of Nottingham (NCB), *The Official Guide Book 1947* (Cheltenham, 1947), p. 191.

¹³ As Griffin, ‘Identity’ pp. 423-424, notes, ‘the original cable radio mike was inaugurated in 1931... and serviced 22,000 homes, fifty factories and numerous public buildings, including schools and hospitals. It played a valuable part in maintaining public morale in wartime’.

¹⁴ *Nottingham Journal*, 23rd May 1929.

¹⁵ Griffin, ‘Identity’, p. 423.

privacy and sanitation'.¹⁶ The social historian, John Burnett, maintained that these were prerequisites to their adoption of what had hitherto 'been typically middle-class characteristics – the privatisation of domestic life, cleanliness, sobriety, [and] concern for the special needs of children'.¹⁷ In Nottingham, this was a process of social (and physical) reconstruction work that commenced in earnest in 1919.

Expansion – and extension – through construction

From the early part of the twentieth century onwards, NCB, like DCB, experienced a shortage of readily available housing land within its own administrative boundaries. Such difficulties were worsened by the fact that, as NCB itself noted in 1919, some 6,826 dwellings in the city were 'unfit for human habitation'.¹⁸ Just a year later, NCB conceded that an additional 2,000 homes were needed if it were to re-house into single-family homes all those families who presently shared accommodation.¹⁹ The failure of NCB to house its residents appropriately, coupled with its inadequate sewerage system, have already been noted (in Chapter Three) as the primary reasons stated by the Ministry of Health for refusing NCB's boundary extension request of 1919.²⁰ 'Stung by the rejection of its extension application',²¹ NCB embarked on a prodigious programme of municipal house and sewerage building.

¹⁶ J. Burnett, *A Social History of Housing: 1815-1985* (London, 1986), p. 337.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ NRO DC/A/1/16, NCB, *Report of the Housing Committee*, 20th October 1919.

¹⁹ P. Boobyer, *Summary of Annual Health Reports of the City of Nottingham*, cited in C.J. Thomas, 'The Growth of Nottingham's Residential Area since 1919', *East Midland Geographer*, 5:3 (1971), pp. 119-132, p. 120.

²⁰ *Nottingham Journal and Express*, 29th May 1920.

²¹ J. Giggs, 'Housing, Population and Transport' in J. Beckett (ed.), *A Centenary History of Nottingham* (Chichester, 2006), p. 440.

NCB's conforming to the designs espoused by the *Tudor Walters Report* of 1918²² had direct consequences upon the lives of the city's municipal housing residents and the sphere of governance of NCB, if for no other reason than the large amount of land that such a programme required.²³ Between 1919 and 1928 NCB constructed municipal housing in locations adjacent to existing communities: at Stockhill Lane, Sherwood, Gordon Road, and Highbury Vale, as well as, from 1925 onwards, Wollaton Park, Windmill Lane and Lenton Abbey (see Figure 6.1).²⁴ Thereafter, in order to meet its housing targets, it needed to develop lands outside its historic 1877 boundaries. In October 1931, NCB sought a trebling of its area through the incorporation of lands belonging to each of its adjoining urban and rural districts.²⁵ Following a public inquiry in 1932, NCB was granted an increase of 5,231 acres (some 92 per cent of which came from Basford Rural District), thereby enlarging its total administrative area to 16,166 acres (see Figure 6.2).²⁶

²² The *Report* was the result of the workings of the Tudor Walters Committee that had been set up by the Government to investigate existing housing conditions. The *Report* asserted that market forces and private enterprise could not, by themselves, provide a decent standard of housing for the poor and that accordingly the state would have to shoulder the responsibility of providing adequate housing. For further, see P. Wilding, 'The Housing and Town Planning Act 1919 – A Study in the Making of Social Policy', *Journal of Social Policy*, 2 (1973), pp. 317-334

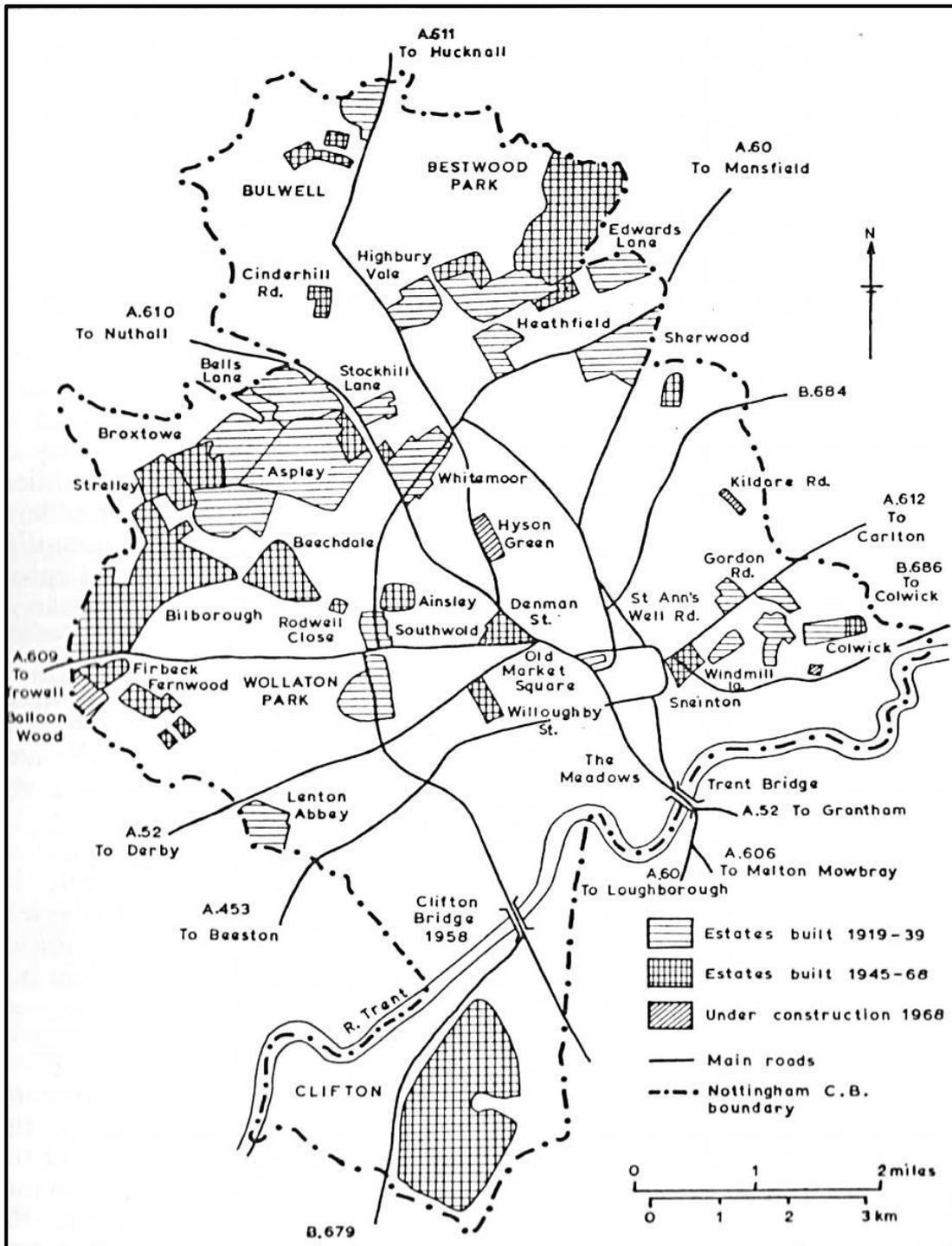
²³ In contrast to Nottingham's existing densities of 'up to 500 per acre in some of the slum areas', the *Tudor Walters Report* recommended a maximum of 12 homes to an acre and a distance of 70 feet between facing houses across a road 'to allow proper penetration of sunlight', and 'a third living room was what was desired by the majority of the artisan class [and] contains only what is regarded by them as necessary accommodation for the proper carrying on of family life'. See respectively, Giggs, 'Housing', p. 440; and *Tudor Walters Report*, cited in Burnett, *A Social History*, pp. 223, 234.

²⁴ The first four estates had been largely completed by 1925 when NCB acquired the land for the other three. Cumulatively these seven developments accounted for the construction of 4,311 homes. See Thomas, 'The Growth of Nottingham's Residential Area since 1919', p. 120.

²⁵ NRO DC/BA/1/2/18, NCB, *Report of the General Purposes Committee*, 23rd October 1931.

²⁶ C.J. Thomas, 'Geographical Aspects of the Growth of the Residential Area of Greater Nottingham in the 20th Century' (University of Nottingham, Ph.D. thesis, 1968), p. 121.

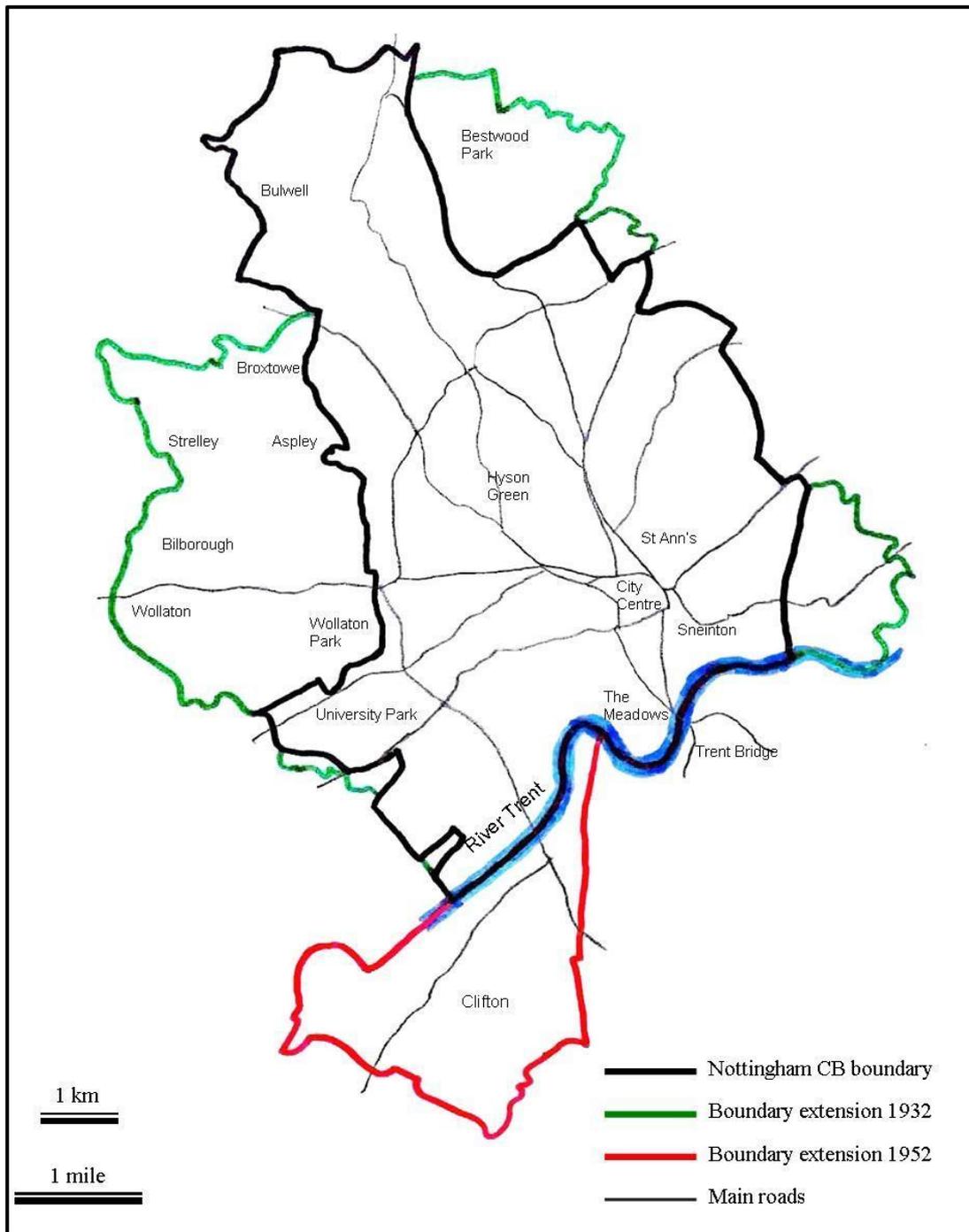
Figure 6.1: Location and date of NCB housing estates constructed, 1919-1968



The NCB Boundary as shown above is that dating from the extension of 1952.

Source: C.J. Thomas, 'The Growth of Nottingham's Residential Area since 1919', *East Midland Geographer*, 5:3 (1971), p. 122.

Figure 6.2: Nottingham County Borough boundaries, historic and as amended



Source: Adapted from J. Giggs, 'Housing Population and Transport', in J. Beckett (ed.), *A Centenary History of Nottingham* (Chichester, 2006), p. 443.

The immediate impact of the 1932 boundary extension (with regard to housing) was that the majority of subsequent council estate construction undertaken in the 1930s occurred to the west and north of the city (Figure 6.1). Of those estates constructed in the period 1930-1939, the Aspley estate (1930-1932) was the largest with 2,838 dwellings; the adjoining estate at Broxtowe (1935-1939) second with 1,908 houses; and that at Bestwood (1937-1939) third, with 1,678 homes.²⁷ The effects of such developments were not, however, merely products of the modernisation of a city expanding its urban townscape. Rather, it was intended that the new developments should contain a mix of incomes as well as an array of local amenities including shops, schools and leisure facilities, in order that social strata were less rigidly formed.²⁸ Thus the construction of the estates was accompanied by societal upheavals as the dispersal and relocation of people *en masse* from the crowded inner-city areas ‘to new residential districts on the outskirts (and in some cases, to totally new planned communities)’²⁹ resulted in ‘a transportation of cultural meanings and associations from one place to another’,³⁰ as the ‘bricks and mortar’ urban fabric of the city was reconstituted and expanded.

Though the 1932 NCB extension (and the construction of housing upon the land granted) helped ease its immediate-term inter-war housing shortage, in the decade immediately following 1945 the number of people needing to be housed by NCB continued to rise. This was primarily a consequence of three factors: first, demobilisation and the associated national decline in average household size

²⁷ Thomas, ‘The Growth of Nottingham’s Residential Area since 1919’, p. 120.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Burnett, *A Social History*, p. 234.

³⁰ Daniels and Rycroft, ‘Mapping’, p. 270.

combined with higher than average rises in the rate of marriage.³¹ Secondly, specific ‘government approval for tackling the city’s slums’³² was garnered; finally, from the early 1950s onwards, there was a marked increase in the inward migration and settlement of Commonwealth immigrants into Nottingham.³³ According to the historian, Nick Hayes, the cumulative effects of these processes were, with regard to the governance of the city, and despite progressively more rigorous eligibility criteria, that the number of households swelled by more than 15,000, and the waiting list for council housing topped 12,500 in 1951, while ‘some 2,875 condemned properties still had to be cleared... [and other] large areas of the city’s housing stock was [*sic*] obsolete’.³⁴

To exacerbate NCB’s problems of housing and governance, the *Dudley Report* (1944) proposed higher building standards for council constructed housing and a new framework thereof: ‘neighbourhood units’.³⁵ Such units, the *Report* proposed, should form the basis of future residential building programmes and it was envisaged that up to 10,000 persons would live in these state-engineered communities, in which the residents would be drawn from a variety of social backgrounds and different age

³¹ R. Wall, ‘The Household: Demographic and Economic Change in England 1630-1970’, in R. Wall (ed.), *Family Forms in Historical Europe* (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 496-501.

³² See Giggs, ‘Housing’, p. 445.

³³ The sociological effects of distinct immigrant communities are not addressed within this thesis. However, for further, see M.S. Husain, ‘The Increase and Distribution of New Commonwealth Immigrants in Greater Nottingham’, *East Midland Geographer*, 6 (1975), pp. 105-129; Giggs, ‘Housing’, pp. 453-455; and J. O’Neill, ‘Family Life in the Twentieth Century’ in J. Beckett (ed.), *A Centenary History of Nottingham* (Chichester, 2006), pp. 513-533.

³⁴ N. Hayes, ‘The Government of the City, 1900-1974: The Consensus Ethos in Local Politics’, in J. Beckett (ed.), *A Centenary History of Nottingham* (Chichester, 2006), p. 471. The latter comment was based on the findings of a survey carried out between 1947 and 1952 that identified some 11,232 houses (in addition to those condemned) as being in poor or unfit condition. See also Giggs, ‘Housing’, p. 445. The 10,000 houses that were demolished in St Ann’s (as discussed in Chapter Three) were not included in this figure.

³⁵ Ministry of Health, *Design of Dwellings* (London, 1944). Usually referred to as the *Dudley Report*, it was the first major rethinking on housing design since the *Tudor Walters Report*. In a similar manner to that which had been adopted in 1918-1919, the Ministry of Health published in 1944 (following the report) a new *Housing Manual* which contained the principal recommendations of the *Report*. For a brief synopsis of the *Report* and its effects, see P. Malpass, ‘The Wobbly Pillar? Housing and the British Welfare State’, *Journal of Social Policy*, 32 (2003), pp. 589-606.

ranges.³⁶ Neighbourhood units were to be endowed with an array of local amenities including parks, youth clubs, public houses, sporting facilities, and a church.³⁷ Moreover, given that many architects and planners were ‘caught up in the spirit of socialist euphoria... [and] saw themselves as social engineers whose principal, and complementary, tasks were to create community and beauty’, the hope was that such estates would ‘develop a community consciousness and that the standard of social life would be markedly higher than that found on the residential suburbs of the inter-war period’.³⁸ Precisely where such post-war municipal housing developments should be located, NCB’s Reconstruction Committee was clear:

The planning of the City should not be injuriously handicapped by the present City boundaries... further housing developments in the main should be carried out in southerly and easterly directions... [and would have] a considerable influence on many other matters such as education, parks, playing fields, baths and libraries... [Thus they would not be] divorced from the boundary question, because of the lack of available area within the present City boundaries.³⁹

Accordingly, in 1946, under threat of compulsory purchase, NCB acquired ‘932 acres of land from Colonel Clifton [outside NCB’s boundary] in the Parish of Clifton with Glapton’,⁴⁰ situated upon the southern bank of the Trent and within Basford Rural District. In so doing, NCB intended that this site would become the location of a single housing estate, for it was ‘the only site of any size available for immediate development, and not subject to mining subsidence’.⁴¹ However, before construction could begin to house three adjoining ‘neighbourhood units’ totalling between 25,000 and 30,000 people, not only did approval need to be obtained from the Ministry of

³⁶ *Dudley Report*.

³⁷ Burnett, *A Social History*, p. 292.

³⁸ Thomas, ‘Some Geographical Aspects of Council Housing in Nottingham’, p. 90.

³⁹ NRO DD/2295/13, NCB, *Report of the Reconstruction Committee on Post-War Development in the City of Nottingham*, 9th September 1943, p. 6.

⁴⁰ NRO CC/CL1/BL08/2, Statement for Joint Promoters of the Parliamentary Bill, p. 4.

⁴¹ PRO T184/298, Opinion of NCB, cited in T.F. Smith, *Brief for Commissioners: Nottingham Conurbation*, 1960, p. 9.

Town and Country Planning but agreement reached between itself and Nottinghamshire County Council (NCC). Neither was a foregone conclusion. Party political objections (at both City and County Halls) to the proposed development included that there was no direct road linkage between the proposed estate and NCB; thus, without a boundary extension to cede the land to the jurisdiction of NCB, issues of governance would be confused, along with issues pertaining to rateable income.⁴² At a national level, the Ministry of Agriculture opposed the development because of the potential loss of productive arable farmland, whereas the Coal Board ‘was enthusiastic because alternatives meant sacrificing coal-bearing areas’.⁴³

Hayes notes that the initial result of such objections was that ‘attempts to obtain planning permission were thwarted both locally and centrally, and this threw city planning into crisis [for by 1948 NCB] had sufficient land to build only a further 3,500 houses’.⁴⁴ So that these competing and largely pre-determined positions could be arbitrated, a public enquiry was convened in 1949, at which NCC signified that it would reverse its opposition to the scheme. As a result, despite counter-proposals by Conservative members of NCB to construct high-rise blocks elsewhere, agreement between the two local authorities was reached.⁴⁵ This became effective in 1952 as a consequence of the Nottingham City and County Boundaries Act 1951,⁴⁶ which was a Joint Bill presented to Parliament on behalf of both NCB and NCC. Its contents represented a cautious marriage of the contrasting demands of both bodies and thus the former was endowed with further living space, and the commercial and community interests of adjoining county districts were also protected. Accordingly,

⁴² NRO CC/CL1/BL08/2, Statement for Joint Promoters of the Parliamentary Bill, p. 5.

⁴³ PRO HLG 107/136, Inter-Departmental Planning Meeting Minutes, 18th August 1948.

⁴⁴ Hayes, ‘Government’, p. 471.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Nottingham City and County Boundaries Act 1951 (14 & 15 George VI c.31).

NCB was ceded land (totalling 2,287 acres) to the south of the River Trent because ‘it was more convenient and logical for the Corporation, who would be providing the houses there [Clifton estate], to be responsible for all the local government services’,⁴⁷ while NCB made a series of promises and commitments to NCC. These included the transfer to NCC of ‘some age-old town land’ amounting to 89 acres,⁴⁸ on which the latter built its new County Hall (at West Bridgford, where it remains), and a pledge ‘not to acquire or appropriate any land or erect houses in the County for housing city overspill’ for a period of ten years (until 1961 at the earliest).⁴⁹ The Act also contained provisions by which the 1951 extension would ‘never be used as a ground for including West Bridgford or Ruddington into the city’.⁵⁰ This was an agreement that gave NCC, in the words of County Councillor Alderman Littlefair, ‘a reasonably long spell of security for West Bridgford’.⁵¹

The effects of NCB’s house building

In exceeding the national minimum standards suggested for municipal housing (certainly in the inter-war period) and through so doing, setting ‘an example to other local authorities in lay-out... design and quality of dwellings’,⁵² NCB shaped the projected image of the city, not only for the benefit of its own existing inhabitants, but also to attract further inward migration and economic development above other cities. In terms of its own civic responsibilities and resultant issues of governance, NCB became the dominant house builder in the city from the inter-war period until

⁴⁷ NRO CC/CL1/BL08/2, Miscellaneous Papers, p. 5.

⁴⁸ D. Gray, *Nottingham: Settlement to City* (Nottingham, 1953), 111. In total, the net acreage increase to the city was 2,198 acres (making its total administrative area 18,364 acres).

⁴⁹ NRO CC/CL1/BL08/AUX, Nottingham City and County Boundaries Act 1951, para 42.

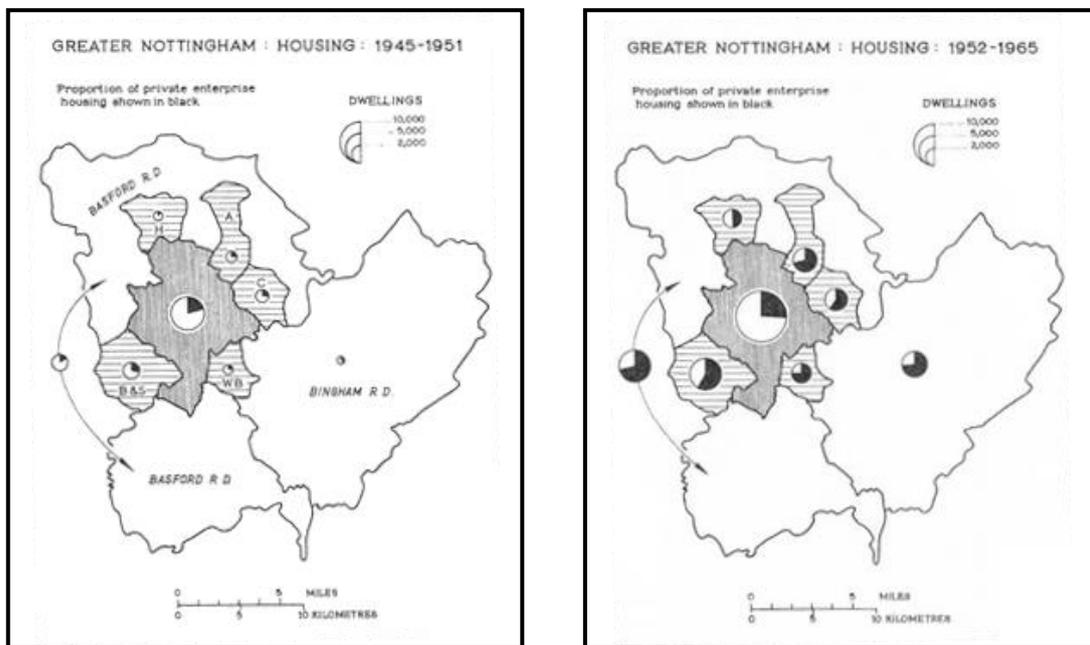
⁵⁰ NRO CC/CL1/BL08/2, Notes for Discussion with Parliamentary Agents, 26th May 1950, p. 1.

⁵¹ NRO CC/CL1/BL08/2, Minutes of Meeting between NCC and NCB, 23rd May 1950, p. 2.

⁵² K.C. Edwards ‘The Geographical Development of Nottingham’, in K.C. Edwards (ed.), *Nottingham and its Region* (Nottingham, 1966), p. 376. See also Gray, *Settlement*, p. 96.

1951. In contrast to the national average, where ‘80 per cent of all houses built in Britain between 1919 and 1939 were for owner occupation’,⁵³ in Nottingham, of ‘26,603 houses constructed in the inter-war period, 17,461 (65.5 per cent) were built’ by NCB, with the private sector being accountable for just 34.5 per cent.⁵⁴ This was in contrast to areas such as Beeston and West Bridgford, which were largely developed by private builders, especially between 1952 and 1965 (see Figure 6.3).

Figure 6.3: Housing developments in Greater Nottingham, 1945-1965



The map on the left denotes housing in Greater Nottingham 1945-1951; the one on the right 1952-1965. The proportion of private housing is shown in black. ‘H’ represents Hucknall; ‘A’ Arnold; ‘C’ Carlton; ‘WB’ West Bridgford; ‘B&S’ Beeston and Stapleford. The shaded part in the centre is NCB.

Source:

K.C. Edwards, ‘The East Midlands Urban Region’, *East Midland Geographer*, 4:2 (1966), p. 69.

⁵³ P. Lawless and F. Brown, *Urban Growth and Change in Britain* (London, 1986), p. 73.

⁵⁴ Giggs, ‘Housing’, p. 440.

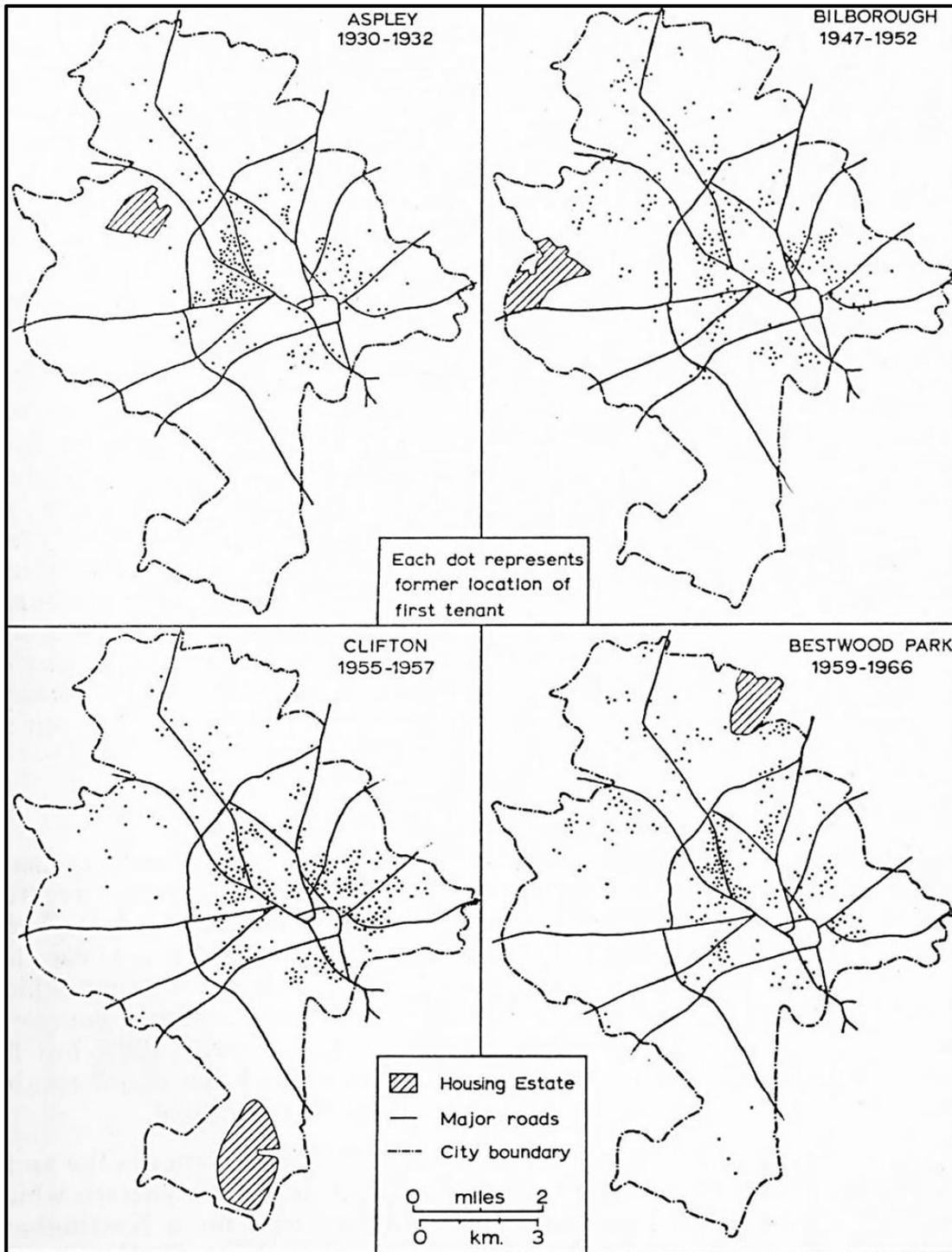
Even though the policies of mass social relocation were envisaged as a mechanism through which old communities could be replicated in new surroundings, the policy was only partially successful, particularly with regard to the building of sustainable long-term communities. The assertion by C.J. Thomas that ‘council policy attempted to resettle people in the estates nearest to the area in which they were originally living’⁵⁵ is moot, as Figure 6.4 illustrates. The Aspley estate (1930-1932) primarily included residents from nearby Radford and Hyson Green, some one and a half to two miles away. However, in the first four years of tenancy upon the Aspley estate, some 16 per cent of new tenants left the estate, with the majority returning to the city centre areas whence they had originally come.⁵⁶ This suggests that the primary reason for such movement was ‘dissatisfaction with life on the council estate’.⁵⁷ The estates lacked essential services with regards to adequate shops and social facilities, which compounded the difficulties in fostering a fuller sense of community. Subsequent estates drew tenants from farther afield: the Bilborough estate (1947-1952) housed people who had been scattered all over the northern and central sectors of the city, up to five miles away; the Clifton estate (1951-1959) garnered residents from as far away as eight miles, largely from the central and eastern parts of Nottingham. Some of those Clifton estate residents were then transferred some seven miles away to the Bestwood Park estate (1959-1968), although most of the latter’s tenants were drawn from a four mile radius (and particularly from Hyson Green).

⁵⁵ Thomas, ‘Some Geographical Aspects of Council Housing in Nottingham’, p. 92.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 97.

Figure 6.4: Former locations of first tenants of Nottingham County Borough housing estates



The NCB boundary shown on these four maps is that of 1952.

Source: C.J. Thomas, 'Some Geographical Aspects of Council Housing in Nottingham', *East Midland Geographer*, 4:2 (1966), p. 92.

The municipal estates constructed post-war therefore increasingly became not only ‘new build estates’ that were ‘essentially large [self-contained] isolated units of the urban landscape’,⁵⁸ but were ‘in districts... distinct from those occupied by persons considered to be of a different status’.⁵⁹ Accordingly, residents did not benefit from central government’s desire (as contained within the aforementioned provisions of the *Dudley Report*)⁶⁰ that social and economic interplay would result in the achievement of socially-balanced communities. Indeed, Nottingham County Borough (NCB) not only failed (city-wide) to relocate people in the desired mixed manner but also enacted a policy by which it ‘sold off blocks of land to private builders, stipulating the type and quality of houses to be erected’ in areas such as Wollaton.⁶¹ Further it ‘curtailed its own housing activities [in those districts]... so that private residential development for the middle and upper income groups could be concentrated there’.⁶² Council housing was almost exclusively inhabited by lower income groups within the skilled occupation sector; the reason for the limited income spread was primarily financial, determined by the capacity of tenants to pay appropriate rents.⁶³ Thus, as the Deputy City Engineer and Surveyor of NCB observed in 1953, though it had originally been envisaged by the city planners that a portion of the Clifton estate would be developed (privately) as an area for middle-class families, this never materialised.⁶⁴ As Silburn remarks, with particular reference to life on the Clifton estate, despite reflecting ‘the suburban ideal emphasising domesticity and privacy, [and] the family rather than the community... [material improvements and community consciousness came] at the cost of a certain social

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

⁵⁹ Thomas, ‘The Growth of Nottingham’s Residential Area since 1919’, p. 125.

⁶⁰ Ministry of Health, *Design of Dwellings* (London, 1944).

⁶¹ Giggs, ‘Housing’, pp. 440-442.

⁶² Thomas, ‘The Growth of Nottingham’s Residential Area since 1919’, p. 125.

⁶³ Thomas, ‘Some Geographical Aspects of Council Housing in Nottingham’, p. 95.

⁶⁴ H. Lawson, ‘The Development of the Clifton Estate’, *The British Housing and Planning Review* (July/August 1953).

sterility and a sense of lifelessness'.⁶⁵ The Clifton estate was subsumed *in toto* into a morass of lower income council housing that was to characterise it for decades. As the academics, Jamie Gough, Aram Eisenschitz and Andrew McCulloch observe, such stigmatisation tends to limit the social development of its residents and can result in the continuing deterioration of an estate (see Figure 6.5).⁶⁶ This indicates how the social ills that developed during the study period impinge upon the present day.

Figure 6.5: Clifton Estate, Nottingham County Borough, 1971



Source: *Nottingham Evening Post*, 29th November 1971.

The issues and difficulties pertaining to questions of identity and belonging that were seen upon the new estates, and the issues of governance and community building that were associated with them, were not, however, merely practical political

⁶⁵ Silburn, *People in their Places*, p. 33.

⁶⁶ J. Gough, A. Eisenschitz and A. McCulloch, *Spaces of Social Exclusion* (London, 2006), p. 114-116.

developments that affected just the city. This is because the evolution of suburbs, and the re-housing of inner city tenants to fringe estates, had expanded NCB's zone of influence. Accordingly, the practical and political realities of issues such as relocation, neighbourhoods, densities of population, and the need for further housing development lands, became interlinked with wider structural questions of governance. This was not a new issue. With regard to Nottingham, it was suggested (academically at least, since 1922)⁶⁷ that the city was the centre of an emerging conurbation and that accordingly its people – as well as those of the wider area over which it cast its shadow – needed to be governed as one. It was also a debate that was carried to the very heart of the deliberations of the Hancock Local Government Commission (HLGC) pertaining to Nottingham, and it is to the matter of conurbations that this chapter now turns.

Conurbations

The term 'conurbation' was coined by Patrick Geddes in 1915, who noted that there was, within the county of Lancashire,

growing up another Greater London as it were – a city region of which Liverpool is the sea-port and Manchester the market, now with its canal port also; while Oldham and the many other factory towns, more accurately called “factory districts”, are the workshops.⁶⁸

Geddes was commenting on the geo-political and economic spectacle that he was witnessing, in which each of the towns and cities mentioned was developing a greater network between them in which each served the others in a copacetic manner (while remaining individual places that contained a multitude of individual commercial concerns, shopping areas and housing districts). This was not, however,

⁶⁷ C.B. Fawcett, 'British Conurbations in 1921', *The Sociological Review*, 14:2 (1922), pp. 111-122.

⁶⁸ P. Geddes, *Cities in Evolution* (London, 1915), pp. 12-13.

a process that necessitated that each individual unit would lose all semblance of its individuality and identity. Rather, in terms of general recognition (beyond the immediate locality and in issues relating to governance), the entirety of such areas – the conurbations – would require ‘new forms of social grouping... government and administration’ that were ‘better able to cope with its problems than are the present distinct town and county councils’.⁶⁹

In subsequently giving, according to the economic geographer, T.W. Freeman, greater ‘form and direction to the stimulating ideas of Geddes’,⁷⁰ C.B. Fawcett contended that, in order to be considered as a conurbation, an area needed to be

occupied by a continuous series of dwellings, factories, and other buildings, harbour and docks, urban parks and playing fields etc., which are not separated from each other by rural land; though in many cases... such an urban area includes enclaves of rural lands which is still in agricultural occupation.⁷¹

Fawcett’s definition of what constituted a conurbation, therefore, would have immediately precluded the existence of, for instance, a single Nottingham-Derby conurbation, for no such administrative body could exist without the inclusion of parishes from within South East Derbyshire Rural District (SEDRD). In contrast, the existence of a conurbation between NCB and West Bridgford Urban District (UD) was not precluded by his definition because of a substantial geographic break – the River Trent – between the two administratively separate areas. Thus Fawcett claimed, in using the Trent as the model, that the Mersey was ‘in fact a link rather than an area of separation between Liverpool and Birkenhead’.⁷² Fawcett further stated, reflecting upon Nottingham, that in the case of Nottingham and West

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 15, 19.

⁷⁰ T.W. Freeman, *The Conurbations of Great Britain* (Manchester, 1959), p. v.

⁷¹ C.B. Fawcett, ‘Distribution of the Urban Population in Great Britain, 1931’, *Geographical Journal*, 79:2 (1932), pp. 100-113, p. 100. See also Fawcett, ‘British Conurbations’, p. 111.

⁷² Fawcett, ‘British Conurbations’, pp. 112-113.

Bridgford, ‘there is equally no doubt to the[ir] actual unity’.⁷³ In a similar vein, the substantial tract of open land between NCB and Beeston UD (in the guise of the University Estate, Wollaton Park, and the Highfields public playing fields) was also not a barrier to the existence of a Nottingham conurbation under the Fawcett definition because the area – though devoid of the conurbation-requisite of continuous urban buildings (and thus more ‘rural’ in character) – was nevertheless used for urban purposes.⁷⁴ The result was that in both 1922 and 1932 Fawcett proffered evidence of a Nottingham conurbation based on a total of five local government authorities, illustrated in Figure 6.6, and comprised of NCB, the UDs of West Bridgford, and Beeston,⁷⁵ as well as Carlton and Arnold (but not Hucknall).⁷⁶

The definition as to what constituted a conurbation and the existing governance requirements of the component areas under such a definition are thus clear; yet, in 1944 Fawcett qualified his characterisation specifically to enable a single conurbation to exist between Nottingham and Derby. He stated that,

before the present war, in 1936, Nottingham and Derby had spread towards each other and been linked by the growth of the industrial area between them. They were actually connected by strips of what I carefully defined as “urban land”, along which the urban restriction on motor speed was in force in 1935 and 1936. So we have in the mid-Trent valley an eighth great conurbation developed, like the Leeds-Bradford conurbation, around two cities.⁷⁷

⁷³ *Ibid.*

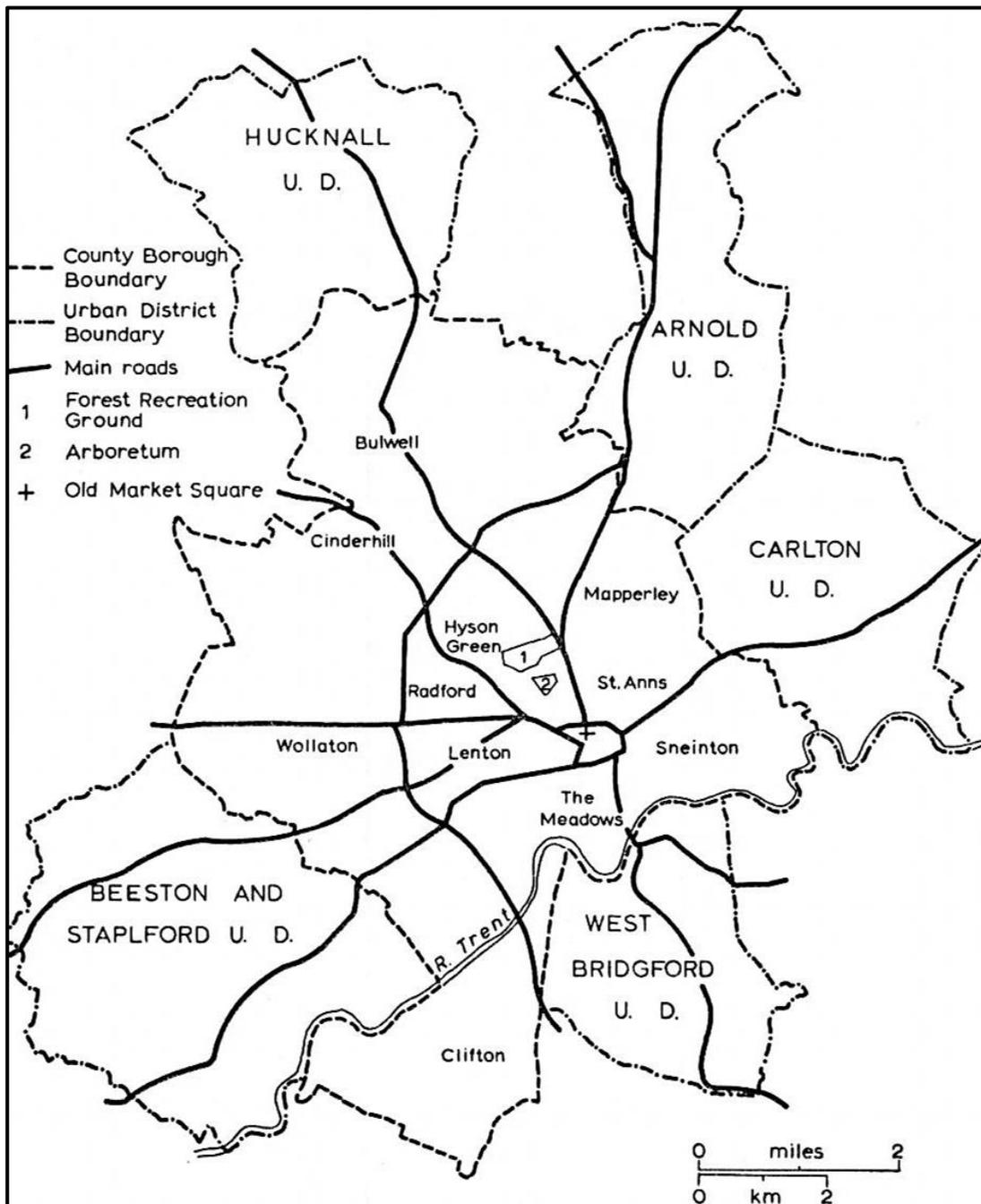
⁷⁴ *Ibid.*; See also Nottingham City Council (NCB), *The City of Nottingham: The Official Handbook*, (Cheltenham, 1932).

⁷⁵ In 1935 Beeston UD was amalgamated with Stapleford to form the Beeston and Stapleford UD.

⁷⁶ Fawcett, ‘British Conurbations’ and ‘Distribution of the Urban Population’.

⁷⁷ G. Clerk, E.G.R. Taylor, C.B. Fawcett, M.P. Fogarty, S.H. Beaver, E.C. Willatts, L. Dudley Stamp, J.N.L. Baker, E.W. Gilbert, A.E. Smailes, ‘The Doctrine of an Axial Belt of Industry in England: Discussion’, *The Geographical Journal*, 103 (1944), pp. 63-72; Fawcett’s comments, pp. 63-65.

Figure 6.6: Location map of NCB and its five surrounding urban districts



The boundaries of NCB are those of 1952.

Source: M.S. Husain, 'The Increase and Distribution of New Commonwealth Immigrants in Greater Nottingham', *East Midland Geographer*, 6:3 (1975), p. 111.

Fawcett enlarged upon his assertion in 1949, with an additional proposition that, as well as the link between Nottingham and Derby, each of the ‘smaller towns in the Erewash Valley’ was also an inherent part of a wider single conurbation.⁷⁸ Such an extended view of the geo-political and economic scope of a conurbation centred on Nottingham was not widely recognised by prominent contemporaneous regional geographers: neither K.C. Edwards, nor A.G. Powell endorsed the single Nottingham-Derby conurbation.⁷⁹ Indeed, the political geographer, G.W.S. Robinson, appears to have been the only academic of the period to have endorsed Fawcett’s larger conurbation model. He maintained that the geographic triangle of ‘Nottingham-Derby-Alfreton looks like becoming the next addition to [the list] of major British conurbations’; that ‘the population of such an area would exceed 930,000’; and that there was attached to the city ‘a ribbon of continuous development reaching a dozen miles into the country, far beyond the suburban ring proper’.⁸⁰

As a result of the academic and civil-service based submissions that it received, the HLGC was compelled to consider the extent to which the continuously built-up area that radiated outwards from NCB was contiguous with the outer-limits of Nottingham’s zone of influence, the geographic and social delineation of such a zone, and the effects of such an expanded vision of the city upon issues of its future governance.

⁷⁸ C.B. Fawcett, ‘Review of *The Land of Britain: Its Use and Misuse*, by L.D. Stamp’, *Geographical Journal*, 113 (1949), pp. 98-99, p. 99.

⁷⁹ K.C. Edwards was head of the Department of Geography at the University of Nottingham, and editor of *East Midland Geographer*. A.G. Powell was a professor within the department. Both submitted independent opinions to the HLGC regarding the characteristics of Nottingham and its wider environs and its future governance needs.

⁸⁰ G.W.S. Robinson, ‘British Conurbations in 1951’, *The Sociological Review*, 1 (1953), pp. 15-26, p. 18. G.W.S. Robinson was Assistant Lecturer at the University of Southampton.

The initial work of the HLGC

In accordance with the national protocols (as previously noted), the Hancock Local Government Commission (HLGC) sent out, in the summer of 1960, questionnaires to Nottingham County Borough (NCB), Nottinghamshire County Council (NCC) and the five city-adjointing urban districts (UDs) of Arnold, Carlton, West Bridgford, Hucknall, and Beeston and Stapleford as part of its initial consultations with them as to their future governance needs. With the exception of the latter, each of the replies sent by the UD's merely echoed the sentiments expressed by both NCB and NCC that 'no change' was needed. Further, Beeston and Stapleford presented an effective re-issue of its previous, unsuccessful call for incorporation as a (non-county) municipal borough,⁸¹ seeking therefore that the Derbyshire parish of Sandiacre should be subsumed into its authority on the basis that '[the latter's] characteristics are similar to those of the population of the Council's district and particularly of Stapleford'.⁸² These were opinions and demands which were ignored by the other authorities and persons who submitted papers to the Commissioners and dismissed out of hand by the Commissioners in their *Draft Proposals for Nottingham* of September 1962.⁸³

This part of this chapter accordingly addresses three specific aspects. First, the replies received by the HLGC from NCC and NCB are considered, and explanations of their respective contents proffered. Secondly, it examines the official *Brief for Commissioners: Nottingham Conurbation* ('*Nottingham Brief*') that was prepared for the Commissioners by Smith of the Ministry of Housing and Local Government.

⁸¹ As Smith notes, 'the Council petitioned for a charter of incorporation in 1952, which was rejected on the advice of the Minister in 1956', PRO T184/298, Smith, *Brief for Commissioners: Nottingham Conurbation*, p. 13.

⁸² PRO T184/303, Beeston and Stapleford UD, Proposals to the HLGC, 26th April 1960, p. 4. Such an incorporation would have meant that the newly enlarged Beeston and Stapleford UD would have had a population of more than 60,000 – giving it a *de facto* case for being made into a municipal borough. The UD's comments were, however, explicitly 'not made with this object in mind' (as above).

⁸³ PRO T183/5, HLGC, *Draft Proposals for Nottingham*, September 1962.

Thirdly, the submissions received from the aforementioned academics, Powell and Edwards, are noted. Their submissions are noted because of the way in which they informed the work of the Commissioners, and because of their contribution to the wider and long-standing academic discussion of issues pertaining to Nottingham's identity and its conurban status.

The submissions of NCB and NCC

In replying to the initial questionnaire sent by the HLGC, neither NCB nor NCC made any representations for changes to the geo-administrative *status quo* that existed between them. NCC asserted 'with confidence... that Nottinghamshire as it exists at present is as satisfactory an administrative unit from the geographic point of view as one could find',⁸⁴ and additionally stated, with regard to the five UDs that adjoined NCB that

administration in these areas... is admirable. They are all viable local government units with loyalties, traditions, and feelings and centres of their own. The latter are far enough from the centre of the City of Nottingham to constitute centres in their own right, and the County Council are of the opinion that their relationship with the City of Nottinghamshire is no greater than those which normally exist when a large city is surrounded by urban areas.⁸⁵

This reply not only made especial mention of the perceived separateness of adjoining UDs such as West Bridgford but also sought to demonstrate that there was little shared community of interest between NCB and its adjacent UDs. Additionally it dismissed that which did exist as not being exceptional and, accordingly, an inappropriate ground upon which to expand NCB's area of governance.

⁸⁴ PRO T184/288, Nottinghamshire County Council, Replies to the questionnaire sent by the HLGC, May 1960, p. 3.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 6

The initial submission made by NCB to the Commission was written in a similar vein. It noted that ‘the present size and shape of the city has given rise to no particular difficulties’,⁸⁶ and made reference to the ‘gentlemen’s agreement’ of 1951 between itself and NCC, as a means by which to explain its absolute reticence in asking for any additional territory.⁸⁷ Despite NCB’s (previously noted) need for more land, and that it was evident that West Bridgford was the most likely candidate for incorporation, NCB ‘decided that no recommendation to this effect should be submitted to the Commission at this review’.⁸⁸

That NCC sought to draw the attention of the Commissioners to the agreement of 1951 is not surprising; as observed in previous chapters, county borough extensions could only be accomplished at the rateable and acreable detriment of a county. However, that NCB also chose to draw explicit attention to its assurances of 1951 is unexpected, given that, nationwide, the general trend was for county boroughs to seek expansion. The HLGC afforded NCB a legitimate opportunity to state a case for either immediate or near-future territorial expansion – the 1951 agreement was due to expire within months, and would have done so by the time of the publication of the HLGC’s *Draft Proposals for Nottingham*. Accordingly, two contentions are advanced. First, the replies given by NCB to the HLGC questionnaire, and its subsequent remarks at its meeting with the Commission on 19th December 1960 – that its decision ‘to ask the Commission to maintain the *status quo* in the area was arrived at after considering the area as a whole... they would not be justified in claiming any of the peripheral areas unless they could show that there would be clear

⁸⁶ PRO T184/288, Nottingham County Borough, Replies to the questionnaire sent by the HLGC, May 1960, p. 7.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 6. The ‘gentlemen’s agreement’ was subsequently encapsulated in the Nottingham City and County Boundaries Act 1951.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

advantages to both sides⁸⁹ – did not ring true. Secondly, NCB's stated position ignored the functional realities of local governance convenience,⁹⁰ and was politically contrived for the sake of the maintenance of party political electoral strengths at city, county, and national levels.

The contention that party political needs were given precedence over the needs of local governance may be illustrated by the case of West Bridgford. As the largest of the dormitory suburbs, Powell contended in 1955 – some six years before his submission to the Commission – that the area should have been incorporated and that its dominant characteristic was as a dormitory 'for a predominantly middle-aged population and [was] especially attractive to members of the "professional and intermediate" social classes'.⁹¹ Indeed, such was their pre-eminence that '38 per cent of the population of West Bridgford [fell] into these two classes compared with an average of 19.5 per cent in Nottingham and its five adjoining urban district councils and 14 per cent in the county as a whole'.⁹²

The party political significance of this (if, at any stage, West Bridgford were incorporated) was not lost on the ruling Labour Party elite in NCB. Immediately prior to NCB's submission to the HLGC, the Labour majority within NCB had been slashed from 20 seats to two in the 1960 local elections. In marked contrast, West Bridgford UD had consistently, since its formation, returned in excess of 85 per cent Conservative members. Expansion of Nottingham southward over the River Trent

⁸⁹ PRO T184/298, Minutes of Meeting between NCB and LGC, London, 19th December 1960, p. 1.

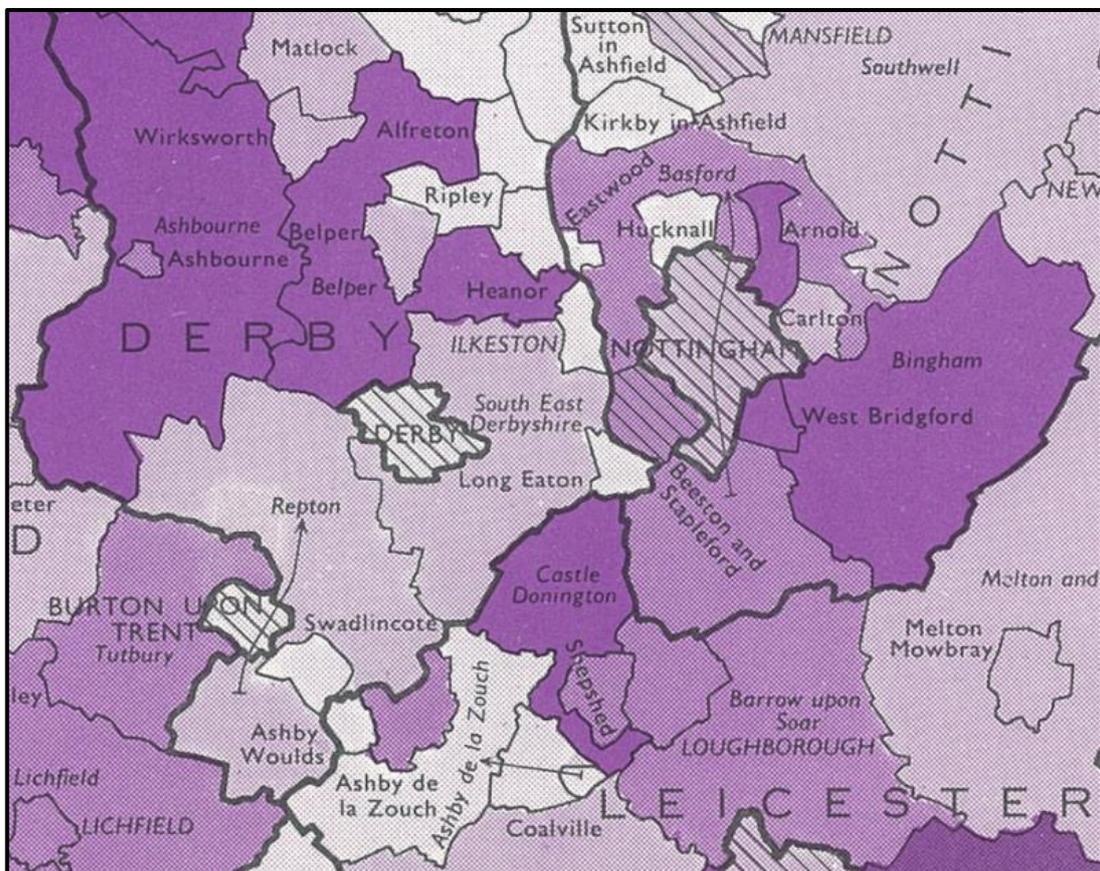
⁹⁰ PRO T184/298, Smith, *Brief for Commissioners: Nottingham Conurbation* (1960). Such political realities were concurrently noted by Smith: for instance, he noted that 'the journey to work patterns links all these Nottinghamshire districts to the city... the City Council are responsible for supplying water to and disposing of sewerage from the urban districts... [and] all this raises the question whether there should be one local government unit for the whole area', p. 1.

⁹¹ A.G. Powell, 'The 1951 Census: (3) An Analysis of Population Changes in Nottinghamshire', *East Midland Geographer*, 4 (1955), pp. 29-41, p. 30.

⁹² *Ibid.*

into the political territory of predominantly middle-class, private housing would therefore bring with it the potential for Labour's political exile from the leadership of NCB (Figure 6.7). Conversely, in Clifton, NCB's existing enclave south of the Trent, over 90 per cent of initial tenants were of the classes of skilled and partly skilled occupations.⁹³

Figure 6.7: Professional and managerial groups 1, 2, 3, 4, and 13 of the census classification, by local authority areas



The average percentage in England of the total of economically active and retired males enumerated in each local authority area was 14.9 per cent (not including the Greater London Council). Palest lilac (e.g. Ashby de la Zouch) represents less than 10 per cent; wisteria (Repton) <15 per cent; lavender (Basford) <20 per cent; purple (West Bridgford) <30 per cent; and the striped area represents a large centre for employment with working populations in excess of 25,000.

Source: Royal Commission on Local Government in England (1968), Map 17.

⁹³ Thomas, 'Some Geographical Aspects of Council Housing in Nottingham', p. 94.

That such local party political concerns were apparent at the time of the HLGC is evident from the observations of Smith, who, in seeking to explain to the Commissioners NCB's 'surprising lack of proposals', suggested that the fact that 'Labour control of the Council was reduced... may, however, not be insignificant'.⁹⁴ Divergence between recorded comment and politically palatable suggestion is also apparent through examination of the positions taken by both the officers and elected representatives of NCB present at the meeting held between them and the HLGC in London on 19th December 1960. At that meeting the Commissioners expressly noted the need for all parties to examine the needs of the peripheral UDs when reviewing the future governance needs of NCB.⁹⁵

In light of the statistical evidence presented, NCB officers agreed with the Commissioners in four of their key observations: first, 'the voluntary migration of city people to the fringe areas increase[d] the existing links with the city'.⁹⁶ Secondly, 'physically, Arnold was a continuation of the town area... linked to the city for major purposes... [and] had well defined dormitory areas' – an assessment also true of Carlton and West Bridgford.⁹⁷ Thirdly, the latter 'was wholly residential [and] without the city, could not exist'.⁹⁸ Finally, as a consequence of the foregoing, 'a case could be made for inclusion of all the fringe areas' into the jurisdictional administration and territory of NCB.⁹⁹ Yet, despite such consensus within the discussions of the meeting, the officers of NCB were still required to promote and adhere to the policy positions dictated by their politically elected masters: positions which were not necessarily accurate but did serve a political end. Thus, while the

⁹⁴ PRO T184/298, Smith, *Brief for Commissioners: Nottingham Conurbation*, p. 1.

⁹⁵ PRO T184/298, Minutes of Meeting between NCB and LGC, London, 19th December 1960, p. 2.

⁹⁶ PRO T184/298, Smith, *Brief for Commissioners: Nottingham Conurbation*, pp. 2-8.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

stated position of NCB at the meeting was unbending and non-negotiable with regards to the inclusion of areas such as West Bridgford – on the basis that such moves ‘would not make local government more convenient and that residents were opposed’¹⁰⁰ – the alternative proposal to incorporate Strelley (a Labour stronghold) was advanced as being more geographically appropriate.¹⁰¹

Party political manoeuvring of this type was not limited solely to NCB. Indeed, such was the political manipulation by the Labour Party that, following a meeting between the Commissioners and NCC on 5th January 1961, Smith stated in his Memorandum to the Commissioners that ‘the facts quoted [by NCC] were misleading’, and that he had, as a result, ‘to correct some wrong impressions’.¹⁰² Thus, while NCC claimed that Arnold had a separate identity from that of the city as a consequence of several factories (as well as the collieries at Bestwood and Gedling) giving its inhabitants ‘local work and a strong independence’,¹⁰³ such comments were disproved by Smith, and were counter to information already in the public domain. The 1951 Census shows, for instance, that some 7,000 of the occupied population of Arnold worked outside it (and of those, 5,000 within NCB).¹⁰⁴ Furthermore, NCC had itself declared in its *1948 Development Plan* that ‘Arnold is an integral part of the Nottingham Conurbation and has close association with it both commercially and socially... functioning largely as a dormitory for workers in other parts of the conurbation’.¹⁰⁵ Arnold was not, therefore, a socio-economic entity separate from the city (as NCC

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 11. This proposition was advanced at the meeting by the NCB Labour Party leader and was subsequently ignored by the Commissioners.

¹⁰² PRO T184/298, T.F. Smith, Internal Memorandum to the Commissioners, 10th January 1961, p. 1.

¹⁰³ NCC, *1948 County Development Plan* (Nottingham, 1948), p. 7.

¹⁰⁴ Census of England and Wales 1951, *County Report, Nottinghamshire* (1954).

¹⁰⁵ The dormitory function of Arnold was subsequently validated and updated by Smith who noted that notwithstanding the fact that some ‘4,000 people had migrated into Arnold [since 1951], nearly all from the city, local employment had only increased by 116 men’. PRO T184/298, Smith, Internal Memorandum to the Commissioners, 10th January 1961, p. 1.

tried to claim at the 1961 meeting with the HLGC), but was, like Beeston and West Bridgford, dependent upon it.

Aspects of party political collusion can be seen throughout the initial submissions received by the Commission from both authorities. Such was the level of duplicitousness and collusion identified by Smith that he not only commented on ‘remarkable coincidences’ between the submissions made by the two authorities, but also concluded that ‘the city and county have attempted to conceal in their submissions the case for change’; that ‘consequently the submissions are not informative’; and that ‘the problems of Nottingham have, therefore, to be examined more closely’.¹⁰⁶

Smith’s Nottingham Brief

In addition to Smith’s allusions to a Nottingham conurbation, and his memorandum correcting the impressions projected by Nottingham County Borough (NCB) and Nottinghamshire County Council (NCC), his *Nottingham Brief* contained a number of comments pertinent to this study. In particular, Smith recognised that ‘the affinity between the city and the peripheral districts... [could be illustrated] by the location of industry and the journey to work pattern’,¹⁰⁷ and that the peripheral districts would be ever more closely integrated into NCB as a consequence of their need to house the latter’s overspill population.¹⁰⁸ The pattern of dependency was therefore, according to Smith, such that, from both identity and development perspectives, each of the

¹⁰⁶ PRO T184/298, Smith, *Brief for Commissioners: Nottingham Conurbation*, pp. 3, 1, 4.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.* Despite the figures to the contrary presented by both NCB and NCC, Smith estimated that 68,600 people would need to be ‘housed as over-spill outside the city’.

‘fringe authorities [had] to be looked at not only from the point of view of the city, but also from their own points of view, as units within the conurbation’.¹⁰⁹

In terms of industry and employment, the inter-dependent relationship between the urban districts (UDs) and NCB was absolute, as the 1951 Census shows (with the partial exception of Hucknall). Smith noted that in Hucknall ‘70 per cent of its population found employment within the district [and] the remainder was equally divided between the coal mines in the surrounding Basford Rural District and employment opportunities in the city’.¹¹⁰ In contrast, in the case of Arnold, ‘70 per cent of the workers [found] their employment outside the district, principally in the city’; with regard to Carlton, the figure was ‘well over half’.¹¹¹ At the opposite end of the scale, with only 12 acres of industrial land, West Bridgford attracted no inward movement of industrial workers and its residents were ‘almost completely dependent upon the city for their livelihood’.¹¹² Further, the Beeston half of the Beeston and Stapleford UD was unique within the conurbation in that the net inward movement of workers from NCB to the district was higher than the outward number from the district.¹¹³

Interdependent relationships of employment and residency were not only in keeping with the conurbation concepts advanced by Geddes, but were also mirrored, Smith proffered, in terms of shopping patterns between the peripheral urban districts and NCB. Though Smith presented no statistical data within his *Nottingham Brief* to confirm his beliefs, his observations as to the relative strengths and weaknesses of

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

the shopping facilities offered by each of the urban districts were ultimately correct. Citing a Board of Trade Report with regard to 1961, the urban geographer, John Giggs, notes that the concentration of shops in NCB equated to ‘77 persons per shop... [with] the average number of persons per shop in the five urban districts [being] 116... and the figure for West Bridgford 150’.¹¹⁴ Such data reinforced the latter’s absolute functional and service-provision dependence on the city, even if, with reference to perceptions of self-identification, ‘its residents feel that they are quite distinct from Nottingham people’.¹¹⁵

Similarities between NCB and the two urban districts of Carlton and Arnold were also noted by Smith with regard to housing and the fact that residential development between these areas was continuous across the administrative divides. Such an observation could not be made with regard to NCB and Hucknall UD, with the latter noted as ‘physically separate’ as a consequence of ‘the green belt which surrounds the district and isolates its development from the city’.¹¹⁶ Finally, Smith remarked, with regard to Beeston and Stapleford, that there was ‘a measure of physical separation from the city by virtue of the grounds of the University and Wollaton Park’.¹¹⁷ However, such a physical break in the urban landscape was offset by ‘Beeston being connected with the city [NCB] by an industrial belt which is continuous on both sides of the boundary and by residential development across the boundary’.¹¹⁸ Moreover, as Fawcett had previously stated, defined areas of open

¹¹⁴ Board of Trade, *Census of Distribution and Other Services, North Midlands* (1964), cited in J.A. Giggs, ‘An Analysis of an Out-of-Town Regional Shopping Centre near Nottingham’, *East Midland Geographer*, 5:5 (1972), pp. 263-271, p. 265.

¹¹⁵ PRO T184/298, Smith, *Brief for Commissioners: Nottingham Conurbation*, p. 5.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

space within cities or between urban authorities neither precluded them from functioning as one nor being seen as conurban.¹¹⁹

Beyond the five UD's that adjoined NCB, Smith's *Nottingham Brief* also made substantive mention of Long Eaton UD and the Parish of Sandiacre in South East Derbyshire Rural District (SEDRD). Both are briefly noted at this juncture because of how linkages between them and NCB were perceived, the effects of any westward expansion of NCB, and how the question of their future governance would be addressed in the period after the HLGC. Smith noted that Long Eaton was 'situated at the extreme south western edge of the city conurbation... [and] allied to the industries of Nottingham', concluding however that it had 'no other close links with Nottingham and [that the] affinities it has are with Beeston and Stapleford rather than with the conurbation as a whole'.¹²⁰ Incorporation of Long Eaton UD would therefore have rested upon an indirect relationship with NCB itself through Beeston and Stapleford; had the latter been absorbed into NCB, Long Eaton would have adjoined the newly enlarged NCB.

Sandiacre's relationship with NCB was similarly removed and dependent upon aspects of the Beeston and Stapleford UD. Within the administrative county of Derbyshire (as was Long Eaton), Sandiacre's linkages with NCB were also indirect. Smith observed, therefore, that while Sandiacre had significant communities of interest with Stapleford because 'its development is continuous with that of Stapleford', such linkages were, as with Long Eaton to Beeston, 'local with Stapleford rather than with the conurbation as a whole'.¹²¹ Thus, even though both

¹¹⁹ Fawcett, 'British Conurbations' and 'Distribution of the Urban Population'.

¹²⁰ PRO T184/298, Smith, *Brief for Commissioners: Nottingham Conurbation*, p. 6.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 6, 15.

Long Eaton and Stapleford are referred to in Smith's *Nottingham Brief*, there is no suggestion from him that they should be incorporated into NCB. The broad thrusts of Smith's *Nottingham Brief* are clear. A conurbation existed, centred upon Nottingham and its five adjoining UDs, and was, 'in the south west... continued via Beeston and Stapleford across the county boundary into the Long Eaton and Sandiacre areas of Nottingham'.¹²² However, Smith viewed it as more appropriate for the workings of the HLGC that Nottingham was seen in terms of its being a continuous conurban area, centred upon NCB and either four or five of its immediate adjoining UDs.¹²³

The submissions of Powell and Edwards

The opinions and facts presented to the Commissioners by Smith were subsequently supplemented by the submissions forwarded by the Nottingham University academics, A.G. Powell (in January 1961) and K.C. Edwards (in February 1962). Whereas Smith had offered alternative views to the Commission as to what constituted the Greater Nottingham area, Powell was categorical in his opinion. He stated that the configuration of administrative authorities that adjoined NCB (his 'Nottingham continuous urban area') comprised 'NCB and the built up parts of the adjacent urban districts'¹²⁴ but not Hucknall, for it was 'a mining community different in character and with an individuality of its own'.¹²⁵

Like Smith's *Nottingham Brief*, Powell's submission also commented upon the wider area and the extent to which the city's influence (both direct and indirect) extended

¹²² *Ibid.*, p. 1. Such a configuration (including Long Eaton and Sandiacre's combined population of 31,170) would have promoted Nottingham to being the seventh largest conurbation in England (including London) with a population of 511,000.

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ PRO T184/298, A.G. Powell, Submission to the Commissioners, 16th January 1962, p. 6.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 1. This was, therefore, a definition that concurred with the geo-administrative make-up of the Nottingham conurbation previously proffered in both 1922 and 1932 by Fawcett; respectively, 'British Conurbations' and 'Distribution of the Urban Population'.

westward towards the Derbyshire boundary. In so doing, Powell contrasted his aforementioned ‘continuous urban area’ – which was effectively an inner-ring limit of Nottingham – based upon a continuous urban landscape of industry and housing supplemented by corporation supplied transportation, with NCB’s outer-ring of influence. The latter, he proclaimed, was the ‘true limit of Greater Nottingham’, delineated by ‘the line of the London-Leeds motorway to the west of Long Eaton’.¹²⁶ Moreover, though he dismissed the idea of there being a separateness between NCB and Beeston, opining that ‘the plain between Nottingham and Beeston [was] ripe for further industrialisation’, Powell did suggest that there was a case for treating the Stapleford half of the Beeston and Stapleford UD differently from that of Beeston’s (with regards to its quantifiable relationship with NCB).¹²⁷ In furthering this line, Powell drew the Commissioners’ attention to the 1949 *Journey to Work Survey*, noting that while

over 40 per cent of all workers leaving Arnold, Carlton and West Bridgford work in the city... [and that] the same is true for the Beeston, Chilwell and Bramcote sectors of Beeston and Stapleford UD... for Stapleford itself less than 20 per cent of the out-moving workers travel to Nottingham; the main movements being to the west and south into the Erewash Valley industrial unit on the Derbyshire border.¹²⁸

In addition, Powell highlighted the geographic separation that existed between the towns of Beeston and Stapleford, and argued that the gap between them was ‘quite different in character’ from that betwixt NCB and Beeston.¹²⁹ Thus, the latter via the grounds of the University of Nottingham and Wollaton Park (Figure 6.8) was

properly regarded as urban open space and part of the internal open space system to the whole system... [with] regional urban uses proper to a provincial capital... used without discrimination by the residents of the

¹²⁶ PRO T184/298, A.G. Powell, Submission to the Commissioners, 16th January 1962, p. 6.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

built-up area as a whole... the gap between Beeston and Stapleford... being farm and market garden land with poor access from either side... is intended to serve as part of the Nottingham green belt by the county (who thereby themselves recognise and propose to perpetuate the division between Beeston and Stapleford).¹³⁰

Accordingly Powell proposed, given this differentiation, and Stapleford's shared communities of industry and employment linkages with Sandiacre and the Erewash Valley, that a divorce of the two halves of the Beeston and Stapleford UD would not only produce 'a Greater Nottingham [that] is a strong and single entity', but also provide, if Stapleford were transferred to administrative Derbyshire, a future governance solution for the 'Lower Erewash Valley communities... [making] possible the creation of a single district in the Lower Erewash Valley'.¹³¹ Powell's submission therefore offered salient comments to the HLGC with regard to NCB and its immediate urban district neighbours. Further, it provided an alternate future governance proposal for those urban authorities and predominantly urban parishes that lay between the present western boundary of NCB, the western-focused extremities of its perceived zone of influence, and the eastern extremities of Derby County Borough's zone of influence (as noted in Chapter Five).

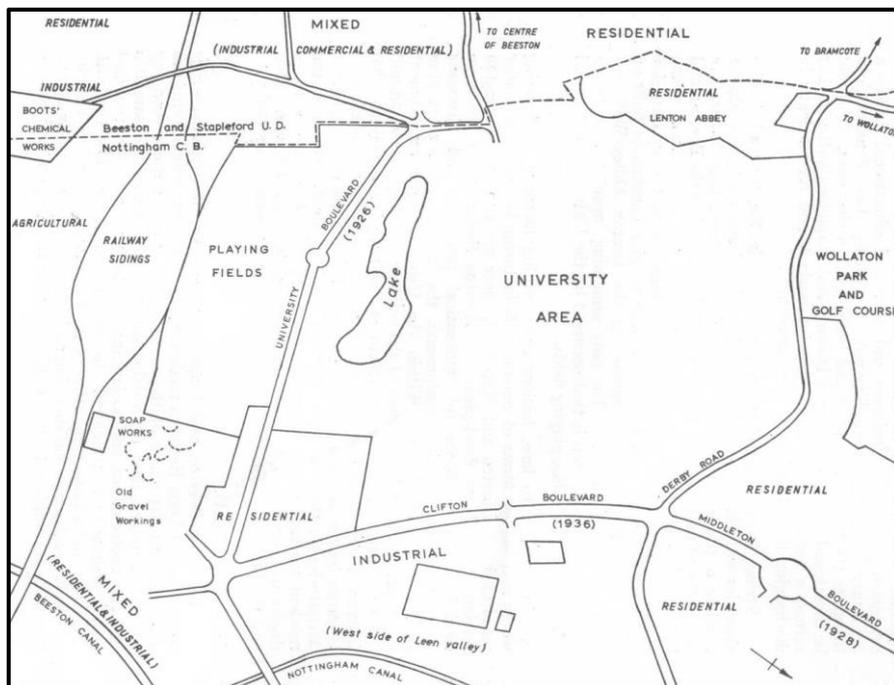
¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

Figure 6.8: Urban land usage across the Nottingham County Borough and Beeston and Stapleford Urban District administrative boundary



This contemporaneous aerial view, taken from the north-east, shows the university area, with lake, playing fields (both university and public) and railway sidings on the Nottingham-Derby line to the left. The top of the map, on the right hand side shows the merging of residential districts belonging to Nottingham (beneath the dashed white line) and Beeston (above). The dashed white line denotes the administrative boundary between the two authorities. At the bottom of the map can be seen the mixed residential and industrial area forming part of Nottingham.



Source:

K.C. Edwards, 'The Nottingham Conurbation', *East Midland Geographer*, 3:2 (1962), pp. 67-68.

Like Smith, Edwards also advocated the existence of a Nottingham conurbation, though he used the term ‘conurbation’ interchangeably with that of ‘the Nottingham urban complex’, which was seemingly of his own devising.¹³² In giving form to his urban complex/conurbation concept, his submission drew attention (unlike the others) to the social and recreational role that NCB performed for the wider area as well as its dependence upon its immediate UD neighbours for certain recreational facilities. The regional significance of the University was thus contrasted with NCB’s reliance upon those neighbours for the siting of the racecourse (Carlton UD), the Trent Bridge Cricket Ground, Nottingham Forest’s ground (both in West Bridgford UD), and the location of the Nottingham Rugby Football ground (Beeston and Stapleford UD), while the wider area’s counter-reliance upon NCB for shopping and dancing facilities was highlighted.¹³³ All these aspects of urban life were thus presented by Edwards, regardless of their precise geographic location, as being parts of a single, greater, urban whole.

Edwards’ Nottingham conurbation thus, in the first instance, comprised each of the adjoining UDs as well as Long Eaton and Hucknall, and was based on concepts advanced by Geddes (as previously noted), for the relationship between its component parts was one of inter-dependence. This was an observation furthered by Edwards not only with reference to recreational and leisure pursuits but also matters of industry and employment. He thus proposed that Beeston and Stapleford, Arnold, Carlton, West Bridgford, Hucknall, and Long Eaton UDs were

industrial satellites... heavily dependent upon the City of Nottingham for major services and to a large extent for sources of employment... [and that] the whole urban complex... comprises a highly industrialised area in which many of the principal activities.... are interdependent, while

¹³² PRO T184/277, K.C. Edwards, Submission to the Commissioners, February 1962.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

others... are closely inter-related... [and as a result] the daily journey to work presents a highly complex pattern of movement.¹³⁴

Edwards' submission also agreed with Smith that Clifton and West Bridgford were 'two adjacent units... both overwhelmingly residential in character and heavily dependent on Nottingham'.¹³⁵ Further, he concurred with Powell's observations as to the friction that existed between the towns of Stapleford and Beeston, noting that that the union of the two separate urban districts had

initially presented the appearance of a "*mariage de convenance*" for the two areas had few common interest and the two centres, sited three miles apart, had, and still have, no direct means of communication... [and that a significant number of resident workers] travelled outward to Long Eaton, to the Stanton Ironworks in the Erewash Valley [in SEDRD], and to the Courtauld (British Celanese) works at Spondon near Derby [also in SEDRD].¹³⁶

However, Edwards disagreed with Powell's contention that these were grounds upon which to separate Stapleford from the rest of Greater Nottingham. Rather, the former argued that such complex movements of workforce populations showed not only 'the integration of the whole area' but also that 'Beeston and Nottingham are each important dormitories for the other'.¹³⁷ While such a conclusion had validity for Beeston's relationship with NCB, it did little to explain how Stapleford was 'an integral part of the Nottingham urban complex' except as a by-product of its 1935 administrative union with Beeston.¹³⁸ Edwards' further averred that 'employment provision in the Urban District [of Beeston and Stapleford] is distinctly in excess of the resident working population'¹³⁹ and was a comment designed to show the

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

¹³⁹ 'There is a net inward daily movement of 5,000 persons, including 1,300 females, chiefly from Nottingham... [to] the Beeston Boiler works, and the large establishments of Boots and Ericssons', *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

employment-related interdependence of the entire UD and NCB. However, this study suggests that the comment underlined the extent to which Beeston alone (within the UD) was interdependent with NCB and that the two halves of the UD did not work as one.

The failure of Edwards' submission to offer quantifiable data by which to validate all his assertions can also be seen with regard to his reasons that Long Eaton was also an integral part of the 'Nottingham urban complex'. Beyond stating that many of Long Eaton's residents were dependent upon the city for weekly shopping and entertainment; that the town's 'economy closely resemble[d] that of Nottingham;... and that its lace and hosiery manufacturing actually developed as an offshoot of Nottingham',¹⁴⁰ Edwards presented no contemporary data that such dependency was anything more than the affinity of dependence which was to be expected of a smaller to a larger area.

Such characteristics may also be seen in Edwards' views on Hucknall's relationship with NCB. Notwithstanding the fact that Edwards commented upon the historic opinion of NCC with regard to Hucknall – that 'it [was] important to treat Hucknall as part of the Nottingham conurbation and not as an isolated town'¹⁴¹ – the rest of his comments relating to Hucknall undermined this observation. Thus, his submission drew attention to the 'tenuous' nature of the ribbon development from the city towards Hucknall (extending for only 'about a mile'); noted the separate industrial (coal mining) employment structure of the town; and further suggested that, at a

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

similar distance to Long Eaton ‘of seven miles from the centre of the city... the built-up area of Hucknall [remained] still distinct from that of the city’.¹⁴²

Given such anomalies within his submission relating to the relationship between NCB and, respectively, Long Eaton, Beeston and Stapleford, and Hucknall, Edwards provided a ‘modified definition of the conurbation’.¹⁴³ He accordingly noted that while his original definition of the conurbation ‘represent[ed] the full extent of the built-up area having Nottingham as its focus, for planning purposes there may well be grounds for excluding both Long Eaton and Hucknall’.¹⁴⁴ Edwards drew attention to the fact that

the economy of the Nottingham conurbation continues to expand... [I]ts rate of unemployment [is] slight, being well below the national average... [whilst] under present policy the Board of Trade is unlikely to permit the introduction of further large-scale industrial enterprises... Many existing undertakings continue to grow and considerable expansion in service activities is to be expected.¹⁴⁵

From this and his further observations relating to national trends in household size, the rate of population and household increases in the census decade 1951-1961 in Nottingham (24,145 and 17,698 respectively), and the continued programmes of slum clearance and redevelopment, Edwards proffered four conclusions. First, he suggested that ‘the net need for additional dwellings in the conurbation appear[ed] likely to be 40-45,000 dwellings by 1980’.¹⁴⁶ Secondly, as a consequence of both average densities of between 11 and 12 dwellings per acre (based on national guidelines and subsidence risks over much of the area), and the decline in the available acreage of already earmarked development land (as a consequence of

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

existing redevelopment programmes), there would be a shortage of available residential land in the existing development plans of both NCB and NCC equating to approximately 30,000 homes. Thirdly, to address these problems, territorial expansion of NCB was needed ‘beyond merely repeating the process... of the late nineteenth century... [in which] small centres of industry and related urban growth then outside Nottingham, were brought into the city’.¹⁴⁷ Finally, Edwards believed that land for residential purposes was ‘most likely to be obtainable on the eastern side of the conurbation and on the south side across the Trent, whereas expansion in employment [was] more likely to occur on the west’.¹⁴⁸ This was a factor that he suggested would increase as a consequence of the completion of the London-Yorkshire (M1) motorway. Thus, through Edwards’s re-definition, there was a broad consensus of opinion presented to the HLG by Smith, Powell and Edwards, as to the immediate geographic and economic zone of influence of NCB, the need for further boundary expansion, and the general industrial and social characteristics of the wider area.

In subsequently visiting the Nottingham area in April 1961, and thereafter publishing their recommendations for the future governance requirements of Nottingham in September 1962, the Commissioners concurred with the opinions advanced by Smith with regards to party politics and largely validated the viewpoints furthered by Powell and Edwards.¹⁴⁹ In commenting upon the reliability of the submissions that they had received from local authorities, the Commissioners noted that they had ‘in

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ PRO T183/5, HLG, Press Release, Statement and Accompanying Notes Relating to the Draft Proposals for Nottingham, 5th September 1962.

no case felt able to accept in full the case made by the county borough'.¹⁵⁰ Further, as a consequence of

neither the county borough council, the county council nor the district councils round Nottingham mak[ing] any suggestions for altering the present area of the city... [the HLGc had] made their own assessment of the position in and around Nottingham... The role of the Commission [was] not merely to consider suggestions from local authorities [but was] required by the [1958 Local Government] Act and regulations to review the organisation of local government and to make any proposals which appear to them to be desirable in the interests of effective and convenient local government.¹⁵¹

In the minutes of the HLGc meeting that followed their visit to the Nottingham area, it was recorded, first, that West Bridgford 'is very much part of Nottingham'; secondly, that 'the links of Nottingham and Carlton are very strong'; and thirdly, that 'the dependency of Arnold and Carlton... is shown by the absence of any significant shopping centre'.¹⁵² Finally, the Commissioners declared, in contrast, that Hucknall, with 'its own Woolworths and Boots', provided them with 'little justification for including Hucknall in the [Nottingham] County Borough'.¹⁵³ With regard to the future governance arrangements for Beeston and Stapleford, such certainty is not evident. The minutes observe that Beeston's dependency upon NCB was 'less strong than Arnold and Carlton',¹⁵⁴ that the 'the link between Stapleford and Nottingham is tenuous',¹⁵⁵ and that 'a case could be made out for including Stapleford with Beeston in the county borough or for leaving it with the county... [or] for it to be joined with Sandiacre in Derbyshire'.¹⁵⁶ Nevertheless, between that meeting and the publication

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² PRO T184/298, HLGc, Minutes of Meeting, 14th April 1961, to discuss extensions to NCB following the visit of Messrs Storey, Woodhead, and Knox to the Nottingham area on 10th April 1961.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ PRO T183/5, HLGc, Press Release, Statement and Accompanying Notes Relating to the Draft Proposals for Nottingham, 5th September 1962, p. 8.

of the *Draft Proposals for Nottingham*, such ‘concerns’ had been overcome and accordingly, the HLGc asserted that Beeston was

physically a continuation of the city... [and that Stapleford] should be included with Beeston within the extended county borough [for this would] not only cause less disturbance to the administration of local services, but would include within the county borough the only large area of undeveloped land in the fringe areas that is free from subsidence.¹⁵⁷

The *Draft Proposals for Nottingham* therefore recommended expanding NCB to incorporate the entirety of two of its abutting urban districts (Carlton and West Bridgford); the vast majority of Beeston and Stapleford;¹⁵⁸ the southern, boundary-adjointing, ‘developed part of the urban district of Arnold’;¹⁵⁹ small parts of three parishes from within the two rural districts of Basford and Bingham; and a small strip of land ‘lying east of the new course of the River Erewash in the urban district of Long Eaton and in the parish of Sandiacre in South East Derbyshire Rural District’.¹⁶⁰ Thus, if the proposals were enacted, NCB ‘would have an area of 34,170 acres, a population of 463,000 and a rateable value of £6,728,000 [*sic*; £20,828,000]’,¹⁶¹ respective increases of 86 per cent, 48 per cent, and 41 per cent in rateable income (Figure 6.9).¹⁶²

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸ As part of a wider ‘tidying up’ of administrative county boundaries, it was proposed that the small part of Beeston and Stapleford UD ‘lying west of the new course of the River Erewash’ should be ceded to Derbyshire and the jurisdiction of Long Eaton Urban District Council, and a corresponding part ceded to Nottinghamshire. HLGc, *Report No. 8*, p. 105.

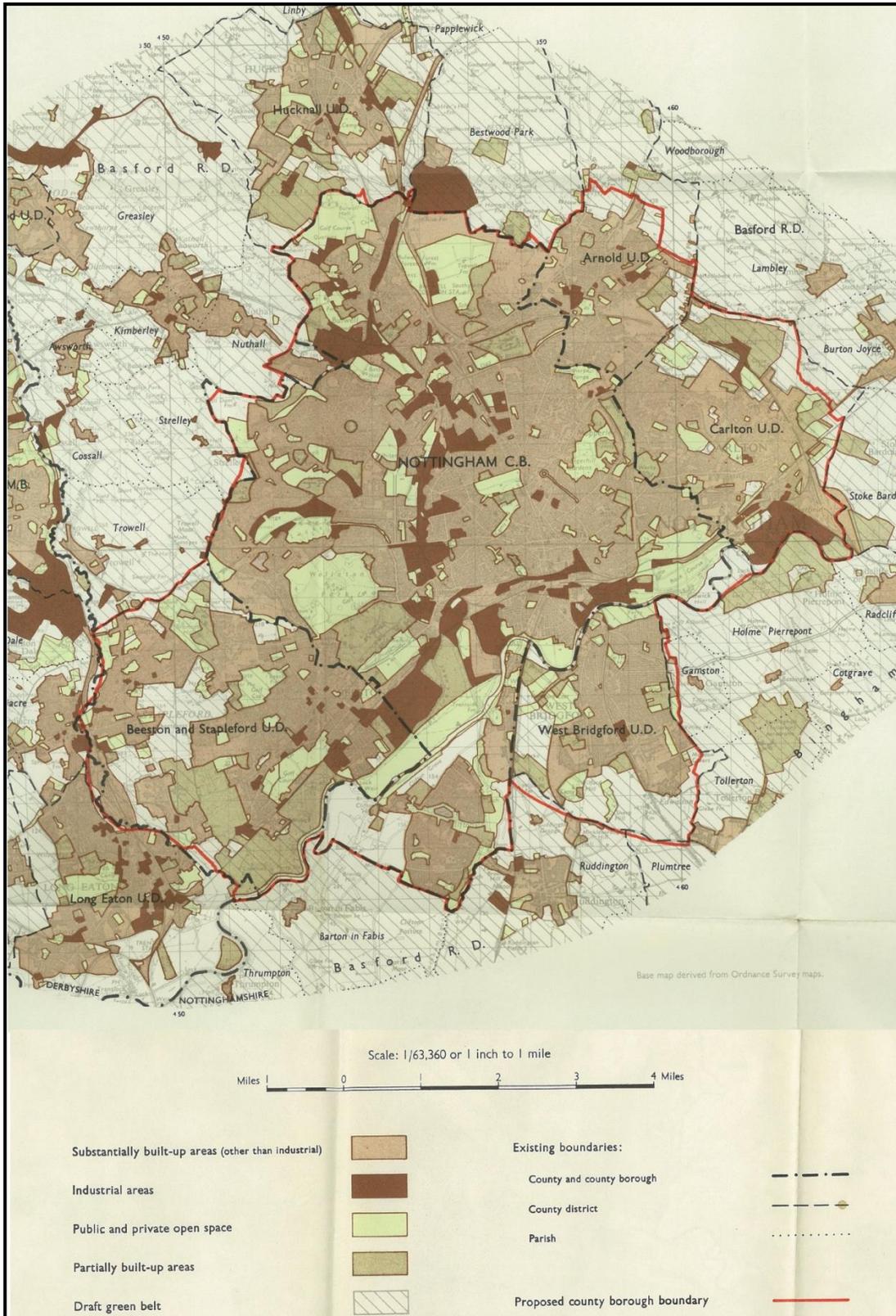
¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 105-106.

¹⁶¹ PRO T183/5, HLGc, Press Release, Statement and Accompanying Notes Relating to the Draft Proposals for Nottingham, 5th September 1962, p. 9. The figure given in the *Press Release* is wrong – the increase was £6,728,000, to a total of £20,868,000. This error was repeated in the *Draft Proposals for Nottingham* section of *Report No. 8*, p. 106.

¹⁶² Or, 15,800 acres, 150,000 people, and £6,728,000 in rateable value.

Figure 6.9: Pattern of development, with boundaries proposed for Nottingham County Borough by the Hancock Local Government Commission



Source: HLGC, *Report No. 8* (1964), Map 8.

The *Draft Proposals for Nottingham* issued by the HLGC represented a triumph for the reforming agenda and recognised the processes of civic improvement and expansion – especially regarding housing – that had been undertaken by NCB and through which its influence had been extended to separately governed areas (whether rural or urban).¹⁶³ This acknowledgement of urban expansion was evident within the *Draft Proposals for Nottingham* though its application was not absolute, for the existence of distinct communities was still recognised. For example, the HLGC did not recommend the incorporation of the still ruralised portion of Arnold UD or the entirety of Hucknall UD on the basis that they possessed different socio-industrial cultures from that of the continuous urban area centred upon NCB.¹⁶⁴ In the case of Hucknall, there was also an established town centre as well as a geographically separation from the tentacles of NCB's ribbon development.¹⁶⁵

Though not reviewed under the auspices of Special Review Area (conurbation) protocols,¹⁶⁶ such was the nature of the administrative amalgamations proposed, and given the submissions of Powell and Edwards and the minutes of the Commissioners, the HLGC tacitly accepted that NCB had become a conurban area in all but name. Furthermore, in proposing to make its borders synonymous with those of the county (between Long Eaton and Sandiacre) any further future boundary extensions westwards would necessarily result in incursions upon the urban area of DCB. This was subsequently given form in the *Memorandum of Dissent* by Derek Senior¹⁶⁷ to

¹⁶³ Thereby showing its ability to govern properly. The Commissioners themselves noted 'to say that there is one problem for the city and another for the four adjoining urban areas appears... to them untenable'. PRO T183/5, HLGC, Press Release, Statement and Accompanying Notes Relating to the Draft Proposals for Nottingham, 5th September 1962, p. 11.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁶ Though the HLGC had powers under the Act to add areas to the Special Review Area other than those defined by the Registrar General, it did not exercise such powers anywhere in the country.

¹⁶⁷ Derek Senior was a well-respected specialist journalist who rose to prominence at the national conference of the Town and Country Planning Association in December 1964. Subsequently he wrote

the majority report of the Royal Commission on Local Government in England that had, as noted in Chapter Five, begun its deliberations prior to the publication of HLGC's *Draft Proposals* for YNMGRA.¹⁶⁸

Nevertheless, as the previous chapter explained with regard to DCB, between the publication of draft proposals and the making of a Ministerial Order, elaborate processes of additional consultation had to be undertaken. These processes were not only more laborious than those entered into with regard to DCB, as Chapter Seven discusses, but were, at a ministerial level, subject to greater party political considerations (which can be seen, most particularly, in the diaries of Richard Crossman).¹⁶⁹

extensively on the topic of the 'city-region' and was appointed a member of the Royal Commission on Local Government in England in May 1966.

¹⁶⁸ Royal Commission on Local Government in England, Vol. 2, *Memorandum of Dissent by Mr D. Senior*, 1969 [Cmnd 4040-1]. The *Memorandum of Dissent* was longer than the final report of the Royal Commission on Local Government in England, Vol. 1, 1969 [Cmnd 4040].

¹⁶⁹ R.H. Crossman, *The Diaries of a Cabinet Minister. Vol. I: Minister of Housing 1964-1966* (London, 1975).

Chapter Seven

Nottingham and the HLGC: Reactions and Reconsiderations

Chapter Six analysed the initial workings of the Hancock Local Government Commission (HLGC) with regard to the future governance requirements of Nottingham County Borough and the wider Nottingham area. In so doing, issues pertaining to longer-term civic desires to refine the city's image and the effects of increased levels of municipal house building upon an expansion of the townscape were discussed, as well as how these contributed to the extent of Nottingham's pull-effect and conurban tendencies. The chapter also assessed the differing contributions that the HLGC received from local bodies, academics, and political parties during the period of its initial consultations, including the background to the decision by the Labour-controlled Nottingham County Borough (NCB) not to proffer suggestions for its urban expansion.

It was also suggested that NCB and Nottingham County Council (NCC) contrived to continue the *status quo* for the sake of the maintenance of party political electoral strengths at city and county levels. In Chapter Seven, this is further explored, including the national repercussions perceived by the Minister of Housing and Local Government, Richard Crossman. Such collusion between NCB and NCC hindered the functioning of the HLGC – compared to how it had operated elsewhere – for it meant that the Commissioners were compelled to undertake a more in-depth review of the area in order to devise their own proposals for Nottingham's future governance. In

due course, therefore, the HLGC recommended, in its *Draft Proposals for Nottingham* of September 1962, that NCB should be almost doubled in acreage.¹

In focussing upon Nottingham, this chapter evaluates the nature of the responses received by the HLGC to its *Draft Proposals for Nottingham* by both individuals and the local authorities affected by its recommendations. To accomplish this, consideration is given to submissions made in response to the *Draft Proposals for Nottingham* and at the statutory conference held by the HLGC in Nottingham in May 1963. Additionally, although academics such as K.C. Edwards and A.G. Powell did not elaborate on the submissions they made prior to the *Draft Proposals for Nottingham*,² the submissions by local authorities and individuals are analysed in the context of the theories posed by the traditionalist and reforming schools that such academic opinions represented.

Thereafter, the chapter reflects upon the final proposals of the HLGC review process within *Report No. 8* in June 1964³ and the subsequent public inquiry. Particular attention is paid to the clash between the Commissioners' proposals and the wishes of the communities that would be affected by the incorporation of the urban districts of Arnold, Beeston and Stapleford, Carlton, and West Bridgford into NCB. The publication of Sir Edward Ritson's *Report of the Inspector* in June 1965⁴ was the final step in the consultation process prior to the deliberation by the Minister whether to act upon the Commission's proposals. Ritson presented the argument for incorporation as being finely balanced, noting that any decision with regard to the

¹ PRO T183/5, HLGC, *Draft Proposals for Nottingham*, September 1962.

² See Chapter Six.

³ Hancock Local Government Commission (HLGC), *Report No. 8, Report and Proposals for the York and North Midlands General Review Area* (London, 1964).

⁴ E.H. Ritson, *Report of the Inspector Appointed by the Minister of Housing and Local Government to Hear Objections to the Proposals of the Local Government Commission for England for the City of Nottingham and the Surrounding Areas* (London, 1965).

expansion of NCB would be taken not only upon the evidence rendered but also on ministerial discretion. Underpinning each of these distinctive parts of the chapter is the Commissioners' remit that local government reform was to guarantee the creation of 'effective and convenient' units of administration.⁵

The contention of the HLGC that the *Draft Proposals for Nottingham* fulfilled this requirement was persistently challenged by community groups, individuals, the four urban districts affected, NCC, and (for the most part) even the intended beneficiary of expansion, NCB. Each urban district was anxious to retain the existing framework and boundaries of local government, and safeguard against the threat of homogenisation, as were the groups and communities that objected to the proposals. However, the number and nature of local reactions to the HLGC's proposals differed, depending upon the geographic area from which they originated. It is suggested that this reflected not only issues of localism but also the socio-economic profiles of the communities involved.

Public reactions to the *Draft Proposals for Nottingham*

In the period between the HLGC's publication of the *Draft Proposals for Nottingham* in September 1962,⁶ and the statutory conference for Nottingham,⁷ the Commissioners were inundated with letters of objection to their proposals.⁸ In contrast to the experience of the HLGC with relation to Derby County Borough (DCB) – where the letters of objections had been overwhelmingly institutional in nature – those received with regard to NCB contained a far greater number of

⁵ Ministry of Housing and Local Government, SI 2115/1958, *The Local Government Commission Regulations* (1958).

⁶ PRO T183/5, HLGC, *Draft Proposals for Nottingham*.

⁷ Held on the 29th and 30th May 1963, in the City Police Headquarters, Nottingham.

⁸ Both within the official period in which comments upon the *Draft Proposals for Nottingham* could be made (until 29th October 1962), and thereafter.

responses from individual persons. Though there were some letters of objection from residents and organisations based in the urban districts of Arnold and Carlton – in addition to some 720 and 1,515 pre-printed postcards from these two areas respectively – the majority of individually written responses to the Commission came from residents of the two urban districts of West Bridgford, and Beeston and Stapleford.⁹

Three months after its establishment in September 1962, the Voluntary Action Committee for the Defence of West Bridgford published a leaflet entitled *Local Government Commission Draft Proposals: Points to Ponder*.¹⁰ Delivered to all households within the urban district, this grass-roots organisation rallied local residents, declaring that only the efforts of local residents would stop incorporation, and imploring them to write to the Commission and their local MP. In providing residents with nine points against the proposals, it reiterated aspects of the traditionalist school of local government with regard to the benefits of local representation;¹¹ countered the geographic argument that had previously been made that the River Trent was a common link between Nottingham and West Bridgford rather than an obstacle;¹² challenged the reforming contentions that larger authorities brought with them improved service provision;¹³ and suggested that the HLGC did not acknowledge local sensibilities.¹⁴

In addressing these varied points, *Points to Ponder* claimed that the inherent democratic strengths of localism would be diminished through the HLGC's *Draft*

⁹ PRO T183/5, HLGC, *Draft Proposals for Nottingham*.

¹⁰ PRO T184/283, Voluntary Action Committee for the Defence of West Bridgford (VACDWB), *Local Government Commission Draft Proposals: Points to Ponder*, November 1962.

¹¹ See Chapter Four.

¹² C.B. Fawcett, 'British Conurbations in 1921', *The Sociological Review*, 14:2 (1922), pp. 111-122, 112-113. See also Chapter Six.

¹³ PRO T184/283, VACDWB, *Points to Ponder*, points 3 and 4.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, point 8.

Proposals for Nottingham because it would mean that ‘you can no longer go the [town] Hall and see your own local Council officials who are concerned only with West Bridgford... Local needs will be... swallowed up in a large city council... [that will be] unable to devote so much time to West Bridgford’.¹⁵ Further, the leaflet conveyed a concern that local rates would not only be increased as a consequence of incorporation, but also that those rates would be expended on serving other parts of the ‘new’ authority, rather than solely on services for West Bridgford. In elaborating upon this, *Points to Ponder* implied that services would not be improved by the establishment of larger units of local administration; indeed, the leaflet asserted that the HLGC’s proposals brought ‘no compensating advantage for West Bridgford’.¹⁶ Such localism with regard to the allocation of rates was matched by an expressed fear that residents would face other additional financial burdens in the event of West Bridgford disappearing into the greater morass of NCB. Thus residents were warned, for instance, that ‘car insurance will automatically be increased by the transfer of your garage from a county area to a city area’,¹⁷ underlining the socio-economic differences apparent within West Bridgford compared to the rest of the greater Nottingham area.¹⁸

Within its publication, the Voluntary Action Committee also suggested that the proposed amalgamation of West Bridgford with NCB threatened ‘the natural boundaries’¹⁹ of the area, and that ‘the concentration of main services and administration in the City will make it necessary... more often to make the

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, points 2 and 3.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, point 9.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, point 7.

¹⁸ R.H. Osborne, ‘A Road Traffic Census at Trent and Clifton Bridges, Nottingham’, *East Midland Geographer*, 16 (1961), pp. 49-59, 51.

¹⁹ PRO T184/283, VACDWB, *Points to Ponder*, point 1.

troublesome journey over Trent Bridge'.²⁰ This was a point that, though written to spur residents into action, nevertheless ignored some everyday realities: first, West Bridgford Urban District operated its own bus service into Nottingham city centre.²¹ Secondly, the regular traffic censuses taken by the Geography Department of the University of Nottingham illustrated a year-on-year rise in the number of journeys across Trent Bridge.²²

Indeed, the traffic censuses contributed not only quantitative traffic figures but advanced qualitative reasons for some of those figures. The traffic census of 1961 found, for instance, that during the post-rush hour decline in traffic between 9:45 am and 11:45 am, a spike in traffic occurred between 10:15 and 10:30; this was attributed to 'the shopping habits of car-owning West Bridgford housewives'.²³ Further, the spike in the number of cars returning to the city between 2:00 pm and 2:15 pm was due 'to the after-lunch return to work in Nottingham by persons living in West Bridgford'.²⁴ Such trends were not replicated in the other major Trent crossing, the Clifton Bridge, which led Osborne to conclude that a higher proportion of commuters lunched at home in West Bridgford, compared to those elsewhere in the wider Nottingham area.²⁵

West Bridgford was noticeably different from Nottingham. Between 1951 and 1965, West Bridgford had a higher proportion of car ownership and the highest proportion

²⁰ *Ibid.*, point 5.

²¹ West Bridgford Urban District Council (Passenger Transport Department), *Golden Jubilee: 1914-1964: Fare and Timetable: All Routes* (Nottingham, 1964).

²² Osborne, 'A Road Traffic Census at Trent and Clifton Bridges'. The Trent Bridge Traffic Census of 1954 showed that between 1950 and 1954, the number of vehicles using the bridge between the hours of 6 am and 10 pm had grown by about 30 per cent. Between 1954 and 1961, a further rise of 32% was evident, pp. 51-52.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

of private housing in Greater Nottingham,²⁶ which corresponded with Osborne's observation that West Bridgford was 'one of Greater Nottingham's foremost residential areas for professional and clerical workers'.²⁷ This was not only a factor for British-born residents. The political geographer, Sohail Husain, asserted that in contrast to those who settled elsewhere in the wider area, the New Commonwealth immigrants in West Bridgford were 'well-educated, well-spoken, and successful', were more likely to have an English spouse than elsewhere in the wider Nottingham area, possessed 'weaker connections with the Asian community... [and were] keen to adopt a wholly English way of life'.²⁸ Finally, Powell noted that the rate of natural increase in West Bridgford over a twenty-year period was 'exceptionally low' at 0.2%.²⁹ This was an increase of fewer than forty births more than deaths, which represented the 'very character' of the urban district,³⁰ and was in direct contrast to all of the other 'suburban districts around Nottingham [which] show[ed] rates of natural increase well above the county average'.³¹ West Bridgford was therefore an area that experienced minimal change and the subsumption of the urban district into a wider Nottingham would not only have brought change, but also would have meant that West Bridgford was no longer unique.

Those who sought the 'defence of West Bridgford' felt that their identity as a separate and distinct part within the county of Nottinghamshire was threatened, and

²⁶ K.C. Edwards, 'The East Midlands Urban Region', *East Midland Geographer*, 4:2 (1966), pp. 63-72, p. 69. See Chapter Six.

²⁷ Osborne, 'A Road Traffic Census at Trent and Clifton Bridges', p. 56. See also A.G. Powell, 'The 1951 Census: (3) An Analysis of Population Changes in Nottinghamshire', *East Midland Geographer*, 4 (1955), pp. 29-41; see Chapter Six.

²⁸ M.S. Husain, 'The Increase and Distribution of New Commonwealth Immigrants in Greater Nottingham', *East Midland Geographer*, 6:3 (1975), p. 121-122. The period to which he refers is 1951-1971. At the time of publication, M.S. (Sohail) Husain was completing his PhD at the University of Nottingham and was subsequently appointed as a lecturer in the Geography Department of the University of Southampton.

²⁹ Powell, 'The 1951 Census: Nottinghamshire', p. 30.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 30-31. The rates of natural increase were: for the county: 12.3%; for NCB: 9.6%; and for Beeston and Stapleford: 23.3%.

that the ‘pride in and enjoyment of the urban facilities and community life which you have yourselves created [would] be destroyed’ if subsumed into the greater urban mass of NCB.³² The HLGC’s *Draft Proposals for Nottingham* ran contrary to the division of land previously agreed by NCB and NCC; the Voluntary Action Committee denounced the changes as ‘being imposed upon [NCB and NCC] by the gentlemen who compose the Local Government Commission who think they know best’ – and therefore amounted to little more than ‘change for change’s sake’.³³

The themes of distinctiveness and civic independence from Nottingham found in the *Points to Ponder* leaflet were duly repeated and augmented in the letters received by the HLGC from West Bridgford residents. Mrs H.A. O’Hara, for instance, noted that:

West Bridgford has its own weekly paper and mention should be made that it conducted a recent referendum with an overwhelming vote against the Urban District being merged with the City. History should record that in the 1920[s], two public polls were also held on this subject where again people clearly showed they had no wish to merge into Nottingham.³⁴

A Miss Kemp suggested that West Bridgford ‘has developed its own sources of entertainment... and always has a good number of recreational and instructional clubs for all age groups and these are constantly increasing’.³⁵ In addition to such individual responses, the West Bridgford Rotary Club collected a petition of some 13,000 residents’ signatures opposing incorporation (approximately half the population of West Bridgford at that time).³⁶ The MP for Nottingham South, William Clark, reported that he had received some 160 letters of opposition.³⁷ In keeping with

³² PRO T184/283, VACDWB, *Points to Ponder*, point 6.

³³ *Ibid.*, point 9.

³⁴ PRO T184/283, Mrs H.A. O’Hara, Letter to the Commissioners, 10th October 1962.

³⁵ PRO T184/283, Miss Kemp, Letter to the Commissioners, 12th November 1962.

³⁶ PRO T184/283, Rotary Club of West Bridgford, Letter to the Commissioners, 13th December 1962.

³⁷ William Clark was the Conservative MP for Nottingham South from 1959-1966; for East Surrey 1970-1974, and for Croydon South 1974-1992. Upon his retirement in 1992, he became Baron Clark of Kempston.

the style of organisational responses that the HLGC had received in light of its proposals for DCB, a cornucopia of diverse associations, from the West Bridgford Garden Holders Association, to the Hall Bowling Club, to local political branches, passed resolutions against incorporation and furnished the HLGC with these results.³⁸ In contrast, only one letter of support emanating from West Bridgford is recorded in the communications received by the Commissioners: the Reverend Boulton noted that, for him, ‘it would be a great relief to be able to belong to the City library’.³⁹

Animosity to the proposals was also evident in the responses received by the HLGC from residents and organisations in the Beeston and Stapleford Urban District. Thus not only did the Labour and Conservative Party branches voice opposition to the proposal,⁴⁰ preferring – as had their political counterparts in Derby – a retention of the electoral *status quo*, but also the Chamber of Commerce, the Poultry and Rabbit Club, various churches, the Women’s Institutes of Beeston and Attenborough, and countless trade union branches.⁴¹ Some twenty, almost identical, letters from individual residents, stressing issues such as raised car insurance, and the convenience of the monthly payment of rates,⁴² were also received by the HLGC between the 9th and 13th November 1962.⁴³ This suggests that some form of co-ordinated residential response to the proposals was initiated. However, unlike those

³⁸ PRO T184/283, Letters to the Commissioners, 1962.

³⁹ PRO T184/283, Reverend Peter Boulton, Letter to the Commissioners, 13th November 1962.

⁴⁰ PRO T184/283, Beeston and Stapleford Labour Party and Beeston and Stapleford Conservative Party, Letters to the Commissioners, 11th and 12th November 1962, respectively.

⁴¹ HLGC, *Report No. 8*, Appendix Four: Local authorities and bodies who [*sic*] made representations on the *Draft Proposals for Nottingham*, pp. 148-155.

⁴² Offered by Beeston and Stapleford Urban District but not by NCB.

⁴³ PRO T184/283, Though these fell outside the official comment period (as did many of the responses to the HLGC), the notations upon them suggest that they were nevertheless forwarded to the Commissioners.

in South East Derbyshire Rural District and West Bridgford, there is no recorded evidence of such an organisation within Beeston and Stapleford.

In addition to these ‘formulaic’ letters, there were also two notable letters of objection composed by individuals: Mr Lorendes of Attenborough,⁴⁴ and retired Councillor Stanley Woods, of Stapleford.⁴⁵ These are specifically noted in greater detail for three reasons; first, they were the only two letters that, at this point in the HLGC review, offered sustained critiques of the Commissioners’ *Draft Proposals for Nottingham*. Secondly, both letters proffered reasoned alternative suggestions for the future governance of the wider area. Finally, the espoused ideas linked into developing theoretical models of local governance that came to the political fore at the very end of the study period.⁴⁶

In his letter to the HLGC, Lorendes asserted that if the Commission’s view that ‘the broad ribbon of development along the Derby/Nottingham Road is a reason for joining the Urban District to the city’ was accepted, then the same ‘ribbon development logic’ must also lead to the conclusion that Beeston and Stapleford were similarly linked to Long Eaton, ‘whilst Sandiacre is one with Stapleford’.⁴⁷ However, rather than arguing that these areas should be part of an ever-increasing Nottingham urban area, he suggested that, with regard to local government reform, ‘the logical line-up is the Beeston and Stapleford Urban District Council with Long

⁴⁴ PRO T184/283, Mr Lorendes, Letter to the Commissioners, 10th November 1962.

⁴⁵ PRO T184/283, Mr S. Woods, 30th October 1962. The submission included: an accompanying letter; a copy of his self-published pamphlet, *What Shall We Do with the Erewash Valley?* (Stapleford, 1947); and a document entitled: Comments and Observations: On the recommendations of the Local Government Commission concerning the boundaries of Beeston and Stapleford Urban District Council and the City of Nottingham.

⁴⁶ Such models were evident in the proposals advanced both by the Royal Commission on Local Government and in Derek Senior’s dissenting report thereto. Royal Commission on Local Government in England, Vol. 1, 1969 [Cmnd 4040]; Royal Commission on Local Government in England, Vol. 2, *Memorandum of Dissent by Mr D. Senior*, 1969 [Cmnd 4040-1].

⁴⁷ PRO T184/283, Mr Lorendes, Letter to the Commissioners, 10th November 1962.

Eaton and Sandiacre'.⁴⁸ Combined, a single administrative unit covering the southern quartile of the Erewash Valley and crossing the existing Nottinghamshire/Derbyshire border would check NCB's unceasing conurban tendencies westward, providing an urban counter-point. A boundary transgression across the two counties was, as has been noted, not permissible under the review protocols governing General Review Areas (GRAs). This suggests, again, that the area should have been considered under the terms of a Special Review Area.

Retired Councillor Woods's substantial submission to the Commission included not only a detailed critique of the Commission's proposals, as well as his own proposals, but also the enclosure of the pamphlet that he had written in 1947 on local governance entitled, *What Shall We Do with the Erewash Valley?*.⁴⁹ Involved with local politics at a district level for fifty years, he felt that the 'unholy marriage' of Stapleford to Beeston was a deeply 'unsatisfactory experience', which had led to his actively, if unsuccessfully, seeking its annulment ever since.⁵⁰ Woods proposed a model of reform that, at first glance, may have seemed to be an unbridgeable paradigm. This is because he sought to protect the traditionalist elements of local government, specifically rejecting the idea of Beeston and Stapleford's amalgamation with Nottingham. Simultaneously, he countenanced the need for greater service areas to be established and dismissed the sanctity of the county. Woods claimed that

the residents of [Beeston and Stapleford] would not benefit in the slightest degree by any of the [HLGC's] recommendations... for the last twenty-seven years, the Beeston and Stapleford UD has proved... quite capable of looking after itself and the rate-payers; it has been highly efficient... The limitations imposed on the present Commission are much too narrow... by dealing with this part of the country in a piece-meal fashion – city by city without taking into account the proximity of

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ PRO T184/283, Woods, *What Shall We Do with the Erewash Valley?*.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

neighbouring townships. This whole area, within a radius of some thirty miles or more, is to-day heavily populated. Thus... instead of dealing with Derby and Nottingham as separate, isolated units, their close proximity and the intervening countryside should have been taken as the ruling factor.⁵¹

These comments echoed aspects of the contentions previously furthered by Edwards and Powell, and highlighted the difficulties imposed by GRA status. Further, aspects of Woods's model were compatible with the developing ideas relating to the existence of city regions that were given academic form in the writings of Senior.⁵²

Even though Woods acknowledged the process of urban expansion, he argued that the future governance needs of the wider Nottingham-Derby area had not been well served by the GRA approach adopted by the Commissioners and that it was a folly to make proposals that would see the two county boroughs increasingly coalesce.⁵³ Not prepared to see the intervening villages and communities of the Erewash Valley 'taken over by their bigger neighbours',⁵⁴ he asserted that there was a pressing need for the western boundary of Nottingham and the eastern boundary of Derby to be

fixed permanently, where it is now, freeze it, erect an iron curtain if you like, but fix it there for all time... Keep these two County Boroughs as far apart as possible... to retain the present rural-urban nature of the area between these two boroughs instead of allowing them to spread into a great sprawling, Manchester-like area of houses, factories, shops and sky-scrapers.⁵⁵

In so doing, Woods rejected the argument that Nottingham should be allowed to expand so as to become a conurbation, implying that Nottingham's existing townscape did not exhibit the pre-requisite characteristics necessary to be defined as

⁵¹ PRO T184/283, Woods, Comments and Observations, pp. 1, 3, 6. Mr Woods' extensive underlining and double-underlining have been removed for ease of reading.

⁵² D. Senior, 'The City Region as an Administrative Unit', *Political Quarterly*, 36:1 (1965), pp. 82-91.

⁵³ PRO T184/283, Woods, Comments and Observations, pp. 6-7.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* Geddes defined Manchester as a conurbation in 1915: P. Geddes, *Cities in Evolution* (London, 1915). See also Chapter Six.

such. Woods also warned that without deliberate and preventative measures, such a transformation – ‘too awful to contemplate’ – would be realised.⁵⁶ In rejecting the notion of a takeover of Beeston and Stapleford (and the other authorities) by NCB as an affront to civic pride that would lead to the removal of local accountability, Woods also challenged the existing primacy of the county structure. However, paradoxically, in embracing the reforming agenda, Woods advocated that, particularly with regard to planning, the longer-term needs of the area should be addressed by a single, centralised authority that would ‘cover the whole of the thirty-mile radius... including both Nottingham and Derby, together with the intermediate townships and villages’.⁵⁷ This proposal – with regard to planning – was not, however, a ‘solution’ that represented a radical departure in thinking. Rather, it was an extension of trends already developing within central government that accepted that, for certain policy initiatives, a more expansive geographic focus was necessary. As Osborne notes, this was recognised in the early 1960s, by both Conservative and Labour governments, as they sought to direct regional structures of governance in order to deliver infrastructural and economic growth and improvements.⁵⁸

In seeking support for his assertion that Nottingham was not the ideal urban partner to Beeston and Stapleford Urban District, Woods drew an analogy between the city of Nottingham and a ‘Great Aunt [who] is a proud and beautiful lady; we like to visit her, but... would not dream of moving in to live with her’; though those who visit Nottingham were indeed ‘prepared to pay for the privilege’.⁵⁹ He criticised the

⁵⁶ PRO T184/283, Woods, Comments and Observations, p. 7.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁵⁸ This was realised, for example, in Lord Hailsham’s ‘mission’ to Newcastle in 1963, the undertaking thereafter of a series of regional studies across the nation, and the eventual establishment of Economic Planning Regions by the returned Labour Government of 1964. R.H. Osborne, ‘New Counties for Old in the East Midlands: An Outline Scheme for the Reform of Local Government Areas’, *East Midland Geographer*, 28 (1967) pp. 207-223, pp. 209-210.

⁵⁹ PRO T184/283, Woods, Comments and Observations, p. 5.

proposal for amalgamation on the basis of existing levels of service provision, ease of rate-payment, and the amount of debt with which NCB was saddled. Thus, in noting that the relationship between the city and surrounding districts was mutually advantageous – that while the city did provide amenities, visitors and commuters spent money in the city – Woods contested the validity of the argument usually presented by county boroughs that fringe residents merely exploited their services and conveniences.⁶⁰ This was a point that chimed with the comments previously advanced by Patrick Geddes relating to the way in which the constituent parts of conurbations contributed to the greater whole, and also with the Commissioners’ own observations that Beeston and Stapleford enjoyed a positive net inward flow of workers from the conurbation as a whole.⁶¹

Finally, in making an appeal for the voices of residents to be heard, and exploring the traditionalist theme of local democracy (noting, for instance, that whereas Beeston and Stapleford Urban District had two councillors for every 4,000 people, NCB had only one),⁶² Woods brought into focus that specific part of the Commissioners’ remit that required them to take account of local wishes in their recommendations.⁶³ Thus, he challenged the Commissioners:

Surely, the essence of good government does not for ever revolve around finance. There are other far more vital aspects... what about the happiness and contentment of the people to be governed; their convenience and their safety? Surely these and their wishes are the things which should be considered first and above all.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

⁶¹ See Chapter Six.

⁶² PRO T184/283, Woods, Comments and Observations, p. 3.

⁶³ Ministry of Housing and Local Government, SI 2115/1958, *The Local Government Commission Regulations* (1958). See also J. Stanyer, ‘The Local Government Commissions’, in H.V. Wiseman, (ed.), *Local Government in England 1958-1969* (London, 1970), Table 8, p. 41.

⁶⁴ PRO T184/283, Woods, Comments and Observations, p. 6.

It is therefore evident within both the generic responses received by the HLGC to its *Draft Proposals for Nottingham*, as well as the more detailed submissions of individuals such as Lorendes and Woods, that there was public disappointment with the Commissioners' initial findings. In addition, there existed deep-rooted feelings of separateness from Nottingham (especially vocal in West Bridgford), as well as dissatisfaction with that which was perceived as a piecemeal approach to reviewing the needs of the wider area.

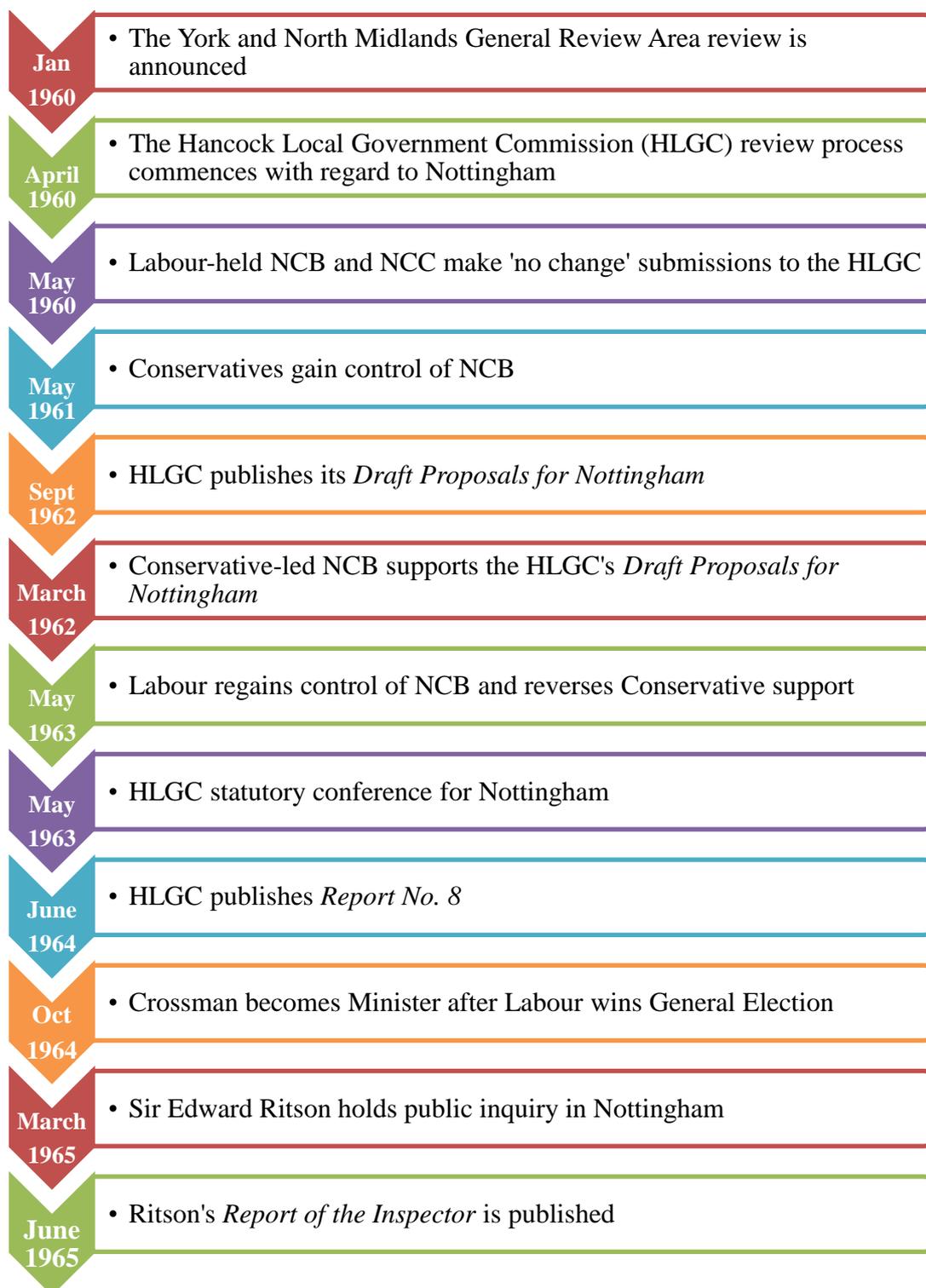
Local authority reactions

It was contended in Chapter Six that, prior to the publication of the *Draft Proposals for Nottingham* by the Hancock Local Government Commission (HLGC) in September 1962, there had been political collusion between the ruling Labour Party groups within Nottingham County Borough (NCB) and Nottingham County Council (NCC) regarding their decisions not to propose any boundary changes to the HLGC. A change in the political control of NCB in the municipal elections of 1961, when the Conservatives became the ruling group, meant that the position of NCB became more complicated.

As can be seen in Figure 7.1, the political vicissitudes of NCB wrought changes upon the process of the HLGC, in so much as policy positions were clearly party-led. The effects of these changes were significant, for the two political parties were diametrically opposed to each other with regard to Nottingham's expansion. The stated position of NCB at the official meetings it held with the Commissioners in the period of initial submissions had resolutely been one of 'no change'.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ See Chapter Six; PRO T184/288, Nottinghamshire County Council, Replies to the Questionnaire Sent by the HLGC, May 1960; and PRO T184/288, Nottingham County Borough, Replies to the Questionnaire Sent by the HLGC, May 1960.

Figure 7.1: Timeline of political changes and the processes of the Hancock Local Government Commission in Nottingham, between January 1960 and June 1965



Subsequently, the HLGC ascertained (in the period between the spring of 1961 and the publication of the *Draft Proposals for Nottingham* in September 1962), that the newly-Conservative NCB would actively support the Commission were it to recommend substantial expansion. As Figure 7.1 demonstrates, however, this support would evaporate upon the re-election of a Labour majority in NCB.

The adoption of support for the Commission's *Draft Proposals for Nottingham* became apparent as a result of confidential meetings in March 1962⁶⁶ held between H.F. Summers, the Secretary of the HLGC, and T.J. Owen, the Town Clerk of NCB; and between Commissioner Bernard Storey and Alderman William Derbyshire, the Conservative Chairman of the Planning Committee. Summers reported to the Commissioners that Owen had promised that, at the statutory conference, NCB would 'support a proposal to include the fringe areas; what he was very anxious not to do was to have the city propose – or be represented as taking an initiative in proposing – these extensions'.⁶⁷ Summers further noted in the same memorandum that he believed that the previous attitude of 'no comment' by NCB was party politically motivated. A week later, Storey described his meeting with Alderman Derbyshire in a letter to Summers, concurring that

[NCB] had made no proposal for a boundary extension to the Commission when the Labour Party was still in control... The Labour Party's real reason was that the incorporation of suburbs would bring advantage to the Conservatives by the addition of wards safe for them.⁶⁸

The change of position taken by NCB is important to note for two reasons. First, it shows a definitive split in positions taken by the local Labour and Conservative

⁶⁶ For which no minutes were taken but from which subsequent memoranda were composed.

⁶⁷ PRO T184/298, Confidential memorandum to Commissioners from Summers following an unrecorded meeting between H.F. Summers and T.J. Owen, Town Clerk of NCB, 22nd March 1962; emphasis in original.

⁶⁸ PRO T184/298 Confidential letter from Commissioner Storey to Summers and the other Commissioners, following a meeting between Storey and Alderman Derbyshire on 28th March 1962, 29th March 1962.

associations that were clearly related to issues of local electoral expediency because, nationally, both parties had adopted a reforming program based on incremental reforms and the expansion of urban influence. Secondly, within NCB, both Labour's failure to promote change, and the Conservatives' subsequent embrace of the HLGC's proposals, illustrate how the differing actions of parties in a local context could have far-reaching implications. For example, a failure to extend boundaries while nevertheless accommodating increasing levels of council housing could ultimately result in a greater necessity for high-rise development. Equally, urban expansion to incorporate more suburban areas had the potential to change the social and electoral character of an area for local, and subsequently, national elections.⁶⁹

In the period of consultation between the HLGC and local authorities that followed the publication of the *Draft Proposals for Nottingham*, Conservative NCB advanced three points in favour of the Commission's findings. First, with regard to the creation of efficient and convenient local units of governance, 'it was self-evident that the replacement of... separate local authorities... by one local authority must result in very substantial improvements in the effectiveness and in the economy of administration'.⁷⁰ Secondly, in commenting upon the continuity of the townscape of Greater Nottingham, NCB noted that 'the existing local government boundaries between the city and the four urban districts are largely artificial and any stranger proceeding through the whole conurbation would regard himself generally as being in Nottingham throughout'.⁷¹ Thirdly, NCB maintained that this visual unity was

⁶⁹ Parliamentary constituency boundaries are based upon a combination of complete local government units within a single administrative county. Consequently, changes to local government boundaries traditionally result in the subsequent realignment of parliamentary constituency boundaries. It follows, therefore, that expansion of county borough boundaries to incorporate suburban fringe areas may thwart existing party political strengths in both city and suburban areas.

⁷⁰ PRO T184/298, Written comments by NCB on the *Draft Proposals for Nottingham*, presented at the meeting between NCB and HLGC, Nottingham Guild Hall, December 1962; emphasis in original.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

mirrored by the ‘close community of interest in so far as work places and amenities are concerned’,⁷² demonstrating the existence of a linked urban sense of belonging. In so doing, therefore, Conservative NCB revealed a wholehearted endorsement of the reforming agenda with regards to the establishment of larger service-provision authorities. This position contrasted with that which was adopted by Conservative-controlled rural authorities such as South East Derbyshire Rural District, where urban expansion was resisted specifically on the basis of community individualism, thereby showing that the absence of direct control by party headquarters allowed greater variance in local policy.

In contrast to NCB’s lone voice of support for the HLGC’s *Draft Proposals for Nottingham* amongst the local authorities affected, Arnold Urban District maintained the position that it had adopted in its preliminary submissions to the HLGC. Accordingly, it noted in consultations prior to the statutory conference⁷³ that the Commission’s claim that Arnold was ‘substantially a continuation of the town area of the county borough’ was based not only on ‘a superficial inspection of the area’ but failed to take account of evidence of a ‘vibrant and strong community life’ in the shape of ‘40 individual clubs and organisations’.⁷⁴ Thereafter, at the conference, Arnold Urban District reiterated these points and further reported that ‘a poll had produced an overwhelming vote [80%] against incorporation’.⁷⁵ The citing of such polls and plebiscites was a recurring feature of defences deployed by authorities threatened with incorporation, as has been noted both in this chapter and Chapter Five. Such reactions underlined the district’s belief in its own individuality, in

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ Held on the 29th and 30th May 1963, in the City Police Headquarters, Nottingham.

⁷⁴ PRO T184/303, Written comments by Arnold Urban District on the *Draft Proposals for Nottingham*, submitted to the HLGC, December 1962; paragraphs 4 and 12.

⁷⁵ View of Arnold Urban District, cited in ‘Reactions to Draft Proposals [for Nottingham]’, HLGC, *Report No. 8*, p. 109.

conjunction with a contention, similarly used by other authorities nation-wide, that any linkages that might exist between the affected urban districts and NCB were no more than ‘those arising from mere proximity’.⁷⁶ These were not grounds upon which urban expansion could be legitimately justified under the terms of the 1958 Local Government Act.⁷⁷

Arnold’s case against incorporation – a repetition of traditionalist arguments pertaining to individuality, local traditions, the need to check unfettered urban expansion and a demand that the wishes of local inhabitants be heard – was echoed by Carlton Urban District. Carlton asserted that, while the Commissioners had chosen ‘to take a quick look around’, their failure to understand the deeper issues of the area meant that the proposals ‘must be regarded [as based] on somewhat tenuous material’ and that there was, upon closer inspection, only ‘a superficial appearance of continuous urban development between itself and the county borough’.⁷⁸

As with the residential responses received, the formal submissions of the urban districts of West Bridgford and Beeston and Stapleford were more substantive than those received from the other urban districts under threat of incorporation. West Bridgford declared that even if the HLGC’s claim that West Bridgford was ‘essentially a dormitory... [was] well founded... it by no means follows that the persons who live in the urban district but work elsewhere see themselves as part of the county borough’.⁷⁹ Further, West Bridgford complained that the work of the committee was inherently ‘quite undemocratic’, for ‘7 persons who have no

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ See Chapter Three.

⁷⁸ PRO T184/303, Written comments by Carlton Urban District on the *Draft Proposals for Nottingham*, submitted to the HLGC, December 1962; paragraphs 3 and 8.

⁷⁹ PRO T184/288, Written comments by West Bridgford Urban District on the *Draft Proposals for Nottingham*, submitted to the HLGC, December 1962, paragraph 6.

connection with West Bridgford [are] considered more important than the views of 27,000 residents', and asserted that 97 per cent of residents opposed incorporation.⁸⁰ Finally, the district drew the attention of the HLGC to the role that the former played in education, providing schooling from primary to tertiary levels for the residents of rural areas such as Bingham and Sutton Bonington. In the event of West Bridgford being transferred to NCB such children would, until new schools were built in the rural areas, have to travel to Newark to attend a county selective school.⁸¹ The Commission's stated aims of optimising efficiency and convenience, therefore, were undermined by this point.

In presenting its opposition to the Commission's *Draft Proposals for Nottingham*, Beeston and Stapleford Urban District took advantage of the fact that the Commission's work had progressed on an area-by-area basis. By the time of the publication of the *Draft Proposals for Nottingham*, the final reports had been published for West Midlands Special Review Area, and the West Midlands and East Midlands GRAs.⁸² Thus Beeston and Stapleford Urban District learnt from the arguments that had been successfully deployed (or otherwise) as a means by which to present information in a manner that would appeal to the Commissioners.

At the statutory conference, therefore, Beeston and Stapleford stated that it was, according to the 1963 *Municipal Journal*, the second largest urban district north of the Home Counties, with a population greater than 80 per cent of the existing

⁸⁰ PRO T184/283, Written comments by West Bridgford Urban District on the *Draft Proposals for Nottingham*, submitted to the HLGC, November 1962, p. 1.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 2-3.

⁸² Hancock Local Government Commission, *Report No. 1, Report and Proposals for the West Midlands Special Review Area* (London, 1961), *Report No. 2, Report and Proposals for the West Midlands General Review Area* (London, 1961), and *Report No. 3, Report and Proposals for the East Midlands General Review Area* (London, 1961).

municipal boroughs.⁸³ This was a contention that Beeston and Stapleford Urban District used to underline its civic independence from Nottingham, reminding the Commissioners that ‘Beeston and Stapleford very substantially exceeds (in population) towns which you have elsewhere considered large enough to provide district services effectively’.⁸⁴ In advancing lines of argument that had previously been deployed by the HLGC as the reasoning behind the decisions not to propose the incorporation of other urban districts that abutted the boundaries of county boroughs, Beeston and Stapleford made specific reference to the HLGC’s *Report No. 4* for the South Western GRA with regard to Bristol.⁸⁵ That this had been published less than three months prior to the Nottingham statutory conference meant that it was more difficult for the Commissioners to try to suggest that their thinking could have radically altered. In commenting upon its own industrial character and inward movement of workers, Beeston and Stapleford Urban District drew the attention of the HLGC to *Report No. 4*, noting that ‘the independent industrial character of the Kingswood Urban District was one of the factors that influenced you [the Commissioners] to propose that Kingswood remain outside Bristol when you formulated the final review for the South Western General Review Area’.⁸⁶

Bristol, in the South Western GRA, like Nottingham in the YNMGRA, had been subject to intense academic debate as to its urban status and the suitability of its future governance arrangements being reviewed under General, rather than Special

⁸³ PRO T184/303, Comments by Beeston and Stapleford Urban District on the *Draft Proposals for Nottingham*, at the statutory conference, 30th May 1963; PRO T184/288, written comments by Beeston and Stapleford Urban District on the *Draft Proposals for Nottingham*, submitted to the HLGC, December 1962 paragraph 6d.

⁸⁴ PRO T184/303, Comments by Beeston and Stapleford Urban District on the *Draft Proposals for Nottingham*, at the statutory conference, 30th May 1963.

⁸⁵ Hancock Local Government Commission, *Report No. 4, Report and Proposals for the South Western General Review Area* (London, 1963).

⁸⁶ PRO T184/303, Comments by Beeston and Stapleford Urban District on the *Draft Proposals for Nottingham*, at the statutory conference, 30th May 1963.

Review Area protocols. As with Nottingham, Bristol was initially categorised as a conurbation by Fawcett in 1922, and ranked as the seventh largest conurbation in England (excluding London). In 1951 and 1959 respectively, G.W.S. Robinson and T.W. Freeman concurred that Bristol and Nottingham were conurbations ‘in all but name’.⁸⁷ However, whereas C.B. Fawcett had ranked the Bristol conurbation one place above that of Nottingham (because he included Kingswood Urban District in his Bristol model), both Robinson and Freeman placed it in eighth place – one ranking below Nottingham.⁸⁸ The HLGC’s exclusion of Kingswood once more illustrated, the difficulty of reaching agreement as to precise external boundaries. Given the similarities between Bristol and Nottingham, Kingswood and Beeston and Stapleford, the parallel point made at the HLGC statutory conference was clear.

Throughout the process of the discussions subsequent to the publication of the *Draft Proposals for Nottingham*, therefore, there had been unanimity of purpose between the four urban districts as to undesirability of the HLGC’s proposals for extending NCB. These were, as noted above, subsequently repeated by the urban districts at the statutory conference. In making such representations, the districts were joined not only by their residents but also by Nottingham County Council (NCC). The support that NCB had offered for the proposals did however vanish in the spring of 1963, two months before the statutory conference, when political control was wrested back by Labour. As a result, at the statutory conference, all of the authorities concerned (county borough, county council and urban districts) were unanimous against the HLGC’s proposed boundary change. Publicly disassociating itself at the statutory conference from the written representations that the HLGC had received from NCB

⁸⁷ Fawcett, ‘British Conurbations in 1921’, p. 119; G.W.S. Robinson, ‘British Conurbations in 1951’, *The Sociological Review*, 1 (1953), pp. 15-26, p. 23; T.W. Freeman, *The Conurbations of Great Britain* (Manchester, 1959), p. 215.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

in the period between the publication of the *Draft Proposals for Nottingham* and the statutory conference, the Labour-restored NCB representatives declared that ‘the City Council is anxious to avoid any conflict of opinion with the County Council... it has not made and is not making any claims’.⁸⁹ Thus, the case against incorporation through the expansion of NCB was absolute.

The views of the HLGC

Prior to the determination of its final proposals as contained within *Report No. 8*, the Hancock Local Government Commission (HLGC) was required both to consult with the local authorities concerned and to hold a statutory conference at which their views, as well as those belonging to other interested bodies and individuals, would be heard. This was because, as is noted in Chapter Four, the process of consultation enshrined within the 1958 Local Government Act required the HLGC to take a wider measure of public opinion than had hitherto been the case with, for instance, the Trustram Eve Local Government Commission, where the views of inhabitants had been seen as synonymous with those advanced by the local authorities themselves.

In outlining the manner in which the Commissioners would hear and respond to the submissions that they received, Sir Henry Drummond Hancock, Chairman of the HLGC, in opening the second day of the statutory conference Nottingham, sought to reassure those assembled by stating that:

We realise that our *Draft Proposals* [for Nottingham] are not only controversial but also came as something of a startling surprise because they were not preceded by any claim made by the City Council. But the Commission’s role is not merely to mediate... or to accept the status quo in the absence of proposals... The fact that the City had made no claim [for expansion] undoubtedly made our task more difficult. We did not

⁸⁹ PRO T184/284, Written comments by NCB submitted to the statutory conference, 29th and 30th May 1963, paragraph 26.

have opposing views before us to weigh up and balance against one another... Had we not put forward any proposals of our own there would have been no opportunity for the public discussion of possible changes at Nottingham.⁹⁰

In elaborating upon these opening remarks Hancock drew attention to three particular regulations by which the Commission had been guided.⁹¹ First, he noted, there was a need for the HLGC to review whether areas ‘such as Carlton or Arnold are substantially a continuation of the town area’⁹² (whether or not proposals were forthcoming from the authorities concerned), and, if that was the case, whether there was an advantage to their being incorporated into NCB on the basis of realising greater efficiency. Secondly, the Commissioners were compelled to ‘look at the problems broadly as well as in detail’, which they felt was a particularly important consideration for Nottingham as there ‘already existed the beginnings of a conurbation which in the near future was going to require a great deal of co-ordinated planning if the errors made in other conurbations were to be avoided’.⁹³ Finally, Hancock informed the conference that though the HLGC would not forget to take into account ‘the wishes of the inhabitants’, its ‘over-riding duty is to secure more effective and convenient local government’.⁹⁴ It was in light of such parameters, therefore, that the written proofs and oral submissions provided to the Commissioners (as noted earlier in this chapter) were reviewed and processed by the HLGC between April 1964 and the publication of its *Report No. 8, Report and Proposals for the York and North Midlands General Review Area* in June 1964.

⁹⁰ PRO T184/284, York and North Midlands General Review Area, statutory conference, Nottingham, 29th and 30th May 1963, Chairman’s Speech.

⁹¹ Ministry of Housing and Local Government, SI 2115/1958, *The Local Government Commission Regulations* (1958).

⁹² PRO T184/284, YNMGRA statutory conference, Chairman’s Speech, p. 1.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

In reviewing *Report No. 8*, one factor is immediately apparent; the section given over to the ‘Reconsideration of Draft Proposals [for Nottingham]’ is substantially longer than that entered into with regard to any of the other seven county boroughs that the Commission reviewed within the YNMGRA.⁹⁵ Indeed, not only is the detail relating to the process by which the HLGC came to its final recommendations substantially more exhaustive, but the tone deployed throughout is one of justification. Accordingly, in quashing the contention of the urban districts that there existed a continuity of development between them and NCB, the Commissioners concluded that, with regard to Carlton and Arnold there was ‘substantial continuity of development... [and] that they owe their recent development to their proximity and links with Nottingham’.⁹⁶ In a similar vein, *Report No. 8* found that

the continuity with West Bridgford is... no less substantial... although there may be differences in the character of the development on the two banks [of the River Trent], these differences are not greater than are found within the boundaries of almost every county borough in the country and West Bridgford is completely urban in character’.⁹⁷

The tacit acceptance by the HLGC of the view that had been advanced by Fawcett in 1922⁹⁸ was also evident with regard to NCB’s relationship with its westerly neighbour, Beeston and Stapleford Urban District. Thus, in its *Report No. 8* the HLGC concluded that even though ‘the university area is a break in normal residential development... it is not a break in urban continuity’.⁹⁹ Further, and in contrast to other county boroughs reviewed in the YNMGRA, the Commissioners justified their proposals for Nottingham with reference to decisions made elsewhere in the country. Thus, as with University Park,

⁹⁵ Barnsley, Derby, Doncaster, Kingston-upon-Hull, Rotherham, Sheffield, and York.

⁹⁶ HLGC, *Report No. 8*, p. 111.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ Fawcett, ‘British Conurbations in 1921’.

⁹⁹ HLGC, *Report No. 8*, p. 111.

Wollaton Park, again, is a large open space but it is a city amenity. Newcastle's Town Moor, Southampton's Common, Bristol's Downs are not thought of by anyone as breaking the unity of the city where they are found. It does not seem to us that Wollaton Park should be so thought of.¹⁰⁰

Having sought to reaffirm the validity of its position with regard to Beeston and Stapleford through observation and reference to other comparable examples nationwide (despite the disparity in acreage), the HLGC also used the views of the authorities themselves to add credence to *Report No. 8*. Addressing the issue of Stapleford, the Commissioners noted that, when it had been combined with Beeston in 1935, the 'green wedge' that existed between them (in the form of the Bramcote Hills) was not 'thought sufficient to prevent the county from making them a single district'.¹⁰¹ Therefore, as there was 'some connecting development [between them] along the Derby Road', the HLGC declared that it was justified in its decision *not* to split Beeston from Stapleford.¹⁰² Further, the Commission asserted that including *both* within an enlarged NCB had more to do with the previous decisions of other authorities (such as NCC) than their own mandated requirement to review existing governance arrangements. Indeed, the Commissioners implied that, had Beeston and Stapleford not already been united, incorporation of Stapleford with NCB would not necessarily have been justified, for the latter's 'continuity with Stapleford is less substantial'.¹⁰³ This adds weight to the view that the wider future governance needs of the area needed to be addressed under SRA rather than GRA protocols. It was a position previously mooted by both local businesses and academics that Stapleford –

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.* Note, however, the comparable (approximate) acreages of these spaces are as follows: Wollaton Park, Nottingham: 700 acres; University Park, Nottingham: 330 acres; Town Moor, Newcastle upon Tyne: 990 acres; Southampton Common: 326 acres; and The Downs, Bristol: 441 acres. Wollaton Park and University Park are adjacent to each other.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

without Beeston – could have been part of an alternative local government as a consequence of its ‘oneness’ with the Derbyshire town and parish of Sandiacre.¹⁰⁴

The lack of consistency in the HLGC’s use of existing decisions – whether their own or those of other authorities, such as NCC – to justify their own proposals may also be seen in its comment that the inclusion of the entirety of the Beeston and Stapleford Urban District into NCB was acceptable on the basis that

the *County Development Plan* in 1952 says in reference to Beeston and Stapleford – ‘The Urban District functions primarily as an integral part of the Nottingham Conurbation and is, in effect, a continuation of the east-west industrial belt with extends from Carlton Urban District through the City to Beeston’ – if this was a fair assessment of the situation in 1952, it can hardly be an exaggeration in 1964.¹⁰⁵

Adherence to the same *County Development Plan*, however, would have resulted in the HLGC recommending the incorporation of Hucknall Urban District, for the plan specifically noted that ‘it is important to treat Hucknall as part of the Nottingham Conurbation and not as an isolated town’,¹⁰⁶ yet this was a contention the Commissioners dismissed in their *Draft Proposals for Nottingham*.

The underlining tension concerning conurban status is also apparent in the rest of the Commissioners’ comments relating to its reconsideration of its *Draft Proposals for Nottingham*. Within *Report No. 8*, for example, the HLGC asserted that ‘since the city and the four fringe districts formed one substantially continuous area of urban development’, the optimisation of resources across a range of local government

¹⁰⁴ A suggestion that had, as noted in Chapter Two, first been advanced by Fawcett in 1915 (although he also included Long Eaton in this arrangement); C.B. Fawcett, ‘The Long Eaton District: Geographical Conditions and Problems of a Growing Industrial District’, *The Geographical Teacher*, 8:1 (1915), pp. 14-26.

¹⁰⁵ HLGC, *Report No. 8*, p. 112.

¹⁰⁶ NCC, *County of Nottingham Development Plan: Report of the Survey 1952*, cited in K.C. Edwards, ‘The Nottingham Conurbation’, in K.C. Edwards (ed.), *Nottingham and its Region* (Nottingham, 1966), p. 453.

services could be achieved ‘if there were one authority for the whole’.¹⁰⁷ Given, therefore, that the HLGC also believed that the urban influence of Nottingham expanded well beyond the immediate jurisdictions of its boundary-abutting neighbours,¹⁰⁸ the logical extension of this is, once again, that the wider area exhibited conurban tendencies more suited to review under SRA provisions.

Finally, with regard to both social class and issues of identity, a number of additional factors were raised by the HLGC. Pointing to the social composition of both the city itself and the surrounding districts, the HLGC noted that ‘private house building in the city during the decade [1951-1961] represented about 11 houses per 1,000 population, but in the fringe districts 52 houses per 1,000 population’, and that NCB was ‘estimated to have lost nearly 14,000 people by migration between 1951 and 1961... [with an] estimated gain in the four fringe areas [of] over 12,000’.¹⁰⁹ The Commissioners asserted that the social balance of Greater Nottingham was being eroded ‘by administrative divisions’, with NCB being disproportionately disadvantaged through social segregation.¹¹⁰ Commenting, therefore, on the effects that would be felt by NCB were expansion not to be accepted, the Commissioners concluded that there would be a negative impact on the social fabric of the wider community, and the ability of NCB to deliver efficient services would diminish as its rateable pool contracted through outward migration. Thus, the Commissioners remonstrated, ‘to suggest that all the city may need for the health of its local

¹⁰⁷ HLGC, *Report No. 8*, p. 113.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 112.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

government is some land for any necessary municipal housing' was 'a sadly inadequate view'.¹¹¹

In addressing the 'wishes of inhabitants', the HLGC suggested that, as an expanded NCB would be the central focal point of what would be a far larger unit empowered to the benefit of all, it followed that fringe residents would 'have a bigger voice than they have now in many big questions', rather than losing their identity and democratic voice.¹¹² The HLGC's view, therefore, directly contrasted with that of the traditionalist school of local government reform, as the former claimed that the residents within the Greater Nottingham area would benefit from having a 'really effective voice in the tremendously important decisions of the future about planning and traffic', with particular regard to 'the consequences for the fringe areas themselves'.¹¹³ All other concerns as to individuality raised by the opponents to the HLGC's proposals were summarily dismissed. The Commissioners declared 'that community life or the special character of these areas would [not] be lost' because 'most of the people living in the fringe areas must have interests of one sort and another in the city',¹¹⁴ yet provided no evidence for this. Further, the HLGC derided those 'who want to remain under a separate local authority' because they 'have not made an adequate assessment of the future needs of the area, but have... feared consequences to their community life which need not come about'.¹¹⁵

Thus, while the Commissioners stated that they were 'sorry to go against the expressed wishes of so many people', *Report No. 8* largely conformed to the recommendations previously advanced in the HLGC's *Draft Proposals for*

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 118.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 118-119.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 119.

Nottingham.¹¹⁶ There were, admittedly, some adjustments, but the reality was that these were but very minor modifications. Under the *Draft Proposals for Nottingham* NCB would have been enlarged to have, as noted in Chapter Six, an ‘area of 34,170 acres, a population of 463,000 and a[n increase in] rateable value of £6,728,000’.¹¹⁷ *Report No. 8* amended these figures to 34,100 acres, a population of 469,000 and a rateable value of £20,060,000 respectively.¹¹⁸

The public inquiry

Following the publication of *Report No. 8*, a mandatory public inquiry on the Commission’s recommendations for Nottingham was held in 1965. Chaired by Sir Edward Ritson, it was an expensive and time-consuming affair.¹¹⁹ In contrast to the Trufram Eve Local Government Boundary Commission, which heard only from local authorities, the HLGC had been established with a remit to garner a broader spectrum of opinion.¹²⁰ The inquiry lasted 15 working days and necessitated the employment of three Queen’s Counsel and seven junior counsel by the local authorities affected, as well as the attendance of five Members of Parliament (who also spoke for a further three Members), five town clerks, one chief constable, numerous councillors as well as council officials, and four representatives from the

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ HLGC, PRO T183/5, HLGC, Press Release, Statement and Accompanying Notes Relating to Draft Proposals for Nottingham, 5th September 1962, p. 9. There is a typographical error in the Press Release and Notes, the Draft Proposals for Nottingham, and *Report No. 8* that the rateable value was £6,728,000, rather than an increase of £6,728,000 to its ‘existing figure of £14,140,402’; HLGC, *Report No. 8*, p. 133.

¹¹⁸ HLGC, *Report No. 8*, p. 119.

¹¹⁹ The public inquiry culminated in the publication of a report by Sir Edward Ritson, entitled *Report of the Inspector Appointed by the Minister of Housing and Local Government to Hear Objections to the Proposals of the Local Government Commission for England for the City of Nottingham and the Surrounding Areas* (London, 1965). Sir Edward Herbert Ritson entered the civil service in 1910 and was Deputy Chairman of the Board of Inland Revenue, 1949-1957.

¹²⁰ See Chapter Four.

Labour Party.¹²¹ In addition to the formal witnesses called and examined by the local authorities, a further 121 proofs of evidence were deposited by the local authorities concerned. Ritson also heard from some 128 persons who spoke either in an individual capacity or as a representative of a local association at the evening meetings held in each of the four urban districts, as well as during the day sessions of the inquiry. Seven of these represented Conservative Party branches, eight from the Labour Party, and a trio of Liberals. Ritson discerned that, despite the presence of branch members of the three major political parties, a continuing point in the statements by individuals was that the administration of NCB ‘was run on strict party lines and [that] this was disliked’.¹²²

The speakers embodied the spectrum of community life in the period: social groups; welfare societies; mothers’ unions; sports clubs; church groups; parents and teachers associations; arts groups; residents’ action groups; trade unions; lads’ clubs; chambers of commerce; educational institutions; gardening clubs; poultry and rabbit keepers; businessmen; and various unaffiliated individuals. All were opposed to the further urban expansion of NCB. Instead, they preferred to see a retention of the existing system of local government in their individual districts, for these were the areas, as demonstrated by the community-based groups noted above, with which people associated themselves on a day-to-day basis. Those who spoke were joined, in the case of the meetings held at Beeston, West Bridgford, Arnold, and Carlton, by crowds of 600, 360, 450 and 450 persons respectively, ‘limited [only] by the size of the halls... scores of people were turned away’.¹²³ The panoply of responses left, according to Ritson, ‘the general impression that the objections were spontaneous

¹²¹ Tuesday, 23rd March to Friday, 9th April and Monday, 26th April 1965; Easter intervened.

¹²² Ritson, *Report of the Inspector*, p. 26.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

and deeply felt... enthusiastically applauded and all received with approval'.¹²⁴ This was, therefore, evidence of a groundswell of public opinion, in direct contrast to the movement towards regional structures of governance that was increasingly being advanced at central government level.

The objective of the public inquiry as opposed to the statutory conference was that the arguments voiced were heard afresh by an independent chairman, who was also required to balance the views aired with those formally presented by the Commissioners. The strength of the crowds and the numbers seeking to speak at the inquiry certainly suggests that, among the wider community, there was a belief that their voice had not been listened to by the HLGC. Commenting on the process of the inquiry, Ritson duly observed:

The inquiry was an exceptionally long one, especially as regards the length of submissions by Counsel and the volume of evidence adduced by the objectors... This is not said by way of criticism or complaint. It was inevitable that in so deeply felt a matter as this every authority would wish to state its case fully and to let nothing go by default. The result was... a large measure of repetition [but] the repetition was valuable, in that it left a clear impression of the nature of the main objections.¹²⁵

While Ritson viewed such repetition as beneficial, the prolonged processes of consultation were not welcomed by the Minister of Housing and Local Government, Richard Crossman, who commented – some five months before the public inquiry – that ‘the more I looked at what the Commission has been doing, the more futile I found their work’.¹²⁶

Ritson made specific reference to the discretionary power of the Minister, suggesting that the decision would be reached depending ‘on [Crossman’s] views of certain

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 50. According to Ritson, the submissions of counsel covered 186 pages of foolscap and the proofs of evidence, 330 pages.

¹²⁶ R.H. Crossman, *The Diaries of a Cabinet Minister. Vol. I: Minister of Housing 1964-1966* (London, 1975), p. 65. Diary entry for 20th November 1964.

basic factors',¹²⁷ which were presented as five-fold. The first and second factors related to improvements in service. First, Ritson considered whether there was proof that the 'Commission's proposals would lead to any improvement in the local government services in the area, leaving aside for the moment the questions of housing, planning and traffic', concluding that 'the evidence was all the other way – that no improvement would take place'.¹²⁸ Secondly, he noted, that savings in efficiency which might be lost by the county, the city would gain. These comments thus indicated that the views of the reforming agenda of local government would not necessarily apply to Nottingham. Thirdly, with regard to the need to achieve balance between issues of efficiency and the democratic wishes of those affected by any changes in existing local government arrangements, Ritson's conclusion was unambiguous: 'the inhabitants of the four districts are wholeheartedly against the proposals [and] in this they are supported by their parliamentary representatives'.¹²⁹ Fourthly, on the question of whether the HLGC was correct in its assertion that NCB and the four urban districts formed 'one closely knit area of continuous urban development',¹³⁰ Ritson offered contrasting views. He maintained that 'Arnold and Carlton must be looked upon as part of a development of Nottingham. The physical continuity cannot be gainsaid and the industrial links are clear'.¹³¹ Conversely, the River Trent did, 'provide a break in what would otherwise be continuous urban development' but this was offset by the fact that 'some 70 per cent of the population of [West Bridgford] work in Nottingham'.¹³²

¹²⁷ Ritson, *Report of the Inspector*, p. 50.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² *Ibid.*

Ritson differentiated between the situation pertaining to Beeston and Stapleford Urban District and those of West Bridgford, Carlton and Arnold. Although he acknowledged that the extent to which University Park and Wollaton Park could be considered physical breaks was ‘a matter of opinion or of interpretation of the facts’, he upheld that

Beeston’s [and Stapleford’s] case for their exclusion from the proposed county borough rests on firmer ground... the links with Nottingham are not strong. The town has developed independently from the city, only 20 per cent of the inhabitants work in the city, nearly as many work in districts west of the township and generally, to a considerable extent, it is a town in its own right.¹³³

Nevertheless, while effectively rejecting the case advanced by the HLGC for the inclusion of Beeston and Stapleford, Ritson once more illustrated the conflicting nature of the matter, concurring with the HLGC’s position that it was ‘hard to escape the conclusion that the area enclosed in the Commission’s proposed county borough is one of substantially continuous urban development’.¹³⁴

Finally, given the intricacies and close counterpoints of boundary reform, Sir Edward considered the ‘fields of housing, planning and traffic’, proffering that, whereas the Commissioners’ assessment was that

advantages would flow and those advantages would outweigh the disadvantages in other fields... the case of the objectors against this view was first that the Commission had brought no evidence on the point. Secondly, all the evidence adduced at this Inquiry showed that it could not possibly be said that progress in housing, planning or traffic had been in any way hampered by the present arrangements.¹³⁵

In thereafter concluding the main part of his *Report of the Inspector*, Ritson offered four observations to the Minister. First, it was questionable whether benefits would

¹³³ *Ibid.* pp. 51-52.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

be ‘derived from unified administration’.¹³⁶ Secondly, he believed that ‘the disadvantages which the objectors have brought against the proposals have... been properly and adequately presented’.¹³⁷ Thirdly, in reviewing the evidence received, Ritson observed that ‘the disadvantages may be described as practical and demonstrable; the advantages are matters of inference and judgment’.¹³⁸ Finally, the question of how best to organise the future governance of the area, was one ‘not, I should have thought, capable of being answered by evidence. [Rather], the answer to be given must be primarily an exercise in [ministerial] judgment’.¹³⁹ A consummate civil servant, Sir Edward had very clearly left to the Minister the final decision as to the future governance of Nottingham – and how to balance the conflicting wishes of citizens against that which had been deemed by the HLGC as the more efficient and convenient management of resources.

The views of the Minister

Crossman was appointed, as previously noted in Chapter Five, Minister of Housing and Local Government in October 1964 upon Labour’s regaining power in the General Election. Within six weeks of taking office, Crossman was already expressing frustration at the ‘tinkering along’ of the HLGC,¹⁴⁰ which had resulted in each successive area review taking longer to complete than the one before it, and the general principle ‘that where a city swells, the conurbation should extend its boundaries’.¹⁴¹ The underlying premise of the Concordat upon which the 1958 Local Government Act and the HLGC had been constructed meant accepting that ‘the war

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

¹⁴⁰ Crossman, *Diaries, Vol. I*, p. 65, 20th November 1964.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

between the county councils and the county boroughs [w]as endemic in our national life'.¹⁴² This was an acceptance that Crossman found to be 'one of the most stultifying things in our whole governmental system'.¹⁴³ The Minister was also acutely aware of the parliamentary ramifications of changing local government boundaries. Recognising that 'it's a little improper to see these local boundary changes in relation to parliamentary divisions', Crossman admitted that, although acceptance of the HLGC's proposals would mean that parliamentary 'Labour seats would be in danger... Minor amendment [would] make practically sure that Coventry remains our way' – a factor that he noted was also applicable to Leicester and Nottingham.¹⁴⁴ Mindful therefore that such power made him 'a powerful politician in [his] own right', Crossman was, nevertheless, impatient for 'genuine local government reform' and felt that, given his expressed displeasure with the progress of the HLGC, such reform should be 'on the agenda of the next government with a big enough majority'.¹⁴⁵

Ritson's *Report of the Inspector* in June 1965 relating to the HLGC's work at Nottingham not only illustrated the finely balanced nature of the case for urban expansion, but also public dissatisfaction with the Commission's work. The *Report* did little to improve Crossman's perceptions as to the ongoing appropriateness of the HLGC's work. Indeed, a mere three months later, on Tuesday 21st September 1965, Crossman announced to the delegates attending the Association of Municipal Corporations Conference in Torbay that the entire structure of local government and the size of local authorities therein was 'ill-adapted to fulfilling the immensely

¹⁴² *Ibid.* See also Chapter Four.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

important functions with which they are charged'.¹⁴⁶ Though Crossman's decision to make his assessment of the existing structure so public was a last minute affair, and from the tone of his diary entry one seemingly borne out of frustration,¹⁴⁷ his announcement was warmly welcomed by the conference.¹⁴⁸ Thus, having made clear his intention, Crossman rejected the controversial proposal that Nottingham should absorb its four adjoining urban districts in late 1965, noting that, in so doing, he had 'protected [the Party's] position... manag[ing] to combine a sound local government policy with an extremely shrewd defence of Labour's parliamentary position'.¹⁴⁹

Conclusion

In reviewing the reactions that the HLGC received to its *Draft Proposals for Nottingham* from residents, local authorities, and other interested bodies, this chapter has shown that there was a dichotomy at the heart of the HLGC's work. Under its terms of reference, the Commission was required, above all other considerations, to advance recommendations to the Minister through which the most efficient and convenient units of local administration could be formed.¹⁵⁰ This requirement was repeatedly shown, with regard to the Nottingham area, to be incompatible with the views of local people and the authorities charged with administering them at that time. Such difficulties were compounded, as Chapter Six also noted, by issues of

¹⁴⁶ Crossman, cited in K. Young, 'The Party and English Local Government', in A. Seldon and S. Ball (eds), *Conservative Century: The Conservative Party since 1900* (Oxford, 1994), p. 423.

¹⁴⁷ 'Yesterday I suddenly decided that... the situation was now getting unworkable and I was thinking of winding up the Local Government Boundary Commission.' Crossman, *Diaries, Vol. I*, p. 331, 21st September 1965.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.* It is also noted that Crossman made the announcement while his Permanent Secretary, Dame Evelyn Sharp, was on holiday.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 621, 24th August 1966. In the diary entry he also refers to having protected the political interests of Labour in Middlesbrough as well as Coventry, Leicester and Nottingham.

¹⁵⁰ Ministry of Housing and Local Government, SI 2115/1958, *The Local Government Commission Regulations* (1958).

political collusion which sought to ensure that Labour control of both NCC and NCB was sustained through the maintenance of existing boundaries.

Achieving this continuity of political control was threatened by a change in political leadership in NCB, when the Conservatives were briefly restored to power. Embracing the reforming agenda in the establishment of geographically greater units of local administration, Conservative-led NCB supported the HLGC's proposals for the urban expansion of NCB. It cannot be assumed that this was purely in order to optimise efficient service delivery. Given the concerns later voiced by Labour's Richard Crossman, it is probable that the Conservative Party was similarly aware of the political benefits that could be accrued through the incorporation into NCB of suburban areas that were traditionally more inclined to vote for them (such as West Bridgford, and Beeston and Stapleford).¹⁵¹

Despite these party political influences, evident at both local and national levels, it would be inaccurate to portray the evidence presented to the HLGC in its review of future governance arrangements for Nottingham as being purely, or even primarily, political. Throughout the elaborate process of consultation, collation and consideration of this evidence, the Commissioners found there was a constant theme of opposition to the urban expansion of Nottingham. Such opposition was based not only upon issues of local representation, independence, and the desire to retain perceived differences in community identity, but also upon an acute awareness of the potential service and rateable ramifications of incorporation into a larger administrative body. Far from accepting the reforming ideal that 'bigger was better', the opposition expressed by an assortment of voluntary groups and association (particularly in West Bridgford, and Beeston and Stapleford) was adamant that there

¹⁵¹ Young, 'The Party in English Local Government', p. 417.

would be no ‘compensating advantage’ to incorporation.¹⁵² That the consultation process under which the HLGC was required to labour was also far more expansive than that of previous local government boundary commissions ensured that residents had ample opportunity to ensure that their voices were heard.

In reviewing the suitability of the HLGC review process, two substantive conclusions can be deduced from the evidence presented in this chapter. First, although the repetition of opinions previously enunciated may have been, to cite Ritson, ‘valuable’,¹⁵³ it also made the review process unwieldy and long-winded. Residents and authorities increasingly challenged the consistency of the Commission’s decisions as the former learned lessons from previous reviews conducted by the HLGC, a phenomenon that meant the process became more and more protracted. Secondly, in retrospect, it is apparent throughout the review that there was a body of opinion which saw the future governance needs of Nottingham in a wider context than the HLGC was able to do. Indeed, given the acknowledged size of the zone of influence of Nottingham, and to a lesser extent Derby, and the developing coalescence between NCB and DCB, treatment of the wider area under SRA provisions (rather than county borough by county borough) might have resulted in a more holistic view of future governance requirements being undertaken. This was a re-designation that would have permitted the Commission to consider more radical recommendations including for instance, the establishment of authorities that transgressed existing administrative county boundaries.

The York and North Midland General Review Area review was a process that took 65 months, from the announcement of the review until the publication of the *Report*

¹⁵² PRO T184/283, VACDWB, *Points to Ponder*, point 9.

¹⁵³ Ritson, *Report of the Inspector*, p. 50.

of the Inspector. Not only was this longer than any other General Review Area or Special Review Area where the process was completed, it was substantially longer than the Royal Commission on Local Government in Greater London (the Herbert Commission). The laggardly nature of the process did little to recommend the continuation of the Commission's work to a minister who was impatient for change. Crossman would thence, like Bevan before him, be a Labour minister in charge of local government who would dismiss a commission on local government before its work was complete. For Nottingham and its environs, therefore, reform of local authority boundaries would only be forthcoming some nine years later, through the enactment in 1974 of the Conservatives' Local Government Act of 1972.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁴ Local Government Act 1972 (Elizabeth II c.70). The Act became effective from 1st April 1974.

Chapter Eight

Conclusion

This study has explored a range of issues pertaining to the effects of local government reform upon urban expansion and issues of identity in the period 1945-1968, with reference to Derby and Nottingham. Throughout the work, the nature of the various reform processes initiated by successive governments has been analysed, as well as reactions to those reform proposals as voiced by local authorities, community associations, academics, and general members of the public. Local examples have been noted alongside the ideological arguments that accompanied the gradual shift in dominant central government (and political) thinking – from *laissez-faire* liberalism¹ to centralism¹ – so that this study is not merely one of local interest but also offers national insights.

The research questions that have been addressed within this work are comprised of four primary elements. First, the study has foreshadowed the full-scale reconfiguration of local government as a result of the Local Government Act of 1972.² The period of this study, 1945-1968, is oft neglected, or at least relegated to secondary importance, in wider chronological studies of the development of modern local government. The preceding chapters have demonstrated, however, that the years immediately after the Second World War were important to the development of alternative governance models. Secondly, with regard to how boundary changes affect local authorities and communities within them through the process of urban expansion, a number of themes has been noted. The desire to reform local

¹ M. Goldsmith, 'The Changing System of English Local Government', in J. Lagroye and V. Wright, eds., *Local Government in Britain and France: Problems and Prospects* (London, 1979), pp. 13-15.

² Local Government Act 1972 (Elizabeth II c.70).

governance structures led to fears that smaller administrative units would lose their local identity; in turn, this highlighted differences in the priorities of central and local government. Central government was predominantly concerned with maximising and equalising service efficiency, whereas local residents sought reassurances that their democratic access to elected representatives would not be diminished and that they would not be financially penalised by funding services across a wider area. Thirdly, this study demonstrates how national party political machinations trumped local sentiment regarding the subsumption of smaller communities into large urban areas. The Hancock Local Government Commission enshrined the need for the views of local people and groups to be taken and assessed with regards to the future administration of the areas in which they lived. The defence and enhancement of individual party political positions, however, was given at least equal weighting to the importance of reforming existing structures in order to optimise efficiency in the distribution of resources.

Finally, distinct themes were extrapolated with regard to the expansion of urban-ness. These included the evolution of conurbations, the physical enlargement of urban centres, and the manner in which both exert influence over rural hinterlands. The growth of county boroughs and urban districts through the construction of council estates not only on the periphery of their own territories, but also upon the land of neighbouring rural districts, weakened the relevance of the administrative divide between rural and urban authorities. This expansion was strengthened by consequential societal developments and built on longer-term trends that placed urban needs above those of rural authorities. These were processes, however, that did not begin solely in 1945. Accordingly, a historical background to these issues provided a context for the acceptance (or refusal) of boundary expansion

applications. For example, as discussed in Chapter Two, even immediately following the cessation of the First World War, Nottingham County Borough (NCB) saw itself as the centre of an urban area extending beyond its own boundaries. This prompted it to seek incorporation of the urban districts of Arnold, Carlton, Hucknall, West Bridgford, and Beeston (a claim that NCB would repeat as the decades wore on).³ Further, there was a growing expectation in central government that minimum standards of sanitation and housing would be met by local authorities. This was made clear, for example, by the Minister of Health, Christopher Addison, in his rejection of NCB's 1919 proposal. Addison noted that NCB's failure was in good part because of its lamentable record with regard to housing and sewerage.⁴ Thus, even at this early stage, it was demonstrated that the supposed basis upon which expansion could be granted was subject to considerable ministerial influence.

From 1888, and throughout the study period, concerns from politicians and residents were evident regarding issues of local identity and belonging, the appropriateness of governance structures, and access to local political representatives. At the time of the passing of the 1888 and 1894 Local Government Acts, Borough MPs sought reassurances not only that rates collected in their individual localities would be spent in them, but also that the amalgamation of areas would not lead to a loss of either local representation or civic identity. Comments such as those voiced by Sir William Harcourt, MP for Derby, that taxation raised needed to remain within the locality,⁵ and Samuel Hoare, MP for Norwich, to retain the administrative independence that it

³ NCB's expansion plans of 1919 were contained within NRO CC/CL1/BL07.015, *Report of the Nottingham City Council to the Minister of Health* (1919). Beeston Urban District was amalgamated with Stapleford Rural District as a consequence of the Nottinghamshire County Review of 1934; the new authority, the Beeston and Stapleford Urban District was effective from 1st April 1935.

⁴ NRO CC/CL1/BL07.01/1, Letter from H.O. Stutchbury, Assistant Secretary to the Minister of Health, to Nottingham County Borough, May 1920.

⁵ Sir William Harcourt, 20th April 1888, *Hansard*, Commons, 3rd series, vol. 325, col. 82-83.

had enjoyed from ‘time immemorial’,⁶ were, in essence, the same as those arguments that persisted during the consultations of both the Trustram Eve Local Government Boundary Commission (TLGBC) and Hancock Local Government Commission (HLGC), as noted in subsequent chapters with regards to both Derby County Borough (DCB) and NCB. Thus, the concerns of one generation echo those of another.

Resonating throughout the study was Westminster’s desire for local government to perform its functions efficiently, although perceptions of what constituted efficiency differed between the authorities themselves, central government, and the public. The size and shape of local governance units were key components of the debate. Therefore, while the 1888/1894 structure of local government simplified the existent system of a multiplicity of districts and authorities, it was based on some element of continuation from that which had hitherto existed and its adaptability to changes in service provision and delivery was questionable.⁷ Though the reforms of the 1920s and 1930s hastened the demise of some very small authorities and strengthened the residual county areas (by raising the minimum threshold at which county borough status could be achieved), such measures merely postponed the need to address the issue of boundaries and functions rather than resolving it. There remained, on the eve of the Second World War, not only a huge disparity in the size between authorities of different types but also among those of the same classification.⁸ This rendered the allocation of functions (on the basis of rateable ability to perform them) impossible.

In the period immediately following the Second World War, there was, again, an initial movement towards reform, in the appointment of the Trustram Eve Local

⁶ Samuel Hoare, 13th April 1888, *Hansard*, Commons, 3rd series, vol. 324, col. 1286.

⁷ C.B. Fawcett, *Provinces of England: 1883-1952* (London, 1960), p. 49.

⁸ V.D. Lipman, *Local Government Areas, 1834-1945* (Oxford, 1949), p. 231.

Government Boundary Commission (TLGBC). However, its remit was limited – perhaps not unsurprising given other legislative priorities – which meant that many of the problems it reported could not be fixed. Nevertheless, as the TLGBC stated, it was ‘a nonsense to talk about functions and boundaries separately’, for the two were inextricably linked.⁹ Yet, at no stage (either before or during the study period) was the need to reform functions and boundaries concurrently resolved. In raising this difficulty, and requesting powers to address it, the TLGBC was summarily dismissed by the Minister of Health, Aneurin Bevan, in 1949.¹⁰ However, as Chapter Four comments, Bevan’s subsequent proposal to establish significantly wider units was shelved a year later, in light of Cabinet hostility and the changed party political situation that accompanied the General Election of 1950. That some service areas needed to be larger had nonetheless been recognised. In establishing the National Health Service, for instance, the geographic structure of local government was rejected in favour of the creation of 13 regional boards.¹¹ Economies of scale were also achieved in a range of industries nationalised between 1945 and 1951, but such initiatives were not fully realised in the arena of local government.

After the Second World War, county boroughs sought once more to extend their territories. Predominantly located either on the fringes of their existing lands or within the territories of adjoining authorities, new estates expanded towns and cities visually, adding to that which occurred as a result of ribbon development. There is a

⁹ Trustram Eve Local Government Boundary Commission, *Report of the Local Government Boundary Commission for 1947*, p. 2. The TLGBC was citing the Minister of Health, Standing Committee B, Official Report, 16th December 1947, col. 157.

¹⁰ Aneurin Bevan, 27th June 1949, *Hansard*, Commons, 5th series, vol. 466, col. 758-761.

¹¹ National Health Services Act 1946 (9 & 10 George VI c.81). Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire, Rutland, much of Derbyshire, substantial sections of the three parts of Lincolnshire, along with the county boroughs of Barnsley, Derby, Doncaster, Grimsby, Leicester, Lincoln, Nottingham, Rotherham and Sheffield were administered from Sheffield. See also Ministry of Health, SI 2158/1946, *The National Health Service (Determination of Regional Hospital Areas) Order*.

danger, however, in confusing the meshing of invisible, administrative divisions, and the homogenisation of lifestyles, with an assumption that the local identity that a person may possess has similarly merged.¹² Osborne's traffic census of Trent Bridge in 1961,¹³ for instance, illustrates that from a detached, administrative viewpoint, West Bridgford and Nottingham functioned as one. Residents of West Bridgford commuted into Nottingham, came home for lunch, shopped in Nottingham and West Bridgford, and, in all respects, treated the two as constituent parts of the other.¹⁴ Yet, as was evident throughout the long consultation processes of the HLGC, there were not only administrative voices¹⁵ raised against West Bridgford's absorption into NCB but also a robust defence of the individuality of the former launched by residents, who considered that many of the realities of the ways in which they conducted their lives did not equate to a change in where they belonged. Whether from a viewpoint of 'being different',¹⁶ or through political and economic fears that that which they had achieved would be diminished by subsumption into the larger mass,¹⁷ such protests against incorporation were 'deeply felt', as Ritson noted, with reference not just to West Bridgford but all the areas the HLGC recommended for incorporation into NCB.¹⁸

Expressions of distinctive external identity to the urban centres of Nottingham and Derby were echoed in the development of new urban identities as existing

¹² G. Rose, 'Place and Identity: A Sense of Place', in D. Massey and P. Jess, *A Place in the World?* (Oxford, 2003), p. 88.

¹³ R.H. Osborne, 'A Road Traffic Census at Trent and Clifton Bridges, Nottingham', *East Midland Geographer*, 16 (1961) pp. 49-59.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

¹⁵ West Bridgford Urban District, Nottingham County Council, and Nottingham County Borough.

¹⁶ K.D.M. Snell, *Parish and Belonging: Community, Identity and Welfare in England and Wales, 1700-1950* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 28-31.

¹⁷ PRO T184/283, VACDWB, *Points to Ponder*.

¹⁸ Sir Edward Ritson, *Report of the Inspector Appointed by the Minister of Housing and Local Government to Hear Objections to the Proposals of the Local Government Commission for England for the City of Nottingham and the Surrounding Areas* (London, 1965), p. 26.

communities were relocated from central to peripheral areas. The relocation of people from congested and unsanitary living quarters to council housing that was designed to improve both health and community is relevant not only to issues of urban expansion, governance and changing concepts of identity between 1945 and 1968, but also because lessons can be learned from the consequences of that process. The belief that the process of rehousing would solve social problems was a constant political theme not only before and during the study period but one that remains to this day.¹⁹

Though there is no single reason why local and central government policies seem not to have brought about the successful regeneration of urban spaces, an analysis of the secondary and primary sources discussed within this study enables three observations to be made. First, the ‘public-ness’ of the slums, with their doorsteps straight onto the streets, alleys as playgrounds and hubs of informal gatherings, and the exposure of domestic life, gave way to more clearly delineated individual plots of habitation, modernised homes, and the ability to personalise areas such as gardens. The democratisation of the middle-class ideal of privacy²⁰ was seen ‘as an essential building block in the process of social improvement’.²¹ Secondly, the fragmentation of the extended family as a consequence of the dislocation of war, intra-urban migration, and the wider adoption of entertainment within the home, such as television and radio, meant that the nuclear family became more inward-looking. As the historian, Selina Todd, notes, working-class communities – such as those on council estates – became increasingly concentrated on material improvements, such

¹⁹ S.J. Newman, ‘Does Housing Matter for Poor Families? A Critical Summary of Research and Issues still to be Resolved’, *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* 27:4 (2008), pp. 895-925, p. 895.

²⁰ M. Young and P. Willmott, *Family and Kinship in East London* (London, 1957), p. 156.

²¹ D. Vincent, ‘Secrecy and the City, 1870-1939’, *Urban History* 22:3 (1995), pp. 341-355, p. 350.

as higher rents, washing machines, and other domestic appliances.²² Changes in patterns of association were exacerbated by greater distances between home and work (with more time and money spent travelling), higher numbers of women in employment, and an inward focus on the home. Finally, the lack of infrastructure in the newly built estates, such as churches, pubs, recreational facilities and shops, meant that many of those who had been relocated were still dependent upon old centres for various day-to-day provisions and activities – as was noted, for instance, with regard to the Mackworth estate in Derby. Policies designed to bring about social betterment resulted in the expansion of urban spaces but did not necessarily bring about all of the societal benefits that had been envisaged.

The dissonance between promise and reality that was felt by those on the fringe council estates – as Beatrix Campbell noted, for instance, on the trade-off between space, cold, and cost,²³ and through the proportion of initial tenants who moved back to the areas whence they had come²⁴ – was mirrored in the review process. Although the HLGC promised greater public involvement in how local government boundaries were determined, public opinions did not feature in the final decision. Just as the design, allocation, and siting of housing was decided by political masters on behalf of those for whom they were designed, local government reform also failed to reflect the desires of those who would be affected.

While the creation and interpretation of local government was couched in terms of improving services, enhancing the standard of living, safeguarding local democratic traditions, or a myriad of other pledges, the reform of local government was

²² S. Todd, 'Did They Ever Really Have It So Good? Working-class Families in 1950s Britain'. Paper presented at the Economic and Social History Seminar, All Souls College, Oxford, October 2012.

²³ B. Campbell, *Wigan Pier Revisited: Poverty and Politics in the Eighties* (London, 1984), p. 32.

²⁴ C.J. Thomas, 'Some Geographical Aspects of Council Housing in Nottingham', *East Midland Geographer*, 4:2 (1966), pp. 91-93.

intrinsically political and bureaucratic. It was a process in which the reforming agenda of larger urban-based units of service delivery triumphed over rural concerns of individuality and exceptionalism, in the same way that urban centres had been given precedence over rural authorities in the preceding hundred years. The exceptions to this trend were where service provision was so lamentable that it could not accommodate any increase²⁵ or where partisan electoral security was compromised.²⁶ The latter should not be surprising for the reform of boundaries and institutions brought electoral repercussions. Thus, the reasoning behind the apparent lack of consistency behind the decision to grant an expansion of DCB in 1968 while concurrently failing to make any allowance for NCB's future growth needs becomes clear. NCB was politically finely balanced, whereas DCB had a well-established tradition of returning a Labour administration that, *ceteris paribus*, would not be significantly threatened by the inclusion of leafy SEDRD suburbs and villages.

Although individual ministerial personalities during the period 1945-1968 played a role in the nature and speed of reform – from Macmillan's insouciance, to Sandys's equanimity, and the exasperation of Crossman – the need for the nationwide, full scale reorganisation in local government ultimately surmounted short-term party political priorities. In the years covered by this study, opportunities for reform had been repeatedly thwarted by a failure to empower reviewing bodies with sufficient power to discuss functions in conjunction with boundaries. Further, discussions between the varied national local government associations and the government too often centred on the *nature* that the process of reform of local government might take, rather than *actual* proposals for reform.

²⁵ As for instance had been the case in NCB's unsuccessful expansionist bid of 1919; and discussed in Chapter Two.

²⁶ As discussed by R.H. Crossman, *The Diaries of a Cabinet Minister. Vol. I: Minister of Housing 1964-1966* (London, 1975), p. 621.

With ministerial frustration at its peak,²⁷ in May 1966 a new review process was established by the Labour Prime Minister, Harold Wilson. The Royal Commission on Local Government in England, chaired by Sir John Maud (Redcliffe-Maud)²⁸ was endowed with sufficient powers of review to fundamentally alter the local government landscape of England. Reporting within three years of its inception, the Redcliffe-Maud Commission precipitated a process of reform that, like those before it, was nonetheless subject to party political influences. Thus, its recommendations were not fully adopted as a consequence of the surprise electoral defeat of the Labour Government in the General Election of June 1970 and the return of a Conservative Government that was almost universally opposed to its proposals.²⁹ The Conservatives had, however, pledged in their manifesto that they would reform ‘local government within the lifetime of the next Conservative Government’.³⁰

In establishing a new system of local government nationwide, the Local Government Act 1972³¹ therefore addressed a majority of the difficulties that had characterised the 1888-1894 system. It did so in several ways. First, the Act accommodated projected urban growth through the fusion of urban and rural areas into singular authorities. Secondly, it defused the mutual antagonism that had hitherto characterised relationships between county boroughs and counties by abolishing the former and recasting the latter, as reformed in a new two-tier system in which it was the dominant partner. Finally, the Act recognised the need for the country’s largest

²⁷ As evidenced by the accounts given by Richard Crossman in his diaries relating to the failure of the HLGC to make progress and the unending nature of the war between the national local government associations.

²⁸ Appointed as Chairman of the Royal Commission while merely Sir John Primatt Redcliffe Maud, his elevation to a life peerage took place during the life of the Commission, in July 1967. He chose to hyphenate his surname to become Baron Redcliffe-Maud of the City and County of Bristol.

²⁹ K. Young, ‘The Party and English Local Government’, in A. Seldon and S. Ball (eds), *Conservative Century: The Conservative Party since 1900* (Oxford, 1994), p. 430.

³⁰ Circular letter from Anthony Barber, Chairman of the Conservative Party, 9th June 1969, cited in Young, ‘The Party and English Local Government’, p. 429.

³¹ The Local Government Act 1972 (Elizabeth II c.70).

urban areas to be governed separately, in creating seven metropolitan counties, underpinned by 36 metropolitan boroughs. In so doing, it facilitated a reallocation of functions across both tiers.

This study has shown that, within the arena of local government, between 1945 and 1968 ‘the prospect of a more radical reconsideration of the existing institutional structure emerged’.³² The reviews variously undertaken by Onslow, Trustram Eve, and Hancock, along with the influence of ministers such as Aneurin Bevan and Richard Crossman, provided not only the political backdrop and context but also the motivation for the full-scale reforms that followed in 1972. By the close of the study period, the limited reforms previously introduced had shown themselves to be insufficient to resolve the challenges faced by the existing local government structure. However, while the eventual reforms addressed structure, function, and the urban-rural divide sustained within the Victorian system of governance, little attention was given as to how residents, local groups, and associations would identify with the newly created authorities. In the final analysis, therefore, the reform of local government was a political process, in which national party political priorities triumphed over local sentiment.

³² M.J. Daunton, *Wealth and Welfare: An Economic and Social History of Britain, 1851-1951* (Oxford, 2007), p. 616.

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