

Nick Gallent

Re-connecting 'people and planning': parish plans and the English localism agenda

This article examines the influence that community groups are able to exert over planning policy, framing a local analysis of engagement between parish councils and local planning authorities in England within a broader view of collaborative rationality and communication through formal and informal networks. The article focuses on how the 'neighbourhood'-based networks of community action reach out and connect to formal policy actors, arguing that the connectivity achieved by parish planning groups and local government prior to the enactment of the Localism Act 2011 gives a strong indication of how future neighbourhood planning in England will function.

Keywords: communities, parish plans, neighbourhood planning, connectivity, England

For the past 20 years, incoming national governments in the UK have 'proclaimed that it is time to re-empower local government and put power closer to the people' (Haughton, 2012, 96). This has not been a uniquely British project, but is one shared the world over by societies grappling with the need to reinvent the role and modus operandi of government during a period in which, in many places, established social orders have given way to a pluralisation of worldviews and liberalisation of lifestyles (Misztal, 1996, 54). The old orders tended to be rooted in adherence to the conventions of a 'political class' and traditional ideas of citizenship, social contract and allegiance. 'Good government', in these contexts, was thought to be a matter of 'administering' to largely homogeneous societies in which needs and aspirations were broadly similar (Foucault, 1982). Such administration was undertaken at a level increasingly remote from the lives of ordinary people (Habermas, 1984, 86) and characterised by adherence to a professionalised and closed model of government. But increased social complexity – fuelled by a global diffusion of contrasting cultures and identities – eroded universal accord with the manifestos and policies of established political groupings, culminating in a challenge to traditional forms of authority. Against this backdrop, governments have sought to 'reconnect' to the citizenry, accepting that planning and service delivery have become increasingly complex and cross-sectoral endeavours, dependent on collaboration between state and non-state actors (Marsh and Rhodes, 1992). But such collaboration is not easy to achieve. Those operating in the traditional 'public' (i.e., within government) and 'non-public' realms (i.e., voluntary, private and community actors) have tended to form their own discrete groupings, with the former coalescing into 'policy communities' and the latter into 'interest

Nick Gallent is a Professor in the Bartlett School of Planning, UCL, 22 Gordon Street, London WC1H 0QB; email: n.gallent@ucl.ac.uk

Paper submitted March 2012; revised paper accepted October 2012.

groups', with only weak connectivity between the two (Marsh et al, 2009, 621). It has therefore proven difficult to 'put power closer to the people' because much of that power remains with the political, expert and administrative classes, often for reasons that relate to the strategic function of government and the need to ensure that local actions and decisions contribute to broader societal, environmental and economic goals (Davies, 2008).

This article analyses England's recent (and ongoing) experience of reconnecting to the citizenry. In particular, it focuses on how community groups may be able to exert increased influence over planning policy, framing a local analysis of engagement between parish councils and local planning authorities in England within a broader view of collaborative rationality and communication through formal and informal networks.

The article explores the dynamics of community-based planning within an area of anticipated housing growth in South-East England. It has two points of focus: first, how community groups at the parish level develop the *capacity* needed to take forward community-based planning exercises (i.e., how they come to engage in the planning process) and secondly, how they *connect* to local government and seek influence over planning decisions and frameworks, including the frameworks or strategies of different service providers. In its treatment of guiding concepts and in its discussion of findings, the article is divided between these two foci: *capacity building* and *connectivity*. It is further subdivided to consider the capacities of communities and the internal arrangements for community-based planning, how communities are *connecting* to new local government apparatus in England (emerging over the last decade), whether 'bridging ties' (a concept borrowed from social network analysis) helps explain interactions between communities and policy actors, and whether communities successfully 'bridge' to non-community actors via intermediaries. This main analytical section follows on from necessarily brief reviews of the rapidly evolving planning and local government apparatus in England (divided into sections on English 'planning basics' and localism, and the evolution of an apparently stronger community agenda over the last 15 years), key conceptual thinking linking ideas of social capital to collaborative planning and a short introduction to the study area and the research undertaken. Using primary research, the article contributes to a local and international debate on the place of community actors in formal planning and decision-making.

Planning reform and localism in England

The idiosyncrasies of place

The recent and current structures of local and regional government in England are surprisingly simple, though how different levels potentially relate to one another perhaps requires some explanation. Until April 2012, the planning system was operated

at 'regional' and 'local' levels. Regional Assemblies in eight of the nine English regions (London being the exception) were charged with the production of 'Regional Spatial Strategies' that contained, among many other things, house-building targets derived from projections of national household formation. These targets (expressed in terms how much housing should be built by the end of a plan period and annual building rates) needed to be incorporated into the 'local plans' – or 'Local Development Frameworks' – of the authorities charged with development planning, which were then expected to strive towards their achievement. These 'development planning' – (or 'local') authorities comprise both metropolitan and non-metropolitan districts or boroughs, London Boroughs and unitary authorities.¹ Although the Regional Spatial Strategies were initially revoked by Ministerial Letter on 6 July 2010, under provisions contained in the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009, this move was judged in the Courts to be an inappropriate use of discretionary Ministerial power. Hence, revocation was not formally initiated until Section 109 of the Localism Act came into force on 6 April 2012. At the time of writing, the 'local authorities' described above have sole responsibility for developing the 'strategic vision' of an area (DCLG, 2011, 12) and for development planning and control.

But beneath this critical local government structure sit the 'civil parishes' and town councils. These originated in the Local Government Act 1894 and were intended to be a neighbourhood-based governance structure, focused upon the administration of the daily affairs of towns and villages. At inception, they were mainly a rural phenomenon but subsequent attempts to revitalise local democracy, and connect to the citizenry in new ways, resulted in an expanded role for parish councils and in wider spatial coverage. The Local Government and Rating Act 1997 enshrined in law the right of 'communities at the village, neighbourhood or town level' beneath a district or borough to have an elected town or parish council. A decade later, the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 extended this right to urban areas.

With the enactment of a Localism Act in 2011, the planning function in England has been repositioned with local authorities, but there has also been a changed role for parish councils. The latter have not, hitherto, possessed any formal planning powers. Some parish councils involved themselves in the production of a range of local appraisals, plans and design statements. Such 'community-based' planning activities were designed to focus the energies of residents around local projects and campaigns, and occasionally fed a community's collective knowledge and aspirations to the development planning authority (which could choose to act upon it, in order to promote

¹ Where authorities are not 'unitary' (with a full suite of local government powers), they sit beneath a metropolitan or non-metropolitan county. But because the counties have had no strategic- (or 'structure'-) planning function since 2004 (following legislation), development planning authorities have until very recently been locked into a strategic planning relationship solely with the regions.

democracy, or ignore it). Parish Plans had, in recent years, become the most popular product of parish planning. But the Localism Act encourages their transformation into ‘neighbourhood development plans’, which will need to emerge from a more formalised adoption process and be demonstrably ‘compliant’ with the content of local plans (the ‘local development framework’ label having been dropped) and with national policy, to be set out in a National Planning Policy Framework. The legislation also hands new powers to civil parishes, who are able to draw up their own planning ‘orders’, which can strengthen or relax planning regulations governing specified land uses or changes between uses. They will, for example, be able to effectively wave through certain types of community project.

There is a new relationship, therefore, in the English system between the development planning function of local authorities and the ‘community-based’ planning activities of civil parishes.²

Re-designing the planning system

Following the UK General Election of 2010, a new Coalition government sought to smooth the passage of its then ‘Localism Bill’ by challenging the established view that executive power combined with professional input is the surest route to the most equitable and efficient planning and local development outcomes (Cabinet Office, 2010). It argued, and continues to press the point, that top-down planning – through the regions – had failed to deliver against the country’s housing and infrastructure needs, and that only by bringing communities to centre-stage in local decision-making would it be possible to build consensus around the need for more homes, and around the case for the infrastructure investments needed to deliver growth and economic prosperity (DCLG, 2011, 11). This article is concerned with the period immediately before the Localism Act 2011 and the then state of the relationship between parish planning and the wider apparatus of local decision-making. It treats parish planning as the immediate forerunner of the neighbourhood development planning that is now emerging in England, but argues that the ‘connectivity’ achieved by parish planning groups and local government (and associated local service providers), prior to 2010 gives a strong indication of how future neighbourhood planning will function. A large part of this functionality will depend on the future aspirations for community-based planning, which have taken shape over a number of years. These relate, as I will argue at the end of this article, to the balance that community groups would wish to see develop between their own responsibility for the ‘co-production’ of planning, and the future responsiveness of non-community actors and local government frameworks to community input.

² In ‘non-parished’ urban areas, this same relationship will develop between ‘neighbourhood fora’ and metropolitan districts or boroughs, or between fora located in London and the London Boroughs. These fora are essentially a substitute neighbourhood government structure in instances where parishes are absent.

The community agenda and planning

Well before the Localism Act, recent UK governments had given unequivocal support to 'community leadership' as a means of delivering local services, suggesting that such leadership is 'at the heart of the role of modern local government and councils are the organisations best placed to take a comprehensive overview of the needs and priorities of their local areas and communities and lead the work to meet those needs and priorities' (DTLR, 1998, para. 8.1). Governments had also lauded the importance of 'parish councils' in England, which 'can work in partnership with their principal council [i.e., local authority] to bring government closer to the people and to establish the decentralised delivery of local government services' (DTLR, 1998, para. 2.14). A series of Local Government Acts in the 2000s created a framework in which parish councils, and other representatives of community interest, were to become better integrated with local government structures and service providers through 'local strategic partnerships' tasked to deliver coordinated initiatives in the pursuit of a shared vision or 'community strategy' (Doak and Parker, 2005, 24; Owen et al., 2007, 52). The aim, ostensibly, was to connect neighbourhood interests to the development of policy frameworks: to create networked responsibility. The empowerment agenda was brought out and reiterated even more explicitly in a 2008 Community Empowerment White Paper, which sought to introduce a 'duty to promote democracy' for local authorities (DCLG, 2008, 24–26) by working more closely with community groups.

The local government reforms introduced by the Labour government sought to encourage bottom-up working practices and promote more inclusive forms of governance and decision-making (Moseley, 2002, 387). But government also seemed intent on connecting communities to the tools of delivery, tying planning authorities into these local networks and making them subordinate to the will of a wider community of residents and stakeholders. Hence planning became seen as more than the activity of a few professionals, but rather a shared endeavour facilitated, rather than delivered, by local government. A previously narrow view of 'land use' planning was broadened to encompass a wider array of place-making concerns, becoming the UK's own brand of 'spatial planning' (Nadin, 2007). However, planning professionals have sometimes found it difficult to work in this changed environment, and face particular challenges when connecting with community interests in order to deliver broader plans that are more clearly input-orientated (Gallent et al., 2011). This is partly because of the inherent and well-known difficulties of engaging with diverse communities (Sarkisian et al., 2010), and distilling consensus from dialogue, but also because during the three Labour governments, the focus on community empowerment seemed to be at odds with the government's steering centrism, marked by a strengthening of regional planning and the insistence that local government should be bound by planning targets formulated by the centre and by the regions.

This apparent contradiction in Labour policy – empower communities while taking the decisions that have the biggest effect on communities at a regional level – was consolidated in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. This legislation strengthened two opposing aspects of the planning system. On the one hand, it created a clearer strategic focus, switching from advisory regional planning *guidance* to regional spatial strategies, which would henceforth dictate much of the key content of local development frameworks (LDF). On the other hand, the legislation also sought to bring planning onto the front line of the government's efforts to renew local democracy and create clearer lines of communication between communities and policymakers. At the local level, development 'plans' were replaced by LDFs (comprising a suite of documents setting out a vision for an area's physical development) which were to be bound by ambitions set out in the Community Strategy agreed by a range of public sector, third sector, business and community interests. By making this link, government hoped that planning would be regarded as one of the means by which a community's wider ambitions are realised. If planning is subservient to community interest, and if community networks can define this interest (within the framework offered by the Community Strategy), then a much stronger link seemed achievable between neighbourhood ambitions and the actions of statutory actors.

But recognising the public's antipathy towards Labour's regional planning project, the UK Coalition government, elected to power at the May 2010 general election, soon signalled its intention to revoke regional strategies (see above) and to do a great deal more to 'empower' communities. The new government made 'localism' its mantra and its ministers portrayed Labour as a centralising force, responsible for putting too much distance between citizens and centres of power. It was claimed that a 'yawning chasm' had opened up between state and society, fostering indifference to the political process, and rendering local government incapable of responding to local needs. This chasm would only be closed if power were handed back to 'citizens, communities and local government' because only when 'people and communities are given more power and take more responsibility can we achieve fairness and opportunity for all' (Cabinet Office, 2010, 1).

As indicated at the beginning of this article, the Localism Act 2011 has now created a system of neighbourhood development planning in England. In rural areas, these plans – where they are produced – are likely to evolve from parish and other community-based plans, statements and appraisals dealing with a range of land use and development issues. They will be subject to a light-touch examination that will test their compliance with the local plans drawn up by local authorities. However, what is not clear from the current round of systemic reforms is whether communities will be encouraged, and supported, to actively engage with and connect to planners and service providers in a constructive way (i.e., in a way that is consensual and not combative, and which reconciles local ambition with strategic priority) and,

moreover, whether local authorities will be more proactive, and more open, in their dealings with communities. Although the framework is changing, it is not clear *how* the 'chasm' between state and society, or between people and planning, will be closed. The localism now being promoted by government should be about more than rewriting frameworks and protocols. It is surely about initiating a new conversation between communities and local government, ensuring a better fit between community-based plans and local plans through an effective dialogue, and about connectivity. Connectivity between communities (with their parish plans) and policymakers (with their local plans and other strategies) has been poor (Owen, 2002, 86). The reasons why it has been poor are considered in the remainder of this article, which begins with a focus on the internal arrangements for community-based planning and the implications for external connectivity.

Internal community capacity and reaching out

There is an expansive literature concerned with the accumulation of social capital, the expansion of community capacity and the triggering of collective community-based action in response to local service or development challenges. The tendency to plan at a parish level, and to pursue parish agendas on the back of this forward thinking, can be framed within this literature. Studies of community capacity tend to be rooted in ideas of communicative action(s) which transform (individual) 'human' into 'social' capital and hence a broader capacity to act in a collective interest (Wilson, 1997). The framework of thinking developed for the project on which this article draws took as its starting point communicative action's translation into *collaborative planning* with its onward extension into the idea of *network power* and links to the notion of accumulated social capital as being the motor for engagement in the planning process.

As is well known, collaborative planning approaches are premised on *diverse* stakeholders (community members, interest or other local groups) coming together for face-to-face dialogue, each representing differing perspectives on a shared problem or opportunity. The rationale of collaborative action is that it facilitates a fusion of differing interpretations and perspectives (on the problem or opportunity) which can generate innovative solutions or responses that are exclusively possible through cooperation (see Forester, 1989; 1999; Healey, 1997; Innes, 1995; 2004). Cooperation triggers the formation of networks, which then evolve and strengthen over time. Through the sharing of skills and knowledge, these networks develop greater capacity. The result has been described as 'network power' (Booher and Innes, 2002; Innes and Booher, 2003; 2004) *built on* the success that previously separate agents achieve in linking together agendas and *manifest in* their increased capacity to influence decision-making. Furthermore, participants in dialogue build a lasting sense of shared identity, which helps maintain the integrity of collaborative structures. This perspective can be

applied to the *internal* networks of community-based planning, or past parish planning in England, or can be used as a basis for understanding the rationale behind onward *external* connectivity to non-community actors.

Internally, different individuals may find themselves in a situation where their ability to achieve their own goals is dependent on the actions of others, and subsequently come to recognise this *interdependence*. Within a place community, a system of mutually beneficial exchange needs to take root, with individuals choosing to share and pool skills, expertise, contacts, enthusiasm and so forth. *Externally*, links form when internal capabilities are inadequate relative to the scale or scope of known challenges and those within the community either *reach out* for assistance, or non-community actors *reach in* with a view to realising a local project (which contributes towards the achievement of strategic objectives). Commonly, parish councils have sought the financial assistance of local government or attempted to achieve community goals by influencing policy decisions. Local government, for its part, has sought the appreciable legitimacy of grass-roots support in order to promote (or be seen to promote) democracy or advance its own development goals. According to Booher and Innes (2002, 227–28) the act of mutual exchange creates a reciprocal relationship that will only deliver the desired outcomes (i.e., an effective collaborative approach that produces win–win outcomes for partners) where there is trust and transparency in the relationship, that is, where that relationship is ‘authentic’ (229–31) rather than coercive or based on one partner having power over another.

Focusing just on the internal networks of community-based planning, all of the above infers an accumulation of social capital around the groups that come together to resolve the challenges facing a community. Parish councils in England can be conceived as community hubs and as foci for the growth of social capital, being at the confluence of community networks. For this reason, a whole range of local projects may grow out of the interactions that happen within councils, with groups coming together to run local services (Moseley, 2000) such as shops, village halls, pubs, post offices and so on. Repeated interaction within such community fora emphasises the reality of interdependency (Beem, 1999), generates trust (Putnam, 2000) and may help build consensus and avoid conflict (Falk and Kilpatrick, 2000). It is the possibility of bringing community groups into a ‘partnership’ with external actors and building consensus around policy and development decisions that has been lauded by the UK Coalition government as a means of reducing local conflict and increasing housing supply (Sturzaker, 2011). This is the basis of the challenge to the ‘established view’ that executive power combined with professional input is the surest route to the most equitable and efficient planning and local development outcomes noted at the beginning of this article.

External connectivity

Clearly, that challenge can only be successfully mounted if there is an effective and authentic connection between community groups and actors external to that community. Social network analysis anticipates breakages in potentially shared networks as groups coalesce into cliques. This happens because different groups perceive themselves as having more in common with some actors than with others, and do not always recognise the benefits of building particular links. Parish councils may look inward, for example, seeing their function as being one of service to the community. They may find it difficult to relate to external actors, who speak in a legalistic language and seem to have strategic concerns that differ from the parochial outlook of the council. They may want to achieve greater connectivity, but this proves difficult. There are big operational and cultural differences, in this instance, between the non-professional world of the parish council and the professional world of local government, conforming with the division between interest and policy groups (Marsh et al., 2009). Or in social network parlance, there is a 'structural hole' to be spanned. Near-neighbours in a social network – with common values and beliefs – may simply bond and quickly form a clique, but disconnected subgroups (i.e., the community itself and alliances of external policy actors) are too distant from one another and this distance needs to be bridged. Putnam (2000, 22) explains that a process of 'bridging' is needed to cross social and political divides and to generate the broader reciprocities that are central to realising, for example, collaborative planning goals.

Parish planning in England has traditionally been rooted in neighbourhood groups with relatively narrow interests and with only weak links to representative bodies and the professionalised policy community (Raco, 2007). These various groups and bodies are divided by the immediacy or longer-term scope of their respective concerns, by relative ignorance or knowledge of formal policy processes, by their different motivations, by what they understand to be their responsibilities, and by their priorities. For example, a village or neighbourhood may be within the jurisdiction of a local authority based in offices some miles away. It may be a focus for groups concerned about a number of neighbourhood issues, who have limited knowledge of formal policy structures, who are bound and motivated by a desire to conserve certain local features cherished by residents and conservationists alike, who see their responsibility as being to friends, family and neighbours, and their priority as being to shape or prevent local change. Those in the authority have wider concern; they understand the legal parameters of their powers, are motivated by pursuit of a broader 'public good' or by some 'paradigm' that they feel should guide policy, their responsibility is not to a single place or community and their priorities tend to be strategic. There is significant potential for misunderstanding between these groups, and potentially great distance between them, given their apparently tangential goals, rooted either in

parochial ambition or strategic priority. It is in this context that the idea of bridging, noted above, has been transported into the arena of community-based planning to denote a means of reconciling these goals through greater connectivity and discourse.

Owen et al. (2007, 50–51) argue that such bridging should offer a means of connecting the diametrically opposed concepts of *governance* and *democracy*. The latter is ‘top down’, rooted in ‘representative authority’ and achieves its ends through mandated power. It places great weight on a strategic perspective and its modus operandi is through local authorities as the instruments of change, who work in partnership with other professional agencies. The local authorities provide accountability while their partners – in fields such as economic development and housing – bring additional expertise to bear on complex problems that the authority alone is unable to solve. Governance, on the other hand, denotes something that is ‘bottom up’ and extends beyond the public realm of local government and its expert partners. It begins at a sub-local level and involves unleashing hitherto private energies. Priorities are defined within affected communities, and local groups are empowered to take actions against these priorities. But the need to build bridges between these concepts and competing realities suggests an acknowledgement that neither can achieve its goals without reference to the other: the strategic to the local and vice versa. While strategic perspectives frequently promote ‘provider-led’ approaches to service provision (Carley et al., 2000) and may encounter community opposition, very local control can degenerate into myopia, focusing on detail, and ultimately lack the coordination needed to deliver service efficiencies or grapple with the inevitable ‘strategic dilemmas integral to governing’ (Davies, 2008, 18).

This debate has intensified in recent years with the prospect of a more localised planning process emerging that concedes power to neighbourhood groups (Gallent et al., 2011). There is a fear that strategic oversight will be weakened and anarchy will substitute for integrated spatial planning at a local level, while the loss of regional planning will create a sub-regional vacuum as local authorities are less inclined and obliged to cooperate on strategic projects (Bianconi et al., 2012). While not addressing all of these concerns, there is a recognised need for a process of plan co-production to take root in England so that community-based plans are not at odds with the plans of local authorities. The content of the Localism Act 2011 suggests that this will not happen as local plans retain their primacy – as the ‘strategic vision for the wider area’ (DCLG, 2011, 12) – and neighbourhood plans must be in compliance with them. But forced compliance is no substitute for the dialogue and consensus that government appears committed to pursuing, as it is the consensus that emerges from a shared process – and from the co-production of plans – that, it is proposed, will reduce conflict around planning and development decisions (DCLG, 2011, 11). But how will this dialogue and consensus be achieved? How will bridges be built between the parochial and the strategic? Again, social network analysis offers some clues. Bridges between

cliques tend to take the form either of intentional intermediaries or incidental 'weak ties'. The former comprise actors who recognise the gap between community and political/professional interest and form, or are created to bridge that gap. The latter occupy a position between cliques. They are not strongly tied to any particular clique (e.g., they are neither a core community actor nor in a position of power within local government), but have some connectivity to both. They have been characterised by Granovetter (1973) as 'weak ties' that are potentially strong (giving momentum to the expansion of a network) by virtue of their 'betweenness', which allows them to act as conduits between cliques. Both intermediaries and weak ties can perform a bridging function, spanning the structural holes described earlier.

The internal and external connections that characterise and give shape to community-based planning, and may help government deliver on its planning reform ambitions, are now examined in a case-study area and through research that is briefly described in the next section.

Research approach and case-study area

The field work for this project was undertaken in the Ashford Growth Area, in the county of Kent, Southern England (see Figure 1). Ashford was selected as a case study because of the diversity of planning and development circumstances facing communities at the town's urban edge and further afield. Some communities in the borough have recently found themselves subject to major urban expansion proposals; others have faced substantial village growth proposals; but others have been subject to only slow and incremental growth, or no growth at all. Ashford captures a diversity of situations, albeit in an area that is politically conservative and where there are important environmental and landscape constraints and sensitivities. The hope, when selecting the borough as a case study, was that a range of different interactions with planning would be revealed, along with a range of experiences and outcomes, that would be the product of differing development pressures. The town and its hinterland were identified some years ago as a location for concentrated housing growth. The final iteration of the South East Plan (i.e., the Regional Spatial Strategy; GOSE, 2009) required that 56,700 additional dwellings be built in the East Kent and Ashford sub-region between 2006 and 2026, with 22,700 (47 per cent) concentrated in the Ashford Growth Area. Despite the revocation of this plan, and all regional strategies, the Borough still faces a major growth challenge. There is capacity for only 32 per cent of these homes to be built in Ashford town itself, with the remainder having to be delivered within urban extensions. The Borough's Core Strategy outlines plans to build approximately 15,500 dwellings on greenfield sites. Two major expansion sites have been identified: Chilmington Green/Discovery Park on the south-west edge of the town and Cheeseman's Green/Waterbrook to the south-east (see Figure 2). A lack

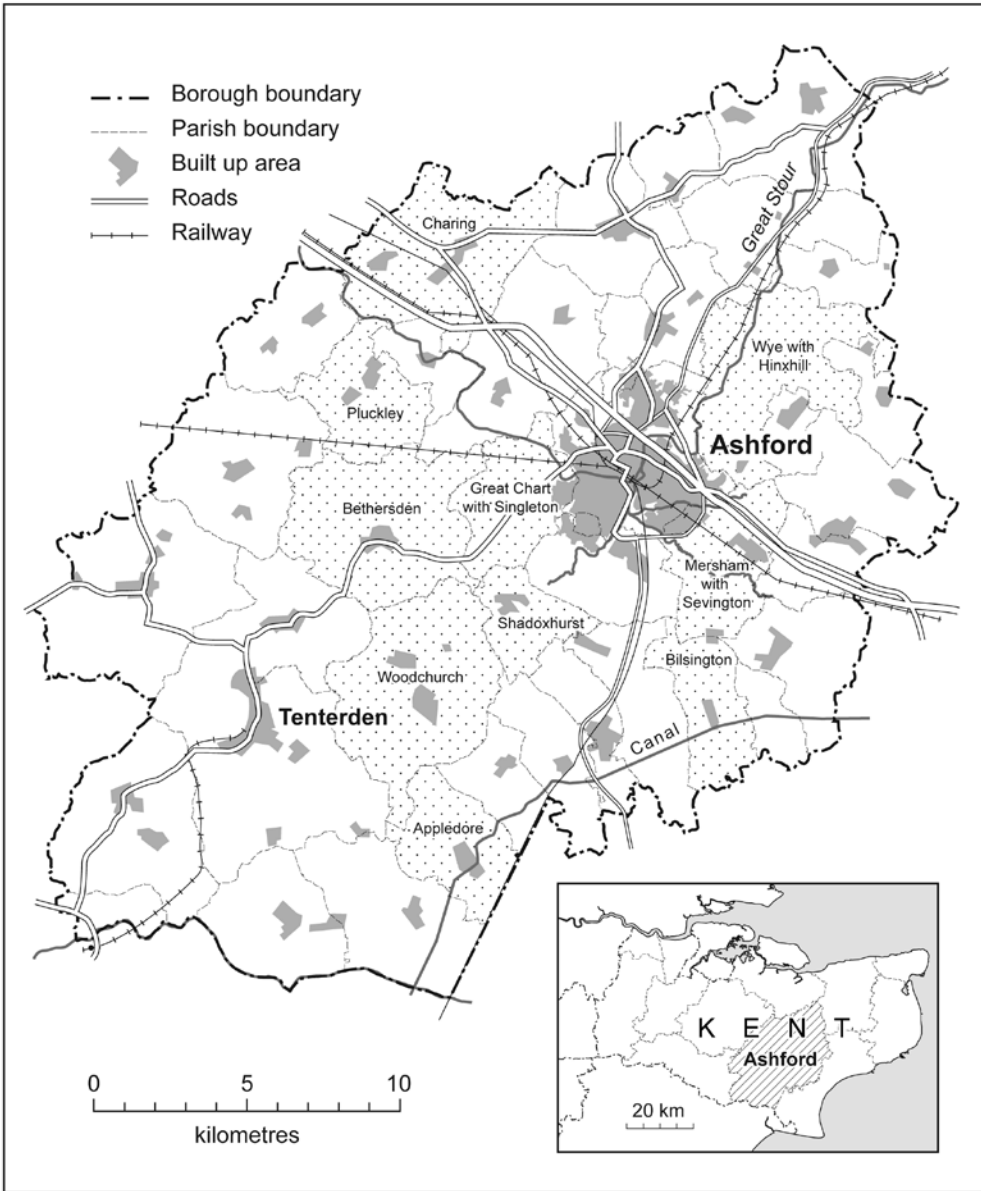


Figure 1 Location of Study Area

of primary constraint – either environmental or physical – has made these locations prime candidates for expansion. However, a number of hitherto rural settlements will be affected by these plans, triggering concern in these communities.

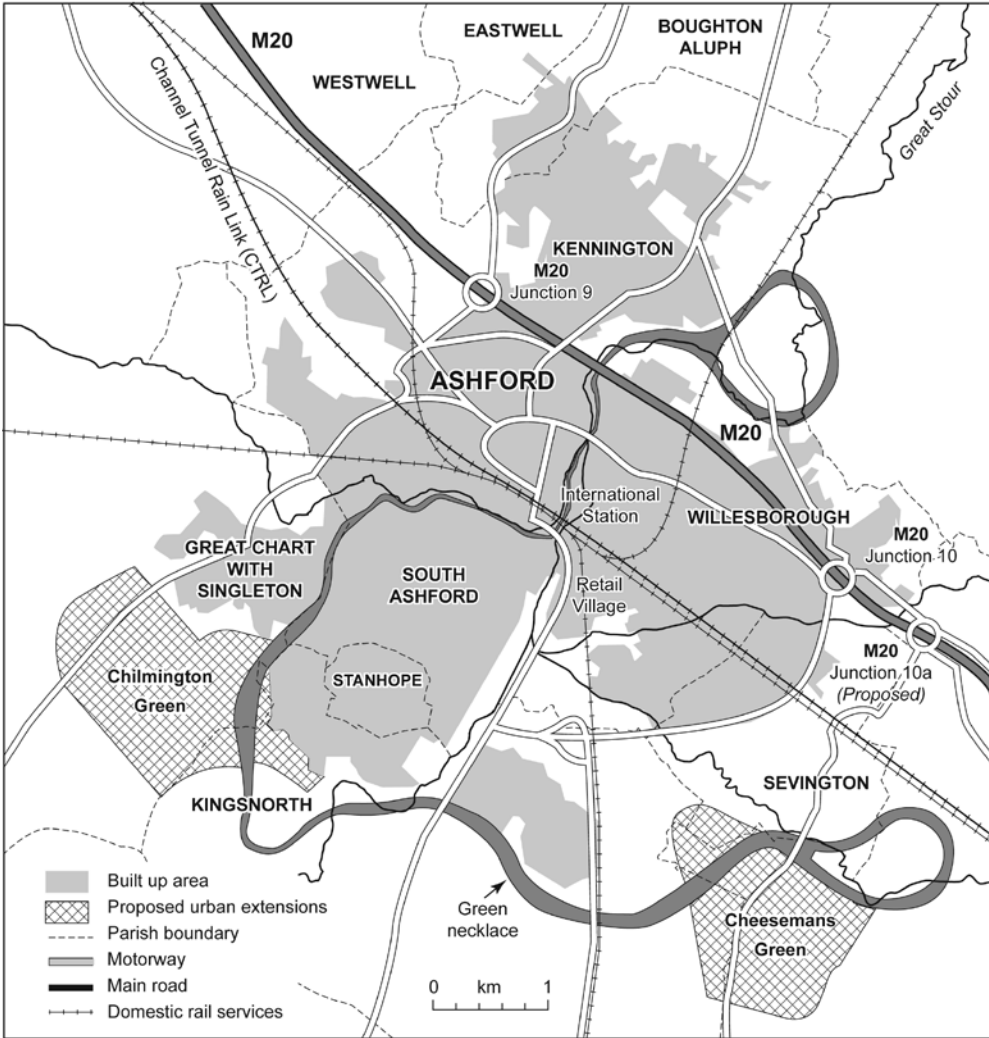


Figure 2 Major Urban Extensions

Field work in and around Ashford comprised a series of focus group meetings (ten in all) with parish council groups (seen as 'entry points' into communities): some, as indicated above, located in the direct path of the extensions, some close to the extensions (but not directly affected), and some in apparently 'safe' locations (the ring of consulted parishes is shown on Figure 1). The parish groups typically included the parish council clerk, chairman, other members and individuals co-opted to work on the parish plan. A series of eight parallel meetings were also held with policy actors at the beginning of 2010: these included housing, planning and development control

representatives of the borough council, members of the LSP and Growth Area special delivery vehicle, community support groups, the highways authority and the regional development agency. These focus groups and meetings offered differing perspectives on connectivity and provided the evidence for this analysis. Following the recording and transcription of all focus group discussions and interviews, an attempt was made to triangulate different perspectives on local relationships – to consider, for example, how housing officers interfaced with community groups from the point of view of the groups, the housing officers themselves, and other local officials. Critical or incidental relationships were explored within transcribed interviews and it is these data that provide the core material for this paper. All discussions were structured around key themes: internal and external interactions around parish planning activities within the communities, including patterns of community involvement and engagement with wider groups of residents, neighbouring parishes, support bodies and local officials; and interaction with communities, other policy actors and support groups, from the point of view of these actors and groups. A synthesis of all the discussions with the focus groups and interviewees is provided in the next section, subdivided according to the scheme described in the introduction.

The capacities of communities and arrangements for community-based planning

The process of producing a parish plan is regarded as a valuable means of harnessing local energies and building community capacity. Ultimately, these plans are an expression of ambition and the outcome of a process in which people exchange ideas and work through shared problems. There is rarely an expectation that parish plans will be ‘delivered’ (in their entirety) or that ideas within them will permeate into local plans, but there is a common view that communities need plans – or some alternative project – to *become a community* and develop patterns of sociability in which divisions are addressed and residents become better connected. Given the way this project treated parish councils as ‘entry points’ into communities, it perhaps comes as no surprise that these councils were viewed as critical community fora and potentially central players in recent and future community-based planning activities. That said, it was clear from focus groups that others within the communities took an active interest in planning and frequently pursued specialist agendas that, from the point of view of council members, risked compromising the integrity of any shared vision and certainly, from the point of view of the research team, pointed to critical fractures within the community. It was clear that while ‘planning activities’ were happening in many communities, this could never be labelled ‘community planning’ if that were to imply *full participation* from *all sections* of the community. On the admission of one group, their plan had been produced by four people (out

of a total of almost 3,000 residents) and while there had been consultation on its content, a decision had been made early on not to contact residents on particular streets owing to a perception of limited interest.

Whether such tendencies resulted from the particular profile of volunteers (and their tendency to make connections with like-minded people) in the parish plan process was a question put to the community focus groups. In some instances this was thought to be problematic, with parish councils dominated by older, retired residents with 'more time on their hands' who might have a tendency to pursue service agendas, for example, that might be construed as having limited relevance to younger, single people or families with children. But this was not a general pattern. Several groups reported a 'healthy through-flow of participants', with the composition of councils constantly changing and paralleling shifts within the community itself. Sometimes it proved difficult to mobilise the wider community behind parish council agendas, though particular events and perceived challenges or threats to a village (including planning applications) had a tendency to fire people into action, suddenly expanding the reach of the parish council beyond the 'usual suspects'.

However, networks of friendship were regarded as important in maintaining interest in community-based planning, with involvement viewed as a means of keeping in contact with people and making new acquaintances. New residents often become involved in parish planning for this reason, and also because they enter villages believing that networked action of this type is part of rural community life (i.e., they have been attracted by the stronger 'sense of community' that they believe exists in village England). There was some corroboration of the notion that a diversity of skills is important for the internal capacity building process, and this occasionally resulted in the co-opting, for instance, of designers or photographers to work on a plan. However, it proved difficult to ascertain whether the complementarity of skills or knowledge is a factor in bringing groups together. For the most part, it was claimed that 'raw enthusiasm' is the only qualifying characteristic that binds parish council members and plan groups together. In fact, the latter often rejected the professional input of local 'experts' who, it was felt, wanted to hijack or control the production of a parish plan. Such experts were accused of reining in the enthusiasm of others, constantly reminding them of what was possible from a design, planning or funding perspective. Communities, for the most part, did not wish to have their ambitions curtailed by self-appointed professionals within the community and regarded their input as 'destructive'. However, this was not a universal picture. In some places, the professionals had become the community leaders and boasted more skills and more expertise than the local authority itself, claiming to possess the knowledge 'to work the system' to achieve their goals.

But whether communities feared professional input or claimed an abundance of it, an apparently universal feature of the parish groups studied was the difficulty they

encountered in reaching out to the wider community, reinforcing the view that parish councils are often cliques with limited capacity to act in the collective interest.

Parish councils are strange beasts. Apart from anything else, you get a strange, eclectic mix of people that sit on them, but unless you actually want to take part and have an interest in it, it sort of goes on around you without you doing much about it. I desperately tried to get more people to our parish council meetings, but it doesn't seem to have any effect [...] all the time things are going good, everybody will let you get on with it and take care of it but, as for actually taking part, it's sometimes very difficult for people to come out and put their head above the parapet. (Parish respondent)

The councils tended to report to residents and consult them in an ad hoc way, acting as representative authorities. Their principal connection with the wider community came through overlapping interest group membership and personal social networks. Parish council members tended to be the archetypal 'active citizens' who were involved not only in the council itself but in a range of other groups: local history or conservation societies, sports and youth clubs, or groups for parents or older residents.

[...] a lot of it is personal, because of course the parish councillors themselves belong to a lot of these groups. Certain things are run by the same people. So obviously there's a lot of cross-membership, information-sharing and liaison. (Parish respondent)

Members of these different groups tended to come together within the parish council, which was effectively a forum for people possessing the highest number of group memberships. Seen pejoratively, this might mean that the councils represent the interests of the groups but not the community as a whole (i.e., not the non-members or the non-active citizens). Alternatively, the councils could be presented as being well connected to the declared interests and activities of the wider community.

External connectivity

It was suggested earlier that external links form when internal capabilities, within a community, are inadequate relative to the scale or scope of known challenges and those within the community either *reach out* for assistance, or non-community actors *reach in* with a view to realising a local project (or alliance) that furthers their own objectives. The research began the search for external links by looking at relationships between different parish councils but found little evidence of significant cooperation across parishes and very few examples of councils making connections with local groups beyond their own boundaries. Some short-lived lobbying alliances formed in the early days of the Growth Area strategy, but these quickly folded. Parish respondents saw external engagement as potentially drawing them away from 'service to the community' and as a distraction. Parish councillors who expended too much effort on

what were perceived to be non-community issues were accused of 'playing politics'. This could simply be attributed to a parochial outlook, but behind this outlook is a view that parish councils have a place in the hierarchy of local government, but not necessarily a function that extends to strategic thinking. They expect to adapt to the framework that grows up around them, and not necessarily to have any direct hand in shaping that framework.

In Ashford, the parish councils were found not to be connected in any way to the machinery of 'community empowerment' highlighted earlier. They believed that they had no link to the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) and therefore no input into the Community Strategy. In pre-2010 government rhetoric, Community Strategies (later superseded by Sustainable Community Strategies) were to become the 'plan of plans' (Morphet, 2004), setting a template for all other local strategies and frameworks. This appeared to put the members of the LSP in an extremely powerful position, with 'communities' given a role in setting the objectives for local planning. But two questions were raised in the focus groups: first, what was the purpose and scope of the Community Strategy; and second, which 'community' did it belong to? Knowledge of the Strategy (and of the LSP itself) was extremely limited. Many participants in the focus groups could not distinguish between the Ashford Partnership (i.e., the LSP) and Ashford's Future (i.e., the special delivery vehicle tasked to drive forward the Growth Area plans), and a significant number believed the Community Strategy was in fact the Communities Plan (i.e., *Sustainable Communities: Building for the Future*) published by the Labour Government in 2003, which established the framework for Growth Areas in the South-East and East of England.

The purpose and scope of the Community Strategy was largely unknown and most parish council members seemed unaware that the 'community credentials' of the LSP came from having partners claiming to represent the interests of Ashford's communities, including its rural parishes. These included Ashford Community Network, the Kent Association of Local Councils and Action with Communities in Rural Kent (ACRK). The secretariat function for the LSP was undertaken by an officer of the Borough Council. He expressed the view that the partnership had very strong links to Ashford's communities through the representative bodies, claiming that the LSP worked in close collaboration with the parishes. But in the language of the LSP, 'partnership' was conflated with 'representation'. Because groups like ACRK sit on the board of the Ashford Partnership, it was suggested that communities had the ear of business interests and service providers, and could directly influence their investments and programmes. But going back to the parish groups, it was noted that membership of the representative bodies was renewed annually, but apart from that, there was very little contact with these 'associations' and 'networks', and these certainly provided no avenue into the workings of the LSP.

This analysis of the lack of connection between place communities and LSP is

repeated elsewhere. Given the apparent community focus of both partnerships and parish councils, albeit at different spatial scales, Owen et al. (2007) had previously suggested that a fit should be sought between Community Strategies and the content of community-based plans, adding that this could be realised through the appointment of liaison officers, tasked to work with communities (69). These authors claimed that there was 'an acceptance that the community strategy could help broker the policies and decisions required by many bodies to address very local problems' (70). But despite this perception, Owen and colleagues observed 'very little traffic' on these 'bridges' between community and policy actors, and these same findings emerge from Ashford.

There was no 'bridging' to planning through the LSP, though arguably the partnership could not act as an *intermediary* as it was resourced from within the local authority and not independent of it. But if connection to local government through the apparatus intended to create that connection was discounted, then parishes were left to deal directly with local government officers, lobbying on issues of detail rather than seeking a broader input into strategy and policy based on their own plan ambitions. This tended to be the normal state of affairs. Parish councils maintain regular contact with named officers, building up personal relationships over time. For the most part, 'constructive' links were reported with a range of Borough Council Departments. From the perspective of the parishes, these good relationships were attributed to local experiences: officers supporting a bid for a leisure services grant or a close working relationship built up around a local needs housing scheme, for instance. Links in areas faced with significant growth proposals tended to be regular but sometimes combative. There were exceptions to this, with one parish resigned to major change and pushing hard for community benefits from residential development permissions. Links in areas less clearly affected by growth tended to be more irregular and convivial, but the 'invisibility' of the Borough Council could create its own frustrations, sparking conflict around seemingly innocuous proposals. The Borough Council, and other stakeholders, reported finding it easier to connect with 'parished' rural communities than non-parished urban communities, but encountered difficulties in trying to 'persuade local people of the benefits of development'. All parties valued dialogue, but differing interpretations of, and expectations from, the process were a source of friction. For communities, dialogue is continuous: it is a conversation which shapes outcomes, and occurs between parties who trust one another – it is authentic rather than coercive. Consultation does not amount to dialogue, but tends rather to be a hurdle that planners must cross to justify a decision already taken (see Selman, 2001). But for the policy actors, consultation *is* dialogue: it is an exercise in outreach, which aims to educate communities and manage expectation, thereby shortening the path to consensus around the *necessity* of a decision. It was clear from community groups that interpersonal contact, of an informal nature, is considered the principal means of making external connections.

However, these connections happened in 'responsive mode' when queries were being raised about a very particular local issue or development proposal. They were not focused on the development of strategy (and seldom on the content of parish plans) but were concerned with finding the 'ear of the right person' so the parish councils could lobby for minor adjustments to major decisions. Even the few 'weak ties' identified in the study shared this purpose. Parish councils often conceded that it could be difficult to get to the right people, especially senior officers who it was believed had the power to revisit decisions and potentially get them amended. In earlier reflections on social network analysis, it was noted that Granovetter (1973) drew attention to the 'strength of weak ties' in bridging gaps in networks and allowing subgroups to connect to nodes in a wider network that are in a position of power and influence. As part of a wider search for external links, the potential of various actors to play the role of 'weak tie' was examined. Ward members were the first to be considered. These drift between the political worlds of the Borough and the parishes, having a central place within the latter. They may act as intermediaries but are not weak ties. Rather, they are embedded in both groups and form part of a representative process rather than being incidental champions of local interest. Parish clerks also perform the role of intermediaries (and are often considered by non-community actors as entry points or gateways into a community) but their ties to the community and to policymakers are often strong and purposive. Support bodies – such as ACRK – cannot be considered weak ties as they have a mission to enter communities and to bridge the priorities of local people to the investments of service providers. Ultimately, the research uncovered only very light evidence of parish councils reaching out to employees of the Borough Council who happen to live locally, encouraging them to bring community concerns to the attention of their senior colleagues.

There's a couple of people in the village who actually work in Ashford as well, there's [named individual], so sometimes [...] certainly in terms of the [named] Committee [...] there's a number of times when we've tunneled into Ashford if you like, we've gone in from somebody who works with Ashford Borough Council rather than going through anything formal, we've come into the centre. (Parish respondent)

This is an example of how personal networks might be made to work for a community, but it does not fit with the model of weak ties closing structural gaps. There were more examples of mediation and bridging than of incidental weak ties.

Mediation (on strategy and policy matters) by intermediaries was the final port of call for this research, and the only obvious mediator between the parishes and local government, and other service providers, was Action with Communities in Rural Kent. When interviewed, the ACRK representatives claimed that the organisation – previously the Kent Rural Community Council – was becoming increasingly involved in 'bridging work': explaining to parishes what sort of 'evidence' service providers were

looking for in parish plans; and setting up a database for service providers of available parish plans, cross-referenced against the themes of the Community Strategy. ACRK's central mission was to help community groups more 'smartly interface' with policy actors. These parish councils generally welcomed this kind of community support, but viewed themselves as representative bodies with responsibility to deal directly with decision-takers. This meant that while assistance in understanding the evidence requirements of service providers was useful, councils wished to retain responsibility for gathering that data and feeding it to the providers. ACRK was happy with this arrangement and although it was able to help communities understand external evidence needs (and therefore strengthen the data and analytical component of parish plans and appraisals) it did not have the capacity to maintain a constant presence in a community or perform the role of permanent bridge. This sort of function was also performed by less obvious mediators. While the work of ACRK provided the only example of systematic bridging, there was also strong evidence of local authority housing officers providing a useful link to planning teams. Planning officers themselves were viewed as the regulators, liable to make bad decisions (or give bad advice) owing to their lack of appreciation of community concerns. Housing (project) officers, on the other hand, had a track-record of working with the parishes, especially on local needs projects, on homes for older residents, and on ensuring that new affordable housing adhered to the design standards set out in village design statements.

I've had a very good relationship with the Strategic Housing Manager on a number of projects that I've been working on. She's really good. We can work really well together and we're working on both the local needs and the older persons housing schemes and that's a joint parish scheme actually, the older persons housing, where they are trying to encourage small groups of parishes. (Parish respondent)

They had often won the trust of parishes and given the clearest indication of anyone in the Borough Council that the content of parish plans – especially those elements relating to housing need – were of value. For these reasons, housing officers tended to maintain good relations with clerks, chairmen and co-opted plan working group members. And what they heard from the parishes, they communicated via a Rural Round Table, which brought them together with the officers of other departments on a monthly cycle. Other departments acknowledged the possibility of 'linking through' housing, gaining some insight into emergent tensions and opportunities within Ashford's parishes.

It was housing officers, rather than community liaison officers (who merely arranged the parish forum meetings), that had invested time in building relationships with parish groups. While they undoubtedly had a vested interest in the realisation of projects, they were not viewed as the regulators. They had a track record of working with communities to achieve goals that had been jointly agreed between

parish councils, officers and other delivery partners. Planning officers, on the other hand, were often pushing projects that had not come out of the community and their role was to persuade unwilling community 'partners' that decisions reached by the Borough Council were the right ones. Housing officers simply felt like more genuine partners, and the dialogue with communities came across as more authentic.

Conclusions

I will say that parish councils could possibly make more effort to communicate with the borough and vice-versa, because it's all about *communication*, and I think there is a blockage somewhere [...] but much of life really is about people talking to each other. It has to be two-way and there has to be a fundamental willingness on both sides to talk openly. (Parish respondent, emphasis added)

The ambition of creating 'a new system of collaborative planning' (Conservative Party, 2009, 3) in England – that is, systematising an interpretation of how local democracy might function – is a bold one. To a significant extent, success in this latest round of planning reform will be predetermined by the internal mechanics of communities. Those which are well connected, and which draw together different interests, may have a greater propensity to work with the neighbourhood planning agenda in a way that augments local democracy. But planning at this scale is more likely to be inclusive, and might even avoid serving a narrow set of vested interests, if approaches can be identified for drawing more groups into community-based planning. There is of course a risk that a particular set of community dynamics continues to privilege narrower interests and that planning at the neighbourhood level is limited to opposing change. Communities need to manage this risk themselves, but will be helped by the presence of voluntary support groups. Beyond this *internal* issue, realising government's broad ambition will mean investing in greater *external* connectivity between traditional planning users and producers, and ultimately bringing them together in the co-production of plans. This is a big step away from the current modus operandi of spatial planning in England, in which professional planning teams are dispatched to manage expectation – which is undoubtedly a prime purpose of consultation around planning strategy and policy – and key decisions are reached in committee, following the receipt of advice from professionals. The revocation of regional strategies – after April 2012 – has eased some of the tensions around the purpose of consultation. Trust in local decisions had previously been undermined in many of the case-study communities by a belief that most decisions had already been made at national and regional level, and that the planning authority was merely the harbinger of bad news, sugar-coating this news with a pretence of participation in a context of mutual powerlessness.

Policy actors had some empathy with this view, feeling that their own efforts to manage expectation (through consultation) were absolutely necessary given the limits

to their own power and resources and the need to 'win support' for certain inevitabilities. They often became frustrated by what they viewed as the unreasonable expectations of community groups, manifest in objectors personalising their grievances and blaming officers for the broader failings of the system. But what stands out here as a key message is that those actors perceived to be further away from regulatory process found it easier to work with communities. This applied to the community support group, but it also applied to non-planning local authority officers who had developed a project-based relationship with these communities. The 'bridging' capability of housing officers was highlighted in the discussion above, but the work of leisure services officers – in bringing sports projects to fruition – meant that these could also provide a working connection to local government. But planning officers often endure rather than enjoy their relationship with the public, feeling that this relationship is scarred by a lack of trust in the wider planning system. Some hostility can be traced back to the recent experience of regional planning, and the feeling of powerlessness that this fostered, especially in those communities with a latent capacity and desire to shape their own futures. Within this context, there were few instances of cooperative working or the development of shared agendas. Communities continued to view themselves as recipients of decisions: as 'bystanders', hopeful that the inputs they continued to make, through community-based planning and responses to consultations, would impact on the detail of change.

This reality, found in and around Ashford in the run-up to the general election three years ago, sits in stark contrast to the ideal of interactive local governance, better connected to the citizenry, delivering consensus around plans and development decisions and able to respond to the heterogeneity of need. The weakness of external connection between community and non-community actors in the presented case study acted as a brake on collaborative working and on the prospect of building consensus around decisions. However, there was a real vitality in Ashford's communities – revealed by the analysis of internal connectivity and activity – and a strong desire to input into planning frameworks. But turning parish plans into neighbourhood development plans will not automatically close the 'yawning chasm' between state and society.

A degree of closure might be achieved by extending the powers of parish councils, by making planning decisions subject to the direct approval of communities, and thus redressing the balance achieved within the planning system between input and output orientation. This would result in a more *responsive* system, but one which might be unable in many instances to deliver on major projects. This type of approach has been taken in the Localism Act 2011, but the primacy of the local plan has been maintained, so ensuring that the system's descent into myopia is limited and a mechanism is maintained for dealing with the 'strategic dilemmas integral to governing' (Davies, 2008, 18): that is, the need to ensure that local decisions and actions contribute

to bigger goals. Another approach would be to devolve greater *responsibility* to community structures which could coordinate the contracting of services and take control of certain aspects of planning regulation, agreeing principles of devolved control with the local authority. This sort of approach had been suggested by the *Control Shift* paper published by the Conservative Party (2009) in the lead-up to the general election and now takes the form of devolved power to modify certain regulatory tools, including the drawing up of 'neighbourhood planning orders'.

But although the research found a great deal of frustration with existing engagement processes, it did not uncover any significant appetite for extended community responsibility. Rather, community groups appeared overwhelmed by existing levels of 'engagement' with local government, but underwhelmed by the *quality and authenticity* of that engagement and its end results. Reflecting on what 'localism' might mean for communities in and around Ashford, focus group participants argued for a basic need to build genuine links between people and planning, *starting at* the interface between community groups and planning authorities. They were looking for a *different relationship* with planning professionals and looked positively on the move to revoke regional strategies and dismantle the apparatus of regional planning. Planning officers agreed that their own 'offer' to communities might change once they were less constrained by unpopular regional goals. They may no longer be viewed merely seen as the harbingers of bad news, despite their own plans having to remain compliant with national policy.

But reform of the planning system in itself will not alter the basic reality of limited dialogue between community groups and local government, which remain divided along the lines described by Marsh et al. (2009). For there to be harmonious compliance between future community-based plans and local plans – and a chance that communities will more regularly 'welcome development' (DCLG, 2011, 11) – there will need to be substantial investment in open dialogue between authorities and residents, and a consequent accumulation of trust. Communication remains the antithesis of governance built upon the norms of administration (Foucault, 1982; Habermas, 1984), and throwing a new type of community plan into the mix and hoping that this will catalyse an entirely new relationship between people and planning seems rather fanciful, given significant operational and cultural barriers. Planners have been in the business of defending decisions already made for a long time (Selman, 2001) and government has given no clear idea of how this status quo, and central philosophy of planning, will be challenged. It seems certain, however, that intermediaries – whether external or internal to local government – will play a crucial role in bringing past combatants together, and helping create some of the harmony that the UK Coalition government hopes will ease development conflicts in England.

Acknowledgements

This research was supported by the Economic and Social Research Council, Grant Number RES-062-23-1650. The figures were drawn by Sandra Mather at Liverpool University. The huge contribution of Steve Robinson, Senior Planning Officer at Allerdale District Council, to this research is gratefully noted.

References

- BEEM, C. (1999) *The Necessity of Politics: Reclaiming American Public Life*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
- BIANCONI, M., HAMIDUDDIN, I. and GALLENT, N. (2012), *Local Empowerment and Strategic Co-ordination: A Review of Changing Practices in Infrastructure Planning at the Sub-regional level in England* (FiBRE – Findings in Built and Rural Environments), London, RICS Education Trust.
- BOOHER, D. and INNES, J. (2002), 'Network power in collaborative planning', *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, **21**, 221–36.
- CABINET OFFICE (2010), *The Coalition: Our Programme for Government*, London, The Stationery Office.
- CARLEY, M., CHAPMAN, M., HASTINGS, A., KIRK, K. and YOUNG, R. (2000), *Urban Regeneration through Partnership: A Study in Nine Urban Regions in England, Scotland and Wales*, Bristol, Policy Press.
- CONSERVATIVE PARTY (2009), *Control Shift: Returning Power to Local Communities*, London, the Conservative Party.
- DAVIES, J. S. (2008), 'Double-devolution or double-dealing? The local government White Paper and the Lyons Review', *Local Government Studies*, **34**, 3–22.
- DCLG (DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT) (2008), *Communities in Control: Real People, Real Power*, London, DCLG.
- DCLG (DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT) (2011), *A Plain English Guide to the Localism Act*, London, DCLG.
- DOAK, J. and PARKER, G. (2005), 'Meaningful space? The challenge and meaning of participation and new spatial planning in England', *Planning Practice & Research*, **20**, 23–40.
- DTLR (DEPARTMENT FOR TRANSPORT, LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND THE REGIONS) (1998), *Modern Local Government: In Touch with the People*, London, DTLR.
- FALK, I. and KILPATRICK, S. (2000), 'What is social capital? A study of interaction in a rural community', *Sociologia Ruralis*, **40**, 87–110.
- FORESTER, J. (1989), *Planning in the Face of Power*, Berkeley, University of California Press.
- FORESTER, J. (1999), *The Deliberative Practitioner: Encouraging Participatory Planning Processes*, Cambridge, MA, MIT Press.
- FOUCAULT, M. (1982), 'The subject and power', *Critical Inquiry*, **8**, 777–95.
- GALLENT, N., HAMIDUDDIN, I. and MADEDDU, M. (2011), *Selecting and Allocating Sites for Housing Development: Politics, Expedient Sites, Regional Planning and Localism* (FiBRE – Findings in Built and Rural Environments), London, RICS Foundation.
- GOSE (GOVERNMENT OFFICE FOR THE SOUTH EAST) (2009), *The South East Plan (South East Regional Spatial Strategy)*, Guildford, GOSE.

- GRANOVETTER, M. (1973), 'The strength of weak ties', *American Journal of Sociology*, **78**, 1360–80.
- HABERMAS, J. (1984), *The Theory of Communicative Action: Part 1: Reason and the Rationalization of Society*, Boston, MA, Beacon.
- HAUGHTON, G. (2012), 'Planning and growth', in M. Ward and S. Hardy (eds), *Changing Gear? Is Localism the New Regionalism*, London, the Smith Institute and the Regional Studies Association, 96–107.
- HEALEY, P. (1997), *Collaborative Planning: Shaping Places in Fragmented Societies*, Macmillan, Basingstoke.
- INNES, J. (1995), 'Planning theory's emerging paradigm: communicative action and interactive practice', *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, **14**, 183–89.
- INNES, J. (2004), 'Consensus building: clarifications for the critics', *Planning Theory*, **3**, 5–20.
- INNES, J. and BOOHER, D. (2003), *The Impact of Collaborative Planning on Governance Capacity*, Berkeley, Institute of Urban and Regional Development, University of California.
- INNES, J. and BOOHER, D. (2004), 'Reframing public participation: strategies for the 21st century', *Planning Theory and Practice*, **5**, 419–36.
- MARSH, D. and RHODES, R. (1992), 'Policy networks in British politics: a critique of existing approaches', in D. Marsh and R. Rhodes (eds), *Policy Networks in British Government*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1–26.
- MARSH, D., TOKE, D., BELFRAGE, C., TEPE, D. and MCGOUGH, S. (2009), 'Policy networks and the distinction between insider and outsider groups: the case of the Countryside Alliance', *Public Administration*, **87**, 621–38.
- MISZTAL, B. A. (1996), *Trust in Modern Societies: The Search for the Bases of Social Order*, Cambridge, Polity Press.
- MORPHET, J. (2004), 'The new localism', *Town and Country Planning*, **73**, 291–93.
- MOSELEY, M. (2000), 'England's village services in the 1990s: entrepreneurialism, community involvement and the state', *Town Planning Review*, **74**, 415–33.
- MOSELEY, M. (2002), 'Bottom-up village action plans: some experience in rural England', *Planning Practice & Research*, **17**, 387–405.
- NADIN, V. (2007), 'The emergence of the spatial planning approach in England', *Planning Practice & Research*, **22**, 43–62.
- OWEN, S. (2002), 'From village design statements to parish plans: some pointers towards community decision-making in the planning system in England', *Planning Practice & Research*, **17**, 81–89.
- OWEN, S., MOSELEY, M. and COURTNEY, P. (2007), 'Bridging the gap: an attempt to reconcile strategic planning and very local community-based planning in rural England', *Local Government Studies*, **33**, 49–76.
- PUTNAM, R. (2000), *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, New York, Simon & Schuster.
- RACO, M. (2007), *Building Sustainable Communities: Spatial Policy and Labour Mobility in Post-war Britain*, Bristol, Policy Press.
- SARKISSIAN, W., HURFORD, D. and WENMAN, C. (2010), *Creative Community Planning: Transformative Engagement Methods for Working at the Edge*, London, Earthscan.

- SELMAN, P. (2001), 'Social capital, sustainability and environmental planning', *Planning Theory & Practice*, **2**, 13–30.
- STURZAKER, J. (2011), 'Can community empowerment reduce opposition to housing? Evidence from rural England', *Planning Practice & Research*, **26**, 555–70.
- WILSON, P. (1997), 'Building social capital: a learning agenda for the twenty-first century', *Urban Studies*, **34**, 745–60.