Northumbria Research Link

AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN NORTHUMBERLAND NATIONAL PARK

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Abstract

The notion of new housing delivery within the larger rural settlements as opposed to smaller villages and hamlets is compounded by the opportunity for developers to deliver more units on larger sites, thus generating more profit. Additionally, the idea of developing in service centres and sustainable communities is heavily emphasised within policies - including Planning Policy Statement 3 (2006) and the report 'From Decent Homes to Sustainable Communities' (DCLG, 2006). Whilst there is some logic in providing new housing close to existing services, there is also an argument that the smaller, more remote communities become increasingly unsustainable without new development. This is a particular concern for those areas where rising levels of second home ownership and an ageing population exacerbate the difficulties in housing a local workforce. As National Parks have a duty to foster economic and social-well being of their constituent communities (whilst also conserving natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage), the decisions they face as to where and how to promote affordable housing delivery are inherently difficult.

By examining the views of housing and planning professionals, together with those of the local community, a range of opinions, concerns and aspirations have been elicited. The findings have been used in the formation of a delivery framework and a series of recommendations to inform Northumberland National Park Authority's future actions, policies and management plans in respect of affordable housing delivery.

It is reasoned that affordable housing delivery in remote rural areas requires a micro-management approach reflecting the distinctive characteristics and needs of communities which are unaccounted for in overarching strategies. Preservationist attitudes and overarching policies favouring developments in service centres risk stagnation and degeneration within smaller rural communities. However, the research demonstrates the potential of communities and particular organisations to demonstrate housing need and work towards sustainable rural development.

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Declaration: I declare that the work contained in this thesis has not been submitted for any other award and that it is all my own work. The work was done in collaboration with Northumberland National Park Authority.

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

1.1   Contextualising Northumberland National Park

National Park Authorities are the responsible bodies for statutory planning functions in each of their respective Parks. The Environment Act (1995, Section 61) defines the statutory purposes of National Park designation:

- To conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the National Parks; and
- To promote opportunities for the public understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the Parks

In addition to the two primary purposes of the Parks, the *Environment Act (1995)* also states that National Park Authorities have a duty to seek to foster the economic and social well-being of their local communities, but should do so without incurring significant expenditure. It is professed from the phrasing of these aims that National Park Authorities are encouraged to concentrate their efforts on issues of conservation and public enjoyment over those of an economic and social nature. As a result the welfare of local inhabitants risks becoming jeopardised through lack of attention. As Cairncross et al (2004) note, whilst National Park Authorities have concerns about the provision of affordable housing, landscape conservation carries more importance - a situation embedded in institutional behaviour and legislation.

National Parks within the UK share common qualities such as outstanding value in terms of natural beauty, ecology, archaeology, geology and recreation opportunities. Table 1.1 illustrates that although many of the National Parks have similar features, the scale of certain physical and social aspects can diverge substantially from park to park.

Table 1.1 – Comparison of UK National Parks

National Park	Area (square miles)	Year of designation	Population	Pop. density (people per square mile)
England				
Broads	117	1989	5,721	49
Dartmoor	368	1951	29,100	79
Exmoor	267	1954	10,600	40
Lake District	885	1951	42,200	48
New Forest	220	2005	34,400	156
Northumberland	405	1956	2,200	5
North York Moors	554	1952	25,000	45
Peak District	555	1951	38,000	68
South Downs	1020		115,000	113
Yorkshire Dales	685	1954	19,654	29
Scotland				
Cairngorms	1467	2003	16,000	11
Loch Lomond and the Trossachs	720	2002	15,600	22
Wales				
Brecon Beacons	519	1957	32,000	62
Pembrokeshire Coast	240	1952	22,800	95
Snowdonia	840	1951	25,482	30

Source: UK Association of National Park Authorities (accessed 2006)

Table 1.1 also illustrates that Northumberland National Park has the lowest population (2,200) of any park within the UK, and the lowest corresponding density (5 people per square mile). The Park's comparatively low density - being almost six times lower than any of the other parks within England - is arguably its most distinguishing feature.

Northumberland National Park was designated as such in 1956, half a decade after the UK's first Parks (Lake District, Peak District, Dartmoor and Snowdonia). The management of the Park was originally carried out by Northumberland County Council, but has more recently (from 1997) been carried out by the free-standing Northumberland National Park Authority (Northumberland National Park Authority, 2006). The National Park lies wholly within the North East region, but borders Scotland and the North West region. Until the recent formation of a Unitary Authority, the Park comprised parts of three district/borough councils; Alnwick, Berwick upon Tweed and Tynedale. The district and borough councils acted as the Housing Authority for their entire coverage, as well as the Local Planning Authorities for those areas outside of the National Park boundary (see Figure 1.1).

Northumberland National Park Authority is the Local Planning Authority for 20% of Northumberland County; over 100,000 hectares. However, the Park's boundary excludes the area's larger settlements. Those settlements within the boundary are typified by small villages, hamlets, and isolated farm dwellings (Northumberland National Park Authority, 2006).

Figure 1.1 – Northumberland Authority Boundaries

Source: Northumberland National Park Authority, 2006

The Commission for Rural Communities (2005) argues that the funding for affordable rural housing within National Parks is more complex than for other areas, and represents a notable barrier, particularly for the higher cost areas. Research has shown that although completion rates for open market housing in most of the National Parks has been sufficiently suitable to needs (in terms of absolute numbers) over the last decade, only a relatively low proportion of these completions have been affordable housing stock (Cairncross et al, 2004). Lack of access to affordable housing is compounded by the rising cost of rural housing for local people; in Exmoor National Park, for example, studies show that of housing built over the last twenty years, only one in ten dwellings is occupied by a local person, and that a quarter are second or holiday homes (Exmoor National Park Authority, 2003).

A variety of approaches are used to demonstrate and measure housing needs in the National Parks – all of which have certain limitations. Housing registers are inadequate as they are unreliable and unrelated to National Park boundaries. In addition, they lack

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sufficient detail to allow for nomination based on local occupancy criteria. Local Authority housing needs surveys are generally inadequate as they cover different geographical boundaries and lack the level of detail required for National Park communities (Cairncross et al, 2004). Aside from dealing with the divergence in affordable housing definitions, it is also necessary to consider additional factors such as how up-to-date any analysis is, and whether the data can be fragmented to provide evidence for the specific areas lying within Park boundaries. This is a difficulty inherent in many of the UK's Parks, although with due diligence the problem may be surmountable. For example, the Peak District National Park has undergone significant demographic changes. Many new residents have moved to the Park to retire or to purchase holiday homes. Younger, unskilled workers have been priced out of local housing markets creating labour shortages for traditional land management practices considered an integral element of the area's character (Dougill et al, 2006). The Park covers parts of seven different Local Authorities and as such the constituent districts have undertaken district-wide surveys that include separate analysis of the Park area. This collaboration has enabled hotspots of acute affordable housing need to be identified both in the Park and its surroundings (Peak District National Park Authority, 2004).

Since affordable housing is associated with wider community goals and the holistic sustainability issue, Northumberland National Park's 2004 Housing Needs Assessment (Cumberland and Burns, 2004) included an assessment of services within the Park's communities. The assessment identified that the provision of public transport, leisure facilities, shops and job opportunities were all perceived to be poor. Primarily due to its remote rural locality, services within the National Park are limited and have seen a progressive reduction over the last 30 years. In the past the lack of services has necessitated households travelling outside of the Park, often relying on market towns for their provisions. However, the way the Park's communities access their services is now beginning to change with the growth of online shopping, mobile shops and health services (Northumberland National Park Authority, 2006). Further details of the National Park's socio-economic makeup can be obtained from the 2001 Census:

- The Park has a relatively old population (67 % over the age of 45) compared with the North East (60 %) and England (61 %).
- A large proportion of residents of the Park either travel to work by car/ van (48 %, compared to 35 % of Northumberland residents) or work mainly from home (38 %, compared to 7 % of Northumberland residents)

- There are 1,061 people in employment; the largest employer (28 %) being agriculture, hunting and forestry
- There is a low rate of unemployment with only 37 economically active people between 16-74 years being unemployed

The Park Authority's Local Development Framework has a central role in maintaining the character of the Park whilst fostering the social and economic well-being of the Park's communities. It aims to situate effective development to meet the needs of communities and support change that brings positive benefits to the Park (in line with the National Park objectives). The Local Development Framework is also designed to take account of other key strategies such as the Regional Economic Strategy; Integrated Regional Framework; Regional Housing Strategy, sub regional strategies, and the emerging Local Development Frameworks and Community Strategies of the three Districts within the Park (Northumberland National Park Authority, 2006).

1.2   Background to Affordable Rural Housing

Affordable housing is defined within the government's Planning Policy Statement 3 (Department of Communities and Local Government, 2006) as non-market housing provided to those whose needs are not met by the market. It can include social-rented and intermediate housing, for example shared equity, and should normally meet the needs of current and future eligible households (for example through restrictions on price, eligibility and resale). The definition is inclusive of private sector and unsubsidised homes that fulfil these criteria, but not new low cost market housing.

Whilst PPS 3 (2006) remarks that affordable housing should include social rented and intermediate housing, it is the decline in the former which has had the greatest impact in reducing the number of affordable homes (Walker, 2001). The Right to Buy has caused a colossal loss in social housing stock held by the public sector. Along with increased sales, comparatively low levels of house building from councils and Registered Social Landlords have prevented an adequate number of affordable replacements. It is often believed that the growing levels of need reported by Barker (2004) arises from our preference for living in smaller households, but in fact only 11% of this projected annual increase in households arises from such non-demographic factors. The principal elements in this increase are the changing age structure of the population (responsible for 39% of the projected increase), increased longevity (28%)

and inward migration (22%) (Holmans et al 2005). The Barker Review (2004) makes clear the number of social houses built in the UK has fallen from around 42,700 per year in 1994-95 to around 21,000 in 2002-03. In recent years, expenditure on social housing has increased, from £800 million in 2001-02 to over £1.4 billion in 2003-04, however, the rate of new supply has continued to decline. Barker (2004) argues that this is a consequence of the strong rise in land prices and the increased emphasis attached to improving existing social housing stock.

In the 2006 annual State of the Countryside Report (Commission for Rural Communities, 2006) it was stated that social/Local Authority housing represents only 7-8% of all rural completions. With increased demand for homeownership house prices have doubled in real terms in the last decade. According to the Housing Green Paper the average house now costs over £210,000 when taking inflation into account. This figure represents over 8 times the average salary (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2007).

Whilst Local Authorities have moved away from housing ownership and management (through Right to Buy, Large Scale Voluntary Transfer and Arms Length Management Organisations) the number of Registered Social Landlords has significantly increased (Mullins and Murie, 2006). However, the Housing Corporation's cost yardstick has, at least historically, placed those Registered Social Landlords developing in small settlements at a disadvantage (Shucksmith, 1990; Hoggart, 1997). Furthermore, with greater private financing of Registered Social Landlord schemes (where the risks attached to cost over-runs are significant), constraint of the sector's supply has been exacerbated. These factors have resulted in meagre housing contributions within rural areas (Walker, 2004).

Almost one fifth of England's population live in rural settlements. Many of these face a significant shortage of affordable housing. While there are regional differences, in Great Britain more than half of Local Authorities with the highest house price to income ratio are in rural areas (Horton, 2005). Furthermore in predominantly rural districts the percentage of overall housing stock that is owned, either by housing associations or local authorities, is only 13% compared to 22% in predominantly urban districts (Shucksmith and Best, 2006). Workplace-based earnings figures show the average earnings in 2004/5 in the most rural districts were only £17,400, compared to £22,300 in major urban districts (Shucksmith and Best, 2006).

Growth in the level of second home ownership has also been blamed for reducing access to affordable housing within rural areas (see for example The Commission for

Rural Communities, 2006). Although second homes may be a problem for particular local areas, there is some evidence to suggest their impact on affordability is over exaggerated. Gallent et al (2002) note that there are around 100,000 second homes in rural England representing less than 1% of the total stock; nevertheless the concentration in particular areas has led to second homes becoming widely perceived as a manifestation of social inequality in England's National Parks (Cairncross et al, 2004; Richards and Satsangi, 2004; Wallace et al, 2005).

In recognition of the affordable housing crisis within rural areas, the Government established the Affordable Rural Housing Commission in 2005. In 2006 the Commission reported a need for the equivalent of around six new houses a year in each rural ward, most of which hold a population of around 5,000 people (Shucksmith and Best, 2006). Within this report the Commission made special mention to National Parks which were described as epitomising the problems in affordable rural housing delivery – particularly at the expense of local people. The Commission's first recommendation relating to National Parks stated that:

"*The Government increases the emphasis placed on the statutory duty to foster the social and economic well-being of Park communities to ensure that National Park Authorities use their planning and other functions actively to encourage the provision of affordable rural housing*" (Shucksmith and Best, 2006)

This recommendation originates on the understanding that affordable housing often links to wider-societal issues; the countryside encompasses communities as well as landscape and without community needs such as affordable housing, those on lower incomes become increasingly excluded. The redistribution of social classes termed by Shucksmith and Best (2006) "*A progressive gentrification of the countryside*" has meant young people are recurrently forced to move away from their friends and families, sometimes having to commute back to the countryside for work.

Despite the Affordable Housing Rural Housing Commission's recommendation new development within any rural area is often met with a degree of scepticism and opposition, simply because of the varied interests present. Arguably the biggest problem faced in rural areas comes from the need to provide housing without causing any detrimental impact on the landscape. Planning Policy Statement 7 (DCLG, 2005) demonstrates that nationally designated areas comprising National Parks, the Broads, the New Forest Heritage Area and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), have been confirmed by the Government as having the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty. Consequently the conservation of the natural

beauty of the landscape and countryside continues to be given great weight in these areas' planning policies and development control decisions.

The 2006 report by the Affordable Rural Housing Commission and more recently the Taylor Review (DCLG, 2008) have concluded that the interpretation of sustainable development within the planning system has often proved detrimental to smaller rural communities. Once small rural communities have lost some of their services they are intrinsically regarded as unsustainable, and therefore deemed unsuitable for the affordable housing which could enhance sustainability.

Whilst some sections of rural communities are all too aware of the need for more affordable housing, opposition from local middle classes and campaigners (such as the Campaign for the Preservation of Rural England) may be particularly intense. Planning consultations at local and regional levels are prone to submission from more articulate and well-organised interests opposing development. Even when the need for new housing is recognised, there is the danger that stigmatisms of social housing will act to suppress the developments which the community itself so badly needs (Somerville, 1998).

The Prince's Foundation's Affordable Rural Housing Initiative (2006) expresses that good design is capable of culminating in wider economic, social and environmental benefits – although the precise definition of what constitutes 'good design' remains open to interpretation. The Foundation's (2006) suggestion that the principles of good design can foster community acceptance and speed the planning process to ultimately help deliver more affordable homes is a logical but perhaps optimistic stance, particularly in regard of the insistence of local materials which may undermine affordability. The report argues that the benefits of using local materials and traditional styles can include greater local support, exceeding local planning conditions, integration dwellings with the neighbourhood and providing homes with enduring appeal. To surmise, the Foundation insists that local materials should be considered an asset even when increasing the build cost.

1.3   Justification of the Research

Although affordable properties (as defined by the government) have long since been a component of the housing market in some form, there is currently a substantial emphasis in increasing delivery. A growing population, rising house prices and a reduction in supply through the Right to Buy scheme and low levels of house building

have all contributed to increased demand for affordable homes. The growing demand coincides with devolving governance and a growing emphasis in empowering local communities; changes which alter the ways in which strategies are administered and housing delivered. Counter-urbanisation driven by the search for the rural idyll has placed particular pressure on the indigenous residents of National Parks. As the government wishes to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to live in a decent home, which they can afford in a community where they want to live (DCLG's PPS 3, 2006), National Park residents - particularly those with ancestral heritage in the area – require changes to housing strategy and delivery that can protect their right to remain.

In an attempt to limit the so called gentrification of the countryside (Shucksmith and Best, 2006), new and innovative methods of affordable housing delivery have emerged alongside more traditional means (discussed in Chapter 2). However, the unique nature of National Parks including their statutory purpose to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage, ensures that affordable housing delivery is inherently more complex than for the more customary urban and suburban areas. The distinct governance in National Parks whereby Park Authorities act as the Local Planning Authority whilst borough, district or county councils remain as Local Housing Authorities, further complicates the process of delivery.

Local housing need, housing markets and national government guidance have all seen considerable changes since the adoption of Northumberland National Park's Local Plan in 1996. DTZ's work in Northumberland on Housing Market Assessment (2006) has confirmed that lack of affordable rural housing in Northumberland is one of the top priorities to be addressed. Similarly the Northumberland National Park Housing Needs Survey (Cumberland and Burns, 2004) confirmed that this sparsely populated rural area still manages to exhibit levels of need warranting well-researched potential solutions. Whilst the Edwards Report: Fit for the Future (1991) made it clear that National Parks are unsuitable for major new housing development, they are to prioritise the housing needs of those who live and work there.

1.4   Research Aims and Objectives

The aim of the research is to develop an affordable housing delivery framework for UK National Parks based upon existing mechanisms. Northumberland National Park is used as a case study to support the research.

The research seeks to ascertain which affordable housing delivery mechanisms are best suited to remote rural areas; areas where a lack of Brownfield sites, high development costs and a valued landscape have acted to constrain new affordable housing builds. This process encompasses research into the viability of mechanisms, their ability to provide dwellings on different scales, and the difficulties in identifying sites for affordable housing development.

In addition to the delivery mechanism(s), the delivery framework will also include recommendations as to which types of organisations and landowners are most likely to contribute to a successful development scheme. There are a variety of organisations that are (or could be) involved in affordable housing delivery. In order to establish the most appropriate means of delivery for the study area, it is necessary to consider the function and potential of these different types of organisation.

Even for the National Parks where characteristics may be very similar, no individual strategy has been universally adopted or even preferred. It is arguable that each National Park or rural local authority should seek to achieve a tailored affordable housing delivery strategy based upon its own investigations. However, with affordable housing delivery becoming an ever more important issue for rural communities, lessons learnt from this case study will also prove insightful to others outside of the study area.

In order to accomplish the research aim a number of objectives have been identified:-

- Determine how applicable the various housing delivery mechanisms currently available are to National Parks, and specifically Northumberland National Park;
- Seek professional opinions from all sectors associated with affordable rural housing delivery;
- Examine what specific factors prevent housing from being built in the study area, and what resources and/or actions are required for obstacles to be surmounted;
- Develop a delivery framework for Northumberland National Park based on findings from the above
  and
- Investigate whether there is a consensus regarding the demand for affordable housing, how it should be delivered and who should benefit from its development, or if perceptions between the National Park communities and housing/planning organisations differ

Since the findings relating to these objectives are of potential use to many organisations linked to housing and planning within rural areas, the research can be shown to exhibit generic applicability.

1.5   Scope of the Research

As the study seeks to inform future strategy of Northumberland National Park there are certain boundaries to the scope of the research.

The research covers only those housing delivery mechanisms which are permitted under the English legal system and overarching National policies. Although certain means of delivery may appear favoured through emphasises given within policies or the frequency of their application amongst organisations, all are initially considered and critiqued (Chapter 2).

Likewise the various types of organisations capable of being involved in the housing delivery process are considered. Even where an individual organisation exhibits little experience in housing projects, inclusion may be warranted on the grounds of the potential to prove valuable. Whilst one or a combination of organisations may have proved effective elsewhere, there is no guarantee that the same will be true within the study area. The inclusion and assessment of a wide variety of types of organisation helps to ensures that the outcomes of the study are influenced by open-minded and impartial research, rather than any preconceptions.

The study area itself is governed by the focus on the case study of Northumberland National Park and the Park Authorities commitment to those living and working in the Park. The National Park Authority has strong ties to a number of communities overlapping the Park boundary, particularly with regard to funding community development projects in designated action areas (Figure 1.2). Consequently a buffer zone defined by the boundaries of these action areas is also considered within the research. The inclusion of the action areas is significant owing to the additional coverage immediately beyond the National Park boundary. The addition of the buffer zone around the Park boundary invokes the inclusion of a number of market towns (or gateway settlements), namely Haltwhistle, Bellingham, Rothbury and Wooler. Nevertheless the aim of the research is concerned with meeting need of those living and working within the National Park itself.

Figure 1.2 – Northumberland National Park and Action Areas
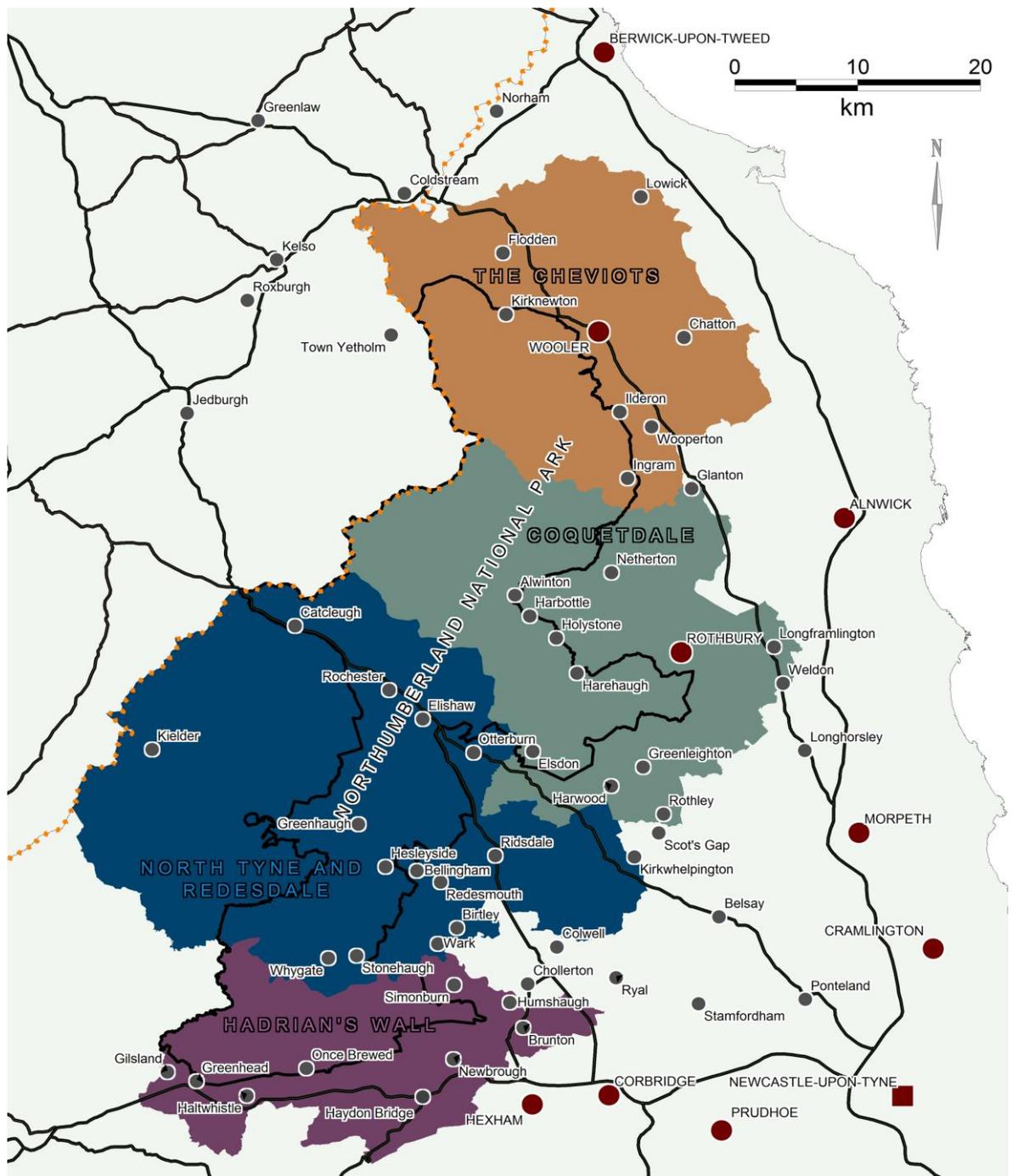
Source: Northumberland National Park Authority (2008)

Owing to the remote nature of the National Park few organisations concerned with
housing delivery are actually based within the area for which conclusions are sought.
However, a multitude of organisations are currently operating within rural
Northumberland and have the potential to be involved in projects within the Park. For

this reason data collection inevitably involves engagement with organisations and individuals from outside of the study area.

1.6   Research Outcomes and Contribution to Knowledge

Current housing delivery mechanisms tend to be more easily applicable in urban areas which represent relatively low development costs and better access to Brownfield sites – both of which have contributed to making affordable housing delivery in remote rural areas a comparatively neglected area. Although it is apparent certain policies such as the Rural Exceptions Policy have been applied in more rural areas, there is by no means a definitive or accepted approach for providing rural affordable housing.

A review of academic literature and national reports and policies suggest increased potential for affordable housing delivery through a variety of mechanisms. Whilst each of these is critiqued within the literature there is little to suggest how mechanisms can combine to complement an overarching housing strategy or target. This research adopts a methodology to assess the suitability of affordable housing delivery mechanisms within a National Park, incorporating viability with regard to scale, location and developer interest. Additionally there is also a unique assessment of whether delivery can be made more effective through combining a number of these mechanisms.

In addition to this specific contribution to Northumberland National Park, the research also encompasses an element of generic applicability. The assessment of how mechanisms may be combined as part of an overall housing strategy could prove especially insightful for rural areas consisting of smaller settlements where there is no consensus favouring any one delivery mechanism. Aside from the delivery mechanism itself, there is also the potential to learn from other aspects of the delivery framework. For example, how the inhabitants of such areas perceive the terms local and community; terms which hold great importance when developing allocation policies for affordable housing designed to meet local need. Furthermore the research will inform on which organisations have the potential to support community scale housing schemes. This can be particularly important in scenarios where funding may require the inclusion of a particular type of organisation, or to demonstrate community consultation and partnership working. In essence these elements can help to inform means of governance for sparsely populated rural areas concerned with affordable housing.

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The findings of the research will therefore not only be of benefit to Northumberland National Park, but UK National Parks in general, areas where affordable housing need is exacerbated by landscape considerations, and also other small, sparse and remote communities throughout the country.

1.7   Chapter Summary

This chapter has given an introduction to the issues surrounding affordable housing delivery and the particular pressures faced by UK National Parks. In addition the chapter outlines the purpose of the research, its scope and the outcomes desired. There are a number of mechanisms capable of delivering affordable housing, as well as a plethora of issues pertaining to the means by which rural areas are governed in relation to this delivery. The following chapter serves to explore these issues in greater depth by examining existing policies, academic literature and secondary data.

Chapter 2 – Theoretical Framework: Delivering Affordable Homes in Rural Areas

2.1   Government and Governance in Rural Areas

Connelly et al (2008) note that in rural areas, a blurring of the traditional roles of government and non-governmental sectors has involved the development of new structures, both informally (Curry and Owen, 1996) and in response to national and supranational policies and programmes. The structuring of rural policy within the UK has traditionally elevated agriculture above issues of forestry, conservation, land use planning and economic development. Whilst agriculture was represented by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, conservation was left to the Department of Environment and the Countryside Commission, and economic development to the Department of Trade and Industry and the Rural Development Commission. The segmented nature of rural policy led to the emergence of Rural White Papers in the mid 1990s, which explicitly recognised the need to develop more integrated policy for the diverse character of the contemporary countryside. The formation of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) in 2001 further hinted at enhanced integration of rural policy. Despite such changes the actual policy making actors (in Figure 2.1) and process remain largely unchanged (Woods, 2005).

Figure 2.1   Policy Making Actors

Supranational

European Union: Responsible for Common
Agricultural Policy (CAP) and Rural Development
funding through European Structural Funds

National

Government Departments: Responsible for
proposing, introducing and enforcing policy

Sub-national

Devolved Governments with potential responsibility
for areas of agriculture, planning, conservation, rural
development etc.

Pressure Groups

Various Groups representing different interests. E.g.
National Farmers' Union, Countryside Alliance,
Campaign to Protect Rural England

Source: Woods, 2005

The EU has a common Rural Development Policy, which nonetheless places considerable control in the hands of individual Member States and regions. The policy is funded partly from the central EU budget and partly from individual Member States' national or regional budgets. The essential rules governing Rural Development Policy for the period 2007 to 2013, as well as the policy measures available to Member States and regions, are set out in Council Regulation (EC) No. 1698/2005. Under this Regulation, Rural Development Policy for 2007 to 2013 is focused on three themes (known as thematic axes). These are:

- improving the competitiveness of the agricultural and forestry sector;
- improving the environment and the countryside;
- improving the quality of life in rural areas and encouraging diversification of the rural economy.

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At both the European and National (UK) level, emphasis is placed on acting cohesively so that the linkages between the environment and social capacity and economic activity can be exploited in unison (Pearce, 2005). To help ensure a balanced approach to policy, Member States and regions are obliged to spread rural development funding across all three themes in a bid to promote holistic and sustainable development.

2.1.1 Defining Sustainability

Sustainable development means that the needs of the present generation are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (WCED, 1987). This definition is widely agreed upon, although understood to mean many different things. Some interpret this - the Brundtland definition - to mean conservation-at-all-cost, whereby consumption is limited through reduced economic growth. Other scholars argue that sustainable development will occur naturally, as market prices for non-renewable resources increase, thus providing the impetus for the development of sensible alternatives (Brandon and Lombardi, 2005). At the heart of the debate, there exists a tension between adherence to core principles and openness to reinterpretation and adaptation (Kates et al, 2005).

Sustainable development fosters discourse about intergenerational equality; preserving, if not enhancing the environment for future generations may be construed as a moral obligation (Brandon and Lombardi, 2005). However, ambiguity exists in interpreting what the concept means for policy and action, with attempts to make changes in the name of sustainability often resulting in criticism as actions are perceived to be doing too much or too little (Arman et al, 2009).

At the micro-economic level, sustainability is judged by considering the economic, social and environmental performance (the triple-bottom-line illustrated in Figure 2.2), related to the interplay between built, financial, social, human and natural capital. For any given issue, there is not a single response that represents sustainability. To the contrary, there are a variety of potentially sustainable responses, each of which has positive and negative economic, social and environmental ramifications. In this sense, Baker (2006) argues that sustainability is more of a process than an end goal and might involve achieving a balance between conflicting needs and aspirations (Brandon and Lombardi, 2005). This argument is challenged by sustainability theories that proceed from an ethical basis of sustainable development, notably the 'Theory of Strong Sustainability' (Schultz et al, 2008; Hauff and Wilderer 2008). From this perspective, sustainability is not only a process, but a moral obligation founded on

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ethical objectives, which are to be used to guide policy towards the definitive goal of sustainable development.

Figure 2.2 - Elements of Sustainability
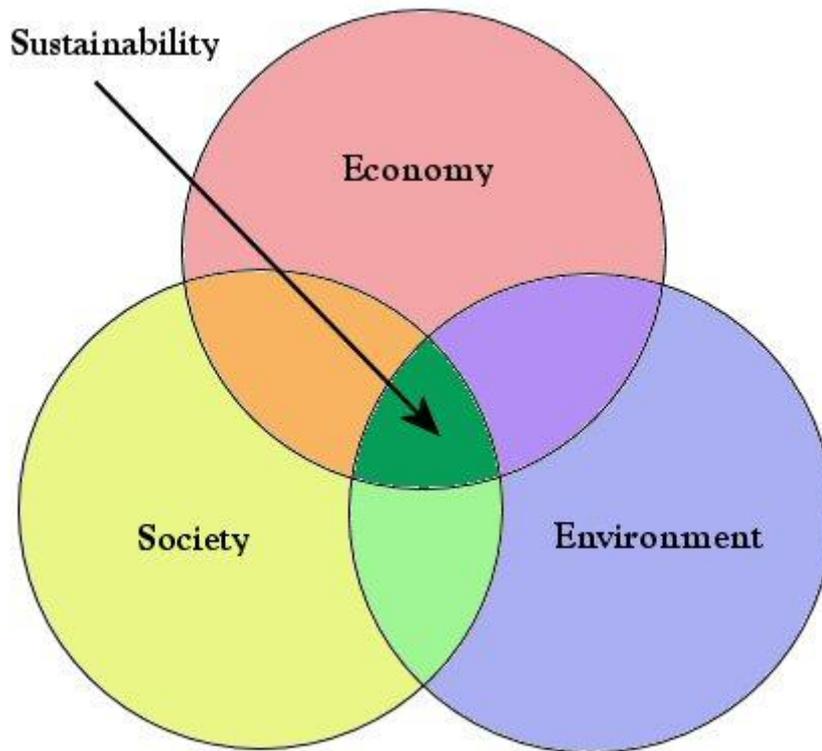
Derived from Arman et al, 2009

Evans (2005) argues that decision-making for sustainability is dependent on building the necessary capacity within local government and within civil society so that both segments can effectively engage with complex sustainability issues. Within government, capacity building involves such things as breaking down the silos of government departments, the ways of working and the ways of budgeting to allow integrated decision-making to flourish. Building social capacity involves providing opportunities for diverse groups to engage over issues to develop the trust, reciprocity, networks and partnerships required to engage with and support democratic decision-making processes. Important factors to incorporate in an examination of local governance and decision-making processes for sustainability include: political support, participation, resource commitment, good planning process, support from higher levels of government and local context (Conroy & Berke, 2004; Koontz, 2005).

2.1.2 Sustainable Rural Communities

Marshall and Simpson (2009) suggest that demographic and political changes have served to undermine the perception of a rural idyll in which small settlements are envisaged as settings for balanced, affable yet vigorous communities. Regional and local plans and strategies too often portray the rural economy more narrowly as essentially about food production and tourism. Other aspects of rural life are explicitly or implicitly portrayed as being residential or recreational, not productive – what is sometimes referred to as the consumption countryside (Lowe and Ward, 2007). This is the notion of rural areas as largely populated by commuters and the retired. The 'retirement countryside' and the 'commuter countryside' are both potent but partial characterisations that cast rural areas in an essentially dependent status. Underpinning both are negative attitudes towards rural in-migration that have influenced both policy and research (Lowe and Ward, 2007). It is only recently that the significance of in-migration to the economic development of rural areas has been more sympathetically analysed, showing that in-migrants, directly and indirectly, stimulate both employment and business growth of the local and regional economy (Stockdale and Findlay, 2004; Bosworth, 2006). Nevertheless, dominant perspectives that characterize rural areas and their populations as essentially dependent continue to exert a negative effect on physical and economic planning. While economic planners are inclined to ignore the contribution of rural economies to regional prosperity, physical planners are inclined to see rural development as fundamentally unsustainable.

Development in rural areas is often restricted by planners on the grounds of environmental sustainability, whether seeking to protect the countryside for its own sake, or allowing development only in those towns and villages demonstrating prerequisite services. Instead of accepting such practice as established doctrine, Lowe and Ward (2007) insist that there is a need to be more specific about whether the aim is to protect wildlife habitats, special landscapes or high-quality agricultural land. Secondly, the lack of services in rural areas as a reason for blocking development has the same self-fulfilling quality as the discredited key villages policy of the 1960s and 1970s, whereby smaller settlements without what planners deemed an acceptable range of services saw no allocation for development. The harshness of this approach – now resurrected in the use of sustainability appraisals to determine which settlements should be allowed, and which denied, new housing – is accentuated by further concentration and centralization of services such as supermarkets, hospitals, post offices and building societies. Wilson (2006) declares that the hierarchy of settlements employed by planners as a means of guiding development is increasingly considered

to be invalid in terms of sustainable development. Such restrictions are a key issue on the policy agenda as illustrated by the Government's formation of the Affordable Rural Housing Commission and the stance of the Commission for Rural Communities who state that thousands of villages are heading towards

"*Virtual stagnation, affluent but aging ghettoes far from the sustainable mixed communities the government seeks to foster*" (CRC 2007).

If key workers are not able to afford accommodation in rural areas then local communities will suffer economic decline (Marshall and Simpson, 2009). The lack of rural affordable housing also leads to issues of social justice and inequality as local people are unable to afford homes as a result of the demand from more wealthy outsiders (Richards and Satsangi, 2004). This has led to tension in some rural areas with attacks on holiday homes and businesses (Bathurst 2007; Morris 2007). Not only is it possible that locals be forced out of rural areas, but there are also concerns for frustrated in-migrants unable to find any affordable accommodation in these locations. The lack of affordable housing is particularly severe in English National Parks because of the desirability of these areas as places to live and the restrictive policies on developments that are often considered incompatible with landscape preservation (Cairncross et al. 2004).

The potential for tension between the primary conservation aims of National Park Authorities and their recreational, economic and social roles is well known and documented. For example, in 1974 the promotion of recreational uses of National Parks was qualified by the condition that this should not be to the detriment of the natural beauty of the landscapes. This became known as the Sandford principal that gave conservation precedence over recreation. Interestingly, Scotland's National Park situation is very different for two key reasons. Firstly, National Parks were much more recently set up following the National Parks in Scotland Act (2000). Secondly, alongside the primary conservation aims is the promotion of "sustainable economic and social development of the area's communities" (Richards and Satsangi, 2004). Some believe that English National Parks need to heighten the importance of social and economic wellbeing in order to develop a more balanced picture of sustainability (See for example DCLG's Taylor Review, 2008).

Tensions between social and economic duties and landscape conservation are perhaps illustrated no more clearly than through the affordable housing issue. By its very nature, affordable housing seeks to not only meet usual housing objectives such as the provision of basic shelter, meet certain planning and building code standards,

meet consumer expectations in terms of amenity, location and size, but also needs to meet affordability requirements. Affordable and sustainable housing adds a complicating factor because sustainability parameters, including but not limited to intergenerational equality, economic feasibility, social acceptability, energy efficiency and minimisation of waste must also be considered. While it is a noble goal to ensure that households in affordable housing are also living in homes that minimise energy costs and are cost-effective to maintain over the building's life-cycle, the financial difficulty of how to incorporate costly features remains. Despite the costs there is an argument for the recognition of sustainability as a key amenity for communities, valuable enough to warrant the surmounting of substantial financial barriers (Connelly et al, 2008). The notion posits that sustainability and infrastructure should not be regarded as a cost, rather a critical long-term investment in communities. As The Prince of Wales' Affordable Rural Housing Initiative report (2006) proclaims, it is essential that any new housing be built to a high design standard, fitting sympathetically into the local style of architecture and respecting the character and identity of the area. This approach is not only critical in gaining the acceptance of the local communities and the Local Planning Authority, but also ensures that any new homes will be of inherent and enduring value to the area.

Since the population aging in National Parks is more severe than in surrounding areas there are particularly severe consequences for the vibrancy and sustainability of their constituent communities (Marshall and Simpson, 2009). Local planners must respond to the needs of the growing elderly populations within National Parks but also pursue policies to increase the housing affordability and the attractiveness of these areas if the out migration of young people is to be countered. If current patterns of migration remain in place, the extent of new housing development required to prevent declines in the working age population will be political unacceptable for National Park Authorities. Thus, Marshall and Simpson (2009) argue that policies that control the age profile of migration are essential to tackle future issues of sustainability in National Parks. By considering the long term, holistic nature of sustainability it becomes apparent that its success relies not only on the quantifiable resources (for example, the number of affordable houses provided), but also the ways in which policies dictate change and allow resources to be managed.

In the past two decades there has been a gradual shift in the dominant style of housing management from a regulatory, rule-based approach to a more flexible community orientated style predicated on the engagement and support of local residents. This trend is particularly evident in the UK where there has also been an increasing

emphasis on creating mixed tenure, socially diverse sustainable communities. Thus instead of large, monotenure [*sic*] housing estates of social or owner-occupied housing, national policy increasingly favours full integration of well designed housing to meet the needs of all income groups and household sizes (Bailey and Manzi, 2010).

The concept of mixed communities has played an important role in a range of comparative locations, pointing to considerable policy convergence in this area, despite substantial differences in approaches to housing provision. What the programmes have in common is an acknowledgement that long-term social sustainability requires committed and effective community governance based on communitarian principles, social capital development and governmentality. These models have included ensuring sustainable improvements through devolved political arrangements, participatory budgeting, neighbourhood working and resident-led community activism (Bailey and Manzi, 2010).

Sustainable Community Development applies the concept of sustainable development to the local or community level where the challenge is to integrate sustainable development principles, long-term planning processes and specific community priorities (Connelly et al, 2008). The goal is to adopt strategies, structure and processes that mobilize citizens and their governments in the growth or improvement of six forms of capital (Figure 2.3). Community mobilization – the integration of the actions of citizens and their government serves to coordinate, balance and catalyze the values, visions and activities of various community actors through democratic processes. It is through a culture of community involvement, multi-stakeholder participation and consensus-building within communities that the values, visions and outcomes can be identified to make those communities more sustainable (Roseland, 2005).

Figure 2.3 - Community Capital Framework
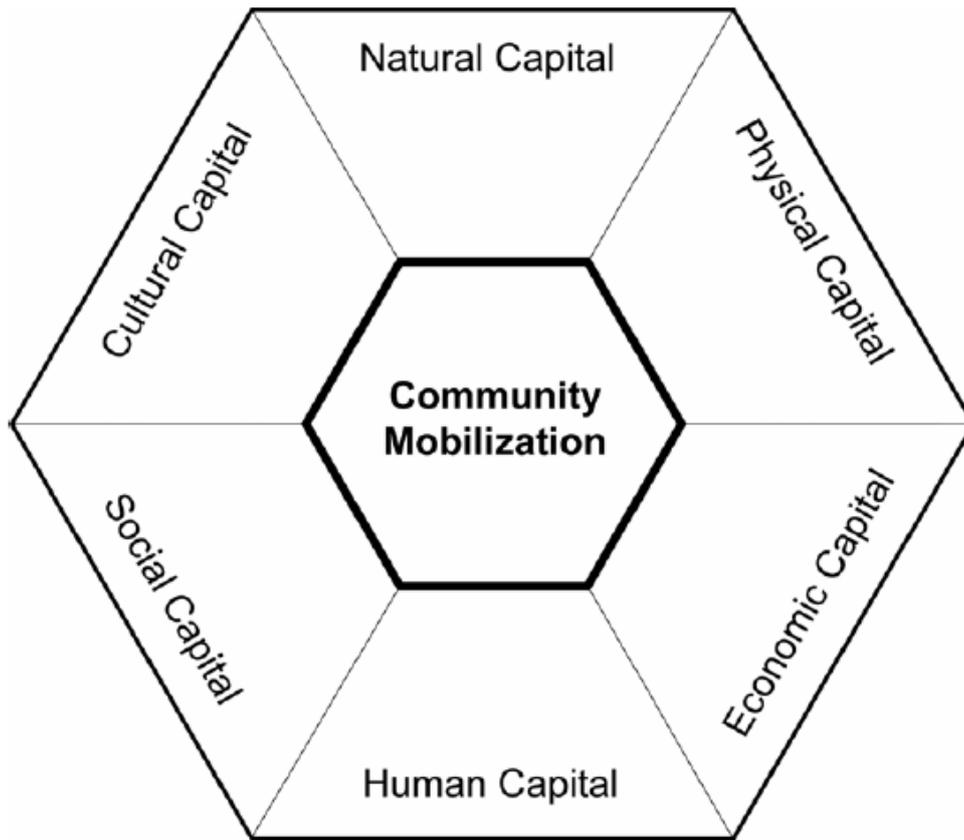
Source: Roseland, 2005

Although the means of measuring capital, mobilisation or indeed the wider concept of sustainability is imprecise, there is some agreement in regard to the processes required for progress to be achieved. Brandon and Lombardi (2005) argue that sustainability is at its strongest where there is debate, since sustainable outcomes only occur as the result of considering opposing interests. Similarly Davidson (2005) remarks that more than a blunt imposition of policy or action, sustainability requires debate, compromise and negotiation; without debate and tensions between the society, economy and environment, it is difficult to provide the solutions required for a sustainable future. Crucially, sustainability challenges wide-ranging interest groups to engage and consider what sustainability will mean for existing economic, societal and environmental systems. Therefore, in the interests of facilitating change that results in a sustainable future, debate and discourse must be encouraged. It is unlikely that any organisational or public policy commitment to sustainable development that does not catalyse contested debate is truly reflecting sustainability.

The key to strategic sustainability is to think holistically about planning and implementation and to identify the key opportunities, actors and strategies to advance

sustainability in a given context (Connelly et al, 2008). In a rural context Lowe and Ward (2007) declare that a radically different view is required of what we mean by sustainability – a view not steeped with connotations of preservation that automatically assumes that urban development is more sustainable than its rural counterpart. Scott et al (2009) insist that there is no simple unified vision of sustainable rural development. Rather what emerges is the desire for locally derived and differentiated countrysides where development is based on joined up policies informed by accurate assessments of need at the local level. Hodge and Monk (2004) also suggest the need to take account of local circumstance in rural policy, but through locally derived character assessments as oppose to statistical assessments. Marsden (1999a, b) argues for rural typologies with greater emphasis placed on the formation of effective partnerships with local communities so as to establish place specific strategies, i.e. top down approaches engaging and meeting with bottom up approaches – an approach synonymous with Ray's (2006) neo-endogenous development. Here a more thorough examination of community empowerment literature is considered.

2.1.3 Decentralisation, Devolution and Regionalism within the UK

Throughout the 20th century debate has periodically erupted concerning the appropriateness of local government to meet the economic challenges facing cities and regions in England in the context of marked spatial inequalities in economic and social conditions (Pike and Tomaney, 2009). Historically, such disparities have been most apparent and have been framed in terms of regional inequalities with their origin in the collapse of the regionally concentrated traditional export industries, notably coal, steel and shipbuilding, in the period between the First and Second World Wars. This de-industrialization particularly affected West Central Scotland, South Wales and North East England, but expanded to include regions such as the West Midlands as other manufacturing industries declined in the 1970s and 1980s. These geographically concentrated job losses were cast as 'regional problems' and, along with the rapid growth of London and the South fuelled by the growth of financial services in particular, reinforced a pattern of inequalities that first became visible in the 1930s (Martin, 1988).

Uneven development at the regional scale led successive governments to enact regional polices aimed at enhancing those economies lagging behind (Taylor and Wren, 1997). The 1960s in particular saw governments attempt to direct patterns of economic activity between regions through the use of constraints and incentives (Kaldor, 1970). This spatial Keynesianism (Martin and Sunley, 1997) reflected the

centralised nature of the UK government along with a social democratic ethos by which employment levels could be managed, living standards equalised and the manufacturing industries could be modernised through regional policy.

From 1979 Conservative governments continued to operate spatial policies, albeit on a smaller monetary and geographical scale than previous regional policies. Here the focus was on small enterprise and urban regeneration policy (Martin, 1993). Nevertheless regional inequalities and regional based financial investment during the completion of the Single European Market ensured the continuation of (denuded) regional policies. As regional economic and social disparities worsened throughout the 1980s a notion of more effective and efficient government and public service delivery through enhanced regional coordination emerged. In 1993 the Conservative government introduced Government Offices for the Regions. However, these Offices did not truly signify devolution since their role was to act as coordinators of central policy. Conversely the Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) introduced by the subsequent Labour government were designed to steer and stimulate indigenous development. The idea of a bottom-up, endogenous approach to development is particularly important to the smaller, more remote rural communities prone to isolation from the larger urbanised centres in which modern industry is habitually located.

The Rural White Paper (DCLG, 2000) set out a vision for a living, working, protected and vibrant countryside. Much emphasis was given to developing sustainability in rural communities and rural proofing – a tool requiring policy makers to consider key questions on how any policy may affect rural people, businesses and communities. Specifically, it requires policy-makers to:

- Consider whether the policies they are developing will have any impacts on rural areas;
- assess the significance of those impacts; and
- where appropriate, adjust the policy to address the needs of those who live in rural areas.

In 2003 the government commissioned an independent review of rural delivery to be carried out by Lord Haskins. The Haskins Review (2003) added weight to the proposition that rural policy delivery should increasingly be decentralised to regional and local bodies in England.

In July 2004 the Government published its full response to Haskins in the form of its Rural Strategy. Rather than a broad rural policy framework, the Rural Strategy

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focussed on the institutions regulating and funding agriculture and land management. Natural England was established so as to oversee farming's environmental payments and the protection of valued landscapes and biodiversity. However, the strategy gave poor coverage to other major rural issues such as local government, rural services, transport, rural business support, training, the voluntary sector and rural housing. Lowe and Ward (2007) comment that these shortcomings reflected Defra's limited experience in the non-land management aspects of rural development and revealed how far removed from local priorities the concerns of the centre had become. However, with the abolition of the Countryside Agency threatening to leave no national voice for rural social concerns, Ministers did agree to set up a small Commission for Rural Communities in its place to act as an advocate for the disadvantaged in rural areas. The Countryside Agency's operational responsibilities for promoting rural areas' social and economic welfare did not fall within the remit of the Commission for Rural Communities, but was instead transferred to the RDAs. Meanwhile questions remained about the effectiveness of Defra in promoting action within rural affairs, a role that had been pursued by those bodies which had been expunged (the Countryside Agency, the England Rural Affairs Forum and the Market Towns' Advisory Forum). Despite the emphasis within the Haskins Review surrounding decentralisation and public involvement, the Rural Strategy failed to provide any greater clarity and coherence over how decentralisation might work below the regional level. There was nothing on the role of local authorities, nor initiatives in parish renewal, localism and community development prompted within the Rural White Paper.

Although the remit of Regional Development Agencies does encompass rural development they have come to be seen as organisations primarily associated with urban economic development – arguably at the expense of rural areas. The difficulties RDAs have faced in relation to promoting rural dimensions of economic development may be attributed to a multitude of factors. Co-ordination on rural affairs between the RDAs is weak not only because of the competition between Agencies, but also as a reflection of the relative importance (or lack of) given to rural development. Secondly, the nature of nationally prescribed performance targets strongly influence the investments of RDAs to be directed towards large scale urban-based projects as oppose to a large number of small investments. Thirdly, those government departments sponsoring the RDAs (Department for Trade and Industry, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and the Treasury) have given an increasing emphasis to urban development through so-called city region projects.

Whilst the use of Regional Strategies may also be viewed as an example of devolving power from Whitehall, the targets contained within the strategies (for example number of houses to be built) emanate from central government. The process of developing Local Development Frameworks at Sub-regional levels (whether for unitary or borough/district authority area) are therefore inescapably driven by overarching targets and agendas. Consequently the very notion of devolved power and bottom-up thinking ascribed within the Haskins Review, Rural Strategy and Empowerment White Paper is undermined.

In essence the devolution of power and influence to urban-centric Regional Assemblies and Development Agencies appears to be an inadequate approach in empowering the rural communities. The neglect of rural areas in favour of city-region development underpins a sense that rural areas and communities lack their own sources of dynamism or entrepreneurship, that they are essentially dependent on urban areas, and that they are fundamentally unsustainable. This mindset has resulted in rural areas becoming marginalized from territorial economic development planning (Centre for Rural Economy, 2006).

The failings of the aforementioned devolutionary measures are also inferred through the introduction of more recent Acts and proposals from central government. 2007 saw the introduction of the Sustainable Communities Act, encouraging the economic, social and environmental well-being of local areas, including representation and participation in civic and political activity. In addition to this, the Sustainable Communities Amendment Act was passed in April 2010, to ensure that the process of involvement established by the original legislation becomes an on-going process rather than a one off event. The Decentralisation and Localism Bill, announced in the Queens speech, (25th May 2010) called for further powers to be devolved so that councils and local communities possess greater control over housing and planning decisions. This measure, it is hoped, will ensure that there is a legislative framework allowing communities to shape their own communities. These changes also coincide with the appointment of the state's first appointment of a Minister for Decentralisation.

Pemberton and Goodwin (2010) note that the structures of local government in rural England are currently undergoing a major reorganisation, designed to introduce 'unitary' authorities which are responsible for the delivery of all key services within a local government area. This is the latest in a series of reforms which have seen the UKs system of local government change greatly since its inception late in the nineteenth century.

2.1.4   Community Empowerment in Rural Development

For the UK, the issue of rural governance – referring to who governs, rather than how governing takes place – has also been subject to dramatic evolution within the last 30 years, largely as a result of the changing discourses within the European Union. Whereas previously the rural has been equated with agriculture, there is now greater recognition of the diverse nature of rural areas. With these changes, linked to a variety of socio-economic processes, there has been a need to view rural development as something more than an adjunct to agricultural development.

Within the European Union from the late 1980s onwards, a rural development framework has evolved which emphasises ideas of integration, participation and partnership. This mirrors moves within the broader realm of economic development where the principles of subsidiarity and cohesion have been accorded considerable prominence (Walsh, 1995). A variety of rural measures, most notably LEADER, has arisen in response to the perceived problems of many rural areas. Central to the initiatives undertaken has been an espoused shift away from traditional 'top-down' approaches to more inclusive and integrated 'bottom-up' strategies. Inherent within the approach currently being advocated is the involvement of local residents in the development process. This has meant an increasing emphasis on the importance of community groups and local actors, as well as the encouragement of partnership arrangements allowing such groups a say in what happens in their own area.

The current rhetoric of rural development plays heavily on the role of the local community, who are envisaged as playing an integral part in the process of initiating and managing their own projects. The argument being that policies that are sensitive to local circumstances will not only be more effective in taking the uniqueness of local social structure, economy, environment and culture into account, but also, through the involvement of the local community, policies will be more likely to be successful in their implementation. In essence, communities that have a say or role in the development of policies for their locality are much more likely to be enthusiastic about their implementation (Curry, 1993).

It might be argued that this shift reflects wider notions of moving away from a modernist vision of planning to a more post-modernist approach emphasising rural diversity and local differences. Locally sensitive initiatives are therefore favoured over the development of cross-spatial blueprints. Such strategies also tend to utilise ideas of the tradition of co-operation and self-help reputed to be deeply embedded within rural life

(Rogers 1987). Viewed from a wider political economy perspective, these moves might also be seen as an attempt to off-load responsibility for rural development and a tacit admission that previous endeavours have failed. In an era where there is an increasing emphasis on fiscal considerations and value for money, it has also been argued that a grassroots approach represents a cheap method of delivering some form of rural development (McLaughlin, 1987).

White (1996) argues that strategies emphasising participation reflect a wish by governments or agencies to control developments – a process best achieved through incorporation rather than exclusion. In doing so, it is possible for local people to be involved, whilst not necessarily in control. The question surrounding the representativeness and meaningfulness of communities is perhaps the greatest threat to the perceived success of bottom-up development. However, the legal and technical complexities of certain projects will often require communities to lend the support and expertise of external organisations. Furthermore evidence of partnership working is increasingly required as a prerequisite for obtaining grant funding.

Although initiatives such as LEADER can help to facilitate collaboration and the sharing of knowledge, the vast array of potential partnership organisations within a network can often result in inefficient use of resources owing to their duplication. It is also common for the representatives (which may encompass community groups, trade unions, employers, farming organisations, the unemployed and state agencies involved with agriculture, industry, tourism, education, training and the local authority) to be perceived as having different weighing when it comes to giving impetus for a particular development project or goal. Over-representation of certain professionals or a level of class – whilst it may be well meaning – can narrow the extent of representation and infer community involvement on the basis of the participation of a small number of people not necessarily representative of wider local views. Such representation risks a scenario where those groups most in need receive unsubstantial benefit. Even if community groups could be assumed to be reasonably representative, evidence from an evaluation of LEADER I indicates that aid to private sector projects was more common than support for community group projects, both in terms of numbers and financial support (High and Nemes, 2007). In summary it is those least disadvantaged who are more likely to have the necessary time and financial ability to be actively involved in the formulation of a project. If this is the case, both people and places in need may become further marginalised.

The question of unequal power relationships is crucial when considering partnership and participation in rural development. These partnerships may be prone to the disabling impediment of an oppositional engagement where the so-called professional views are accorded primacy above that of the local 'amateurs'. In this scenario, the unequal power relationship results in what Varley (1991) terms "partnership from above". As Commins (1985) and Cloke (1987) argue, the unwillingness of the statutory organisations and professionals to relinquish control can be detrimental to communities' innovation and experimentation in finding their own solutions to local problems. In such a case the very notion of bottom-up development becomes undermined as communities lose faith and partnerships dissolve. Murray and Greer (1993) conclude that those partnerships able to survive in these cases do so on the basis of a dependency, rather than local empowerment.

It cannot therefore be assumed that a territorially-based approach is intrinsically more attuned to the needs of local people. Instead it may merely serve as a mechanism for the pursuance of a top-down agenda. In cases with substantial involvement from state agencies, it may be argued that there is at least the necessary support in place to allow change to occur. On the other hand it equally runs the risk of de-politicising issues (see Kearns, 1995) and removing reprehensibility from the state whilst continuing to legitimise the need for existing power structures (both national and local) to remain intact. In the words of Bowler and Lewis (1991), there is always the very real risk that rather than emerging as an alternative model for development, the bottom-up approach seems most likely to be absorbed by the established institutional structures, whether intentionally or not. Rogers (1987) declares that a reliance on voluntary activity results in a tacit acceptance of existing power structures. Thus, in order to avoid conflict, consensus will prevail (Curtin, 1996). Under such circumstances views which challenge an established consensus are unlikely to be accommodated, even when accepting the possibility that some views within rural society are likely to carry considerably more weight than others.

Even where statutory bodies are willing to act less in terms of self-preservation and more in a manner conducive to local autonomy, the problem of power relations at a local level may still require some resolution. Despite the idea of a rural idyll, complete with a close knit community, people within a defined community will rarely hold identical values and ideas in regard to development. Cohen (1985) rightly points out that far from being straightforward, community is an ambiguous concept fraught with conceptual difficulty. Although sociologists have long since been interested with the

idea of communities, there remain a number of interpretations as to what constitutes a community. Ferdinand Tonnies contrasted the pre-eminence of gemeinschaft, or community, in rural areas based on close human relationships developed through kinship, common habitat, cooperation and coordinated action for social good (Harper 1989), with that of gesellschaft, or society, in urban space, where relationships were based on formal exchange and contract. Although later writers have critiqued the overly simplistic nature of this dualism, community remains a strong element in lay discourses of rurality and associated policy documents. In lay discourses community is often used to imply frequent, high quality social interaction between individuals, strong social networks and a shared sense of identity (for example Jones, 1997), but such qualities exist more as ambiguous abstractions rather than anything concrete and measurable. Woods (2005) notes that in policy discourse community can be used as a shorthand term to refer to an administrative territory, the public, or a normative concept of a self-organising group of people, whilst Leipins (2000) proposed a model of community based on four elements; people, meanings, practices and spaces/structures - all of which are proposed to be mutually constitutive (See Figure 2.4).

Figure 2.4 Leipins' Community Model
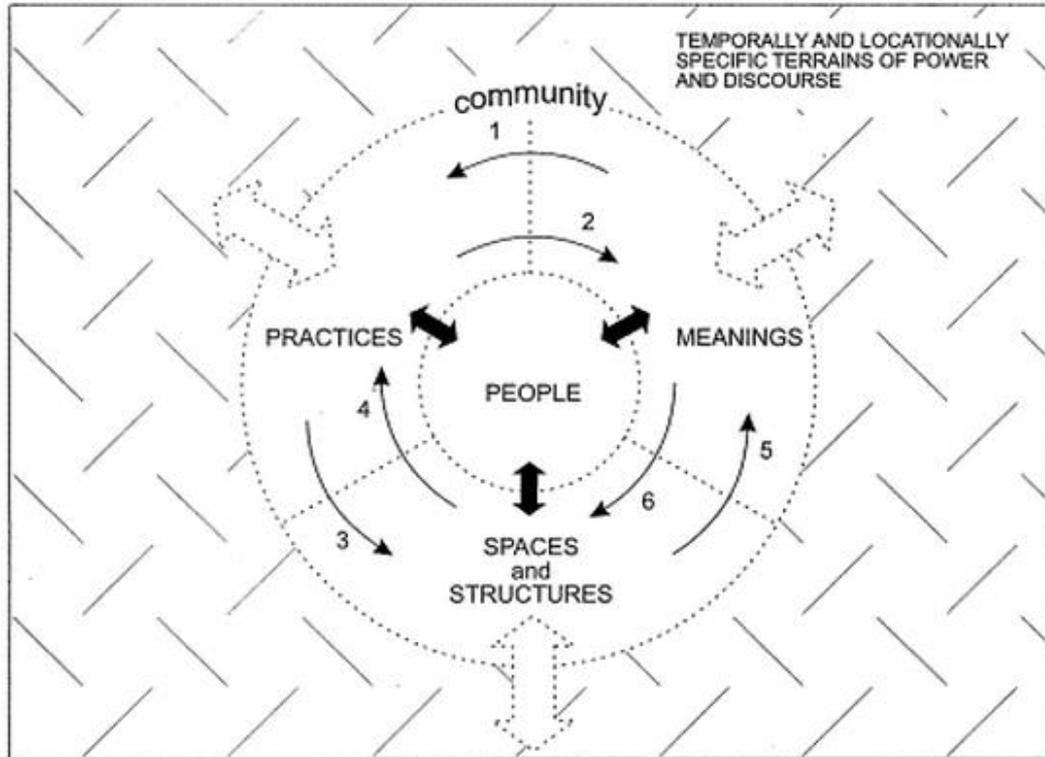
1 MEANINGS	legitimate practices
2 PRACTICES	enable the circulation and challenging of meanings
3 PRACTICES	occur in spaces and through structures, and shape those spaces and structures
4 SPACES and STRUCTURES	affect how practices can occur
5 SPACES and STRUCTURES	enable the materialization of meaninngs
6 MEANINGS	are embodied in spaces and structures

The contention between meanings of communities is not just a semantic point. Invoking the term community can serve to gloss over important divisions within localities and can effectively lead to the ignoring of differences in attitudes, outlooks, living conditions, etc. within particular areas. For instance, a 'class-less' analysis of rural life may lead to the assumption that rural areas consist of a homogenous group of people with shared interests and broadly similar outlooks, or at least the convenient down-playing of a more complex reality. This highly romanticised notion tends to suggest the idea of a 'natural' community. Thus, there is the risk of assuming that rural development objectives can be achieved by obtaining the 'community view'. That such a view does not exist, let alone is obtainable, presents huge problems for policies which appear to utilise this simplistic notion. Members of a spatially defined community may well possess a variety of conflicting interests and few common goals. For

example, the wealthy and powerful may have a very different agenda to that of the poor and weak (Cloke et al, 2000).

Despite the difficulties in defining and extracting views, the idea of communities has now become an intrinsic element of rural development initiatives through a desire to empower citizens. However, by taking into account the inherent politics and power struggles it is important to note that participation is not always synonymous with empowerment.

2.2   The Roles of Planning and Housing Authorities

Northumberland National Park lies wholly within the North East region, bordering Scotland and the North West region. Until the recent formation of a countywide Unitary Authority the Park comprised of parts of three District Councils; The Local Authorities of Alnwick, Berwick upon Tweed and Tynedale, all of which acted as the Local Planning Authorities for their respective areas outside of the National Park. Northumberland National Park Authority is the Local Planning Authority for the National Park area, which represents approximately 20% of Northumberland County.

The Planning responsibility of the Park and surrounding Local Authorities has been simplified in Figure 2.5

Figure 2.5 Planning Responsibilities of Local Authorities prior to the Formation of a Unitary Authority
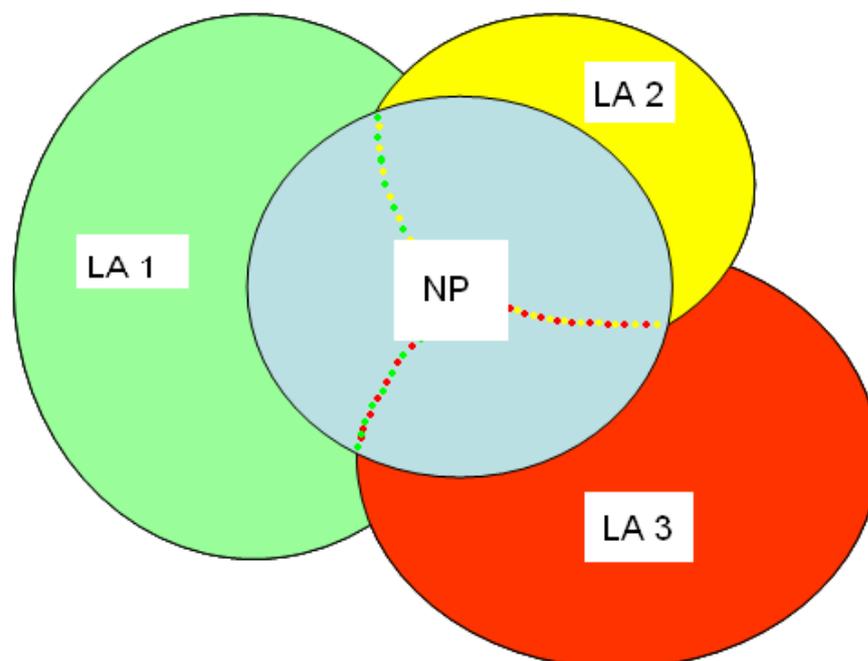
Although the National Park has its own Planning Authority it is not a Housing Authority. Instead housing responsibilities including the promotion of adequate and affordable housing laid with the Local Authorities, each representing a portion of the Park (Figure 2.6).

Figure 2.6 Housing Responsibility in and around Northumberland National Park prior to the Formation of a Unitary Authority
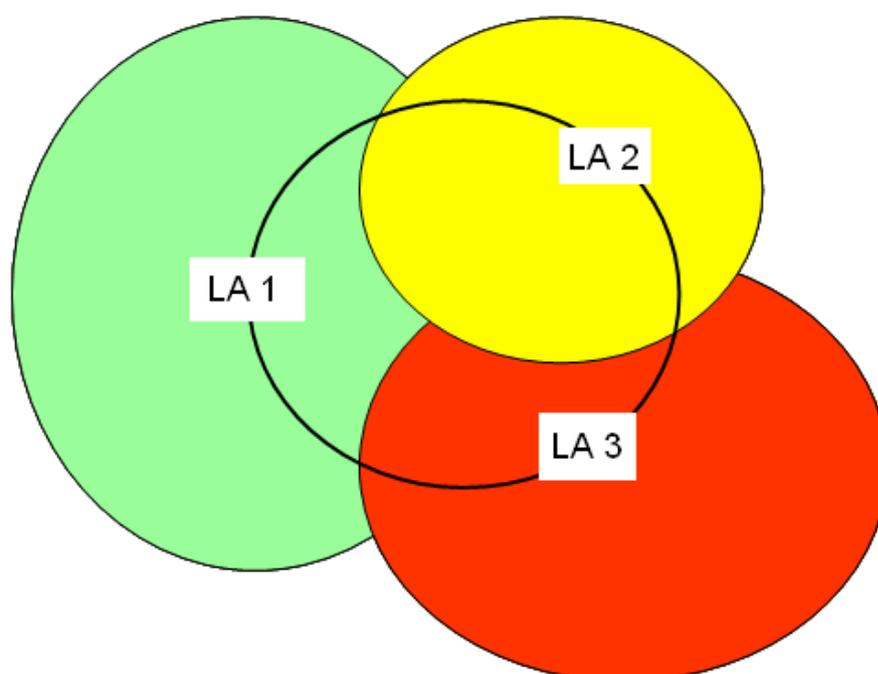
With the formation of a Unitary Authority the jurisdiction of the borough and district council Housing and Planning Authorities has amalgamated. However, the National Park Authority remains as a standalone Planning Authority. Although the Planning Authority is not ultimately responsible for meeting affordable housing need, it, like a Housing Authority can impact upon the ways and potential of delivering affordable homes.

The numerous planning acts over the last century have often been worded in a rather vague way that deliberately leaves room for interpretation in line with contemporary Government policy or to suit particular circumstances. The introduction of Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) notes, and more recently Planning Policy Statements, for statutory planning, cover a range of development issues (see Figure 2.7). These

policies have been supported by a series of Regional Planning Guidance notes (and latterly Regional Spatial Strategies) which provide a more local perspective on planning issues. Together the guidance, statements and strategies help with the interpretation of legislation and the informing of development plans. Additional guidance may also be provided by the Royal Town Planning Institute as well as statutory bodies such as Natural England.

Figure 2.7 Planning Policy Statements and Guidance

Planning Policy Statement 1 Delivering Sustainable Development

Planning Policy Guidance 2 Green Belts

Planning Policy Statement 3 Housing

Planning Policy Statement 4 Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth

Planning Policy Statement 5 Planning for the Historic Environment

Planning Policy Statement 6 Planning for Town Centres (now replaced by PPS 4)

Planning Policy Statement 7 Sustainable Development in Rural Areas

Planning Policy Guidance 8 Telecommunications

Planning Policy Statement 9 Biodiversity and Geological Conservation

Planning Policy Statement 10 Planning for Sustainable Waste Management

Planning Policy Statement 11 Regional Spatial Strategies

Planning Policy Statement 12 Local Development Frameworks

Planning Policy Guidance 13 Transport

Planning Policy Guidance 14 Development on Unstable Land

Planning Policy Guidance 15 Planning and the Historic Environment (now replaced by PPS 5)

Planning Policy Guidance 16 Archaeology and Planning

Planning Policy Guidance 17 Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation

Planning Policy Guidance 18 Enforcing Planning Control

Planning Policy Guidance 19 Outdoor Advertisement Council

Planning Policy Guidance 20 Coastal Planning

Planning Policy Guidance 21 Tourism

Planning Policy Statement 22 Renewable Energy

Planning Policy Statement 23 Planning and Pollution Control

Planning Policy Guidance 24 Planning and Noise

Planning Policy Statement 25 Development and Flood Risk

Crook and Whitehead (2002) explain that planning has two roles in meeting housing need. The first being to calculate the overall requirement for new dwellings and to set out these requirements in statutory plans and other policy documents at various spatial scales. The second role is to ensure that planning policy then makes provision for adequate land to meet these overall requirements, either by allocating specific sites in development plans or by setting out policies to be used by Planning Authorities when responding to applications to develop other sites (so called windfall sites). Targets regarding the total number of affordable housing completions, or quotas dictating a proportion of developments to be affordable are now commonplace.

2.3   Housing Delivery through the Planning System

2.3.1 Section 106 Agreements

Provided that Local Planning Authorities have policies in their adopted statutory development plans that assess the need for new affordable housing in their districts, they may require private developers to contribute to meeting this need. They may also set specific targets to be achieved on sites allocated for new housing in adopted plans. When developers agree to make contributions these are made legally binding contracts, where they enter into agreements with the relevant Planning Authority under Section 106 of the 1990 Town and Country Planning Act. These contributions are categorised as a means of planning gain (Healey et al, 1993). In the past, planning gain was generally limited to securing developers' contributions towards the specific costs directly associated with development impacts, including off-site infrastructure. Nowadays, they are increasingly used to make contributions to wider infrastructure and community needs, including affordable housing (Grant, 1998; Campbell et al., 2000). This is intended to ensure that local residents are essentially no worse off as a result of the development (Barker 2006).

Stephens et al (2005) conclude that providing affordable housing using Section 106 agreements has the potential for meeting three of the government's main affordable housing objectives:

1. Ensuring land is made available for housing and does not have to be bought by housing associations on the open market;
2. Providing a financial contribution from developers to expand the supply of affordable housing that can be obtained given available government funding;

3. Supporting the mixed communities agenda both by putting as much as possible of the supply on the same sites as market housing and mixing what is provided between social renting and intermediate tenures to ensure that a range of household groups will live on the site.

Whilst sites consisting solely of social housing made up the vast majority of the output during the last century, these objectives instead emphasise mixed development sites. From 2000 (PPG3), it was made clear that if developers were unwilling to provide affordable housing alongside open market units, Planning Authorities would be permitted to refuse planning permission (DETR, 2000). As a result mixed housing developments through Section 106 agreements are becoming the only realistic option for many Local Planning Authorities (Crook et al, 2005).

The role of Section 106 agreements within the planning system is illustrated in Figure 2.8

Figure 2.8 – The Role of Section 106 in the Planning System
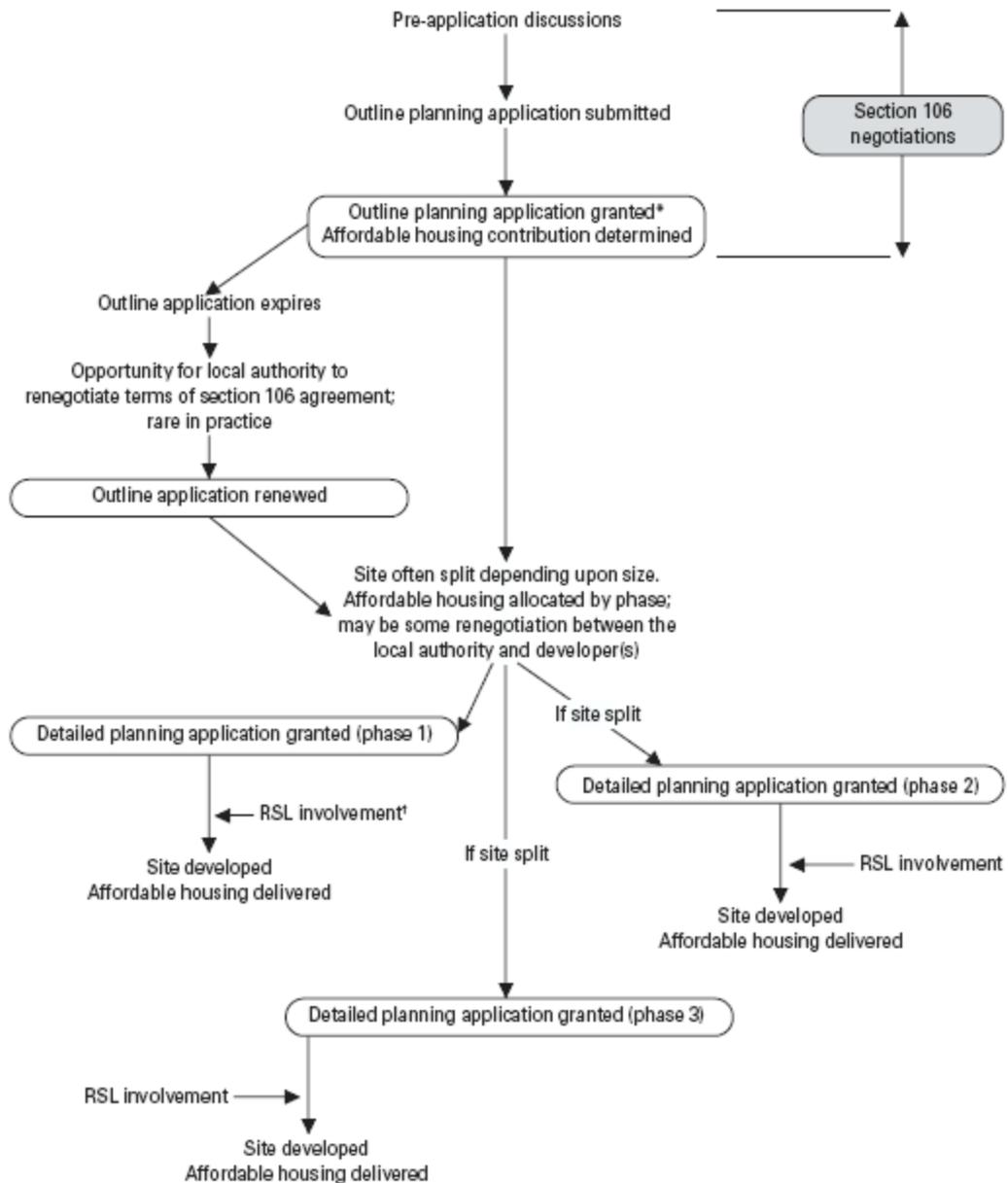
Source: Crook et al, 2002

The Section 106 approach to providing affordable housing starts from the presumption that the land use planning system, together with building regulations, will determine the total number of additional dwellings that may be provided, their location and their

physical attributes (Monk et al, 2006). These outcomes are guided by central government policy, regional allocations of appropriate numbers, local plans and development controls. The aim to ensure that affordable housing is delivered through the planning system is not meant to modify development decisions significantly, but is intended to ensure that a proportion of properties, based on local needs data, is affordable – either via low cost market provision or, more usually, social rented housing.

The actual Section 106 negotiation process is lengthy, in fact anything up to 6 years, although 18 months is common. Development of the Section 106 agreement is often undertaken in parallel to negotiations and redrafted when agreements change or disputes are settled. The actual legal detail of the Section 106 agreement may take another 18 months to finalise. Planning permission is often granted subject to the legal agreement and this agreement may not be finalised until well after permission is granted. This adds to the already lengthy planning process summarised in Figure 2.8 (Crook et al 2002).

In negotiating a proportion of affordable homes the Section 106 contract ensures land for affordable housing alongside open market housing. It also ensures that a financial contribution is made to the affordable housing provided. In this way the use of planning gain for affordable housing means that developers and landowners are being asked to fund part of the shortfall in the provision of social rented and other affordable housing. (Crook et al, 2005). The cross-subsidy required to procure affordable housing can be derived in three main ways. First, developers can pass the expected subsidy back to the landowner by paying a lower price for the land. As long as the same amount of land comes forward, this is simply a financial redistribution from landowners to affordable housing.

Second, the cost can fall on developer profits. One of the richest sources of subsidy here comes from land price increases arising after the developer buys the land. Alternatively subsidy could come from an increase in the prices of the market houses included on the sites. This would not normally occur – as one would expect the developer always to seek the highest attainable price (Crook et al, 2005).

Price reduction is also possible by reducing the cost per dwelling – for example, by altering design and material specifications, changing the mix of housing provided, or increasing densities (Monk et al, 2006). These measures do not involve subsidy but rather changes in the output provided and in the efficiency of production.

Direct government subsidy in the form of Social Housing Grant (SHG) is allocated through the Homes and Communities Agency, both to mixed development Section 106 sites and to 100% affordable housing sites. Local Authority Social Housing Grant may also be available to assist provision. Allocation of land is usually a prerequisite to attaining Social Housing Grant. The variation in financial subsidy from Social Housing Grant and that available through Section 106 makes it difficult to ascertain the impact of the planning system approach. Contributions from Section 106 may be seen as a way of stretching Social Housing Grant, or in other cases they may be a substitute with higher levels of subsidy being necessary to allow for development to take place at all (Crook et al, 2005).

Although limited estimates have been made regarding the number of dwellings produced through Section 106 agreements, numerous authors suggest that 15,000 per annum is likely to be the maximum achievable amount given overall levels of output (Holmans et al, 2000; Crook et al, 2001). However there is scepticism that these estimates cover a number of years and that not all development is actually completed. Crook et al (2005) state that the majority of Local Authorities do not keep accurate records of affordable housing completions, units secured or approved through the Section 106 process. Some Local Authorities have reportedly only recorded those units actually completed, while others included those units that were likely to be secured but were still under negotiation - a situation capable of worsening as the housing market slackens (Monk et al., 2006). There is also evidence that some Authorities have recorded all affordable housing units allocated planning permission in the relevant year, and not just those secured or approved as an element of a market site. Double counting of starts and completions is a further problem. The combination of these factors means that it is extremely difficult to give a definitive evaluation of the mechanism's success in terms of output. However, there is evidence to suggest that the proportionate share of affordable housing completions attributable to Section 106 agreements is increasing (Figure 2.9)

Figure 2.9 – The Delivery of Affordable Housing through Section 106 Agreements
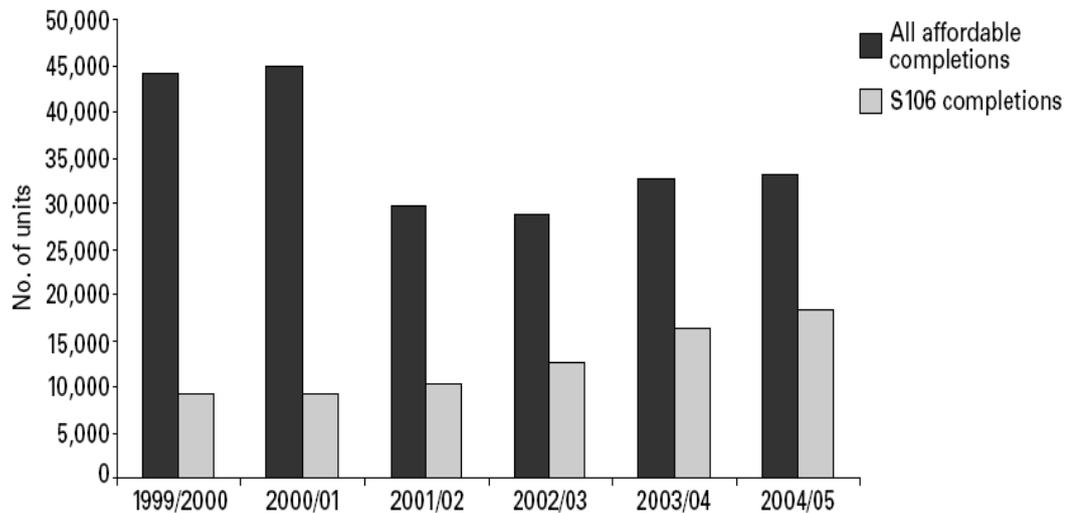
Source: Monk et al, 2006

What evidence there is suggests that not only have Planning Authorities varied in their ability to achieve their target proportions of affordable housing but in the majority of cases what has been provided has required financial subsidy in the form of Social Housing Grant, both from Local Authorities and from the Housing Corporation (now the Homes and Communities Agency). Crook et al 2005 state that as many as two-thirds of the units secured on Section 106 sites are reliant on some level of Social Housing Grant. There have also been problems with definitions of need, with making robust estimates of requirements, with integrating planning and housing strategies at the local level, negotiating contributions on a site-by-site basis, and with mechanisms to protect affordability in perpetuity in ways that also protect the lenders of Registered Social Landlords. Although Section 106 agreements have resulted in larger proportions of affordable housing being developed in areas of housing pressure (Holmans 2001), proportions of affordable houses developed on Brownfield sites are generally low (Crook et al, 2001).

The notion that Section 106 agreements are more productive in certain areas is echoed by Crook and Whitehead (2002) who conclude that the agreements are more difficult on Brownfield and inner-city sites and in the North of England. Local Planning Authorities in the South are likely to be in a stronger bargaining position than those in the North for four reasons:

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- Land values and development gain would be on average higher in the south;

- Housing needs would be greater;

- The policy backing for negotiating affordable housing would be stronger in general

  and

- Planning controls would be more tightly implemented

Farthing and Ashley's (2002) research showed that the key difference between the North and South regions related to the extent of housing need. Planning Authorities in the North were much more likely to report that housing needs in their area were low. This makes it difficult to negotiate for affordable housing since developers can argue that a high proportion of the North's housing is already affordable. Given a strong bargaining position, priority to affordable housing and the right negotiating tactics, an Authority is more likely to succeed in negotiating an element of affordable housing, and to achieve affordable housing numbers at or over policy targets. However neither a strong commitment to providing affordable housing nor appropriate negotiating tactics can overcome a weak bargaining position (Crook and Whitehead, 2002).

The difficulties in negotiating Section 106 agreements represent a key barrier to the mechanism's success. According to Whitehead (2007) the most common issue faced by planners comes from developers claiming that affordable housing requirements are not financially viable. On the other hand some planners feel a need for greater transparency with developers, allowing all parties to understand what it would cost to provide affordable housing and how much a housing association would pay for the completed units. Certain Local Authorities utilise a Section 106 template in a bid to make the process easier. However, the need for lengthy negotiations persists.

Within an area such as Northumberland National Park it is possible that the bargaining position of the Planning Authority may differ from that of other (Northern) Local Planning Authorities. Low levels of development in the past have potentially escalated demand to levels higher than elsewhere in the region. However, a scarcity of Brownfield sites greatly limits the applicability of Section 106 agreements. The preference of the Northumberland National Park Authority to deliver any new housing through small scale developments (as outlined in the Parks Core Strategy Preferred Options, 2006) further reduces the likelihood of Section 106 concluding as the favoured delivery mechanism. Although PPS 3 suggests a threshold of 15 dwellings before a proportion of affordable housing becomes required, the decision as to what threshold to

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apply ultimately lies with the individual Local Planning Authorities. Whitehead (2007) reveals that a minority of Local Authorities have introduced reduced thresholds, although a smaller development is often combined with a smaller proportion of affordable units.

Crook et al (2005) outline a variety of affordable housing tenures delivered through Section 106 agreements. The most common tenure is social rented housing involving a Registered Social Landlord. Shared ownership through Registered Social Landlord involvement is also common. Other tenures included variants of Low Cost Home Ownership (LCHO) schemes. These units are dwellings sold on the open market but are usually restricted in size in order to maintain affordability. Discounted open market value (DOMV) units are less common. In this case the developer will sell the units at a discount of the open market value, usually a reduction of 20%. Subsequent sales are also at the same discount. The process is habitually administered by the Local Authority. Low Cost Home Ownership schemes can also utilise occupancy restrictions whereby those entitled to purchase a dwelling must satisfy certain criteria such as being resident in the area for a number of years or being defined as a key worker (Rutter and Latorre, 2009).

Developers prefer Low Cost Home Ownership over rented units as they can be sold at open market value and thus generating greater profit. Developing social rented units, and to a lesser extent shared ownership units next to market units, can impact upon the saleability and therefore the value of the market units. Occasionally, Low Cost Home Ownership units and shared ownership units are used as a buffer between rented and market units, or even clustered on a separate part of the site (Crook et al, 2005).

Although Local Authorities of Southern regions may hold a strong bargaining position, the North generally requires a lower level of subsidy for the development of shared ownership and other Low Cost Home Ownership properties. This scenario almost certainly results in additional affordable housing, but in terms of ownership rather than rental properties (Farthing and Ashley, 2002).

A wide range of clauses are being used within Section 106 agreements for the provision of affordable housing. However, relatively few of these detail when affordable housing is to be provided or what happens if it cannot be in the form initially intended. In short protracted Section 106 negotiations largely stem from unclear local, planning-led affordable housing policies. Without clear local policies, the granting of planning permission - subject to a Section 106 agreement - has proved in some cases to be the

granting of little more than the right to enter into lengthy, legal, and costly debate (Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors, 2001).

There is some acknowledgement (for example Crook et al, 2005) that the policy is evolving and lessons are being learned; there is therefore potential to increase the contribution of planning gain to affordable housing within existing frameworks. Even so, the application of Section 106 in an attempt to provide high proportions of affordable housing upon small scale rural sites – those most common in Northumberland National Park – will likely remain unachievable. This, Pearce (2005) suggests, is largely due to a lack of interest from developers in such circumstances; *the higher the requirement of affordable housing the lower the incentive for developers to provide the market housing upon which the provision of affordable housing depends*.

2.3.2 The Rural Exceptions Policy

Local Authorities in England have been able to operate a Rural Exceptions Policy since 1989. It is very much a policy designed to provide affordable housing in perpetuity at a localised level (Shucksmith and Best, 2006). Planning Policy Guidance 3 (2000) described how the Exceptions Policy allows Local Planning Authorities to grant planning permission "*for small sites within and adjoining existing villages, which may be subject to policies of restraint, such as Green Belt, and which the local plan would otherwise not release for housing, in order to provide affordable housing to meet local needs in perpetuity*". The subsequent Planning Policy Statement 3 (2006) maintains this policy, and in its application directs Local Planning Authorities to have regard to the needs of the rural economy and the needs of current residents (or those with a family or employment connection).

The need to ensure that units procured using the mechanism are retained for community use in perpetuity means that exception schemes are subject to Section 106 planning agreements. In fact, they are sometimes referred to as Section 106 schemes, although the two should remain distinct as in some cases this proves to be a misnomer since not all Section 106 schemes are based on a planning exception deal (Gallent and Bell, 2000). However, Rural Exception Sites remain prone to cost barriers, so even when land has been donated or acquired at low cost, it may be necessary to allow some market housing through Section 106 schemes.

The underlying notion that rural exception sites may be allocated on Greenfield sites has unsurprisingly caused a degree of contention. Clear concern not to threaten the

countryside's character has combined with increasingly stringent views on matters such as need assessments and cross-subsidy to limit the impact of the exceptions policy on the overall need for cheaper rural housing (Gallent and Bell, 2000). However, the Rural Exceptions Policy is designed not solely as an affordable housing solution, but also as a means of allowing rural settlements and their economies to remain operational. As Planning Policy Guidance 3 outlined (paras 69-70);

"Villages will only be suitable locations for accommodating significant additional housing if it can be demonstrated that such housing will support local services which will become unviable without some modest growth"

This statement therefore implies that the Exceptions Policy is a tool for aiding the sustainability of rural areas, although what is meant by sustainable is itself contestable. As various commentators have noted, current definitions of sustainability in the UK planning system lack coherence and give uneven priority to the different aspects of sustainability (see for example Owens and Cowell, 2002). In this regard, there is a sense that Government policy needs to stress social and economic concerns in the same vein as their environmental counterparts (Elson et al, 1998).

Shucksmith et al (1993) suggest that the low numbers and slow progress associated with exception sites may reflect the greater tendency of antigrowth interests to mobilise and to engage with the planning process; a phenomenon similar to that observed with wind farm developments (Wolsink, 2000; Bell et al 2005). Despite the policy's potential to provide affordable housing in areas of restraint such as the Greenfield sites, there has generally been a presumption in Local Plans against development for affordable housing in areas with a special designated status. Such areas, Satsangi and Dunmore (2003) conclude are prone to the type of tensions concerning a wish to safeguard the environment and the wish to provide affordable housing. Additionally, planners and indeed Local Authorities as a whole may have financial considerations to take into account which act to hinder the application of the Exceptions Policy (Richards and Satsangi, 2004).

Hoggart and Henderson (2005) note that cost and time considerations associated with exceptions sites prevent the policy becoming a priority for housing providers. There is money available for small village homes in the Housing Corporation (now Homes and Communities Agency) budget which Registered Social Landlords may want to use. However, there is an unwillingness to push for increases in this budget when other need to which they attach greater importance remains unsatisfied. Registered Social Landlords thus embody a similar view to that expressed by the Local Government

Association (2002, p. 5), which argues that : '*A significant proportion of the need for rural affordable housing should be provided in market towns where people have a greater access to a wider range of facilities*'. In this regard, issues of overcoming parish council and local resident concerns, and difficulties of securing land for exception site homes take on a secondary importance. Instead there are predilections amongst Registered Social Landlords towards larger developments that have more guaranteed demand, cost less and offer occupiers better access to services (Hoggart and Henderson, 2005).

Exacting criteria (and arguably contradictory objectives) have meant that few localities actually qualify for designation as Rural Exception Sites. Shucksmith and Best (2006) report that only 262 dwellings were developed on exception sites across all of rural England in 2003/2004. Although it is suggested a lack of finance and poor information on local need are substantial limiting factors, the limited supply of land and the potential tension between environmental and social objectives of policy represent the most significant barriers. Furthermore the process is also extremely slow and time-consuming for all involved, taking anything from 3-12 years (Shucksmith and Best, 2006).

Despite the lengthy process, the developments resulting from rural exception sites are unavoidably small (six units on average). Consequently the process is perceived to be resource intensive. The resulting units are typically located on the edge of a village and consist almost exclusively of social rented housing with local occupancy restrictions in place. Figure 2.10 from (Crook et al 2002) depicts the number of dwellings secured or approved through rural exception schemes. The numbers outside the South are low with the possibility that the South East figure for 1998–1999 being an anomaly (Crook et al 2002).

Figure 2.10 – Dwellings Approved and Secured on Rural Exception Sites
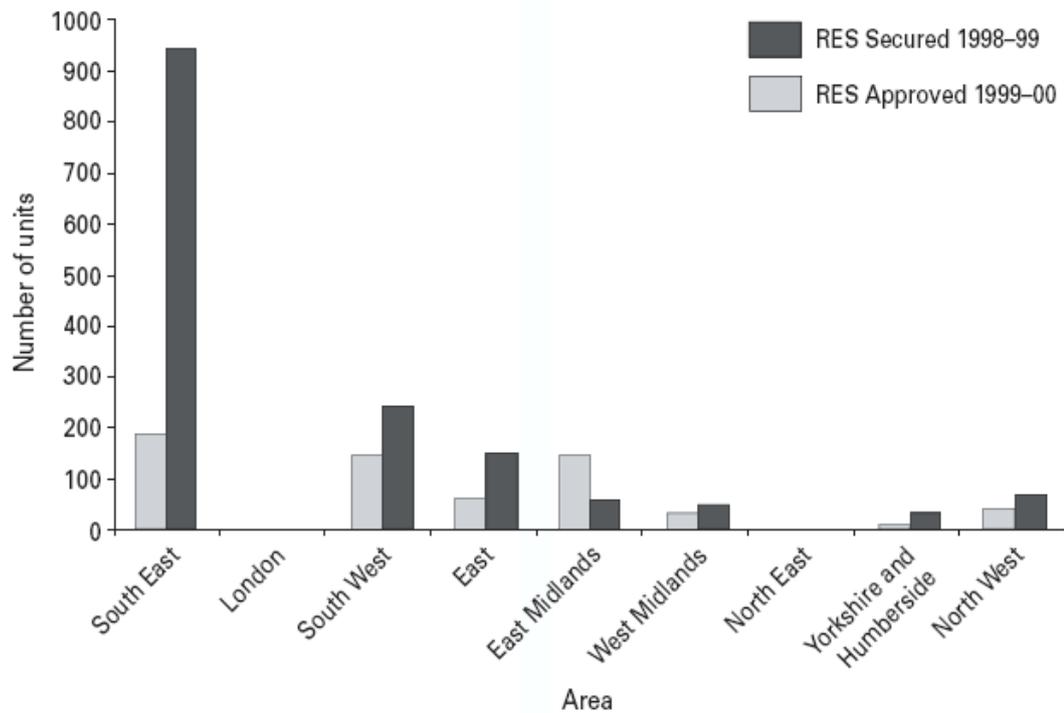
Source: Crook et al, 2002

Although Figure 2.10 demonstrates low output, Local Authorities within England have adopted the use of exceptions policies with notable enthusiasm. As far back as 2002, ninety-five per cent of rural Authorities had an exceptions policy in their local plan (ENTEC et al., 2002). The awareness and uptake of the policy can be of significance to those small villages where affordable housing is provided. However, it does not indicate that the Exception Policy is making a big numerical contribution to meeting affordable housing need across rural England (Satsangi and Dunmore, 2003).

From a supply perspective a lack of land available for development represents a formidable obstacle in ensuring affordable housing can be provided. Although the nature of the Rural Exception Policy enables planning complications to be surmounted it cannot guarantee that landowners will willingly sell off their land, especially that which has been held in the family for generations (Satsangi and Dunmore, 2003). A persistent constraint on all exception sites relates to the *hope value* generated when planners approach landowners and suggest that social (but not market) housing might be permitted on their land (Action for Communities in Rural England (ACRE), 1988; Williams et al., 1991; Gallent & Bell, 2000). The message this sends to the landowner

is that the pressure for development in a particular village is growing, pushing prices beyond the reach of local people. The landowner may then believe that permission for social housing could become a full permission in the near future. Even though land retains (in theory) non-residential value, anticipation of potential future profit confers on the land the additional hope value. If the Local Authority - together with a Registered Social Landlord, whose role it is to purchase and develop the site - decide to pursue the scheme, the owner may have to be offered a price closer to full market value. Subsequently the cost of development increases and the potential to develop affordable units is reduced (Gallent et al, 2002).

Despite the involvement of Rural Housing Enablers (a concept advocated by the Countryside Agency, 2005) to champion such developments, easing the burden of local planning departments and gathering local support, there can be no guarantee that suitable development sites can be acquired at low cost. As it becomes apparent that exception schemes are not a backdoor route to massive development profits, only those landowners with some philanthropic motivation have volunteered their land for such schemes. Crook et al (2002) explain that the ability to designate land on the edge of settlements *only* for affordable housing is one means in which to remove the hope value for market development. As non-housing land generally has a lower value than land zoned for development, the costs passed onto the developer and therefore the user are reduced. The strategy thus generates an indirect land subsidy for the purpose of providing affordable homes.

From a demand perspective, information on local need that is of poor quality or out-of-date can serve to prevent the establishment of a rural exception site. Research by Satsangi and Dunmore (2003) found that both Local Authorities and Registered Social Landlords had been involved in cases where affordable housing had been provided but no suitable local occupier could be found. The properties therefore went to households from within the district but outside of the local area. Such a scenario causes ill feeling and makes it increasingly difficult to develop subsequent exceptions sites. Regular updating of parish based housing needs surveys can help to prevent this situation arising, although doing so may be considered resource intensive. Furthermore, the process of establishing local need may risk raising expectations which may not come to be realised (Satsangi and Dunmore, 2003).

Even where demand is present and land attainable, exception sites are by no means universally welcomed. Research by Gallent et al (2002) suggests that it is not only the residents but also the Local Authorities who display trepidation towards new affordable

housing developments. In 15 case studies (across England and Wales), Local Authority and Registered Social Landlord officers acknowledged that local people faced housing difficulties. Young people in the community were particularly vulnerable to difficulties, although a broader concern that local people were forced out of villages because of a lack of reasonably priced housing also emerged. Paradoxically, these concerns are often accompanied by a resistance towards the provision of new affordable homes. In England, attitudes tended to be symptomatic of the classic NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard) syndrome: local people expressing concern that their immediate friends and relatives may not find a home, but not wishing for low income families to move in and subsequently lower the tone of their neighbourhood. Several Authorities in England noted that a combination of nimbyism and political support weakened by strong local opposition had substantially restricted affordable housing provision (Gallent et al, 2002).

Despite the barriers surrounding exception sites (for example, Hoggart and Henderson, 2005) it is important to note that particular villages have clearly benefited from individual schemes, and acceptance of the overall initiative has been eased by this balance. There remains a recognition, however, that this single initiative cannot be used alone to tackle all rural housing needs, as well as uncertainty as to whether the resultant price and tenures are appropriate (Hoggart and Henderson, 2005). Land has been given free or cheaply in many cases, with the more experienced Registered Social Landlords developing yardsticks for prices per acre or plot above which they will not purchase on the basis that eventual costs would be too great for their intended clients (Gallent and Bell, 2000). Even where land is provided at nil cost, there can be no guarantee that eventual costs will be affordable in all cases. In other words, the subtraction of the land cost element might not be sufficient to achieve the aims of those implementing schemes.

Gallent and Bell's research (2000) demonstrated that whilst many experienced builders could continue a programme of shared ownership units out of their own resources, the lack of an immediate return on rental units still necessitated some form of outside subsidy. In addition, success with a rolling programme of shared ownership was also threatened by any recession. If the full range of rural needs were to be met, exceptions policy could not provide a substitute for financial inputs required from government. However, as the policy's name suggests, dwellings procured under this initiative are not envisaged to be a solution to meeting substantial need, but rather as additional to other units supplied for general need (DoE, 1991; DETR, 1998).

It may be argued that greater experience in dealing with exceptions, rather than official guidance, has resulted in the most significant impact on the success of the schemes. The different parties involved are becoming more adept at working in partnership, however, tensions remain between Registered Social Landlords, developers and private lenders (Rural Development Commission, 1998). This experience also results in more precise forecasting of end costs, although a question mark still hangs over the affordability of some exception schemes (Rural Development Commission, 1998). The core limitations with exceptions are unlikely to diminish. Despite widespread take up of the policy (Elson et al, 1998; ENTEC 2002) the Policy has only delivered a few new houses, typically two to eight schemes in a Local Authority area, since its inception (Rural Development Commission, 1998). In relation to the affordability issue, the Rural Development Commission has also argued that rural exception schemes do not represent an immediate answer to the processes of social exclusion within rural communities (Gallent and Bell, 2000).

The idea of a more consistent system to attenuate time and effort surrounding the negotiations of landowners, developers and planners is potentially the key to enhancing affordable housing provision through the planning system. The pioneering of a scheme in Harrogate (as discussed at a Royal Town Planning Institute event, 2007) whereby all developers must provide a set percentage of affordable housing units, on land with a set cost appears to be providing approbation from developers who are better informed of what is required and therefore what they can expect to profit. Concurrently, because this system makes all possible development sites of equal value to developers, any hope value preventing landowners releasing land evaporates. The longer such guidelines remain in place the more efficient and effective delivery can expect to become.

2.3.3 Second Home Taxation

Second homes have become an issue concurrent with National Parks' affordability problems. As Gallent et al (2004) note, the central issue with English second homes is not their overall number – or proportion relative to the national housing stock – but their tendency to concentrate in the most attractive areas and to combine with retirement purchasing to create a range of highly localised difficulties. Chapel Stile in the Lake District National Park is cited as a village wholly taken over by the second homes and

holiday homes market (Wallace et al, 2005). Figure 2.11 demonstrates the concentrated distribution of second homes in rural England.

Figure 2.11 – Distribution of Second Homes in England
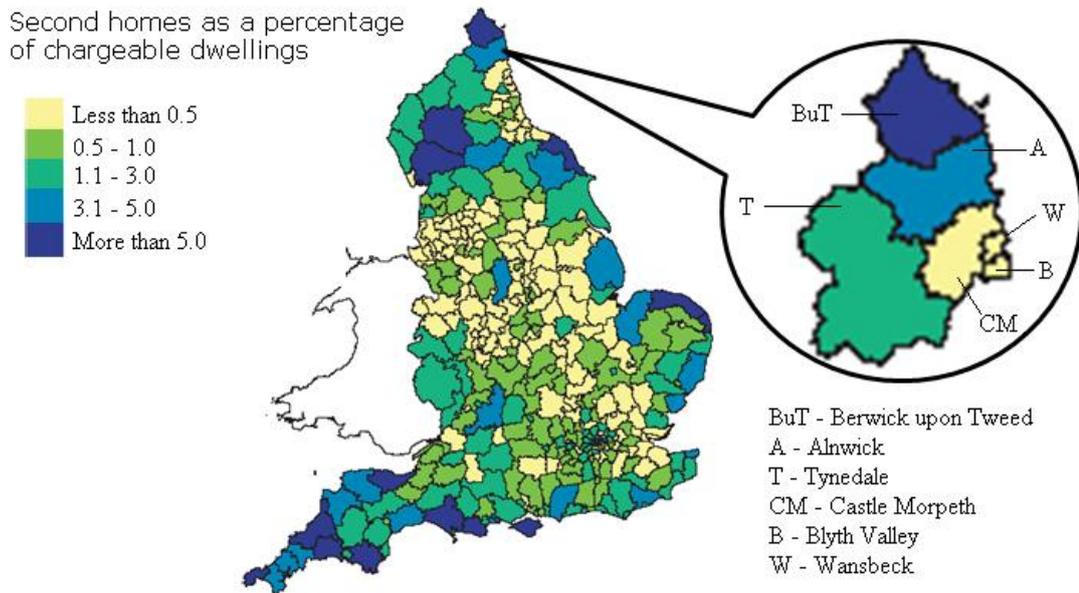
Source: Commission for Rural Communities, 2006

Retirees, although not always welcome, tend to have but one home; as do commuters. Conversely second home owners are not seeking to satisfy any basic need, and could often satisfy their needs by residing elsewhere. They are, according to some, being greedy, 'robbing locals' of their 'right' to reside in their home village (Meacher, 1999), and contributing nothing to the local community as a result of their general absence from the area (Monbiot, 1999).

With growing recognition of the negative implications associated with second home ownership changes have began to occur. Since the Local Government Act of 2003 Local Authorities have been provided with the opportunity to charge full council tax on second homes with powers to use the additional funding to meet local housing needs (Prior to this second homes were subject to a 50 % council tax reduction). Tables 2.1 and 2.2 demonstrate the extent of second homes within Northumberland's rural Local Authorities prior to the formation of a Unitary Authority, and also the use of resources raised through taxation.

Table 2.1 - Second Homes in Northumberland's Rural Authority Areas

Local Authority	No. of 2nd Homes	% of Total Stock	Resources Raised
Tynedale	481	1.87	£210,000
Berwick Upon Tweed	1275	9.43	£560,000
Alnwick	732	4.91	£333,000

Table 2.2 - Second Home Taxation and Resource Use

Local Authority	Level of 2nd Home Council Tax Discount Supplied	Split of Resulting Resources (County and District)		Use of Funds for Housing Related Provision
Tynedale	10%	C = 50%	D = 50%	Enabling Housing, Research, Housing Advice Services, Additional Housing Staff
Berwick Upon Tweed	10%	C = 50%	D = 50%	None Identified
Alnwick	10%	C = 50%	D = 50%	None Identified

Source: Commission for Rural Communities (2006)

As it is widely believed that existing second homes are likely to remain as relatively unused holiday retreats (despite fiscal disincentive), supply of new builds brought about by second home taxation should be seriously considered (The Countryside Agency,

2006). This approach would help ensure affordable properties for local people in spite of the continual threat posed by second home ownership.

The total annual figure for Northumberland second home council tax is estimated at £1.24 million (Affordable Rural Housing Project Scoping Report, 2006). Of this amount, only around £100,000 has been specifically allocated (by Tynedale Council) to mitigate the impact of second homes. In contrast The North Yorkshire Second Home Tax Scheme started in 2004 has now provided 156 affordable housing units across 22 locations (some as small as one house). These impressive results serve as a strong indication that second home council tax really can positively impact affordable housing delivery.

Whilst Local Planning Authorities can influence the taxation of second homes, the use of additional funding, ring-fenced for reinvestment in affordable housing projects, is primarily the responsibility of the Local Housing Authority.

2.4   Existing Housing Stock

The socio-political tide began to turn against council housing in the 1970s, as home ownership came increasingly within the reach of working class families. Mortgaged owner occupied homes became a central element in the consumer culture. The 'fiscal crisis of the state' in the mid 1970s prompted the then Labour government to cut back on investment in maintenance, improvement and development of council housing (Ginsburg, 2005). This process was greatly enhanced under the Conservative governments from 1979 - 97. From the tenants' point of view, the advantages of council housing ebbed away, as rents increased above inflation, maintenance and improvement withered, and Right-to-Buy sales visibly demonstrated the governments' lack of commitment to the sector. The spiral of decline over the 1980s and 1990s was, thus, largely engineered by governments, bolstered by an often zealous commitment to widening home ownership. Councils were unable to raise investment funds for maintenance, improvement and new development, and yet held politically responsible by tenants. Unsurprisingly this led Local Authorities to search for alternatives (Kemp, 1999).

2.4.1 Large Scale Voluntary Transfers

One such alternative has been for councils to transfer a large proportion (usually all) of their housing to a Registered Social Landlord – a so-called Large Scale Voluntary Transfer. The inclusion of the term 'voluntary' refers to the use of a ballot allowing tenants to support or reject the proposed transfer (Collier, 2005).

The transfer programme was initiated by Local Authorities in the late 1980s (Murie and Nevin, 2001) although Large Scale Voluntary Transfer did not become an explicit government programme until 1993. The number of transfers has been carefully regulated and rationed by governments, because of the public expenditure on costs - particularly the increased cost of Housing Benefit generated by higher rents (Ginsburg, 2005). Although there has been no explicit requirement imposed on councils to conduct transfers, in doing so capital and revenue restrictions are avoided (Bines et al., 1993) and investment outside the public sector borrowing requirement may be accessed (Mullins et al., 1995). As transfers involve no subsidy they are dependent upon a positive stock valuation that could pay off outstanding housing debt, and leave sufficient free equity in the property post-transfer. This allows the newly formed Registered Social Landlord to mortgage the stock in order to undertake catch-up repairs, modernisation and provide new housing. The business plans, which government and the private finance institutions require, also enable the Registered Social Landlord to guarantee the level of rent increase for a fixed period (Walker 2001).

Mullins and Murie (2001) explain that stock transfers in England have resulted in a much larger Registered Social Landlord sector and radically altered the make-up of the largest Registered Social Landlords (50 per cent of which are new stock transfer landlords) (Housing Corporation, 2001). The size and makeup of Registered Social Landlords is illustrated in Table 2.3

Table 2.3 – Local Authority Stock Transfers for England, Wales and Scotland (1988 - 2005)

	Whole Stock		Partial Stock	
	No. of local authorities	Dwellings transferred	No. of local authorities	Dwellings transferred
England	155	876,346	23	81,000
Scotland	4	105,000	19	19,000
Wales	1	6,400	3	1,000
Total	160	987,746	45	101,000

Source: Mullins and Murie, 2006

The rise of the Large Scale Voluntary Transfer has transformed the composition of the Registered Social Landlord sector with 57 new Registered Social Landlords each responsible for more than 2,500 dwellings being formed before the turn of the century. Harriot and Matthews (2004) point out that whilst substantial numbers of Local Authority houses have been lost through the Right-to-Buy programme, the Large Scale Voluntary Transfer scheme has added significantly to the Registered Social Landlord sector. These changes have led to the property profiles in each sector becoming somewhat similar (Table 2.4)

Table 2.4 Britain's Property Types in Social Tenure (2001)

| | Local Authority

Percentage of households | Registered Social Landlord

Percentage of households |
|---|---|---|
| Detached Houses | 1 | 2 |
| Semi-detached Houses | 26 | 18 |
| Terraced Houses | 29 | 32 |
| All Houses | 56 | 52 |
| | | |
| Purpose built Flats | 42 | 41 |
| Converted Flats | 2 | 6 |
| All Flats | 44 | 47 |

Source: Wilcox, 2003

Between 1999 and 2004 there were 133 tenant ballots for transfer in England, of which just 16 returned a 'no' vote (Ginsburg, 2005). However, some have argued that the transfer process is being forced by Local Authorities and that the term *voluntary* is contestable (Taylor 1999). Scottish Homes transfers have been rather controversial in origin and implementation. A range of techniques have been used by the organisation, some more elaborate than usual, to promote the benefits of transfer. Certain practices have left the impression among many tenants and practitioners that tenants were being pushed or rushed into changing landlords whether they liked it or not. When tenants do vote against transfer, additional ballots may be held in the hope of reversing the consensus at a later date. Ginsburg (2005) notes how several councils, St Helens, Maidstone and Torquay for example, have successfully returned to the tenant electorate with revised plans after a 'no' vote.

Mullins and Simmons (2001) attempted to assess the performance of transfer Registered Social Landlords using the Housing Corporation's performance indicator

data. They found that on the core performance indicators dealing with rent arrears, re-let times etc. the transfer Registered Social Landlords are performing better than Registered Social Landlords as a whole, although the overall performance of Registered Social Landlords is deteriorating. There is increasing concern about the access of homeless people and other people on Local Authority housing registers to social housing post-transfer. Whilst Local Authorities are obliged to provide social housing for homeless families, this process is inherently more difficult if they do not have their own stock of housing. Despite the criticisms of Registered Social Landlords, there is also evidence to suggest that they are more competent and professional than the councils whose stock had been transferred (see for example Naidoo (2001).

An evaluation of the early years of Large Scale Voluntary Transfer was conducted for the government by Mullins et al. (1995) who found that for tenants, the two most significant changes brought about by transfer were the new rent regime and the new housing investment. Surveys of tenants showed that many tenants who had voted against the transfer had been won over, particularly by the improved repairs and maintenance service, although unsurprisingly they were particularly dissatisfied with the substantial rises in rent (Mullins et al., 1995). The study also revealed considerable diversity in the responses of Local Authorities to Large Scale Voluntary Transfer, notably the extent to which the transfer receipt was re-invested in housing and to which the Local Authority considered itself to have a continuing role in housing. The overall conclusion of the evaluation was that Large Scale Voluntary Transfer was generally a positive experience, but involving (for tenants and their landlords) some exposure to risks and challenges (Mullins et al, 1995).

An important aspect of the campaigns to persuade tenants to vote for Large Scale Voluntary Transfer is that they will not experience unsettling disruptions or changes to the services they are used to receiving. Indeed, it is not uncommon for Large Scale Voluntary Transfer tenants to be unaware that the Local Authority is no longer their landlord several years after Large Scale Voluntary Transfer has taken place. Large Scale Voluntary Transfers are also marketed to tenants on the basis that after transfer they will be able to deal with the same housing staff, operating from the same offices. In many cases this is exactly what has happened, with the Registered Social Landlord offices continuing, initially at least, to occupy the office space of the pre-transfer housing department (National Audit Office (NAO) 2003).

Whilst the Local Authorities of Northumberland have demonstrated a gradual decline in stock (likely attributable to Right-to-Buy sales) up until 2001, Large Scale Voluntary

Transfers have since moved entire stocks to Registered Social Landlord ownership. The districts of Tynedale (2001), Castle Morpeth (2006), Wansbeck (2008) and Berwick upon Tweed (2008) have all succeeded in transferring their entire stock through the Large Scale Voluntary Transfer process, whilst Blyth Valley and Alnwick have opted for stock to be managed by an Arms Length Management Organisation.

Figure 2.12 Contribution of Stock Transfers in the Release of North East Local Authority Housing
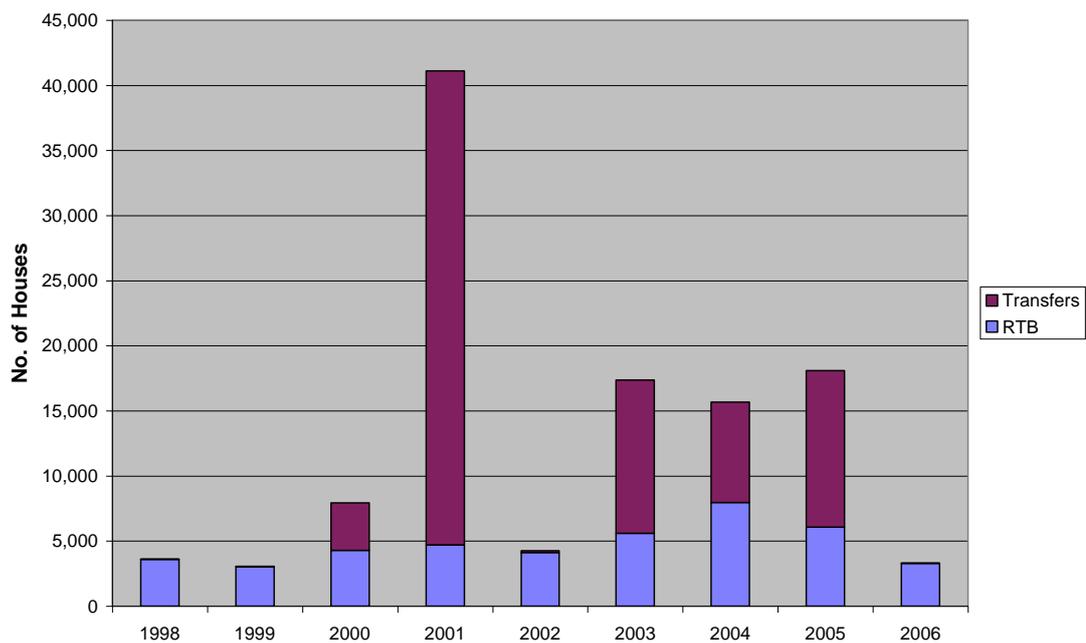
Source: Communities and Local Government, 2007

As Figure 2.12 demonstrates, stock transfer has already had a significant impact, and seems certain to continue transforming the shape of social rented housing throughout the UK. The changes occurring now are potentially so far reaching that the Registered Social Landlord sector, which 30 years ago consisted of little more than 100,000 dwellings, seems set to become the second largest tenure category (after owner occupation) by 2012 (Malpass and Mullins, 2002).

2.4.2 Arms Length Management Organisations

Along with Large Scale Voluntary Transfers and sales through Right-to-Buy, Arms Length Management Organisations represent a means for Local Authorities to be removed from the customary management of housing stock. In this case the Arms

Length Management Organisation is set up by the Local Authority to manage, maintain and improve all or part of its housing stock. The board of the new organisation will typically include councillors, tenants and independent members. Although the board may have a degree of influence from the councillors, the organisation is classified as a Company Limited by Guarantee (under the 1985 Companies Act) and thus remains independent from the council. The properties do continue to be owned by the council and the existing tenants remain. The model has introduced a strong separation between Local Authorities' strategic role, which remains with them, and their operational roles, which have to be transferred to the separately governed Arms Length Management Organisations (Mullins and Murie, 2006).

Unlike Large Scale Voluntary Transfers which may be considered by all Local Authorities, the formation of an Arms Length Management Organisation requires external authorisation. The process of applying to set up such an organisation begins with an appraisal undertaken by the Local Authorities, which must include the participation of local tenants. A bid is then forwarded to the Department of Communities and Local Government. If approved, the organisation is given responsibility for all management functions (Flint, 2006). Arms Length Management Organisations can only be considered an option for Local Authorities capable of achieving a two star rating from the Housing Inspectorate component of the Audit Commission. This in turn provides eligibility for the public funds deemed necessary to meet the decent homes standard.

The first Arms Length Management Organisations were established in April 2002. Since this time allocation rounds have taken place on an almost annual basis as Local Authorities compete for selection and the associated funding designation brings. Similarly to stock transfers, Arms Length Management Organisations are rationed so that a limited number of Authorities are permitted to form companies in any one year (Harriott and Matthews, 2004). Although central government promotes the model on the basis that it is desirable owing to the separation of strategic functions (retained by the Local Authority) from landlord delivery functions, for many Local Authorities the attraction is simply the potential to access greater public investment (Pawson, 2006). The continuation of stock transfer together with the availability of the Arms Length Management Organisation option has led to increased restructuring (see Figure 2.13). By 2005 barely half of England's Local Authority housing was managed on the traditional model. Theoretically Local Authorities can retrieve full control of housing management from the Arms Length Management Organisation progeny once the initial objective of investing to secure compliance with the Decent Homes Standard has been

achieved. However, as yet there is little evidence to suggest this process is being enacted (Mullins and Murie, 2006).

Figure 2.13 – Contribution of Arms Length Management Organisations to Social Housing in England
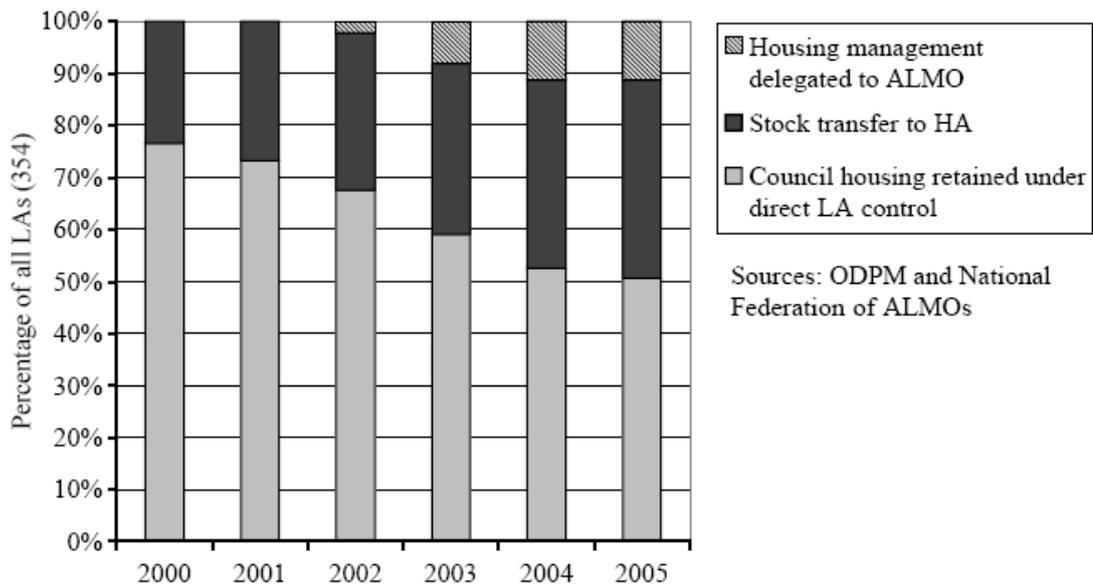
As the uptake of the Arms Length Management Organisation option is effectively rationed through Housing Inspectorate criteria and central governments allocation rounds, a considerable number of applications have resulted in relatively few new organisations. Having been introduced in 2002, as of 2005 there were only 20 Arms Length Management Organisations in receipt of funding with a further 29 having been accepted to join the programme (Department of Communities and Local Government, 2007). The National Federation of Arms Length Management Organisations (2007) reported that there are 62 Arms Length Management Organisations in operation across 57 local authorities managing 924,000 council properties.

The Department of Communities and Local Government (2007) reports that Arms Length Management Organisations have begun (and look set to continue) to deliver significant improvements to homes. The impact of Decent Homes funding is reported to have been very positive - particularly where the provision of modern facilities, kitchens and bathrooms has been concerned. For round one the numbers of non-decent homes are substantially reduced by year three of operation. In addition a publication by the

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2005) cited Housemark's analysis of performance against statutory Private Initiatives, which confirmed that the first generation of Arms Length Management Organisations has tended to achieve higher standards than that recorded by the parent Local Authorities in 2001/02. This trend was apparent for rent collection, tenant satisfaction and repairs by appointment. The findings are all the more significant in that they relate to pre-arms length housing departments which were already rated as among the best in the country. This, the department argues, can be seen as strong evidence of the positive impact of the performance-based resource allocation framework for Arms Length Management Organisations. There is also an added incentive as organisations must exceed specified threshold performance targets not only to gain initial access to earmarked funding, but also as a means of retaining access to these resources (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2005).

Despite the benefits of Arms Length Management Organisations there have been some criticisms. A joint report (by the Chartered Institute for Housing, the National Federation of ALMOs and Housemark, 2005) identified a number of limitations associated with Arms Length Management Organisations. Firstly the partnership between Local Authorities and new organisations tend not to be standardised and so often lack clarity. In some cases there is evidence that the two ran quite separately with restrictions being placed on the range of services the Arms Length Management Organisation could manage on behalf of the Local Authority. However as Berry et al (2004) note, Local Authorities habitually move relevant staff to the new board in an attempt to provide the necessary guidance as to what the management organisation could and could not do.

Anti-transfer campaigners such as Defend Council Housing contend that ALMOs are a one-way ticket towards full stock transfer and should therefore be opposed as tantamount to privatisation. Such rhetoric is potentially significant because it has become custom and practice for Local Authorities to seek ballot endorsement from tenants when proposing to establish Arms Length Management Organisations (Pawson, 2006). A key question put forward by Defend Council Housing (2007) asks why are improvement funds only available should an Arms Length Management Organisations be set up, why is it not possible to allow funds to be allocated in the first instance? This, Defend Council Housing argues is evidence that the move represents part of a hidden agenda by the government to privatise council housing stock. Furthermore, the timing of an Arms Length Management Organisation option may not be a coincidence; as a number of Local Authorities have repeatedly failed to convince tenants to support the Large Scale Voluntary Transfer schemes, these new

management organisations have been introduced as part of a two way process. What is more, even after formation of an Arms Length Management Organisation there is no guarantee that funding will be allocated. A third of the newly formed companies which have been set up haven't received the money they were promised by the government. Should an organisation fail to gains a 2 star rating no extra funding is received. As a result tenants can be left with all the costs of the new organisation, but none of the benefits (Defend Council Housing, 2007).

The Audit Commission (2006) accuse councils of deliberately misleading tenants. Many tenants of Arms Length Management Organisations feel that they are on the board to represent a constituency of tenants. Often this misapprehension is a direct result of mis-selling the role at the time of the ballot. Tenants are often led to believe that they will have an explicit role in representing the interest of their fellow tenants on the board. This is not compatible with the accepted principle that dictates that as a board member they have to work for the interest of the organisation, i.e. the directors' responsibility takes supremacy (Defend Council Housing, 2007). In this instance there is a striking similarity to the insidious implications raised by Taylor (1999) regarding the government's drive to privatise housing through Large Scale Voluntary Transfers.

As the board of Arms Length Management Organisations habitually include councillors, tenants and independent members, there is an implication that management becomes increasingly tailored to satisfy the needs of tenants (Harriot and Matthews, 2004). Supporters of Arms Length Management Organisations have argued that they allow tenants to have more direct control over housing management decisions but it is not clear that this is true (since they constitute a minority of the Board). Somerville (2004) explains that their introduction enables tenants to have significant minority representation on the key decision-making body, and the option appraisal regulations set out under the government's Sustainable Communities Plan (DCLG, 2003) require tenants to be fully involved in the decision-making process. However, it is arguable that these are only minor advances on the position that council tenants have enjoyed since 1980, when given the right to be consulted on housing management matters. The stronger power temporarily allowed under Tenants' Choice (enacted in 1988 and repealed in 1996), which effectively enabled tenants to trigger a transfer of their housing to another landlord, has not been resurrected in any form. Conforming to the tripartite principle of one-third tenants, one-third councilors and one-third independents is arguably a recipe for deadlock and compromise rather than any kind of radical change (Somerville, 2004).

Although some authors (for example Bramley et al, 2004; Berry et al, 2005) predict an expansion of Arms Length Management Organisations on the basis of strong demand (particularly from those Local Authorities unable or unwilling to carry out full transfer of ownership of their public housing stock), the report by the Chartered Institute of Housing et al (2005) entitled 'ALMOs: A New Future for Council Housing' does little to clarify the long term expectations of these organisations. It notes that despite the initial demand from Local Authorities, Arms Length Management Organisations are not necessarily here to stay. They have temporary contracts with local councils, aimed at completing the decent homes programme, which once achieved could trigger their demise. The report goes on to insist that many councils, tenants, and Arms Length Management Organisations themselves would prefer the new bodies to have a long-term future in reshaping the way council housing is run. To do so the Local Authority housing revenue accounts would need to be put on a sounder basis financially. If Arms Length Management Organisations are to continue they will need to become more flexible and sustainable, able to address the varied needs of the places and tenants they serve and help contribute to wider Local Authority priorities. One alternative may be that in the course of time, a Local Authority and its Arms Length Management Organisation will drift apart, with the former losing both capacity for, and interest in, any agenda for transforming what will continue to be its housing (Somerville, 2004).

The typically strong performance of Arms Length Management Organisations may result in tenants wanting to retain and build on their achievements (Perry, 2005) but it remains to be seen whether tenants and staff will begin to identify more closely with the new organisation than with its parent Local Authority. Another crucial unknown is whether Ministers will back calls for reform of the housing finance system to set Arms Length Management Organisations free from the constraints of the council housing subsidy framework. This could be critical in allowing for the development of new housing. Unless given the scope to do so, Arms Length Management Organisations look set to face continuing contraction as a result of ongoing Right-to-Buy sales (Pawson, 2006).

At the regional level Arms Length Management Organisations have been established in the North East. Initially it appeared the mechanism was being centred around the most urbanised areas (Newcastle and Gateshead) where greater numbers of council housing exist. However the former Northumberland Authority of Blyth Valley went on to form an Arms Length Management Organisation, and subsequently take over stock within the district of Alnwick. Nevertheless, most Authorities in Northumberland transferred stock to a Registered Social Landlord via Large Scale Voluntary Transfer

prior to the formation of a Unitary Authority. Perhaps those Arms Length Management Organisations will evolve somewhat, but from the relatively little evidence available at this early stage it would be naïve to label the process as a likely solution to areas demonstrative of affordable housing need.

2.4.3 Supply and Affordability of Social Housing

Both Arms Length Management Organisations and stock transfer seek to provide opportunities for the involvement of a more diverse range of people (including tenants) in decision making - helping to encourage innovative and radical thinking (Flint, 2003; Somerville, 2004). Whilst there is undoubtedly an increased tenant participation in the form of involvement in management boards, whether tenants exert any more collective influence than they did within local electoral politics is highly debatable (Ginsburg (2005).

In terms of a mechanism for affordable housing delivery, the most obvious point to make about the Large Scale Voluntary Transfers and Arms Length Management Organisations is that they do not directly allow a single additional household to be housed, and yet can require a great deal of private financing. Arms Length Management Organisations in particular appear more involved with regeneration of council housing and their immediate physical environment; looking to better the quality of what already exists rather than a means of developing new affordable units. Other benefits instead come from better management and allocation polices, and the potential to recycle some receipts (in the case of transfers) into additional housing investment. Useable receipts can be used for any capital purpose, including Social Housing Grant, but as Whitehead (1993) notes, the funds raised are more commonly used to pay off debt or to fund other services. Although Transfers do not directly create any new affordable housing they do offer some protection from a continuing loss of stock exemplified through the Right-to-Buy programme. This retention is also strengthened as new tenants are prohibited from buying the properties (Harriot and Matthews, 2004). Contrastingly Arms Length Management Organisations remain susceptible to the loss of properties through tenants' Right-to-Buy.

The affordability of social housing is now largely based upon central government's rent restructuring scheme. As the methods for setting rents varies between Registered Social Landlords, with most using informal benchmarking by comparison with neighbouring Registered Social Landlords, there are often arbitrary differences. Similar properties in the same localities but with different landlords can exhibit such

differences, as can similar properties in different locations. This scenario can seem unfair and confusing for tenants, as well as restricting in terms of their choice. It may also lead to problems for social landlords such as higher void rates and long lags before properties are let. It is a situation that has arisen because social housing has grown and changed much over the last century. During that time, many different subsidies have been given to Local Authorities and Registered Social Landlords, and different rent setting policies have been pursued. Registered Social Landlord rent patterns are even more chaotic than Local Authority rents, due to the wide variation in the histories, locations and the financial viability of the many landlords (DETR, 2000). Furthermore, rents in the Local Authority sector are often significantly lower than those of Registered Social Landlords.

The restructuring regime (launched by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister in April 2003) looks to eliminate the wide and inexplicable differences in Local Authority and Registered Social Landlord rent levels, i.e. differences not related to quality, size and locality. It also seeks to maintain affordability by keeping any increases below the level of market rents. Target rents which must be achieved by 2012 have been introduced for both Local Authorities and Registered Social Landlords. Consequently Registered Social Landlords are unable to charge unjustifiable rates, whilst the expectation to meet the Decent Homes Standard remains. This will undoubtedly cause many of the Registered Social Landlords receiving transferred stock to reconsider their business plans as rents become regulated. A three year review (Communities and Local Government, 2006) implies that in terms of affordability, property size will be the most influential factor, stating that; Restructuring tends to cause the rents of smaller dwellings to rise faster and those of larger dwellings to rise more slowly than the average rent increase. Therefore the respective size of transferred dwellings may also go some way to determining how affordability changes at the local scale.

2.5   Community Participation in Affordable Housing Delivery

The responsibility to provide affordable homes for the majority of the last century has been with the government and Local Authority branches. The last twenty years has seen an increased role for Registered Social Landlords, but now a meaningful role for communities is emerging. Over recent years events and announcements on the political stage have implied a desire to encourage contributions and solutions at the grass roots level. The European Union introduced the Rural Development Regulation (through the Agenda 2000 reform of the Common Agricultural Policy) advocating more

endogenous practices - the concept being that rural communities could work together with relevant agencies to deal with their localised problems in their own way (Shortall, 2004). The UK has attempted to enact changes through regional offices, development agencies and publications implying future policies will continue to support more devolved decision making and action (for example the Government action plan: Together we can, 2005). This trend has already given some communities the impetus to make a positive impact on local affordable housing supply.

One means through which English communities can attempt to push the issue of affordable housing is through the development of a parish plan. The Government's November 2000 Rural White Paper stated that Parish Plans should identify key facilities and services, set out the problems that need to be tackled and demonstrate how distinctive character and features can be preserved. They are also designed to set out a vision for the community in the future and identify the action needed to tackle issues of concern, encompassing everything that is relevant to the people who live and work in the community. Sylvester (2005) notes that parish plans are a successful tool for communities looking to secure project funding, influence changes to the built and social environment and for strengthening the democratic mandate of the parish councils. They also have a role in providing impetus for local community action and for setting out a parish's case for influencing other agencies. However, in many instances planning departments believe it is unrealistic to expect parish plans to fit into development planning. Hughes (2005) surmises that although parish plans are a useful aid in developing community led proposals, their weighting and influence is very much in the hands of other exogenous organisations. Ultimately, even with well developed plans no positive impact can ever be guaranteed.

Perhaps Village Design Statements, advocated by the Countryside Agency (2007), represent a more effectual means to drive community based development initiatives, since communities have a unique appreciation and understanding of their own localities. A Village Design Statement can outline how any new building fits into the village. It is intended to influence the operation of the statutory planning system, so that new development is in harmony with its setting and makes a positive contribution to the immediate environment. This acknowledgement of balancing new development with landscape character, together with funding from respected backers has allowed Village Design Statements to command much greater respect than their parish plan counterparts. Hughes and Chesterman (2005) refer to the effectiveness of Village Design Statements in the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. In this instance Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty members provide funding and guidance;

attending meetings with villagers to prepare the statements. The projects focus on village character and distinctiveness and take 2 years to complete at a cost of between £1,000 and £5,000. As the Village Design Statements are often influenced or initiated by community members with a background in planning or local government they tend to be more informed than the typical parish plan. As a result of their detail, relevance and partnership work the design statements are given recognition, having been adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance.

Even with a positive reputation amongst some planners, Village Design Statements (like parish plans) can only express a desire for more affordable housing. For new supply to become a reality through community action, it is often necessary to rely on organisations such as Community Development Trusts. Such trusts can be found operating on varying scales in both Scotland and England, engaging with eager communities to assist on issues such as affordable housing supply. Community Land Trusts incorporating affordable housing provision are a means once seemingly forgotten within England, but are now re-emerging as a potential solution to meeting communities' housing need.

Community stewardship of land is not a contemporary concept in the UK, with the Community Land Trust model of ownership originally seen in the parish land trusts of the 17th and 18th centuries. It was later utilised by the garden city movement. All land owned in Letchworth Garden City, for example, is held in community ownership and in 2004 surpluses of £1.73 million were reinvested in the community and in the city fabric (Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation, 2004). Many new projects and initiatives are currently taking place throughout the UK and the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 provides a framework for the support and development of a growing number of Community Land Trusts in rural Scotland. The approach has been used for many years in the United States where Community Land Trusts come in a range of shapes and sizes, serving a single neighbourhood to an entire city or county, receiving federal assistance for legal and other expertise.

A Community Land Trust is a not-for profit community controlled organisation that owns, develops and manages local assets for the benefit of the local community. Its objective is to acquire land and property and hold it in trust for the benefit of a defined locality or community in perpetuity. The trust separates the value of the land from the buildings that stand on it and can be used in a wide range of circumstances to preserve the value of any public and private investment, as well as planning gain and land appreciation for community benefit. Crucially, local residents and businesses are

actively involved in planning and delivering affordable local housing, workspace or community facilities (Leigh, 2000).

Memberships are open to local residents and those wishing to endow land or property for the benefit of the Community Land Trust's defined geographical area. The directors are elected by the members and frequently grouped into three categories: those representing the leaseholder tenants and homeowners whose housing or workspace is provided by the Community Land Trust, those living locally or community organisation representatives who are not Community Land Trust leaseholders, and those representing the broader public interest (e.g., Local Authority representatives, those donating land and contributors of professional skills such as surveyors, architects and lawyers). This governance system has proven to provide a healthy organisational balance on the board, allowing for the protection of the community's long term interest (Countryside Agency, 2005).

With the consent of planners, agricultural land on the edge of a village can be bought at agricultural prices and - with exception planning from the Local Authority - used by the Community Land Trust to develop affordable housing to rent or to buy to meet local housing need. In other situations, planning permission may be given to a private developer, if they agree with the Local Authority to endow a trust with a portion of land for affordable housing development. To prevent speculation and windfall gains, the Community Land Trust removes the land from the market. Therefore a homeowner can only buy the building, not the land asset. Typically the homeowners will be given a long-term (usually 99 year) renewable lease that enables the property on the land to be purchased with a mortgage and that also allows succession rights to the property by family members (Countryside Agency, 2005).

Those in support of Community Land Trusts argue that they are the best value solution to localised affordable housing problems (for example Lord Haskins, 2003). Perhaps their biggest strength is a proven record - albeit in the United States – for ensuring housing remains affordable in perpetuity (Davis and Demetrowitz, 2003). This strength was emphasised at a Community Land Trust event (South East Rural Community Councils, 2006) in contrast with existing Low Cost Home Ownership schemes and their short term affordability potential. The examples displayed in Figures 2.14a and 2.14b illustrate the difference between the two schemes.

Figure 2.14a – Affordability of a Low Cost Home Ownership Scheme

Average house price of approximately £100,000 in the year 2000
Low cost home ownership scheme helps a family onto the housing ladder with an equity loan
25 percent subsidy = £25,000
Property purchased by initial purchaser with a mortgage of £75,000
Assists a household with an income of £21,500 a year (mortgage multiple of 3.5 x income)

Four years later at the resale of the property house prices had increased 80 percent whilst wages increased by only 23 percent.

House price of £180,000 in 2004
25 percent capital receipt from resale = £45,000
Recycled subsidy now assists a second household to purchase the property at £135,000
Assists a household on £38,600 income (mortgage multiple of 3.5 x income)

The Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE, 2005) shows that the average gross annual salary is £23,000. In this example the scheme has become less accessible over the four year period

In areas of high housing values, Local Authorities can struggle to allocate shared ownership properties to households from priority groups on the housing register as the open market appraisal of property value takes no account of local area median incomes. With each resale the property value increases faster than wage rises and becomes less accessible. Shared ownership models delivered through Registered Social Landlords include the provision for households to staircase to full ownership resulting in a capital receipt which is recycled to assist another household. However, the sale of one home does not necessarily fund a similar property or assist a household on equivalent income as house prices are not static between sales and pooled capital covers a region with different housing markets (South East Rural Community Councils, 2006).

Community Land Trusts employ restrictive covenants which capture land value in perpetuity by preventing sale of the property on the open market. The Community Land Trust benefits from any increases in value of the property in line with the open market and passes the benefit on to successive generations. The subsidy which goes into a property is locked in and increases in value with each resale. Although an initial subsidy is required for the first household to purchase at an affordable price, the model is able to continue to deliver benefit by capping the resale value as compared to the open market value. On resale the household cannot realise the full open market value of the property due to the restrictive covenant and so increases in value are preserved. The subsidy remains with the property as a proportion of the open market value and as

a result also grows in value. The outgoing household receives capital as an incentive to help them move on to home ownership. The cost of purchase is then reduced for the incoming household. The cycle is repeated with each resale.

Figure 2.14b – Affordability of Community Land Trust Housing

Community Land Trust Resale Formula

Open market value at initial purchase in 2000 = £100,000

Initial purchaser requires 25 percent subsidy to purchase = £25,000

Initial purchaser obtains a mortgage of £75,000

At resale the open market value four years later = £180,000

The increase in open market value = £80,000

The resale formula repays the initial purchase mortgage of £75,000 and them 25 percent of the uplift in value = £20,000

The remaining equity stays with the property and allows the following residents to purchase at a resale value of £95,000, providing a significant discount on the open market value

The cycle is repeated with each resale and effectively locks in the initial subsidy as each household leaves behind 75 percent of the growth in value for the benefit of the next household

Locking in value through the CLT model[1]
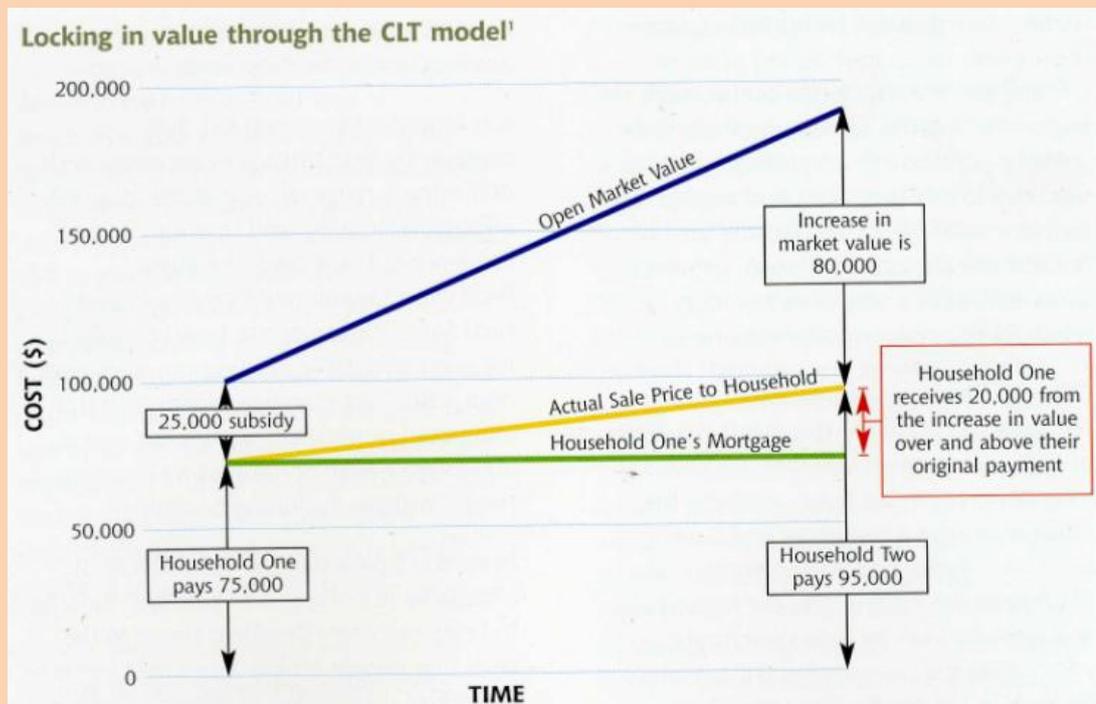
Source: Davis and Demetrowitz, 2003

Burlington Community Land Trust has found that over time affordability has increased with each resale enabling the trust to assist families on a lower percentage of area median income. An analysis of property sales carried out in 2003 showed that the percentage of average median income which a family needed to be able to afford the average priced Community Land Trust property had fallen from 62 percent to 57 percent (Davis and Demetrowitz, 2003).

Despite the apparent benefits of Community Land Trusts it would be naïve to assume the mechanism can be successfully applied resolutely to all areas. Diacon et al (2005) note that governance structures in rural areas tend to be simpler than in urban areas, as there are fewer agencies to deal with. However, often for the same reasons, rural governance structures often lack the resources or capacity to increase the skills and support for community groups who wish to develop a Community Land Trust. Through the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs' (DEFRA) Rural Housing Enabler programme and the Rural Community Council, support is provided for rural communities seeking to meet their housing and related social, economic and environmental needs. However, the funding for this work is fragile and links to statutory bodies - whose support is essential to bring action plans to fruition - are often weak. Registered Social Landlords delivering housing in rural areas tend to be smaller than in urban areas, but government funding patterns for social housing are increasingly focussing on delivery through large partner associations. These larger organisations are less willing to pursue rural schemes because of the difficulties that impede delivery. For example, identifying and gaining planning permission for sites in attractive rural areas, and the higher unit costs arising from the small scale of the development and higher design requirements (Shucksmith and Best, 2006).

The current level of regulation applied to grant-funded affordable housing provision may be too limiting for Community Land Trusts and alternative approaches may need to be developed (Diacon et al, 2005). In the longer term all Community Land Trusts aim to be financially independent with rents, ground rents, letting and service charges covering mortgages and running costs, with any deficit covered by reserves or local fund raising (Countryside Agency, 2005). As reputed with other affordable housing delivery mechanisms trialled in rural localities, there are a number of other factors restricting success, most notably land availability. Even with the assurance that any land sold or gifted to a Community Land Trust will remain an asset for providing locals affordable housing in perpetuity, reservations amongst some landowners will no doubt remain. The issue of hope value (Gallent et al, 2002) may prove particularly relevant for upland farmland where environmental stewardship schemes allow land to generate a

modest income with relatively little management. These circumstances could plausibly result in a lack of agricultural land being available for development – even if the exception scheme or altered planning permission allowed.

The success of community involvement and initiatives in the process of affordable housing provision is very circumstantial. As with other mechanisms it relies on funding for inauguration and for land to be either gifted by philanthropists, or sold at low cost. Equally important is the need and desire for communities to become well organised, driven and resolute. However, the success of trusts elsewhere demonstrates the potential of communities working passionately and invoking a unique sense of motivation to benefit themselves and their fellow community members. Communities have an uncompromising knowledge of their localities invaluable in sourcing land and derelict dwellings which can often serve to benefit localised schemes (High and Nemes, 2007).

Rogers and Robinson (2004) state that tenant participation in scheme management often coincides with improved service delivery and improved tenant satisfaction. Other consequences are more difficult to assess but it seems safe to assume that community engagement will help prevent the social decline of neighbourhoods, once investment is in place and work to extend valuable social networks builds capacities and confidence in its tenants. Community action also reduces the likelihood of nimbyism since it is the local people shaping the projects and their respective directions. With success (in terms of design, affordability and resident selection) the acceptance of schemes such as Community Land Trusts can expect to gain greater recognition.

Some community organisations, with grant assistance, are able to explore innovative approaches to land use and design which cash-strapped and often tradition-bound private owners are unwilling or unable to risk (Warren, 2002). Indirect benefits are also evident including increased consciousness of design issues, greater understanding of the planning system by local communities, improved relationships between local communities and a greater sense of ownership of decisions by local residents (Paterson and Preston, 2005). Diacon et al (2005) describe how effective community engagement relies on identifying and engaging those people with a long-term interest in the locality explaining their applicability to roles and responsibilities. Without the assurance planning departments will recognise community action, there is a serious doubt that much time and effort could be wasted. To avoid this it is essential that community work be supported through respected agencies (such as development trusts), so positive action can result in communities becoming accustomed to an

increasingly venerated role. Community Land Trusts therefore represent an opportunity for partnership working; acting as an agent to draw together key players and engage local residents in the development of their communities (Diacon et al, 2005).

The Countryside Agency (2005) note that securing funds and land in the start-up period of a Community Land Trust requires the involvement and support of key organisations and individuals, among them government agencies, Registered Social Landlords, parish, district and county councils and regional bodies. Funders, such as banks and building societies, are important allies as are lawyers, estate agents and other professionals. Start-up costs must be paid for, or at least funded, until a scheme starts on site and the developmental costs are capitalised. It is unrealistic to expect pioneer Community Land Trusts to reinvest any surplus in the community in the early years, as it will first and foremost need to ensure its own financial viability. Once mortgages and financing charges have been paid, surpluses can be re-invested to meet the needs of the local community.

Although Community Land Trusts are beginning to emerge across the UK it is arguable that its relative originality presently restricts a comprehensive evaluation for solving the UK's affordable housing need problems. What evidence there is suggests the mechanism is being applied effectively to small rural communities. However, long term impacts cannot be conclusively remarked upon in the context of rural England. Presumably with increased awareness and support the mechanism could emulate the successes observed in the United States where affordability has long since been established for settlements of various sizes.

The continued support within government reports (Affordable Rural Housing Commission, 2006; Taylor Review 2008) and from Community Finance Solutions indicates a growing role for community led housing initiatives.

2.6   Chapter Summary

This chapter has examined the intricacies of rural governance and given particular focus to the means of delivering affordable rural housing. Whilst some approaches to governance and housing delivery appear to be more preferential than others, there remains some uncertainty over how applicable they are to Northumberland National Park's unique circumstances. The emphasis on solutions tailored to a particular community thus necessitates a more in-depth examination of the housing and planning

issues faced within the study area. The following chapter outlines the development and application of a methodology to elicit this data.

Chapter 3 - Research Methodology

3.1 Research Perspective

The research is a result of a proposal and sponsorship arrangement from Northumberland National Park Authority, who desire an investigation into affordable housing delivery mechanisms so as to inform future planning policies and management plans. The agreement with the Park Authority allows for its facilities and support to be made use of whenever necessary. Although the outcomes of the research were discussed from the outset, the means of investigation and interpretation of findings in relation to existing policies remains independent. The approach allows for research which can be considered impartial; an important consideration given the public's passions towards housing and planning policy, and the possibility of existing attitudes concerning the National Park Authority and its practices. The nature of the research and its purpose is to remain completely transparent to all involved for its entirety. Although there is the possibility that the Park Authority's support of the research could influence participation, it is hoped that the means of implementation can allow the research to be carried out in a manner akin to an independent consultancy. In communicating this information to potential participants it is feasible that the resultant data and findings are representative.

In order to minimise personal biases and maintain an objective approach, the research is to be informed by relevant previous research findings, and considered in respect of the various policies pertaining to the delivery of affordable housing – as opposed to any personal opinion. By considering the aims of these policies it is possible to compare the existing situation within the study area and where necessary recommend changes that could help align to those aims. Through the use of primary data it is also possible to gain an insight into whether such policies and aims are considered effective and rational.

The collection of primary data within research that deals with social science is often open to scrutiny. In order to maintain an unbiased approach – and thus ensure that the research findings are valid – it is necessary to outline some basic precautions; No opinion from a particular individual or group should take precedent over those of others in resultant policy recommendations and decision making. The very nature of attitudes and opinions means that the resultant data cannot be described as definitively incorrect, only less popular or a derivative of incomplete knowledge, poor

understanding or an alternative interpretation. Consequently it is important to utilise a methodology capable of eliciting not only stakeholder attitudes to affordable housing delivery, but also the reasoning behind the formation of those attitudes. Here the means of selecting appropriate methods are considered.

3.2   Types of Approach

Acknowledging the distinction between positivism and naturalist-interpretive philosophies represents a logical starting point in the process of deciding upon and justifying a research methodology (Rubin and Rubin 2005). A summary of the two approaches has been illustrated within Table 3.1

Table 3.1 – Summary of Positivist and Naturalist Approaches

Positivist	Naturalist
Reality is single, tangible, and fragmentable.	Realities are multiple, constructed, and holistic.
Dualism: the knower and the known are independent.	The knower and the known are interactive and inseparable.
Time and context free generalization	Only time-and context-bound working hypotheses are possible.
Real causes, temporally precedent to or simultaneous with their effects (causal relationship)	All entities are in a state of mutual simultaneous shaping, so that it is impossible to distinguish causes from effects.
Inquiry is value free.	Inquiry is value bounded.

Source: Lincoln and Guba, 2000

In the positivist paradigm social researchers emulate traditional physicists or biologists in their approach. They look for the uniform, precise rules that they can claim organise social behaviour. The object of study is independent of researchers; knowledge is discovered and verified through direct observations or measurements of phenomena; facts are established by taking apart a phenomenon to examine its component parts (Cousins, 2002). Using simplified models of the social world, positivists examine how a small number of variables such as income and education interact. The language of positivists concerns numeric statements and statistical equations that can explain and predict human behaviour. This focus on objectivity and numerical evidence is the grounding for quantitative research.

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The naturalist or constructivist view is that knowledge is established through the meanings attached to the phenomena studied. Researchers interact with the subjects of study to obtain data; inquiry changes both researcher and subject; and knowledge is context and time dependent (Coll & Chapman, 2000). As different individuals attach different meanings to particular phenomena there may be several different constructions of events by participants. This notion of unearthing several different constructions, each of which is true in some sense, underlies much of the qualitative approach.

Qualitative researchers operate under different epistemological assumptions to quantitative researchers. For instance, many qualitative researchers believe that the most appropriate way to understand any phenomenon is to view it in its context. They see all quantification as limited in nature, looking only at one small portion of a reality that cannot be split or unitised without losing the importance of the whole phenomenon. For many qualitative researchers, the most effective way to understand what is going on is to become immersed into the culture or organisation being studied and experience what it is like to be a part of it (Bernard, 2005). Rather than approaching measurement with the idea of constructing a fixed instrument or set of questions, qualitative researchers choose to allow the questions to emerge and change as one becomes familiar with the study content.

In addition, qualitative researchers operate under different ontological assumptions about the world. They do not assume that there is a single unitary reality apart from our perceptions. Since each of us experiences from our own point of view, each of us experiences a different reality. As such, the phenomenon of multiple realities exists. Conducting research without taking this into account violates their fundamental view of the individual. Consequently, they may be opposed to methods that attempt to aggregate across individuals on the grounds that each individual is unique. They also argue that the researcher is a unique individual and that all research is essentially biased by each researcher's individual perceptions (Trochim, 2000).

In general, qualitative research is based on a relativistic, constructivist ontology that posits that there is no objective reality. Rather, there are multiple realities constructed by human beings who experience a phenomenon of interest. People impose order on the world perceived in an effort to construct meaning; meaning lies in cognition not in elements external to us. Information impinging on our cognitive systems is screened, translated, altered, and perhaps even rejected by the knowledge that already exists in

that system. The resulting knowledge is therefore idiosyncratic and is purposefully constructed (Krauss, 2005).

Quantitative methods predominate in traditional sciences and assume that science quantitatively measures independent facts about a single apprehensible reality (Healy & Perry, 2000). In other words, the data and its analysis are value-free and data do not change because they are being observed. That is, researchers view the world through a one-way mirror (Healy & Perry, 2000). In its broadest sense, this positivist approach is a rejection of metaphysics. It is a position that holds that the goal of knowledge is simply to describe the phenomena that we experience. The purpose of science is simply to stick to what we can observe and measure. Knowledge of anything beyond that, a positivist would hold, is impossible (Trochim, 2000). As such quantitative methods with their positivist foundation look to separate from the world so as to remain independent and unbiased (Healy & Perry, 2000).

According to the positivist epistemology, science is seen as the way to uncover truth, to understand the world well enough so that it might be predicted and controlled. The world and the universe are deterministic; they operate by laws of cause and effect that are discernable if we apply scientific method. Thus, science is largely a mechanistic or mechanical affair in positivism where deductive reasoning is used to postulate theories that can be tested. Based on the results of studies, we may learn that a theory does not fit the facts, and so the theory must be revised to better predict reality.

Based on the aforementioned citations Table 3.2 summarises the key differences between quantitative and qualitative approaches.

Table 3.2 – Comparison of Quantitative and Qualitative

Quantitative	Qualitative
Allows for theory to be tested	Allows for theory to be developed
Confirming or falsifying patterns and relationships	Understanding complexities, motivations, reasoning and behaviour
Seeks relevance to widely applicable principles, trends and theory	Seeks to uncover unique interpretations surrounding specific circumstances
Focus on breadth of data – large number of samples to ensure patterns are real and representative	Focus on depth of data – small number of samples allowing for a deeper understanding
Importance of Objectivity recognised	Importance of Subjectivity recognised
Relatively quick and easy analysis	Relatively time consuming and complex analysis

Before selecting a research approach it is first necessary to re-examine and clarify the research objectives. As outlined within Chapter 1, the research seeks to;

- Determine how applicable the various housing delivery mechanisms currently available are to National Parks, and specifically Northumberland National Park;
- Seek professional opinions from all sectors associated with affordable rural housing delivery;
- Examine what specific factors prevent housing from being built in the study area, and what resources and/or actions are required for obstacles to be surmounted;
- Develop a delivery framework for Northumberland National Park based on findings from the above
  and

- Investigate whether there is a consensus regarding the demand for affordable housing, how it should be delivered and who should benefit from its development, or if perceptions between the National Park communities and housing/planning organisations differ

On the basis of these objectives it is necessary to consider the use of both qualitative and quantitative data. The former is preferential to building a picture of the factors surrounding affordable delivery in the study area, as expressed by individuals and groups familiar with the delivery process. In combination with the theoretical framework and available secondary data this qualitative data will form the basis of a delivery framework. Elements within this framework may then be tested through the views of public (park residents and visitors) to achieve the final objective. The use of mixed methods thus provides the necessary depth to appreciate the complexity of affordable housing delivery (from those housing and planning professionals with a tangible link to the study area), whilst also generating objective and falsifiable data to convey the views of a wider population. Figure 3.1 summarises the research framework.

Figure 3.1 – Research Framework

Theoretical Framework

Review of academic literature
and policies regarding
affordable housing delivery

Secondary Data Collection

Review of relevant data held by
Northumberland National Park
and Local Housing Authorities

Primary Data Collection

Input from those with specialist
knowledge regarding affordable
housing delivery

Development of Delivery Framework

Proposed strategies for affordable housing delivery to
meet the needs of Northumberland National Park
(based on the findings of the preceding stages)

Delivery Framework Testing

Input from Northumberland National Park's
communities and stakeholders

**Recommendations and Contribution to
Knowledge**

Suggested action for Northumberland National

3.3 Primary Data Collection

3.3.1 Potential Methods for Primary Data Collection

The use of primary data as a means of establishing which particular mechanism(s) is best suited to delivering affordable homes requires careful consideration. Since the term *best suited* can have many interpretations it is inherently subjective. The idea that social and economic assets be allowed to take precedence over the environment (or vice versa) has become a notorious contestable issue – particularly for the National Parks of England (Cairncross et al 2004). Clearly the views of an ecocentric as to what is meant by *best suited* may be very different to those of an anthropocentric. Furthermore, because the case study relates to a specific geographical area there is a real possibility that the experiences and perceptions responsible for these views are themselves unique. When solutions are derived from attitudes, opinions and even knowledge it is arguable that there can never be a definitive answer. That is, an answer based on data which is essentially a mass of truths, belief and knowledge will not be falsifiable, since such components, even from disagreeing individuals are both equally valid (or invalid). The fact that any solution could be supported or contested by certain individuals therefore seems inevitable; there is no way to guarantee that all of the National Park's stakeholders will be satisfied with a particular solution, nor any definitive means to prove why a particular solution is the right one. It is this uncertainty surrounding interpretation and the subjectivity each individual brings which lends itself to the naturalist mentality and qualitative methods.

A valid assessment of how best to deliver affordable homes within the study area requires an appreciation of planning and housing issues, as well as the various actors capable of facilitating development. Therefore the primary data collection process relies on input from representatives with experience and knowledge relating to affordable rural housing. Whilst the majority of representatives sought exhibit a local connection, those from further afield with experience and influence relating to other National Parks or overarching policies and strategies are also deemed valuable to the research.

Although the communities of Northumberland National Park are an important element of the study – since they represent the beneficiaries of the research – their participation in the initial stage of the investigation is not regarded as a necessity. This decision is based on the likelihood that the typical community member will not be familiar enough with the specifics of housing and planning policies so as to make informed judgements

regarding their feasibility. Instead the viability of mechanisms should be assessed on the basis of input from housing and planning professionals so that the communities provide data in relation to a set of refined, feasible options.

A participatory rural appraisal could conceivably be used as an alternative to such an approach. The technique is described by Cooke and Kothari (2001) as a means of empowering people and supporting a process of self-reliant development on the terms set by the communities themselves.   Many participatory rural appraisals have been initiated by outsiders (NGOs, government organisations) as a way of encouraging communities to describe their situation, identify and prioritise their needs, formulate a plan of action, diagnose problems during implementation, or engage in participatory monitoring and evaluation (Robb, 2002). Although there appears to be no rigid framework outlining how a rural appraisal should be carried out, Leurs (2003) insists that the key challenge is to support the community to find their own solutions, often through providing training and assistance to local facilitators within community networks. The key criticism of this approach is that it can be conceived as a one-off exercise by outsiders, often coinciding with a lack of initial understanding and familiarity with the environment, resulting in somewhat superficial information being gained. The fact that the technique relies heavily on the collaboration of communities and organisations renders it somewhat unreliable. Without initiation by the relevant outside organisations there can be no guarantee that any suggested changes to policies will have the necessary support from those with power (Cooke and Kothari, 2001). This represents a major concern when dealing with issues such as planning and housing.

Participant Observation represents an alternative means of ascertaining the qualitative data required to assess the issues faced in rural affordable housing delivery. Through immersing oneself in the work of housing and planning professionals, the approach offers the opportunity to better understand the issues being faced (Bernard, 2005). Gilbert (1993) argues the constraints of participative approaches as a method can be excused by its value as a method of discovery. However, the process of participative approaches, such as ethnography can be extremely difficult to organise (owing to difficulty in acceptance and concerns of confidentiality) and problematic in the sense of attaining reliable and representative data (Seale et al, 2005). It has also been known that the researcher can introduce bias by bringing preconceptions to the investigation, or through developing feelings of sympathy, anger or other (Crang, 2002). In this instance where a spectrum of views and experiences need to be explored applying participatory approaches would likely prove inefficient in terms of time consumption and conclusions reached.

Focus groups are often used in an exploratory way when researchers are not entirely sure what categories, links and perspectives are relevant. For instance, to gauge opinion on environmental related issues (Seale et al, 2004). The approach is particularly useful in generating discussion and providing details perhaps not considered by the researcher (Barbour, 2005). However, focus groups do have certain limitations. Even with a small number of participants (usually between 6 and 12) it can still be very difficult to find a time and location which suits all of those involved (*Seale et al, 2004*). This is of particular concern when acknowledging the varied activities and locations of individuals whose views are deemed to be necessary. Secondly the managing of a focus group is not always an easy task. The moderator must be able to listen carefully and develop discussion without putting words into the mouths of others. The nature of participants can also impact upon the quality of the outcome; having loud and abrasive individuals may cause certain areas to be incompletely covered as the more reserved members are unable to get their views across (Barbour, 2005).

The participants of focus groups are usually a relatively homogeneous group of people used to represent a particular society or community (Stewart et al, 2006). Since the aim of the primary data collection is to elicit the spectrum of issues faced by different groups, a technique designed for a homogenous group does not lend itself well to this task.

Today interviews are extensively employed within social sciences (Kvale, 2007). Owing to the interviewing culture within today's society its various formats are well established. Seale et al (2004) insist that practitioners do not need vast amounts of detailed technical instruction on how to conduct qualitative interviews; our frequent exposure to the technique has forged an inevitable understanding of the process and its applications. Crang (2002) explains that interviews have proved particularly useful in the study of tacit or local knowledge, with their widespread success resulting in orthodoxy for qualitative research.

Although there are many positives of recorded face-to-face interviews, most notably their potential to extract detailed and contextual information, the technique is not without criticism. Qualitative research interviewing tends to under-theorise its data. It assumes too easily that an interview is an unproblematic window on physiological or social realities, and that the information that the respondent gives about themselves and their world can be simply extracted and quoted (Wengraf, 2004). Furthermore when attempting to derive conclusions from a multi-interview project the individual account is likely to become part of a broader collection of voices which may result in

interviewees being portrayed as representing a specific perspective (Strong, 1980). In appreciating this it is evident that the difficulties with such a methodology can arise both from data collection and analysis.

3.3.2 The Use of Interviews in the Primary Data Collection Process

It is apparent that all of the primary data collection methods have benefits and limitations, some common across the qualitative research spectrum. However, a review of research method literature summarised above, helps to conclude that interviews represent the most feasible means of effectively ascertaining people's attitudes and opinions towards affordable housing delivery issues. Here the preferred interview technique is explored in greater depth.

With a desire to encourage free and open responses, in-depth interviews have been deemed the preferable style of interviewing. This decision demands caution so as to minimise the trade-off between comprehensive coverage of topics and the in-depth exploration of a more limited set of questions (McCormack, 2004). In-depth interviews encourage capturing of respondents' perceptions in their own words, a very desirable strategy in qualitative data collection. This allows the evaluator to present the context of the opinions and experiences from the respondent's perspective (Rubin and Rubin 2005). For this research the promotion of greater empathy and understanding synonymous with in-depth interviews makes it preferable to a restrictive structured approach.

In order to ensure that all of the key areas are covered, the use of probing and open ended questions is often directed by a pre-prepared interview guide (Seale et al, 2004). Although some may assume that this semi-structured approach is easier (in that the majority of questions do not need to be pre-prepared), in reality the researcher must be mentally prepared so as to react to responses given by the interviewee (Wengraf, 2004). Therefore, the quality of the information obtained is largely dependent on the interviewer's skills and personality (McCormack, 2004). The semi-structured approach requires much more time for analysis and interpretation following the sessions. However, what may appear disadvantages eventually help to give more informed conclusions based on deeper understandings.

In addition to the familiar face-to-face interviewing technique there are some circumstances which make telephone interviews a viable alternative. This is particularly relevant for acquiring input from individuals located outside of the study region.

Telephone interviews are preferable to mailing questions, which have shown to be inferior in terms of generating responses (Fowler et al, 2002). The comparative lack of research based upon telephone interviews typifies the conception that researchers and respondents can better understand one another's intentions (and reactions through animation) when situated face-to-face. Furthermore it can be difficult for the researcher to accurately recall what was said using telephone interviews. Consequently telephone interviews are habitually used only for short sessions where in-depth responses or comments regarding numerous issues are not required. Despite these generalisations research comparing telephone and face-to-face interviews has suggested no significant difference in the resulting transcripts (Sturges and Hanrahan, 2004). As such the substitution of face-to-face interviews for telephone interviews can be justified where circumstances necessitate.

Interviewers often use a tape recorder during in-depth interviews so as to keep a reliable record of what was said and in what context. From here the researcher can begin to analyse the qualitative data. Owing to the in-depth nature of the interviews the note expansion method is favoured over the use of verbatim accounts. Whilst verbatim accounts provide a more comprehensive record of the interviews, the technique is time and resource intensive. Furthermore, knowing each and every word and pause is to be included in the analysis may actually put undue pressure on the interviewee. The method is most appropriate when the transcriptions are short enough to be produced in a reasonable amount of time, and when it is essential that the respondent's own words and phrasing are required for analysis (Richards, 2005). In contrast the note expansion method involves the interviewer listening to the tape to clarify certain issues and to confirm that all the main points have been included in the notes. The note expansion approach saves time and retains all the essential points of the discussion, making it the preferable technique for in-depth interviews, or where data collection is governed by a demanding research timeframe (Bernard, 2005). Researcher bias is a particular concern for this technique, since the interviewer may be selective in what they choose to transcribe and analyse.

The concern of researcher bias associated with qualitative interviews is a longstanding issue. According to Onwuegbuzie (2003), researcher bias occurs when the researcher has personal biases or a prior assumptions that he/she is unable to bracket. This bias may be subconsciously transferred to the participants in such a way that their behaviours, attitudes, or experiences are affected. In addition to influencing participants unduly, the researcher could affect study procedures (e.g. asking leading questions in

an interview) or even contaminate data collection techniques. Onwuegbuzie (2003) goes on to note that at the data analysis and data interpretation phases researcher bias is a very common threat to legitimating research simply because it is usually the case that the researcher themselves will serve as the instrument in collecting the data. More specifically order bias occurs when the order of the questions that are posed in an interview schedule - or the order in which observations are made - makes a difference to the dependability and potential to confirm the findings. In such cases, interpretations cannot be confidently generalised to situations outside of the study context (Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2006). Contrary to this Rubin and Rubin (2005) argue that qualitative interviews are actually a mechanism of reducing biases. Although the researcher may have an established stance, the process of interviewing allows for a panoramic view encompassing all angles and sides of a dispute to be considered, and for different versions of a particular incident or scenario to be discovered. Thus interviews have the potential for the interviewee's personalised versions and understandings to be elicited.

3.3.3 Sampling for the Primary Data Collection Process

The decisions surrounding sampling methods and sample size are of considerable importance in any research. They will have a direct impact on the quality of data, and ultimately the credibility of any conclusions. Considerations in the decision making process often relate back to the original research question (Black, 2002). For example which organisations and roles are most likely to be able to provide contextual information regarding affordable housing in Northumberland National Park.

Ritchie and Lewis (2003) insist that samples should be as diverse as possible within the boundaries of the defined population, thus optimising the chances of identifying the full range of factors or features that are associated with the research subject. This is particularly apt of qualitative research which typically relies on small yet in-depth sampling.

Marshall and Rossman (2006) outline three means of sampling which have been summarised within Table 3.4

Table 3.3 – Overview of Broad Sampling Techniques

Convenience Sampling	Engages with the most accessible subjects Least costly in terms of effort, time and money	Poor quality data Lacks intellectual credibility
Purposive/ Judgement Sampling	Most productive subjects selected based on researchers knowledge and existing data and literature For subjects who have specific experiences or specialist knowledge	Researcher needs to ensure that the sample encapsulates a relevant range of research criteria Prone to researcher bias
Theoretical Sampling	Builds interpretative theories from the emerging data The principal strategy for the grounded theoretical approach	May not be sufficient to inform the subject selection process Not ideal for explorative research which does not necessitate the testing of a hypothesis

Source: Marshall and Rossman, 2006

Whilst Table 3.3 indicates three distinctive approaches, it is noted by Marshall and Rossman (2006) that in practice there is often considerable overlap.

Since affordable housing delivery is a specialised area, purposive (otherwise referred to as judgemental) sampling appears to be most fitting to the primary data collection process.

With the purposive sampling approach members of a sample are chosen with a purpose to represent a location or type in relation to a key criterion. This has two

principal aims. The first is to ensure that all the key constituencies of relevance to the subject matter are covered. The second is to ensure that, within each of the key criteria, some diversity is included so that the impact of the characteristic can be explored. As Blaxter et al (2001) note, such examples of non-probability sampling approaches are most aptly applied when the researcher lacks a sampling frame for the population in question, or where a probabilistic approach is not judged to be necessary[1].

Within purposive sampling there are a number of approaches designed to yield different types of sample composition depending on the study's aims and coverage. There is likely to be some degree of overlap when applying any of the individual strategies which have been categorised in Table 3.4.

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1 There are broadly two key types of sample frame; existing lists or information sources, and sample frames that need to be specifically generated for a research study. The latter is often required where the study population is not one which can be identified through official statistics. This will often be more time consuming than using existing data sources, but may be the only option (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003).

Table 3.4 – Purposive Sampling Strategies

Extreme or deviant case	Selecting cases that have unusual manifestations of the phenomenon of interest
Intensity	Selecting information-rich cases that manifest the phenomenon intensely, but not extremely
Maximum variation	Selecting cases that are considerably different on the dimensions of interest
Homogeneous	Selecting cases that are similar to each other
Typical case	Selecting cases that are typical, normal, average
Stratified	Selecting cases from different subgroups
Critical case	Selecting cases that have potential for logical generalisations and maximum application of information to other cases
Snowball or chain	Selecting cases from referrals by participants
Criterion	Selecting cases based on them meeting some criterion of interest
Theory-based	Selecting cases that manifest theoretical constructs of interest
Confirming and disconfirming	Selecting cases that have potential for supporting or refuting initial analysis
Opportunistic	Selecting cases that are unexpectedly available
Random	Selecting a relatively small number of cases using a probability sampling procedure
Political	Selecting or avoiding politically sensitive cases
Convenience	Selecting cases that require little effort or forethought
Combination	Selecting cases by mixing purposeful sampling with probability sampling

Source: Patton, 1990

As the research seeks to examine the different views various groups have towards how best to deliver affordable rural housing, there is an inherent need to identify and select

from different types of groups within the research population. As Mason (2002) notes, when sampling relates to organisations and institutions their respective role should indicate a clear relevance to the research question. Using this approach it is feasible to eliminate the possibility of sampling significant proportions of individuals within the same role or workforce by categorising the organisations they represent. This process actively reduces the homogeneity of samples whilst helping to increase the potential of a greater spectrum of views. This strive for greater diversity through increasing the type of organisations represented is most closely association with what Patton (1990, 2002) refers to as stratified purposive sampling (See Table 3.4).

Based upon the strategic stratified and purposive sampling premises, a number of sub-categories can be derived from the sample population, that is, individuals or organisations associated with affordable rural housing provision in Northumberland National Park, its gateway settlements, or an area with similar circumstances; For instance; National Parks, Local Authorities, Regional actors, Community Trusts and support organisations, housing developers and other representatives not categorised within an aforementioned group, despite an undeniably strong link to affordable housing provision and/or the management of Northumberland National Park. Estate agents are also included in the inquiry for their specialist knowledge regarding the area's housing market. As estate agents are not intrinsically involved in planning and housing policies, nor housing development, a separate question framework exists for this group.

The question as to how large a sample should be has no easy answer (Bailey, 2007). Marshall and Rossman (2006) note that an appropriate sample size for a qualitative study is one that adequately answers the research question. Since the sampling error is inversely proportional to the square root of the sample size, there is usually little to be gained from studying very large samples (Marshall and Rossman, 2006).

Bailey (2007) states that 20 is a good starting point when selecting individuals to be interviewed. If this does not provide sufficient or conclusive data the researcher should continue to examine new cases until they fail to add anything new. Ritchie and Lewis (2003) simply observe that a single qualitative study made up of individual interviews will often include fewer than 50 samples, although ultimately the final decision will need to come from the individual researcher and the nature of the study. In practice, the number of samples usually becomes obvious as the study progresses, since new categories, themes or explanations cease to emerge from the process (Sandelowski, 1999). This point is termed data saturation. To apply the concept to the primary data

collection method, the number of samples from each sub-category is permitted to expand until relevant attitudes and information cease to emerge (Figure 3.3).

Figure 3.2 – Application of Stratified Purposive Sampling
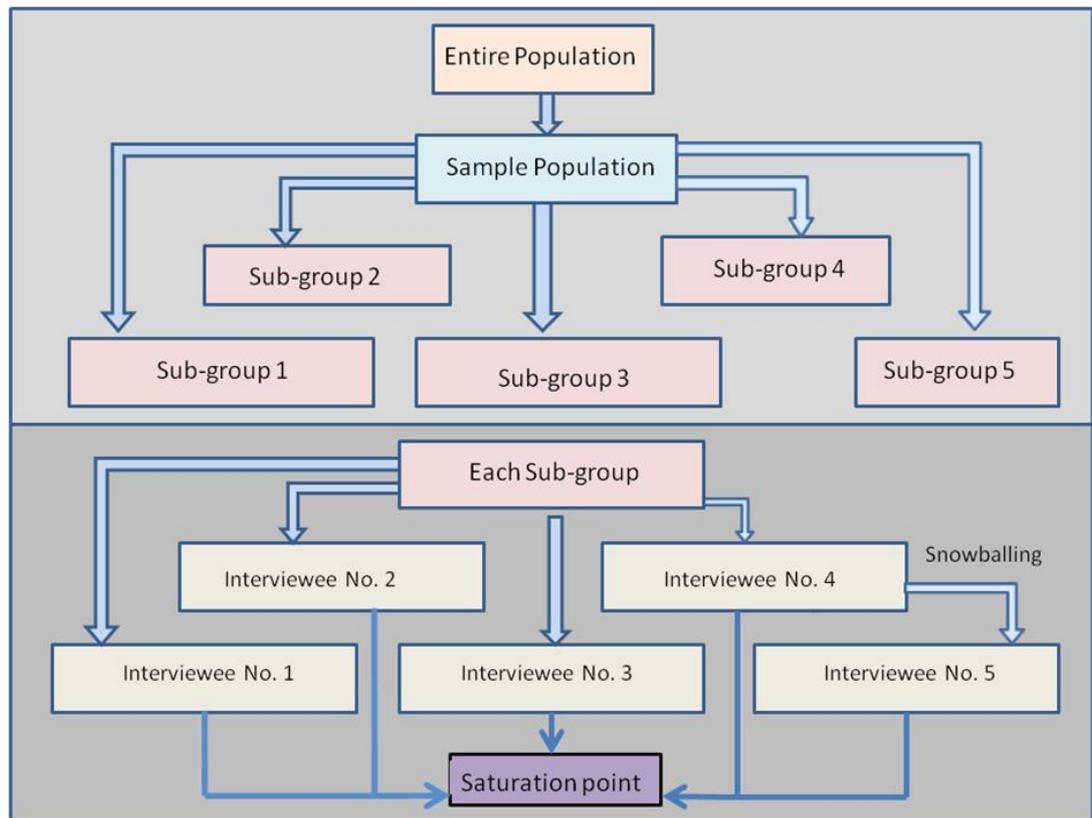
Inevitably the number of organisations within each sub-category is prone to variation. Furthermore the number of employees with a plausible connection to the research also differs between organisations. For this reason the precise number of interviews conducted for each sub-category varies somewhat. This in itself is not a problem, since the aim is not to interview a specific number of representatives for each sub-category, but to ensure that the interviews combine to ensure the data saturation point for each category is reached.

3.3.4 Approaching Potential Samples

Fowler (2002) states that there are two problems to be addressed with personal interviews; gaining access to the selected individuals, and enlisting their cooperation. In order to attain a response the researcher may have to make numerous calls, and remain flexible to an individual's time and setting needs. Difficulties of non-response

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can be partially dealt with using a degree of persistence. Fowler (2002) states that a substantial proportion of refusals are thought to come about through contacting the respondent at a bad time, rather than from a fundamental unwillingness to participate. Cooperation can sometimes be enhanced through some form of prior correspondence that informs the subject of the research, its purpose, and how they are important to it. At this stage it is also useful to explain issues surrounding confidentiality and how the data will be used.

Patton (2002) suggests that for purposive sampling within a specific subject area, it is sometimes possible to ensure participation through the known sponsor approach. Essentially the researcher uses the reputation of another person to establish their own legitimacy and credibility. This can be particularly useful where contacting a number of organisations that are working in partnerships or on similar projects. In this way it is highly likely that individuals will be aware of contacts relevant to the research, and perhaps even willing to promote the study amongst their own contacts. Although this may appear an invaluable process for generating participants, it is important to ensure that it is the researcher who remains in control of selecting the individuals for participation. Over-reliance on the suggestions of others, without the necessary evidence of relevance could easily result in a cycle of self promotion and research bias (Flick, 2006).

Having considered the above a number of procedures were followed for this research. Each organisation/individual included on the sample list was first contacted via telephone which served to explain the purpose of the research, and also why the inclusion of that particular organisation/individual was deemed to be important. In the event that an individual did not wish to participate the reason for why was sought and an inquiry made as to whether an alternative within the organisation would be well placed to substitute for the participant. In the event of accepting an interview in principle, individuals were sent (via email or mail) a briefing further outlining the research, as well as a copy of the question framework on which interviews were based (See Appendix 1). After allowing the contact an appropriate time to digest the mailed documents, a further phone call was used to finalise the details of the interview. The result of this method provided 30 interviewees representing:

1. Allendale Community Housing Trust
2. Alnwick District Council Housing and Regeneration Department
3. Berwick upon Tweed Council Housing Department
4. Blyth Valley Council and Sub Regional Housing Strategy Coordinator
5. Community Action Northumberland
6. Federation of Northumberland Development Trusts
7. Forestry Commission
8. Glendale Gateway Trust
9. Haltwhistle Community Partnership
10. Hands-on-Help for Communities (Community Consultation)
11. Holy Island of Lindisfarne Community Development Trust
12. Home Housing Group (Registered Social Landlord)
13. Horizon Homes (Private Developer)
14. Housing Corporation
15. Johnnie Johnson Housing (Registered Social Landlord)
16. Kendall Cross (Private Developer)
17. Milecastle Housing Association
18. National Housing Federation
19. New Forest National Park
20. Nomad E5/ISOS Group (Registered Social Landlord)
21. Norcare Supported Housing Charity and representative of the North East Housing Board
22. North Tyne and Redesdale Community Partnership
23. Northumberland Estates (Duke of Northumberland)
24. Northumberland National Park Authority
25. One North East (Regional Development Agency)
26. Shelter Housing and Homelessness Charity and representative of the North East Housing Board
27. Three Rivers Housing Association
28. Two Castles Housing Association
29. Tynedale District Council Housing Department
30. Tynedale District Council Planning Department

Immediately prior to the interviews a consent form was issued so participants could acknowledge their awareness of the purpose of the research, how its findings may be used, and where applicable, that they agreed to being recorded.

3.3.5 Implementing Interviews

Patton (2002) argues that no precise recipe for sequencing interview questions could or should exist. To some extent the sequence is determined by the interview strategy being employed. The development of a topic guide has become widely practiced in qualitative research - albeit to varying degrees of detail (May, 2002). In its simplest form a topic guide may simply list key topics to be covered as a broad agenda for the interview. Ritchie and Lewis (2003) argue that on the whole it is best to keep the topic guide as short as possible since shorter guides generally encourage more in-depth data collection. It is recommended that for interviews designed to last between one and two hours between six and nine subject sections should be used. Any more is likely to result in an interview which is only capable of providing basic, surface level information.

The process of topic guide design begins by establishing the subjects to be covered during the data collection phase. This is often clear to the researcher from the stated objectives of the research, and the existing literature in the field. The interviewer needs to translate their research puzzle into several main topics or questions which the respondent can relate and respond to through reference to their experiences (Rubin and Rubin, 2005). The guide should not only be useful to the researcher, but as important to the participants who have offered to give their time and share the details of their lives and work. Interviewees have the right to expect a clear, understandable and supportive guide to aid them through a process than can be both unsettling and confusing (May, 2002).

The type of data resulting from the study should be determined primarily by what the researcher is trying to find out, considered against the background of the context, circumstances and practical aspects of the particular research project. The type of responses resulting from qualitative research is largely dependent upon the type of question being asked. Patton (2002) describes six categories of question, each capable of generating a different style of response;

- Experience/Behaviour questions refer to something happening or how entities act
- Opinion and value questions refer to how something is regarded
- Feelings questions refer to emotional impact of events
- Knowledge questions relate to understanding of issues and circumstances
- Sensory questions relate to what is striking in terms of sight, sound, taste, touch and smell

- Background questions are simple in structure, with responses often being unique to the individual

As this research is concerned with exploring the opinions and attitudes towards different housing delivery mechanisms it is rational that the main questions (as included in the question framework) focussed on opinion and value, and knowledge questions. However, in-depth, subject specific research habitually involves a substantial amount of time and questioning so as to elicit the demanding levels of thoroughness required. For this reason, in addition to the main subjects of interest, topic guides will usually include some indication of issues for follow-up questions and probing. As most probes cannot be specified in advance - since their wording and use are dependent on the participant's response, it is always necessary for the researcher to develop some follow-up questions spontaneously. These could plausibly include a substantial number of what Patton (2002) refers to as experience and behaviour questions. Ritchie and Lewis (2003) explain that the extent to which follow-up questions are prescribed in the guide will vary depending on a number of issues. These include; the purpose of the study, how far topic coverage can be anticipated in advance and the desired balance between participants and researcher in shaping the structure of the discussion.

3.3.6 Additional Considerations

The success of data collection relies largely on the preparatory actions and interpersonal skills of the researcher. The process of building trust, good relations, respecting norms of reciprocity and sensitively approaching ethical issues are all equally important. For interviewing in particular the researcher must be active, patient, a good listener, empathetic and respectful (Yeschke, 2003).

Qualitative research often involves intruding into the settings of participants which may require an adjustment to the researcher's presence. Adjustment of routines and priorities to aid the researcher, or even simply tolerating the researcher's presence should be recognised as participants giving of themselves (Marshall and Rossman, 2006). These actions are therefore duly acknowledged through for example offering informal feedback, sharing knowledge or suggesting ideas and contacts.

Ethical considerations should also be taken into account. Emotionally engaged researchers must continuously evaluate and construct their behaviour (Lerum, 2001). If the researcher will require people to change their routines or donate time to the inquiry, doing so must be completely voluntary. During an interview it is courteous for the

interviewer to act in a means that will help the participant feel at ease. Through prior planning and informing, the participant should be given the opportunity to prepare themselves for the interview should they wish. In doing so the chance of the participant being made to look unintelligent in front of the interviewer, or in some cases, friends and colleagues is reduced (Wengraf, 2004). This procedure also improves the quality of data emerging from the interview, since interviewees act apprehensively when presented with the possibility of being made to look foolish (Yeschke, 2003)

Although poorly designed and executed interviews result in poor data generation, it should be remembered that most interviewees agree to participate on the basis of being able to assist the research, or at least have their opinions listened to (Marshall and Rossman, 2006). However, interviewees may be reluctant to change their comments for fear of looking injudicious. Therefore, it is important that the researcher allows the opportunity to reiterate or revisit statements and conclusions. As qualitative studies often focus not on falsifiable facts, but on perceptions, the researcher knows that there is no definitive wrong answer to many of the questions being asked. If the participant is aware of this it is much more likely that the interview can progress in a more relaxed and productive manner.

Ethical considerations are not only necessary during the data collection, but also in the stages which follow. During transcription of interviews the issue of confidentiality made clear within interviews must remain consistent. The researcher also has a responsibility to produce a loyal transcription, i.e. one which accurately represents the statements put forward by the participants. Ethics in the analysis phase involve the question of how deeply and critically the interviews can be analysed, and whether the participants should have a say in how their statements are interpreted. As Kvale (2007) states, it is the researcher's responsibility to report knowledge that is as secured and verified as possible.

3.4   Pilot Study

A pilot study for the primary data collection method was developed in combination with the Community Land Trust National Demonstration Programme; part of which involves an examination of existing and potential community based housing schemes in the rural areas of North East England. Specifically the pilot study targeted Northumberland's rural hinterland, much of which is covered by Northumberland National Park.

The interview process was conducted using a pre-assigned question framework designed to elicit details of existing and planned housing projects, wider housing issues in the region (specifically affordability), knowledge and experiences of affordable housing provision, and opinions on improving affordable housing provision within rural areas.

The research involved six interviews, targeting individuals associated with housing in rural Northumberland; these included –

- A planning officer from Northumberland National Park
- Head of housing at one of the Local Authorities
- A local development trust worker with experience in housing delivery
- A community development consultancy worker and researcher in community housing schemes
- A representative of the sub-regional housing strategy team
- A local affordable housing project officer

This would be a sufficient sample size to test how effective the process would be in eliciting information, and also whether the resulting data would be sufficient to draw conclusions from. The figure was also regarded as acceptable by the staff involved with the Community Land Trust National Demonstration Project, which the pilot study would supplement.

When selecting interviewees it was necessary to make two considerations; firstly the individuals would have to exhibit a demonstrable link to housing and/or planning within rural Northumberland. Secondly, they would have to represent various sectors so as to generate a spectrum of views relating to different stakeholders. Relevant sectors in the region could include those dealing with housing and planning policy, housing delivery and community development. Even for the relatively sparsely populated area of rural Northumberland, dozens of organisations and individuals could be argued as being valuable for the study. In order to shortlist candidates it was decided that the most active, experienced and geographically relevant individuals should be approached.

The process of sourcing contacts was initially implemented using web based research, and latterly through confirming applicability with the desired contacts via phone. Prior to the interviews, participants were emailed an information sheet clarifying the aims of the study, as well as the semi-structured framework on which questions would be based.

This action was designed to help the interviewees understand what the research was looking to answer, and to allow in the preparation of any information and documentation they deemed relevant.

Having consented to the study interviews were conducted in the workplace of the relevant organisations with the use of the pre-prepared question framework and a digital recording device. The dialogues were then transcribed using the note expansion method. This involves the researcher listening to the interview and confirming that all of the key areas have been covered. Any notes made during the interview are expanded upon and supplemented with the use of the recording. In this instance the responses were summarised and noteworthy remarks highlighted.

When all of the interviews had been transcribed it was possible to align the various responses to the different areas set out in the question framework, and thus consider the various issues in turn.

3.4.1 Lessons from the Pilot Study: Informing the Research Process

With regard to sourcing contacts the methods employed appear to have been extremely successful, not only in identifying important contacts for the pilot study, but also as a means to generate a host of potential contacts for the wider research. Whilst web based research can provide a useful overview of the organisations and projects in place, it should not be considered an exhaustive list. The final decision as to exactly who would be interviewed was clarified by an initial phone call to that individual or organisation. This ensured that even where a particular organisation appeared to be of relevance to the study, it was possible to confirm which specific people within that organisation would be best placed to provide insight. The result was the sourcing of six contacts able to provide different perspectives of the affordable housing delivery issues. The means of approaching potential contacts and decision to allow an insight into the purpose of the research prior to an interview proved to be extremely productive in ensuring compliance. The success of this approach signifies it is appropriate for use within the wider research.

As individuals were selected based upon their expertise and experience in housing projects they were capable of informing discussions and relating their answers back to specific examples. Nevertheless, interviewees were often keen to suggest other individuals who they felt would be able to provide more depth on certain issues. This was apparent not only during the interviewing process but also when attempting to

arrange the interviews in the first instance. An insistence to persist with what the researcher believes to be an exhaustive or representative list of potential respondents can thus be viewed as a somewhat credulous approach - since it is plausible that the interview process itself will result in previously unknown contacts being unearthed. However, it is logical that the researcher makes every attempt to ensure the original list be as representative as possible, so as to reduce the potential for unforeseen yet necessary additional interviews. In doing so, various themes of specialist knowledge relating back to the overarching issue of rural affordable housing delivery should be conceivable from the original contact list. The proposed list for the wider research (Section 3.3.4) thus warrants the inclusion of staff concerned with housing and planning from Local Authorities and National Parks, Development Trusts and other community orientated groups, housing providers and the regional bodies associated with policy, governance and funding.

By interviewing only six individuals it was found that a number of specific follow up questions became repeated as respondents referred to common issues and projects. Although for the pilot study this was not necessarily a problem since each participant could potentially hold different understandings and opinions on these subjects, it is a discovery that should be taken into account when finalising the wider research question framework. As the wider research will include a greater number of interviews it is inevitable that a more diverse spectrum of expertise and experiences will come to light. The possibility of in-depth comments into wider debates and peripheral issues on which the research does not focus remains an inherent danger with semi-structured interviews. Although the pilot study has hinted that such divergence away from the key research questions is a possibility, it should serve simply as a warning to the researcher, and to remind of the importance in appropriately designing and implementing the semi-structured approach. In particular it is important for the interviewer to ensure the process remains relevant without prohibiting each individual from fully explaining their understanding and opinions on their particular specialities. As Rubin and Rubin (2005) note; because the interviewer seeks to match questions to what each interviewee knows, the interview should be conducted in a manner which results in each conversation having an element of uniqueness.

It is important to ensure that representatives of different sectors still retain the opportunity to comment upon ideas and projects which they themselves are not involved. Indeed this process should be actively encouraged through taking the time to explain the workings of the various mechanisms and issues unfamiliar to the interviewees. By allowing an insight into the purpose of the research and providing the

question framework upfront, the interviewee has the opportunity to gather their own thoughts and queries prior to the interview process.

By undertaking the interviews within the interviewees' workplace participants were put at ease and had access to information which would help to inform the research. The semi-structured question framework proved an effective means of allowing the interviewees to express their thoughts on the various aspects of affordable rural housing. Whilst the framework ensured that all of the relevant aspects were covered, additional spontaneous questions were used to provide greater depth on specific issues and projects. In the vast majority of cases these questions arose naturally to responses of participants, as opposed to being pre-prepared follow-up questions. The pursuit of a relaxed atmosphere and open questions inevitably led some interviewees to begin to expand beyond the realms of the issues within the question framework. Nevertheless, referring back to the framework it was possible to continue a reasonably smooth and fluid dialogue ensuring all subject areas were given appropriate attention. If anything, this finding suggests that there is little need to place emphasis on the exact order in which topics are examined.

Since in-depth qualitative data was sought – so as to allow for the participants to fully elaborate on their attitudes and reasoning – questions were primarily open-ended. Although certain questions asked participants to quantify responses as a means of measuring the respective level of agreement/disagreement surrounding an issue, it was the use of the qualitative data which provided the greatest insight into the participants' mindset. Inevitably a number of the follow-up questions served to clarify particular points, and could thus adopt an closed-ended form. Within the wider research, in which a greater number of participants are to be interviewed, it is permissible to adopt a similar means of questioning, with greatest emphasis placed on those open-ended questions able to generate in-depth qualitative responses. Whilst the quantitative element may prove more relevant when using a larger sample size, it should not remove the importance of the depth and richness so valuable in coming to understand the interviewees' attitudes.

The use of a digital recording device during the interviews was extremely beneficial in allowing full focus to remain on interacting with the participant. This is an intrinsic element of the in-depth interview technique since the researcher is required to concentrate and react in accordance with participant responses. Throughout the interviews there was no indication to suggest that the interviewees were at all fazed or

influenced by the presence of the recorder. In fact, it appeared that most of the participants spoke and acted as if no recording were being made.

The interviews typically lasted between 45 minutes to 1 hour. This duration represented the time when all areas had been covered rather than through constraints arising from other appointments. All of the interviewees offered to provide future input if required, although the use of the question framework ensured this was rarely the case within the confines of the pilot study. Overall the process proved very successful in allowing participants to explain their experiences and understandings surrounding the areas of inquiry.

The use of the note expansion technique allowed for an effective comparison process, whereby different opinions and ideas could be identified as popular or diverging. The technique helps to ensure that the individual interviews continue to be considered throughout the analysis, and that one particular respondent does not become over-represented. It was possible to analyse the recordings so as to shape a number of conclusions and draw attention to topics which remained contested. On the basis of the pilot study it is possible to use the aforementioned process within the wider research to elicit the type of data required to formulate conclusions as to what represent feasible options regarding affordable housing delivery. These conclusions will be the basis of a delivery framework that will help to test the views of the National Park's community members in relation to the feasible options as determined through the input of housing and planning professionals.

Despite attempts to accurately represent the various views of participants, it is arguable that any interview process will inevitably include some level of subjectivity. This can occur with regard to what a researcher considers to be worth asking, transcribing and analysing. Likewise the subjectivity arising from the way in which comments are interpreted could potentially result in conclusions becoming misinformed. However, it is felt that during the pilot study the decision to use in-depth semi-structured interviews, and the means by which they were applied adequately acted to minimise such pitfalls. As the method involved a lengthy communication process which included a series of additional questions for the purpose of clarification, the chances of misunderstanding and misinterpretation were highly unlikely.

With the verified means of sourcing and approaching contacts, designing a question framework, implementing the interviews and ultimately producing data from which conclusions could be drawn, it is fair to say that the pilot study can be considered a success.

3.5   Delivery Framework Testing

A delivery framework is to be developed on the basis of the theoretical framework, secondary data and primary data. The purpose of the delivery framework is to outline viable and appropriate means of affordable housing delivery for Northumberland National Park's local need. A complete framework should thus encompass three elements;

- The mechanism(s) suitable for delivering affordable housing to meet the Park's need
- The organisations (or individual roles) valuable in facilitating the delivery process
- The areas/communities/settlements in which development should be located

Owing to the specialised housing and planning knowledge underpinning certain aspects of the Delivery Framework, it is not realistic for the framework in its entirety to be directly tested through the engagement with the National Park's residents and visitors. However, it is possible to elicit attitudes and preferences which can be related to proposed delivery processes within the framework.

In addition to investigating the support for existing proposals the Delivery Framework testing process may also provide clarification of issues on which housing and planning professionals exhibit no consensus (or where too few relevant responses prevent any meaningful conclusion from being formed). Community input on the Delivery Framework can therefore be used to providing information for issues which housing and planning professionals are not entirely familiar with. These could, for example, include; public support/opposition to affordable housing, nimbyism, community representation, awareness of affordable housing need and potential for community involvement/facilitation.

3.5.1 Approaches for the Delivery Framework Testing

Whereas the use of semi-structured in-depth interviews are favoured for the collection of data from professionals associated with housing and planning, the comparatively large number of residents to which the research is applicable dictates the need for an alternative approach be utilised during the testing phase. The aim to accurately represent the attitudes and perceptions of a large population could feasibly be achieved through two approaches. A sample of the population in the form of one or

more focus groups could be used to consider issues in a manner generating discussion and allowing individuals to consider scenarios from different perspectives in the hope that a favourable solution could be agreed. The difficulties associated with focus groups (namely concerns over the potential to provide adequate representation – also see Section 3.3.1), led to the approach being dismissed in this instance.

Discussions with the National Park Authority staff experienced in working with the communities brought to light a number of issues undermining the value of focus groups and their resultant data. Whilst the difficulties of arranging multiple meetings throughout the Park were likely surmountable, social factors brought about by unfavourable group dynamics are regarded as being more difficult to overcome. Although effective moderation allows every individual the opportunity to provide input, it is inescapable that certain individuals may feel threatened or embarrassed to participate in discussion. These fears are likely to be exacerbated in circumstances where attitudes differ from an apparent orthodoxy, or those of an assertive, intellectual or respected contributor. Furthermore, since the research is concerned with affordable housing there was concern that those in greatest need would feel inferior to the more affluent participants to whom affordability is not an issue. Although anonymity and confidentiality can be guaranteed within the written research, an individual's contributions are inevitably shared amongst other participants.

Since the reasons behind different attitudes (to affordable housing issues) are derivable from the primary data collection process – particularly from organisations that operate closely with the public – the primary aim of the testing process is to ascertain the *extent* of the attitudes and causes so that they can be considered in relation to the delivery framework. As the required approach is concerned with measurement for a large sample population, a survey capable of generating quantitative data is preferable to the rich qualitative data offered through focus groups. Quantitative survey research is sometimes portrayed as being sterile and unimaginative, yet it is well suited to providing certain types of factual, descriptive information – the hard evidence (De Vaus, 2002) and extremely flexible in terms of design. Perhaps the biggest flaw with questionnaires is that respondents are able to omit particular details or sections. In order to prevent subsequent analysis becoming based on an incomplete picture it is important that questionnaires are effectively designed to encourage completion.

3.5.2 Survey Design

Hakim (1987) makes a distinction between descriptive and analytic survey design. Descriptive surveys are designed to inform what proportion of a population or sample has, for example, a certain opinion, or how frequently they engage in an activity. They are not designed to explain why the attitude or behaviour exists. However, social research rarely deals with monocausal [sic] phenomena, i.e. a single cause resulting in a specific effect (Hakim, 1987). Almost invariably multi-causal models exist, so that any effect is the outcome of a complex network of determinants. Statistical procedures allow this network to be disentangled by examining variance, the significance of determinants, and how powerful a determinant is (Oppenheim, 1992). Eliciting the extent of attitudes is achievable through descriptive design, but in order to explore or clarify the underlying reasoning and the strength of associations between different factors, it is necessary to include an element of analytic design. Therefore, both descriptive and analytic elements are included within the survey.

The nature of questions within the survey is largely determined by findings in the preceding stages of the research, and the wider goal of relating community input to objectives of the research. In order to accomplish this goal and attain meaningful findings, it is necessary to consider what type of input is required.

The type of input provided from respondents is driven by the type of questions within the survey. When collecting data from a large sample, the processing and analysis are made more manageable by ensuring that the survey generates simplistic data. In order to test theories and make comparisons the data should be able to be aggregated, ranked or numerically assignable (Oppenheim,1992). These requirements can be fulfilled by using closed questions (See Table 3.5).

Table 3.5 - Comparison of Question Types within Surveys

	Advantages	Disadvantages
Open Questions	Freedom and spontaneity of answers Opportunity to probe Useful for testing hypotheses about ideas or awareness	Time consuming in terms of completion and analysis Coding is very slow and costly, and may be unreliable Demand more effort from respondents
Closed Questions	Require little time No extended writing Low costs Easy to process Make for easy comparisons Useful for testing scientific hypotheses Less interviewer training required	Loss of spontaneous responses Bias in answer categories Sometimes too crude May irritate respondents due to lack of opportunity to express themselves

Source: Oppenheim, 1992

Although closed questions are capable of producing a certain degree of frustration amongst respondents wishing to fully express themselves, a large scale enquiry dictates that they are the only realistic means of gathering quantifiable data. The

simplicity and associated ease in completion are also essential in generating an adequate number of responses. Optional responses within surveys must always be exhaustive, thus allowing every respondent the opportunity to provide a response, even if is 'not applicable' or 'do not wish to comment' (De Vaus, 2002). In order to gauge the importance of various factors a ranking format based on the Likert scale was implemented where required. A ranking format requires respondents to rate the importance or strength of agreement relative to the way other factors in the set have been rated. In doing so the format provides answers that indicate the relative rather than absolute importance of items, preventing respondents from robotically assigning a maximum value to all factors. De Vaus (2002) notes that for a large number of items it may be preferable to rank only the top/bottom three, whereas a small number of items permit all to be ranked.

When dealing with binominal data, clustered bar charts are recommended (Rees, 1995) - for example to depict the two variables; length of residency and perception of need for affordable housing. The result is that the variation of one variable can be viewed in respect of another. This technique thus helps to test existing theories or to develop new ones. While tables and graphs may depict apparent trends and information surrounding the way in which two variables are associated, statistics go further by providing a very concise index of the extent to which two variables are related (Hinton, 1995).

During the analysis phase the Mann-Whitney U test is applied to test whether there is any significant difference between two populations, or whether observed differences could have occurred by chance. The test can be used when data is ordinal as well as for direct measurements (Rees, 1995). Where the respondents are categorised into three or more categories, the Kruskal Wallace test is used in place of the Mann-Whitney U test (as advised by Hinton, 1995)

3.5.3 Sampling for Delivery Framework Testing

A representative sample of any population should be so drawn that every member of the study population has an equal chance of inclusion. Depending on the overall size of the population which is to be represented, two means can be applied. If the population is small enough it may be possible to approach all potential samples (for example through a blanket mail out). Otherwise, a representative sample can be assumed through a random sampling technique. Random sampling is a statistically defined

procedure requiring a table, set of random numbers or computer able to randomly generate (Oppenheim, 1992).

In this case, because the National Park Authority is able to provide access to the personal addresses of its residents, it is possible to invite every household to participate in the research. In addition the Authority has access to anonymous addresses of those within the Park's immediate surroundings – the so-called buffer zone. As the buffer zone consists of a much greater number of addresses, for means of consistency a sample of equal magnitude to the households in the National Park is used as a means of generating comparable data. With assistance from the National Park Authority's Geographical Information Staff a random selection of addresses from within 5 miles of the National Park boundary is used to make up this sample.

Since the questionnaire is equally applicable to all residents within the National Park and prescribed buffer zone, the issue of sampling is relatively simple in relation to the interview process used in the collection of primary data. However, because of the nature of National Parks, visitors represent a separate group of relevant stakeholders. Since the addresses of visitors cannot be known, their input derives from engaging with the visitors through questionnaires in the National Park's various visitor centres and face to face. In order to increase participation, the visitor survey (see Appendix 2) is kept comparatively short, but includes key questions, some of which are also featured in the resident questionnaire. This approach allows the results of certain enquiries to be compared between the two groups (Chapter 4).

Questionnaires when mailed out provide an efficient means of data collection, since the researcher has minimal engagement with each of the participants. The process is therefore particularly apt for engaging a large number of samples, especially when they are widely dispersed or residing at a location which would make individual visits unfeasible. The disadvantages of the approach emanate from the researcher's lack of control in how the questionnaires are treated. Without personal engagement there is an increased probability that the questionnaires will not be completed. Those that are completed may be incomplete or misinterpreted. Although the absence of an interviewer may be considered beneficial, ensuring minimal bias is introduced, it is still possible that a questionnaire projects a type of person or organisation behind the research, which then impacts upon the responses. Although such a phenomenon is largely unavoidable without resorting to deception, there are a number of factors which help to increase response rates, thus giving greater opportunity to understand the diversity of views across the sample (Fowler, 2002).

By allowing the sample advanced warning of the study and inviting participation in the research, the individual gains insight into why their input is required. If the invitation is well implemented in that it verifies a connection between respondent and the issue at hand, there is a greater chance of generating a response. Others have stated that an explanation of the sampling method used and how the individual came to be chosen can also be of benefit (Seale et al, 2004). Sponsorship or endorsement from a particular organisation or individual may help to validate the response, should the sponsor be in a respected post, or a representative of a reputable organisation. However, the use of a sponsor could just as easily have a detrimental impact, depending upon their relationship with the sample population (Fowler, 2002). The approach also risks introducing bias by generating responses from a certain sector of the population (united in their relationship with the sponsor). Similarly advanced publicity promoting the positive aspects of the research can help to raise credibility, as well as the public's awareness.

For mail surveys the use of personally addressed envelopes may also be conducive to increased levels of response, as are the guarantee of confidentiality and anonymity. In this case however, the anonymous nature of the research prevents the use of an incentive. Pre-paid envelopes ensure that participation is made convenient for the respondents.

In addition to the mailed questionnaires, an online version of the survey allows participants to submit their responses without leaving their home. Since the mid 1990s the internet has become a viable and popular means of administering questionnaires. When the web survey closes, the data are normally placed in a database for further statistical analysis by the researcher. Although some have suggested potential problems with web surveys (De Vaus, 2002), principally that the same person can respond many times to skew the results (ballot box stuffing), advances in online survey design allow this flaw to be minimised. By permitting only a single response from an individual IP address the respondent can only submit one survey before having to alter the computer's settings, or having to use a different computer altogether.

The corresponding visitor surveys were distributed to the Park's visitor centres so as to ensure that responses be generated from throughout the study area. With the encouragement of National Park Authority staff and an accompanying notice explaining the purpose of the research, the survey generated 54 responses over a 2 month period.

Resident questionnaires were sent out to all of the National Parks 999 households. Additionally an equal number of questionnaires were posted to randomly selected addresses within 5 miles of the National Park's boundary, the so called Buffer zone. 253 of the 1998 questionnaires sent out were returned, giving a response rate of 13% - a figure consistent with previous mail outs conducted by the National Park Authority.

The mailing of questionnaires to every household within the National Park and an equally sized sample within the buffer zone provided ample opportunity for residents to participate in the research. Furthermore, residents were given the option of completing the questionnaire online. However, the Park Authority's insistence that residents from within the Park should first be contacted about the research before having to request a questionnaire greatly limited the number of responses from Park residents. Consequently results from the resident survey are inevitably skewed in favour of residents from within the buffer zone. As Chapter 5 details, the responses rarely differed significantly on the basis of a resident's location in or out of the National Park. Therefore, although the requests of the Park Authority may have limited the number of responses, it is very unlikely that the validity of findings became compromised.

Of the 253 questionnaires returned 51 emanated from the National Park households, and 195 from the Buffer zone sample. As shown in Appendix 3, the questionnaire has 3 sections. Section 1 of the questionnaire applies to all 253 residents participating in the study.

3.6   Chapter Summary

In order to work towards the research aims described in Chapter 1 and compare findings with the existing literature and policies covered in Chapter 2, it is first necessary to collect data from the study area. This chapter has identified the benefits of qualitative data so as to elicit the factors which influence the attitudes of those professionals associated with housing and planning, and quantitative data as a means of demonstrating the views of a wider population – the Park's residents and visitors. Through the subsequent chapters the results and analysis of these methods aid the formation of conclusions and recommendations.

Chapter 4 - Findings and Development of the Delivery Framework

4.1   Introduction

The qualitative responses from the interview process reflect a spectrum of issues pertaining to affordable housing delivery within the study area. Firstly, this Chapter considers how the findings correspond to the theoretical framework, namely the aspects of governance, sustainable development and community empowerment outlined within Chapter 2. Secondly the Chapter covers what the interview findings (together with the theoretical framework) mean for the delivery framework; which mechanisms are suitable for meeting Northumberland National Park's affordable housing need, which organisations (or individual roles) would be valuable in facilitating the delivery process, and in which areas/communities/settlements should development be located.

4.2.1 Governance

As the Theoretical Framework detailed, the scale at which issues should be considered and acted upon is one of the most important aspects of government. The interview process revealed that this is no more relevant than when considering the issue of affordable housing delivery.

The National Park's draft core strategy states that all new National Park housing should meet local need, but there is a danger that other Authorities could interpret policies and the scale they are to be applied differently. This is a particular concern when considering how the term *local* may be interpreted. The National Park Authority has tried to define local need in the core strategy draft (2006) as "*inside the Park or inside a parish bordering the Park*" but there is already some evidence to suggest that this definition is not shared amongst some communities within the Park. When referring to a specific consultation meeting in the settlement of Elsdon, the Park's planning officer had been taken aback by the strong opposition of the community, who insisted that there was no local need for any new housing, affordable or otherwise. A number of the interviewees shared the concerns that not all of the Park's settlements would be in favour or need of additional housing. Furthermore they expressed that any attempts to force development on to opposing communities would likely have negative implications for reputations and future projects.

Interviewees with experience in working with individual communities warned of the dangers associated with considering an area the size of Northumberland National Park as a single community. Was this to be the case, the respondents felt it inevitable that certain communities without a desire for more housing would see an unwanted influx of people from other parts of the Park - people which they did not consider local. If a settlement exhibiting affordable housing need did see development come to fruition, would people from elsewhere within the Park (particularly those individuals considered to exhibit a greater level of need) be prioritised and relocated? Should they be? The political agenda of devolution has inferred that governance be an issue for increasingly localised areas - with Pemberton and Goodwin (2010) highlighting the current restructuring of local governments into Unitary Authorities.

Two thirds of the interviewees felt able to give a reasoned response as to what impact the switch to a Unitary Authority will have on affordable housing provision in the National Park. Of these respondents, 40% were optimistic that best practice from the most effective Local Authorities will be taken onboard and enacted throughout the National Park, as well as the rest of Northumberland. Conversely a minority of interviewees fear that the move to countywide governance will act to dilute the attention given to affordable housing in small rural communities. By diverting focus to issues such as education and employment in Northumberland's larger settlements where the needs of greater populaces could be better served, respondents cautioned that the issue of affordable housing in small communities could lose prominence. It was also suggested that the success of the new Authority in dealing with affordable housing may ultimately depend on who is placed in the senior positions, and what their personal views and priorities amount to.

The impact of local government restructuring cannot be underestimated as it has the potential to lead to support or neglect of certain issues as well as to spark reassignment or removal of current staff. The level of uncertainty surrounding this change was present throughout the interviewed sub-groups, even amongst senior staff in the existing Local Authorities. Bizarrely the change could mean scrapping or at least amalgamating the Local Development Frameworks that some Local Authorities - were at the time of interviewing - still preparing. What impact a Unitary Authority will have on the National Park Authority and its Local Development Framework remained unknown.

One line of argument is that a Unitary Authority will bring an end to the complex nature of multiple Local Authorities overlapping the National Park. Different definitions of terms including *sustainable settlement* and *local need* would presumably be resolved allowing

for uniform application throughout the whole of the County. Such a change will help to clarify issues to all housing and planning professionals operating within Northumberland National Park. A separate argument is that a Unitary Authority will help to ensure that the National Park receives the same standard of quality and attention throughout, in contrast to the scenario where performance of different Local Authorities is widely regarded as inconsistent.

Interestingly, when asked on what scale policies should be administered, the option of Local Authority proved almost twice as popular as the Sub-Regional (Countywide) counterpart. Indeed the move from district and borough councils to a countywide administration may be perceived as contradictory to the devolution of governance suggested within the EU's Rural Development Policy, as well as the UK government's Empowerment White Paper (2006). What is more, the change will proceed despite the public's overwhelming rejection of the proposal in the 2004 regional assembly referendum (Berwick Advertiser, 2006).

Although the idea of a Unitary Authority faced some criticism on the grounds that a one-size-fits-all structure is unsuitable for a county as diverse as Northumberland, at this stage the implications of the change were acknowledged to be largely reliant on speculation.

It is conceivable that redefining the scale of local governance could induce a review of how *local* itself is defined. A change in definition will inevitably cause those involved in local resident allocation policies to re-examine criteria. Although people have their own ideas as to what scale *local* refers, it is perhaps most conceivable as a relative term defined by some historical context or ideas of place, space and scale rather than a definitive concept (Pike et al, 2007).

60% of respondents consider *local* to mean within a particular Ward or Parish, a response that dominated over any of the other suggested scales. Other scales including; Housing Market area, Local Authority area, individual settlements and immediate/adjoining parishes all demonstrated similar degrees of support. The largest suggested scale which referred to *local* as being sub-regional or countywide proved the least popular of all responses.

Despite the popularity of wards and parishes as a defining scale for what is meant by local, Local Authority was conclusively the most popular level at which respondents felt housing and planning policy should be decided upon (43% in favour). This option is considered to provide a scale large enough to realise and account for wider socio-

economic issues, whilst being small enough to appreciate the needs of the individual communities. Those who selected the sub-regional and regional options reckoned that housing markets operated beyond the local level and thus concluded that a wider level of governance would be preferential. The notion of wider housing markets, i.e. crossing the boundaries of the district and borough councils, is strongly supported by DTZ's recent consultancy work (Figure 4.1). Only a small proportion of respondents (10%) considered it feasible to apply exclusively the overarching National policies for housing and planning policies, with an equally small number advocating a more devolved, endogenous decision-making process at the Ward/Parish level.

Figure 4.1 – Geographic Range of Northumberland's Housing Markets
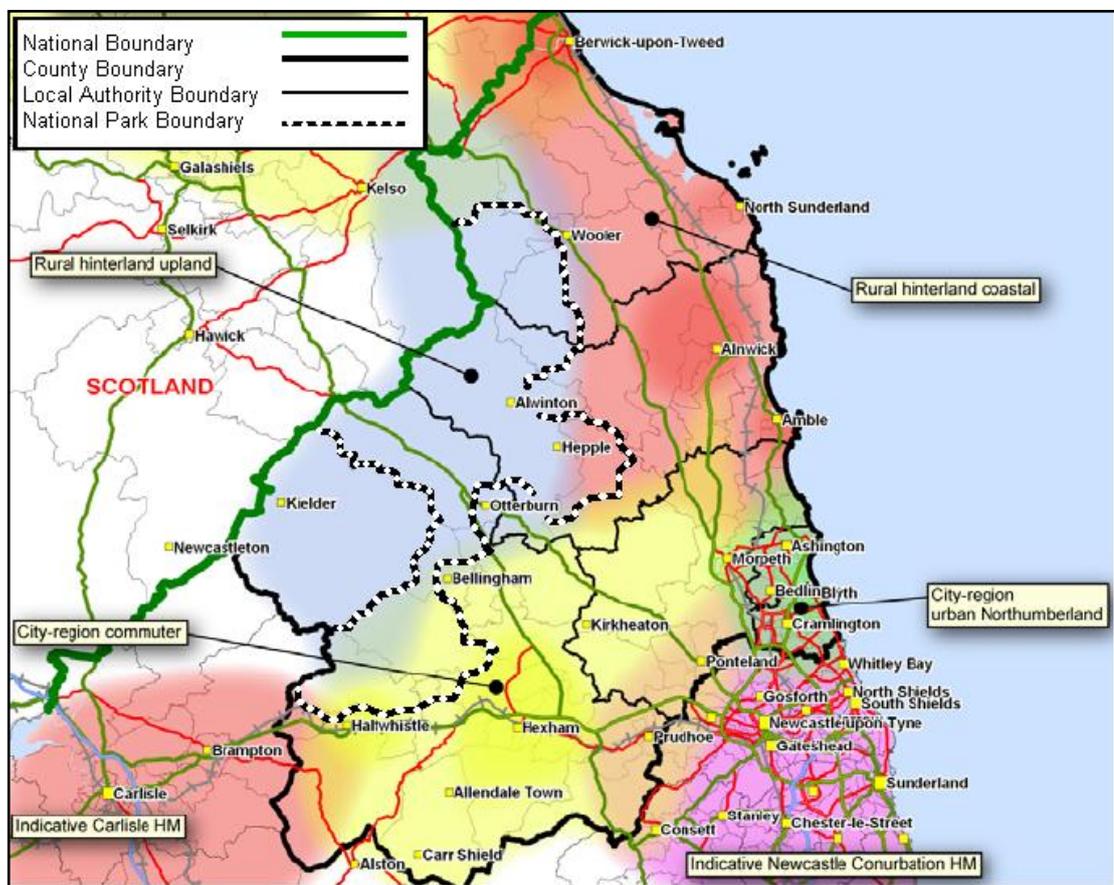
Source: DTZ, 2005

In reference to existing theory, the respondents exhibit a degree of mirroring of Hodge and Monk's (2004) views; favouring delivery based upon locally derived assessments. Although the concept of 'local' and 'community' are likely to remain a contentious issue owing to individuals' sense of identity in relation to their understanding of the terms, the respondents were almost unanimous in their support of policies that look to tailor delivery to those areas exhibiting unique needs – even if there remains some disparity

amongst respondents as to the scale of government considered most apt to enact those policies.

Perhaps the variation in views amongst participants can in part be explained by the acceptance that the organisations they represent would plausibly assume a changeable level of power and importance in respect of a more top-down or bottom-up agenda. There is also the possibility that the support for Local Authority level governance – and to a lesser extent sub-regional governance – may be associated with respondents' familiarity of these structures. The idea of supporting a familiar circumstance or policy, despite holding criticisms is a reoccurring phenomenon (having previously been identified with the likes of wind farm developments (Halliday, 1993) and the adoption of a single European currency (Routh and Burgoyne, 1998)).

Even those respondents advocating the idea of devolution conceded that there is a strong argument to be made for wider governance in the name of efficiency. For example, although respondents advised that the National Park not be considered a single community, governance at the Park scale is capable of providing a clear first port of call to all constituent communities requiring support for development. This is particularly useful for the settlements too small or remote to be considered for inclusion in the area's existing Development Trusts. Successful developments can strengthen relationships with specialists who are able to offer advice based on their experiences, so that all settlements can easily access information and learn from one another. Additionally, with increased size in terms of population and geography, a government organisation is likely to carry more weight in influencing political decisions (for example regional strategies), and have better access to finance for community projects.

Interestingly, the frequent association of 'local' with parishes/wards does not correspond to support for parishes/wards as a suitable scale for housing and planning decision making. In essence these views convey that devolution can only be effective down to a certain scale. Whilst the Sustainable Communities Act (2010) and Decentralisation and Localism Bill (2010) demand that communities be increasingly involved in decisions that will shape their futures, the responses of interviewees align to the notion that communities cannot be permitted to make decisions which may contradict or hinder wider, overarching policies. However, since communities are more likely to support development which they are in some way involved or consulted on (Curry, 1993), the findings infer the need to work with local communities to ensure that understandings and aspirations are consistent with those overarching housing and planning policies. The potential for communities to unite against a particularly policy or

project supported by government is capable of leading to conflict and contempt. The paradox posed by government empowered communities disagreeing with the housing and planning visions of that same government, thus poses the need for policies to be prioritised.

The concept of neo-endogenous development (Ray, 2006) whereby governments collaborate and facilitate community action is perhaps the ideal scenario. Yet where opinions differ (as in the aforementioned example of the Elsdon consultation) there is a stark reminder that in practice there is always likely to be some degree of opposition towards any form of change. Responses from the interviews suggest that having to deal with public objection is an intrinsic part of the development process which can often be countered using reliable and up to date housing needs data, yet in this instance residents had contested whether any need did exist within their settlement. Scott et al's (2009) study of community visions affirms the importance of development being based on joined up policies informed by accurate assessments of need at the local level. That research demonstrated that the public are not against development per se, but that any development must be shown to be needed, and as such for the benefit of the community.

An overwhelming proportion of the interviewees described the level of affordable housing within Northumberland National Park as critical or close to critical. Although these two categories represent around 90% of those stating a value, many exclaimed that this high level of need is for only a small number of new developments, since the population of the National Park is so low in respect of its size. Those selecting "Don't Know" felt unable to give an accurate estimation of need. Although in some cases these individuals were able to recount anecdotal evidence, they expressed the need for further substantiation. Some argued that the evidence available specifically for the National Park area is inadequate, others that they simply have not been made aware of any such evidence within formal documentation.

Despite the suggestion of inadequate needs data for the Park, all respondents were confident that the level of need has worsened in recent years. The most common reason for this argument was simply the increase in house prices already highlighted within academic literature and the secondary data collection process. The next most frequented response for rising need was attributed to inward migration which limited the supply of housing available to the Park's existing residents and workers. These opinions corroborate the arguments of various authors (Holmans and Whitehead 2005; Shucksmith and Best, 2006) as well as the findings from the Taylor Review: Living

Working Countryside (DCLG, 2008), which reports the rural population has risen 7% in the last decade, in comparison with only a 3% rise in urban areas. Whilst in-migration proved a popular assumption for worsening need amongst respondents, there is some argument that in-migrants can directly and indirectly stimulate both employment and business growth of local and regional economies (Stockdale and Findlay, 2004; Bosworth, 2006). Hence in-migration, whilst a contributory factor of increasing affordable housing need, may in some cases serve to promote sustainable communities. The worry for respondents with regard to Northumberland National Park was a perceived growth in the number of retirees, commuters and second home owners. Echoing the sentiments of Stockdale and Barker (2008), these groups were considered detrimental owing to a lack of contribution to economic services and the removal of properties from the market which could otherwise be inhabited by more integrated individuals. Since Local Authorities are to manage (to a certain extent) the nomination of residents for new affordable homes through policies and local need criteria, it is little surprise that Local Authorities are considered to be the most important group in relation to housing, planning and community development activities.

Of course to some extent Local Authorities are driven by central government and the associated national policies. Respondents exhibited a substantial degree of variation in opinions relating to the effectiveness these policies with regard to the promotion of affordable housing delivery. The emphasis on affordable housing from national government is difficult to dispute within the Housing Green Paper (2007), which has prompted positive feedback from organisations such as the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2007). In particular praise has been given to the increased funding, support for a wide range of delivery methods and reforms concerning the release of public land. Nevertheless, respondents largely agreed that the planning system itself needs to be simpler for communities looking to become involved in housing provision through for example, Community Land Trusts. It is argued that at present, although communities are being encouraged to take charge of themselves and their needs, this inevitably proves challenging given a complex and exacting planning system.

Around over one third of respondents commented that the national policies are not the most influential planning related factor in affordable housing delivery, but rather how such policies were interpreted by individual Local Authorities. This was attributed to a belief that the actions of the different Local Authorities, including the National Park Planning Authority, varied considerably in their efforts to encourage affordable housing. Further discussion showed that respondents are not necessarily referring to the measures or wording within planning and strategy documents, but from their

experiences with their respective Local Authorities. Again, these findings parallel those of Scott et al (2009) where the public strongly supported the policy guidance (in this case that of the Rural Development Plan and Planning Policy Wales) which outlined multifunctionality, protecting of the wider countryside, necessary development based on accurate assessment of local need, landscape, nature conservation, encouraging diversification and engagement with local communities. However, the capabilities of Local Authorities to enact policy in practice is not always deserving of the same support.

The elaborative comments of respondents left little doubt that some Local Authorities are perceived as being much more effective than others in terms of dealing with affordable housing provision. Through recording the comments of the respondents - some of which deal with a particular Authority, and others who work with multiple Authorities – it is apparent that of the Local Authorities overlapping the National Park, Tyndale District Council is held in the highest regard. A representative of the council explained that funds generated from a Large Scale Voluntary Transfer have allowed the Authority to focus more attention on affordable housing staff and schemes. One of the most common issues that developers, and even the Local Authorities themselves realised, was the inconsistency in objectives of Local Authorities' planning, housing and finance departments. Whilst Tynedale is widely considered a well integrated and single minded facilitator of affordable housing schemes, other Authorities are described as having departments with inconsistent objectives. Of those respondents experienced in dealing with a Local Authority, around half felt that the strategies restricted affordable housing development. Although this was not the case for those that primarily deal with Tynedale District Council.

Taking account of the variation in experiences amongst the respondents, it is inappropriate to make generalisations about the commitment and effectiveness of Local Authorities as a whole. It is also apparent that despite what is written within the policies and strategies of Local Authorities it is actually the coordination between departments, and the consistency of interpretation amongst different personnel that has the biggest impact upon an organisation's perceived effectiveness. The prioritisations made within different Local Authority departments provide a useful example of this issue.

Whereas, in the case of private landowners and private developers, respondents empathise with aims to maximise financial gain, this is not the case when discussing Local Authorities. Developers in particular have found some Local Authorities to

demonstrate a lack of consistency amongst housing, planning and finance departments. Within strategies and during the interview process, Local Authorities professed commitment to solving affordable housing issues; however, this is contested by many developers as well as some Community Support Organisations. A common cause for discontent is that (some) Local Authorities promote affordable housing as a number one priority, yet seek to maximise their revenue when releasing land. Aside from purely financial and philanthropic reasons, the release and acquisition of land for housing was also purported to be influenced by political pressure on public landowners from the top down, publicity directed towards organisations, an awareness of the need for more affordable housing from family and peers, nimbyism/public pressure and external market factors.

From the experience of respondents the most common means of acquiring sites for affordable housing is to purchase directly from a public landowner or private business. Yet acquiring land for development is regarded by respondents to be the most significant barrier to delivering affordable housing in Northumberland National Park. Of course land acquisition is inherently linked with planning policies, since although there is no shortage of land within the Park, the amount regarded as being both acquirable and capable of receiving planning permission drastically reduces development opportunities. Such restrictions combined with rising property prices, inward migration and a lack of new developments to ease demand have all ensured that land remains a valuable asset. It is perhaps for this reason that the Local Planning Authorities (alongside the Local Communities) are considered to be the most influential group in respect of affordable housing related decision making. This prevalence over Housing Authorities is particularly relevant since the National Park Authority functions as a Planning Authority, but not a Housing Authority.

Those representatives of community organisations in and around the Park praised the Authority for the backing and financial assistance received. In fact, a representative of the National Park Authority professed that the majority of funding is targeted towards the community groups situated on the outskirts of the Park. This is attributed to a conviction from the National Park Authority that the organisations within the gateway settlements are key to supporting the needs of those living and working within the Park - and also that no such groups exist exclusively within the Park itself. Despite such examples of support many interviewees expressed the need for more proactive governance from the Park Authority. Additionally, restrictive planning, added bureaucracy and preservation of landscape and character at the expense of overall sustainability were all suggested to be negative aspects of the Park Authority. This

contrasts with how the National Park representatives thought they may be perceived, especially at present in respect of the formation of affordable housing policies as part of the emerging Local Development Framework. Park staff anticipate that this process could mark the start of a new era for the Authority allowing their intentions and commitment towards affordable housing to be better recognised. They also accepted that the Authority could do more to facilitate affordable housing developments. One means in which this could be achieved would be simply to commence dialogue with landowners and developers, whilst cementing the relationships held with the communities and other relevant staff from the surrounding Local Authorities. Representatives of those community groups situated on the edge of the National Park are satisfied with how the Park Authority has operated with them, but this satisfaction is not replicated with the overlapping Local Authorities.

Perceptions of the Park Authority based upon firsthand experience is a clear sign that the stereotypical dismissive reputation of planning departments still remains and is in some cases justified. This is a notion shared amongst respondents from the various sub-groups. With planning policies and the acquisition of land regarded by respondents as the two greatest barriers to providing affordable housing in the National Park, it is clear that these are prominent areas which need to be reassessed, not only in principle but also in practice.

4.2.2 Collaboration

For an affordable housing project to come to fruition, and be considered a success it is widely accepted that the organisations in the different sub-groups are required to collaborate. This is particularly true for National Parks exhibiting stringent planning restrictions, public objection and overlapping governance. Housing and planning departments even within individual Local Authorities are subject to disagreement. Therefore, ensuring the decisions and actions of the National Park Planning Authority dovetail with those of the overlapping Local Authorities responsible for housing is understandably challenging. Respondents from the three Local Authorities overlapping Northumberland National Park acknowledge that the collaboration between the Authorities (including the National Park Authority) could be greatly improved upon. As even these Local Authorities (whose housing departments are ultimately responsible for meeting the needs of those in the Park) have little collaboration with the Park Authority, to the extent that it is viewed as a fastidious part of their jurisdiction, it is essential that the reputations and relationships are enhanced.

Despite mixed responses from the interviewees as to the integration of housing and planning policies, around 70% admitted that the degree of integration has improved over recent years. Furthermore, it is propitious that comments made by various sub-group representatives indicate that there are a variety of individuals and organisations willing to consider the possibility of working closer with the Park Authority in the future so as to meet housing need.

The National Park Authority's planning officer remarked that in terms of housing provision the Park Authority worked closely with Tynedale council. Of the three Authorities included in the Park's boundary, it was Tynedale that was perceived to be the most active in driving forward affordable housing projects. Furthermore Tynedale district covers a greater area of the Park than the Local Authorities of Alnwick and Berwick upon Tweed respectively. As it is the Local Authorities' responsibility to ensure sufficient housing is provided, Tynedale would obviously be an important ally for the Park Authority. Although the Park's planning officer described Tynedale council as the most active Local Authority in terms of affordable housing provision, this has come as a result of expansive use of the rural exception policy and Section 106 agreements operating outside of the Park's boundary. In reality the National Park itself has seen very little development of affordable homes, from Tynedale or the other Local Authorities.

Although the three Local Authorities which overlap Northumberland National Park hold housing strategies based upon local needs assessments, because the assessments include disparities in timing, techniques and ultimately the way data has been represented, the National Park Authority considered the use of this data in the formation of its strategies to be unfeasible. Northumberland National Park Authority commissioned a Housing Needs Assessment specifically for the National Park area in 2004 (Cumberland and Burns, 2004). With housing need perceived to be a rapidly fluctuating entity, this survey was updated in 2007 by the Park Authority. The fact that some respondents remain unaware of the Park's needs data is perhaps a combination of two factors. Firstly those involved in housing delivery consider the National Park an area in which planners prefer to be extremely selective in allowing developments, and therefore the Park is unappealing to the developer. Secondly, as it is the overlapping Local Authorities that are responsible for meeting housing need, it is plausible that the National Park Authority is not approached during consultation and thus the Park specific data is disregarded. Without the necessary collaboration in acquiring and analysing such data it is inevitable that perceptions of need and delivery solutions will differ to some degree.

Despite the debate around what exactly is meant by local need it is apparent that many of the organisations involved in negotiating resident allocation policies to satisfy this need (such as the Local Authorities and Registered Social Landlords) do have similar ideas about how to nominate potential residents. All respondents concerned with resident nomination/allocation support the notion that certain criteria should be included during the process; a local connection based on existing residency, family connections or local employment, use of local services (such as having children in schools), household earnings as well as proven housing need. Despite the consistency in support of these criteria, the level of importance given to each was found to differ amongst the various organisations. For example, some Registered Social Landlords stated a preference for a policy based on a prospective residents' proximity to the new development, whereas the corresponding Local Authority was said to prefer to base nominations on the level of need of prospective tenants within the entire district.

In the most common affordable housing delivery circumstance involving the negotiation of resident allocation between Registered Social Landlords and the Local Authority, the latter is usually given at least 50% (and in some cases 100%) nomination rights the first time a property becomes available. However, as these nominations may be based on district wide needs data held by the Authority's housing department, there would immediately be an increased chance of complication when applying these nominations to developments within the National Park. This is simply because the National Park Planning Authority has recently developed its own criteria for what constitutes local need. As the National Park Authority is not a Housing Authority, it has historically relied upon the housing departments of the overlapping Local Authorities to nominate residents, and at one time even contracted this service to Castle Morpeth Council. Now that the National Park has implemented criteria in order to demonstrate an individual's local housing need, any resident allocation negotiations within the Park's jurisdiction must now take account of these additional criteria. Understandably these extra criteria are regarded as an extra layer of bureaucracy by those Local Authorities whose housing departments overlap the National Park. As a result even the most proactive of Local Authorities admit that the National Park has been neglected in comparison to other nearby sites outside of the Park. Here the Local Authority administers both housing and planning, making for a more favourable and simple development process. This scenario contrast steeply with that of the Peak District National Park and its surrounding Local Authorities. The Peak District National Park overlaps parts of seven different Local Authorities and as such the constituent districts have undertaken district-wide surveys that include separate analysis of the Park area.

This collaboration has enabled 'hot-spots' of acute affordable housing need to be identified both in the Park and its surroundings (Peak District National Park Authority, 2004).

The idea of Local Authorities collaborating with communities as a means of better informing local needs data arose as a prominent theme during the interview process. Local Authorities representatives themselves reported a desire for increased collaboration with the Local Communities, since the Authorities are responsible for ensuring those communities' housing needs are met. From the perspective of the Local Authorities, the Federation of Northumberland Development Trusts is considered a possible medium through which accurate and up-to-date needs data can be collected. A representative of Berwick-upon-Tweed Borough Council conceded that they have already begun discussion with the trusts and parish councils in the borough for this purpose. As the aforementioned meeting at Elsdon showed, not all communities will feel it necessary to develop additional housing. Therefore, it is important that the community from each settlement be represented or consulted.

The interview process demonstrated that not only is Local Authority – Local Community collaboration a viable means of deriving needs data, it also had the potential to provide affordable homes. An established Community Trust has the potential to draw in skills from the existing development trust network. In some cases (e.g. Allendale) a separate arm may establish to specialise in community housing projects, whereas other community development trusts have preferred to manage all aspects of development within a single team (e.g. Glendale). The transfer of a sizeable building and its surrounding grounds from Tynedale Council to Allendale's Community Development Trust Fawside is one example of the positive measures Local Authorities can take. Allendale Community Housing - a subsidiary of the Fawside Trust - is now considering a partnership project with a Registered Social Landlord to develop a small number of new units as part of a Community Land Trust scheme to meet local need. This scheme thus demonstrates the value of collaboration between Local Authorities, Community Groups, Community Support Organisations and Developers.

By involving a wide range of partners/collaborating organisations it is plausible that the difficulties in affordable housing delivery become more easily surmountable. Many of the respondents were aware of scenarios in which a proactive approach to networking and promotion of a scheme had resulted in land being gifted. This is extremely significant given its importance in affordable housing projects, specifically because the cost of land can have implications for the resulting provision both in terms of the

number of properties and the affordability. This is in part explains why funding is also regarded as a key barrier to delivery.

In practice communities have found that attaining funding is somewhat capricious since many of the potential sources prioritise funding towards alternative projects. Respondents suggested that for community based schemes to become an attractive means of housing provision, a more definitive funding application procedure would be required. Whether funds derive from European grants, the Regional Development Agencies, Local Authorities or more logically the Housing Corporation (now the Homes and Communities Agency) was a subject many interviewees had different ideas about. One participant suggested that increased funds could also be made available from the Regional Housing Board through the National Affordable Housing Programme. In addition the Community Land Trust Fund (The Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, 2008) may allow more conversant community trusts the freedom to choose whether a partnership (with for example a Registered Social Landlord) is desirable, rather than simply being necessary on financial grounds.

Although collectively the interviewees showed a good awareness of the county's various housing organisations and schemes that had proved successful, it was also apparent that relatively little networking was taking place across administrative boundaries. This process would likely prove especially beneficial in allowing community based groups to initiate schemes through the facilitation of skills transfer from the area's relevant contacts. For example, the experiences and knowledge surrounding one project would likely prove invaluable in answering the housing and legal queries of other communities looking to develop a similar project of their own.

The relationship between Local Authorities and Registered Social Landlords proved particularly important for certain affordable housing projects in the county. Where sites can be procured solely for affordable housing there is an opportunity to use the rural exception scheme. The research showed that in many cases this land could be provided by the Local Authority, although transfer from additional landowners, including other public bodies and landed estates also contributes to the use of rural exception schemes. Although the ability to cooperate is potentially fruitful in terms of delivery, interviewees eluded to cases in which relationships had faced difficulties. Lack of single-mindedness amongst Local Authorities proves a great frustration to some of the Registered Social Landlords. Such is the extent of non-collaboration that cases were reported in which Registered Social Landlords had been backed by the housing department and progressed to securing grant allocation only to be refused permission

to develop from the planning department. Registered Social Landlords explained that having schemes fail in this manner damages their reputation, and that of the Local Authority, in the eyes of the Homes and Communities Agency. Again, respondents' comments as a whole demonstrate that not all of the Local Authorities acted in such a disjointed manner.

A number of Registered Social Landlords are increasingly considering projects in which they partner with community based organisations in order to establish affordable housing (for example, Community Land Trusts). For the time being many communities feel that such a partnership is required for their aspirations to be met, unless they could benefit from a large charitable grant. As partnerships between Community Development Trusts and Registered Social Landlords are a relatively recent idea, there is as yet insufficient evidence to conclude on the effectiveness of schemes and relationships. Nevertheless, it appears that the two groups are being open-minded about the possibilities and are keen to trial the idea.

In respect of affordable housing projects interviewees had been involved with, many highlighted the importance of collaboration with their respective Local Authority, yet certain other organisations had been much less important. Those considered least influential include Arms Length Management Organisations, Regional Development Agency One North East and Northumberland National Park Authority. In respect of Arms Length Management Organisations it is simply the case that organisations have no experience of working with these groups, and have no expectation to do so in the future. The Regional Development Agency on the other hand was heavily criticised by many respondents for showing no obvious interest in the rural areas, although some community support organisations have benefited from One North East funding. The limited supply of funding is perceived to be the organisations only impact, since none of the other representatives reported any meaningful relationship relating to affordable housing. Whereas Local Authorities in general are regarded as highly influential, the specific consideration of Northumberland National Park Authority appears unimportant to many of the respondents. To some extent this is explained by the respective organisations having not operated within the Park and as such having no previous experience of dealing with the Authority. As certain organisations declared that working in the Park is a possibility, the finding also indicates the opportunity for a more proactive approach from the Park Authority.

The Federation of Northumberland Development Trusts (including its constituent trusts) is the most commonly identified organisation whose increased input and support is

sought. This group is perceived to be a valuable link between the Local Communities and the various organisations represented in the study. Local Authorities and the National Park Authority were the joint second most popular choices for increased input and support reaffirming the increased potential for collaboration with the latter. The importance of Registered Social Landlords in providing new build affordable housing is demonstrated with their rating, whilst One North East were identified on the basis that they should take more interest and give more support to rural areas in general. Interestingly Lenders and a Rural Housing Enabler were both identified on more than one occasion, despite not being represented on the list of selections (except through the *Other: please specify* category). A Rural Housing Enabler is desirable to the community groups owing to the roles in assisting with village housing needs surveys, identifying sites and facilitating discussions between Registered Social Landlords, funders and the community (Commission for Rural Communities, 2005).

4.2.3 Sustainability

National Park's have responsibility for conservation, natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage, but are also required to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities within their respective areas. Where conflict exists between these two primary purposes, conservation takes priority; and the fact that fostering local economic vitality has been subsidiary to both has caused significant contention for businesses and residents of National Parks (Richards and Satsangi, 2004). The most important tool for achieving the objectives of landscape conservation has been the planning system. As National Park Authorities are Planning Authorities in their own right they have controlled the volume, nature, and appearance of developments and as a consequence altered the structure and evolution of local economies. In consequence, entrenched discourses have evolved which contrast overall public good provision with the viability and prospects of the local inhabitants and communities who produce them. Critics of National Park policies regard them as inhibiting the scope for diversification of the rural economy, and inappropriate to the employment needs of local communities (Midmore et al, 2008).

Some private developers allege that the Park Authority has historically been very negative in its outlook towards housing delivery. A number of developers and community support representatives argued that there has been an agenda to freeze the Park, instead of allowing it to develop naturally. These respondents stated that the Park had come to be such a beautiful place because it was a working environment and

a changing environment. This evolution, developers argue, has ceased with the restrictive policies and negative actions of the National Park Authority.

A number of respondents echoed these comments, explaining that the Park Authority has a history of dismissing housing at the expense of wider social and economic aspects of sustainability. Respondents cautioned that if development continues to be refused on the grounds of environmental sustainability (including preservation of character), social and economic sustainability will be negatively impacted upon. Although the wider issues of sustainability are acknowledged within the Park's emerging strategies (e.g. Local Development Framework, 2008), there are still concerns as to whether these changes in writing will come to reflect changes in action.

Although some interviewees were keen to express concerns over the lack of consistency when it came to assessing housing need in Northumberland, there was a consensus among the participants that additional affordable houses would be required. Referring to the National Park and its adjacent settlements, respondents empathised with the National Park Authority's intent to deliver through small scale development projects. As the Park's planning officer explained such schemes would be aimed at meeting local need whilst retaining settlement and landscape character.

The idea of providing more affordable homes emerged as an important consideration when examining the sustainability of the National Park communities. The community development consultancy worker and affordable housing project officer were particularly keen to explain the need for balancing environmental, social and economic objectives when trying to create sustainable communities. Using the analogy of a three legged stool it was suggested that should the National Park continue to hold the environment in such high regard relative to social and economic issues, it would be inevitable that services and workforces would come to collapse. The idea of trying to resist changes through housing development restriction within Northumberland's rural hinterland was thus considered an unsustainable strategy. It was expressed that a continuing insistence on preserving the typical Englishness of settlements could have negative consequences for the services and economy. Since housing is intrinsically linked to these factors a more understanding and holistic view would need to be considered.

Perhaps the most prominent issue relating to the area's sustainability results from the demographic trends the Park has experienced – a scenario already highlighted by Marshall and Simpson (2009). In the words of one interviewee;

"Northumberland has an ageing population, more so than the North east and certainly more so than the Tyne and Wear area, and by 2020 we will have a significantly high proportion of elderly people within the sub region that will be requiring support. So we have these twin needs of providing affordable housing for the elderly population, but also the younger generation who will be required to support them"

The interviewee went on to explain that whilst there is truth in assumptions that the upland rural areas are sparsely populated, and so are perceived as having relatively little need for any new housing developments, it is important to realise that proportionally this area's population has risen substantially more than those surrounding it (Table 4.1).

Table 4.1 – Population changes in Northumberland Housing Markets

Area	Population 1981	Population 2005	Absolute change	% Change
Rural Upland	4,148	4,514	366	9%
Rural Coastal	63,263	66,382	3,119	5%
City former Coalfield	145,168	148,277	3,109	2%
City Commuter	86,607	92,214	5,607	6%
Northumberland	299,100	311,300	12,200	4%
North East	2,636,200	2,558,300	-77,900	-3%

Source: DTZ, 2007

This scenario means that although the absolute change in population is relatively low, it is inarguable that some development is required to satisfy growing need. What Table 3.1 fails to clarify is what category of people make up this change. Interviewees noted that the lack of development within the deep rural areas had helped to increase demand and so force house prices into becoming increasingly unaffordable to the indigenous population. This phenomenon was well recognised by the interviewees, many of whom went on to explain how the problems were exacerbated by second home purchasing. As Figure 2.11 illustrated the Local Authority districts of Berwick upon Tweed (most northerly) and Alnwick (immediately south) are among the most badly affected areas in the country – a fact that many of the interviewees made specific reference to.

Although it is difficult to accurately predict and measure the impact, or indeed the number of second homes within the National Park, there is a limited amount of data available from the decadal census. The Commission for Rural Communities (2006) reported that the housing stock in Northumberland National Park was 970 in 2001. At

this time 110 properties were classified as second homes and holiday accommodation (11% of the Park's housing stock). Although above the national average (1.7%) this is well below that seen in other Park's. For example, in the same year the Lake District National Park was reported to have 4140 second homes – 18% of its total housing stock.

There is some discussion that the growth in second home ownership represents an inherently unsustainable process. For instance, second homes add to housing pressure in the countryside, contribute to land take and serve no particular accommodation need. Any negative social impacts are closely allied to economic effects that second homes may produce, notably inflationary pressure on house prices, the displacement of existing permanent residents and the cessation of village services. These issues are of particular relevance to the National Park and its surrounding settlements where the growth of second home ownership is predicated on a romanticised view of the rural as a place of tradition and stability - a place that is other to the chaotic urban (Gallent and Tewdwr-Jones, 2001). However, it was stated by one respondent that there is very little that can be done to prevent second home purchases. As a report from the Commission for Rural Communities (2006) remarked, the purchase of second homes is a process that operates in the general housing market and despite some (largely unsuccessful) efforts by National Park Authorities, it remains beyond the control of both planning and housing authorities.

Given that second homes were perceived as an unsolvable problem, those interviewees remarking on the issue simply suggested any resulting taxes be pooled towards satisfying local housing need. Although the National Park has no definitive housing strategy at this time, associated policy documents and the planning officer's comments indicate that this, *the provision for local people,* is their number one housing priority. This issue as to whether the National Park gives priority to the needs of its inhabitants and workers over the character and the environment echoes discussions already raised by the Affordable Housing Commission (2006). The Commission's report (Shucksmith and Best, 2006) recommends a weighing up of the importance attached to social justice, mixed communities and environmental sustainability: all fundamental tenets of policy which are potentially undermined by a shortage of affordable housing in rural areas.

If housing is said to be needed to ensure the survival of 'sustainable communities' then what is meant by a sustainable community is obviously an important factor. Until adopting the emerging Local Development Framework there is no definition applied to

the National Park as a whole. Instead, the three Local Authorities overlapping the Park boundary have their own respective criteria. Consequently a settlement considered sustainable – and therefore perhaps preferable for development – in one area of the Park could be deemed unsustainable had it been located elsewhere.

The definition of a sustainable settlement is particularly pertinent for the rural exceptions scheme – since these settlements are the only location in which the scheme is permitted. Despite the association of sustainable settlements and market towns, Local Planning Authorities are responsible for detailing the criteria for settlements to be deemed sustainable. Consequently there is some flexibility as to where exception schemes can be applied. The extent of this flexibility allows that a sustainable settlement in one Local Authority area could be deemed unsustainable had it been located in the neighbouring area. This ambiguity arguably results in the term losing credibility and becoming meaningless when discussed on a wider scale. Many respondents are critical of the requirement for rural exception schemes to be situated in sustainable settlements since this appears to dismiss the smaller rural settlements. In doing so the policy appears to advocate that these small settlements which require new homes in order to become sustainable should actually be left to degenerate further. This criticism is somewhat mitigated by placing the onus of defining sustainable settlements on the Local Authorities. The recent Taylor Review (DCLG, 2008) highlights Tynedale District Council as a poor example, allowing a definition of sustainable which dismisses the smaller communities within the Authority's jurisdiction.

Having slightly different criteria required for designation as a sustainable settlement in the three Local Authorities overlapping the National Park brings obvious complications. Respondents of Northumberland National Park Authority explained that they have recently proposed their own criteria to encompass a number of small settlements previously deemed unsustainable by the respective Local Authorities. The National Park itself contains no market towns, however, the Park's Local Development Framework policy 6 (2008) identifies 8 'Local Centres' considered suitably serviced for new development. Additionally, the policy designates 5 smaller villages where development is to be permitted so long as it contributes to the provision or protection of village services (Figure 4.2). The Park Authority's intention to allow development in order to enhance the sustainability of smaller settlements is inherently important owing to the lack of larger service centres within the Park. Although the policies of the overlapping Local Authorities declare the intention to develop in local centres, they do not identify settlements within the Park as such. Alnwick council's core strategy development policy (2007) details a hierarchy of Main Rural Service Centres,

Secondary Rural Service Centres, Sustainable Village Centres and Local Needs Centres. Of the 31 settlements outlined for development, not a single one is within the National Park boundary which covers nearly 40% of Alnwick district.

Figure 4.2 – Northumberland National Park Spatial Development Strategy
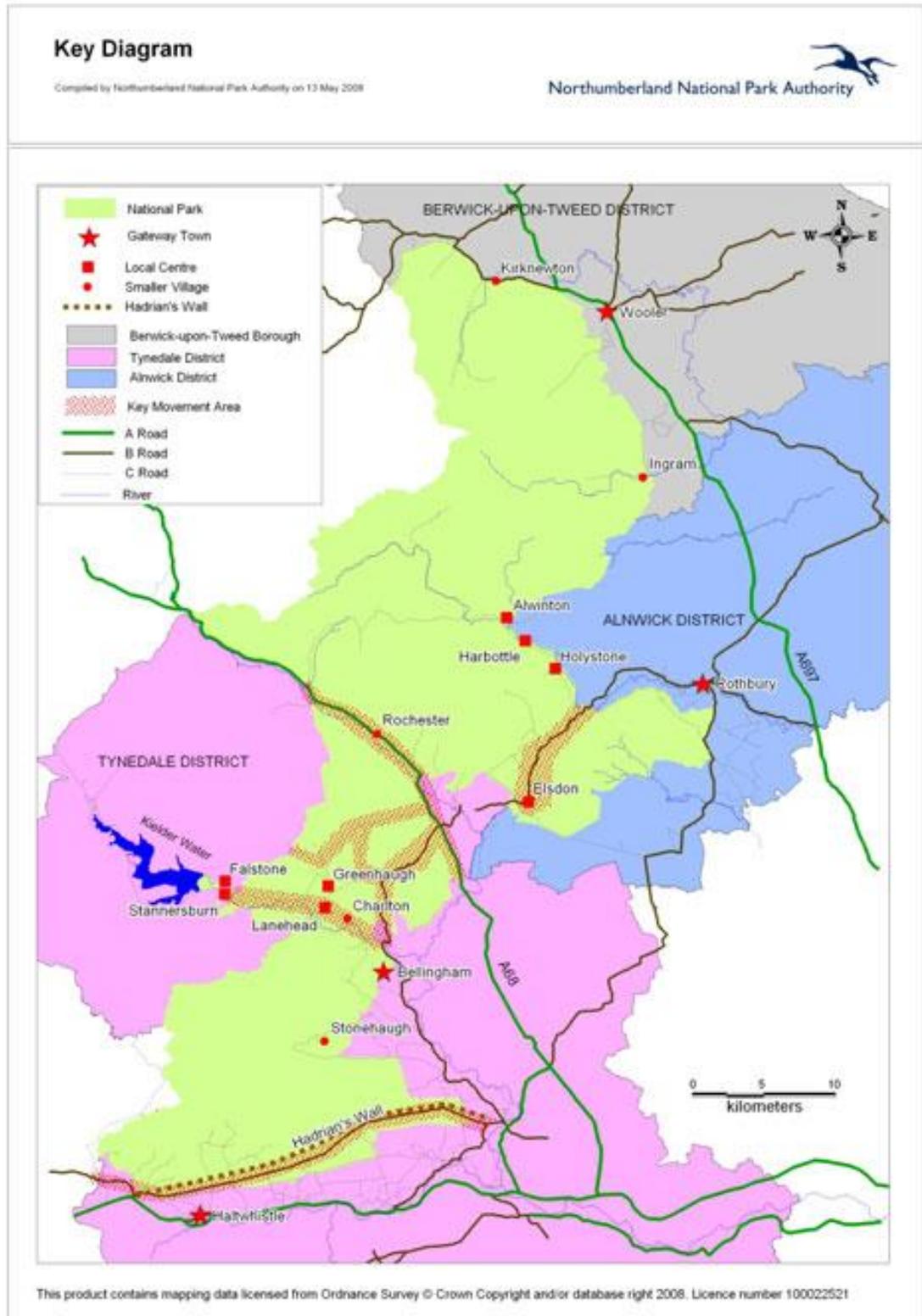
Even in settlements whose sustainability would undoubtedly benefit from new affordable housing, it is possible that residents would object to development. The idea of affordable and social housing sometimes coincides with images of properties appearing cheap and of low quality. Poor design is understandably an important factor associated with objection to developments, no more so than in National Parks; areas designated on the basis of their high landscape and settlement character. As The Prince of Wales's Affordable Rural Housing Initiative report (2006) proclaims, it is essential that any new housing be built to a high design standard, fitting sympathetically into the local style of architecture and respecting the character and identity of the area. This approach is not only critical in gaining the acceptance of the local communities and the Local Planning Authority, but it will ensure that any new homes will be of inherent and enduring value to the area. Whilst Northumberland National Park's Building Design Guidelines (2006) help to ensure that only suitably fitting developments are progressed, developers were quick to acknowledge that this hinders their capability to provide affordable homes therein. For this reason it is also important to consider how existing properties may be of use.

Some of the large landowners explained that a number of properties had traditionally been held for staff, with flexible rents that were variable, but nevertheless maintained below those on the open market. Respondents from different sub-groups, including the landowners recognised that their involvement in housing provision could actually benefit the estates, particularly where they have a vested interest in the overall sustainability of settlements and services. It was recognised that the success of the local economy is often linked to the success of the landowners' business. As a thriving local economy is perceived to need services and a workforce, an intrinsic need for houses to cater for that workforce also exists. As the Taylor Review (DCLG, 2008) stresses, the rural economy and the rural affordable housing crisis go hand in hand. This assertion has led to some landowners becoming involved in local affordable housing schemes (for example the Duke of Northumberland).

4.2.4 Community Empowerment

Local Communities are becoming notably influential in affordable housing projects, whether this be in terms of supporting and facilitating development, demonstrating need, or even objecting to proposals. As affordable housing is now increasingly linked to the notion of meeting local need, it is imperative that the relevant organisations recognise the importance of community input.

By far the most popular choice, regarding which group is underrepresented in affordable housing related decision making is the Local Communities. This is an interesting finding since the group did not feature prominently when respondents were asked from whom they needed increased input and support. As such it would appear that the individual organisations often feel they are doing enough to include the local communities, but on a wider scale they remain underrepresented. Vulnerable Groups, which are in essence part of Local Communities are also featured after being suggested by 6 respondents through the option to specify 'O*thers*'. Not only were they considered underrepresented, a majority of interviewees went as far as to state that Local Communities should provide the greatest level of influence when making decisions regarding the provision of affordable housing. This primarily refers to allowing communities to demonstrate need on which development proposals should be based. In terms of actually progressing a housing scheme, it is felt necessary for local communities to work closely with - and at times be represented through - a Local Authority, since small, rural communities in particular are unlikely to possess the expertise, funding and partners to successfully meet their own need. Involvement of a Local Authority is also thought necessary for decisions relating to resident allocation to be made impartially.

A key concern amongst developers is that at present Local Authority needs data and more specifically waiting lists, do not accurately reflect levels of need. A common suggestion in response to improving the accuracy of needs data is to allow communities greater involvement. In some cases Local Authorities have consulted Parish Councils, Community Partnerships and Development Trusts with the view to ensuring a more accurate understanding of need. This process is in effect an extension of what has already been achieved for the specific localities covered by Glendale Gateway Trust and the Holy Island of Lindisfarne Community Development Trust prior to residents being allocated for the recently developed affordable housing. The idea of working from the grassroots level to identify need, aims to provide a higher response rate and therefore a more comprehensive data set. However, where community organisations are actually involved in the nominating of residents, many have concerns about their ability to allocate impartially. Although it may be beneficial for communities to play a part in identifying need it is generally agreed that the resident allocation should be administered by the relevant Local Authority. In summary there is agreement that organisations, particularly the Local Authorities need to enhance their relationships so as to allow greater community representation. The majority of

respondents expressed that community input is an area routinely reflected upon, although it is widely considered to be a responsibility predominantly for Local Authorities.

Whilst Fraser et al (2007) highlight the failings of a top-down approach, it is acknowledged even within a bottom-up approach conflict can arise. In some circumstances the communities cannot be united owing to different opinions regarding what constitutes the best course of action. Furthermore, as there is no standardised method for community representation it is inevitable that the degree of community engagement differs from case to case, simply as a result of different values and circumstances amongst individuals. As Mansuri and Rao (2004) remarked in respect of community based development, projects that rely on community participation have not been particularly effective at targeting the poor. Most community based development projects are dominated by elites and, in general, the targeting of poor communities as well as project quality tend to be markedly worse in more unequal and socially diverse communities.

The consensus surrounding the need for more affordable housing in the Park established through considering the expert analyses of those employed in a professional capacity relating to housing, planning or community representation. However, their experience with communities suggests that such a consensus is not so apparent amongst the National Park's residents. Misinterpretation of terms such as 'affordable housing' and 'housing need' are considered to be a key issue in influencing the level of support amongst community members.

Northumberland National Park Authority staff in particular are concerned that inhabitants do not necessarily understand what the Authority means by 'affordable housing'. It is felt that as a result of misunderstanding the term, inhabitants may conclude that no need exists. Even when the Park's inhabitants are inclined to agree that more housing is needed for local people, the term affordable housing is thought not to be something associated with the solution to this need. Local Authority staff declared that instead, affordable housing is often confused with social housing which residents worry will be used to provide for those from outside of their communities. The aversion to housing which is not made available on the open market is thought by respondents to be driven from the fear of lower class, anti-social families being relocated and upsetting what are otherwise harmonious neighbourhoods. If such opinions are present as respondents suggest, it would be beneficial to familiarise

communities with local allocation policies which set out precisely who affordable housing is to be provided for.

Additional comments from participants in each sub-group highlighted the problem of nimbyism within the National Park. Those who did not need more affordable housing for themselves, their immediate families, or their livelihoods were thought to be the most likely opponents to any proposed development. Respondents representing community trusts and community support organisations felt that nimbyism is often most prominent amongst the Park's newcomers and those that had been able to afford to purchase an existing property on the open-market as a place to retire to, or to commute from. Some felt that because these people are often most vocal in expressing their opinions they had mistakenly been seen to represent the views of the community as a whole. As Barker (2008) suggests, allowing parish councils a significant influence can in some cases allow for the empowerment of nimbyism. However, nimbyism is not the only possible cause for opposition. Additionally there are concerns about a lack of understanding surrounding local-friendly allocation policies and design quality of affordable housing. The negative stigma surrounding social housing was suggested to be enough for some to oppose affordable housing, even when their own sons and daughters were in desperate need of it. It is also recognised that even the longstanding residents – and the Local Authorities – look unfavourably on any developments thought to be discordant of the National Park's existing character.

Although nimbyism is certainly a potential threat to delivery in some communities, interviewees insisted that increasing the diversity of affordable housing delivery mechanisms would likely result in provision becoming much easier for areas currently neglected. This was an idea strongly supported by the community development consultancy worker who had published material on empowering the communities to deliver for themselves. It was felt that housing had become an alien issue, overcomplicated and incomprehensible to the average citizen. Registered Social Landlords were suggested to be monopolising the industry and contributing to the belief that housing was an issue communities were generally not apt to deal with. Within Northumberland various community housing schemes are developing to counter this supposition.

Talks surrounding developments in Haltwhistle have suggested cooperation between a community partnership and Registered Social Landlord, although at present no details have been confirmed. With regard to community involvement numerous respondents noted that certain communities and landowners wanted to be actively involved in

affordable housing provision, occasionally without the reliance on a Registered Social Landlord. Some participants had experienced communities who felt the Registered Social Landlords may neglect their desires and needs in search of profits. Community Land Trusts on the other hand were perceived by the interviewees as being more acceptable to the communities, since it would be the communities themselves driving the developments. However, there was some debate as to whether Community Land Trusts would require an umbrella organisation (either regional or sub-regional) in order to facilitate projects by attracting funds and sourcing expertise.

Although a number of Trusts have already provided housing, notably the Holy Island of Lindisfarne and Glendale Gateway Trusts, there are mixed views among respondents about the possibility of repeating these schemes. On the positive side the schemes allow for affordable housing that meets the needs of the local community. The practice of devolving power and facilitating neo-endogenous development is at present a popular trend in UK policies (e.g. Empowerment White Paper, 2008), so it is somewhat unsurprising that respondents of Local Authorities and community related groups are keen to express their support for the mechanism. In having the community involved in projects to meet local need, there is likely to be less public objection to any resulting developments. However, this approach is seen by some to be over reliant on communities to unite and self-govern. Whilst the aforementioned examples demonstrate the mechanism's ability to deliver, respondents noted the increased difficultly in initiating such schemes within small, sparse, remote communities. For these communities the lack of residents is seen by many respondents to be a hindrance in establishing a trust and progressing any projects. In the smaller, remote communities even bringing together the critical mass needed to form a trust is perceived as being inherently difficult. Furthermore, finding the people with the necessary time, commitment and skills required to run a trust (not least a housing project) will be challenging for a small community.

Support may be available from the Federation of Northumberland Development Trusts, whose increased involvement is considered invaluable by proponents of both bottom-up and top-down governing styles. Local Community Support Organisations declared that the Federation is an asset to the communities looking to establish their own trust to represent the local issues in a well respected fashion (echoing the conclusions of Defra's 2006 Affordable Rural Housing Project Scoping Report). The Federation also offers ongoing support to established trusts whether for housing or other projects. This is considered extremely beneficial to the Community Development Trusts and partnerships included within the interview process.

Of course, Local Authorities remain a key player for community empowerment and community based housing projects. For example, Local Authorities were seen as the second most frequently reported group from which to directly purchase land. The release of land from Local Authorities is attributed to increased awareness of local need and a growing emphasis on community asset transfers from national government. The Quirk Review (2007) for example is focused on how to optimise the community benefit of publicly owned assets by considering options for greater transfer of asset ownership and management to community groups. The report states that the benefits of community management and ownership of public assets can outweigh the risks and the opportunity costs in appropriate circumstances. And if there is a rational and thorough consideration of these risks and opportunity costs, there are no substantive impediments to the transfer of public assets to communities. Indeed it has been done legitimately and successfully in very many places (Quirk, 2007).

The Homes and Communities Agency is also seen to play an important role in empowering communities due to its role in designating funds for affordable housing projects. However, even though the Agency is considered to be influential this does not necessarily reflect a positive role. Some of the Community Trusts regarded the Housing Corporation as influential since it limits their ability to become self-reliant in terms of developing and managing housing. Instead, owing to the streams through which the Corporation filters its funding, representatives of Community Trusts concluded that they have little option but to partner with Registered Social Landlords. Such comments serve to strengthen the argument that community funding needs to be more readily available and its sources better defined. The lack of awareness of the Community Land Trust Fund (The Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, 2008) amongst interviewees is an indication that although some communities demonstrate the alacrity to become involved in development, there is still benefit to be had from external facilitation and top-down support (Ray, 2006).

4.3   Developing a Delivery Framework

The purpose of the Delivery Framework is to suggest how best to provide affordable housing within the study area. Using responses from the interview process the various aspects of delivery are considered.

4.3.1 Locations for Delivery

Interviewees agreed unanimously that provision of affordable housing through small scale development sites is the most appropriate means of satisfying local need within the Park; a statement echoed in the National Park Authority's core strategy preferred options (2006).

As certain settlements and communities within the Park were perceived as having a unique identity, there is an argument for *local* to relate to a fine scale. For the purposes of housing development and allocation this should perhaps relate down to parish or settlement level. Such a move would likely minimise the issue of nimbyism, and fears that outsiders would be brought in whilst real local need (from a community perspective) risks remaining unaltered.

Whilst the respondents agree on a need for more affordable housing, the required scale of development is much more contested. In some instances uncertainty emerged from the experiences of Local Authorities and Registered Social Landlords when attempting to develop and let properties based upon what some considered unreliable needs data. It was suggested that for some areas, housing need would only become apparent where social housing already existed. Here those in need of housing would routinely register on the Local Authority's waiting list in the hope of being nominated when a property becomes available or additional developments occurred. Those areas without social housing are less likely to have waiting lists since there are no suitable properties for would-be inhabitants to aspire to. The absence of a waiting list may be interpreted as an absence of need, which in turn undermines the likelihood of a development.

This statement was echoed by Registered Social Landlords who had seen their developments supported on the basis of alleged local need, only to have their properties remain empty for almost a year whilst tenants fitting the necessary criteria were being sought. Conversely, Registered Social Landlords recalled instances where they opted to develop in areas reported to have relatively little need before then finding an abundance of suitable residents emerging when the developments were announced. Such was the demand in some cases that it was possible to supplement development as the true scale of local need became apparent. As the idea of nominating affordable housing to meet local need is a relatively new requirement, at present there remains a need to greatly improve the quality of data so as to be accurate and functional (Dimitriou and Thompson, 2006).

DTZ's Housing Market Assessment for Northumberland (2005) gives an indication as to the extent of housing markets across Northumberland National Park. However, many of the boundaries in DTZ's assessments fall around the boundary of the Park (Figure 4.1). The indistinct boundaries and assessment as a whole do not provide the level of explicitness required to understand the subtleties within those housing markets of which the National Park is a part. It is therefore necessary to focus more specifically on the possibility of trends and distinguishing characteristics throughout the National Park.

Although Northumberland's estate agents have varying coverage of the National Park, they are not accustomed to making distinctions across the Park area when recording sales data. Additionally the estate agents experience a relatively low level of property turnover within their respective Park operating areas. For these reasons it was not possible to attain precise data such as average house prices in different areas of the Park. However, with the use of a map, estate agents were able to provide a consensus pertaining to the variation of factors such as relative house prices, supply and demand and cliental. Although the estate agents are largely unfamiliar with Northumberland National Park's action areas, many of the distinctions made clearly aligned to these boundaries. Here the National Park's four action areas are considered in respect of the responses provided by the estate agents.

All estate agents operating within the Hadrian's Wall area and at least one of the other three action areas agree that Hadrian's Wall represents the most sought after area within the National Park. The area's superior accessibility, transport links and proximity to the North East's city region makes the area particularly attractive to commuters. It is also a popular choice for those retirees looking to combine rurality with good service provision, particularly medical care and transport links. The substantial demand for property within the Hadrian's Wall area ensures that its prices are unanimously considered to be the highest throughout the National Park. Hadrian's Wall area is regarded as being the easiest location in which to develop new (brick) properties. It is also the area with the greatest number of properties, and the greatest absolute level of turnover (including short term lets).

The other areas are regarded as being more popular for second home and holiday homes, particularly The Cheviots - an area also highly popular with retirees. A substantial proportion of the cliental for the Cheviot action area are reported to be from outside of the region (with some estimates as high as 40%). The high demand for second home ownership is most prevalent within the eastern side of the action area,

towards the Northumbrian coastline. Although the proximity of the A1 provides a degree of accessibility, the distance from the city region has traditionally limited the level of interest from commuters.

Responses demonstrate that the Coquetdale and North Tyne and Redesdale action areas exhibit much similarity in terms of attracting qualities and demand pressures. In contrast to the Hadrian's Wall action area there is comparatively little demand from commuters since accessibility, transport links and proximity to the city region make commuting infeasible except from the areas' south-easterly extremes. Although regarded as being more popular as a location for (buy to let) second homes than the Hadrian's Wall area, Coquetdale and North Tyne and Redesdale do not face the unprecedented demand reported within the Cheviots. Constituting the heart of the National Park, the two action areas are regarded as the least dynamic. Cliental are generally looking to locate there as part of a lifestyle choice involving spending a greater proportion of time in the rural idyll. Properties most in demand include large detached stone builds with a substantial area of land, and small country cottages.

From these findings it is possible to build upon the findings of DTZ's Housing Market Assessment and distinguish the National Park's action areas into one of three areas illustrated within Figure 4.3

Figure 4.3 - Distinct Housing Markets across Northumberland National Park

Map derived from Northumberland National Park Authority (2008)

As well as the distinctions across the National Park, estate agents also provided input regarding how the state of the economy has influenced the wider housing markets, and what changes would likely result in the near future. In this case there is little consensus as to how demand is affected in and around the Park.

Interestingly those deep rural areas typified by large parts of the Coquetdale and North Tyne and Redesdale areas are said to exhibit low demand when the economy was thriving. This phenomenon was put down to higher fuel prices making viewings and the prospect of living in a remote area less appealing. However, on the whole the economic downturn is regarded as negatively impacting upon residential sales. Where

demand had once outstripped supply the downturn has reversed this trend so that now supply greatly outstrips demand.

Whilst around half of the estate agents reported a reduction in house prices across the board, others observed that National Park properties are less prone to devaluation. National Park properties, particularly around the Cheviot area reportedly held their value comparatively much better than properties outside of the Park's boundary. The fact that turnover in the National Park is relatively low for each of the estate agents makes it difficult to conclude on the validity of these contradictory comments. However, the fact that the vast majority of estate agents are increasingly dealing (or considering to deal) with residential lettings does verify that residential sales have fallen throughout the Park.

With estate agents agreeing that mortgage lending would not return to the levels seen in 2007, it is believed that the return to peak value house prices is unlikely to occur for around 5 years. When the market does pick up it is expected that the Hadrian's Wall area is likely to see the quickest recovery, simply owing to its heightened popularity and dynamic nature.

There is much to suggest from the respondents' comments that communities - for the sake of affordable housing provision - may be defined by the different make-up of residents and the pressures respective localities face. Nevertheless, additional factors should be considered before any recommendation be made. Firstly, a more comprehensive assessment of need for the said areas should be implemented. Secondly, the availability of land needs to be considered so that more specific localities within communities can be assessed.

Owing to the National Park Authority's preference for small scale developments (Northumberland National Park Authority Local Development Framework: Policy 10, 2008), parcels of land held by small private landowners represent an important opportunity worthy of serious consideration. However, the interview process also revealed the opportunity to involve some of the larger landed estates. Around 80% of the Land in the National Park is used for farming, with 50% of the farmland owned by four large landowners; Duke of Northumberland, the Ministry of Defence, Lilburn Estates and the College Valley Estates (Northumberland National Park Authority, 2003). Even when taking into account the restrictions on what constitutes a suitable development site within the planning system, the expansive coverage of these large landowners represents a potentially fruitful opportunity in the delivery of affordable housing.

4.3.2 Mechanisms for Delivery

The vast majority of respondents agree that there would not be a universal means as to how housing would be provided to meet need in the county of Northumberland. Instead a variety of mechanisms would be promoted giving different options for different circumstances; a suggestion supported within the sub-regional housing strategy (2007). Regarding the smaller, more remote communities typified by those within the National Park, certain mechanisms for delivery are more fitting than others. In using the term *best suited* responses do not necessarily reflect what could otherwise be argued as the *most effective* mechanisms, i.e. most productive in terms of the number of affordable properties delivered, but rather the most appropriate for different priorities of National Parks.

Given that the National Park Authority intends to allow affordable housing for the communities' need, but also holds a desire to ensure that any developments in the Park are small scale (Local Development Framework, 2008), the idea of Rural Exception Sites is widely considered to be an appropriate option.

Although the theory behind Rural Exception Sites appears to make the mechanism an ideal solution for the National Park in the eyes of many respondents, a number of noteworthy barriers have also been referred to by the interviewees. The first impediment associated with the mechanism is the lack of suitable sites, just as Shucksmith and Best (2006) suggest. This is primarily of concern to developers who stated that if they were to develop sites purely for affordable housing then they would need to keep the unit cost of the developments down by building a relatively large number of properties on a single site. With the remote nature of settlements in the National Park, together with the Park Authority's desire for small scale development, Rural Exception Sites are often considered to be unviable by private developers (RTPI, 2007). Even those Registered Social Landlords accustomed to developing sites wholly for affordable housing admit that using the Rural Exceptions Policy for developments of less than six units goes against their standard practice. Furthermore concerns emerged that sites consisting exclusively of affordable homes will be more likely to be developed at a low design standard as developers look to compensate for profits lost through the lack of open market housing sales. Obviously the ability to attain gifted or low cost land improves the prospect of providing good quality affordable homes.

Although Rural Exception Sites are advocated by Local Authorities and Registered Social Landlords, it is widely acknowledged that the schemes are difficult to administer. A lack of suitable sites, as well as the cost and time considerations can be so

discouraging that exception sites are unlikely to become a priority for housing providers (Hoggart and Henderson, 2005). Whilst many perceive the lack of Rural Exception Sites to be a consequence of neglect on behalf of the developers (see for example RTPI, 2007), there is also a feeling that the Local Authorities are doing very little in the way of promoting such schemes. The consequence is that everybody considered everybody else to be unsupportive of Rural Exception Sites – a scenario also observed by Hoggart and Henderson (2005). Although it is true that some developers look unfavourably towards the mechanism in comparison to the mixed housing schemes possible through Section 106 agreements, responses show a number of Registered Social Landlords and private developers do consider the mechanism a possibility.

Whilst the policy is designed to satisfy local need, sites are not always exclusively used as a means of providing affordable housing. Instead the number of affordable units is deliberated between a developer and Local Authority through Section 106 negotiations. The result of this process is typically a development consisting of between 8 and 12 houses. Some of the properties will be made affordable (usually through shared equity schemes) whilst others remain at full market price with an option to administer occupancy restrictions. The Park's planning officer has stated that developments are likely to consist of only 3 or 4 properties, meaning perhaps only one or two houses would be designated as affordable. In trying to satisfy local need with such small scale developments, the Park Authority aims to ensure that all housing provided is affordable – an intention more conducive to community based housing schemes.

Owing to the suggestions within various national and regional policies that rural exception sites should only be administered within sustainable settlements (which is often interpreted to mean market towns), respondents questioned the potential to apply the mechanism to the National Park. Indeed, on the basis of the borough and district housing authorities overlapping the Park boundary there are no settlements deemed sustainable and thus no potential to apply the mechanism inside the Park. Instead the policy and definitions render the Park's gateway settlements (market towns) as the most appropriate location for exception schemes. The consequence of such a measure is that those exhibiting local need may be required to move some distance away from their current residence which may be deemed unfit for such new development. The recent development of the National Park Authority's own criteria regarding what constitutes a sustainable settlement is certainly a positive step in supporting the exceptions policy applicability to the Park. Whether this change is taken onboard, or indeed impacts upon the actions of other groups is as yet unclear.

In conclusion there appears to be scope to make increasing use of the Rural Exceptions Policy in creating affordable homes within the National Park, or at least to meet the Park's need through development in the gateway settlements. However, additional application of the mechanism is likely to require more commitment and a proactive outlook from the various organisations involved. The major positive in the nature of this type of delivery is that even with the interest and determination of just a small number of organisations/individuals it is perhaps capable of producing exactly the type of development required to meet the need within the National Park.

At present Northumberland's most productive means of affordable housing provision comes from the use of Section 106 agreements. It is therefore no surprise that this is the mechanism most familiar to respondents as a whole. Although Section 106 agreements are regarded by some to be an important element of the Rural Exception Site schemes, there is also an argument that the Section 106 agreement represents a credible means of delivery in its own right.

The agreements include information on the total number of affordable houses to be developed on a site, and the proportion of affordable houses relative to any open market housing. Local Authorities and Developers both see Section 106 agreements as an essential element for mixed tenure developers, and Rural Exception Sites. As Whitehead (2007) notes; The use of S106 to provide affordable housing as well as other local infrastructure has become the norm with the policy now operational in over 90 percent of Local Authorities. Those Authorities that do not apply the policy have generally made positive decisions that there is no requirement for additional affordable housing in their area.

Interviewees identified Section 106 agreements as an established mechanism capable of providing a large number of affordable homes, albeit usually with an equally large number of open market homes. Responses expressed that cross subsidy generated (whereby profit from open market housing could effectively allow developers to build a proportion of homes for affordable rent or sale) can be utilised to ensure affordable housing with a high standard of design – a significant point since high quality design is regarded as an important factor in attaining planning permission in the National Park (Northumberland National Park Authority Local Development Framework: Policy 3b, 2008). When asked whether Section 106 agreements can be used over multiple sites, respondents acknowledged this is a possibility, although it very rarely occurs. The use of a Section 106 agreement to cover multiple sites could offer the opportunity to split the development of properties on two or more sites, some within and others outside of

the National Park. The benefit of such a negotiation would be to make use of the cross subsidy generated through Section 106 agreements without the need to develop large sites within the National Park. It is also conceivable that those sites within the Park could comprise a high proportion of affordable homes relative to the site(s) outside of the National Park operating under the same Section 106 scheme. Although such a scheme may appear favourable for the National Park Authority there is a real chance that negotiations could falter on the basis of objection towards the lack of affordable housing being developed on the site(s) outside of the Park. Whether the idea is seen to conflict with the government's mixed community agenda (detailed within the Housing Green Paper, 2007) simply comes down to the interpretation of the term community and the scale it constitutes. As the agreement as a whole would have to demonstrate an overall proportion of affordable housing consistent with Local Authority doctrine, it is conceivable that such an agreement could be made a reality.

Despite the idea of Local Authorities utilising Section 106 agreements as a means of ensuring affordable housing would be developed, a number of respondents remarked that developers were often able to negotiate down the proportion of affordable homes based on other contributions to infrastructure (such as new sewage pipes). This perception echoes findings from Burgess et al (2007) detailing the large variation in Local Authority performance in negotiations, specifically when attempting to counter developers' claims that sites requiring a certain amount of affordable housing are unviable. Should Section 106 agreements be used to provide successful affordable housing schemes for the National Park, it will therefore be necessary for Local Authorities to remain open-minded about how the mechanism can be applied, yet firm enough in negotiations to ensure the proportion of affordable homes makes a meaningful difference to those in need.

The varied performance of Local Authorities involved in Section 106 negotiations prompted calls for quotas to span across Local Authority boundaries and toolkits to be introduced. Such measures are theorised to minimise the extent to which developers can take advantage when looking to reduce the proportion of affordable units on proposed sites (Burgess and Monk, 2007). It is conceivable that such quotas could be effectively enacted through the new Unitary Authority.

Owing to Regional and Local Authority strategies, and examples from Community Trusts such as Lindisfarne and Glendale Gateway, community led housing delivery mechanisms have become highly regarded by housing and planning professionals. The mechanisms imply small scale schemes within or adjacent to existing settlements. The

idea of local action is particularly prominent within the recently announced definition of Community Land Trusts (Housing and Regeneration Act 2008). Although the intricacies of Community Land and Development Trusts are not fully understood by all of the interviewees, the emphasis placed on serving the needs of local people through a high proportion of affordable housing is very much supported. It is also noteworthy that Community led mechanisms have experienced a recent rise in prominence within political circles and are strongly supported in the Housing Green Paper: Homes for the Future (DCLG, 2007).

At present there is no Community Land Trust which covers Northumberland National Park as a whole, or smaller Community Land Trusts operating at the settlement and parish levels within the Park. What is apparent is that elsewhere in rural Northumberland, Community Land Trusts (or projects which work in a similar way but are named otherwise) have already proved successful. Indeed many interviewees were reluctant to focus on Community Land Trusts; instead they referred to the wider roles of Community Development Trusts of which Community Land Trusts were a part. Table 4.2 makes a brief comparison of the two structures.

Table 4.2 – Comparison of Trusts

	Community Development Trust	Community Land Trust
Key Purpose	To secure community prosperity through community ownership and management of assets	To own land, and to capture the value of that land for the community in perpetuity
Ownership	Owned and managed by the community	Owned and managed by the community
Local/Regional Body	Federation of Northumberland Development Trusts (FoNDT)	None
National Body	Development Trust Association	Community Land Trusts Association (website)
Trusts in Northumberland	19	2 (also represented as Local Development Trusts)

As the two Community Land Trusts within Northumberland have arisen through the Community Development Trusts (who continue to manage the schemes) it is understandable that some confusion as to their exact roles exists. The large degree of flexibility in the structure and function of Community Land Trusts can make it difficult to distinguish them from Community Development Trusts. Similarities can be further confirmed by examining how the two are defined.

The Community Land Trust website (2007) describes a Community Land Trust as

 '*A mechanism for the democratic ownership of land by the local community. Land is taken out of the market and separated from its productive use so that the impact of land appreciation is removed, therefore enabling long-term affordable and sustainable local development.*'

Meanwhile the Development Trust Association describes development trusts in a broader role stating that they are designed to

'...*cultivate enterprise and build assets. They secure community prosperity - creating wealth in communities and keeping it there.*'

From these statements it is perceivable that Community Land Trusts simply represent one of a number of processes within the scope of Development Trusts. The fact that in this instance Community Land Trusts are referred to as a housing delivery mechanism does not separate them from Development Trusts neither in theory, nor in the opinions of the interviewees. For example, although the Glendale Gateway (Development) Trust is cited as an example on the Community Land Trust association website, the project manager of the cited scheme was reluctant to classify the project as such. Instead it was simply suggested that the project was a community housing scheme which fulfilled the aims of the Development Trust. Respondents suggested that the relative prominence given to Community Land Trusts over other community schemes has arisen from a more eminent structure and definitive title, rather than a greater propensity to ensure affordability in perpetuity.

Table 4.2 and Figure 4.4 demonstrate a well established network of Community Development Trusts within the region. This is not the case for Community Land Trusts which lack the specific sub-regional body of the development trusts. The idea of Community Development Trusts has been more strongly established in the region through the Federation of Northumberland Development Trusts formed in 2002. The Federation has ensured it is relatively easy for new trusts to emerge, and for existing

trusts to find the necessary support. As the development trusts seek to serve their respective communities they will often have unique agendas, not all of which will be inclusive of housing provision. However, the issue of satisfying local housing need has seen a prolific rise in prominence over recent years, and as such an increasing number of development trusts are beginning to consider the option of community housing schemes. For example, in June 2007 North Sunderland & Seahouses Development Trust commissioned a film based project documenting housing needs and aspirations in the coastal villages of Seahouses, Beadnell and Bamburgh with a view to seek opportunities and identify sites for the development of affordable housing. Meanwhile in Tynedale the council has recently begun working with the Federation of Northumberland Development Trusts in an attempt to develop a number of community housing schemes. At this stage it appears that these schemes will emanate from the district's existing development trusts – notably Allendale, Haltwhistle and Prudhoe. Those Trusts that have succeeded in affordable housing provision – and those whose current ambitions show promise – have benefitted from the acquisition of land below the market price. Gifting of land from a trust's respective Local Authority is thus considered a substantial boost in community led provision

Figure 4.4 – Northumberland's Development Trusts and Community Land Trusts

★ Community Development Trusts

▲ Community Development Trusts incorporating a Community Land Trust
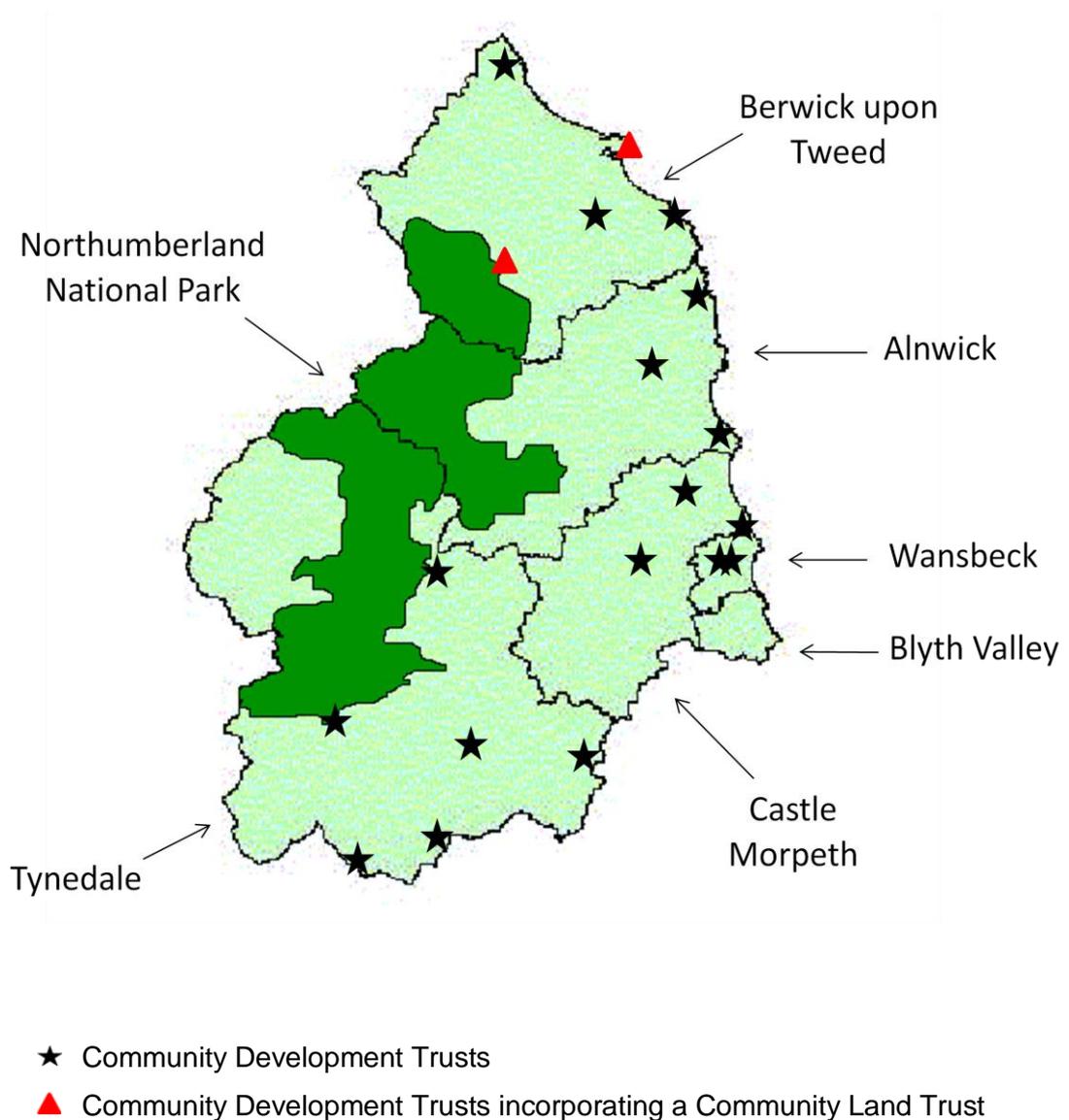
Respondents reacted positively to the principles behind the Community Land Trust mechanism. However, a number of the participants strongly suggested other community housing schemes, including those which would involve cooperation with Registered Social Landlords should not be discounted. Although the National Park has no proven record of utilising any such schemes, several have succeeded in close proximity to the Park, whilst others continue to progress through the Development Trust network. The fact that these schemes have no rigid framework to adhere to has caused different trusts to vary their approach in an opportunistic and circumstance specific manner. So long as local need can be demonstrated and land acquired, the means by which properties are made affordable lies within the hands of the trust.

Referring specifically to the National Park, the planning officer felt that that the area would be an ideal candidate for Community Trusts because of the potential for small scale development. The mechanism would help to ensure minimal impact on existing character whilst dealing with local need. While some respondents point out that any community with demonstrable need can act to set up a Trust and work towards its alleviation, others argue that the smaller, remote communities may not have the necessary critical mass and resources to take action into their own hands. Evidently the potential to deliver through Community Development Trusts already exists within rural Northumberland. As of 2005 there were over 350 development trusts across the UK, with 17 in Northumberland (FoNDT, 2005).

Whilst many commend the work of the Federation of Northumberland Development Trusts in facilitating projects that trusts have started, the Federation are not directly involved in promoting the idea of trusts to the communities – In line with the idea of a bottom-up approach the communities themselves are required to suggest the idea of a trust. In some circumstances such as Bellingham and Haltwhistle, Community Partnerships have established which cover several parishes and thus help to involve some of the smaller communities. This may prove an adequate solution for some of the National Park's communities, although those residing away from the larger settlements remain isolated from any noteworthy community groups. As such respondents do not anticipate Community Land/Development Trusts becoming established and providing affordable homes for the whole of the National Park. Yet as the Federation of Northumberland Development Trusts 2005 report notes, even the renovation of a single property to house one family makes a difference in small rural communities.

The idea of a wider Community Trust for the National Park area provoked a mixture of support and apprehension. Whilst there was a universal agreement that the principles behind Community Trusts were sound, the idea of an umbrella organisation for the National Park (or other sub-region) prompted some concerns. In the first instance there were discussions as to whether a change to the network of Community Development Trusts was necessary. As the affordable housing officer pointed out, with the exception of Rothbury and some smaller settlements nearly all of rural Northumberland is covered by one development trust or another, many of which are just beginning to get to grips with community housing schemes. On the other hand it is arguable that whilst development trusts do cover the larger settlements of rural Northumberland, there are many smaller settlements which remain isolated from the trusts. This is particularly true for the settlements within the National Park itself, as Figure 3.4 illustrates. The smaller

remote communities will likely find it very difficult to establish representation as a trust without an association with an existing trust or partnership. Although respondents admit that it is not impossible for the mechanism to be applied in these small, remote communities, it will require some extremely passionate and hardworking community champions.

Respondents regard the difficultly in the securing funding necessary for development as the biggest barrier for Community Trust housing schemes. The scheme on Holy Island has now reached a stage where affordable housing has become an established asset generating revenue for reinvesting into new housing schemes, as well as other community projects. However, it is widely acknowledged that reaching this self sustaining stage would not have been possible had it not been for a substantial grant from the Tudor Trust. Those respondents aware of the Holy Island scheme declared that the acquisition of funding from the Tudor Trust represents a unique scenario which other trusts will find difficult to replicate. Although other trusts have, and continue to consider roles in providing affordable housing, good intentions will often prove fruitless without access to the financial support required for the initial development - a statement reaffirming the thoughts of Diacon et al (2005). Only a small minority of representatives from the Community Support sub-group expressed awareness of the impending opportunity for community trusts to obtain funding through the Community Land Trust Fund (The Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, 2008). It has now transpired that The Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and the Tudor Trust have become the first contributors to an initial fund of £2 million. With hopes for the fund to continue in growth as more funders become involved, it is possible that Community Trusts could benefit from contributions aimed at supporting feasibility, technical assistance and/or investment. Nevertheless, to this point difficulties in securing necessary funding has been a restrictive factor prompting some Trusts to consider partnership ventures with developers, and in particular Registered Social Landlords.

Despite willingness to collaborate a successful end product cannot be guaranteed. A major difficulty for Registered Social Landlords involved in Community Land Trust schemes arises from the stipulation that properties must be affordable in perpetuity. This requirement makes it difficult for any developer to acquire funding from lenders since if the developer were to become bankrupt and be required to sell assets, lenders require that they are to be sold at (or as close as possible to) open market value. As such it is often very difficult for developers to acquire funds for developments intended to be affordable in perpetuity. However, under the Housing and Regeneration Act (2008) Community Land Trusts which offer homes under a shared ownership lease

model in protected areas will be protected from leasehold enfranchisement. It is suggested that Local Authorities will be tasked to designate the protected areas based upon factors such as land availability, existing stock, levels of need and affordability. Protection from the risk of early enfranchisement would encourage more providers to offer shared ownership housing, since early enfranchisement could result in a financial loss to the provider as the price paid by the owner is likely to be less than if they had to purchase the remaining shares in their house (DCLG 2008).

In conclusion the use of Community Land Trusts in developing new affordable units is at present restricted to those areas of the National Park demonstrating a critical mass of proactive and skilled inhabitants. If new Community Trusts and partnerships emerge or expand their coverage, new opportunities may arise. Those areas exhibiting the critical mass required for a community trust or partnership have already established in the National Park's gateway settlements of Haltwhistle, Bellingham and Wooler. This would suggest that there is also the potential for a trust/partnership in the remaining gateway settlement of Rothbury. For these trusts a more definitive means of obtaining funding is essential if new developments are to be financed. At present it is much more realistic that the trusts acquire existing properties so they can be renovated and allocated to meet local need (as demonstrated by Glendale Gateway Trust in Wooler).

Although a small number of organisations proclaimed involvement with cooperative housing schemes, these were all outside of rural Northumberland and in previous years. Claims of high exclusivity - and therefore social exclusion - have rendered these traditional schemes something of a rarity. Awareness of Cooperatives was limited amongst all sub-groups. Although a small number of respondents claimed to be aware of one operating within the County, when questioned as to its location they began to doubt its continued existence. None of the respondents were aware of any Cooperatives within the rural areas of Northumberland, neither past nor present. The Confederation of Co-operative Housing reports that the government's favouritism for more large scale housing solutions during the 1990s led to a decline in the number of cooperative housing schemes. Today there are less than 300 housing co-ops registered with the Homes and Communities Agency, which provides funding and monitoring of housing co-ops. Most ownership co-ops were established under the more generous grant subsidy regimes in the 1970s and 1980s (Confederation of Co-operative Housing, 2004). Today, within England at least, the objectives of housing coops are increasingly being satisfied by Arms Length Management Organisations and Community Trusts.

The delivery of affordable housing through Large Scale Voluntary Transfer (of council stock to Registered Social Landlords) and the establishment of Arms Length Management Organisations (for stock retained by the councils) are familiar to many of the housing and planning professionals. At the time of the interviews the only example of the latter within Northumberland was within the more urbanised district of Blyth Valley on the outskirts of Newcastle upon Tyne (This organisation has since taken over Alnwick's Local Authority housing stock).

Large Scale Voluntary Transfer has occurred in Tynedale District Council and Berwick upon Tweed, both of which overlap the National Park boundary. As councils have never developed large numbers of houses in the National Park, the number of properties from Large Scale Voluntary Transfers is inexorably small within the Park area (less than 30 properties within Tynedale District's overlapping jurisdiction), and furthermore these are not subject to frequent tenant turnover. However, over 100 Large Scale Voluntary Transfer properties have been transferred in Bellingham (Tynedale), one of the Park's gateway settlements; one reason why the Park Authority still gives serious consideration to meeting need through development in the larger settlements beyond the Park boundary (Local Development Framework, 2008).

Despite some seemingly impressive statistics, all properties associated with Large Scale Voluntary Transfer and Arms Length Management Organisations constitute existing stock. Such changes in ownership or management - although in theory possible – are not synonymous with additional new housing. Somewhat expectedly given the critique within Chapter 2, respondents did not conceive either mechanism as a strong candidate for providing the additional housing that is required to meet the needs of the Park's residents.

Many of the houses currently deemed affordable in and around Northumberland National Park are owned and managed by the Registered Social Landlords. The large number of Housing Corporation (now Homes and Community Agency) funded HomeBuy schemes reported by respondents are explained by the Registered Social Landlords' involvement with private developers, Local Authorities and to a lesser extent Community Trusts. With an increasing number of people unable to afford open market housing, shared equity HomeBuy schemes have become increasingly common amongst Registered Social Landlords. The variety of government led HomeBuy schemes government have been introduced to improve affordability for purchasers and provide more choice in the mortgage which purchasers can take out (DLCG, 2008). As Low Cost Home Ownership is a generic term encompassing the current HomeBuy

Schemes as well as its predecessors, respondents were offered the opportunity to make comment on particular schemes.

Low Cost Home Ownership schemes came under severe criticism from a number of respondents across a variety of the sub-groups. The Open Market HomeBuy scheme in particularly was denounced owing to the requirement to purchase 75% of a property. A reduction of 25% was thought to be a completely inadequate means of making properties affordable to the people who were most in need. For example a house worth £175,000 on the open market would still remain unaffordable to those on lowest incomes, even if it were to be marketed at the three quarter valuation of £131,250. This criticism echoes the findings of a 2007 report by the House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts entitled *A Foot on the Ladder: Low Cost Home Ownership Assistance*. The report states that increased spending on Low Cost Home Ownership assistance means there is less money available for building affordable housing for rent. It can however be a cost-effective way of freeing up a social rent home for another family and helping to relieve the pressure on housing waiting lists when targeted at existing social housing tenants or those households in priority housing need. The assistance going to these two groups has nonetheless been limited, and the new Open Market HomeBuy product, with its requirement to purchase 75% of a property, will make Low Cost Home Ownership unaffordable for many of these households (House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts, 2007).

Owing to the recent introduction of the Government's rent restructuring programme Registered Social Landlords have lost some of their autonomy in that target rents are principally calculated on earnings data (Hills, 2007). Although capital values (based on property location and quality) also play a role in setting rents, many Registered Social Landlords still consider this process to represent a form of fixed rent structure. The governments report *Analysing the Impact of Rent Restructuring* (ODPM, 2004) states that Registered Social Landlords have experienced significant compression in their average rent structures between different bed sized properties, but within this there have been some large variations in individual rents. In overall terms, the impact of the rent changes on the affordability measures is dampened by the structure of the housing benefit scheme, with increases or reductions in levels of benefit entitlement acting to partially offset the initial rental impact.

4.3.3 Partners for Delivery

The idea of partnership working is considered by respondents to be very important in the delivery of affordable homes. As already referred to, there is increasing emphasis towards facilitating communities in decision making and providing the necessary support for community led projects. No more so is the need for partnership work more relevant than within National Parks, where different housing authorities overlap the jurisdiction of one separate planning authority. Furthermore, the perceived difficulties in developing affordable housing within Northumberland National Park is only likely to be surmounted with effective communication, collaboration and support of a collection of groups.

Although the interviewees agreed on the need for certain partners to be sought for developments in which they are, or wish to be associated, there is also acknowledgement that those partners may seek different goals. The difference in the priorities held by organisations may hinder the ability to initiate or see out a scheme.

Developers are often represented as generic group are seen to be driven almost exclusively by financial gain, rather than any desire to benefit a community. With regard to private developers the interviews elicited a spectrum of views concerning the affordable housing agenda. These responses echo the findings of a Joseph Rowntree Foundation report (Rowlands et al, 2006) outlining that developers vary in their approach to affordable housing development. The research concludes that not all developers relate success of schemes purely to the resultant profit, but also on how well the development serves as a lasting advertisement of their products. Whilst some private developers involved in the interview process accepted the need for more affordable housing as a means of ensuring the longevity of communities, others felt resentful that targets are being thrust upon them to the detriment of their revenue. Blyth Valley Borough Council (one of the three Local Authorities in Northumberland which does not border the National Park) recently had proposed affordable housing policies rejected after a number of developers challenged the viability of targets. The policy set a target of 30 per cent affordable housing in new residential development, and required an element of affordable housing in every development of ten homes or more (Blyth Valley Council, 2007). The developers, supported by a High Court Judge, stated that prior to this policy being recommended by the inspector, and finalised by the Council, two other Government inspectors had found in planning inquiries that such a proportion of affordable housing was not needed in the area (News Post Leader, 2008).

Registered Social Landlords were considered by respondents as completely separate to private developers. Reponses demonstrated that the motives of Registered Social Landlords were difficult to pin down. These organisations provide affordable housing for the purpose of generating financial gain that is then recycled into providing affordable housing. At present most of Northumberland's new affordable housing units are developed through Registered Social Landlords who can increase efficiency and profit margins through favouring larger development sites. This is not to say that Registered Social Landlords dismiss the more remote rural areas completely. As the affordable housing project officer noted;

"*Some of Registered Social Landlords* [operating in Northumberland] *are generally very cooperative in trying to find solutions for rural areas, the problems they face aren't necessarily to do with profit targets, but an inability to supply housing because of the planning system*"

Other respondents also empathised with the Registered Social Landlords, insisting that as with so many business sectors, it is important to try and maximise efficiency and output – objectives which cannot realistically be achieved through small scale sites in remote rural areas. To expect Registered Social Landlords to be solely responsible for serving such areas was seen as untenable. Instead it was suggested that they be available to offer resources (financial capital, knowledge and skills) to smaller schemes specifically designed to operate in the more isolated communities. Some communities looking to be involved in affordable housing schemes feel that any real progress requires support and partnership from Registered Social Landlords. Such a partnership can introduce communities to funding from the Homes and Communities Agency as well as the expertise and experience of the Registered Social Landlord. This process of joint working can be construed as neo-endogenous development - an idea rooted in the assumption that two different types of resources should be used in parallel: internal resources, unique to a community, and external resources, offered by the state, non-governmental organisations and supranational institutions and organisations (High and Nemes, 2007; Adamski and Gorlach, 2007). However, there is some disdain from those representing communities that any partnership should come about through choice, rather than necessity.

Although the involvement of a Registered Social Landlord could be beneficial in facilitating the construction process and lending skills to the community, the consequence is that the community may lose influence in the management of the

scheme, and may not be entitled to a share of the resulting revenue being generated. From the community perspective, this contradicts the notion of a community led scheme and undermines the bottom-up development agenda. From the Registered Social Landlord's perspective, to create development and/or transfer skills to the community without the resulting management rights and financial assets would be considered as doing something for nothing. Community representatives in particular perceive the scenario surrounding Community Trust funding to be incongruous, since the mechanism appears strongly supported within various policies yet there appears no consensus on a definitive means of ascertaining funding.

Although for some the idea of a partnership with a Registered Social Landlord is perhaps not considered to be ideal, this is not through fault of those Registered Social Landlords. Indeed respondents representing Registered Social Landlords were amongst those most open to increased partnership formation, and exploring opportunities that would help to provide mutual benefit to themselves and communities. Although Registered Social Landlords have not traditionally provided new homes within the Park's communities, responses made clear that there is potential to for their involvement in Section 106 agreements, Rural Exception Sites and community led housing schemes.

Aside from the existing organisations and groups, respondents of Local Authorities, Developers and Community Support Groups are also keen to see additional input from introducing a Rural Housing Enabler. The post once existed as part of Community Action Northumberland but complications with funding led to its demise. The reintroduction of a Rural Housing Enabler to carry out needs surveys and raise the aspirations of communities is adjudged to be beneficial in helping to dispel the fears and nimbyism through educating the communities, as well as bringing together the various contacts necessary for delivery. A Rural Housing Enabler is also considered by many to be invaluable in helping to identify potential sites for development. Responses from the interview process demonstrate that more effort is needed to investigate the possible release of land from large landowners, of which a small number cover much of Northumberland National Park. Landed estates are regarded as being more likely to release land at an affordable rate than other landowners such as the Forestry Commission and Northumbria Water who appeared less inclined to consider the long term benefits of such actions. Although these organisations were open to the possibility of releasing land for development, those interviewees experienced in dealing with the Forestry Commission professed that their priority had been to secure the highest

possible price for land, rather than to make a contribution to addressing local housing need.

While the sheer expanse of land covered by these landowners is obviously worthy of investigation, a Rural Housing Enabler would also be concerned with seeking opportunities arising from smaller landholders within the communities. Those interviewees experienced in the acquisition of land reported that this process most frequently involved purchase from a private landowner/business – a group perceived by respondents to be motivated almost exclusively through their ability to maximise financial gain. The idea that landowners would hold on to land in the hope that demand would persist and planning restrictions relax to allow for more open market housing, was widely reported as a concern amongst the interviewees. This scenario, discussed by Satsangi and Dunmore (2003) impacts upon the possibility of developing affordable housing, firstly in restricting the land available for development and secondly through increasing the cost of schemes to developers. Despite a common consensus surrounding this issue, a small number of respondents also acknowledge that exceptions do exist. For example, a landowner may be willing to release land at below market value on condition that it is to be used for developing affordable housing to meet local need. One possible means of ensuring that local need is to be targeted is to involve a Community Trust. Although such a partnership is likely to be welcomed by the Community Trust, it only applies with the cooperation of the more exceptional, philanthropic landowners. Discussions indicated that some landowners are not accommodated for by a planning system which respondents as a whole deemed inflexible. For example, if, hypothetically, a landowner was willing to gift land for ten affordable houses with a stipulation that one of those properties must remain in the hands of their family (as suggested in the recent Taylor Review (2008), then despite the addition of nine new affordable homes to meet local need, the proposal would be refused on the grounds that not all of the residents were being allocated based on impartial needs data. Similar comments from landowners as well as those experienced in working with them suggest that were landowners given more viable options to become involved in developments where they too would receive benefit, then perhaps more interest could be generated. RICS (2008) reported that nearly 40 percent of rural landowners would put forward land at below market value for affordable housing, but want reassurance that it is the local community that will benefit. Many would require that the resultant housing stock be made available for family members, staff, those employed in agriculture and those living in adjoining parishes. As Haughton (2007) reflects, the UK planning system has long since experienced criticisms from

landowners and developers over inflexibility, and whilst the process of policy making may have improved through increasing credence of the wider communities' views and circumstances, the Planning and Housing policies are unlikely to change to the extent that an individual landowner has such influence over the nomination of residents.

Although it is suggested that funds for a Rural Housing Enabler may come from the Local Authorities, the new Unitary Authority or even One North East, the funded individual is someone to be viewed as independent of local government. The association with local communities rather than a particular level of government is something respondents considered important in gaining acceptance from communities. Since the previous Rural Housing Enabler post was expunged some Local Authorities have gone on to introduce posts as a compensatory measure. Alnwick and Tynedale Councils now employ a dedicated Affordable Housing Officer and Housing Enabler respectfully. These are posts contracted and confined to their Authority's area. As such the officers are not individually responsible for the National Park or Northumberland as a whole. The appointment of an Affordable Housing Officer by the Federation of Northumberland Development Trusts created a valuable contribution by supporting Community Trusts in housing projects across the County, but this post too is now at an end. The presence of a Rural Housing Enabler is considered invaluable by the Commission for Rural Communities (2005), and whilst respondents have had no guarantee as to whether a new Rural Housing Enabler will be instated, there is acceptance that the formation of a Unitary Authority could bring about such a benefit.

4.4   Synopsis of the Delivery Framework

The locality of development is to some extent determined by the delivery mechanism being employed. For example Rural Exception Sites are only permitted in settlements designated as sustainable. Community Trusts appear to be limited to larger settlements owing to the critical mass required for their formation.

Additionally development sites should be influenced by the distribution and extent of local need. The criteria defining Local Need is outlined by Northumberland National Park Authority (2008) but no definitive housing need data relating to specific communities currently exists. Since Local Authorities responsible for meeting local need are to take account of resident input, there is scope to make more informed conclusions regarding development location following the Delivery Framework testing process.

Mixed housing development sites arising from Section 106 agreements are familiar to different types of developer. Although proven in the delivery of affordable housing it is necessary to provide a proportion of open market housing in order to ensure sufficient developer profit/interest. The Park's preference for small scale developments somewhat undermines the use of mixed housing sites through Section 106, which often relies on large scale development as a means of achieving financial viability. Consequently, although the mechanism is theoretically possible in the National Park, it is better suited to the larger settlements outside of the Park's boundary.

The Rural Exceptions Policy is well suited to the Park Authority's preferences. The Policy denotes that developments should consist of 100% affordable housing and be situated within or adjacent to the boundaries of sustainable settlements. The resulting properties are to be affordable in perpetuity and for the benefit of those exhibiting proven local housing need. Although many developers may be discouraged by the prospect of developing small, remote sites, the research has demonstrated that certain developers would consider any opportunity to do so.

Variations of the Community Land Trust model can also provide small scale housing developments that remain affordable in perpetuity. The mechanism has been applied by Community Development Trusts within rural Northumberland, although external funding and expertise may be necessary. Although Northumberland National Park does not contain any Community Development Trusts, there are a number on its outskirts with the potential to operate inside the Park boundary.

To some extent the individual delivery mechanisms dictate the type of developers best suited to delivering affordable housing. For example, large private developers are capable of developing mixed housing sites through Section 106 agreements, but such firms consider small scale rural development brought about by the Rural Exception Policy to be unviable. Rural Exception sites are most likely to succeed through the involvement of Registered Social Landlords and/or small independent building firms.

To date Community Development Trusts have been unable to develop without either substantial external funding or the formation of a partnership with a Registered Social Landlord. Such a partnership can combine community involvement with access to valuable experience and expertise.

Aside from the actual developers, projects can also benefit from the support and collaboration of individuals and organisations able to represent communities on housing matters. Community Support Organisations such as The Federation of

Northumberland Development Trusts and Community Action Northumberland may prove useful in bringing forward potential development sites and demonstrating a community's need. A dedicated Rural Housing Enabler is also likely to aid such processes, and help to mediate between the various parties.

4.5   Chapter Summary

The chapter has considered the views of housing and planning professionals from a variety of sub-groups. Their professional opinions serve to highlight the issues of governance in rural areas, and in particular the challenges surrounding affordable housing delivery. Through examining the responses it has been possible to critique different means of delivery. However, there are certain issues which remain contested, and questions unanswered – particularly in respect of the community's perception of need and their attitudes towards affordable housing. These views and what they mean for the wider issue of governance and housing delivery are covered within Chapter 5.

Chapter 5 – Delivery Framework Testing

5.1   Resident Questionnaire Results

The delivery framework testing process allowed residents from the National Park and its immediate surroundings to provide input relating to a number of issues impacting upon the potential to deliver affordable housing. These issues emanating from academic literature and the 30 in-depth interviews include; public support/opposition to affordable housing, nimbyism, community representation, awareness of affordable housing need and community involvement/facilitation.

In order to investigate the attitudes of residents, questionnaires were sent out to all of the National Parks 999 households. Additionally an equal number of questionnaires were posted to randomly selected addresses within 5 miles of the National Park's boundary, the so called Buffer zone. 253 of the 1998 questionnaires sent out were returned, giving a response rate of just under 13% - a figure consistent with previous mail outs conducted by the National Park Authority.

Of the 253 questionnaires returned 51 emanated from the National Park households, and 195 from the Buffer zone sample.

As shown in Appendix 3, the questionnaire has 3 sections. Section 1 of the questionnaire applies to all 253 residents participating in the study.

5.1.1   Section 1 Results

Figure 5.1 - Reasons for Moving to the National Park/its Immediate Surroundings

	Lifestyle	Family connection	Employment	Have always lived there	Landscape	Other/not specified
Buffer zone	52	43	40	39	15	6
National Park	19	15	7	2	10	5
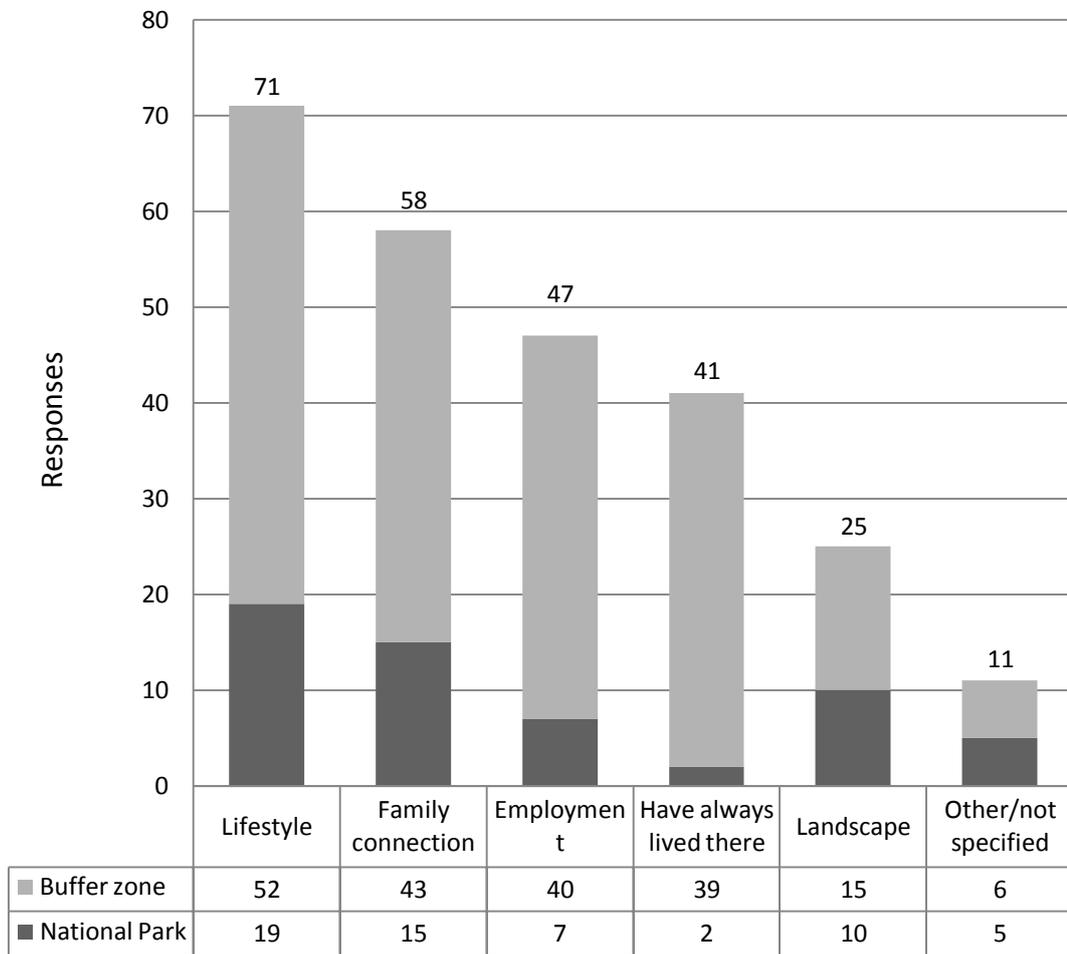
Figure 5.1 shows the variety of reasons responsible for people having moved to the National Park and its immediate surroundings. With 71 responses (28% of the total), the most frequently recorded motivation for moving to the area is lifestyle related. Family connections are also shown to be an important influence, with 23% of respondents having relocated to return to family or through marrying an existing resident. 19% of respondents stated that their move to the area was driven by employment, a figure smaller than what would be expected in wider studies. According to the Office of National Statistics (2008) around 30% of people relocate for employment. The difference in these two figures is likely explained by the area's lack of industry, and attractiveness as a place to retire (see Figure 5.2). Approximately 1 in 6 (16%) of the respondents had not moved into the area, but had lived there their entire lives. Of the remaining residents only 10% selected landscape as the prominent influence in deciding to move to the area.

When comparing the results of those that live in and outside the National Park it is evident that there are few differences in the overall ranking of selections relating to why residents chose to move to the area. The results from those residing in the buffer zone are however more evenly distributed amongst the categories than their National Park counterparts. Most notably, the proportion of residents stating that they have always lived in the area is around six times higher in the buffer zone than in the National Park. Such data suggests that the Park is a greater draw than the Buffer zone for those looking to move to the area, and that landscape appears to play an important part in the decision making process (17% of National Park stating landscape as the most prominent influence as compared to only 8% of those in the buffer zone).

Figure 5.2 - Employment Status

	Employed outside the Park	Retired	Employed in the Park	Unemployed
Buffer zone	80	89	17	12
National Park	28	12	12	3
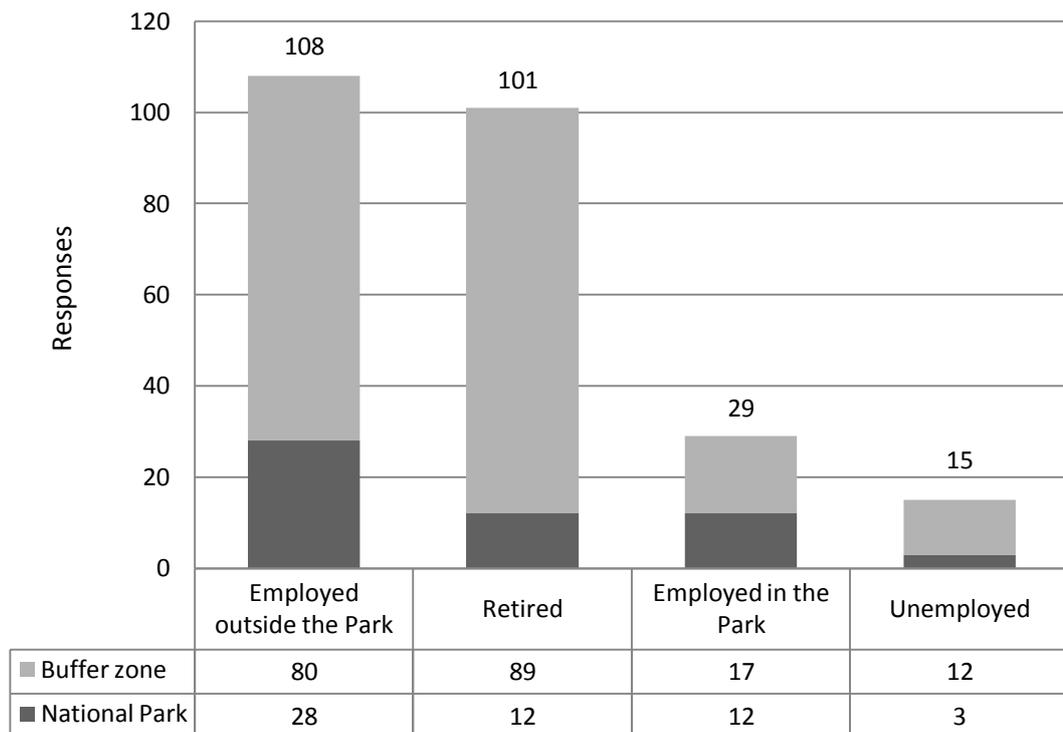
Of the 253 respondents only 29 (11%) are employed within the boundaries of the National Park. The vast majority of the respondents are shown to be either employed outside of the National Park (43%) or retired (40%). By considering the high proportion of retirees and relatively small proportion of residents who have lived in the area all of their lives (Figure 5.1), it is reasonable to assume that a significant proportion of those living in and around the Park have retired to the area.

Examining the individual data sets shows intuitively that respondents are more likely to be employed close to their area of residence. Perhaps less predictably there are proportionally a much larger number of retirees (45%) in the buffer zone than in the National Park (20%). A desire or need for retirees to be close to the larger services centres provides one possible explanation for this trend.

Figure 5.3 - Participation in Parish Councils and Community Development Trust Meetings

	Neither	Parish Council	CDT	Both
Buffer zone	152	21	11	11
National Park	48	8	1	1
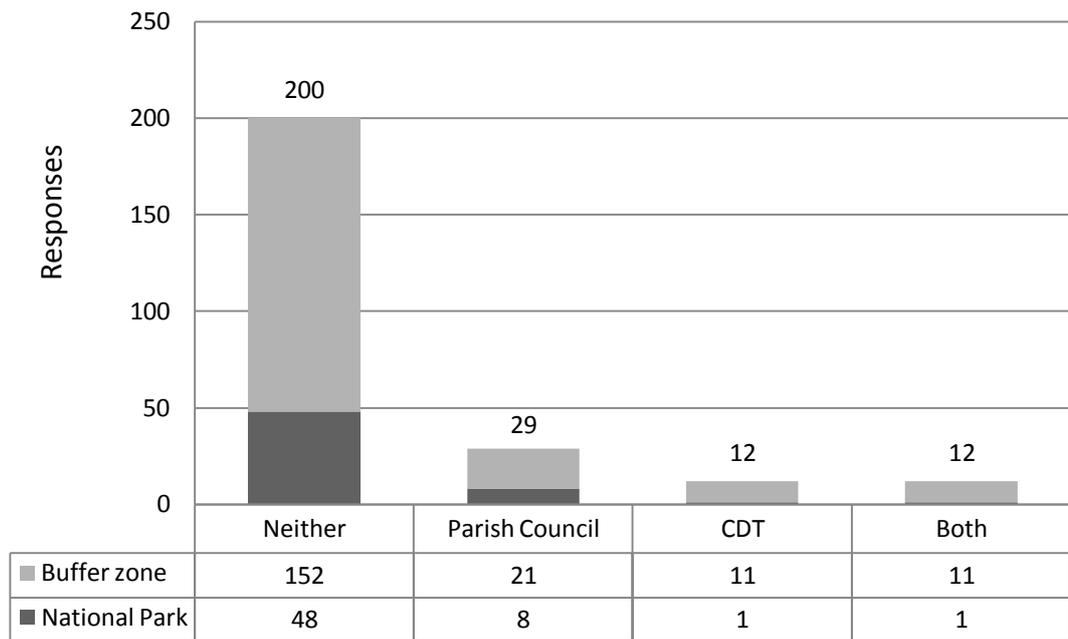
Nearly four fifths of respondents (79%) declare no involvement in the meetings of Parish Councils and Local Development Trusts. The inquiry exhibits that residents are much more likely to attend Parish Councils meetings than those of Community Development Trusts - a finding at least partially explained by the wider coverage of Parish Councils within the area. The sample area includes the coverage of only 3 Community Development Trusts, all of which operate from the more serviced settlements outside of the National Park. As respondents were only able to select one option in this instance, it is possible to deduce from the number of selections for the 'Both Parish Councils and Community Development Trusts' option, that 50% of those attending meetings of Community Development Trusts also participated in those of the respective Parish Council. From this deduction it can be calculated that parish council involvement is proportionally similar amongst those residing in and out of the National Park. The only meaningful difference between the groups comes from participation in

Community Development Trust meetings – a finding explained by the lack of such organisations within the National Park.

Figure 5.4 - Running of Parish Council and Community Development Trusts

	Neither	CDT	Parish Council	Both	Other/Not specified
Buffer zone	171	12	7	4	1
National Park	53	0	4	1	0
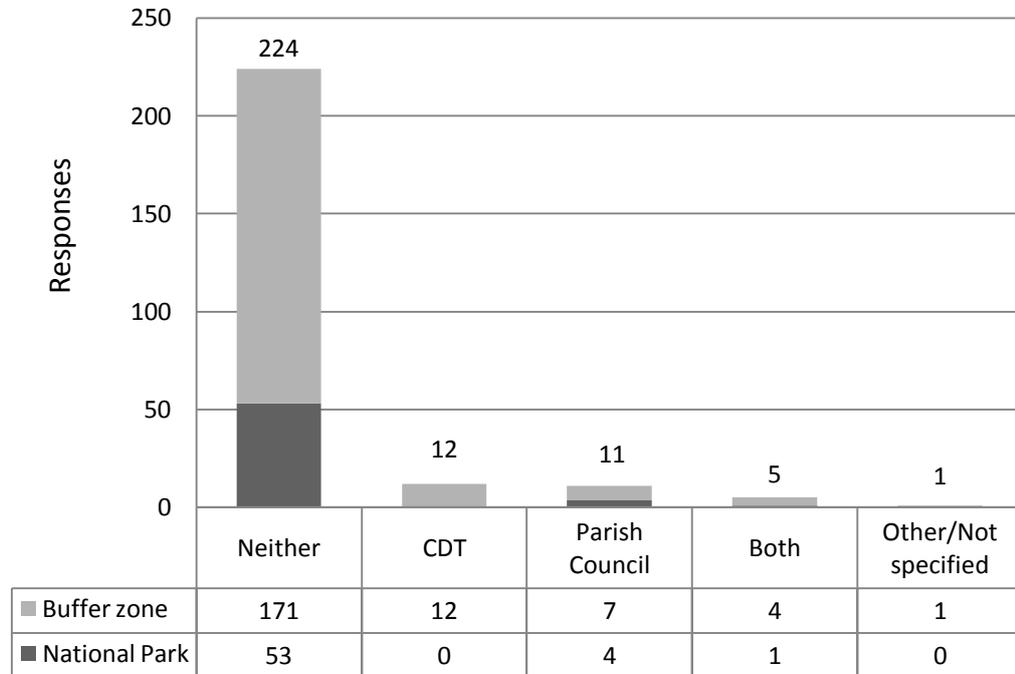
In respect of Figure 5.3 it is unsurprising to find that a high proportion of respondents have no involvement in the running of Parish Councils or Community Development Trusts. Interestingly Community Development Trusts are better represented than Parish Councils in this instance, although as Figure 5.4 shows, this is a marginal difference. As in Figure 5.3, around half of those involved with Community Development Trusts are also participating with a Parish Council.

Whilst the differences in the number of residents involved in running Community Development Trusts can be easily explained by the lack of Trusts operating within the National Park, the relatively high proportion of National Park residents involved in the running of Parish Councils is less easy to explain. One possible explanation is that the National Park's comparatively small population and scattered settlements allows for a higher proportion to be involved. If this were to be the case it would be logical to assume that the National Park residents consider parish councils to be more representative of their communities than their buffer zone counterparts.

Figure 5.5 - Perceptions of Accurate Community Representation through Parish Councils

	Yes	Don't Know	No	Not Applicable	Not specified
Buffer zone	92	66	29	5	3
National Park	22	28	6	2	0
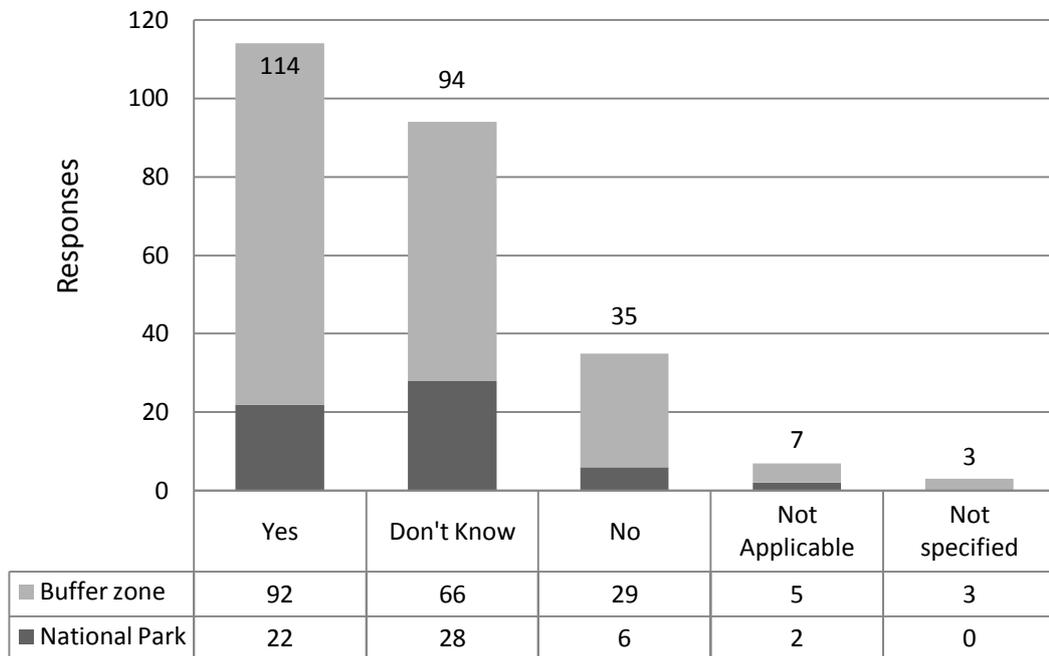
Whilst a minority of respondents (11%) participate in parish council meetings, there exists substantial belief from the wider community that parish councils provide an accurate means of community representation. Those who feel the parish councils do provide accurate representation outnumber those who do not by a ratio of more than 3:1. A large proportion of respondents (37%) report to be unaware as to how accurate the representation provided is. The large proportion lacking awareness is understandable given the apparent lack of involvement in meetings. However, the fact that only 7 respondents consider themselves not to have a local Parish Council emphasises the coverage of these groups.

Contrary to the supposition that because National Park residents are more likely to be involved in the running of parish councils, they would be more likely to consider representation to be accurate, first impressions of Figure 5.5 appear to show the opposite. 37% of National Park residents feel that parish council representation of the community is accurate, compared to 47% of buffer zone residents. However, these statistics are somewhat balanced out when considering the proportions of those stating that the parish councils do not accurately represent the community. In this instance 10% of the National Park residents can be counted in comparison to 19% of those from

the buffer zone. When considering all of the proportions it is difficult to hold any solid convictions concerning differences amongst the two sets of residents.

Figure 5.6 - Perceptions of accurate community representation through Community Development Trusts

	Don't Know	Yes	Not Applicable	No	Not specified
■ Buffer zone	97	48	24	23	3
■ National Park	40	6	7	5	0
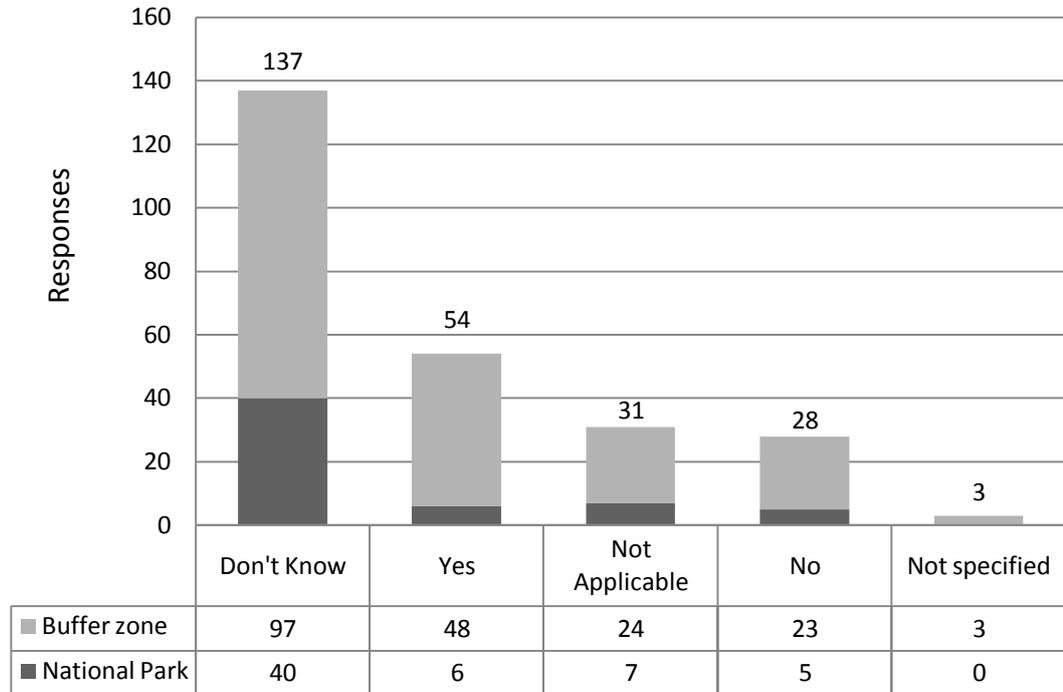
Of those aware of Community Development Trusts many consider the groups to offer accurate representation of the community's views. Those who believe Development Trusts offer accurate representation outnumber those that do not by a ratio of around 2:1. Owing to the aforementioned scarcity of Community Development Trusts – and their comparative infancy – in the area, it is unsurprising to find that a large proportion of respondents (54%) are unaware of how representative the trusts are. It is also possible that many of those selecting 'Don't Know' are actually uncertain as to whether they are within an area covered by a Community Development Trust and as such could be more aptly classified as part of the 'Not Applicable' category.

As such a large proportion of the National Park residents are unfamiliar with Community Development Trusts it is not possible to make any firm conclusions as to the difference in attitudes between them and those within the buffer zone.

Figure 5.7 - Support for Increased Governance from Parish Councils and Community Development Trusts

	Both	Parish Councils	Don't Know/Not Specified	Neither	CDT
Buffer zone	76	45	40	24	10
National Park	23	15	12	7	1
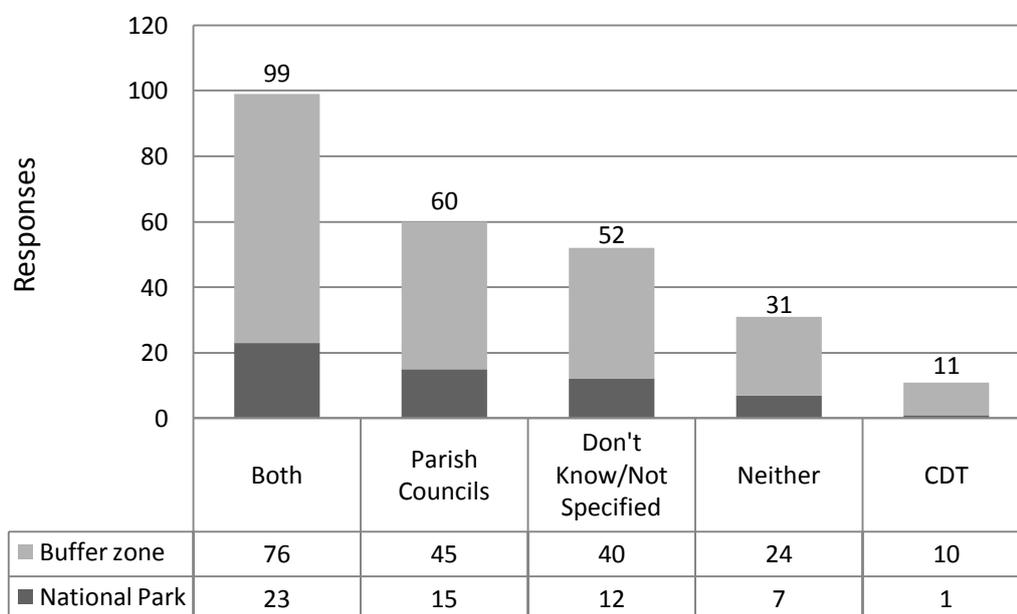
The low proportion of respondents feeling that Parish Councils and Community Development Trusts do not accurately reflect the views of the community is reemphasised in this inquiry into residents' thoughts on offering the groups increased powers and influence into local governance. As Figure 5.7 illustrates, the most popular selection amongst respondents was to provide both Parish Councils and Community Development Trusts an increased role in governance. In terms of specific support, Parish Councils were selected by over 5 times as many respondents as Community Development Trusts, a figure partially explained by the lack of coverage and awareness associated with the latter. Only 31 (12%) respondents felt that neither Parish Councils nor Community Development Trusts should be given a greater role in local governance.

Views amongst National Park and Buffer zone residents are analogous with the exception of the Community Development Trusts option of which Park residents are largely unfamiliar. Despite this unfamiliarity it is salient that National Park residents can still be shown to support the idea of the Trusts as demonstrated by the 40% selecting the option for both parish councils and Trusts to be given a greater role in governance.

Figure 5.8 - Perceptions of Need for more Affordable Housing in Respondents'
Settlement of Residence

	Yes	No	Don't Know
■ Buffer zone	120	53	22
■ National Park	27	29	2
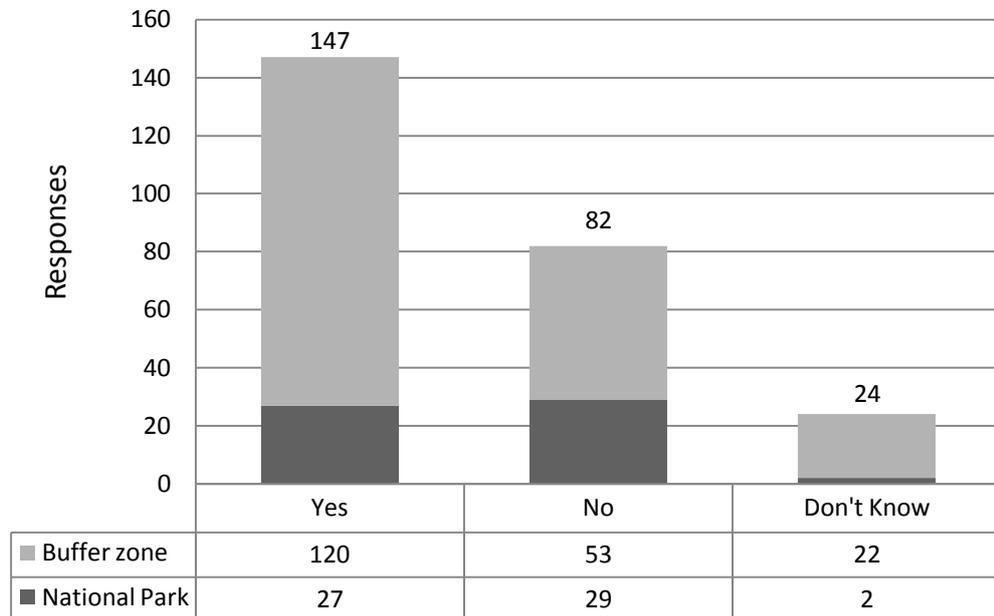
As public support/objection and nimbyism are regarded as key factors in decisions
relating to affordable housing delivery (as shown through the initial in-depth interviews),
it is interesting to reflect upon the data relating to these issues. Figure 5.8 shows that of
the 253 respondents 147 (58%) believe that affordable housing is needed in their
respective settlement. This compares to the 82 respondents (32%) who did not
consider their settlement to be in need of affordable housing. Unfortunately the high
proportion of residents choosing not to provide their settlement of residence precludes
the opportunity to draw conclusions regarding which particular settlements exhibit the
greatest support and opposition to affordable housing developments.

Only 24 respondents (less than 10%) selected 'Don't Know' emphasising the small
proportion without a clear stance on the issue. More remarkably the figure is only
around 3% of those respondents residing in the National Park (compared to 12% of
those in from the buffer zone). Interestingly residents of the National Park appear to be
evenly split on the need for affordable housing in their settlements, whilst those within
the buffer zone are much more likely to accept the idea of need; 62% of buffer zone
residents feel there is a need for more affordable housing in their settlement whilst only
27% did not. Before conclusions can be drawn as to whether these statistics imply
nimbyism or simply a stance that housing should be located in larger, better serviced
settlements, it is necessary to consider subsequent Figures.

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Figure 5.9 - Perceptions of Need for more Affordable Housing Elsewhere in the National Park or its Immediate Surroundings

	Yes	No	Don't Know
■ Buffer zone	134	28	33
■ National Park	37	13	8
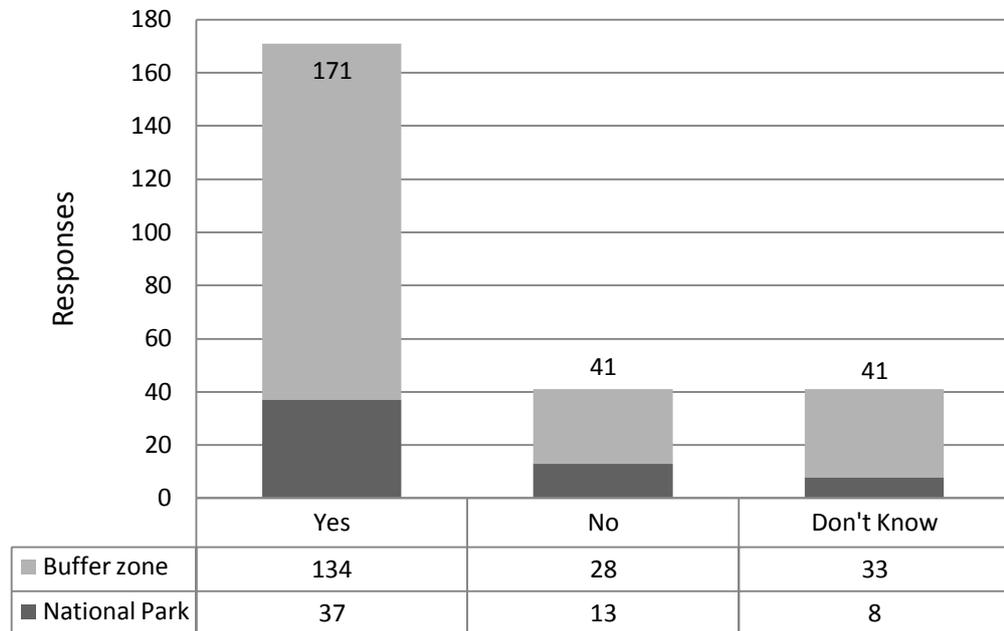
Whilst Figure 5.8 demonstrates notable perceptions of need for affordable housing within the respondents' respective settlements, Figure 5.9 shows that these perceptions are even more common with regard to affordable housing elsewhere in the study area. Over two-thirds of respondents (68%) feel there is a need for more affordable housing elsewhere (outside of their settlement) in the National Park/its immediate surroundings. The number of those discounting any additional affordable housing need is half of that concerning the residents' own settlement, which implies that although some respondents recognise a need for more affordable housing in the area, they do not wish to see developments within their respective settlement. It is also notable that a higher proportion of residents 'Don't Know' whether there is a need for affordable housing away from their settlement. This is logical in that respondents are likely to be most aware of need amongst others within their own settlement communities.

Unlike in Figure 5.8, there appears no discernable difference in the views held by the residents from within and outside of the National Park.

Figure 5.10 - Preferred Location for Affordable Housing to meet the needs of National Park Residents and Workers

	As close as possible to the need	The larger towns on the Park's boundary	The Park's larger settlements	Don't Know /Not Specified	Other
■ Buffer zone	114	26	27	19	9
■ National Park	26	15	6	4	7
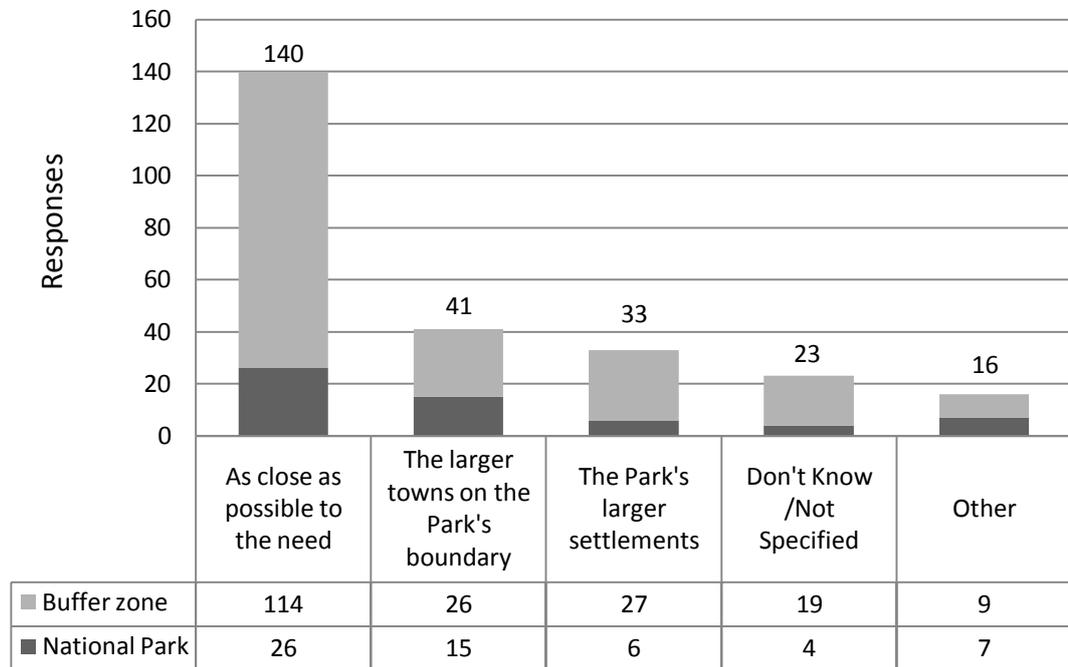
In respect of Figures 5.7 and 5.8 which demonstrate a perceived need for affordable housing, it is important to consider more specifically where this need should be accommodated. As Figure 5.10 shows, the majority of respondents (55%) feel that any new affordable housing developed should be located as close as possible to the need. This is relevant in that it dismisses the notion of developing in what are already well-serviced, sustainable settlements. Given that the question relates only to affordable housing to meet the needs of National Park residents and workers, it is noteworthy that a higher proportion of respondents feel that need should be eased through development in the larger towns on the Park's boundary, rather than within the Park's larger settlements. 14 of the 16 respondents selecting the 'Other' option specified no preference other than to site developments within existing settlements – regardless of size and services.

Whilst the overall ranking of categories appears very similar amongst the two sets of residents, closer examination reveals that in a proportional sense, one noteworthy difference concerning 'The larger towns on the Park's boundary' and 'The Park's larger settlements' can be observed. With regard to the buffer zone residents it is apparent that the two options are of equal preference. Amongst the National Park residents, the preference to develop on the Park boundary outnumbers the option of in Park

development by a ratio of nearly 3:1. The inference that residents may prefer housing to be developed in the larger better serviced settlements is somewhat undermined by the majority illustrated in Figure 5.10 that feel that any affordable housing development should be located as close as possible to areas demonstrating need.

Figure 5.11 - Awareness of Individuals and/or Families Living or Working in the National Park, in Need of Affordable Housing

	Unaware	Aware	Not Specified
Buffer zone	114	75	5
National Park	35	24	0
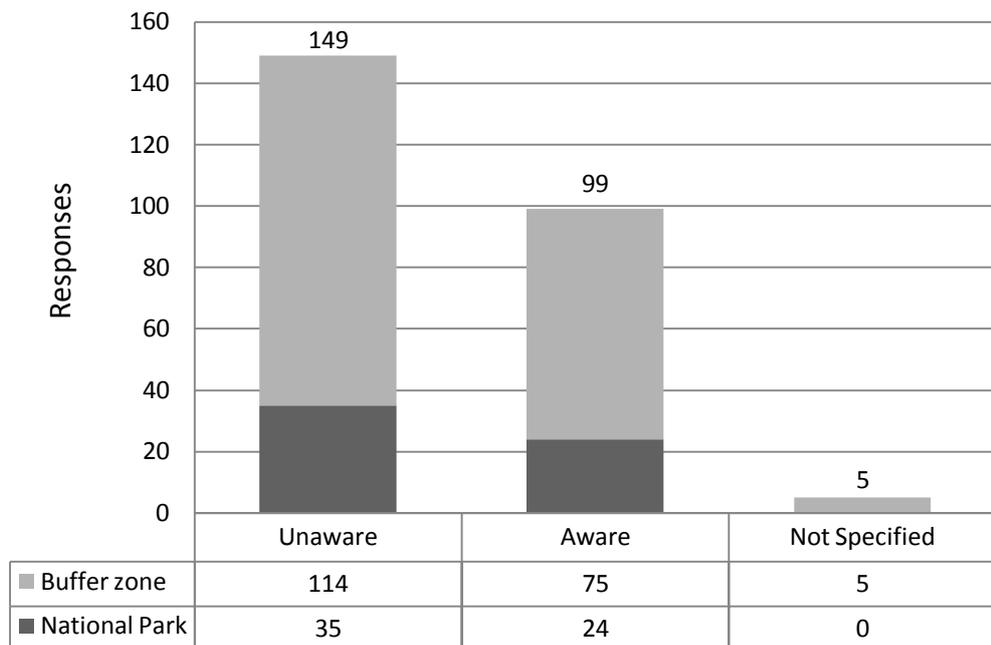
Whilst Figures 5.8 and 5.9 refer to perceptions of a need for more affordable housing, in this instance respondents were asked to state whether they were actually aware of individuals or families living or working in the National Park in need of affordable housing. As Figure 5.11 reveals, the majority of respondents (59%) do not know of any such individuals or families with affordable housing need. This compares to the 99 respondents (39%) who are aware of specific need. Given that the survey did not generate responses from every individual within the National Park, this finding cannot be said to represent precise and irrefutable needs data. However, it does give further weight to the argument that some amount of affordable housing is needed to meet the needs of those living and working in the Park.

When considering those responses in which an answer was specified, awareness of need is present amongst 69% and 66% of the Buffer zone and National Park residents

respectively. These figures suggest that the issue of affordable housing is of equal importance on both sides of the National Park's boundary.

Figure 5.12 - Preferred Prioritisation of Resident Allocation Criteria for Affordable Housing

	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6
■ National Park	2.90	3.32	3.43	3.60	3.37	4.42
■ Buffer Zone	2.25	4.43	2.71	4.25	4.57	2.79

Criterion 1	Those living in the Park or a parish split by the Park boundary but in a home which is unsuitable (e.g. overcrowded or otherwise unsatisfactory by environmental health standards
Criterion 2	Existing residents of the National Park establishing a separate household
Criterion 3	Those in, or taking up full-time employment in an established business within the Park or a parish split by the Park boundary
Criterion 4	Those who do not live in the Park but propose to locate a viable business within the Park which will conserve or enhance the Park's special qualities, or allow opportunities for the public to understand and enjoy special qualities
Criterion 5	Those who do not live in the Park but have a current and long standing link to the local community
Criterion 6	Those closest to any new affordable housing development

Source: Northumberland National Park Local Development Framework, 2008

Note that this question made use of a ranking system and the National Park's six criteria used to define *local* and *local housing need* (Local Development Framework, 2008). The respondents ranked each of the six criteria so that their most preferred option was attributed a value of 6, and their least preferred option a value of 1. The chart demonstrates the average scores derived from all respondents. The higher the value the more preferential residents feel that particular criteria should be when allocating residents for affordable housing.

By aggregating the ranking values (21) and dividing by the number of criteria (6) it is possible to deduce that an average or indifferent rating is equivalent to a value of 3.5 within Figure 5.12. Criteria scoring greater than this value thus constitute a strong preference for allocation, whilst those scoring lower represent a weak preference (i.e. should not be given substantial weighting in the allocation decision making process). From Figure 5.12 it is evident that residents in the National Park and Buffer zone have different preferences about which of the National Park's local resident allocation criteria are most important.

Residents of the National Park express that many of the criteria are of similar importance, with little deviation away from the average score of 3.5. Criteria 6 is the only example scored markedly higher than the average. The importance attributed to those closest to any new affordable housing development reinforces the findings within Figure 5.10, that the location of developments should be determined by housing need. It is also notable that Park residents score Criteria 3 - those in or taking up employment in the Park – higher than those from the buffer zone. This finding demonstrates that Park residents give greater value to developing and sustaining living-working communities within the National Park.

Criteria scores from the Buffer zone residents show much greater divergence from the average score of 3.5. The distinction as to which categories are important and those which are less so is therefore clear within Figure 5.12. Interestingly the Buffer zone residents gave more value to those criteria emphasising existing residents (Criteria 2), an existing link to the Park's communities (Criteria 5) and those proposing to locate a business aimed at conserving or enhance the Park's special qualities (Criteria 4) - In essence criteria that infer preserving existing people, links and attributes of the National Park.

Using the same weighting system as above respondents prioritised considerations for new housing developments

Figure 5.13 - Importance of Considerations for New Housing in and Around the National Park.
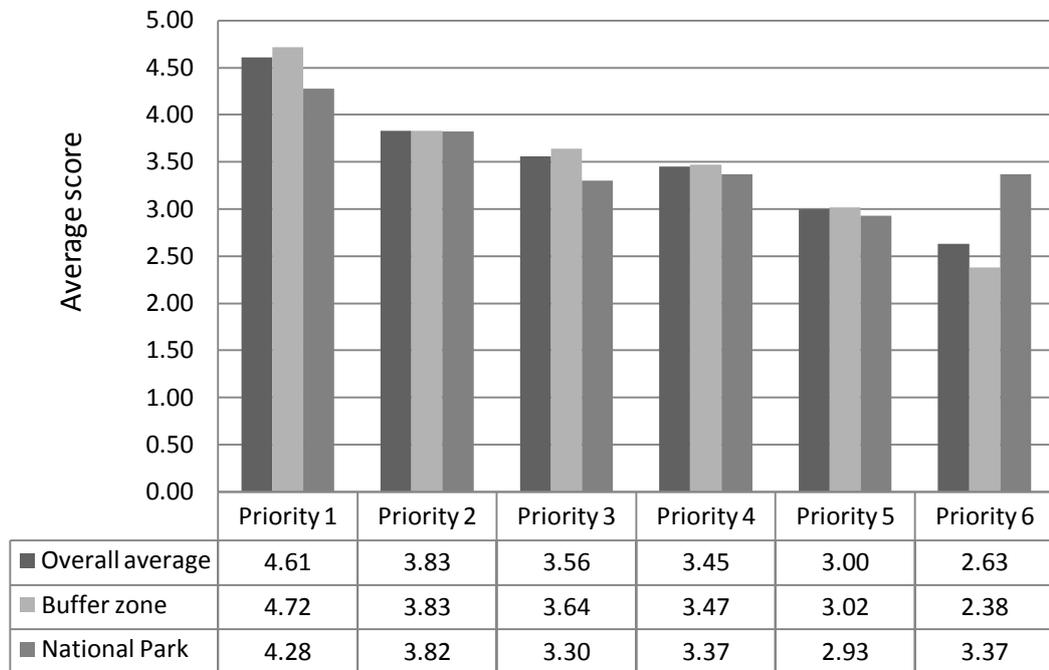
	Priority 1	Priority 2	Priority 3	Priority 4	Priority 5	Priority 6
■ Overall average	4.61	3.83	3.56	3.45	3.00	2.63
■ Buffer zone	4.72	3.83	3.64	3.47	3.02	2.38
■ National Park	4.28	3.82	3.30	3.37	2.93	3.37

Priority 1	Affordability
Priority 2	Resident allocation criteria aimed at meeting local need
Priority 3	Preservation of landscape and settlement character
Priority 4	Involvement of the local workforce
Priority 5	Energy efficient design
Priority 6	Use of local materials

In this instance respondents were asked to prioritise the importance of considerations based on new housing developments in the National Park and its immediate surroundings. Again the value of 3.5 represents a neutral or indifferent view of the consideration; all considerations scoring greater than 3.5 are regarded as higher importance, whilst all below are less so. As such it is evident that affordability is regarded as the most important consideration for any new housing development in the National Park and its immediate surroundings. The criteria used to allocate residents can also be seen as substantially important to respondents', further emphasising the

significance of findings within Figure 5.12. 'Preservation of landscape and settlement character' along with 'Involvement of the local workforce' emerged as being indifferent amongst respondents as a whole, whilst 'Energy efficient designs' and 'Use of local materials' are regarded as the two least important considerations.

In this instance the preferences elicited from residents within and outside of the National Park boundary are largely indifferent. The only notable exception in preferences lies in respect of using local materials, a consideration held in comparatively much higher regard by those residing within the National Park.

5.1.2 Section 2 Results

Section 2 focuses on residents with privately held land in the National Park and the Buffer zone. It excludes the landownership of estates and public bodies which featured in the in-depth semi-structured interviews. As the National Park Authority and Land Registry profess not to hold data on said landholdings, it has been necessary to directly ask residents questions relating to their land. Findings from Section 2 are derived from those 51 respondents who consider their landholdings large enough to site a development of three or more houses. This figure represents one fifth of the respondents, thus signifying the remarkable potential of community members to advise on possible development sites. The nature of this self assessment is not precise since interpretations of what amount of land is required to site three houses will no doubt differ somewhat amongst individuals. However, actual site sizes do vary, so the alternative of stating a specific measurement and expecting landowners to accurately measure their land would by no means increase the objectivity of the inquiry. Despite the triviality in defining applicability to this Section, it is felt that sufficient responses emerged so as to make informed observations regarding the potential of landowners to influence and facilitate affordable housing projects. The emergence of land acquisition (along with planning policies) as the most prominent barrier to affordable housing delivery during the in-depth interviews, serves to underline the relevance and significance of the following results.

Figure 5.14 – Landowners Approached Concerning Development

	Not Approached	Approached
▪ Buffer zone	35	3
▪ National Park	12	1
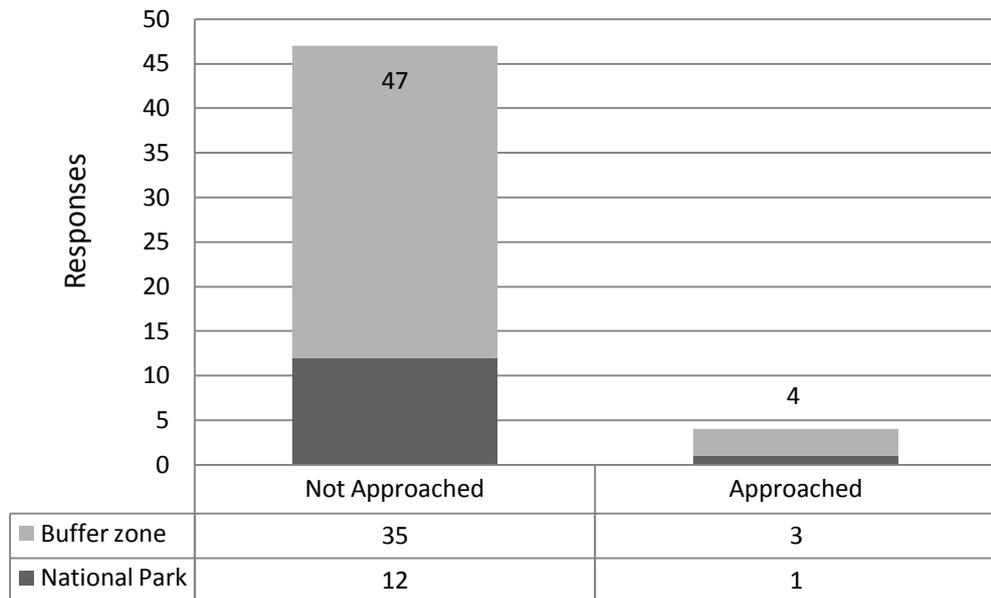
Figure 5.14 demonstrates that only 4 of the 51 respondents have ever been approached by those looking to acquire land. Disaggregating the data reveals that the location of residents appears to have no bearing on the likelihood of being approached regarding land acquisition. In both the National Park and the Buffer zone, landowners were found to be 12 times less likely to have approached.

Figure 5.15 – Willingness to Consider the Release of Land for Affordable Housing
Aimed at Meeting Local Need

	Willing	Unwilling	Don't Know/Not specified
■ Buffer zone	23	15	0
■ National Park	9	3	1
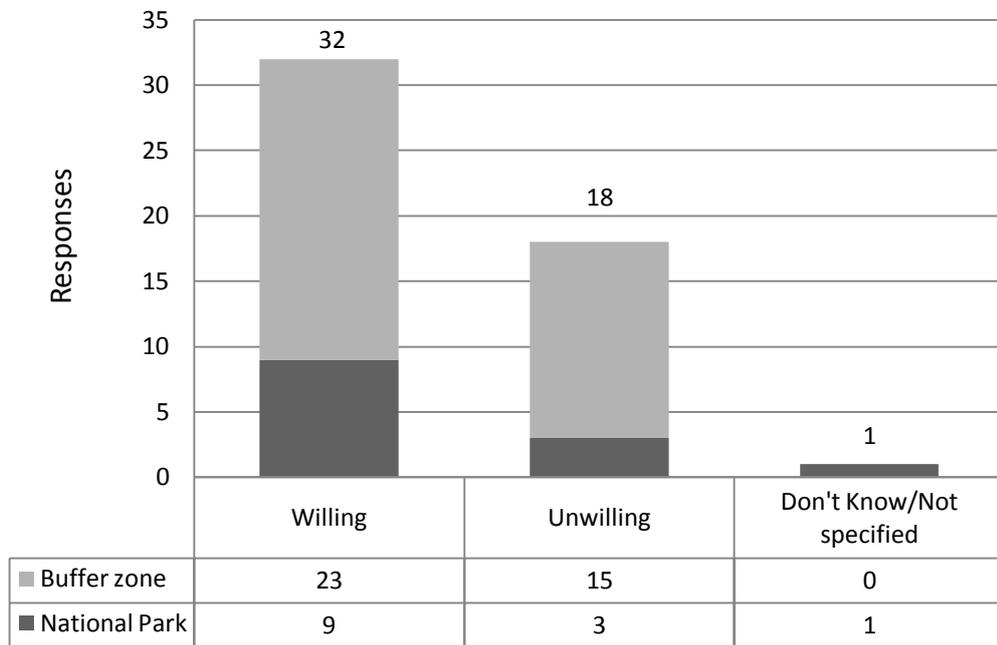
Figure 5.15 illustrates the willingness of the 51 landholders to consider the release of land for affordable housing designed to meet local need. A majority of these landholders (32 individuals, or 63%) expressed such willingness, in comparison with 18 (35%) who were not prepared to release the land in this instance.

61% of those in the Buffer zone expressed a willingness to consider the release of land for affordable housing to meet local need. This compares with 69% of residents in the National Park.

Those 32 respondents who stated that a willingness to consider the release of land for affordable housing were also asked whether they would consider the release of this land at reduced cost. The results of this inquiry are shown in Figure 5.16.

Figure 5.16 - Willingness to Consider the Release of Land for Affordable Housing at Reduced Cost

	Willing	Unwilling	Don't Know/Not specified
▢ Buffer zone	11	11	1
■ National Park	5	4	0
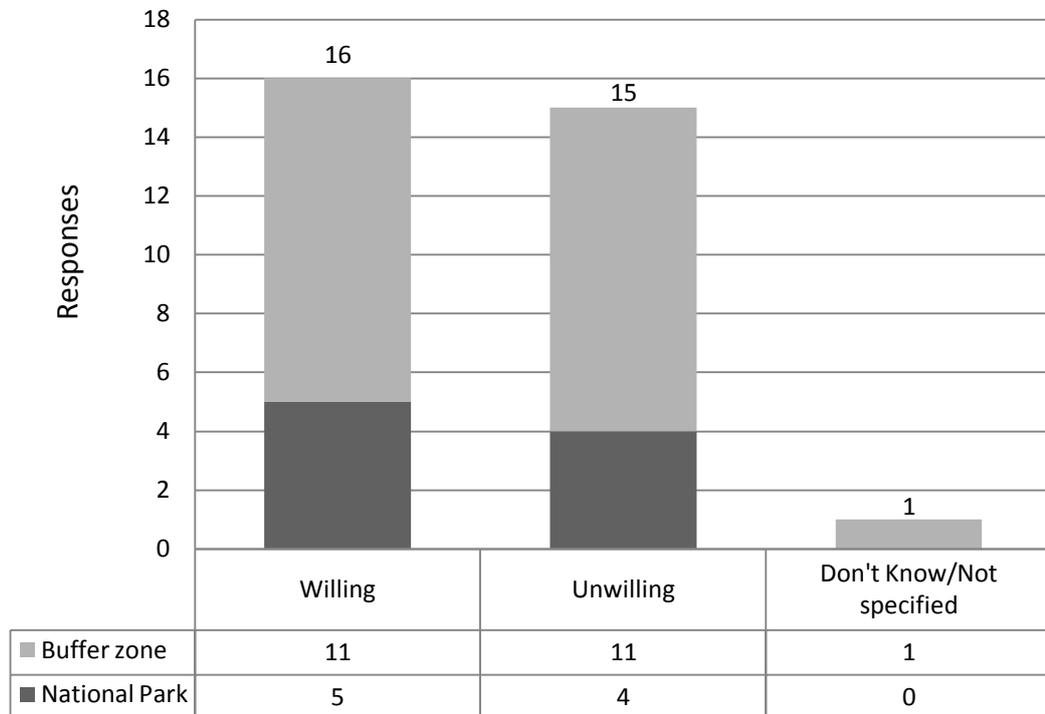
Of those 32 respondents (See Figure 5.15) willing to consider the release of land for affordable housing designed to meet local need, around 50% stated that they would consider the release at a reduced cost. Similarly around 50% declared that they would consider the release of land but would not be prepared to sell at below its market value.

As the data table attached to Figure 5.16 demonstrates the level of willingness to release land at reduced cost applies to both the Buffer zone and National Park landowners.

Figure 5.17 reverts back to all of the 51 landowners whom considered their landholdings large enough to site a development of three or more houses. Here the line of inquiry provides information regarding willingness to consider the release of land for open market housing, and is therefore particularly interesting when contrasted to the release of land for affordable housing within Figure 5.15.

Figure 5.17 - Willingness to Consider the Release of Land for Open Market Housing

	Yes	No	Don't Know/Not specified
Buffer zone	16	22	0
National Park	7	4	2
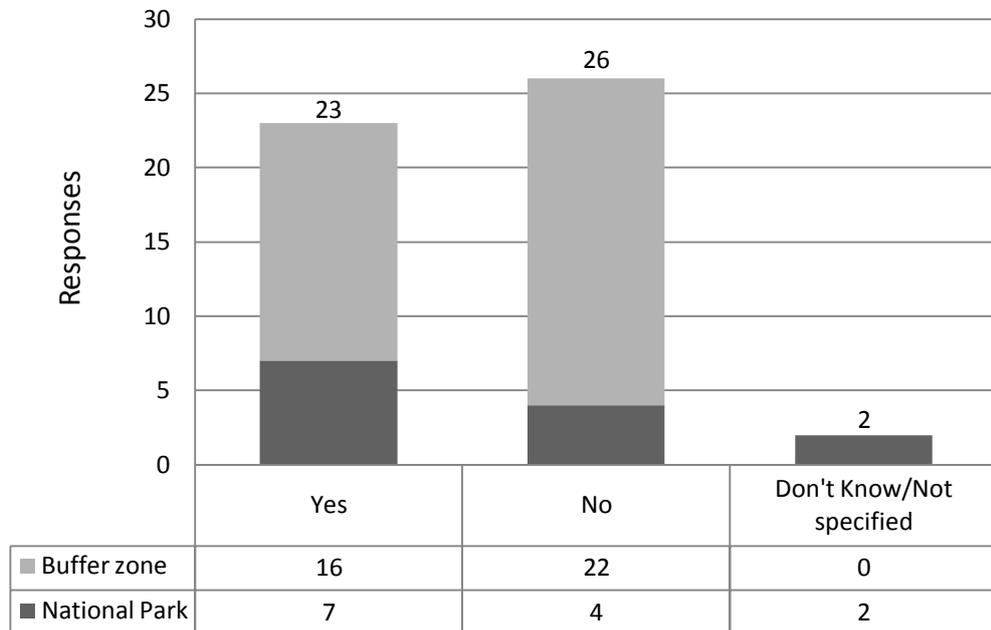
With a sizeable proportion of landholders willing to consider the release of land for affordable housing (63%) it is interesting to note how this compares in relation to open market housing. Figure 5.17 reveals that of the 51 landowners only 23 (45%) expressed a willingness to release land for open market housing. This contrasts with the affordable housing scenario presented in Figure 5.15, in that the respondents willing to release land are actually a minority in this – the open market – case. The comparison of the two cases suggests that certain landowners are only willing to release land on the condition that the housing is affordable, and aimed at meeting local need. Consequently it is logical to assume that for such landowners financial gain does not constitute a prominent influence when considering the release of land for housing. The respective influence of financial gain as well as a range of other factors is further explored in Figure 5.18.

By referring back to Figure 5.15 and the subsequent comments, it is evident that a majority of both National Park and Buffer zone landowners (61% and 68% respectively) exists with regard to willingness to release land for affordable housing aimed at meeting local need. However, in the case of open market housing only 42% of Buffer zone landowners, and 54% of Park landowners, declared a willingness to release land for development.

Figure 5.18 - Influences on the Release of Land for Housing

	Priority 1	Priority 2	Priority 3	Priority 4	Priority 5
■ Overall average	3.63	3.17	3.08	2.70	2.65
■ Buffer zone	3.69	3.50	3.34	2.31	2.45
■ National Park	3.45	2.27	2.36	3.73	3.18
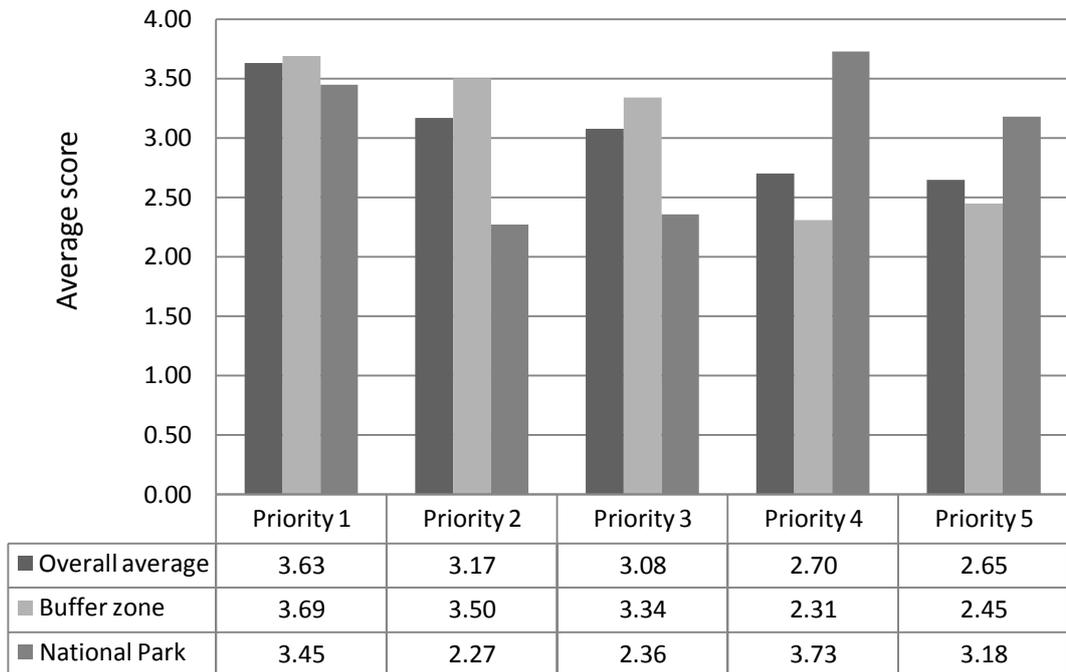
Priority 1	Parties involved
Priority 2	Resident allocation criteria
Priority 3	Affordability of homes
Priority 4	Design of homes
Priority 5	Financial gain

In this instance those with sufficient land ranked five factors with the potential to influence whether their land would be released for a housing development. The factors were attributed a value from 1 to 5, with the most influential factor receiving a value of 5 and the least influential a value of 1. The chart thus demonstrates the average scores from the relevant respondents whereby a higher value represents increased importance in influencing the release of land for housing.

By aggregating the weighting values (15) and dividing by the number of criteria (5) it is possible to deduce that an average or indifferent rating is equivalent to a value of 3 within Figure 5.18. Criteria scoring greater than this value thus constitute the most important factors for landowners in respect of land release for housing developments, whereas values below 3 are considered less important.

Figure 5.18 shows that on the whole 'Parties involved' represents the most important factor amongst landowners when considering the release of land for housing developments. As in Figure 5.13, the resident allocation criteria for any new housing is presented as an important issue. However, somewhat contrary to Figures 5.13 and the deductions made by comparing Figures 5.15 and 5.17, affordability of the hypothesised homes appears to be an indifferent issue to landowners as a whole. Perhaps this is explained by those landowners unwilling to release land for any housing weighting affordability with low scores, or that some landowners do consider affordability important, but not so much as the issues of 'Parties involved' and 'Resident allocation criteria'.

The issues of 'Design of homes' and 'Financial gain' are reported to be the two least important factors for landowners as a whole when considering the release of land for housing developments. However, examining separately the scores of landowners in the National Park and the Buffer zone brings forth some interesting findings. The prioritisation exhibited through the responses of Buffer zone landowners largely mirrors that of the overall average, the only exception being a reversal of the final two priorities; 'Design of homes' and 'Financial gain'. This similarity to the overall average score is unsurprising given that the Buffer zone provided a much larger number of responses than the National Park. As Figure 5.18 demonstrates, the prioritisation derived from National Park landowners differs quite considerably from those within the Buffer zone. National Park landowners appear to attribute much greater importance to the 'Design of homes' and 'Financial gain' associated with developments, culminating in prioritisation as most important and third most important issue respectively. Conversely the issues of 'Resident allocation criteria' and 'Affordability of homes' proved less important amongst landowners in the National Park - a finding which appears to suggest that it is the addition of houses that is most prevalent, not the specifics of those able to inhabit on the basis of wealth or a local connection. As 'Resident allocation criteria' and 'Affordability' are very important to the resident populations as a whole (Figure 5.13), it is apparent that National Park landowners in particular represent a distinctive group within the community.

'Parties involved', referring to the individuals and organisations associated with a development emerged as an important factor for landowners both in the Park and the Buffer zone. Consequently, liaising with landowners to better understand their individual expectations and preferred partners would no doubt prove invaluable in progressing schemes requiring their involvement.

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5.1.3   Section 3 Results

The final questions set out in Section 3 continue to explore the potential for community action and facilitation regarding housing projects. Specifically the questions concern the employees of small, local building firms. 18 respondents stated that they represented such firms, allowing for an insight into the potential of involving the local workforce in local housing projects.

Figure 5.19 - Attempts of Firms to Develop Houses in the National Park or an Adjacent Parish

	Not Attempted	Attempted
■ Buffer zone	9	6
■ National Park	1	2
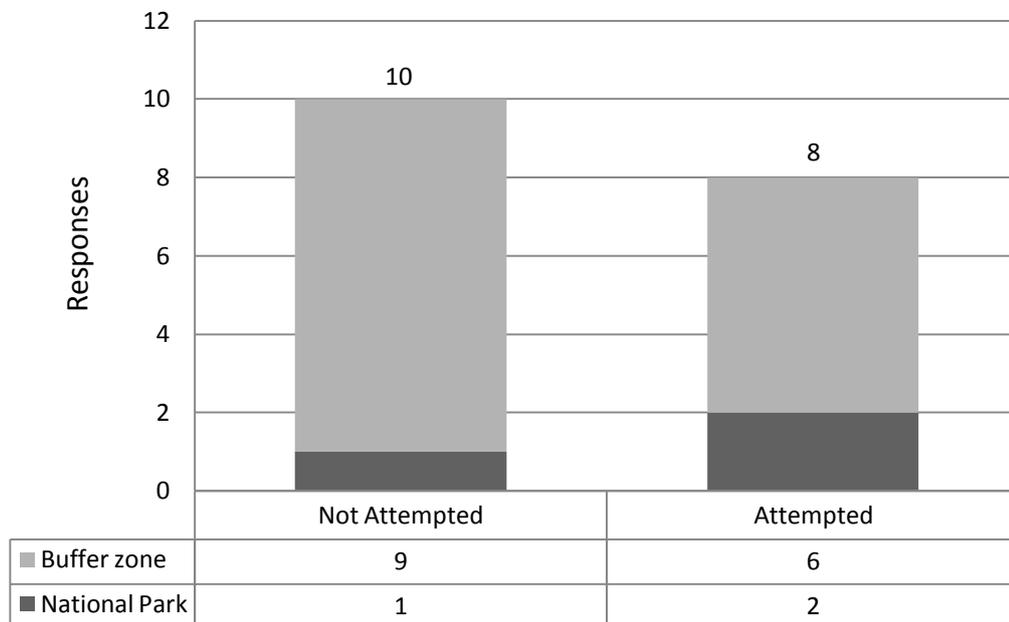
Of the 18 respondents employed within small building firms it was found that a slight majority (56%) have never attempted to develop houses within the National Park or an adjacent parish. However the fact that 44% of the small building firm employees have attempted such development underlines the possibility of involving the local community – and particularly the local workforce – in housing delivery projects. The specific nature of housing development projects the employees consider feasible for their organisations is further explored in Figure 5.20.

Figure 5.19 indicates that a majority of building firms (60%) within the Buffer zone have not attempted to develop houses in or adjacent to the National Park. In contrast only one third of building firm employees located in the National Park stated that no attempt

to develop had been made. In this case the use of disaggregated statistics should only be considered an indication in the potential of community facilitation through local firms. It is realised that although employees of such firms reside within a specified location (in the Buffer zone or the Park itself), it is entirely possible that the firm itself is based in the opposing locality. Without dwelling on the subjectivity of the term, all employees classify themselves as being part of a local firm, and as such it is presumed that all are based in a location which would make projects in or adjacent to the Park feasible. Whether the firms have the necessary experience and capacity to develop housing, or consider development financially unfeasible is another matter. The latter of these considerations is further explored in Figure 5.20.

Figure 5.20 - Feasibility of Building Firms to Develop Affordable Housing

	Feasible	Feasible, but only in conjunction with open market housing	Unfeasible	Don't know/Not specified
■ Buffer zone	4	4	5	2
■ National Park	2	1	0	0
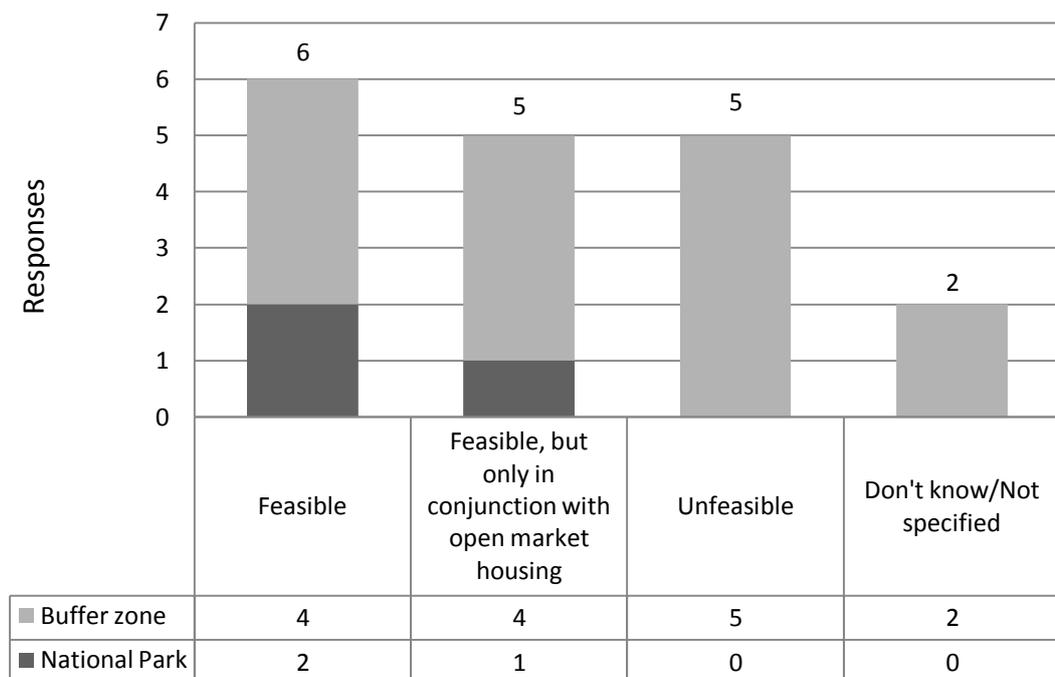
Figure 5.20 demonstrates that 11 of the 18 small building firm employees (61%) considered the development of affordable housing suitable for their organisation; a figure exceeding that which had attempted housing development in the National Park or adjacent parish (Figure 5.19). From a wider strategic or business perspective, this evidence suggests that local building firms could play an increased role in meeting local need.

55% of those employees regarding their organisation as capable of developing affordable houses proclaim that this is possible without the need for cross subsidy through including a proportion of open market housing i.e. it is possible to develop sites consisting solely of affordable homes. The remaining 45% of employees regarding their organisation as capable of delivery affordable houses stated that this is only achievable when permitted to developed mixed sites, i.e. including a proportion of open market housing.

Despite the limited number of applicable responses, disaggregating the data does show that both the National Park and the Buffer zone do contain some proportion of employees who consider their firms capable of developing affordable housing, with or without the need for open market housing. The fact that the number of those considering some form of affordable housing development feasible (Figure 5.20) exceeds those who have attempted development (Figure 5.19), it is plausible to suggest that small, local building firms have the potential to become increasingly involved in any future local affordable housing development.

5.2   Visitor Questionnaire Results

As part of the delivery framework testing process the views of the National Park's users are examined. In surveying the Park's visitors it is possible to ascertain an overview of how important they perceive affordable housing to be in relation to wider issues of landscape and settlement preservation, and ensuring communities are sustainable. Whilst the initial questions seek to understand the nature of visits to the Park, the final two inquiries are borrowed from the Resident Survey, allowing for a comparison of attitudes relating to factors such as location, affordability and design of new housing.

Findings are based upon the collection of 54 visitor surveys obtained from the National visitor centres.

Figure 5.21 – Distance Travelled by Visitors of the National Park
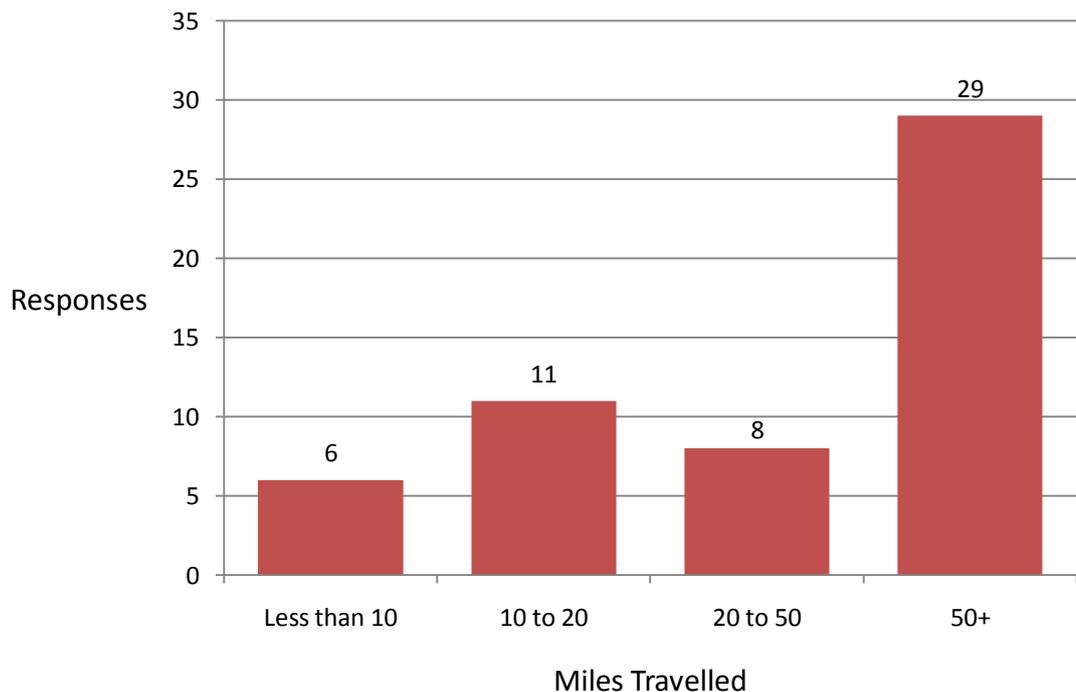
Figure 5.21 demonstrates that Northumberland National Park attracts visitors from a range of distances. With 29 of the 54 respondents (54%) travelling in excess of 50 miles to the Park, this distance represents the most common response. Whilst one may expect greater representation of visitors to come from those residing at a more convenient distance, for example less than 20 miles, it is possible that this populace already consider their local area to exhibit many of the characteristics attracting others

to the Park. This presumption is further supported by the identification of the dissimilar, larger urban areas away from the National Park boundary. The fact that that visitor numbers peak within the '50+ mile' category is somewhat surprising in respect of the lower proportions within the '20 to 50' mile category. Perhaps the higher proportion of visitors travelling longer distances to the National Park is linked to the timing of the survey. In administering the survey during a warm Easter period it is plausible that visitors would be prepared to travel further, to a destination which may otherwise not be considered as appealing. There is also the possibility that some visitors may have quoted their travelled distance including a return journey – a supposition that would help to explain the relative shortage of visitors from 20 to 50 miles.

To better understand the draw of the National Park it is useful to reflect upon the motivations for visiting the National Park. Figure 2.22 illustrates the aggregated responses when visitors were asked to state the most important individual factor leading to their visit.

Figure 2.2 - Primary Attraction for National Park Visitors
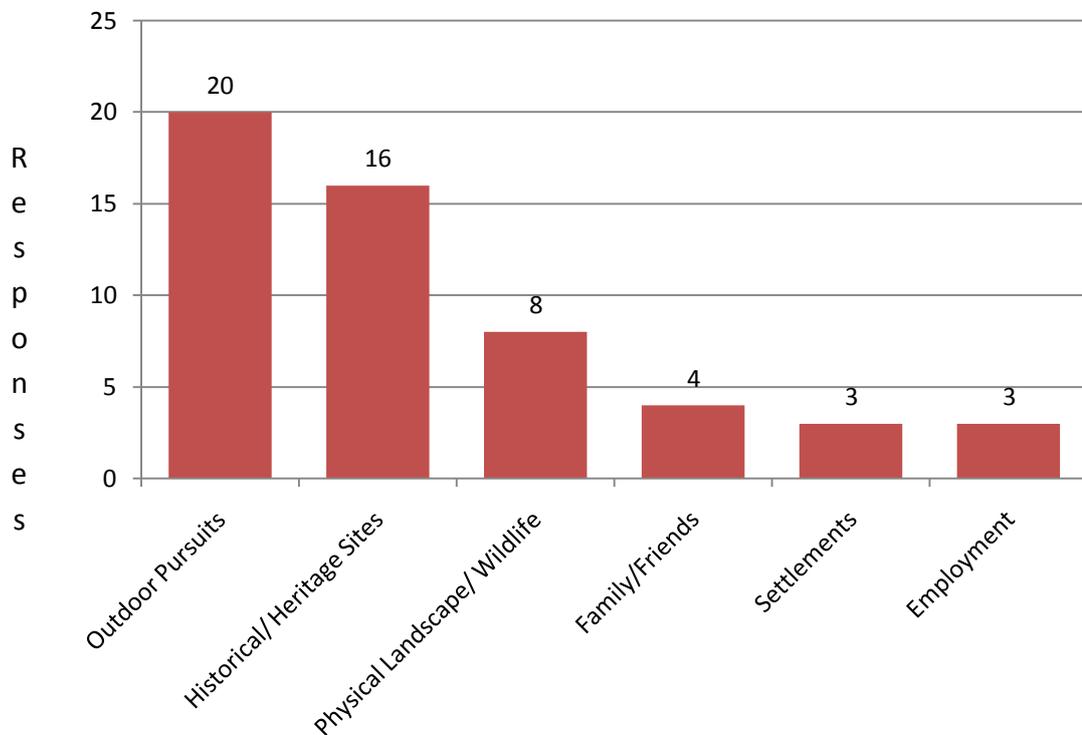
The most popular attraction to Northumberland National Park was found to be the opportunity to partake in 'Outdoor Pursuits', representing the primary reason for 37% of visits. 'Historical and Heritage Sites' can also be seen as a substantial draw to the Park, with 30% of respondents declaring such attractions as their motivation for visiting. Interestingly the physical landscape and settlements of the National Park were found to be less important to visitors, although reasons as to why these categories are under-represented may exist. For instance those who partake in outdoor pursuits – particularly rambling – are also likely to consider the physical environment when making the decision to visit the Park. As such a proportion of those valuing the physical landscape are in all probability, represented in an alternate category. Those that appreciate settlement character are perhaps somewhat absent from the National Park because of relative proximity of Hexham market town. Hexham offers a historic setting in picturesque surroundings as well as an appreciable number of services and convenient transport links.

Although Figure 5.22 gives some indication as to which attractions draw people to the National Park, the importance of visitors to the Park's economy can be better understood when taking into account the frequency of visits (Figure 5.23) and the usage of local services (Figure 5.24)

Figure 5.23 – Frequency of Visits to the National Park
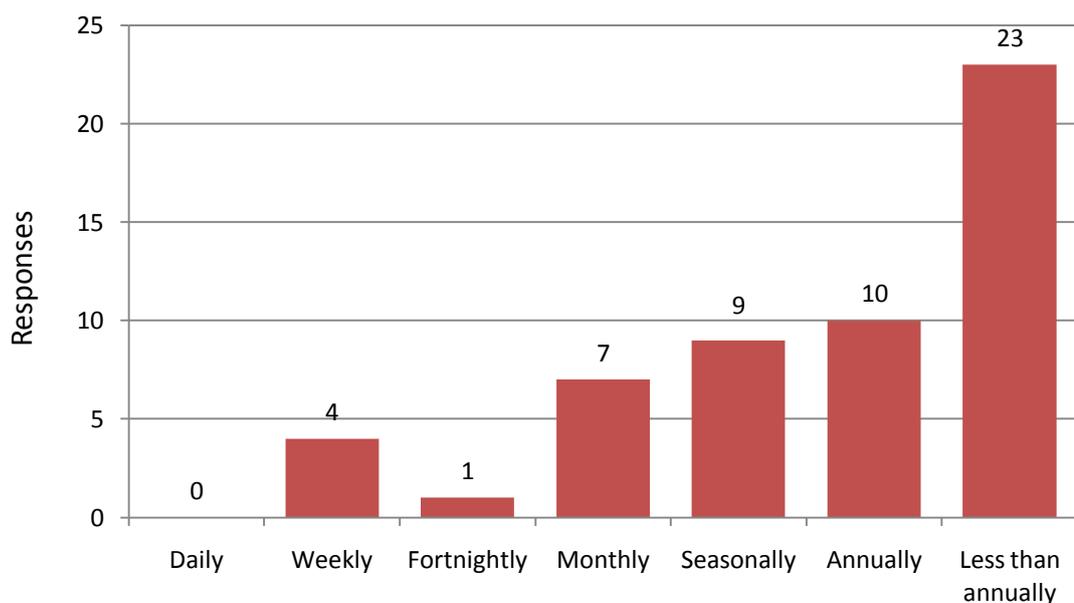
Figure 5.23 illustrates that as a general rule, as the frequency of visits to the Park increases the number of visitors declines. This trend would suggest that the qualities and attractions specific to Northumberland National Park are most often deemed as a rare indulgence for potential visitors. Given that a substantial proportion of the Park's visitors are travelling a significance distance, it is understandable that the visiting frequency tends to be relatively low.

Figure 5.24 - Use of Services when Visiting the National Park
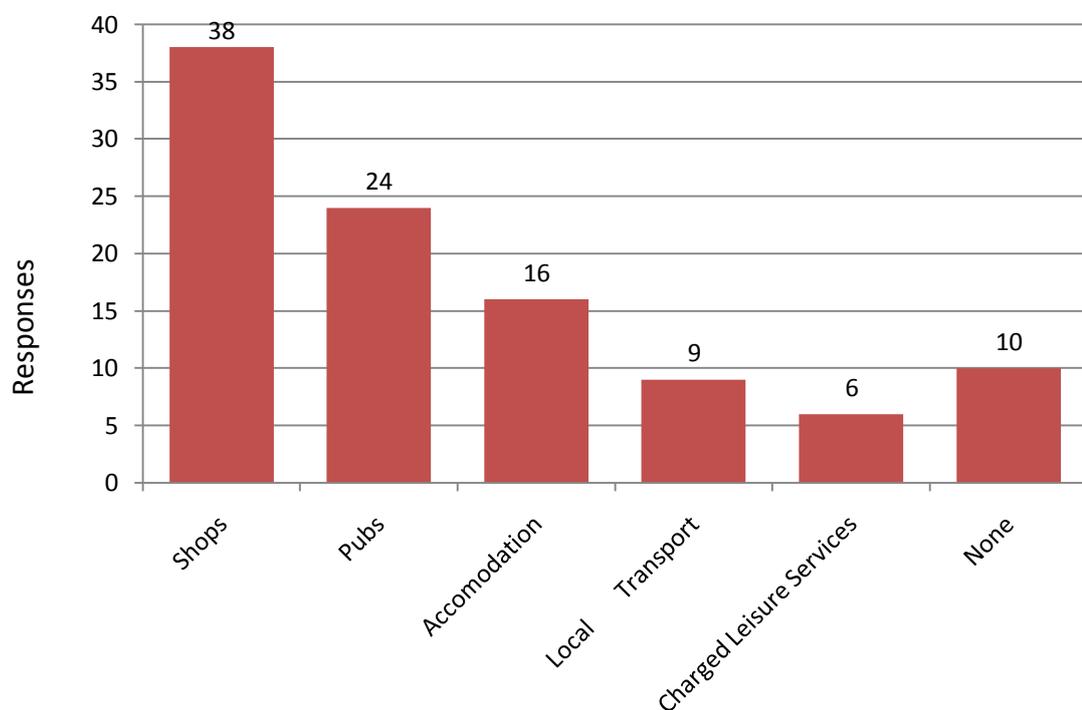
With this particular inquiry visitors were permitted to select all applicable options, thus resulting in a total number of service users (93) in excess of the total number of respondents (54). As Figure 5.24 demonstrates 'Shops' are the most popular service used by 38 of the 54 respondents (70%). Pubs are also a prominently used service, utilised by 44% of the surveyed visitors. Accommodation was found to be used by 30% of visitors, although because the implementation of visitor surveys took place during a period which included Easter, accommodation use is conceivably amplified above the year round average. 10 of the 54 visitors (5%) admitted to making no use of services within the National Park.

The use of services is an important consideration in respect of visitor attitudes towards the future of the National Park – whether in terms of preserving the scenic beauty and settlement character, or favouring developments to promote economic prosperity and more sustainable settlements. Whilst such choices are arguably not dichotomous, analysis can help to identify the relative importance visitors attribute.

The final two questions within the National Park Visitor Survey are also included within the Resident survey. Consequently responses of the two groups are open for comparison.

The first of these questions aims to elicit preferences for the location of affordable housing designed to meet the needs of the National Parks residents and workers. Using the same options available to the residents, visitors' responses are displayed within Figure 5.25a.

Figure 5.25a – Preferred Location for Affordable Housing to Meet the Needs of National Park Residents and Workers
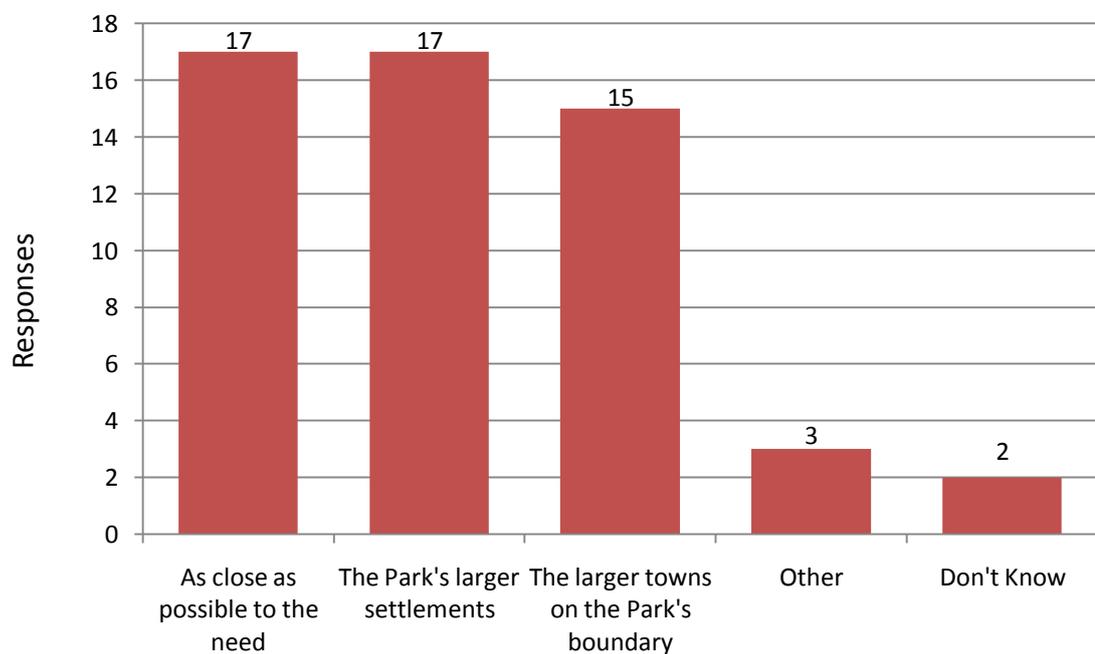
Figure 5.25a reveals that there is no consensus amongst visitors to the National Park as to where affordable housing to meet local need should be situated. With support for the three principal localities emerging as 31%, 31% and 27% respectively, all options are likely to be equally favoured and abhorred by visitors as a whole. Figure 5.25b

provides a comparison of the attitudes of visitors and residents regarding the preferred location for affordable housing designed to meet the need of Park residents and workers.

In order to draw comparisons of the different groups' preferences, responses from each group have been expressed as a percentage. This process results in the responses for each group to total 100, which is the spread accordingly in relation to different preferences for where affordable housing to meet the needs of National Park residents and workers should be located. Intuitively, a higher percentage equates to a stronger preference.

Figure 5.25b – Comparison of Affordable Housing Location Preferences Amongst Residents and Visitors

	As close as possible to the need	The Park's larger settlements	The larger towns on the Park's boundary	Other	Don't Know
■ Visitors	31.5	31.5	27.8	5.6	3.1
■ Resident Average	55.3	16.2	13	6.3	24.3
■ National Park Residents	43.3	25	10	15	5.5
■ Buffer zone Residents	59.1	13.5	14	3.6	20.8
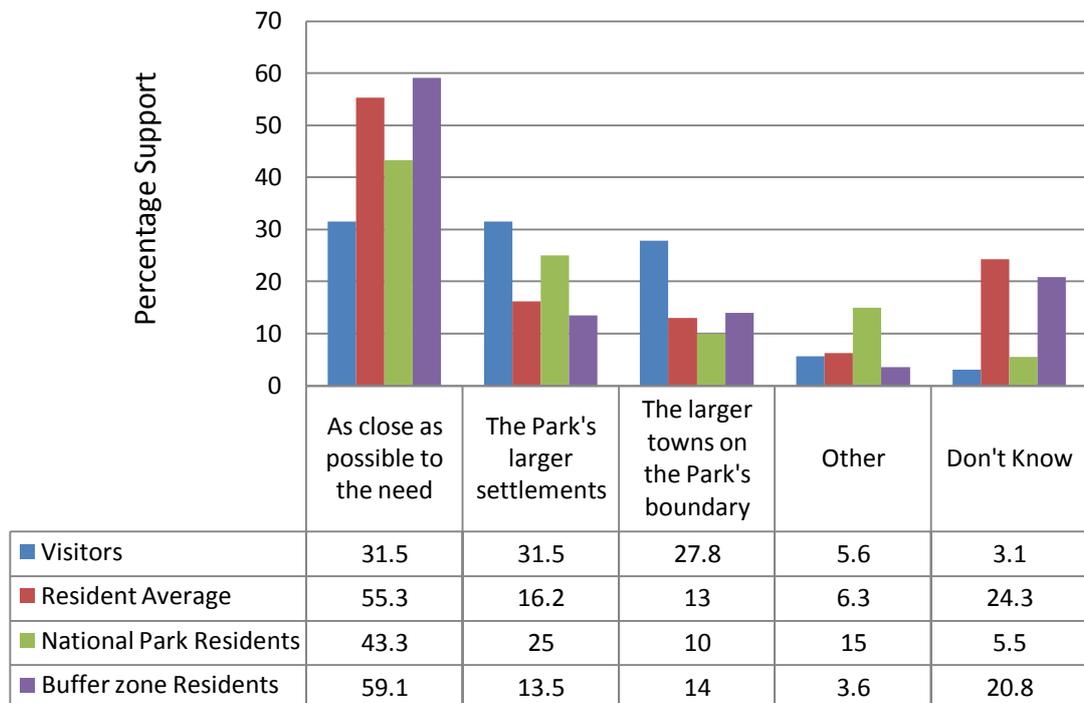
Whilst the findings from the resident survey have already been described within the relevant results section, the purpose of Figure 5.25b is to illustrate how preferences vary between residents and visitors. As shown, visitors are generally less supportive than residents of the notion that affordable housing be located 'As close as possible to need'. In contrast, visitors are more supportive of the options to site affordable housing in 'the National Park's larger settlements' and within 'the larger towns on the Park's boundary'. These two findings may indicate that visitors are less appreciative of the

small scale and importance residents give to the local community – an assertion made strongly by community representatives within the in-depth interviews. The understanding from visitors that the National Park and its immediate surroundings are an individual community - as oppose to a series of individual communities – is a plausible explanation to the divergence in attitudes demonstrated within Figure 5.25b.

With apparent variation amongst residents and visitors regarding preferred location for affordable housing, it is interesting to consider whether attitudes vary as to the importance of additional factors relating to housing developments in and around the National Park. Figure 5.26 shows the importance given to a variety of factors from the perspective of both residents and visitors.

Figure 5.26 – Importance of Considerations for New Housing in and Around the National Park: A Comparison of Visitor and Resident Attitudes
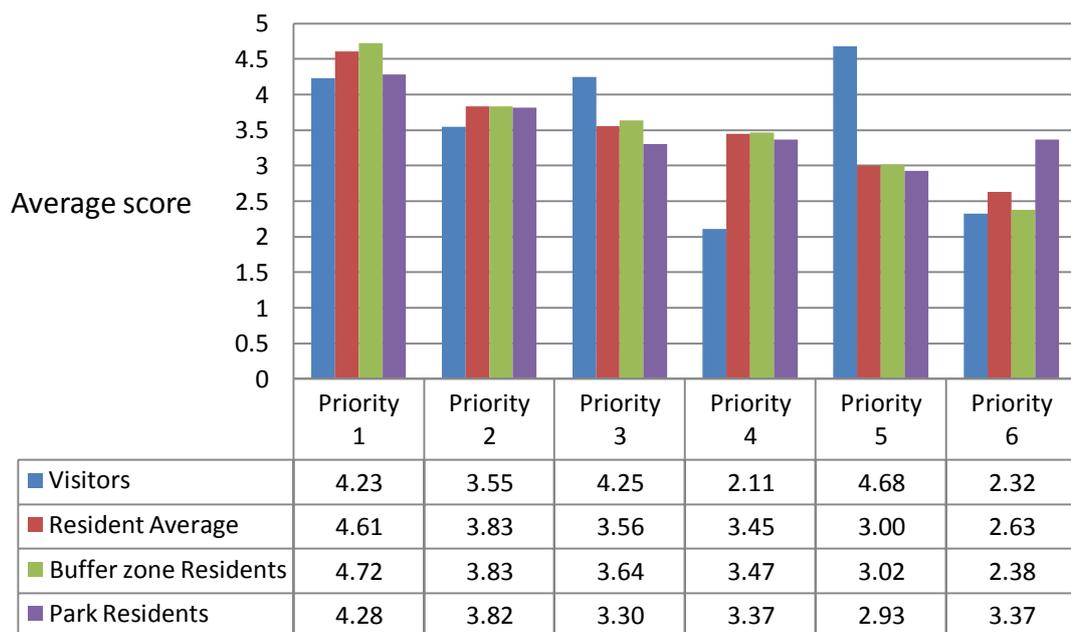
	Priority 1	Priority 2	Priority 3	Priority 4	Priority 5	Priority 6
Visitors	4.23	3.55	4.25	2.11	4.68	2.32
Resident Average	4.61	3.83	3.56	3.45	3.00	2.63
Buffer zone Residents	4.72	3.83	3.64	3.47	3.02	2.38
Park Residents	4.28	3.82	3.30	3.37	2.93	3.37

Priority 1	Affordability
Priority 2	Resident allocation criteria aimed at meeting local need
Priority 3	Preservation of landscape and settlement character
Priority 4	Involvement of the local workforce
Priority 5	Energy efficient design
Priority 6	Use of local materials

The respondents ranked each of the six criteria so that their most preferred option is attributed a value of 6, and there least preferred option a value of 1. By aggregating the ranking values (21) and dividing by the number of criteria (6) it is possible to deduce that an average or indifferent rating is equivalent to a value of 3.5 within Figure 5.26. All considerations scoring greater than 3.5 are regarded as being of higher importance, whilst all below are less so.

Figure 5.26 reveals that visitors have some starkly contrasting views to residents regarding which factors are most important in housing developments in and around the National Park. Most notably visitors to the Park appear to place much more value on energy efficient designs, a factor becoming inherently important to developers through the introduction of new building standards (Department of Communities and Local Government, 2008). The startling support for energy efficient homes does not appear to coincide with a desire for contemporary appearance, since preservation of landscape and settlement character is also of great importance to the Park's visitors – indeed more so than the area's residents. Distinctions between visitors and residents also exist for those factors encompassing a local element. Visitors appeared to consider 'Involvement of the local workforce' markedly less important than had the residents as a whole. Interestingly visitors' views on the importance of using local materials appeared to align with residents of the Buffer zone, i.e. regarding the factor substantially less important than those residing within the National Park itself.

Affordability, Resident Allocation Criteria and Preservation of the Landscape and Settlement Character constitute the three factors which visitors and average residents scored above the level of indifference (a score of 3.5). Only the Park residents believed this to be of lesser importance than additional factors, namely the involvement of local materials and the local workforce. This finding further substantiates the importance of 'local' to residents and communities within the National Park.

5.3 Analysis and Discussion

The Delivery Framework testing process aimed to test a number of ideas postulated during the initial in-depth semi structured interviews with housing and planning professionals. The analysis is based upon the findings from questionnaire surveys targeting residents of the National Park, the Buffer zone and also the Park's visitors. The findings can be categorised into three themes:

- Community perceptions of affordable housing and its delivery
- Attitudes surrounding community representation
- Potential of small-scale landowners and building firms in the facilitation of affordable housing delivery

Here each of the themes is considered in turn.

5.3.1 Community Perceptions of Affordable Housing and its Delivery

As specialist knowledge is required to comment on the application of affordable housing delivery mechanisms, this issue is not under examination from the residents and visitors. Instead the inquiries and subsequent analysis draw upon the available data to determine the extent of different opinions and to establish significant trends and relationships amongst different groups. The issues examined include; how affordable need is perceived, to what extent affordable housing is supported/opposed in different areas and by different groups, and whether the importance of particular considerations in new housing development are linked to other factors.

Referring back to the findings from the initial in-depth semi structured interviews featuring respondents in a professional capacity, an overwhelming majority declared affordable housing to be in high or critical need. Interviewees anticipated that the residents themselves would for the most part be in agreement that some level of need did exist. However, certain interviewees believed that although communities would in principle support the case for affordable housing, a preference would emerge that any developments should be located outside of their settlement, perhaps because of nimbyism. Those interviewees working in a community development role tended to express that newcomers to the National Park are generally against affordable housing, having themselves purchased on the open market into an area of high landscape character which development may threaten. Conversely those with a longstanding

association are regarded by the interviewees as more supportive of development proposals which hold the potential to cater for those they know to be in need, whilst acting to enhance the long term sustainability of their communities.

In respect of the delivery framework testing results, it is possible to remark upon the consistencies and discrepancies amongst the residents and the professionals featured in the in-depth interviews.

Results from the resident surveys reinforce the notion from housing and planning professionals, that a majority of the residents in and around Northumberland National Park do acknowledge a need for more affordable housing. Whilst those residing in the Buffer zone are more receptive than National Park residents to the suggestion of affordable housing in their own settlements, both groups equally support the notion that affordable housing is needed elsewhere in the Park and/or its immediate surroundings. Examining trends and relationships through cross referencing results within the delivery framework can help to establish whether these differences represent nimbyism on the Park residents' behalf, or a belief that affordable housing is simply more necessary and better suited to certain areas and settlements. There is certainly evidence from the academic literature that nimbyism has the potential to restrict affordable housing provision (Gallent et al 2002).

Although the National Park is by its very nature a distinct geographical area, those professional interviewees most familiar with the inhabitants declared that the Park's residents did not identify themselves as a single, homogeneous community. Alternatively, residents were said to identify themselves as part of more localised communities. Eliciting relationships using definitions of 'community' alternative to the National Park-Buffer zone dichotomy could help to better inform of the residents' distinctive attitudes, needs and aspirations based on location. This line of inquiry thus helps to establish the extent of diversity throughout the study area, allowing for local support organisations and the National Park Authority to better facilitate community development. In essence defining a community is necessary for the notion of sustainable community development proposed by Connelly et al (2008) which aims to integrate sustainable development principles, long-term planning processes and specific community priorities.

Alternative definitions of communities to consider include housing market areas, and the National Park's action areas. Using the distinctions within DTZs Northumberland Housing Market Assessment (2006), residents can be classified into one of two basic categories; rural hinterland or the commuter zone. Attempting to classify responses in

this manner is imprecise since the boundaries between housing market areas are blurred (Figure 5.27).

Figure 5.27 – Blurred Boundaries of Northumberland's Housing Market Areas
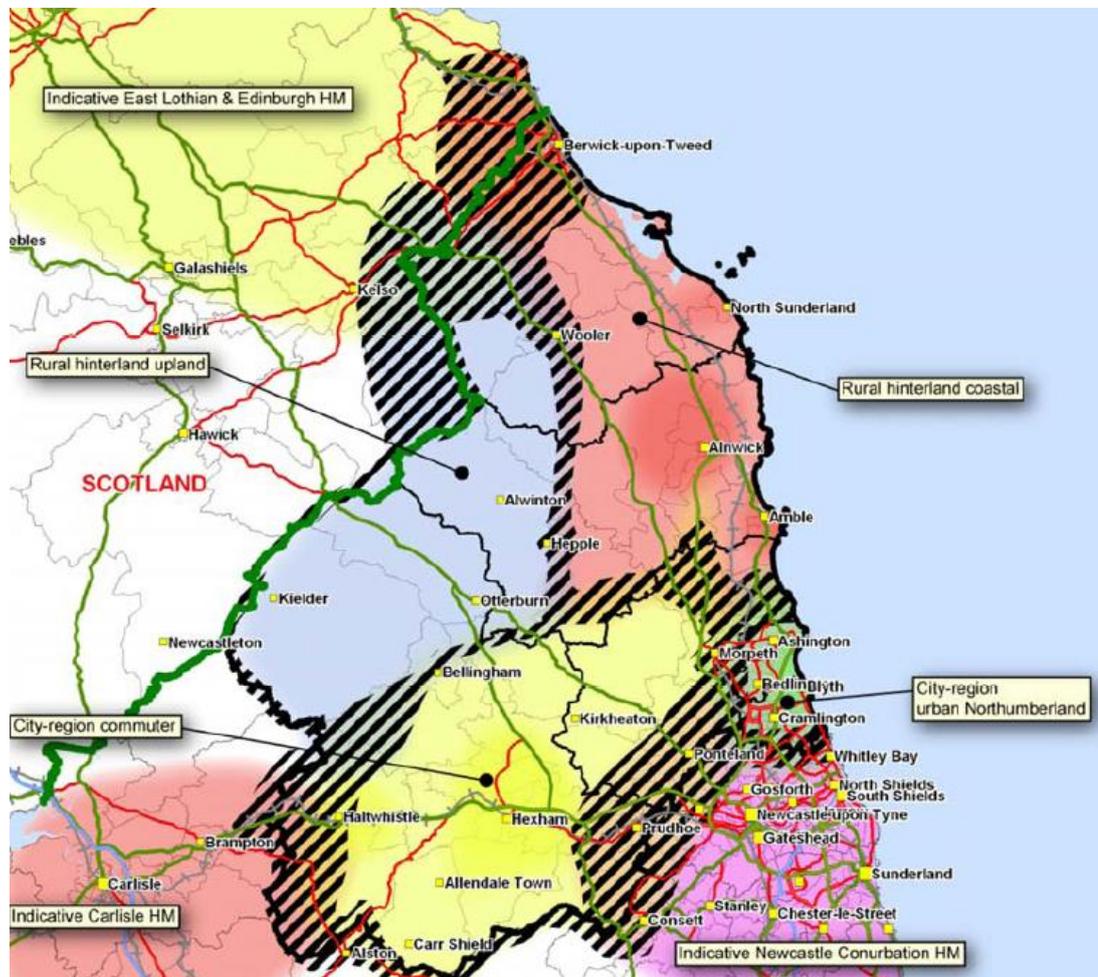
Source: Northumberland Sub-Regional Housing Strategy, 2007

Comparing responses from each market area in respect of residents' perception of need shows that there is no distinction to be made in the perceptions of those within the rural hinterland and the commuter zone. The proportional similarity in perceptions within the Rural Hinterland and Commuter zone affirms that although some quantity of affordable housing is thought to be required throughout the study area, the adoption of housing markets as a means of defining distinct communities is an inadequate strategy. The inadequacy of housing markets may in part be due to the absence of definitive boundaries, or simply that the areas are too large to take account of the

diversity they encompass. Here, action areas (Figure 5.28) representing a more intricate means of defining communities are explored.

Figure 5.28 – Action Areas Making up Northumberland National Park and its Buffer Zone
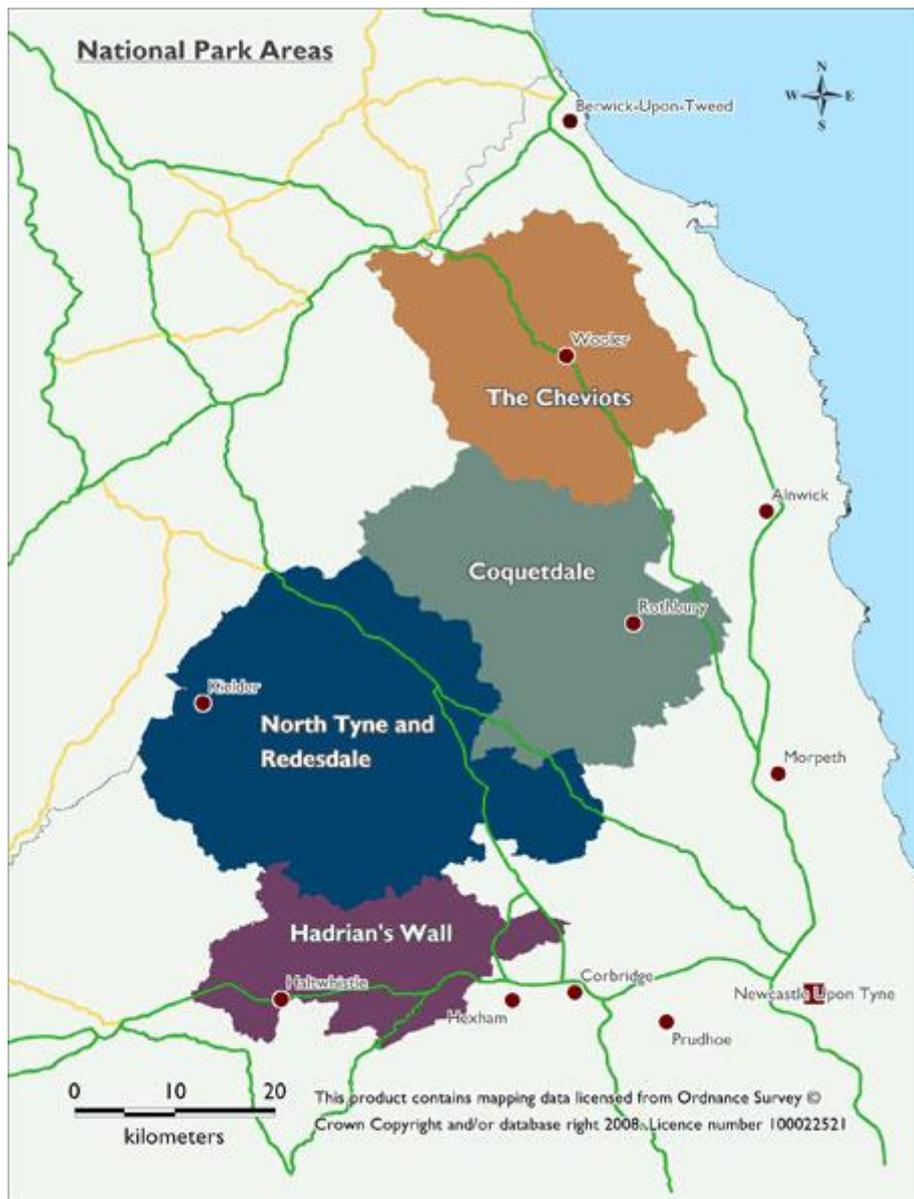
Source: Northumberland National Park Authority, 2008

The National Park Authority uses four action areas as an aid to managing the National Park. The action areas are based upon the notion that the natural and cultural qualities express themselves differently from one part of the Park to another, creating areas of

locally distinctive character (Northumberland National Park Authority Local Development Framework, 2008). Figure 5.29 examines the responses of those residents whose action area was determinable, in respect of their perception of affordable housing need within their settlement.

Figure 5.29 – Perceptions of Affordable Housing Need in Relation to Action Areas
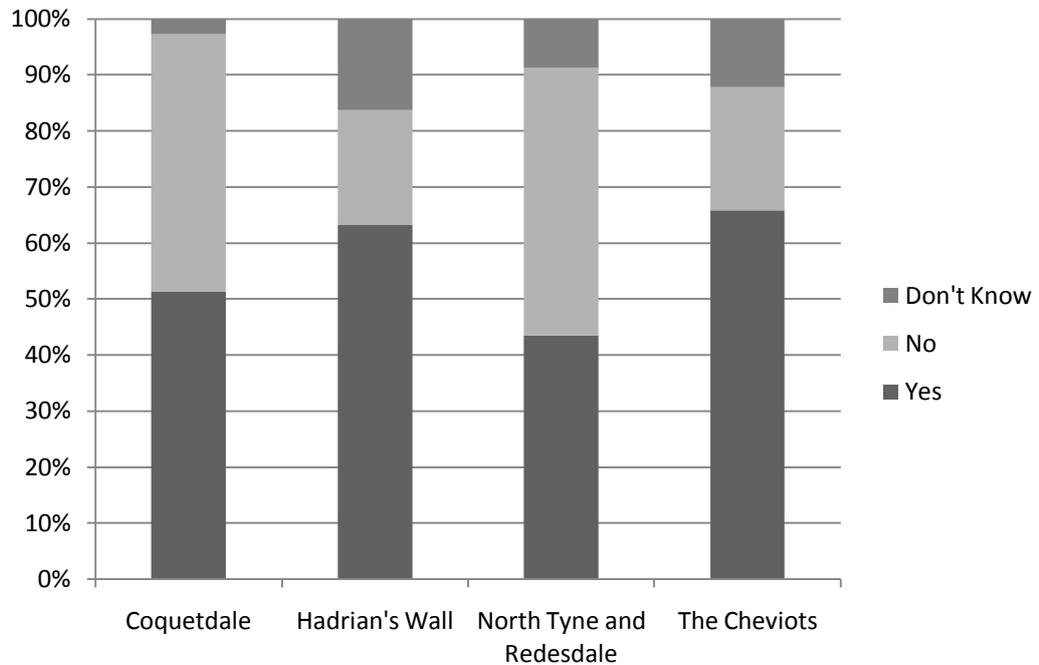
Table 5.1 – Comparison of Percentages from Figure 5.29

	Yes (%)	No (%)	Don't Know (%)
Coquetdale	51.4	45.9	2.7
Hadrian's Wall	63.3	20.4	16.3
North Tyne and Redesdale	43.5	47.8	8.7
The Cheviots	65.9	22.0	12.2

Figure 5.29 indicates that action areas can provide a valuable means of identifying where different attitudes and perceptions exist within the study area. When considering perceptions of need within the respondents' settlement, the data demonstrates the substantial contrasts between the different action areas. The areas of Coquetdale and North Tyne and Redesdale show that the number of respondents perceiving affordable

housing need in their settlement is very similar to those who do not. Contrastingly, in both the Hadrian's Wall and Cheviots action areas, the number of residents perceiving affordable housing need within their settlements outweighs those who do not by a ratio of 3:1. This finding corresponds to the responses provided by the area's estate agents, who identified these two areas as being under particular pressure from prospective commuters and second home owners respectively. Of all of the areas, The Cheviots is the only one to have played host to any recent affordable housing development. It is plausible that the affordable housing development in Wooler - spearheaded by Glendale Gateway Trust - has helped the Cheviot respondents to more fully appreciate local affordable housing need. The fact that a clear majority of residents in the Cheviot area continue to perceive a need within their settlements provides sound justification for considering further development in this action area. This finding is congruous to the comments of developers in the interview process who only began to fully appreciate the level of housing need having already risked a development in an area without comprehensive needs data. The fact that residents in and around Glendale perceive affordable housing need is perhaps a result of the large proportion of second homes within the Berwick upon Tweed area (Commission for Rural Communities, 2006). As Gallent et al (2004) note, the central issue with English second homes is not their overall number – or proportion relative to the national housing stock – but their tendency to concentrate in the most attractive areas and to combine with retirement purchasing to create a range of highly localised difficulties.

Figure 5.29 thus helps to justify the Park Authority's stance on action areas as distinctive communities. The action areas appear to provide a better understanding of how attitudes differ throughout the study area than is possible through using a simplistic National Park and Buffer zone dichotomy. Although observed differences in residents' perceptions cannot irrefutably dismiss nimbyism in its entirety on the improbable grounds that nimbys could be congregated in particular action areas, it is evident that communities are capable of possessing distinctive attitudes. Whilst there remains debate in how to define a community the findings undermine the idea of a typical gemeinschaft rural community, which is overly simplistic and thus of little value in progressing development on the basis of community specific resources and aspirations (see for example Harper, 1989). Instead the Park's use of action areas – designated on the basis of natural and cultural qualities – appears to effectively distinguish communities. Such designation is analogous to Leipins' (2000) proposal that communities should be defined not solely on the grounds of location, but in relation to people, meanings, practices and spaces/structures.

As the resident surveys demonstrate that levels of specific need awareness (i.e. knowing a particular individual of family in need of affordable housing) appears to be equal in the National Park and Buffer zone, it is logical to assume that the issue of affordable housing is equally important for both localities. Adopting the premise that affordable housing is equally important both in the National Park and the Buffer zone, questions immediately emerge as to why differences in preferred development locations exist between the two sets of residents. Whilst both sets of residents are most keen to see development as close as possible to need, Park residents are notably reluctant to see development in the Park's larger settlements. Instead Park residents preferring development to be located in a larger settlement are more likely to favour the largest settlement within the locality, i.e. the gateway settlements. Findings that Park residents accept the idea of dealing with need at its source, and that a substantial number perceive need to exist serves to undermine the idea of a substantial nimby faction. It also serves to support Scott el al's (2009) proposal that development be based on joined up policies informed by accurate assessments of need at the local level.

The preference for development in the most highly serviced settlements reflects the notions of the Regional Spatial Strategy that development and regeneration should be located in what are already considered to be sustainable settlements. Nevertheless, when taking into account the resounding majority of residents in the study that opted for affordable housing development to be located as close as possible to the need, it is clear that residents feel that the location of need should have greatest weight in determining where new affordable housing development should be situated – not the sustainability of settlements based upon their size and services. The emphasis residents place on dealing with need at its source highlights the importance of maintaining comprehensive need surveys. Such a move would invariably help to justify development, and ensure that delivery be carried out in locations with demonstrable need. The findings also indicate that a cautious approach towards administering overarching regional strategies is required if the kind of locally specific development put forth in the recent Sustainable Communities Act (2010) is to be achieved.

The notion arising in the interviews, that duration of residency in the National Park is related to the support/opposition of affordable housing can be explored using multiple findings from the resident survey. The interviewees expressed that longstanding residents within the National Park are more receptive to the suggestion of affordable housing need. The reasoning proposed for the supportive stance stems from an attitude that the socio-economic sustainability of the residents' settlements requires

additional housing and people. Conversely short-term residents are generally regarded by the interviewees to be preservationists able to afford property on the open market and with minimal reliance on local services. As the aforementioned comments were made in specific reference to the National Park, Figure 5.30 and Table 5.2 deal specifically with this group of residents, and how their perceptions of need for affordable housing in their settlement varies in relation to their duration of residency.

Figure 5.30 – Perception of Affordable Housing Need in Relation to Duration of residency

Length of Residency (years)
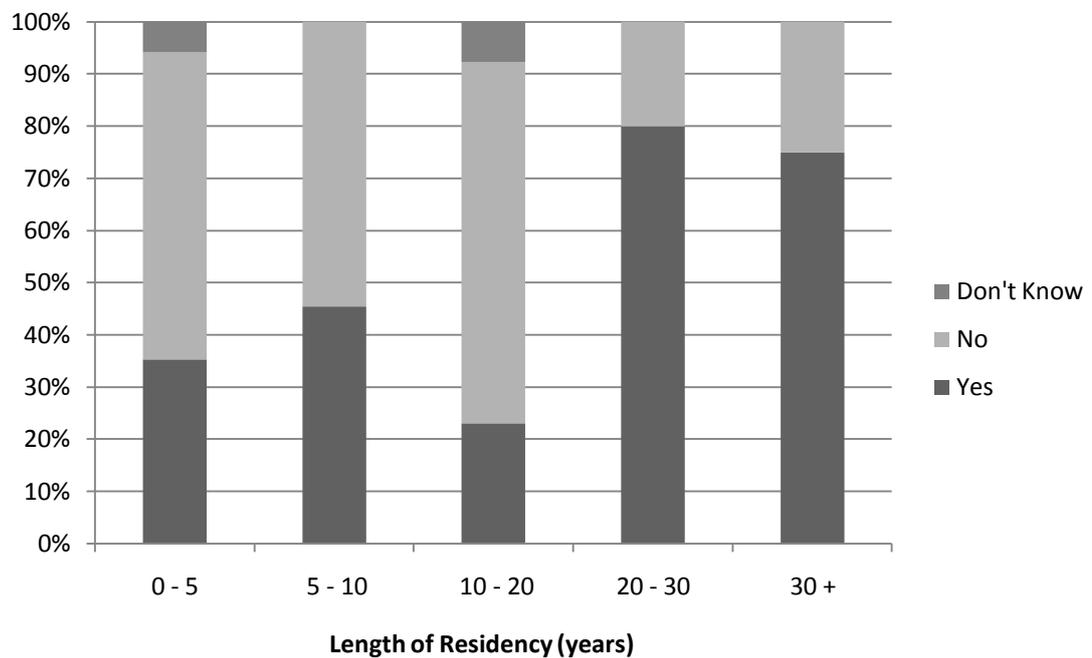
Table 5.2 – Comparison of Percentages from Figure 5.30

	Yes (%)	No (%)	Don't Know (%)
0 – 5 years	35.3	58.8	5.9
5 -10 years	45.5	54.5	0.0
10 – 20 years	23.1	69.2	7.7
20 – 30 years	80.0	20.0	0.0
30 – 40 years	75.0	25.0	0.0

Figure 5.30 reveals that residents in the National Park appear to be more receptive to the need for affordable housing in their settlement when having resided for a longer period. Although there are clearly some exceptions the trend is strongly pronounced, particularly amongst those who have resided in the Park excess of 20 years. Application of the Mann-Whitney U test confirms a statistical significance in the relationship between perceptions of affordable housing need and duration of residency (p value of 0.0247 = <0.05 (95% confidence level) shows that data supports the hypothesis that there is a significant difference between the length of residency amongst the *yes-no* populations).

As certain professionals predicted during the interview process, there do appear to be different opinions and attitudes amongst the long and short-term residents when it comes to perceptions of need in one's own settlement. However, the reasoning behind the professionals' view is not supported in this case. Closer examination of the data reveals no trend in the length of residency and the importance given towards preservation of landscape and settlement character (or any other consideration associated with new housing developments).

The lack of trends associated with length of residency and importance of considerations in new housing developments serves to highlight the complexity in trying to predict how residents and communities will react to development proposals. The finding signifies the difficultly and dangers in categorising residents in the way certain housing and planning professionals attempted to. It is more likely that each community, however the term is defined, includes a diverse mix of individuals with differing lengths of residency and different attitudes built around personal experiences, influences and perceptions. For example, an individual who had a relatively short length of residency in the area but is dependent upon residents to support their local business, may well have different opinions to someone who was perhaps enjoying a long retirement in the area, having been attracted specifically by the area's landscape. Figure 5.31 displays how perceptions of affordable housing need in one's own settlement differ in respect of the factor attracting residents to the area.

Figure 5.31 - Reason for Moving to the Park and Percentages of Perceptions
Regarding Affordable Housing Need in Residents' Own Settlement
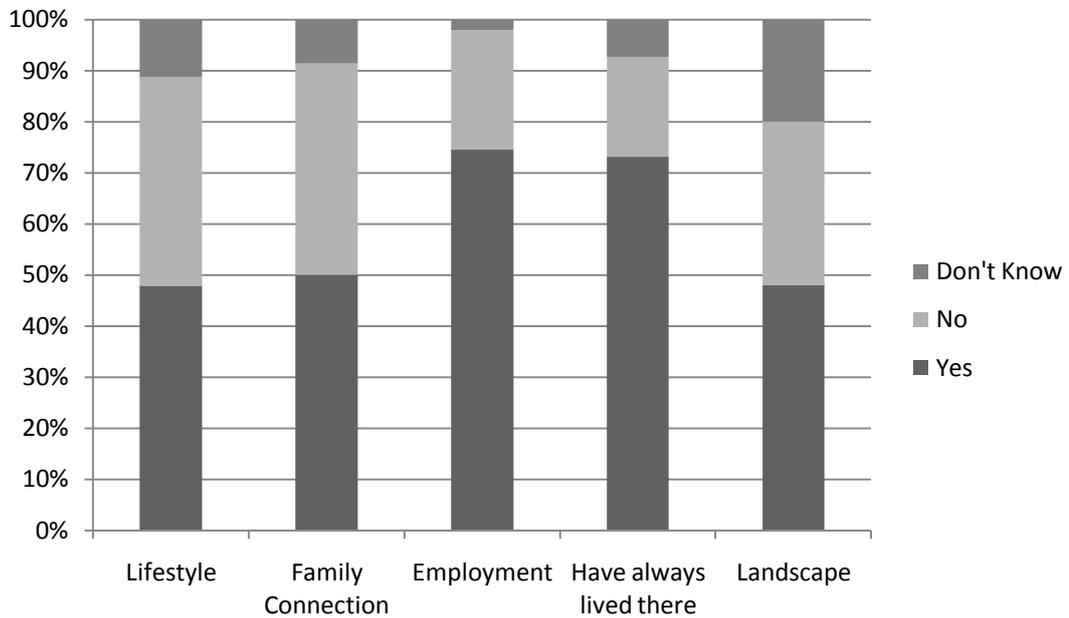
Table 5.3 – Comparison of Percentages from Figure 5.31

	Yes (%)	No (%)	Don't Know (%)
Lifestyle	48	41	11
Family Connection	50	41	9
Employment	74	23	2
Have always lived there	73	20	7
Landscape	48	32	20

When examining the proportions of responses within Figure 5.31, some very interesting
findings come to light. Whilst the responses for the majority of categories manifest as a
well balanced mix, those that have moved to the area for employment, and those who
have always lived in the area, provide a more one-sided result. The two latter groups
typified by their integration in the Park's communities and socio-economic processes,
are evidently much more inclined to perceive housing need in their settlements than
any of the other groups. The idea that those most strongly connected and integrated
with the National Park's socio-economic processes are also those most likely to
support affordable housing proposals echoes the comments of those interviewees

whose profession entails working directly with the local communities. The idea of a connection to the area serving as a formative factor in perception of affordable housing need is further supported in Figure 5.32 which depicts resident employment status and perception of need within their settlement as percentages.

Figure 5.32 – Employment Status and Perception of Affordable Housing Need
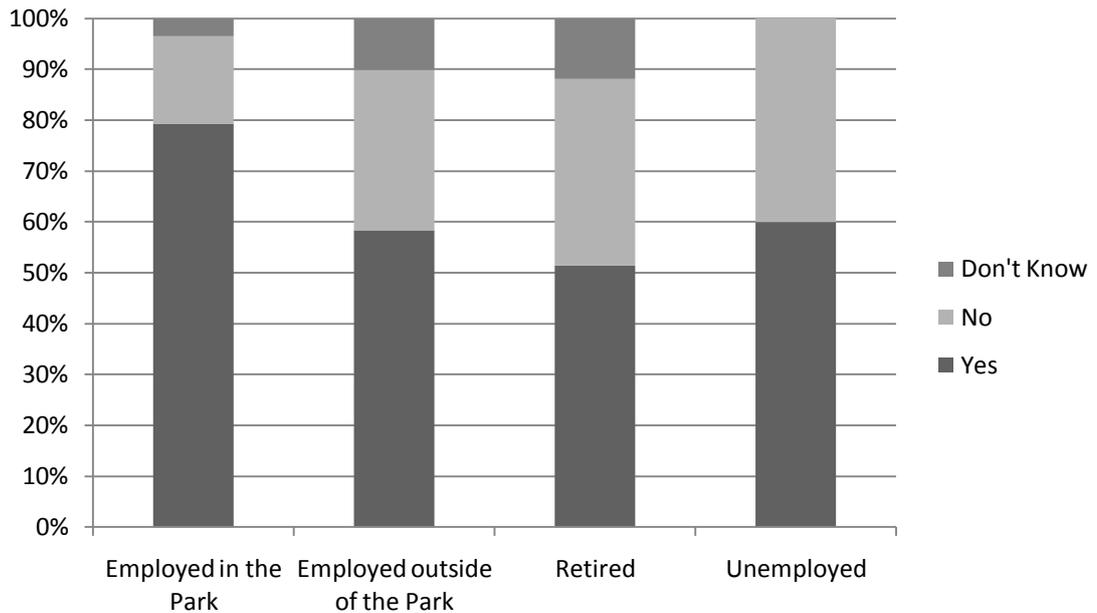
Table 5.4 – Comparison of Percentages from Figure 5.32

	Yes (%)	No (%)	Don't Know (%)
Employed in the Park	79.3	17.2	3.4
Employed outside of the Park	58.3	31.5	10.2
Retired	51.5	36.6	11.9
Unemployed	60.0	40.0	0.0

Figure 5.32 conclusively shows that those employed in the National Park are those most likely to perceive affordable housing need within their settlements. Figures 5.31 and 5.32 thus demonstrate how the connection to the local community does relate to more supportive perceptions regarding affordable housing need.

Whilst there is sufficient evidence to support relationships between perceptions of affordable housing need and factors such as action area, length of residency and

connections to the area's socio-economic processes, relationships pertaining the importance associated with considerations in new housing developments are less tangible.

Given that a connection to the area appears to be an important factor in perceptions of affordable housing need, it is worth examining how this factor also relates to how respondents prioritise other considerations associated with new housing developments. Figure 5.33 considers prioritisation in respect of the reason for moving to the study area.

Figure 5.33 - Importance of Considerations based upon Reason for Moving to the Area
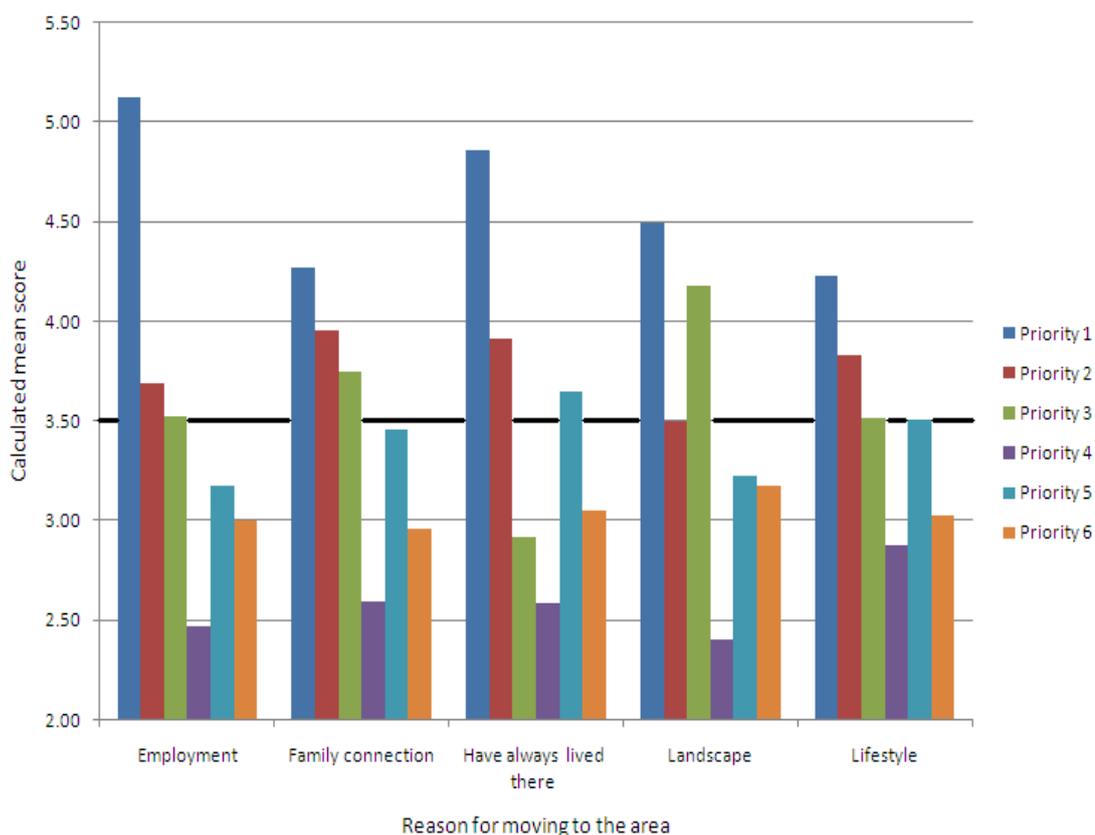
Table 5.5 – Key to Priorities within Figure 5.33

Priority 1	Affordability
Priority 2	Resident allocation criteria aimed at meeting local need
Priority 3	Preservation of landscape and settlement character
Priority 4	Involvement of the local workforce
Priority 5	Energy efficient design
Priority 6	Use of local materials

Again it is evident that interesting findings emerge in respect of those considered most strongly linked to the area's socio economic processes, i.e. those moving to the area specifically for employment, and those who have always lived in the area. Although all of the groups regard affordability as the most important factor to be considered in new housing developments, it is those who have always lived in the area, and those who have moved to the area for employment who allocated the highest scores to the issue.

Intriguingly, those residents that have always lived in the area demonstrated a pronounced disregard for the preservation of landscape and settlement character (See Figure 5.33). Some authors (Cairncross, 2004; CRC, 2007) have suggested that it is the National Park's prioritisation of preservation and conservation - embedded within the Sandford principal and Environment Act (1995) – that makes difficult the delivery of affordable housing and development of sustainable communities. The finding that those residents most likely to be integrated within sustainable communities are amongst those least concerned with preservation reinforces this view, and those expressed within the recent Taylor Review (DCLG, 2008) - that National Parks must heighten the importance of social and economic wellbeing to a level akin to that of environmental preservation. Such a move would serve to align the three elements of sustainability for a more balanced development process (Arman et al, 2009). Although tensions inevitably exist between the opposing causes of action - adherence to core principles and openness to reinterpretation and adaptation (Kates et al., 2005) - there is mounting pressure and evidence to consider the latter so that priorities of relevant departments and authorities become increasingly well defined and consistent. Although this may appear a momentous change, it is one which has already been suggested for wider government (Elsdon et al, 1998; Owens and Cowell, 2002).

On the basis of a mean average, the ranking of the considerations within Figure 5.33 appear to be similar amongst the different groups. Using the Kruskal-Wallace test it is possible to determine whether the importance residents attach to the various considerations associated with new housing development, differ significantly in respect of the reasons for moving to the area. Where H values are larger than 9.49 (0.05 significance level for 4 degrees of freedom) the null hypothesis that all populations have the same distribution can be rejected, i.e. a significant difference exists amongst the populations. Table 5 demonstrates the H values for each of the considerations and clarifies whether any statistically significant difference exists amongst populations defined by their reason for moving to the area.

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Table 5.6 - Significance of Considerations Amongst Resident Groups based upon Reason for Moving to the Area

Affordability	12.78	significant
Resident Allocation	1.33	insignificant
Preservation	8.23	insignificant
Energy Efficient Design	0.31	insignificant
Local Materials	1.83	insignificant
Local Workforce	2.65	insignificant

The Kruskal-Wallace test identifies that the importance attributed to affordability differs significantly amongst the populations defined by their reason for moving to the area. Although affordability emerged as the most prioritised group amongst all of the populations, The Kruskal-Wallace test signifies that levels of prioritisation are not consistent throughout.

Reflecting upon Figure 5.33, it may be a surprise to find that preservation of character is not regarded as being significantly different amongst the populations, particularly in respect of the apparent difference in average scores between those who have always lived in the area and those who have moved there primarily because of the landscape. The relevant value from the Kruskal-Wallace test does signify some degree of significance in the relationship; in fact a value in excess of the 0.15 p-value which corresponds to a significant difference at the 85% confidence level. The reason that the significant difference is not observable at the 95% confidence level (p=0.05), is attributable to the relatively low number of residents who have moved to the area specifically for the landscape. The relatively low number (22) within this category acts to reduce the degree of confidence one can hold regarding the observable difference in mean scores. Nevertheless, it is striking that those who have always lived in the area regard preservation lower than any other group.

Although preservation of character is a leading argument to militate against development in areas adjudged to be of scenic beauty, as a whole, those indigenous to the area place greater importance on the affordability and allocation criteria. However, as this finding is based upon residents' reasons for moving to the Park and not any specific location, the spatial element required to act upon the conclusion within communities is absent. Figure 5.34 thus incorporates the attested action area

communities in respect of the importance given to the various housing development considerations.

Figure 5.34 - Importance of Considerations in Housing Developments in Respect of Action Area
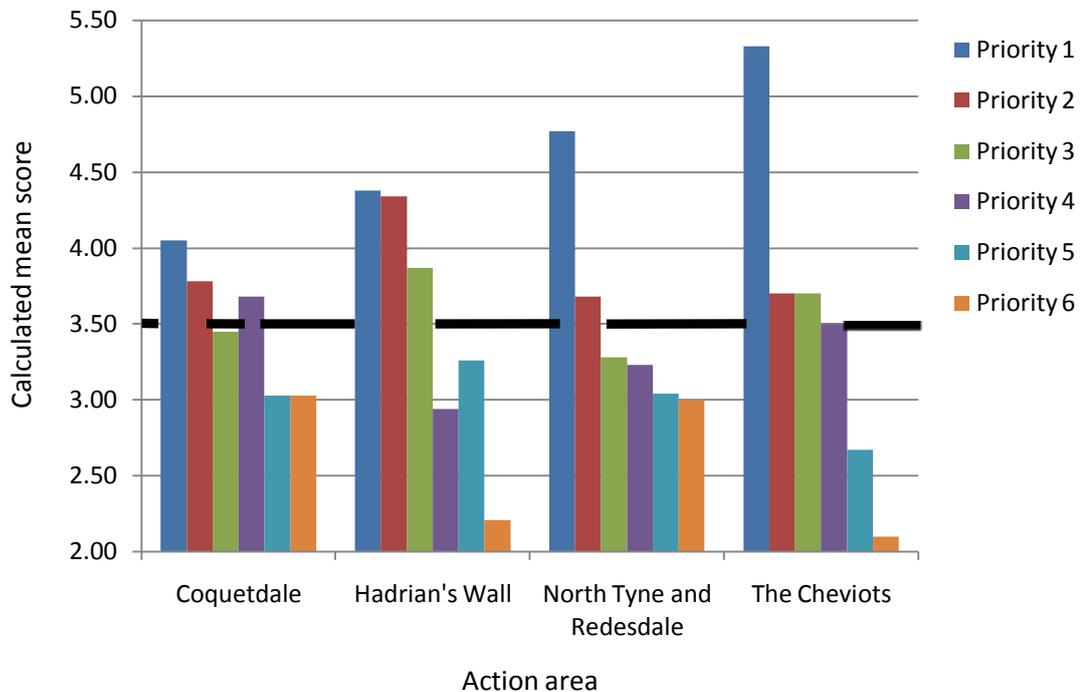
Table 5.7 – Key to Priorities within Figure 5.34

Priority 1	Affordability
Priority 2	Resident allocation criteria aimed at meeting local need
Priority 3	Preservation of landscape and settlement character
Priority 4	Involvement of the local workforce
Priority 5	Energy efficient design
Priority 6	Use of local materials

Figure 5.34 reveals that for all of the action areas, many of the considerations for new housing development manifest around the average score line (a score of 3.5). That is to say that the considerations, in the view of the communities as a whole, are neither important nor unimportant. Results from the Kruskal-Wallace test in Table 5.8 identify which of the considerations can be said to differ significantly amongst the action area

populations. In order for a difference to be classified as statistically significant the H value must exceed 7.81 (the 0.05 p-value for 3 degrees of freedom).

Table 5.8 - Action Area and Considerations for New Housing Development

Affordability	14.46	significant
Resident Allocation	4.68	insignificant
Preservation	3.34	insignificant
Energy Efficient Design	2.76	insignificant
Local Materials	10.68	significant
Local Workforce	5.54	insignificant

The findings from the Kruskal-Wallace test identify significant differences amongst the action area populations for two considerations; affordability and use of local materials. Just as the considerations were regarded in respect of reasons for moving to the area, affordability emerged as the most important across all populations. However, in noting the obvious range in the average affordability scores within Figure 5.34, it is unsurprising to discover statistically significant differences exist amongst the action area populations. The prominence of affordability as a consideration for new housing development amongst the Cheviot residents parallels the high proportion of those perceiving need in their settlement (Figure 5.28). Conversely although residents from the North Tyne and Redesdale area attribute high importance to the issue of affordability in new housing developments, the perception of whether or not affordable housing is needed within the residents' settlements is divided equally. In essence, although the extent of local need is debatable within the North Tyne and Redesdale area, there is a sizeable belief that any new developments anywhere within the Park and its immediate surroundings should take into account the need for housing to be affordable.

Whilst plausible reasons for the differences in affordability scores have already been discussed, the difference in scoring the use of local materials consideration appears unique to the action areas populations. Referring to the mean scores it is apparent that the prioritisation of local materials differs markedly between certain action areas. Whereas the Coquetdale and North Tyne and Redesdale areas exhibit scores around 3 (slightly below the average of 3.5), the Hadrian's Wall and Cheviot areas exhibit scores around 2.2 – much lower than any other consideration. The Cheviot area in particular,

distinctive because of the high levels of second home ownership, demonstrates an accentuated importance for affordability at the expense of other considerations such as the use of local materials. Comparing the scores attributed to the use of local materials shows no apparent relationship to the wider issue of preservation of settlement and landscape character. For the Cheviot area it is entirely possible that the high concentration of second and holiday homes attested by the Commission for Rural Communities (2006) and estate agents participating within the interview process, have served to heighten the importance residents attribute to affordable housing. Whilst the Prince of Wales' Affordable Rural Housing Initiative Good Design Guide (2006) emphasises the need for high standards of design, use of local materials sympathetic to the character and identity of the area – regardless of cost, it is apparent from the research that such idealistic action is not always feasible for developers. For those, like the Cheviot residents, who are directly affected by the lack of affordable housing, the inclusion of local materials is much less important than ensuring any developments are first and foremost affordable. Although there is an argument that developments should be seen as a long term investment which warrant the surmounting of financial barriers (Connelly et al, 2008), the current economic climate and comments from developers infer that some compromise or changes to the way funding can be acquired may is likely required.

On the whole it is evident that relationships between considerations for new housing development and populations of the study area (defined in various ways) are not as frequent as those concerning perceptions of need. Although a number of significant trends have been highlighted for particular considerations and populations, it should also be stated that inquiries on the basis of length of residency and employment status provided no noteworthy relationships with these considerations. Nevertheless, those relationships which have proved to be significant do hold value in helping to understand the attitudes and relative importance certain groups attribute to considerations associated to new housing development.

Findings from the initial in-depth interviews showed that the criteria used in the allocation of residents into new housing can represent a decisive factor in generating public support for developments. During the interviews National Park staff expressed their concern that residents' lack of familiarity with the allocation criteria could serve to undermine developments designed to benefit the local population and businesses. The resident surveys revealed that those living in the National Park are actually those least concerned with providing for fellow Park residents. Instead those within the Park placed

more emphasis on providing for those involved with - or embarking on - employment ventures.

This finding thus serves to highlight the importance Park residents give to its sustainable future and justifies a move away from the idea of the consumption countryside which continues to exert a negative effect on physical and economic planning (Lowe, 2007). Although there are concerns that certain types of 'outsider' relocating to the Park can exacerbate the affordable housing problem (as previously detailed by Richards and Satsangi, 2004; Bathurst, 2007; Morris, 2007) residents are not against in-migration per se. Instead the residents perceive in-migration as a means to stimulate both employment and business growth of the local economy – a finding mirroring those of Stockdale and Findlay (2004), and Bosworth (2006).

As a number of statistically significant relationships have emerged through categorisation pertaining to action area of residency, length of residency, reason for moving to the area and employment status, these same factors have been considered in relation to the importance given to the various resident allocation criteria outlined within the National Park's Local Development Framework (2008):

Table 5.9 – Local Resident Allocation Criteria

Criterion 1	Those living in the Park or a parish split by the Park boundary but in a home which is unsuitable (e.g. overcrowded or otherwise unsatisfactory by environmental health standards
Criterion 2	Existing residents of the National Park establishing a separate household
Criterion 3	Those in, or taking up full-time employment in an established business within the Park or a parish split by the Park boundary
Criterion 4	Those who do not live in the Park but propose to locate a viable business within the Park which will conserve or enhance the Park's special qualities, or allow opportunities for the public to understand and enjoy special qualities
Criterion 5	Those who do not live in the Park but have a current and longstanding link to the local community
Criterion 6	Those closest to any new affordable housing development

Source: Northumberland National Park Local Development Framework (2008)

Although the resident survey results show variation in criteria scoring by National Park and buffer zone residents, when cross referencing the criteria scores with action area of residency, length of residency, reason for moving to the area and employment status, criteria 2, 4 and 5 consistently ranked as highly important. These criteria correspond with those prioritised by the buffer zone residents, but fail to demonstrate the preferences of the comparatively small Park resident population. For instance, the resident survey results demonstrated that criteria 3 and 6 are shown to be valued markedly higher amongst the Park residents than those within the Buffer zone. On these grounds it is difficult to argue that any of these criteria are truly of low importance.

The outcome of this analysis demonstrates that although as a whole certain criteria are favoured amongst residents, a variety of themes encompassed within the criteria are deemed important. For example, whilst the high scores attributed to Criterion 6 specifically by those in the Park, reveals the importance of catering for the areas of need, the highly favoured Criteria 4 and 5 confirm that local need is more complicated than dealing with those residing within the locality. As a whole residents expressed that those from outside of the community should also be considered for affordable housing should they have a current and longstanding link to the local community, or propose to locate a viable business related to the Park's special qualities. In reality the extent to which these criteria would be prioritised is likely to be influenced by a number of factors including; the development's location, the number of new houses provided, the number of applicants on housing waiting lists and the influences of the newly formed Unitary Authority's emerging housing policies.

Given that the interviewees were keen to express the link between affordable housing delivery and economic sustainability of the area's settlements, it is also important to consider the diversity of views amongst the area's visitors, who help to sustain the local economy.

Referring to the findings from the visitor surveys it emerged that visitors on the whole attribute greater scores to the preservation of character and energy efficient design than the residents. However, visitors attribute lower scores in respect of involvement of the local workforce. These findings reflect how visitors use the Park; primarily for Outdoor Pursuits, Historical/heritage sites and Physical landscape/wildlife. Few cited Family/friends, Settlements and Employment as motivation for their visit, highlighting the lack of reliance and connection to the areas socio-economic processes. When considered in respect of the long distances and infrequency many visitors travel to the area, it is understandable that the visitors do not consider the area's socio-economic standing to be of high importance.

The categories designed to group certain types of visitor on the basis of distance travelled, services used, reason for visiting and frequency of visits etc., resulted in sample sizes deemed too small to provide statistically significant relationships, such is the diversity amongst visitors. Even when examining visitor responses as a whole, no categorical preference as to where affordable housing should be located is apparent, which further supports the idea that there is no typical visitor to the area. As such there is not sufficient evidence, nor consensus to warrant the influencing of housing related policies and management decisions by the area's visitors.

5.3.2 Perceptions of Community Representation

The professionals partaking in the interview process considered the term 'local' to refer to parish or ward level communities. However, the majority of professionals interviewed accepted that individuals within the study area are likely to have their own interpretation of what exactly the term local means. Owing to this perception of diversity in understanding, questions remained over whether any consensus exists within the study area. Many of the interviewees remarked upon their organisation's responsibility to serve the local communities, and admitted that the communities were often under-represented in the housing/planning decision making process.

Within the study area residents have the opportunity to express their views through parish councils and in some cases Community Development Trusts. The in-depth interviews with housing and planning professionals revealed a spectrum of views regarding the effectiveness of parish councils and Community Development Trusts in representing their constituencies. The results of the resident survey showed that 53 of the 253 respondents participated in meetings of parish councils and or Community Development Trusts. As disaggregation of this figure would result in populations too small to provide significant representation it has been deemed necessary to consider both groups in unison.

Despite the lack of consensus amongst the professional interviewees, the resident survey showed that both parish councils and Community Trusts are perceived as being effective mediums for representing the communities. Only 12% of residents felt that neither Parish Councils nor Community Development Trusts should be given an increased role in governance. Here the analysis looks to discover whether those involved in the meetings and running of parish councils and Community Development Trusts reflect the views of residents as a whole with regard to opinions on perceptions of affordable housing need, resident allocation and considerations for new housing developments. Tables 5.10a and 5.10b illustrate the respective views of community representation groups and the wider population in relation to perceptions of affordable housing need.

Table 5.10a - Perceptions of Affordable Housing Need in and Around Northumberland National Park

	Parish Council and Community Development Trusts	All Respondents
Yes (%)	57	68
No (%)	19	16
Don't Know (%)	25	16

Table 5.10b - Perceptions of Affordable Housing Need in Respondents' Settlement

	Parish Council and Community Development Trusts	All Respondents
Yes (%)	57	58
No (%)	32	32
Don't Know (%)	11	10

Tables 5.10a shows that in the case of affordable housing within the study area, small divergences exist in the percentages of those who perceive affordable housing need, and those that expressed uncertainty. Despite these differences the overall picture from both populations is suitably similar so as to conclude accurate representation of the community through parish councils and trusts. The suitability of the groups in representing the wider population is further supported by Table 5.10b referring to perceptions of need within the respondents' settlement. Although the incompleteness of returned surveys precludes further analysis into perceptions of need in particular settlements, the available data does infer that those involved within parish councils and Community Development Trusts are no more or less likely than the wider population to oppose development on the grounds of nimbyism.

Although parish councils and Community Development Trusts appear apt in representing the views of the wider population when it comes to perceived need for affordable housing, there are additional factors to consider. As already alluded to, the

criteria used to determine who is prioritised to occupy new affordable housing can potentially alter the level of public support or opposition for a development. In this instance a comparison is made between the relative importance given to the National Park Authority's various criteria by the community representation groups and the wider population. Table 5.11 compares the values.

Table 5.11 - Importance Attributed to Various Allocation Criteria

Criteria	Parish Councils and Community Development Trusts	All Respondents	Buffer zone	National Park
1	2.48	2.40	2.25	2.90
2	3.88	4.12	4.43	3.23
3	2.64	2.89	2.71	3.43
4	4.22	4.10	4.25	3.60
5	4.48	4.27	4.57	3.37
6	3.07	3.20	2.79	4.42

Application of the Kruskal-Wallace test shows that there is no significant difference between the levels of importance attributed to various allocation criteria by community representatives and the wider population, represented as All Respondents. In other words, the parish councils and community development trusts suitably represent the wider population in respect of importance given to resident allocation criteria. Although there are slight variations within the values, Table 5.11 demonstrates that the same three criteria (2, 4 and 5) are unmistakably prioritised amongst the community representatives and the wider population. However, it is important to note that as a greater number of responses originate from the Buffer zone than the National Park, the scores manifesting from the wider population and community representatives are heavily skewed towards the attitudes of Buffer zone residents.

Although Table 5.11 demonstrates some substantial differences between the scoring of community representatives and National Park residents, this does not necessarily demonstrate that parish councils and community development trusts do not accurately represent the Park residents. In fact, because the Park provided only 10 responses from those involved with a parish council or Community Development Trust, there is

insufficient data to investigate whether a statistically significant relationship exists between the Park residents and their representatives.

Owing to the analogous nature of views from National Park and Buffer zone residents with regard to considerations in new housing developments, it is not necessary to distinguish between the two populations as in Table 5.11. Using the same format Table 5.12 contains values pertaining to the importance of a variety of considerations relevant to new housing developments.

Table 5.12 - Importance of Considerations in New Housing Developments

	Parish Councils and Community Development Trusts	All Respondents
Affordability	4.53	4.61
Resident Allocation	4.07	3.83
Preservation of Landscape and Settlement Character	3.40	3.56
Involvement of Local Workforce	3.40	3.45
Energy Efficient Design	3.24	3.00
Use of Local Materials	2.36	2.63

Again the similarity of perceived importance between the wider population and community representatives indicates the effectiveness of parish councils and community development trusts. In this case all six of the considerations are identically ranked. Unsurprisingly the Kruskal-Wallace test showed no significant difference between the populations.

Despite concerns within the literature (Cloke et al, 2000; Woods 2005) that community representing groups often serve to represent only the views of a particular section of society, from these findings it appears that residents' faith in parish councils and Community Development Trusts as a means of representation is soundly justified – at least with regard to affordable housing issues. The inquiry serves to highlight that

representation through such mediums is more effective than certain housing and planning professionals presume. In parallel with the findings of Sylvester (2005) the finding warrants that those organisations wishing to further their community input through consultation, consider doing so through increased dialect and collaboration with local parish councils and Community Development Trusts. Such a move is likely to be supported within political circles given the emphasis of community involvement within DCLG's Community Empowerment White Paper (2008) Sustainable Communities Amendment Act (2010) and Decentralisation and Localism Bill (2010). Given the responses of those housing and planning professionals representative of various sub-groups, the move would also prove popular at the local level. Moreover there is a possibility that increased community involvement will help to save Authorities financial resources (McLaughlin, 1987).

5.3.3 Potential of Communities' Small Scale Landowners and Building Firms in the Facilitation of Affordable Housing Delivery

From the interviews with housing and planning professionals it became apparent that engagement with landowners for the purpose of progressing housing projects differed amongst organisations. Certain Registered Social Landlords contracted staff to engage with communities' landowners as a means of enhancing awareness for potential developments. Relationships between communities and Registered Social Landlords appear to be strengthening in parallel with the involvement of Community Development Trusts in affordable housing projects. A comparison of accounts from Community Development Trust representatives in different districts accentuates the inconsistency of support offered from Local Authorities to the local communities. Certainly those working closest with the local communities expressed that there is greater potential to involve small, local landowners in small, local housing projects.

Results of the resident survey identified that a majority of landowners are willing to consider the release of land for affordable housing development. Interestingly when asked about releasing land for open market housing, the majority (albeit small) expressed that they would be unwilling to do so. When prioritising factors which influence landowners' decision to release land for housing developments, clear differences emerged between those in the National Park and those within the Buffer zone. Disaggregation of landowners into action areas results in populations too small to further explore the significances of locality in terms of action area, and willingness to release land for development. Likewise, the small landowner sample size provides

insufficient data to detect any statistical significant relationship between length of residency and landowner's willingness to consider the release of land for housing.

Despite the limited number of landowners it is still possible to find evidence supporting the theories of those professionals with experience in working closely with the communities. The notion that those with a connection to the area's socio-economic processes are more perceptive to the need for affordable housing appears to be strongly supported for residents as a whole. As discussed, this connection inherently brings about greater awareness of need, whether it is for the benefit of a particular individual or family, or the grander theme of settlement sustainability. Similarly, landowners who are themselves aware of actual need - that is, aware of a particular individual or family in need of affordable housing – are more likely to consider releasing land for development (Figure 5.35).

Figure 5.35 – Awareness of Need and Willingness to Consider the Release of Land for Affordable Housing
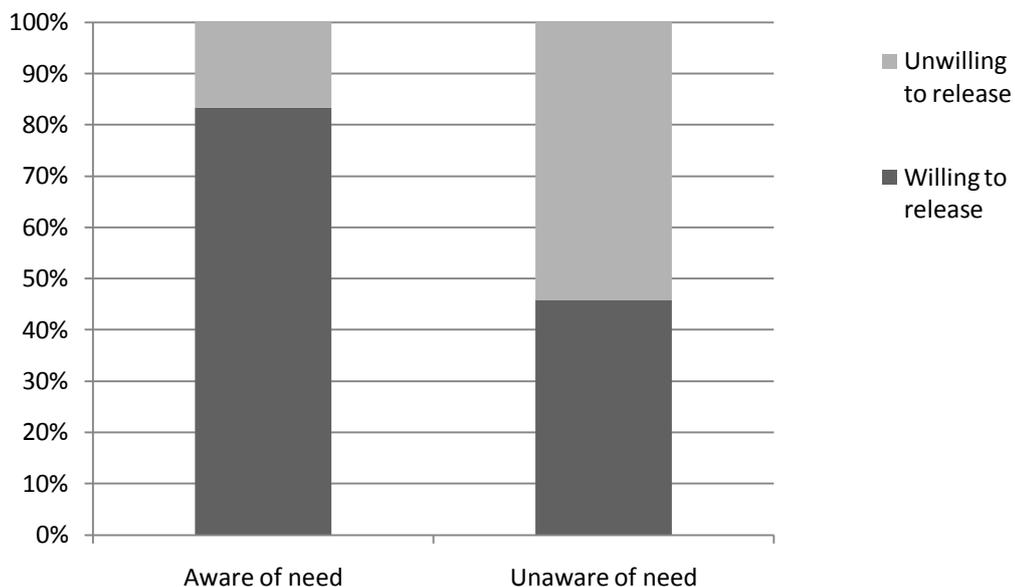
Expanding upon the results of the resident survey, Figure 5.35 provides further evidence of the diversity amongst Landowners and how certain factors impact upon willingness to release land for affordable housing developments. Most importantly the finding, in addition to the aforementioned results, demonstrates that landowners are not to be considered a homogenous group motivated by a single factor. As those professionals working most closely with communities correctly predicted; landowners

do hold a certain level of potential in identifying and providing sites for housing developments – particularly when referring to affordable housing in areas with proven need. As High and Nemes (2007) point out, communities have an uncompromising knowledge of their localities which may prove invaluable in sourcing land for development – a stance also echoed by a RICS (2008) report into securing land for affordable housing through local landowners. The interviews demonstrated that whilst developers and a minority of more dynamic planners recognise the value of landowners as a grassroots asset, there is certainly a belief amongst the professionals as a whole, that planners generally act to negate against development rather than actively encouraging that which policies regard as being suitable. From the results and subsequent analysis it is evident that a number of landowners are interested in facilitating affordable housing projects, and therefore should be more rigorously engaged by those Planning and Housing Authorities serious about promoting and implementing their affordable housing policies. Although landowners within the National Park and the Buffer zone exhibit differing values to the considerations associated with housing projects, both groups expressed that the parties involved are a key factor in the decision to release land. This finding thus highlights the importance of establishing an amicable relationship with the communities' landowners.

In much the same way that potential exists to further collaborate with the communities' landowners, results indicate that small local building firms could also play an enhanced role in the type of small scale housing projects foreseen within the National Park Authority's Core Strategy (2008). Whilst the number of responses from those representing small scale building firms precludes tests of statistical significance, there is still the opportunity to learn lessons from the results. Notably a majority of small building firm representatives declared the development of affordable housing to be feasible for their organisation, whether this be sites consisting entirely of affordable units or with a proportion of open market properties. Although small local firms may have less notoriety and resources than large private developers or Registered Social Landlords, they do hold certain advantages of their own. Firstly, as a private developer remarked during the interview process; small firms are often better suited to small projects. Since larger firms have relatively constant overhead costs they are less inclined to devote time and resources to small projects. Secondly, through involvement of small local firms it is possible that communities could develop endogenously, that is through utilising a community's own assets and resources, including the tacit knowledge and existing relationships lacking from exogenous groups. Although development requires guidance and support from outside organisations such as the

Local Planning Authority, the inclusion of local firms is likely to aid in gaining support from those residents interested in sustaining the area's local economy, since grater community involvement is often analogous to community support (Curry, 1993). The findings also represent the potential of Roseland's (2005) Community Capital Framework in which community mobilisation lies at the heart of sustainable development.

Whilst it is undeniable that certain larger developers, including a variety of Registered Social Landlords, are open to discussion about small scale rural developments, the resident survey demonstrates that small, local firms also represent a viable avenue towards affordable housing development. Neither should be singularly disregarded at face value. Arguably the appropriate means of promoting landowners and small building firms within the community would be through increased dialogue with community support organisations such as Community Action Northumberland. Acting as an impartial medium, community support organisations have the opportunity to represent the ideals of the Planning Authority to the community, and represent the potential of the community's landowners and firms back to the Planning Authority. The interviews and resident survey show greater advantage could be taken of this scenario.

5.4   Chapter Summary

This chapter has illustrated the views of the study area's residents and visitors so as to demonstrate trends and disparities on the basis of factors such as location, socio-economic connections and values attributed to hypothesised developments. Through analysing these findings in relation to the academic literature and responses from housing and planning professionals it has been possible to supplement evidence for particular methods of governance and delivery, whilst also informing and clarifying on issues which had to this point been contested. Findings relating to the communities' perception of need, their potential to inform need and otherwise be engaged in housing delivery are of particular importance. These findings, together with those from the previous chapters are surmised in the following, final chapter, which serves to outline exactly what the research has achieved. The final chapter also describes what action is required so as to ensure the best chance of successfully implementing appropriate housing schemes to meet the needs of Northumberland National Park's residents and workers.

Chapter 6 – Conclusions, Recommendations and Contribution to Knowledge

6.1   Conclusions

6.1.1 Perceptions of Need

There is widespread acceptance amongst housing and planning professionals, as well as residents, of a need for more affordable housing in Northumberland National Park. Whilst the National Park Authority conducted a housing needs survey in 2007, there is little awareness of this survey amongst the organisations represented in the primary data collection process.

Residents regard the issue of affordability as paramount when it comes to new housing developments, ahead of resident allocation criteria and preservation of landscape and settlement character. Those most integrated with the area's socio-economic processes are most likely to accept the idea of need in their own settlements. There are also differences in perceptions of need across the National Park. The Park's action areas, designated on the basis of differing characteristics, face unique housing pressures which correspond to the perception of affordable housing need. Residents of the Hadrian's Wall and the Cheviots action areas (exhibiting substantial demand from commuters and second home owners respectively) are most likely to perceive affordable housing need.

Although in many cases the documented strategies of Local Planning Authorities support the notion of affordable housing, reputations arising from past practices and anecdotal evidence are often contradictory to the strategies' notion. The scenario is a particular issue for the National Park Planning Authority where interviews uncovered a perceived emphasis on preserving landscape and character at the expense of social and economic well-being. Suppositions concerning the Park Authority's desire to preserve the National Park, together with a lack of collaboration between the now defunct Local Housing Authorities and the Park Authority have been instrumental in hindering development in the past.

6.1.2   Governance by Local Authorities

With roles in housing (provision and management), planning, asset management and transfer, as well as community support, Local Authorities are considered extremely influential to all of those involved in the affordable housing delivery process. However, this influence is not always a positive one, since the extent of effective collaboration has in the past varied with different groups and different Authorities.

The District and Borough Housing Authorities which until recently overlapped the National Park reputedly varied extensively in their facilitation of affordable housing delivery. Whilst some Authorities demonstrated commendable asset transfer, community support and an increasing number of staff specialising in affordable housing schemes, there was little effort focussed towards developing within the National Park. There are a number of reasons explaining this apparent neglect. Firstly any developments outside of the Park could be administered by a single Local Authority, since each incorporated a housing and planning department. As such the administrative process remained relatively straightforward and efficient. Conversely, developing in the National Park required the Park Planning Authority and the Housing Authority to collaborate. This process was considered undesirable not just because of the extra dialogue required but because differing objectives and interpretations could hinder or halt proposals. Furthermore, the relatively small and sporadic dispersion of the National Park population constituted an unattractive scenario for the overlapping Local Authorities. Since the Housing Authorities were concerned with district/borough wide housing need, effective alleviation became synonymous with larger, more accessible sites.

The interview process revealed a level of optimism that the new Unitary Authority will hold affordable housing delivery - even for remote communities - in high regard (owing to increased emphasis at the national level through for example the Quirk Review (2007), Empowerment White Paper (2008) and Housing Green Paper (2007)). However, there is an appreciation that any benefits brought about through the Unitary Authority will only occur after an initial settling period. With the formation of a single countywide Authority it is now likely that the emphasis on affordable housing delivery – for better or for worse – will become more uniform throughout the whole of the National Park.

One possible benefit of the Unitary Authority could be to introduce a Rural Housing Enabler. This post is unanimously considered to be of benefit in affordable housing

delivery through fostering links between communities, Local Authorities and developers. Rural Housing Enablers are considered particularly apt at identifying sites for developments and impartially representing the needs of different parties. Consequently the position would be of great benefit to promoting schemes within Northumberland National Park, where such relationships have exhibited discernible potential to grow. As the county's previous Rural Housing Enabler post was expunged through unresolved funding issues amongst the borough and district councils, the launch of a Unitary Authority represents a realistic opportunity to reintroduce the post.

6.1.3 Affordable Housing Delivery Mechanisms

From the theoretical perspective and primary data analysis, three delivery mechanisms demonstrate potential in providing affordable homes for the National Park; the Rural Exceptions Policy, Section 106 Agreements and Community Land Trusts. Figure 6.1 provides a summary of these mechanisms' pros and cons.

Table 6.1 – Summary of Potential Delivery Mechanisms

Delivery Mechanism	Pros	Cons
Rural Exception Scheme	Conducive to small development sites High proportion of affordable homes in perpetuity Specifically for meeting demonstrable local need Allows developments in locations otherwise prohibited	Typical remote location, development size and high proportion of affordable housing makes the scheme unattractive to some developers Many schemes are required to alleviate any substantial level of need Only applicable to settlements classified as sustainable by the Local Planning Authority
Section 106 Agreements for mixed development sites	Successful record of producing a large number of affordable homes Familiar to a range of developers Corresponds to the mixed communities agenda Flexibility in application	Quotas for affordable housing not typically applied to small schemes Success heavily dependent on individual negotiations Many developers require a buoyant economy for schemes to be viable
Community Land Trust (by Community Development Trusts)	Conducive to small development sites Exploits tacit knowledge useful in the identification and acquisition of suitable sites Corresponds to the community empowerment agenda Emphasis on dealing with local need Flexibility in application depending on needs, partners and funding Typically high proportion of homes that are affordable in perpetuity	Trusts often reliant on proactive members as well as external funding, expertise and partners Few Trusts present in sparsely populated areas Some concerns over impartial management of Trusts

Northumberland National Park Authority's emphasis on small scale developments designed to meet local affordable housing need are most notably reflected in the Rural Exception Scheme and Community Land Trusts. Although large private developers typically regard small, remote schemes consisting of 100% affordable housing to be unattractive, some small private developers, community trusts and Registered Social

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Landlords are tailoring towards this type of scheme. Nevertheless, as larger mixed tenure housing schemes are more profitable for developers, Section 106 agreements are capable of generating comparatively greater interest.

Whilst Section 106 agreements have traditionally proved successful in terms of the absolute number of affordable properties developed through mixed development sites, the Park Authority's desire for small scale developments somewhat undermines this use of the mechanism. Perhaps the most effective means of utilising Section 106 agreements to meet housing need in the National Park would be to allow agreements to cover multiple sites. By allowing a developer to provide the affordable element on sites beyond the main development site, (with some sites inside and others outside of the Park), it is possible that those sites inside of the Park consist of small scale developments exhibiting a high proportion of affordable houses, whilst those outside consist of larger developments with higher proportions of open market housing. Such a scheme ensures the developer is involved in a negotiation concerned with a sizeable proposal of total properties to be constructed, whilst also ensuring those developments in the Park are adequately small and affordable. Housing and planning professionals accept that such an application is in theory possible, yet it is reliant on the acquisition of multiple sites suitable for the different elements of development. It is therefore complicated to initiate and uncommon in practice. The use of Section 106 agreements, synonymous with larger, mixed tenure developments is therefore best suited to the larger gateway settlements immediately outside of the National Park.

Despite past housing needs surveys covering the National Park, there are no absolute numbers pertaining to the extent of local need within the Park's communities. Consequently it is difficult to forecast how effective the Rural Exception Policy will be in terms of its potential to meaningfully impact upon local need. However, its application elsewhere demonstrates that even a small addition of affordable housing can often make a significant impact to small rural communities.

Perhaps the most prominent restricting factor regarding Rural Exception Sites is the requirement to be located within sustainable settlements. The criteria of the now defunct district and borough Housing Authorities overlapping the National Park proved too demanding in terms of size and services so as to consider settlements within the Park sustainable. As a result housing developments were focussed away from the Park's smaller settlements – regardless of their housing need. Although Northumberland National Park contains no market towns, the Park Authority has recently chosen to deem some of its smaller constituent settlements as sustainable.

With settlements in the National Park classed as sustainable, there is greater opportunity to apply the Rural Exceptions Policy.

Although Rural Exception Sites are considered unattractive to developers as a whole, the findings demonstrate that smaller building firms within the Park's communities as well as a number of Registered Social Landlords consider the mechanism to be a possibility. Whilst propositions from small local firms should be considered, the experience in developing and managing affordable housing ensures that Registered Social Landlords are the most likely proponent of developments on Exception Sites.

Registered Social Landlords also have experience in partnering with Community Development Trusts. Through working with a Registered Social Landlord, Community Development Trusts can access the external support and expertise habitually lacking. Without partnering and external funding Community Development Trusts are unlikely to be able to develop and own new houses. Instead it may be necessary to focus on the renovation of derelict properties. Although a partnership can allow Community Development Trusts to become involved in affordable housing delivery, the nomination of residents and the management of the properties are likely to be as unique as each partnership project. Such partnerships are also limited by the scarcity of Community Development Trusts with coverage in Northumberland National Park; a scenario relating to a critical mass required for a Trust to form.

As financing affordable housing projects is a key barrier to development, it is logical that funding organisations emerged as an influential group for those involved in delivery. Whilst Registered Social Landlords rely on the Homes and Communities Agency for new developments, private developers and Community Development Trusts are unable to access the Agency's funding. As the two latter groups have historically had no definitive means of acquiring funding, Registered Social Landlords have had a significant advantage in affordable housing delivery to date. Consequently the involvement of private developers and Community Development Trusts in schemes providing affordable housing in perpetuity often requires collaboration with a Registered Social Landlord (Figure 6.1). Although such a partnership can ensure projects are financially viable and facilitate the transfer of knowledge and skills, certain organisations and groups resent the need to rely on a Registered Social Landlord, whilst some remain apprehensive about losing influence in joint schemes.

Figure 6.1 – Scope of Registered Social Landlord Involvement in Perpetually Affordable Housing Schemes
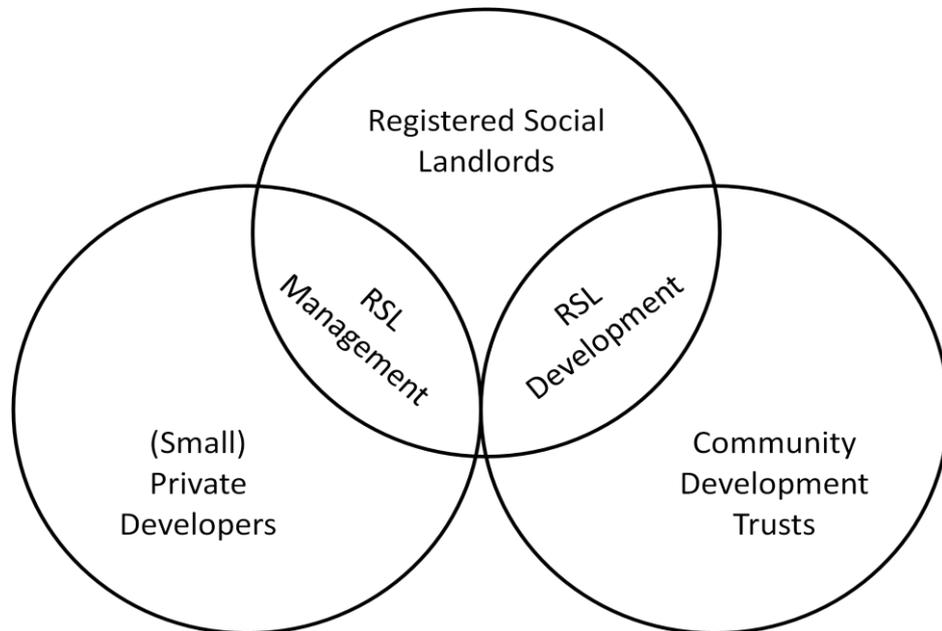
Proposed amendments within the Housing Regeneration Act (2008) to allow Trusts exemption from leasehold enfranchisement, as well as the recent introduction of a Community Land Trust fund suggest a more prominent role for community led organisations. The Community Land Trust fund aimed at supporting feasibility studies, providing technical assistance and/or the investment in Community Trust housing schemes is a positive step, although it is too early to evaluate the extent of its impact. With Registered Social Landlords aided by the Homes and Communities Agency, and signs that Community Trusts are to continue receiving support from central government, it is perhaps the private developers who are least prepared to deal with a demand for affordable housing in the current market – particularly on sites forbidding open market housing. Of the private developers, it is the small, local firms most inclined to become involved in small scale affordable housing schemes. Such firms have the benefit of small overhead costs as well as local knowledge and existing links within the communities. As the Park Authority has a duty to foster the economic and social wellbeing of its communities it is logical that these small, local firms are at least considered for affordable housing projects.

Registered Social Landlords are influenced in the way housing is made affordable through the Rent Restructuring programme and government led Low Cost Home

Ownership schemes. Although Low Cost Home Ownership schemes represent the most widespread means of allowing tenants to work towards increasing a share of ownership, certain schemes have faced criticism for their inadequacy to ensure properties are within the means of those in need. For this reason it is preferable that where possible a Community Trust is able to take on the role of managing affordability. Whilst there are variations in the ways Community Trusts can maintain affordability (including Community Land Trust models described in Chapter 2), to date those Trusts in rural Northumberland have simply chosen to set rent levels below those of private landlords. The Community Land Trust mechanism, as well as any community led renovation projects are realistically limited to the areas surrounding the Community Development Trusts, i.e. Haltwhistle, Bellingham and Wooler.

Although the numerous mechanisms and the developers are habitually considered individually it is beneficial to consider the innovative combinations in which they are feasible and desirable. Adopting a flexible and open-minded approach to housing delivery, as opposed to a single ubiquitous strategy, allows the delivery to be tailored to a particular set of circumstances. Table 6.2 summarise the potential means of delivery within Northumberland National Park.

Table 6.2 – Overview of Feasible Affordable Housing Delivery Mechanisms for Northumberland National Park

Mechanism(s)	Means of Ensuring Affordability	Housing Management	Notes
CLT on a RES	CLT Model/CDT prescribed rents	a) CDT b) RSL-CDT Partnership	Desirable, but limited scope due to scarcity of CDTs. Reliant on proactive CDT with external support and/or opportunity to acquire land at a reduced cost. Potential to involve small, local building firms during development. RSL-CDT Partnerships already proven in rural Northumberland. Opportunity to combine community input and assets with expertise and experience of the RSL. Land acquired at a reduced cost through supportive community landowners increases prospects of affordable units meeting Building Design Guidelines.
CLT in renovated, derelict properties	CDT Model/CDT prescribed rents	CDT	Desirable, but limited scope due to scarcity of CDTs and derelict properties. Reliant on proactive CDT able to attract funds. Demonstrated by Glendale Gateway Trust in Wooler, Northumberland.
Social Rented/Intermediate Housing on a RES	Social Rented/Intermediate Housing Schemes	RSL	Desirable. Already proposed in other UK National Parks. However, unless land can be acquired at a reduced cost RSLs may have difficulty ensuring developments are viable whilst complying with Building Design Guidelines. Caution is required to ensure the details of the scheme are conducive to affordability in perpetuity.
Mixed Housing through S106 agreement within gateway settlements	Social Rented/Intermediate Housing Scheme	RSL	Desirable where local need exists in or adjacent to the gateway settlements (i.e. should not take precedence over RES developments in Local Centres and Smaller Villages/Hamlets demonstrating need). Potential to develop comparatively large sites with a large absolute number of affordable homes. Location outside of the Park nullifies the Park Authority's local need criteria used in resident nominations.
Mixed Housing through S106 agreement within Local Centre or Smaller Village/Hamlet	Social Rented/Intermediate Housing Scheme	RSL	Generally undesirable on the grounds that the mechanism is only deemed feasible for large scale developments. For small scale sites the Park Authority's 50% affordability quota does not apply. Landowners are less likely to release land for developments incorporating a high proportion of open market homes which do not serve to benefit those demonstrating local need.

Whilst those affordable housing delivery mechanisms detailed within Table 6.2 are all feasible within the study area, their respective feasibility and indeed necessitation is dictated not only by the extent of local need and the factors influencing developer interest, but also the presence of Community Development Trusts, gateway settlements and settlements identified by the Park Authority as suitable for development (Local Centres and Smaller Villages/Hamlets). The presence of these features across the Park's action areas are detailed within Table 6.3

Table 6.3 – Presence of Potential Development Sites and Community Development Trusts

Action Area	Gateway Settlement	Local Centres	Smaller Villages/Hamlets	Community Development Trust
Hadrian's Wall	Haltwhistle	N/A	N/A	Haltwhistle Community Partnership
North Tyne and Redesdale	Bellingham	Falstone Greenhaugh Lanehead Stannersburn	Rochester Charlton Stonehaugh	Bellingham Community Trust
Coquetdale	Rothbury	Alwinton Harbottle Holystone Elsdon	N/A	N/A
The Cheviots	Wooler	N/A	Kirknewton Ingram	Glendale Gateway Trust

6.1.4 The Role of Communities

The notion of community empowerment has become well supported over recent years and it is increasingly common for policies from central and local government to support this agenda. To the area's housing and planning professionals, local communities are an influential group owing to their potential to support and facilitate development, demonstrate need, or even object to proposals. Whilst communities are often considered to be under represented in the decision making process, there is a consensus that the onus for community representation lies with the Local Authorities.

Although the majority of housing and planning professionals consider the term *local* to constitute a ward or parish, resident nominations are routinely administered on a wider basis. Whilst the introduction of Choice Based Lettings encourages Authorities to become part of a regional or sub-regional scheme, this is unlikely to correspond to ward or parish level. As Northumberland National Park is such a sparsely populated and wide geographical area, its residents are not inherently local to one another. Neither the Park's staff nor its residents regard the Park as a single, homogenous community. Instead the four action areas represent distinct communities. As a result of communities' distinctions, residents as a whole prefer for any development to be located as close as possible to housing need. Since housing need is such a dynamic entity it is important that assessments are regularly updated so that developments reflect demand.

Prior to the formation of the Unitary Authority, some of Northumberland's borough and district councils had began to cooperate with parish councils and Community Development Trusts as a means of gaining more comprehensive housing needs data. To what extent the process will continue with the countywide Housing Authority is not yet known. As the National Park's parish councils and Community Development Trusts accurately represent the wider community on housing issues, their involvement in establishing and maintaining local housing needs data is both justified and useful.

The National Park Authority is considered by Community Development Trust representatives to be very supportive of the needs of residents. Successful consultation surrounding the criteria used to define local housing need is one example of the Park Authority's commitment to involving residents in the affordable housing decision making process. In this instance responses demonstrate that a longstanding link to the local community and those proposing to locate a viable business are valued much the same as existing residents needing to establish a second household. In essence the consultation shows that local need can encompass making additions to a community, as well as catering for those already residing there. Despite some successful consultations there is further scope for community engagement and support. This research has identified notable interest from local landowners and building firms in becoming involved with small scale affordable housing projects, particularly in areas of proven need. These community assets appear to be dismissed or undervalued by some organisations, despite the likelihood of holding valuable local knowledge. There is evidence that local landowners may be willing and able to facilitate small scale developments by releasing land, often at reduced cost - so long as the resultant properties are to benefit the local community. Acquisition of land is regarded

as a key barrier to development in the National Park. If landowners and Community Trusts are able to identify and provide sites for housing, developers are immediately better prepared to provide affordable units. Land at a reduced cost may allow for greater resources to be allocated towards ensuring developments consist of a high proportion of affordable homes that incorporate design standards sympathetic to landscape and settlement character.

The Park Authority's relationship with its residents is particularly important since communities are generally regarded by housing and planning professionals as being under-represented in the way policies are made and projects delivered. Whilst resident responses in this research generated a series of trends and relationships, management decisions cannot feasibly be tailored to the National Park's visitors. The research revealed that the majority of visitors travel from outside of the local area, making only infrequent trips to the Park. The consequence of visitor diversity and lack of a connection precludes any consensus on housing related issues.

In the absence of a Rural Housing Enabler, the Federation of Northumberland Development Trusts (FoNDT) has taken the lead in allowing communities to be represented, whether through the identification of housing need or championing for further funding and support. This is beneficial not only to the communities but also to the Local Authorities whose remit includes a need to recognise and function in a manner empathetic of constituents. Unfortunately the Federation has few staff and is reliant on periodic external funding which is not guaranteed to continue. Consequently Local Authorities and community representatives must increasingly collaborate to allow for effective collection and updating of communities' local needs data.

6.2 Reflection of Policies and Strategies Impacting upon Northumberland National Park

The conclusions reached have emerged from reviewing academic literature, examining secondary data and analysing primary data originating from in-depth interviews and questionnaires. Here the conclusions are related to the relevant policies and strategies impacting upon Northumberland National Park. As a result it is possible to remark upon the suitability of particular policies and strategies with regard to affordable housing delivery. Where appropriate the conclusions and Northumberland National Park's policies are compared to those of other UK National Parks to demonstrate how possible amendments and supplementation could help to facilitate the delivery of affordable housing.

In order to understand the origins of the National Park's Local Development Framework it is necessary to consider the overarching policies and strategies from which it is derived.

6.2.1 National and Regional Policies and Strategies

A lack of Affordable Housing in rural areas has been acknowledged by the government as a serious issue since the turn of the 21st century. Defra's Rural White Paper (2000) called for increased delivery of affordable homes from the Housing Corporation, the reinvestment of funds generated from increased council tax on second homes, and better use of the planning system. Subsequent Planning Policy Statements have continued to emphasise the importance of the affordable housing issue.

PPS 7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas (ODPM, 2004) states that most new development should be focussed in or near to local service centres where employment, housing (including affordable housing), services and other facilities can be provided in close proximity to one another. However, Planning Authorities are also instructed to allow some limited development in, or next to, rural settlements that are not designated as local service centres, in order to meet local business and community needs and to maintain the vitality of these communities. In particular, Authorities should be supportive of small-scale development where it provides the most sustainable option in villages that are remote from, and have poor public transport links with, service centres. As advised within the Barker Report (2004), PPS 3: Housing (ODPM, 2005) goes on to encourage Local Planning Authorities to develop targets and quotas for affordable housing delivery, as well as advocating the Rural Exception Site Policy so as to address the needs of the local community by accommodating households who are either current residents or have an existing family or employment connection, whilst also ensuring that rural areas continue to develop as sustainable, mixed, inclusive communities. The PPS 4 Draft: Planning for Prosperous Economies consultation (DCLG 2009) looks set to build on the findings of the Taylor Review (2008) stressing the importance of the rural economy and again supporting the development of affordable housing in local service centres.

Planning Policy Statements at the National level are filtered down to the English Regions where they influence Regional Strategies. Although a single integrated Regional Strategy is planned, at present each region functions on the basis of separate housing, spatial and economic strategies. The North East Regional Housing Strategy (GONE, 2007) sets an objective to ensure the supply, type and mix of new housing for

rent and for sale meets social and economic needs, provides choice and supports growth. This objective is expected to reflect the diversity of urban and rural communities and the needs for affordable, family and executive housing. The Regional Spatial Strategy (GONE, 2008) acknowledges the need for more affordable homes in rural areas, particularly in those impacted upon by high levels of second home ownerships. The use of settlement hierarchies is encouraged to provide small scale development sites for supporting sustainable communities. However, the actual means of delivering affordable housing is left to the Local Authorities.

6.2.2   Sub-Regional Policies and Strategies

On 1 April 2009, the seven Local Planning Authorities of Alnwick, Berwick-upon-Tweed, Blyth Valley, Castle Morpeth, Tynedale, Wansbeck and Northumberland County merged together to create one single Local Planning Authority for Northumberland, excluding the National Park. In the past, each of these Local Planning Authorities had produced its own set of planning documents to guide development in their area. These documents have been brought together to form the Consolidated Planning Policy Framework for Northumberland (Northumberland County Council, 2009). This document sets out the relevant planning policy documents, both statutory and non-statutory.

Whilst the recently completed Local Development Frameworks for the aforementioned Authorities are to be amalgamated into a countywide framework, Northumberland National Park Authority's independence from the new authority ensures its role as a Local Planning Authority remains unaffected. The Park Authority's Local Development Framework (2008) and Draft Management Plan (2009) thus remain distinct from those being developed by the new Unitary Authority. However, this is not to say that the new Authority will have no impact upon the National Park. Whilst the National Park Authority is able to continue to function on the basis of the approved Local Development Framework, relations with Housing Authority staff and policies will inevitably alter over time.

The switch from district and borough Local Development Frameworks to a countywide policy framework is a gradual process. The Unitary Authority's Core Strategy which aims to; meet the needs of local development in a sustainable manner, develop a balanced housing market, support regeneration and economic growth, create a healthy, socially inclusive, accessible and vibrant community, and protect a high quality environment, is not set to be adopted until September 2011 (Northumberland County

Council, 2009). On the one hand this establishing phase prolongs the uncertainty as to how the National Park is to be perceived by the housing authority in terms of a location for affordable housing delivery. On the other hand the ongoing production of the countywide Local Development Framework and Core Strategy provides an opportunity for the Park Authority to influence the direction of future strategies through communicating how it sees the future of the Park, and by forging links with the new Housing Authority's staff.

6.2.3 Northumberland National Park: Policies and Objectives

Here the governance within Northumberland National Park is examined. Specific reference is made to how policies and objectives impact upon affordable housing delivery, what solutions are available and why certain solutions are considered preferable. Policies relevant to affordable housing development have been considered in relation to findings regarding location, quantity and means of delivery.

The Environment Act (OPSI, 1995) outlines the two statutory purposes of National Parks:

- To conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage; and
- To promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities by the public

National Park Authorities have an additional statutory duty:

- When pursuing the purposes, the Authority should seek to foster the economic and social wellbeing of local communities within the National Park.

The notion of putting economic and social well being of local communities secondary to the statutory purposes is evident within the wording of Northumberland National Park's Local Development Framework (2008). For example

Policy 1 Delivering sustainable development (part d)

*Sustainable Development in the National Park is development which conserves and enhances the special qualities of the Park, promotes opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities by the public, **and** fosters the social and economic well-being of local communities.*

This definition suggests that development which fosters the social and economic well being of the local communities is not inherently sustainable development. However, it is quite clear that for settlements to remain or to become sustainable, social and economic well-being must be fostered (Lowe and Ward, 2007). Findings from the research demonstrate a strong connection between residents' perceptions of affordable housing need and their integration within the Park's socio-economic processes. Furthermore the widespread perception of affordable housing need and the high importance residents allocate to the issue of affordability (exceeding for example the issue of preservation of landscape settlement and character) appears to suggest that the Park Authority should give greater attention to its duty of fostering social and economic wellbeing. An elevation in importance of this duty is one of the key recommendations made by Shucksmith and Best (2006).

The Local Development Framework (2008) goes on to state (Paragraph 6.13) that there has not been significant pressure for development; that low demand arises from a combination of the National Park's small population and its remote location. In 2007/2008 the National Park Authority received only 66 planning applications, mostly for extensions or conversions. Since 1996 only 7 new build dwellings have been completed within the Park.

The fact that few developments have taken place does not necessarily equate to low demand. The resident survey shows that a clear majority of those living in the Park believe there is a need for more affordable housing – as do representatives of Community Development Trusts and support organisations participating in the interviews. Developers (both private and Registered Social Landlords) regard the National Park as being difficult to develop in, owing to its designation and perceptions concerning the Planning Authority's alleged preservationist conduct. Coupled with the inherent remoteness and small scale nature of any sites, developers naturally focus their efforts outside of the Park. Such development also aligns to national and regional doctrine of settlement hierarchies. The National Park's Policy 6: General Location of New Development is based upon the same principle. The policy outlines a hierarchy of settlements favouring 8 Local Centres for local needs development. Further to this 5 smaller villages/hamlets are approved for development where it contributes to the provision or protection of village services. The location of these settlements are illustrated in Figure 6.2

Figure 6.2 – Settlements Approved for New Development
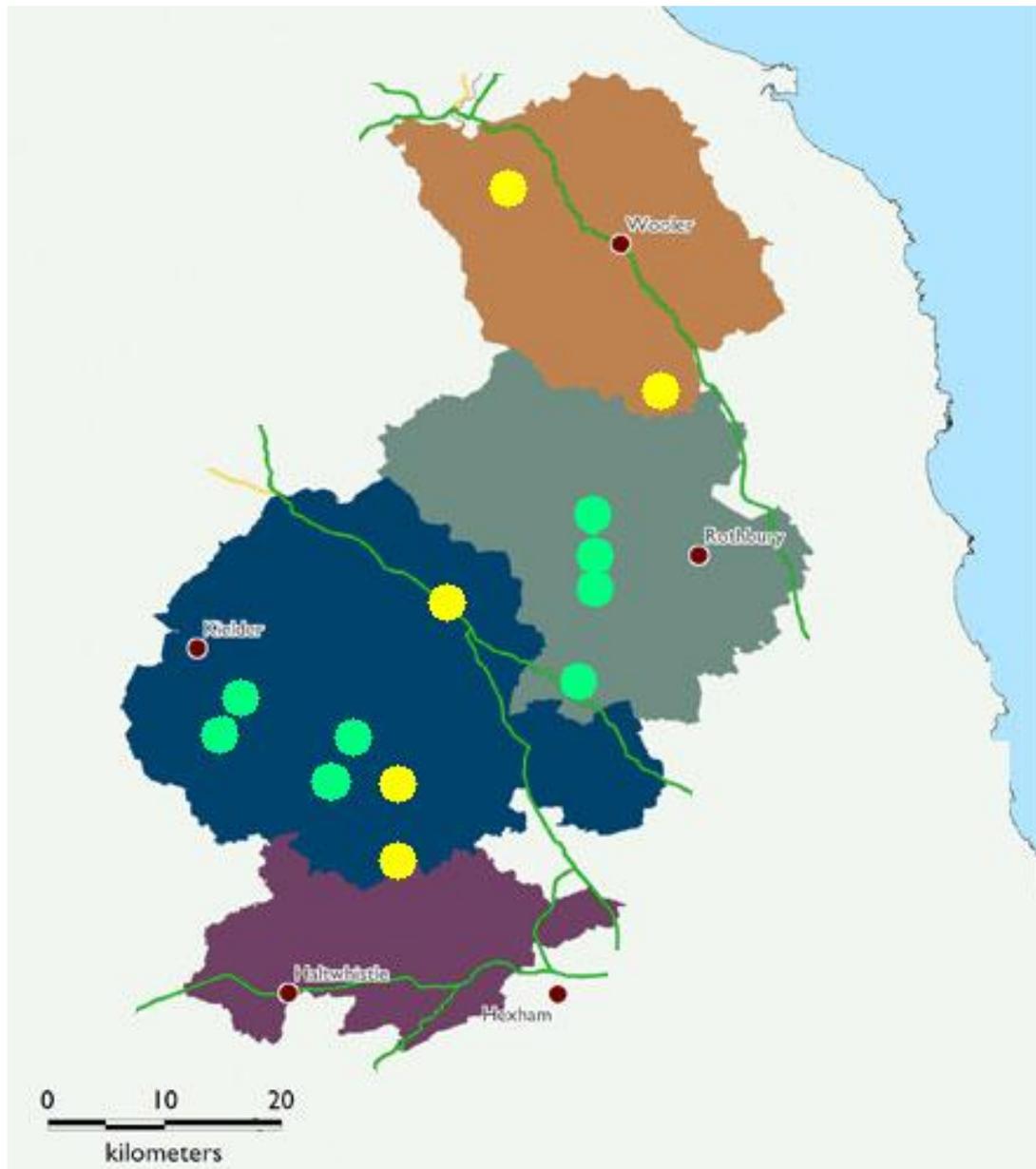
Source: Northumberland National Park Authority (2009)

Key

🟢 Local Centres

🟡 Smaller Villages/Hamlets

Action Areas:

🟠 Cheviots

🔵 Coquetdale

🔵 North Tyne and Redesdale

🟣 Hadrian's Wall

Whilst the Park Authority has successfully followed the guidelines within the Regional Spatial Strategy, detailing settlements for development based on size and services, there remains debate as to whether these guidelines can actually undermine settlement sustainability (e.g. Taylor, 2008). Concentrating development in the larger, more serviced centres may ensure they continue to prosper, but this can further compromise the already struggling services of smaller settlements. If small settlements with few services are deemed ineligible for new housing development, then they are destined to remain unsustainable (Figure 6.3).

Figure 6.3 – Vicious Circle of Rural Degeneration
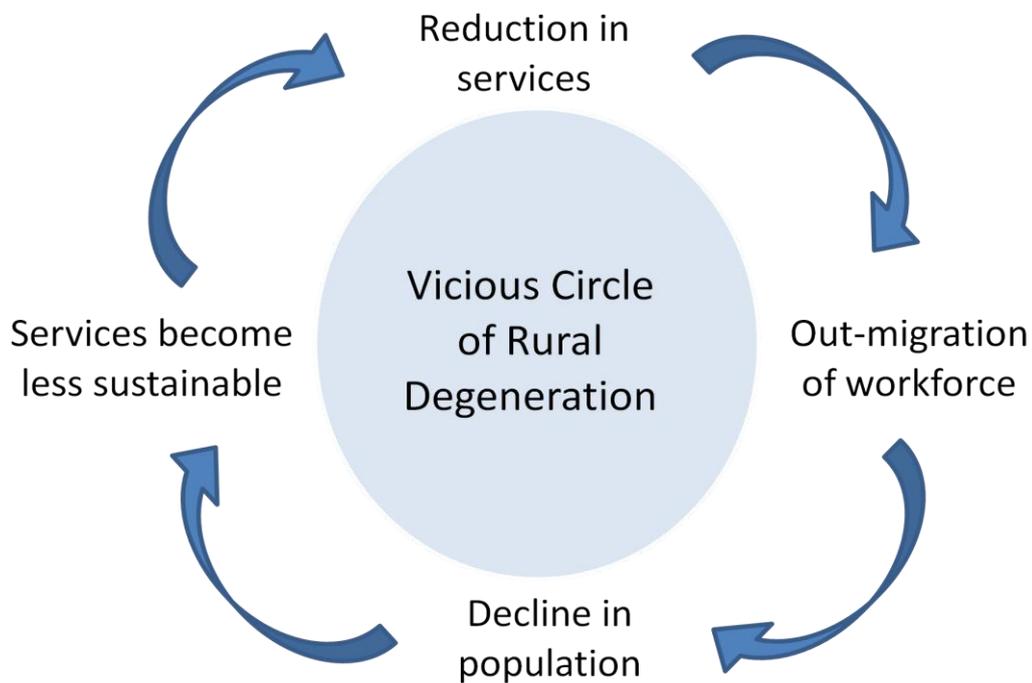
Derived from Milbourne (2004), Commission for Rural Communities (2006)

Whilst there is logic in the argument that the local economy of small, poorly serviced settlements declines because of restrictions on development, these restrictions cannot be solely blamed. Woods (2005) notes that the vast majority of rural settlements are continuing to experience a loss of services. The extensive choice offered by larger corporations, made ever more accessible through increased vehicle ownership has led to reduced reliance on small, independent, local businesses and services.

Consequently even those rural settlements experiencing a growing population through counter-urbanisation are not exempt from the threat of losing local services.

If housing is only to be permitted in sustainable settlements, then how the term is defined in terms of which services are available is a critically important issue for those in housing need. Since it is the Local Authorities who are responsible for defining what constitutes a sustainable settlement it is they who determine which settlements will see the delivery of affordable homes. During the interview process (prior to the formation of the Unitary Authority) Tynedale District Council was widely regarded as the most proactive facilitator of rural housing projects of those Authorities overlapping the National Park. However, the Taylor Review (2008) uses Tynedale District Council as the very example of the narrow-mindedness demonstrated by Local Authorities when defining sustainable settlements. The so-called Sustainability Trap results in smaller rural settlements without certain services being written off as inherently unsustainable and becoming left with few new housing prospects.

Given that affordable housing is now synonymous with meeting local need (ODPM's PPS 3, 2005) it seems irrational not to simply develop where such need exists – regardless of service provision. After all, the criteria used to define local need (in the case of Northumberland National Park, 2008) ensures that many of the future residents would already be living (or have lived) in the locality and be well aware and accustomed to any deficiencies in services. The resident survey demonstrates that the development of affordable homes 'as close as possible to the need' is strongly supported by those living in and around the National Park. Interviewees also criticise the Park Authority's apparently overly preservationist approach which they ultimately regarded as being detrimental to the economy of the Park's communities. However, it is clear to see that the Park Authority's emerging policies follow the guidelines within the Regional Spatial Strategy regarding settlement development hierarchies, whilst also acknowledging the issue of affordable housing need. The designation of a number of smaller villages and hamlets as being suitable for development, so long as it contributes to the provision or protection of village services, is a positive step in recognising the needs of these communities.

Despite the remoteness of many settlements in the National Park, an open-minded view as to what constitutes 'sustainable' has allowed comparatively much smaller settlements to be designated as such. The Park Authority's local facilities survey shows that access to modern services such as a broadband connection and the availability of home delivery shopping from supermarkets are some of the most important

sustainability criteria. Although many of the Park's sustainable settlements contain a pub, village hall or church, the absence of any one of these services does not necessarily preclude the settlement from being classified as sustainable (Northumberland National Park Authority, 2008). This flexible approach is commendable in that it increases the Park Authority's potential to facilitate affordable housing development close to the areas of need, irrespective of a particular services' absence - just as residents prefer. Concurrently, the Park's natural beauty is preserved by heavily restricting development in the open countryside. However, since certain action areas are much better served than others in terms of potential development sites, it may not always be possible to develop close to a community's need under current policy.

Specific reference to affordable housing is made numerous times within the Park's Core Strategy, for example, Paragraph 7.16 states that;

It is probable that developments of affordable housing are likely to take place in the gateway settlements outside the National Park where they can be more easily accommodated and serviced. This does not however prohibit development of affordable housing within the Park, particularly through innovative methods such as Community Land Trusts, linking development with other schemes in the gateway settlements, or to those within the Park's villages that are already managed by social landlords.

In terms of affordable housing delivery the above paragraph is of the utmost importance since it refers to both how and where development is likely to occur. Firstly, the flexible nature of how affordable housing can be delivered resonates with the responses of housing and planning professionals within the interview process. Interestingly no reference is made to the Rural Exceptions Policy in this instance. In contrast the Exceptions Policy has emerged as highly favourable with other UK National Parks (e.g. Cairncross, 2004; Dartmoor National Park Authority, 2008, Lake District National Park Authority, 2009). Although the Exceptions Policy's purpose of providing small scale, affordable developments discourages the involvement of some landowners and developers looking to maximise profit (Gallent et al, 2002; Hoggart and Henderson,2005), the research has demonstrated that certain individuals and organisations within the area are interested in facilitating development for the good of the community.

Secondly, the emphasis given to the gateway settlements outside of the National Park may serve to conflict with residents' preference for development being focussed as

close as possible to the need. With a number of settlements identified as being suitable for development it is somewhat unclear as to the extent a settlement's size and services will override its location in terms of proximity to housing need. Although a multitude of factors such as availability of suitable sites and cost of site acquisition will no doubt influence the location of housing developments, the findings from both the resident survey and interview process underline the importance of first establishing a comprehensive picture of housing need. It is also worth noting that any development within a gateway settlement is likely to nullify the Authority's ability to enact specific local needs criteria for resident nominations, or any quotas and targets relating to the proportion or number of affordable homes.

The Core Strategy (2008) proclaims a target of no more than 4 housing completions on an annual average basis, i.e. over a 5 year period there should be no more than 20 completions. It also states that a Housing Needs Survey will take place every two years. The findings of the survey will help to inform a number of affordable housing targets including; the number of completions, percentage of completions within the identified settlements, proportion of affordable houses to total dwellings on site and amount of houses to be provided on exceptions sites. Policy 12 also states that on all housing sites of more than 0.1 hectares or where 2 or more units are proposed, at least 50% of the resulting units must be affordable where a need for such housing exists. On sites adjacent to the identified settlements small scale housing schemes providing 100% affordable housing will be considered when supported by the housing needs survey. Housing provided in pursuit of this policy must continue to be available to people in local housing need at an affordable cost for the life of the property.

The insistence on perpetual affordability is essential if the houses are to create any long term benefit for the communities. The consequences of such a proposal's absence is remarked upon within the North York Moors National Park Authority's Core Strategy (2008); although local occupancy restrictions guarantee housing is only for those meeting local need criteria, there is nothing to ensure that houses are provided at an affordable price. Therefore, although houses are provided for the local people they are rarely within their means. Conversely, the Lake District National Park Authority's Core Strategy (2009) insists that any new dwelling created will be available in the longer term to provide accommodation for future generations in similar housing need. Local occupancy conditions and legal agreements are intended to offer safeguards, preventing losses to the open market or to holiday letting opportunities.

The extent to which housing is to be provided in National Parks can be denoted in Regional Strategies and/or the policies of the overlapping Local Authority housing departments. Owing to the variance in Park pressures and populations there is no universal affordable housing role or target for the UK's National Parks. For example, the Lake District's Core Strategy (2009) reports that difficulties in allocating sites mean the Park will not be able to deliver the Regional Spatial Strategy target of 60 homes per annum, but the Authority will consider windfall sites as a means of working towards this target. This may be taken forward with the use of the exceptions policy which can provide for affordable housing on land which would not normally be allocated for development. In contrast the North East Regional Spatial (GONE, 2008) and Housing Strategies (GONE, 2007) outline only the number of gross housing additions to the regions constituent counties. Consequently there is no specific target for Northumberland National Park to aspire to.

Northumberland National Park Authority's Core Strategy: Policy 21 (2008) states that all proposals will be assessed in terms of their impact on landscape character and sensitivity as defined in the Landscape Supplementary Planning Document. Development which would adversely affect the quality and character of the landscape will not be permitted. It is therefore essential that any new affordable housing preserves the landscape and settlement character. Whilst, the Park's statutory purpose is designed to take precedence over the supplementary duty, responses from housing and planning professionals as well as residents indicate that greater importance needs to be attached to fostering the economic and social wellbeing of local communities. For example, residents considered the need for houses to be affordable, and make use of local needs criteria as preferential to the preservation of landscape and settlement character. Nevertheless, because development in National Parks will always have to be sympathetic to its surroundings, issues such as scale and design will have to be accounted for through dialogue with developers.

Experience in providing long term affordable housing, and operation as non-profit organisations has led to Registered Social Landlords being identified as a favourable means of delivering homes in numerous UK National Parks. For example Dartmoor National Park Authority (2008) detail that consultation with Registered Social Landlords will help to determine how houses will be made and kept affordable. It is envisaged that 70% of Dartmoor National Park's new housing is to be social rented and provided by Registered Social Landlords. The Lake District National Park Authority also states that much of the new housing to be developed over the next five years is likely to be built by Registered Social Landlords. Two of the four Registered Social Landlords referred to in

the Lake District National Park Authority's Affordable Housing Notes (2009) are represented during this research's interview process.

The use of local resources is also an important part of Northumberland National Park Authority's Core Strategy (2008) Policy 26 (*Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency)* declares that the National Park Authority requires all new development to minimise the amount of energy used in construction and achieve the highest energy efficiency through the location, orientation, layout design and insulation of the development. The resident survey revealed that although residents value the preservation of landscape and settlement character they do not necessarily associate this issue with the use of local materials. However, the fact that residents in the Park attribute particular importance to local materials does suggest that they should be used where possible. As the Prince's Foundation reported (HRH, 2006), high quality affordable housing paves the way for greater levels of public support and therefore increased likelihood of further developments.

6.3   Recommendations

There are numerous factors to consider in housing development within a National Park; overarching policies, statutory purposes and the supplementary duty of National Parks, polices of the Park Authority concerning development location, materials, benefactors and landscape preservation. All of these factors may impact upon how suitable the developer and their associated delivery mechanism(s) are regarded. The means and success of delivery will therefore be based on judgments regarding how the spectrum of policies and objectives governing the Park are to be prioritised in practice.

The sheer number and scope of policies within National Park Core Strategies makes it very difficult to assess which issues should take precedence in the event that two or more policies cannot be simultaneously achieved. Whilst National Parks are expected to place preservation ahead of the economic and social wellbeing of communities, there is a strong argument that this historic approach forces communities into an ever worsening unsustainable spiral (Taylor, 2008). Ideally a Park Authority would hope to be able to balance its objectives and policies in such a way that all could be achieved, and none undermined. In reality the complexity and antonymous nature of certain issues prevents such a harmonious outcome from being assured. Conclusions from the interviews of housing and planning professionals largely reflected the views of those residing in and around Northumberland National Park. The consensus amongst professionals and residents indicates that certain issues have been neglected in the

past, whether that is at the National, Regional or Sub-regional level. Since this research is focussed on the delivery of affordable housing to meet the needs of those within Northumberland National Park, the subsequent recommendations reflect this particular emphasis.

In light of the conclusions and policy reflection, the following recommendations outline how Northumberland National Park Authority can enhance its prospects of delivering affordable housing to meet local need.

- The first and most important step in delivering affordable homes is to establish the extent and distribution of housing need. It is therefore recommended that housing need within Northumberland National Park is assessed through a series of localised housing need surveys in collaboration with the relevant Parish Councils and Community Development Trusts of each Action Area. Subsequent development plans may then be documented in forthcoming action area plans already being considered by the Park Authority.

- The Park Authority should lobby for a Rural Housing Enabler so as to facilitate housing need surveys and provide a valuable link between the housing and planning professionals and potential community level partners.

- As it is ultimately the responsibility of the Housing Authority to ensure that the housing need of its constituents is met, it is essential that Northumberland National Park Authority develops a close working relationship with the Unitary Authority's relevant staff.

- The National Park Authority should insist that its local need criteria - developed through consultation with the area's residents and subsequently supported in this research – should be taken into account when nominating residents for any affordable housing developed in the Park.

- Aside from encouraging the Housing Authority to engage in assessing housing need and supporting a Rural Housing Enabler, the Park Authority should also be proactive through the initiation of discussion and invitation of relevant staff to housing related meetings. Such steps will help to change the perceptions of the Park Authority from a restrictor of development to a proactive facilitator of affordable housing.

- In the event that mixed housing sites are required it would be beneficial if both the National Park Authority and Housing Authority advocate the use of local occupancy restrictions on those houses which are to be sold at open market value. In doing so, even those houses which are not classified as affordable may help to ease local need by providing a property for an expanding household within the Park.

- During dialogue with developers the Park Authority must stress the need for housing to be affordable in perpetuity, aimed at meeting those demonstrating local need whilst not compromising landscape and settlement character.

- As residents prefer development to be as close as possible to the need, and because the sustainability of small settlements can be improved through new development, the Local Centres and Smaller Villages/Hamlets should take precedence over the gateway settlements if they are in closer proximity to demonstrable need. Although developments in the gateway settlements may provide the opportunity to create a greater number of properties, the location outside of the National Park nullifies the Park Authority's 50% affordable homes quota and may also undermine the use of the Park Authority's local needs criteria for resident nominations. Therefore such developments may not serve to benefit those living or working within the National Park.

- The Park Authority should reconsider and/or supplement the current list of Local Centres and Smaller Villages/Hamlets identified as being suitable for development. The settlements are unequally distributed throughout the action areas. In fact those action areas where need is perceived as being greatest exhibit the fewest settlements deemed suitable for development.

- The evidence that community landowners are willing to facilitate development ultimately benefiting their community's social and economic sustainability, justifies their involvement in discussions regarding affordable housing delivery. The Park Authority should help to encourage their involvement alongside relevant Authority staff and potential development partners.

- The Community Enterprise Officers and Rangers within the Park Authority are actively engaged with the local communities and are therefore well placed to learn of community members with the inclination and potential to facilitate development. Pointing these individuals towards relevant community support organisations and Authority staff can help landowners, developers and trusts to further understand the options available to them in respect of affordable housing developments.

6.4 Contribution to Knowledge

Northumberland National Park is unique amongst the English National Parks in terms of its low population, sparsely spread within small settlements across a wide geographical area. At a time when Northumberland National Park Authority has recently finalised policies in support of affordable housing delivery, there are still perceptions that the Park Authority act to restrict rather than facilitate development. This research demonstrates that such perceptions habitually stem from the historic lack of development in the National Park, anecdotal evidence and preconceptions of Nimbyism, rather than any recent dialogue with the Park Authority. Low levels of development have been compounded by a lack of collaboration between the Park Planning Authority and the Housing Authorities overlapping the National Park. The opportunity to facilitate development alongside in-house planning departments in larger, more accessible settlements, led borough and district Housing Authorities to focus their efforts outside of the National Park. Despite the responsibility of Housing Authorities to meet the needs of their constituents – including those within the Park area – they themselves acknowledge that the National Park has largely been neglected.

The neglect of the National Park is partly attributable to the adoption of settlement hierarchies used to outline which localities are preferable for housing development. Lowe and Ward (2007) remark that small rural towns are the fastest growing settlement type, and are also the most popular choice when people are asked to where they would like to move (Commission for Rural Communities, 2006). These small towns continue to play a significant role as service centres and places of work, which makes them relatively self-contained units from an environmental sustainability perspective (Land Use Consultants, 2004). Developing in these sustainable settlements is supported through schemes such as the Market Towns Initiative (promoted by the Countryside Agency), as well as developers whose schemes can be more profitable than in smaller,

remote communities (see for example Shucksmith and Best, 2006). However, it is increasingly recognised that the use of settlement hierarchies are an invalid means towards sustainable development (Wilson, 2006), instead their use may catalyse economic decline and stagnation within those villages deemed unsuitable for new housing (Commission for Rural Communities, 2007).

Those settlements deemed suitable for development by the National Park Authority are too small and inadequately serviced to qualify as suitable under the criteria of Housing Authorities. With these inconsistencies the National Park Authority has a difficult task in ensuring its communities' needs are met. Whilst policies within the National Park's recent Local Development Framework clarify the commitment to providing for those exhibiting local need, changes are needed if the Park Authority's aspirations are to be achieved.

Although the National Park Authority has close ties to the relatively large gateway settlements, their location outside of the National Park prevents the Park Authority's policies from being enacted here. For this reason there can be no guarantee that developments within the gateway settlements can act to satisfy the Park's local need – instead development needs to occur within the Park itself. Such a move unreservedly challenges the convention that National Park's are exempt from development on the grounds of their purpose to conserve and enhance natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage (as detailed in the Environment Act, 1995). In accordance with the findings of Cairncross (2004), the research construes that this purpose serves to undermine a Park Authority's duty (subsidiary to a purpose) to foster the economic and social well-being of its communities. By encouraging suitable developments within the Park's boundary and implementing the appropriate local need allocation criteria, communities can feasibly become increasingly sustainable (Figure 2.2: Elements of Sustainability derived from Arman et al, 2009) - as opposed to the current neglect and risk of stagnation currently faced (Marshall and Simpson, 2009). Specifically, this change would allow local housing need to be catered for at its source, which the research shows the vast majority of residents would prefer.

The aforementioned sparseness of population together with wide geographical spread culminates in diversity throughout the Park. As Cloke et al (2002) rightly remarked, rural areas do not necessarily constitute one homogeneous community. In the case of Northumberland National Park, the area is more accurately portrayed as four communities readily defined as the Park's action areas. The research has demonstrated that the action areas have unique characteristics in terms of:

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- Housing demand driven by commuters and second home owners
- House prices driven by demand
- Resident perceptions of affordable housing need
- Community Trust presence and coverage
- Ownership of land and estates
- Settlements deemed suitable for development by the Park Authority

Since these action areas exhibit different characteristics and assets relating to housing, a micro-management approach examining the unique detail of individual communities is preferable to the customary large scale and rigid nature of housing strategies - a finding supported by Hodge and Monk (2004), Ray (2006) and Scott et al (2009). As a micro-management approach can take account of a particular set of characteristics and assets it is possible to work towards tailored solutions befitting of the community's needs and aspirations. Indeed the notable differences between action area communities govern how effective housing delivery mechanisms are likely to be in meeting the aspirations of the National Park Authority.

The Rural Exception Policy provides the most fitting means of housing delivery for Northumberland National Park as a whole. The scheme's association with small scale developments to provide affordable homes where local need is demonstrable is particularly fitting to the aims of the Park Authority. However, arguably the policy's most important feature is its applicability to areas which would not normally be considered for development (as described within Planning Policy Statement 3, DCLG, 2006). The policy therefore justifies development in locations which may otherwise have been neglected, despite their apparent local need.

Although the Exception Policy is fitting to the needs of Northumberland National Park, as Hoggart and Henderson (2005) declare, its application is somewhat limited through developers considering the scheme to be unviable. Nevertheless, delivery may be achievable through alternative mechanisms depending upon the characteristics of the Park's action areas. For this reason it is important to consider how the different communities are suited to alternative mechanisms. For those communities within the coverage of a Community Development Trust there may be opportunity to provide a limited number of affordable properties through renovation. Although new developments are habitually infeasible to Community Trusts, partnership with a Registered Social Landlord is a possibility, since Community Trusts are capable of identifying and securing land for development which would otherwise remain unexploited by developers. As such, Community Trusts may allow for supplementary

application of the Rural Exceptions Policy, or mixed housing sites within a settlement deemed suitable for development by the National Park Authority. For areas lacking proactive Community Development Trusts the opportunity to develop affordable housing through the exception scheme (and renovations) is reduced. In these instances managing need will likely place greater emphasis on the more customary mixed housing developments brought about through Section 106 agreements. The success of such developments are not only dictated by the presence of settlements within a community identified as being suitable for development, but also the wider state of the economy. As Whitehead (2007) noted, developers can undermine the success of affordable housing schemes by claiming that the project is not financially viable. Without a buoyant economy those firms still willing to develop are more inclined to negotiate a high proportion of open market value properties. In such circumstances it is difficult to alleviate a community's need for affordable housing.

In respect of the preferable housing delivery mechanisms, Northumberland National Park Authority must seek to become increasingly proactive in its collaboration with particular organisations and groups. The resident survey in particular demonstrates the relevance of such collaboration with regard to community groups and even individuals. As High and Nemes (2007) state, communities hold an uncompromising knowledge of their localities invaluable in sourcing land and derelict dwellings which can often serve to benefit localised schemes.

In spite of the popular belief that developers are dismissive to rural development opportunities on the grounds of poor profit margins (for example Hoggart and Henderson, 2005) the research has identified organisations which serve to contradict this orthodoxy. Registered Social Landlords in particular have demonstrated their ability to work in partnership with Community Development Trusts so as to provide small scale, affordable developments in Northumberland's rural areas. In some instances the preparedness to consider new, less conventional opportunities is driven by a particular individual within the organisation. Registered Social Landlords can therefore exhibit varying attitudes to a particular opportunity, and should not be stereotyped on the basis of a single negative experience. Instead the finding resonates with those of Roseland (2005), who states that through a culture of community involvement, multi-stakeholder participation and consensus-building within communities; values, visions and outcomes can be identified to make those communities more sustainable. Indeed this means of cooperation between rural communities and relevant agencies so as to allow for tailored, local solutions is reminiscent of that described by Shortall (2004) and within the 2007 EU Rural Development Regulation.

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It is important for the National Park Authority to provide support and encouragement for those action areas encompassing a Community Development Trust, thus allowing the Trusts the opportunity to work towards meeting the communities need. Community Trusts do not always include staff with housing and planning expertise and can therefore be reliant on outside advice and mediation from Local Authority and/or community support organisations – a scenario that lends support to the concept of neo-endogenous development discussed by Ray (2006). At present the interest and willingness of Community Trusts to be involved with affordable housing projects is no doubt hindered by the absence of community level housing needs data. Were community representatives themselves to be involved in establishing and monitoring the needs of their community, there is likely to be greater levels of the resident led activism referred to by Bailey and Manzi (2010), and the subsequent motivation to advance schemes aimed at meeting demonstrable need (Curry, 1993).

The research elicited opposing views concerning the representation offered by parish councils, and to a lesser extent Community Development Trusts. The extent of this contestation tends not be fully acknowledged by proponents of such groups (for example; Leigh, 2000; Sylvester, 2005; Hughes 2005). However, the research does demonstrate that the study area's community representatives do accurately portray the views of the wider population with regard to affordable housing issues, thus strengthening the position of those proponents. It is therefore appropriate to collaborate with parish councils and Community Development Trusts as a means of gauging public opinion regarding affordable housing development, and to determine local need within the action area communities. Whilst the issues of Nimbyism and public objection emerged as perceived barriers to affordable housing development within Northumberland National Park (as also evidenced by Gallent et al, 2002), these fears did not materialise during the resident survey. On the contrary, the notion of housing schemes designed to provide affordable properties for those meeting the Park Authority's local need criteria is strongly supported by residents as a whole. Again, this signals the importance of proactive governance and community involvement ascribed by authors such as Conroy and Berke (2004), Evans (2005), Koontz (2005) and Connelly et al (2008).

The distinctive characteristics of Northumberland National Park mean that all of the findings are not necessarily relevant to every English National Parks. The need for a micro-management approach is less applicable to those more populated National Parks encompassing larger, well serviced settlements that have typically been regarded as more preferential for housing by developers and previous governments

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alike. However, the micro-management approach, with concepts akin to those advocated in the Taylor Review (DCLG, 2008), is generically applicable to all sparsely populated areas - whether they are within a National Park, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or areas devoid of any designated status. Such communities composed of small scattered settlements are unlikely to identify with the wider geographically defined communities and strategies of Local or Unitary Authorities. For these areas it is necessary to consider what constitutes the local community, and to formulate housing strategies based upon their individual characteristics, assets and needs. In addition, the lessons surrounding the benefits of community empowerment and partnership working are of relevance to all associated with housing and planning policies. Effectiveness in these areas may provide knowledge transfer, the opportunity to utilise a community's resources and demonstrable support for housing schemes.

6.5   Opportunities for Further Research

The role of UK National Park Authorities in promoting and assisting affordable housing development is forced to alter in respect of changing regional and national government policies. As yet there is no definitive consensus on a single means of delivery. In fact, it is unlikely that any one mechanism can be regarded as preferable in respect of the unique needs, pressures, aspirations and resources of communities. Whilst this research has focussed on the mechanisms permitted under the English legal system and national policies, there is opportunity to consider whether alternative laws and policies are better placed to deal with the difficulties faced within England's National Parks.

For example, the Scottish Executive Land Reform Act (2003) enables rural communities with a population of less than 10,000 to establish a community body and register an interest in land or buildings, thereby providing the option to buy when the land/buildings come up for sale. The Scottish Land Fund has been established to assist communities to own and develop land, with funds designated for preparatory costs, acquisition, and development.

On a wider scale, the purpose of National Park's in other countries could be investigated, specifically the relative prioritisation of preservation and the fostering of communities' economic and social wellbeing. For those Parks which include communities, it would be interesting to consider the extent to which similar development related obstacles are faced, and what measures are in place so they may be overcome.

Appendix 1 - Question Framework for the Interview Process

The question framework consists of five generic areas suitable for discussion with all of the interviewees. However, the framework also includes a number of specific questions within these areas, some of which will not be applicable to all of the organisations or individuals participating. As with the pilot study, the interview will allow the researcher to ask additional questions to explore emerging issues/projects/ideas emanating from the interviewees responses.

1. **General/Introductory**

(1) How would you assess the affordable housing need in Northumberland National Park? Critical need 1 2 3 4 5 No need OR Don't Know

(2) To what degree do you feel there is a consensus regarding the need for more affordable housing in the National Park? Unanimous agreement 1 2 3 4 5 Widely contested OR Don't Know

(3) How is your organisation linked to affordable housing provision? Planning authority Housing provider Community related group Other (specify)

(4) How is the organisation funded? Private business Government funding Charitable donations/grants Other (specify)

(5) At what scale does the organisation operate? The National Park Part of Northumberland All of Northumberland The North-East Nationwide Other (specify)

(6) What exactly is your role in the organisation?

2. Housing related

(7) What would you consider the three biggest barriers to providing affordable housing in the National Park?

Acquisition of land   Planning policies   Public objection   Lack of developer interest

Need for subsidy/grants   Lack of collaborative action   Other (specify)

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(8) How does the organisation encourage and ensure affordable housing provision?

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(9) How are the properties associated with the organisation made affordable?

Social HomeBuy   New build HomeBuy   Open market HomeBuy   Homestake
First Time Buyers Initiative   Co-ownership   Adjustable rents   Fixed (legal) rent
structure Removed land value (e.g. Community Land Trust)   Other (specify)

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(10) How is the allocation of residents decided upon?

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(11) Who/what shapes the decisions regarding how and where affordable housing is provided?

Regional strategies   Local planning authorities   Local housing authorities
Funding criteria   Developer profit targets   Local needs   Land availability
Empowered Communities   Other

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(12) How does the organisation acquire sites for housing developments?

Direct from private landowners   Direct from local authorities (specify)   Direct from other

Section 106 agreements   Rural Exceptions Policy collaboration   Development trust

Other community collaboration (e.g. land trust)   Other (specify)

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(13) To what degree do you feel financial gain and philanthropy are important in acquiring or releasing land for affordable housing development?

(a) Acquiring (developers)   Financial gain   1   2   3   4   5
Philanthropy

(b) Acquiring (community groups)   Financial gain   1   2   3   4   5
Philanthropy

(c) Releasing (private landowners)   Financial gain   1   2   3   4   5
Philanthropy

(d) Releasing (public landowners)   Financial gain   1   2   3   4   5
Philanthropy

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(14) Do you think there are other factors which influence the acquisition and release of land?

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(15) Which delivery mechanisms does the organisation make use of?

Section 106 agreements   Rural Exceptions Policy   Large Scale Voluntary
Transfers

Formation of Arms Length Management Organisations   Community Land
Trust Cooperatives   Other (specify)

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(16) What would make the mechanism easier and more effective in terms of providing affordable homes within the National Park? (Removing barriers)

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(17) Are you aware of other affordable housing mechanisms operating in Northumberland?

Section 106 agreements   Rural Exceptions Policy   Large Scale Voluntary
Transfers

Formation of Arms Length Management Organisations   Community Land
Trust Cooperatives   Other (specify)

---

(18) Which of these do you feel would be most effective for provision in the National Park?

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(19) Do you feel there are other i.e. currently undeveloped or unapplied mechanisms which would better serve the needs of Northumberland National Park?

3. Planning related

(20) How effective is the planning system in allowing for affordable rural housing provision?

Effective   1   2   3   4   5   Ineffective   OR   Don't know

---

(21) To what degree do you feel local planning policies encourage or restrict affordable housing provision in the National Park?

Encourage   1   2   3   4   5   Restrict   OR   Don't Know

---

(22) How could the planning system be changed to allow for more effective affordable rural housing provision?

---

(23) Who do you feel should have the most influence in determining where and how housing should be provided?

Local community   Developers   Planning authorities   Housing authorities
Independent researchers   Other (specify)

---

(24) At what scale should housing and planning policy be decided upon?

Ward/Parish   Local Authority   Sub-regional   Regional   National   Other (specify)

---

(25) What is your understanding of the terms 'local' and 'local need'?

4. Collaboration

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(26) To what degree do you feel the objectives of planning and housing policies are integrated

Well integrated   1   2   3   4   5   Poorly Integrated   OR   Don't Know

---

(27) How influential are the following in terms of shaping how your organisation functions in relation to promoting and delivering affordable housing? On a scale of 1 to 5, 5 being the most influential

Local councils

The National Park Authority

The Federation of Northumberland Development Trusts (including individual trusts)

The local communities (i.e. parish councils, prospective tenants, private landowners)

Local community groups (LEADER+, Northumberland Strategic Partnership, Community Action Northumberland etc.)

Regional Policy Makers (Government Office for the North East, North East Assembly, North East Housing Board)

Regional Development Agency One North East

Housing Corporation

Registered Social Landlords

Arms Length Management Organisations

Private Developers

Others (specify)

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(28) Would it be beneficial to have increased input or support from certain individuals, departments or organisations? Details

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(29) Is there anyone who you feel is under-represented in the way policies are made, or projects delivered?

5. Future changes

> (30) What impact (if any) do you feel the formation of a unitary authority will have on affordable housing provision?
>
> Positive   1   2   3   4   5   Negative   OR   Don't know

> (31) How will your organisation be influenced by the new Sub regional (Northumberland) housing strategy?

> (32) Are there any other planned or possible changes which would influence the organisation's operations relating to the delivery of affordable rural housing?

Appendix 2 - Estate Agent Question Framework

1. Which of the action areas does the organisation cover? (demonstrate with map)

2. What are the different characteristics (pros and cons) of the action areas covered by the organisation?

3. Which of the action areas demand the highest and lowest house prices? Why is this?

4. What are the average house prices for each area?

5. How have prices within the action areas changed in recent years and how has this impacted upon sales and clients?

6. How does interest in rented and residential sales differ across the action areas?

7. Does the supply of housing in the action areas match the demand? Are certain types of properties or tenures more sought after than others?

8. Are people attracted to a particular action area on the basis of their employment status or age?

9. How does turnover of properties differ across the action areas?

10. What, if any, changes do you foresee relating to supply, demand and property prices throughout the action areas?

Appendix 3 - Resident Questionnaire

For multiple choice questions please circle one answer unless otherwise stated

Section 1: For all respondents

1. Settlement (or closest settlement) of residence:

2. Length of residency in the National Park/its immediate surrounding area:_____years

3. Why did you move to the National Park/its immediate surrounding area?

Have always lived there   Employment   Family Connection   Landscape
        Lifestyle

Other (please
specify)...…..

4. Are you: a) employed in the Park   b) employed outside of the Park   c)
Retired

                d) unemployed

5. Do you participate in meetings arranged by your Parish Council or local Community
Development Trust? (E.g. Glendale Gateway Trust, Mid Tyne Community Trust, Haltwhistle
Partnership, North Tyne and Redesdale Community Partnership)

Parish Council   Community Development Trust   Both   Neither

6. Are you involved in the running of Parish Council/Community Trust activities?

Parish Council   Community Development Trust   Both   Neither

7. Do you feel your local Parish Council accurately represents the views of the community?

Yes   No   Don't Know   Not applicable

8. Do you feel your local Community Trust accurately represents the views of the community?

Yes   No   Don't Know   Not applicable

9. Should Parish Councils and/or Community Trusts be given a greater role in the governance
of their communities?

Parish Councils   Community Trusts   Both   Neither   Don't Know

10. Do you feel there is a need for more affordable housing in your settlement of residence?

Yes   No   Don't Know

11. Do you feel there is a need for more affordable housing elsewhere in the National Park or its immediate surrounding area?

Yes   No   Don't Know

12. Where should any affordable housing required for the National Park's residents and workers be situated?

As close as possible to the need   The Park's larger settlements

The larger towns on the Park's boundary   Don't Know

Other (please specify)

13. Are you aware of individuals or families living or working within the National Park, in need of affordable housing?

Yes   No

14. Who do you feel should be given priority if an affordable home became available? Please number the selections from what you consider should be most prioritised (1) to least prioritised (6)

☐ Those closest to any new affordable housing development

☐ Existing residents of the National Park establishing a separate household

☐ Those who do not live in the Park but have a current and long standing link to the local community

☐ Those in, or taking up full-time employment in an established business within the National Park or a parish split by the Park boundary

☐ Those living in the Park or a parish split by the Park boundary but in a home which is unsuitable (e.g. overcrowded or otherwise unsatisfactory by environmental health standards)

☐ Those who do not live in the National Park but propose to locate viable business within the Park which will conserve or enhance the Park's special qualities, or allow opportunities for the public to understand and enjoy special qualities

15. What do you feel should be the most important considerations for any new housing in or around the National Park? Please rank from most important (1) to least important (6)

☐ Affordability

☐ Resident allocation policies designed to meet local need

☐ Preservation of landscape and settlement character

☐ Energy efficient design

☐ Use of local materials

☐ Involvement of the local workforce

Section 2: For those owning sufficient land to develop housing projects (3 or more houses)

16. Have you ever been approached by an organisation looking to acquire land for housing

Yes (please specify organisation and year)

No

17. Would you consider the release of land for affordable housing designed to meet local need?

Yes   No

18. If so would you consider the release of land at a reduced value?

Yes   No

19. Would you consider the release of land for open market housing?

Yes   No

20. What influences your thoughts on the release of land for housing? Please rank from 1 to 5

☐ Parties Involved

☐ Design of Homes

☐ Financial Gain

☐ Resident Allocation Criteria

☐ Affordability of Homes

Section 3: For those employed within small building firms

21. Have you ever attempted to develop houses in the National Park or in a parish that is split by the National Park boundary?

Yes   No

22. Do you consider the development of affordable housing feasible for your organisation?

Yes

Yes, but only where a proportion of the homes are to be sold at open market value

No

23. From whose input and advice do you feel you could most benefit from in terms of affordable housing delivery?

Appendix 4 - Visitor Questionnaire

1. How far do you live from the National Park?

Less than 10 miles   10 to 20 miles   20 to 50 miles   50+ miles

2. How often do you visit the National Park?

Daily   Weekly   Fortnightly   Monthly   Seasonally   Annually
          Less than annually

3. What is your primary reason for visiting the National Park? Please circle only one option

Physical Landscape   Settlements   Historical/Heritage sites   Visiting Friends/Family

          Outdoor pursuits   Employment

4. Which services do you make use of when visiting the National Park? Please circle all applicable options

Shops   Pubs   Holiday Accommodation (including B&Bs, Campsites, hotels)

          Local Transport   Charged Leisure Services   None of the above

5. Where do you feel affordable housing to meet the needs of the National Park's residents and workers should be situated? Please circle only one option.

As close as possible to the need   The Park's larger settlements

The larger towns on the Park's boundary   Other (please specify)

6. What do you feel should be the most important considerations for any new housing in or around the National Park? Please rank from most important (1) to least important (6)

☐ Affordability

☐ Resident allocation policies designed to meet local need

☐ Preservation of landscape and settlement character

☐ Energy efficient design

☐ Use of local materials

☐ Involvement of the local workforce

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