PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN THE REVISED PLANNING SYSTEM

Report for the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister

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PREFACE

The aim of this project was to anticipate the passing of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Bill, by looking to innovative Local Planning Authorities which had themselves anticipated the Bill, through studying Planning: delivering a fundamental change (DTLR, 2001).

As one of a number of six-month projects undertaken by this Centre for ODPM, this was originally proposed as a more general review of Participation in Planning. The Chair and Director of the Centre undertook a survey of Peoples’ Attitudes to New Towns as long ago as 1973, utilising questionnaire survey techniques in which the Director specialised. He also recalls the presentation of alternative options for urban structures when working with Planning consultants on Teesside Survey & Plan in Stockton in 1967 (DoE, 1971).

The more determined revival of interest in public participation in Planning today owes a lot to general trends in society and to concerns of government (ODPM 2004). In particular, the development of Local Strategic Partnerships, normally serviced from the corporate headquarters of local authorities, has enhanced the possibilities for approaches to the public.

The Director is a member of two Local Strategic Partnerships, and is Chair of Regeneration in a second-tier District, having previously been Chair of Planning. The report is written for use firstly in disseminating and improving Planning practice. The text of three case studies has been read by Planning staff in the respective areas, on the understanding that the work might now be summarised for wider use beyond the ODPM.

The search for three case studies was confined to two Regions, the North East and Yorkshire and the Humber and to LPAs which had demonstrated innovation in consultation; that said, relevant Authorities were thin on the ground, and their experienced staff were in strong demand elsewhere. The eventual choice of agreed areas (defined in capitals at next page) includes a Yorkshire rural area which has already experienced marked population growth and is now placed in ODPM’s Northern Growth Corridor, together with two Authorities of the North East which raise the debates around historic commuting areas as well as regeneration issues. This produces a balance of one second-tier District (Conservative control), one Unitary Authority (non-Labour coalition since May, 2003) and one Metropolitan Borough (Labour). All were “front-loading” their Development Plan consultations from their Community Plan (but none had reached the site-specific stage in Planning).

Over the four available months it was possible to undertake 18 meetings in the three areas, including all five of the public meetings which continued in this period (minuted in the Appendix). Previous mention of a postal survey of Local Authorities at large was better replaced by use of one by the Local Government Association, and that of Audit Commission inspections of Planning Departments.

Alan R. Townsend, MA, MRTPI, March 5th, 2004
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The aim over six months was to study three innovative Local Planning Authorities in two Regions of England with respect to the changing context of legislation and institutions for Planning consultation, notably the arrival of Community Strategies. As agreed at the outset, the scale and timespan of the project were not of the kind to allow definitive results, but we will offer some pointers towards the questions at issue.

- Relevant Authorities were thin on the ground, and their experienced staff were in strong demand elsewhere. All were “front-loading” their Development Plan consultations from their Community Plan, but none therefore had reached the site-specific stage in Planning. We were repeatedly advised that institutional interests, the major housebuilders, would be holding their fire to this later stage, which they would dominate. Thus, the concept of a shortening of Inquiries on these grounds alone might be missing the main point; of what can be raised at Inquiries.

- The whole range of possible innovations in consultation and publicity was in evidence across the three areas, together with the employment of outside consultants. As warned by the literature, there are repeated problems in assembling a balanced consultation, and our results demonstrate a pattern of response which clearly varies by social class of area.

- Northern England provides examples of substantial integration of Community Strategies and Development Plans. The examples which presented themselves to us all arose in contingent fashion from the interplay of internal local authority dynamics, between Planning and corporate staff groups

- Much of the intellectual traffic in the preparation of CSs has been between local authority staff and their separate specialist groups (for Health, Crime etc.) rather than among groups at the plenary board or even at meetings of group chairs. ODPM (2004) are correct to advise but not, ultimately, require LPAs to co-ordinate with Community Plans

- The possible merging of Area Action Plans with spatially articulated Community Plans provides a distinct prospect, and has already in effect occurred across our rural but not our two urban study areas, which are not giving high priority to area consultations, partly because the response could be partial and “parochial”.

- Nonetheless, consultations in all three areas show support for the Planning system
• A full change of culture is difficult. The Audit Commission’s criteria for an honest and successful consultation are very difficult to attain. We recommend that professional academic and market research be employed in preparing a technical manual to be used in connection with Statements of Community Involvement, including “do’s and don’ts” in running meetings and in questionnaire preparation and sampling.

• This unfortunately adds to a considerable volume of work in what are relatively small Development Plan sections in most Authorities.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like at this stage to acknowledge extensive and often enthusiastic help from Planning and corporate staff of Hambleton District Council, Redcar and Cleveland District Council and South Tyneside District Council, together with members of Local Strategic Partnerships and Government Offices for the North East and Yorkshire and the Humber.

This research, although not directly funded, was undertaken for the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. Any views are solely the responsibility of the authors and may not necessarily reflect those of ODPM.
ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations are used in the report (after the first mention when each term is spelt out):

CC    County Council
CS    Community Strategy
DC    District Council
LA    Local Authority
LB    London Borough
LDF   Local Development Framework
LSP   Local Strategic Partnership
MB    Metropolitan Borough
ODPM  Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
PCPB  Planning & Compulsory Purchase Bill
RPG   Regional Planning Guidance
RSS   Regional Spatial Strategy
SCI   Statement of Community Involvement
SRB   Single Regeneration Budget
UA    Unitary Authority
UDP   Unitary Development Plan
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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

“What is the point of cities built without the people’s wisdom” (Brecht)

It was with this quotation that the professional body, the Royal Town Planning Institute introduced a recent summary of the history of public participation, including the following:

“The planning profession’s history of working with communities can be traced back to the late 1960s and the publication of the Skeffington report ‘People and Planning’. That report accepted the need to involve the public in planning and made far-reaching recommendations which influenced subsequent legislation in the early 1970s. Publicity and consultation became required components of the statutory planning system providing local people with opportunities to comment on and object to development plans and planning applications. Planners in the 1970s embraced this new responsibility with some enthusiasm, and time and effort was spent preparing exhibitions and organising public meetings.

Despite the enthusiasm, the response from the public was typically disappointing. Gradually this led many councils to reassess their commitment to public consultation and to carry out only the minimum necessary to meet the requirements of the planning acts. However, some planning authorities stayed committed to the principle of participation and devised new strategies to overcome the barriers to engagement. As a result, the planning profession today has a wealth of experience of working with communities and valuable examples of good practice to which we can refer”.

Source: Royal Town Planning Institute, 2003

Pressures from the public now combine with record levels of Planning applications in England and Wales resulting from the economic cycle. In addition to opening between 25 and 50 Inquiries on new Plans per year (and having 72 in hand at the end of 2002-3), the Planning Inspectorate received a record number of 26,440 Appeals against the refusal of Planning Permission in this last recorded year (Table 1).

TABLE 1 THE TREND OF ACTIVITY BY THE PLANNING INSPECTORATE

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<tr>
<td>Development Inquiries (England &amp; Wales)</td>
<td>Opened</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>48</td>
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<tr>
<td>Planning Appeals (England &amp; Wales)</td>
<td>Received</td>
<td>16,048</td>
<td>15,542</td>
<td>15,464</td>
<td>14,467</td>
<td>14,896</td>
<td>15,169</td>
<td>15,506</td>
<td>16,015</td>
<td>17,484</td>
<td>19,309</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Appeals</td>
<td></td>
<td>6,938</td>
<td>6,313</td>
<td>8,879</td>
<td>8,482</td>
<td>8,011</td>
<td>8,200</td>
<td>8,026</td>
<td>8,410</td>
<td>7,610</td>
<td>7,179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>22,986</td>
<td>21,855</td>
<td>24,343</td>
<td>22,949</td>
<td>22,907</td>
<td>23,369</td>
<td>23,532</td>
<td>24,425</td>
<td>25,094</td>
<td>26,488</td>
</tr>
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</table>

However, a major new factor has arisen for the writing of Development Plans. Local authorities are only one of a number of bodies engaged in providing services and encouraging the development of their respective areas. The government met a longstanding need (as seen by the present writers) when in 2000 it established “Local Strategic Partnerships” to incorporate with the Local Authorities other service providers from the community and voluntary sectors, along with the private sector. One of their tasks was to write a “Community Strategy” for their area. This requirement was potentially more important and far-ranging than the whole land-use Planning system. Ministers concluded that the two systems should draw on each other and avoid duplication. Our results show it to be the main avenue of consultation for Planning.

1.2 Aims of the Project

To concentrate on innovation, the aims of the project were amended and agreed with Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM):

To establish more precisely the extent of public interest in the Planning system, in the light of current changes. The project concentrates on early experience in incorporating Community Strategies in Planning work, and on the research question that people will be satisfied with a process that is seen to be fair and robust, and accept the outcome. How far does public interest in participation extend beyond individual decisions and special interest groups?

The formal land-use planning system is once more at a crossroads, with unprecedented recent levels of public comment to government on the Green Paper (ODPM, 2001), partly reflecting the level of public attention to environmental issues. The Paper mentions requirements for districts’ Community Strategies and for Certificates of Community Involvement to precede the drafting of Local Development Frameworks, while the frameworks for Regeneration are constantly being adapted.

We must not forget several past frontiers of effort in the promotion of public participation in Planning. Past theory of the 1970s exposed the differences between sociological approaches and Planning to people’s actual involvement in these decisions, but any solutions tended later to run into the sands of complex Development Plan inquiries. Subsequent theory (Healey, 1992) has rationalised the need to reconcile plural interests across a conurbation. What is neglected in both academic and official research is fuller appreciation of the actual public interest in the Planning system, both in Development Plan Inquiries, and the new provision for developing and incorporating Community Strategies in the Planning system.

This review was to be set in the context of extending public participation in the corporate process of the Modernising Agenda, and of the mounting activity of the Planning system (Table 1 above). The principal research evidence was to comprise data from local authorities, chosen to represent innovation in method as well as other factors. The first main stage of the work was to
involve study and interviewing to establish what processes are being adopted in developing the Community Strategy. Under what institutional arrangements was it produced, in which departments, with what consultation and input from members of the Local Strategic Partnership, and with how many consultation meetings with the general public, community groups, voluntary bodies, special interest groups and the private sector? What elements of the Community Strategy actually involve land use, (a) directly and (b) indirectly?

Several questions present themselves in this light. What particular methods can be shown to achieve success in drawing in new levels of involvement? If involvement is accepted to have occurred, again, how much can it contribute to the remit of a Local Development Framework; how much of any community consensus proves to fall outwith the remit of a Planning Framework and has to be omitted? What are the reasons for this? They may involve non-material Planning factors, lie outside the remit of Planning or be incompatible with other aims for the area or with the relevant Regional Planning Guidance (RPG) or Structure Plan.

1.3 The Evolving Framework

Given this basis for the work as it was agreed in revised form in July, 2003, the context into which it was to be fitted continued to evolve after that date. Consultation papers from ODPM (ODPM, October, 2003; November, 2003) related to the draft Bill awaiting Parliamentary approval in this summer of 2004, and defined the working of Proposed Statements of Community Involvement as part of Local Development Frameworks (LDFs). Also in October, Entec UK (2003) produced the Final Report for ODPM of a Study on “The Relationship between Community Strategies and Local Development Frameworks”, This is important among other studies because major changes in Planning participation are likely to occur through the lens of work for Community Strategies (CSs) which may precede them.

As they provide the main challenge and opportunity for improved Participation in Planning it is necessary to view the CS/LDF relationship as a framework for this study. The Planning world had not got very far in digesting that prospective relationship at the time when Entec’s (2003) studies took place. Their survey “was not able to examine what sort of process links are emerging between Community Strategies and existing Development Plans, or indeed any tensions between the two” (p.9); planning officers were “only now” (p.2) beginning to consider what the nature of the relationship might be, as the LDFs alone represented a great departure from established Planning structures and CSs were still at a very active phase of evolution in both aims and methods.

We can now envisage a whole chain of consultation in what ODPM (October, 2003) calls “continuous community involvement”. It may cross-fertilise with fresh thinking and practice in international Planning, which has a new focus on more fundamental elements of participation.
2. PERSPECTIVES IN PLANNING WRITING

2.1 Presumptions in International Planning

A far-reaching survey by Heriott-Watt University et al., (2003), also for ODPM, proposes that “participation in Planning” be replaced by “Participatory Planning”. It concludes that there are fundamental reasons for encouraging public discussion about an area’s plans at a very early stage, possibly before Planning officers touch the subject; this might take the form of open discussion between citizens, citizen groups and other stakeholders; their different interests might be mediated by independent third parties, and at such an early stage that planning disputes were nipped in the bud before reports provoked objections.

The report argues this is necessary because society and the style of governance have changed. There has been increased public distrust in government, while government itself has an increased desire to improve co-ordination between sectors, such as transport, housing, economic development and between scales, for example regional and national. Above all it is also a recognition that for the desired goal of sustainability to be reached, a consensus must be sought and achieved. The report advocates outreach techniques such as presentations between stakeholders groups, but in conjunction recommends skills training for planners in conflict management and problem solving, with the employment also of neutral parties. Other techniques that could be employed are an improvement in the types of meeting held, giving professional support to weaker parties (Planning Aid, in England) and encouraging community capacity building. The authors of this present paper accept the possible importance of this approach in principle, and test its relevance in the body of this report.

An independent and earlier approach by Healey (1997) saw the role of Planning as being essentially one of the constructive reconciliation of interest groups across the sub-region. Collaborative Planning “presents a way forward in realising the practical meaning of participatory democracy in pluralist societies….enabling all stakeholders to have a voice” (p5). This draws on many strands: the realisation that when dealing with a shared space there is a need to search for effectiveness and accountability and to distribute a sense of ownership; and a recognition that public reasoning is legitimate and that expert opinions are no more valid than those expressed by the public. An aim must be, therefore, to integrate urban and regional change more closely with the processes of governance. The key to this is the desire for collaborative planning to seek a ‘win-win’ solution rather than an ‘I win-you lose’ approach. A key part of collaborative planning at large is consensus-building.

As part of the expanded interest in public participation since the 1990s, Bedford et al. (2002) note that even opposing ideologies supported the notion, the Thatcher government from a consumerist perspective and New Labour through its devolutionist agenda, with the aim of ‘getting in touch with people’.
Like Healey (1997), Forester in the US (1989, 1999) argues for a more inclusionary approach to planning, challenging current practice with its heavy investment in experts and elected representatives and encouraging the involvement of local stakeholders. This should provide transparency, comprehensibility, integrity and legitimacy to the previous Planning process of ‘prepare-reveal-defend’. Bloomfield et al. (2001) suggest that the aim of these practices is to stimulate wider civil engagement and a means to restore trust in local government. Consensus building is a process of searching for universal agreement. It “involves a good faith effort to meet the interests of all stakeholders” (Susskind et al., 1999), where stakeholders are individuals or groups likely to be affected by a decision. They identify two types of participation: open participation and representative participation (where individuals represent a wider interest group).

2.2 Negative views

However, there has been a recent critique of these approaches (Thomas 1996, Imrie & Thomas 1997, Stoker 1997). A study of the Aalborg region in Denmark demonstrated that in practice the approach failed due to the strength of the “systemic power” of the political regimes, which dominated the process to the exclusion of others.

“power has its own rationality that ensures those interested parties who hold economic and institutional power are always likely to lead development in a certain direction regardless of public opinion” (Flyvberg, p321).

Other issues with a collaborative planning approach were the legitimacy of stakeholder groups, concerns over raising expectations that planners were not equipped to fulfil often due to lack of time and resources. He felt that achieving the kind of cultural shift in thinking, commitment and transparency of conduct that collaborative planning and the government’s modernizing agenda seek to promote was is likely to prove extremely demanding.

The wider question that Bedford et al (2002) set out to answer was whether these practices “release planning from forms that provoke public disempowerment”. They found that the active participants in the process were often drawn from a restricted cross section of society- the participants were primarily white, middle class and well–educated. Planners and representatives themselves, on the other hand, often described the participants as ill-informed, demanding and unrepresentative. One council saw the process of public consultation as means to economic efficiency rather than a commitment to the ideology of civic engagement. Another praised the ideology behind the process but labelled it a ‘false exercise’, questioning what really changed after the consultation. They argue that it remains to be seen whether inclusive participation will address concerns about disempowerment in the new planning process. As long as the process of control favours the
privileged and the influential then no amount of consultation will increase confidence in local government.

Lowndes et al. (2001a) found the drawbacks of increased public participation in raising expectations to unrealistic heights, slowing down the decision making process and increasing bureaucracy, adding additional costs and encouraging parochialism and conflict between communities. Lowndes et al. (2001b) asked why people participate? Their survey revealed a consensus that people would most often participate in issues that mattered and if their own interests were directly affected. They found the reasons for non-participation included: a negative view of the Local Authority; a lack of awareness of opportunities in which to participate; lack of council response to consultation; and a strong sense that participation was for 'other people'.

Owens (2000), however, asks who are the public and why should they be engaged? An ‘information deficit’ model has the underlying principle that if people had more information about, and therefore a better understanding of the issues and risks associated with, policies they would be more likely to accept them, however disagreeable. Owens (2000) though argues that is something of a myth, concluding that:

"it seems to me that emerging concepts of ‘engaging the public’ are pointing broadly in the right directions. But the signposts remain confused, because the destination is not only distant but involves a greater challenge to the status quo than has hitherto been acknowledged” (Owens, 2000, p5).

For Rydin & Pennington (2000), like ODPM (2004), public participation provides information for the policy process and by involving parties early on in the policy development process it avoids conflict at later stages. It essentially smooths the policy implementation process. They suggest practical strategies for improved participation of two kinds, one reducing the costs of participation by paying for childcare or keeping meetings short and increasing the direct benefits (e.g. creating an opportunity for socializing); the second approach is to make the impact of participation on the policy decisions more explicit, for example using the local media to highlight successful examples and using schools to support notions of participation.

They advocate allowing communities to find their own recourse, and to organize themselves and their own ‘institutional arrangements’ when tackling common dilemmas. However, Rydin (1998), while conceding that collaborative planning is an attractive proposition to planners, went on to question it theoretically and practically. She argues that while the needs of a range of interested parties must be considered so must a planner’s needs.
3. DOES THE STRUCTURE OF LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS ANSWER THE UNDERLYING QUESTION?

3.1 Introduction

Our case studies require us to look at the relationship of Community Strategies (CSs) to Local Development Frameworks (LDFs) in some detail and also criticise their role. At first sight, the introduction from 2000 of Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) and their CS has conceptually resolved a wide range of problems. In LSPs, all the interest groups involved in servicing, running and developing an area, public, private, voluntary and community, are brought together for the first time in a systematic and organised way. In particular, the structure of LSPs clearly allows and encourages the member interest groups to interface, talk and negotiate about the development of their area independently of Planning staff and committees. This simple fact would fit centrally among the proposals of Heriott-Watt (2003), although the LSPs have a much broader remit.

We should note at the outset that it does not necessarily follow that LSPs are well equipped to deal with conflict resolution between constituent partners (Entec, 2003) or even with consultation with the public.

3.2 Shared Consultation with Community Strategies

There is a clear logic to saying that, wherever possible, CSs and LDFs should share a large part of their consultations with each other, in respect of work with both the public and stakeholders of an area.

- The ODPM Consultation Drafts (October, 2003; November, 2003) propose to formalise a much higher level of Community Involvement in LDFs than in present Development Plans; there should be "widespread buy-in" in a "wider proactive approach", to have "all sections of the public actively involved throughout the process".

- Heriott-Watt University et al.’s (2003) proposals in effect extend preparation back beyond "pre-planning" under local authority official auspices to embrace open discussion and mediation between interest groups independently of the Authority. Whether or not these extensions are always necessary or possible in UK conditions, they point the way to a fundamental direction of change for Planners and one which should at least be facilitated.

- Even without a direct land use planning element, Heriott-Watt presented their principal workshop for ODPM and other officials (September 2003) in terms of the possibility of discussion and reconciliation between interest groups. It follows that their proposals are applicable to LSPs in their own right and in any case.

- LSPs are none other than a committee of interest groups in each Local Authority area. Their CSs are expected to be based on community
consultation, firstly of an overall vision for the future of the area; this may obviously derive many implications for land-use planning, beginning for example with assumptions for the future population and employment of the area (with its implications for housing and employment land). The CS cannot be fully implemented without Planning, indeed it may raise expectations too far without taking proposals through the LDF process.

- The Planning interest, however, stands to gain in its own terms from integration with the CS:

  1. At the very least, the Strategy is a "material factor" in Planning decisions and is to be recognised in the LDF Core Document.

  2. The overall "vision" of the Strategy is certainly likely to involve more concerted involvement by institutional stakeholders than would result from a set of Development Plan consultations by Planning officials.

  3. At a wider level of consultation, nearly all (94%) of LSPs have or intended to have a Consultation Strategy, promising sophisticated work in at least some Districts.

  4. There are inherent economies of scale in social survey work. It is difficult to achieve representative samples in interview work, because of mounting costs of interviewing and accessing respondents, while other methods, for instance evening workshops, are expensive in terms of staff time. It is also recognised that areas are beginning to suffer from consultation fatigue.

  5. It is at this point that the arguments merge. On the one hand, Planning needs wider consultation of stakeholders and residents; standards will be enhanced through Statements of Community Involvement (SCIs). On the other hand, LSPs' Consultation Strategies provide an opportunity to undertake a considerable amount of that work. At the very least, there is a clear overlap of content, and between what the two procedures would propose in any one area: in terms of good coordination, presentation and statistical arguments, there is a clear advantage in marrying the two procedures if at all possible.

  6. The argument is more far-reaching, if we consider work and proposals on geographical sub-areas of the Local Authority, where LSPs have mostly seen the need for area sub-panels and, more variably, for community plans; whether or not these will actually involve land-use proposals, the prior consideration of the area's needs by and with its people may be the same.

Spatial planning is seen to play a significant role in all types of Authority, as seen in a survey by the Local Government Association: The acronyms above the columns refer to types of Local Authority: Metropolitan and London Boroughs, other Unitary Authorities, and County and District Councils:
### TABLE 2 IS SPATIAL PLANNING A CORE THEME IN YOUR COMMUNITY STRATEGY? (%)

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>MB</th>
<th>LB</th>
<th>UA</th>
<th>CC</th>
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**Base: 117**

*Source: Local Government Association, 2003*

There are many reasons why the ideal of greater participation is in any case best met by joint use of consultation between LSPs and their respective Planning counterparts. In this view, the LDF is commonly seen as the delivery mechanism of the spatial aspects of the CS. Some broader points also support the argument:

1. Government has reaffirmed that LDFs are to have a broader substantive scope than existing Development Plans; arguably this introduces more CS considerations as objectives (in some cases these were elements that were excluded in the 1980s when national decisions tied Planning back to land-use).

2. "It is felt that, without Planners' input, many CSs will remain highly aspirational and undeliverable" (Entec, 2003, p.19).

3. Some CSs are becoming very spatial documents, particularly as they develop proposals for individual sub-areas from their initial visions.

4. Housing in particular is seen as a point of common ground, together with the sustainability principles of Local Action 21, leading to a particular interest in the environmental and housing theme groups of LSPs.

5. In their conclusions, Entec (2003, p.54) argued "the potential linkages between LDFs and CSs touch on some of the issues which lie at the heart of what spatial planning is meant to be". Any local authority with a well-developed corporate view is bound to acknowledge this.

"Combining the community involvement programme from both initiatives would help to ensure that the widest possible spectrum of public views informed the LDF preparation process. However, despite their intentions, LSPs and other stakeholders may not be necessarily representative of the wider community and could have their own agendas" (Entec, 2003, p. 17).

For practical purposes, however, we must note further limitations to this possible liaison:

1 "The extent and nature of consultation methods being used in CS preparation are rarely described in the CS document itself" (Entec, 2003, p.11)!
2 There are repeated concerns that the membership of LSPs is not representative. "Some planners tend to regard LSPs as ephemeral, highly self-selecting and unrepresentative 'partnerships of the powerful'" (Entec, 2003, p. 19).

3 There are inevitably tensions of view reported between CSs and LSPs: at the end of the day, it has to be remembered that Planning has to stand as a discrete statutory function.

4 There are undoubtedly variations between LSPs (only part due to the geography of the country); some have produced only slender CSs, others ideas that they cannot carry an action plan or assignment of responsibility, either for consultation or implementation.

A balanced view may be supported from Entec (2003, p. 37):

"Whilst LSPs may not be genuinely representative, they do provide greater scope for community involvement than traditional Development Plan public consultation mechanisms. Where they exist, they can be beneficially used to secure an inclusive approach towards LDF preparation. Even where they cannot, experience…..has shown that the use of forums or focus groups can raise the quality of local debate and reduce local opposition and conflict with national planning policy" (Entec, 2003, p. 37).

A principal object of this study is to examine the validity of this contention in local authority activity. As background to our three case studies, we now review existing consultation practice and trends from surveys, and extend this with more basic reports of the Audit Commission.
4. RECENT CONSULTATION PRACTICE FOR DEVELOPMENT PLANS

4.1 Existing Surveys

Lowdnes et al's (2001) paper is essentially a “census of local government activity to enhance public participation”. Their definition of public participation is based on Parry et al (1992) and describes several different types or methods of participation (these are not confined to planning practices):

**Traditional**- e.g. consultation documents and public meetings

**Consumerist**- those aspects concerned with the delivery of services, i.e. satisfaction survey etc.

**Forums**- a regular dialogue with interest groups

**Consultative innovations**- citizens’ panels, citizens’ juries and web-based interaction

**Deliberative innovations**- community based planning, needs analysis and visioning techniques.

Their survey of local authorities found that the implementation of non-traditional participatory practices occurred in nearly half of all authorities; 47 per cent employed focus groups, 45 per cent community planning and needs analysis and 25 per cent visioning exercises. As for the implementation of new technology, 24 per cent claimed to have employed interactive websites, but a recent study by the Society of Information Management revealed no authority had a truly transactional website while only 6 per cent had a good level of inter-action.

When looking at political control of local authorities and the uptake of non-traditional or innovative methods, they found little difference between them, although the Liberal Democrats were slightly ahead and coalition and independently controlled local authorities were slightly behind. Trends in the engagement of the public in participation were encouraging; many local authorities have used the new modernizing agenda to revive participation in governance in general:

“...it would appear that far from being a focus on a few fashionable innovations, the participation agenda has encouraged local authorities to renew their acquaintance with traditional forms of participation, as well as to experiment with alternatives” (p210).

The authors make the observation that there has been a great appetite for and willingness to engage in new forms of participation, and that this has been reflected in rapid uptake of these methods particularly since the mid 1990s, notably focus groups and public meetings. Thomas (1996) argues that traditional standard methods like exhibitions and public meetings will attract only the middles class who are confident with them; feminist theory should be used to engage women more in their own territory of the home, shops and schools.
A fairly to-to-date survey of recent Planning practice for Development Plans is shown in Table 3, prepared as part of a survey for the Local Government Association, and using the same acronyms as for Table 2.

**TABLE 3 METHODS USED TO INVOLVE THE LOCAL COMMUNITY IN THE PREPARATION AND REVIEW OF YOUR DEVELOPMENT PLAN IN THE PAST. % RESPONDED ‘YES’ TO EACH METHOD**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>MB</th>
<th>LB</th>
<th>UA</th>
<th>CC</th>
<th>DC</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<td>Public meetings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Area/neighbourhood forums</td>
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<td>59</td>
<td>44</td>
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<tr>
<td>Visioning exercises</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning for real</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: 196 authorities responding to this question

*Source: Local Government Association, 2003*

“Planning for real” relates originally to the use of a village model or map on which residents can point to suggested developments. The table shows it to be the least used of the various consultation methods to date.

### 4.2 Audit Commission inspections

For some greater depth of comment across the country we consulted reports of the Audit Commission, which covered the Planning function in 12 authorities visited over the period 2002-3. The general conclusion was to find little evidence to suggest that these councils were embracing public consultation under the ethos prescribed by Herriott-Watt (2003). There is in fact more emphasis on weakness rather than strengths, with most attention to Planning application casework.

Not untypical of good practice was Bedfordshire County Council, where the Commission found that there were clear aims and objectives for the consultation exercise. There was good staff involvement and a ‘diverse range of stakeholders’ was consulted including members of the public, District, Town and Parish Councils, members of the development industry, advisory agencies and other district and county councils. A variety of methods were used and responses received from nearly 200 individuals and organisations.

Again, Dudley MB “carried out an extensive consultation process to inform the Best Value review and challenge the Service. A wide variety of consultation methods were used and involved applicants, agents and developers, disability groups, ethnic minorities, a Citizen’s Panel, ‘mystery shopping’ surveys, external bodies involved with the Service, Councillors, service staff and other Council staff”. Then the authority sought to agree protocols with those agencies with whom it consults regularly such as the Wildlife Trust, British Waterways and the Environment Agency”. In a more rural area, Harborough
District Council (DC) encourages parishes to undertake village design statements and offers support to groups involved in such projects. In this way local people are able to study the particular character and design features of their village and, with the help of planning officers, to draw up statements encompassing the most significant design features that they would like see incorporated into new developments within the village. The Council consulted with a wide range of interest groups including regular users of the service, those involved in tourism, staff, elected Councillors, residents living in conservation areas and objectors. It also invited comments from the public through the use of its ‘Talkback’ publication.

The Commission established a wider range of adverse criticisms among the 12 authorities. In Bedfordshire, “the aims were not fully met, for example to identify good practice nationally. There were limited outcomes from the exercise, for example the need for a consultation strategy and an explanatory leaflet and the issues identified were not primarily customer or publicly driven, something acknowledged by the service. There was no significant exploration of issues raised in consultation or of lower satisfaction levels on behalf of some consultees such as parish councils... It appeared that the review team for Plans and Environment largely determined the issues that required addressing rather than allowing users to identify areas of concern”.

The Commission say that it is insufficient to rely on the regular surveys undertaken by most authorities of “Citizen’s Panels”, because their type of questions lack reasons for the views which people supplied. There is also repeated comment on an excessive reliance on questionnaires. There were limited attempts to explore issues identified in more detail through the use of different techniques. Where more varied techniques were used, there was a view that they demanded “a certain level of literacy, oracy and confidence and attract people who have these skills” (Harborough District Council). Councils had not always used existing public liaison groups.

There was also concern over possible neglect of rural parishes: “Parish councils are key players in the planning process. However, they were not involved in the review in any way. We met a group of parish council representatives, who appeared to have some genuine concerns about the service. These concerns could have been considered as part of the review and could have led to further actions for improvement”. There was concern about neglect of the disabled, and the view at Bury that “the service’s capacity to improve is limited because. The approaches to engaging the community do not fully recognise their diverse needs or use the variety of approaches that would enable them to be positively involved”. Where the Audit Commission lavish more general praise is where innovation has been applied, notably for example in Wokingham District for its incorporation of websites and Email amid a wide range of improvements.
5. CONSIDERATIONS FOR IMPROVED CONSULTATION AND SURVEYS

5.1 First principles

Working in the setting of a body under the control of politicians, we have to note a difference between the appearance of good consultation and the reality, as it would be seen by academic research authorities. In this context, the Audit Commission and IdeA (2002) are among the bodies that have recently looked at standards of community involvement. We have to stress that academic research in this field is often finding its deepest insights from qualitative work, from the analysis of what people say rather than exactly how many say it.

Nonetheless the authorities refer to the use of statistics to the 95 percent confidence limits, providing a 3 per cent margin of error on a representative sample of 1000, which is commonly regarded as the minimum size of sample in market research. Not many researchers realise that the same size, 1000, is needed for supplying figures for sub-populations, for each sex, or for say three component areas of a district sample. (Alternatively that means that figures extracted from a District-wide survey will be much rougher if extracted for sub-populations or areas.) Many recipients of a survey will assume that it is percentage coverage that counts (which is totally erroneous until a sample exceeds ten per cent of the “target population”). Some bodies such as regional development authorities encourage individual communities to write their own surveys, “warts and all” as part of the process of self-education and involvement. One of the major problems with questionnaire surveys is the need for experience in drawing up the “coding framework” of open-ended responses if tables are to be produced at all!

5.2 Audit Commission recommendations

The Audit Commission and IdeA (2002) raise salutary points in having a criterion for the proportion of direct consultation carried out during a year that is in accordance with principles of good practice. They see four main principles of good practice for consultation. “The consultation should be:

- related to a decision that the authority intends to take;
- competently carried out;
- inclusive; and
- used in practice.

If we look at this in detail, each of the following principles needs to be applied if consultation is to be effective – i.e. there is no point carrying out a well-designed survey and then taking no notice of the results, or consulting only some sections of the community when looking at overall priorities (Emphasis added).
• The consultation is designed so that it will inform a decision to be made;

• It is clear to the consultees what they can change by responding to the consultation;

• It is made clear to consultees prior to them responding, when they can expect to receive feedback on the consultation;

• The exercise is designed in a way that is statistically valid, and the minimum sample return required is identified in advance of the consultation;

• There is evidence of a systematic evaluation of the most appropriate method(s) of consultation required to inform the decision being made, and to ensure that the method of consultation does not through its nature exclude some groups of the community;

• There is evidence of planning and reasoning for the sample of population selected, and that steps are taken to ensure that the sample contacted represents the make up of the population (or the service users where this is the relevant measure) and avoids bias;

• That there is a review following the consultation to identify any ‘gaps’ in the sample returned (i.e. to ensure that the responses are as representative as the sample planned, and the number of responses sufficient), and to take follow up action where necessary;

• There is evidence of consideration of alternative methods of consultation to cater for hard to reach group, including for example publication of written material in Braille or through audio tape, and the translation of documents where necessary, use of supplementary methods (i.e. one size may not fit all the population targeted);

• There is evidence of analysis of the results obtained from the consultation, and written feedback is reported internally identifying the conclusions and actions resulting from the exercise;

• Clear and timely feedback is given to consultees on how their views were taken into account”.

These are clearly a daunting set of requirements with significant staffing implications.

5.3 Declared trends in Development Plan consultation methods

We can conclude this section by referring to the methods which respondents to the LGA survey said they would use in future. They are presented by the same breakdown of local authorities.
TABLE 4  METHODS USED TO INVOLVE THE LOCAL COMMUNITY IN THE PREPARATION AND REVIEW OF YOUR DEVELOPMENT PLAN IN THE FUTURE % RESPONDED ‘YES’ TO EACH METHOD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>MB</th>
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<th>UA</th>
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<th>DC</th>
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<td>Planning for real</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: 196

*Source: Local Government Association, 2003*

The data shows the Table filling out to provide a more even diffusion of methods across the country, with a value of more than 50 percent in each cell, with the exception of Focus Groups in London Boroughs, Area/Neighbourhood Forums in County Councils, and Visioning Exercises and Planning for Real remaining everywhere below a half. When these are seen as changes of method (Table 5 compared with Table 3), the aspirations are clearly to level up activity in the lower five entries, especially through the use of interactive websites.

TABLE 5  CHANGES IN CONSULTATION METHODS BEING USED IN THE PAST AND IN THE FUTURE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>% Used in past</th>
<th>% Used in future</th>
<th>% Change</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Planning for real</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>+19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Local Government Association, 2003*
The choice of areas for this new study by the University was intended to identify and evaluate innovative good practice, preferably with Local Authorities undergoing Development Plan consultations over the period of the research. The choice was intended to be of three Local Authorities, bearing in mind the resources allocated to this work and the need for repeated visits and interviews. The research design was to include selection on three criteria:

- Local Authorities (LAs) with innovative practice, rather than looking for ‘average’ LA’s
- Authorities with contentious issues, especially if bearing comparison with growth areas of the greater South East
- Social heterogeneity between the three areas; looking at the breadth of participants, does innovation draw in a wider set of participants?

If possible, evidence of (scoping) of the pre-planning element of the process was to be available to assist the selection, including public engagement with strategic documents etc. Other things being equal the selection should include

- A Unitary Authority, and
- One second-tier District"

The identification depended on verifying the up-to-date position of Local Authorities with the Government Offices for the North East and for Yorkshire and the Humber, together with some subsequent enquiries with heads of Planning. After these, the assessment remained that there were just enough authorities to approach.

Several ex-Metropolitan Boroughs in the two Regions proved very community-minded for example in consultation for Issues Reports and in bringing their Plan more in line with the Community Strategy and Local Strategic Partnership (LSP); this had an eye to Local Development Frameworks (LDFs) but was nonetheless a Review of the Unitary Development Plan (UDP). Harrogate, as a second-tier authority in North Yorkshire is notable for a major recent consultation, attracting several hundred objections; however, these were selective Deposit alterations to meet Planning Policy Guidance (PPG3) and to protect hotels and community facilities

HAMBLETON (a second tier authority in North Yorkshire) experiences some growth pressures from Leeds, York and Teesside and marches with a National Park Plan for the North Yorkshire Moors. The Director deals with both Planning and Community Strategy issues in five community areas. They have completed an Issues consultation which included choices among alternatives by respondents. They fully anticipated the LDF arrangements and are seen as the most active Authority in this regard in their Region, continuing with market town meetings at the moment for Area Action Plans (AAPs).

REDCAR & CLEVELAND (Unitary) combines declining heavy industry and ex-ironstone mining villages with attractive commuting areas adjoining the
same National Park. They have successfully integrated and correlated issues from the Community Plan in the Local Plan Review Issues Report of March, 2002, for instance there are, among the usual full set of topics, chapters on Crime and Community Safety, Children, Young people and Lifelong Learning and Health; the resulting consultation records 257 contributions very accurately.

SOUTH TYNESIDE (ex. Met); a history of high unemployment etc prompted them to review their area's role through employing consultants prior to the Community Strategy consultation, which, through being both led by Planners includes land use issues in the recent Community Forums and Citizens' Panel work; the aims assumed they could adopt LDF procedures.

These three emerged clearly from our enquiries. Across wide areas of the two Regions there were few authorities which really met the criterion for being innovative and at the right stage. Other types of Authority were engaged in partial alterations, and second tier resourcing for Development Plan work efforts was fairly slim.

All in all, the selection of Hambleton, Redcar & Cleveland and South Tyneside was seen as the best alternative and agreed with ODPM. Hambleton's population growth and house values will represent the main English trend of urban-rural growth pressures. The controversies surrounding middle class reactions to use of green land and the conservation of historic settlements are certainly present in Redcar & Cleveland and South Tyneside, but they also involve community consultation in areas of housing decline and major technical strides in methodology. As can be seen from the following table, they represent not only a balance of types of Local Authority, but also of political control.

**TABLE 6 SELECTED CASE STUDY AUTHORITIES**

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<td><strong>REDCAR &amp; CLEVELAND</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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7. CASE STUDY I: A SHIRE COUNTY DISTRICT

The North of England contains some Travel-to-Work Areas of high prosperity, and Hambleton is part of such a belt extending from the Lake District to the East Riding of Yorkshire. Hambleton's average price for a detached house is £235,000 and for a semi- £131,000. Pressures have been accentuated by improved access from Leeds, itself prosperous, via the new build M1/A1(M)/A1 link, and the District increased in population by 5.9 per cent between the last two censuses. The A1 traverses the whole District from south to north and has now been seen, with the M62, as part of an officially supported axis of growth, the Northern Growth Corridor linking and including the City Regions of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, West Yorkshire and the North West (Regeneration & Renewal, 30th January, 2004; ODPM, 2004).

The Development Plan process has been important in controlling and guiding these pressures, with over half of Hambleton's new dwellings for instance recently built on brownfield land in market towns. Five years ago the Planning Officer reported that he was under significant pressure from housebuilders, fighting development appeal by appeal, but they are now very well aware of the rules under the present Development Plan; these have been upheld under PPG3 and the government's willingness to stand behind it at appeal. As a result the remaining housing issues are more subtle; the distribution of building between the five main market towns, the question of affordable housing for those on lower incomes and the sustainability of village life in the 135 villages of the District.

Control has been achieved under a delegation agreement with Council members which places an average of 11 applications on each Development Control Committee meeting agenda compared with about 50 or 60 a few years ago, allowing more time for public speaking in committee to be introduced. This is also part of a wider shift in corporate culture prompted by the arrival of a new Chief Executive in 1996, a new Chief Officer structure, the establishment of the Cabinet System and a new Council Leader, and has resulted in good Best Value results.

The Community Plan and Development Plan have been inspired and driven forward by Council priority which was contingent on the influence of individual innovation and recruitment. The arrival of an experienced Community Planning officer from Bradford, with its high need for community awareness, was a catalyst bringing a fresh approach, fresh ideas and experience in working with the community. She went out and attended meetings to get people involved in existing and new groups, embracing existing Town and Parish Councils.

It was therefore under the Director of Planning and Environmental Services' auspices that a Community Planning Steering group was set up in April 2001, producing a draft of the Community Plan in October 2002 before the establishment of the LSP in November, 2002, and the spatial Key Issues report of January, 2003. These were regarded throughout as interacting, and consulted in parallel. The five themes of the Community Plan, which
themselves were evolved through consultative meetings, will be articulated through the Local Development Framework (LDF), including for example topics such as Health. They reflect success in attracting senior figures to the LSP, including for example the Highways and Environment Agencies. The themes have been used to reshape the Council’s overall Vision and Priorities.

7.1 Area consultation in a "federal" District

Local consultation fairly rapidly led to entrusting most activity to five devolved area groups. It is worth noting at this point that Hambleton is of course a compromise name, using the name of the Hambleton Hills which front the Vale of York to the east. The Authority was established in 1974 by the merger of five former Rural Districts surrounding five respective towns, including Northallerton, the only Urban District.

Figure 7 Hambleton Strategic Partnership

The Area Groups (to the right) of this definitive diagram played an important role throughout consultations before and after the Key Issues Report. An important catalyst lay in the argument for regenerating market towns which flowed from the establishment of the Countryside Agency. This combined with success in attaining finance from the Single Regeneration Budget 6 (available countywide, but not common in rural areas generally). To access the funding it was necessary to write "Community Prospectuses" in each of the five market towns, including costed projects. This was the basis of four of the five Area Groups of the diagram; Thirsk Regeneration Initiative Committee was established under the then regional "Market Towns Initiative", while Bedale and Northallerton now have "Renaissance Market Town" status with the Regional Development Agency, hence the recent consultation meetings which we observed (see Appendix).

All the 178 parishes are grouped under these five units including about 80 joint or single active Parish Councils. At the start of these consultations, the District Council wrote to each Parish asking about their concerns and issues,
and undertook meetings in principal villages, at least 10 public meetings in each of the five areas. District Councillors proved amenable to this and later stages of the process, perhaps because of a tradition of leaving staff to make arrangements and proposals, a point of immense importance in allowing volunteer members of the Area Groups to constitute much of the Groups’ political “legitimacy”. Officers thought that the middle classes of the area had the time, resources and confidence to take up these openings. Great efforts were made to contact “hard-to-reach” elements and to make inroads in engaging church and youth groups, but there is some regret that connections have not yet been made, for instance with the small ethnic minority population of the area. However, the affluence of the predominantly middle class population of the area supports electronic communication, including a site for the monthly routine minutes of each of the five Areas. A socially more balanced representation is possibly demonstrated by recent contacts.

The Area Groups were seen as important for expressing local needs and concerns, providing vision for the locality and thus providing the local input to the Community Plan. For this purpose, communities organised themselves into steering groups but received support from Single Regeneration Budget (SRB), the Yorkshire Rural Community Council and the North Yorkshire Forum for Voluntary Organisations. Community Plans for all Areas were produced in 2003. A notable feature of the whole process was an emphasis on Consultation Audit and Feedback. A complete table for the period April, 2001 to March 2004 was prepared, under the structure of the five areas, cross-tabulated against the following headings:

**Title/purpose**, normally the five Community Plans  
**Consultees**, normally the general public  
**Date and frequency**, ad hoc followed by annual  
**Results**, i.e. coverage of focus groups, questionnaires, interviews; these varied from 80 interviews and 60 comments forms in Thirsk to a response of 2000 out of 7000 to questionnaires sent out from Easingwold.  
**Outcomes**, in all cases explicit as use to develop and prioritise the local community action plan and feed into the District one  
**Feedback**, variously to public events, meetings, local paper, exhibitions, open days and website  
**Cost**, varied from £100/£200 for volunteers’ stationery to £15000 for consultants  
**Evaluation**, is self-critical over the need on occasion for greater publicity, better locations for mobile units; one Area reported limited response from Parish Councils due possibly to “consultation overload”

### 7.2 The Community Plan

The Community Planning Steering Group for the whole District was established shortly after the Investment Prospectus Groups (March, 2001) and began by checking existing consultation material and strategies to avoid duplicating work already done. It integrated representatives of the Area Groups with the principal stakeholders, now appearing on Figure 7.1 (above) as the Executive Group and Chaired by the Director of Planning and
Environmental Services, keeping in step with individual and common issues. The Group brought together some key partners, such as the Environment Agency, voluntary sector or Police who would not have otherwise worked together. Continuing in a clockwise direction round the diagram, the later five Thematic Groups resulted from consideration of up to ten possible priority themes identified through consultation, bringing in new and independent members, including on the Sustainable Community Group a Housing Association, the National Park, the Environment Agency, horticulture, woodlands, and Local Authority Development (County and District).

The senior Hambleton Partnership Board, the LSP, was established later and is regarded as successful for the level of representation which it has attracted in a "second-tier" District. In this widely flung District continuing attention was paid to the integration of the Area Groups in understanding District-wide issues, through representation on the main LSP, and a right to attend Thematic Group (resolving potential feelings of dissatisfaction found in other LSPs).

Following a stakeholder survey of July, 2002 the Community Plan (Hambleton Strategic Partnership, 2002) is an A4 colour document of 64 pages covering the broad principles of the Thematic Groups on a District-wide basis. Each section begins with "Local Views" and each sub-section with

"You told us that............."

The Plan is attributed to Hambleton LSP "on behalf of the community, that is the people who live and work in Hambleton and also those who visit the area", (p.1). The themes, issues and priorities to be included in the Community Plan were assembled through Area Groups, partners’ consultations and undertaking public consultation through Hambleton News, the Council newspaper. "The Steering Group then established five Focus Groups with partners from across the District to look at the information from all the consultations and to develop district-wide priorities, targets and actions. This formed the basis of the Priorities for Action which appear in the Plan." Each priority theme is concluded with a list of actions and assigned to a partner and a particular time period.

The consultation on this draft Community Plan, from December, 2002 to March, 2003, was undertaken through focus groups and proformas, the local authority newspaper and a web forum. Final copies were sent to all the original people consulted. Over 150 comments were received. The main problem, beyond the proformas, was that additional information was very varied and difficult to integrate.

As part of a "Vibrant Community" theme, Community Development and development of ICT are themselves action points. These included distributing one publication per year to residents (a Best Value Performance Indicator), to update and inform progress on the Community Plan and rationalise existing consultations.
Despite the involvement of Planning staff, very little of the report (a few commitments by service providers) has to do with spatial distributions. However, the "Sustainable Community" section includes policies for housing, conservation, flooding, air quality and waste which marry those of a traditional Local Plan with those of the Environment Agency. However, the same team produced three months later, in January, 2003, a complementary spatial document.

7.3 The Key Issues Report

The Key Issues Report (Hambleton District Council, 2003) is announced as the precursor to a new type of Plan, which will "build on the Council's Community Plan and take forward its themes and proposals relevant to land use planning". However, it will also implement Local Agenda 21 and other Council strategies. The Document notes in particular that "The preparation of the Community Plan and Community Investment prospectuses has given rise to a new impetus for agencies to work together to deliver their services in a more effective way that meets the needs of rural communities. The Local Development Document should build on this work and help to deliver the Community Plan" (p.6). The Document was intended to generate discussion about issues through securing and considering the views of communities, businesses, service providers and amenity groups on more than 38 key questions. The Initial Draft Deposit Plan was to be ready by the winter of 2003 but formal processes cannot now start until the enactment of the Planning and Compensation Bill. All readers were invited to comment via Email, a website, telephone or letter.

The majority of the report falls under sectoral chapter headings: Housing, Economy, Town Centres, Transport and Community and Social Infrastructure, with general KEY ISSUES presented as questions for the reader placed in prominent boxes, for example: Should village shops and public houses in rural areas continue to be safeguarded? Many of the issues are specific to the separate towns and may involve competition between them. In this field, the main point from the York and North Yorkshire Joint Structure Plan is to identify Northallerton and Thirsk as the principal service centres; this County Council saw itself till recently as delegating LSP functions and the Community Plan to Districts. What is remarkable is the extension of choice among options to the reader.

7.4 Deriving Spatial Strategies

All stages from the approval and circulation of the Issues Report to the preparation of the Draft Strategic Vision and Spatial Strategy for the new Local Development Framework were completed within the calendar year of 2003.

The Key Issues Report was circulated to all town and parish councils, service providers, amenity organisations and interest groups, consultants and developers, a cross section of local businesses and residents who have expressed a wish to be informed of the local plan review. In addition, officers
attended meetings of the LSP Area and Thematic Groups to explain to members of each partnership group the role of the Local Development Framework with respect to the work of their partnership and to encourage the partnerships and their constituent groups to respond to the consultation. A period of six weeks was set for the consultation but this was extended for a further two weeks.

The main process of consultation was by questionnaire. It was available to download from the Council’s website and it could be completed electronically. A Discussion Forum was set up on the website covering key issues; this received over 400 hits on several topics. Over 600 questionnaires were circulated and 275 returned and in addition, there were 45 letters. Many respondents included detailed comments on points of concern. The responses have been analysed and collated into a report of consultation on the LDF Key Issues Paper.

Council papers include results of consultation result from meetings of “Local Plan Area Committees”, for detailed discussion by Councillors from the respective five areas, also compared with views of stakeholders from each of the five areas. Most of the results are broken down by the five areas and provide for choices between the basic bones of any spatial strategy for this area. These include, for example, the degree of priority to be given to Northallerton and Thirsk, the principles of centralising or decentralising development between market towns and larger or smaller villages in general, and the means of sustaining village life as well as District-wide written policies. Within this framework, it is clear that Planning Officers have had to develop for example site specific policies for employment as well as the detailed classifications needed for village policies.

Nonetheless, the direct use of questions from the Issues Report for Members to make recommendations (with the risk of distortion through area political rivalries) is one of the boldest decisions for which this Planning Authority could claim fame. The response of Members assembled in Local Plan Area Committees merited over four pages of report. These concern alternative statements of the overall Vision, the market town hierarchy, village development and the economy. The most remarkable for Planning is the section on Housing which is reproduced here.

7.5 Housing (direct excerpt from Council report of the consultation of Councillors)

“Which housing development scenario should be selected?
Members were asked to select a strategy for housing development.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Bedale</th>
<th>Easingwold</th>
<th>Northallerton</th>
<th>Stokesley</th>
<th>Thirsk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Focus housing development in the market town</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) The majority of housing developments in the market towns with some in 3-5 larger villages</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
c) Mainly in the market towns with development in 10 – 15 villages with good range of services

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<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Yes</th>
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d) More even distribution of housing development between market town and a larger number of villages

<table>
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<th>Yes</th>
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|          | Yes with conversion of farm building allowed |

Taken together with the response to question 2 on the spatial strategy, indicates that Members would prefer to see a housing strategy where development in mainly in the market towns with a spread of development across 10 – 15 or more villages. This strategy would have to be developed to accord with the overarching vision focused on building sustainable communities and vibrant and prosperous market towns.

**Should a single large development of 400 – 600 houses be planned for in Northallerton and Thirsk?**

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<th>Bedale</th>
<th>Easingwold</th>
<th>Northallerton</th>
<th>Stokesley</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Northallerton</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thirsk</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With only one exception there was a clear expression against this proposal. The suggestion was put forward that two or three sites may be acceptable. Another alternative would be to subdivide the development so that it could be phased so that smaller sites were released according to need.

**What proportion of new housing should be provided as affordable housing both to rent and purchase?**

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<th></th>
<th>Bedale</th>
<th>Easingwold</th>
<th>Northallerton</th>
<th>Stokesley</th>
<th>Thirsk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

The results show rejection of a policy for heavy concentration of housing, allowing a more balanced development between towns and villages. There is rejection of a single large development (to support a single new primary School) of 400 to 600 houses in Northallerton and Thirsk, and recognition of the need for about one quarter of housing as “affordable”. In the economy section (not reproduced here), there was no agreement between areas over the degree of concentration of new employment land, whether a new large hotel was needed, although the refurbishment of underused buildings in market towns was seen as the best method of their regeneration. Other issues showed a lack of preferences.

The fuller survey document, of 40 questions, was circulated to 400 partners, attracting 225 responses, although their analysis did not produce a consensus.
on the Strategy. From Members’ comments and those of such stakeholders, the Draft Strategic Vision derived the key themes; of sustainable communities and vibrant and prosperous market towns, although the stakeholders gave less weight to transport, leisure and recreation. The Spatial Strategy is summarised in two sentences, but the report points out the complexity of supporting village services. A number of factors are placed alongside those from consultees before being argued through to produce changes in the spatial distribution of proposed housing. The stakeholders’ views on employment location are analysed prior to the statement of an employment strategy in five sentences. All the strategies, concluding with one on Rural Regeneration, are carefully documented prior to being clearly signposted as boxed bullet points.

7.6 Continuing Consultation

Parallel with the completion of the draft at end-2002, there has been fairly continuous consultation occurring in one area or another. This has occurred through deliberate delegation to the areas of preparations, notably of consultation, for the Area Action Plans. In particular, the RDA, Yorkshire Forward, has funded the employment of consultants in the two Renaissance Market Towns, Northallerton and Bedale, where we attended public consultation events in the shape of meetings and Planning for Real. Lead consultants and others worked with the relevant Area Group and with focus groups to develop projects. The Planning for Real event in the Town Hall of Northallerton was advertised on local BBC radio as well as by the town crier. People were encouraged to add “post-it” notes to the map display boards of the town planning proposals, and it was thus easy to identify the burning issues. Detailed meetings in the town of Bedale attracted mainly older people, with the main issues once again the loss of shops, attracting and retaining young people, street cleanliness and pedestrianisation.

Some of the problems of running satisfactory evening meetings are presented in the Appendix which comprises reports of all the public meetings which were available to us after choosing the areas for study. The three reported in Hambleton showed the possibilities emerging from the use of independent outside consultants, the value of specially prepared displays, the use of new techniques (including a camera booth), the elicitation of a range of issues, the use of both daytime and evening venues and the possibility (in the Bedale cases) of building consensus. However, the three meetings variously demonstrated deficiencies of advertising, signs to the room, poor disabled access, and cold or poorly laid out rooms as well as a slowness to comment, a bias to limited or very parochial views and inability to visualise the longer term.

Yorkshire Forward are co-ordinating work in this area through a staff member who very familiar with Hambleton. The theme of physical renovation brings out a number of conflicts over Development Plan issues, some to do with land ownership etc. Transport as a whole has become a sensitive issue in market towns, ranging around the familiar debates about parking and charges for it, and the value of having visitors whether as tourists or longer distance
shoppers. It also raises issues over the legitimacy of who should have a say in it, consultees, stakeholders, town meeting, District or the County Highway Authority, and who selects the final solution.

7.7 Conclusion

The Council has already approved the broad contents, costs and timetable of the LDF and has put proposals for the Local Development Scheme to the Council in March, together with starting the employment of consultants on a range of topics including the Sustainability and Strategic Environmental Assessment of the Core Strategy. The timetable allowed for the agreement to a Draft Statement of Community Involvement in January, 2004, its final publication in October, 2004, consultation on preferred options in November, 2005, Examination in March, 2006 and Adoption in March, 2007. The Community Plan is undergoing monitoring reports.

This ambitious timetable involves complete replacement of the current Local Plan with six Development Plan documents (and probably four SPD). Clearly, the Authority has defined some important steps forward, particularly in integrating Planning with the Community Plan (and showing the competence of Planners in corporate holistic working), providing capacity building for community groups, the presentation of spatial strategy options to politicians and stakeholders, and in devising an appropriate form and very thorough arrangements of decentralisation and delegation to five constituent areas. That consultation has achieved much wider engagement, raised aspirations, and emphasised the importance of feedback to the people, recognised perhaps a little late in the next case study. However, important interests like the housebuilders did not respond to the invitation to engage at this stage. Political leadership of the Council was important, but Council members were not much more involved than before.
8. CASE STUDY II: A UNITARY AUTHORITY

The main land use issues in our second authority are fairly well known. Its area was included with Middlesbrough in one of the classic post-war Planning studies and in Teesside Survey & Plan (HMSO, 1967) as the amalgam of industrial housing for large heavy industries, and a mix of former ironstone mining towns and villages and attractive (ex-) Yorkshire market towns abutting on the North Yorkshire Moors National Park, leaving a challenge today for integration, regeneration and greenfield development. Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council had 22 years existence (as “Langbaurgh on Tees” Borough Council) as a second-tier district until the abolition of Cleveland County Council in 1996 and its promotion to Unitary status.

Its current Local Plan was initiated in 1989, took 20 months between the Consultation Draft in 1993 and the Deposit Draft of January, 1995 and was approved in 1999, running from 1992 to 2006. However, the Tees Valley Joint Strategy Unit has been responsible for the successor to the County Structure Plan and the first one was prepared for consultation in 1999 and approved in 2002. New Unitary Authorities were advised to work jointly to prepare Structure Plans where there was strategically important cross boundary considerations and successfully did so. This work is to continue as input into the North East Regional Spatial Strategy.

In preparing to look at all the issues involved in what was the Local Plan 1st Review in 2001, the Planning policy staff of Redcar and Cleveland took the initiative in looking to innovate in their approach both to the Plan itself and how to consult on it. This was at the same time as nascent ideas over new Planning processes. Together with the local government modernisation agenda, Community Plans were coming to the fore, and the Community Plan, 2001-6 commanded attention (Redcar & Cleveland Partnership, 2001) along with other corporate strategies and policies. The Government’s Green Paper (DTLR, 2001) reinforced the view, and received support from other parties.

In the absence of detailed government guidance, they produced an Issues Report in 2002 which cascades the vision and priorities of the Community Plan and Council strategies and “tried to come up with the land use issues” that would need to be addressed in the forthcoming LDF in a series of imaginative questions. The second half identifies the key issues on an area basis. They got a good reaction from the public and the bodies they consulted on the approach, except from house builders who found that the area approach needed an index of sites. Every other person or organization which responded or who made comment on the form and the content were quite complimentary, including Government Office. The consultation itself, in 2002, produced extensive results and is the main subject of this section, after essential consideration of the pre-Planning stage.

However, the Deposit Plan itself, including consideration of the results of consultation, was delayed along with the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Bill. There is concern at the time of writing that Government Office is
suggesting that the Issues consultation may have to be repeated because it did not address Options.

8.1 Pre-Planning elements

The Planning staff were involved at a senior broad level in preparing both the Structure Plan, consulted in 1999 and the Borough’s Community Plan of 2001. The latter, which has an emphasis on regeneration and economic development following the remarkable run down of employment in the steel and chemical industries since 1980. These culminated in issues of depopulation and demolition in the most dense housing areas being raised in the Structure Plan. The regeneration need has involved the selection of different combinations of Ward Areas, including Rural Development Areas, Assisted Areas for Regional Selective Assistance and the Single Regeneration Budget. Although there were increasing amounts of community consultation for neighbourhood projects originated by the Chief Executive’s Department, the view is that regeneration projects with recurrent social spending have so far involved Planning only incidentally.

However, the Council brought in consultants to cope with the large area adjoining the Middlesbrough boundary, the “Greater Eston” area whose population fell by 15 percent between 1991 and 2001. The first study, by the Planning consultancy of Nathaniel Litchfield & Partners (2001) addressed a number of issues including overall housing levels, whereas the second, commissioned by the LSP through the Borough Council, was by the community and social regeneration consultants BOW (“Banks of the Wear”, i.e. Sunderland –based consultants), and tended to bring out what had been seen as a failing to that point, that the Council had failed to provide feedback from previous consultation, and suffered public criticism (irrespective of its actions)

This difference of origin between two studies in the same area can be seen as significant for present purposes. A principal aim of the second study was to consolidate the public’s view of the area, involving a four-stage process: information gathering, consultation of key stakeholders, and full community and agency consultation; the latter comprised a series of seven public consultation sessions, three agency consultation sessions organised by theme, and outreach sessions with five specific groups – all supplemented by written questionnaires:

“A general point that seemed to run through the consultations was that the first report was limited in focussing on the physical environment while a lot of the problems were caused through anti-social behaviour, drugs, drink and youth crime” (BOW, 2002, p.5)

As in other Districts of the North East, there was strong tension between Wards reported here. There was strong criticism of any priority spending in the northern areas adjoining the former steelworks sites, tempered only by the view that their problems would spread to the southern areas if not tackled. The majority of consultees accepted the need for demolition and rebuilding in
northern areas, but it was recognised that a “more detailed consultation would be required”. There was a balance of opposition to new building of houses and a new shopping centre. There were anger and cynicism expressed at many of the public consultation sessions, connected with a perceived lack of information, commitment, vision and leadership principally from the local authority - although the LSP was little known in this context. There were concerns from a range of stakeholders that the local authority needed to develop its capacity to work in partnership and on a multi-departmental and multi-agency basis.

Although this work was commissioned separately from the Local Plan, the Key Issues Report (Redcar & Cleveland Council, 2002) is at least explicit in acting on the contents of the consultants’ study. This Report does raise the issue of demolition at South Bank. An officer is taking this forward as the Greater Eston area remains a testbed for the development of Action Area Plans.

8.2 Evolution of the present Community Plan

The Redcar & Cleveland Partnership is firmly a Borough-wide organisation, dating back to Best Value needs of 1998. It includes the major players in representing the social, economic and environmental sections of the community drawn from public, private and voluntary sectors, and has eventually evolved a constructive role for the community sector. It is serviced by the Community Planning Team of the Chief Executive’s Department. Overall it lays claim to very considerable consultation in the preparation of its Community Plan. “The Partnership and our member organizations have carried out a wide range of consultations and surveys listening to the views of many people throughout Redcar & Cleveland” (Redcar & Cleveland Partnership, 2001). Several of these refer to regular large efforts by service providers, and a good tradition of survey and statistical work in Health. An Annual Survey is capable of carrying different topics in different years, and this was utilised; it is a postal survey with a normal response of 1000 to 1500 out of 2500 forms issued, undertaken by a market research firm including basic cross-tabulation.

A range of consultation events took place throughout 2001/2002 to listen to people’s views about this Plan and to hear what issues were important to people for the future.

As regards the generation of the Plan itself, the Partnership believes that it can successfully tackle the issues facing the community “by effectively working together”. However, the main meetings are three-monthly and the meetings of Chairs of Priority Groups (some of whom are also councillors) do not appear to have filled the gap fully. Major aspects of work were delegated to Priority Groups, though there was high level consultation with staff in senior management teams. The view is held that the interest groups of the area would not have come together without the LSP, except when they absolutely had to. Developers were not necessarily involved, because Housing was
grouped with “Sustainable Environment” until 2003 and seen in the framework of Council housing stock transfer.

As seen below at a summary level, Housing and Planning do not figure prominently in the Plan priorities:

1. Create more employment opportunities
2. Tackle crime and make communities safer
3. Invest in Children, Young People and Learners
4. Create a Sustainable Environment
5. Improve the Health of Local People

Priority One (above) is site-specific to the extent of mentioning inter-related business, research and manufacturing sites for development along with brownfield land for freight and renewable energy, which has recently been reviewed as a new economic policy document (Redcar & Cleveland Council, 2004). There are two levels of specificity over neighbourhoods for renewal. However, even Priority Four, creating a sustainable environment, has little overtly to do with Planning; it is mainly about developing, collating and publishing indicators, although a policy of identifying and protecting habitats is present along with community consultation.”

8.3 Deriving Planning Issues

We can say that the Community Plan identifies the issues and priorities for the Borough-wide community across a very wide range of topics. These are developed by a number of LSP partners in their strategies; the LDF work draws these together to set out the land use planning policies and allocations proposed over the next plan period to help meet the CP priorities and in line with the proposals being developed by the partners. The proposals developed in area wide strategies such as the Eston Strategy will be worked up into Action Area Plans in the LDF. Other detailed work on design standards will be taken forward as Supplementary Planning Documents.

The Planning staff are now attending some of the Priority Groups over any work which links into the LSP although they did consult with key actors at an earlier stage. However, the Issues Report was seen by the Planning and corporate staff to derive from the Community Plan, in a "one-way" relationship: the thoroughness and innovation involved in this process were recognised inter-departmentally and recommended their work for this report. The six priorities above are modified through a transition table into Plan Aims and Objectives as in the extract shown on the next page, It was also necessary to add an additional field relating specifically to promoting an integrated transport system and improving the infrastructure of the Borough. This is of national interest for relating 18 Objectives to Community Plan Priorities. Overall the significant aspect for this present report is that of accepting what were normally regarded as non-Planning issues, the apparently "social" questions (above) of education, crime and health.
### Aim 1: To improve the image of the Borough (Community Plan Priorities 1, 4, & 6)

**Objective 1:** To encourage the principles of good urban design  
**Objective 2:** To improve the appearance of vacant and derelict land through the use of landscaping  
**Objective 3:** To provide more leisure opportunities in town and country and to increase the number and quality of tourist facilities and visitor attractions  
**Objective 4:** To improve the physical and natural environment in urban areas

### Aim 2: To promote the sustainable development of the Borough (Community Plan Priorities 1 & 4)

**Objective 5:** To have regard to environmental, social and economic considerations when developing policies and proposals  
**Objective 6:** To promote the reuse of brownfield land  
**Objective 7:** To promote energy conservation and the efficient use of energy

### Aim 3: To provide opportunities for economic growth and stimulate urban and rural regeneration (Community Plan Priorities 1 & 6)

**Objective 8:** To promote the expansion and creation of clusters or networks of knowledge driven companies  
**Objective 9:** To provide incubator units to help foster innovation and competition  
**Objective 10:** To revitalise and broaden the local economy by providing a range of sites suitable for the needs of existing and future businesses  
**Objective 11:** To promote the regeneration of priority areas within the Borough

### Aim 4: To protect, conserve and enhance the built and natural environments (Community Plan Priorities 4 & 5)

**Objective 12:** To promote the effective protection of the environment and the prudent use of natural resources  
**Objective 13:** To conserve and enhance wildlife habitats and species including the promotion of biodiversity  
**Objective 14:** To preserve the built and archaeological heritage of the Borough  
**Objective 15:** To secure the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty and amenity of the land

### Aim 5: To promote social progress which recognises the needs of everyone (Community Plan Priorities 2, 3, & 6)

**Objective 16:** To address the issues of social exclusion  
**Objective 17:** To provide for education and community facilities and opportunities for recreation  
**Objective 18:** To consider the needs of the priority groups within the Borough

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The impact of this decision is demonstrated by the contents of the three chapters which reflect the decision and represent 18 of the 116 pages of the document. When it came to linking issues such as social safety with those of a Planning document (Chapter 4) they followed up-to-date guidance in designing out crime published in conjunction with local police authorities. This led to direct questions for consultees on tackling crime and the fear of crime, on the role of Police Architectural Liaison Officers, on the appropriateness of the Home Zone concept, and on making town centres safe after dark.

At the outset the Planning staff considered that it should not be impossible to turn objectives such as helping youth and lifelong learning into land use issues (Chapter 5), to be achieved “in a facilitating role in employment and training, working towards providing appropriate housing and facilities such as
open space and youth recreation centres” (p.29). Critical consultation points on open space policy included contributions through planning obligations to offsite play areas. All these aspects have been established in planning for some time but may turn on new Government guidance on Section 106 agreements.

With other non-traditional Planning issues, the team was also explicit in finding difficulties in linking Health with land use (Chapter 8). This reflects the common local authority view of supporting good health with leisure facilities. Thus, one of the key questions for consultation was “Which facilities do you think would encourage people to have a more active lifestyle?” In this case, they have since made advances in writing topics for the Deposit document, making contact with Primary Care Trusts and holding meetings with them to discuss their future strategies over the next ten years, followed by actual managers of key initiatives for Health Authorities. The next stage will have a lot more detail about future development in the Borough in Health, based on extensive consultation.

8.4 The Issues Report Consultation

The most remarkable feature of the consultation was the direct transfer of questions from all the various sections of the report to the response forms, like those quoted already above. There were also novel features in respect of certain types of publicity. However, much of the procedure followed conventional lines, and the response did not perhaps do justice to the quality of effort of the Issues Report.

The period of consultation ran for six weeks of 2002 although late responses were accepted up to the end of May. The consultation exercise comprised the following elements:-

- **Key Issues Report**
  Copies of the report were issued to a wide range of consultees. The report could be viewed at council offices, libraries and on the web (only 160 hits were recorded due to some difficulties being experienced with accessing the site).

- **Response forms**
  Comments forms were placed in the Key Issues documents and sent to over 500 organisations on the Local Plan data base; they were also available at libraries, council offices and at all the exhibitions (see below), returnable by all modes.

- **Leaflets**
  A leaflet, introducing the consultation exercise and giving exhibition details, was delivered to every household and business in the Borough and distributed to public buildings.

- **Posters**
  Posters advertising the consultation exercise were delivered to many public buildings and displayed inside all buses leaving two bus depots.

- **Exhibitions**
Exhibitions were held throughout the consultation period, together with mobile exhibitions staged for a week each in ten branch libraries and village halls.

- **Publicity**
  The consultation exercise was publicised through a press release which forms Appendix 1 of this report. Over 500 letters were also sent to people and organisations on the Local Plan data base.

- **Meetings**
  Five meetings were attended by Planning Services staff

A total of 257 responses were received by form, letter, telephone, fax, email and at meetings, many of which contained comments on a range of key issues.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>RESPONDENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Statutory Consultees</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Councillors</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest Groups/Voluntary Sector</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parish Council/Town Council/Ward Forum</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Local Authorities</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council Departments</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traders/Retail</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business/Development Interests</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services/Utilities</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Environment</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individuals</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>257</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The comments of Councillors may not fully represent their overall interests, having had more opportunity to mention issues before. The view of one leading member of the time was that the consultation was quickly taken over by the “usual suspects” from the building industry etc.

All the responses from 257 people were meticulously logged and catalogued, and listed by chapter heading in the report. With a few “yes/no” questions as an exception, the format for this response was of open-ended questions, providing written answers to a wide variety of questions. In fact, such was the diversity that most of the answers given were unique to one person each, and they would not be easy to place into classificatory groupings and individual questions from the Issues Report received up to 33 codes or answers (ie after amalgamating those answers which were the same from different people).

There is a difference of response between questions relating to the Borough as a whole and the six constituent areas, and between the more middle class areas, Guisborough and Redcar on the one hand, and the others. In the Borough as a whole only 14 questions generated more than 10 codes, with
only one over 17. On the other hand, when it comes to local and site-oriented issues, response is much more extensive, for example 17 questions on the six areas attracted more than 10 codes, 10 with 17 or more.

Where there was spontaneous agreement between a number of people, then local issues lead the field, despite obviously there being few people who would want to pronounce on a different town’s issues. Thus, the most frequent answers in the whole operation were over the need for a swimming pool in Redcar (28), the possible relocation of Redcar Racecourse (25, an issue which was already well-discussed) and the need for a Wildlife Corridor in Skelton & Brotton (18). In Redcar, the question of litter accompanied those of shops, seafront improvement, leisure facilities and local issues. Guisborough is a historic market town adjoining the National Park where respondents supported the reopening of rail links (13), the provision of a swimming pool (12), play areas (10) and open space (10). There was undoubtedly less response from former and present industrial areas, notably the large housing areas previously consulted and discussed above in Greater Eston. There, and in three other areas including Redcar and Guisborough (with about ten responses each) the cry was “no more housing”.

A notable item which had figured in objections to the Joint Structure Plan for the area was a new business park on greenfield land to the south of Redcar, which now inspired four objections. A thread which ran through the responses was that of protecting or developing transport lines of different kinds (including former railways), whether for Light Rapid Transit, cycle tracks, pedestrians, or greenways. There was further environmental comment on landscape designations, wildlife corridors and flood prevention.

The overall lessons learnt from the consultation, in terms of an officer’s earlier presentation were that they were on the right tracks although there was a need to maintain Councillors’ support. As regards contact with the public, the team well exceeded the conventional need to put an advert in the paper and make sure the documents were available in the library. What was seen to help was going into the libraries and speaking to people. The Planners now feel that people understand that involvement is important; they understand the local planning system, and realized this document could affect their futures and a lot more people get involved.

In retrospect, the exercise could have taken more advantage of the LSP in the shape of its Community Network consultation list. There was a need to achieve corporate awareness and commitment within the Council and to allow flexibility in relations with the Community Plan.

8.5 Continuing work

The consultation stated that all the comments received would be carefully considered in the preparation of the First Deposit of the Draft Replacement Local Plan, originally for consultation early in 2003, now for re-consultation.
after the passing of the Planning and Compensation Bill. A factor in this last winter has been the loss of two staff who had led this work to other Planning employers.

The Planning Policy team has been undertaking preliminary work in developing the Core Strategy document to take account of the responses to the Key Issues paper and in the light of emerging Government advice on LDFs. The original team envisaged writing the next Draft by taking on the Community issues and deciding how to write them in terms of land use policy. They felt that they had to respond to and acknowledge each issue raised. Although they could not implement everything, they feel that they do have to justify why recommendations are not taken up, with a view to the same argument coming up in a future consultation.

If one asks whether there were any broad conflicts occurring across the Borough, for example between housing development and amenity groups, the answer was that at this stage the question was not so relevant. As the end of the present plan in 2006 plan approaches, developers and environmental groups know the next plan will be a key document and begin to compete, notwithstanding the “void” housing in parts of the Borough. It was expected that quite large sites would emerge from analysis and need justification. Meanwhile, however, a significant opportunity for stakeholder participation was provided by inviting a Market Viability Assessment Panel as part of the Borough’s Urban Housing Capacity Study; the invitation went to the House Builders’ Federation, Housing Associations, individual building companies, surveyors and valuers.

In the meantime, important development issues have arisen requiring consultation. A full consultation was held over one of the issues attracting just ten comments in the main exercise, the “Coatham enclosure”. The process of writing a Development Brief for this prominent seafront site was accompanied by a public consultation. Using most of the same methods as before, 162 responses were processed into a seven page report. The work undertaken on this and other ongoing projects will feed in to the preparation of the LDF either as AAP or site specific proposals

8.6 The wider context

The Planners felt that, having written the Issues Report document, they could have identified what the main issues would be and predicted the main responses. The rigour of the main consultation exercise is not necessarily matched by any great salience for the questions from the report at the present time.

It is also worth reflecting on the fact that the LSP arrangements have been refined since the publication of the Report and these will be taken into account as the preparation of the LDF proceeds. Experience with an LSP, here as elsewhere, has shown that there is not all that much capacity (as opposed to need) for an integrated vision. Service providers have very little resource to spare locally after meeting national performance criteria, and the local
examples of joint working which were cited in this Borough actually occurred outside the LSP, one being in the end unsuccessful. Although there are economies to be gained from integration, it was difficult to achieve the co-ordination of a wide range of groups in 3-monthly meetings; it was better to focus on a few topics, for example in day conferences. There is an issue about both the cohesion therefore, and the representativeness, of the LSP structure as one basis for Planning. It was difficult to retain the interest of the private and small business sector, while community members had tended to “have their own axes to grind” until recently.

Where appropriate the latter will be developed into Area Action Plans to form part of the LDF. There are also housing and other educational and social projects requiring community consultation. If there are any land use planning proposals eg the development of new schools or community facilities these will be included in the LDF.

However, at the stage of writing, the Community Planning Team have several improvements in hand. These include the issuing of a Community Strategy (extending the Community Plan in detail), a greater role for the Community Network, and a greater role for Area Committees. These are one of a number of features of interest to the new multi-Party coalition of councillors which have formed the ruling group since elections of May, 2003, together with an interest in green issues and community safety. Their election was related to Ward issues concerning residents which were the stuff of the previous consultations of this report, but they are also establishing their own position with relation to staff, other bodies and longer term thinking.

This case study has shown the advantages of the an approach which

- developed a full range of draft policies on the basis of the CP
- transferred precise questions from the Issues Report to consultation
- achieved a full response to local issues from wealthier areas

However,

- the area was suffering from lack of feedback from previous Council activity
- the LSP was not strongly built for purpose at the relevant time
- the questionnaire structure might have benefitted from some “pre-coding”
- conflict was expected to resume at the next stage, of site-specific proposals
9. CASE STUDY III: A METROPOLITAN BOROUGH

9.1 Introduction

South Tyneside comprises South Shields, Jarrow and Hebburn with their riverside strip of industry outliving the extinction here of the shipbuilding industry itself. In addition to wide areas of former Council housing it also includes limestone cliffs to the east and both historic and mining villages to the south. A somewhat isolated geographical position contributes to high relative levels of unemployment.

The Borough would not claim to have distinguished itself until it met the impact of the present government's Modernising Agenda. The challenges of some difficult external assessments led to a series of staff and organisational changes, leading the "Community Strategy and Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy" (South Tyneside Council, 2003, p. 54) to report that the Council had "reformed itself politically and structurally to deliver eight priorities" in its master service plan.

Consultations for its future Local Development Framework (LDF), intended to meet the need for its Statement of Community Involvement, were an integral part of the "Community Strategy...." launched in November, 2003. The preceding Citizen's Panel Survey carried a majority of land-use planning questions, and the whole vision was checked for its usability now in the LDF preparation. The corporate CS operation was led by a qualified Planner with recent experience elsewhere, who is the first to say that this situation arose from "overriding coincidences", of changes of the Chief Executive and the opportunity for staff exchanges between Corporate Development and planning. These provoked the debates and re-thinking needed for the marriage of intended CS and LDF procedures and consultations.

9.2 Previous projects in the area

The Authority's first Unitary Development Plan was accompanied by a survey and video, but was characterised by "consultation after the event". Because of the area's levels of deprivation, different combinations of Wards had qualified for successive rounds of funding under the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB). This encouraged a culture of active community and voluntary bodies supported by STRIDE, the South Tyneside Resource for Initiating the Development of the Economy of South Tyneside and by the South Tyneside Council for Voluntary Service (STCVS), which together are on the LSP and represent its Community Network. Evaluation of all the SRB 4, 5 and 6 projects by the Universities of Northumbria and Durham (2003) showed a flourishing range of social and economic regeneration projects, many with good community links. The Chair of the CVS for the area said there is every effort to consult widely on SRB and Neighbourhood Renewal Fund schemes but the response was not always matching. Alternative methods of consultation included use of outreach workers and also Planning for Real. Environmental and Community schemes did get into Planning applications, discussed with local people and police etc, but formal Planning situations
were unfriendly for local people: the community planning has not necessarily linked to land-use planning so far.

9.3 Evolution of the present Community Strategy

"We weren't short of plans; over 50 statutory plans for the Government and more than 200 covering the work of organisations in South Tyneside. But there wasn't one that brought the others together, explored their complex and cross-cutting relationships and set out a strategic vision for the social, economic and environmental regeneration of South Tyneside" (South Tyneside Community Strategy, 2003, p.6). This was distributed on Disc and prints as 106 pages, complete with 170 Action Points and 40 Aims each with referenced evidence, objectives, performance measures and targets. What is notable here is that this has taken two attempts, each with consultation (see below).

Much of the origins of the new departure lay in criticism of the Authority from the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) and OFSTED procedures, and created a set of major structural changes in the public, private and voluntary sectors, and a requirement that the area should develop its vision within the LSP. As it happens, the new post of Executive Director of Corporate Development was filled by a Planner recruited from Scotland where he had combined regeneration with other duties (Entec, 2003, found few such examples of CS work being headed by a Planner).

Under this leadership the revived CS and the review of the UDP were merged in one process. Planning policy officers were loaned to Corporate Development for six months before returning to their normal home in the Neighbourhood Services Directorate. This departmental liaison was not straightforward in human terms. Planners and corporate staff could easily misunderstand each others’ actions without a major change of philosophy; there was a large debate about roles and the scoping of the work before a reportedly satisfactory outcome was achieved.

However, an independent view from outside was firmly sought (triggered by "yet another" industrial closure) in the introduction of consultants to produce a "Transformational Plan" (Comedia, 2002), which among its radical innovations introduced a firm cultural aspect to development. Nonetheless urban design, the (Tyne) riverside, the main town centres, green and sustainable development took equal place alongside the issues of young people, the retired and social enterprise. It was site-specific to the extent of including land use and design solutions for four specimen strips of land.

9.4 Consultation; stakeholders

The consultants, Comedia, claim to have spoken with 500 people during their visits including 77 organisations and businesses. Of these 27 were private sector firms operating in the Borough ranging from engineering firms in the North Sea oil sector to local newspapers and night clubs; the balance included voluntary bodies, ethnic minority groups, sub-regional bodies, trades
unions and regional and national government bodies. Following the interim report, the "Transformational Commission" held a series of hearings on priority issues, taking evidence from many local actors as well as drawing in national expertise. The consultants admit that they do not go in to detailed evidence on every topic; however,

"the Commission hearings focussed upon complex, cross-cutting issues which it felt required multi-agency attention and which, if not given focus, risked falling down the cracks between established priorities" (p.8).

The view of experienced Planners was that the Transformational Plan was a valid experience. Its ideas had come through, and were being developed with separate consultants on industrial land, town centres and the riverside. However, the visitors were present for a relatively short period. They raised expectations over some of the “iconic” schemes proved to be impractical. The consultation of 500 was not quite what it seemed; some were specialists on specialist topics, while there were not enough wider meetings. The Community Strategy tended to pick up material without large amounts of further analysis.

It appears that officer work with the LSP members has likewise comprised separate conversations rather than the stakeholder membership exchanging discussion or negotiation directly between each other. There had been no detailed debate in the plenary meetings, although the chairs of the six component Priority Groups had provided an overview group themselves. The main work lay between officers and Group members. Following a desktop study of the key strategic influences on each of six priority subjects, including partners' strategic plans, government policy and results of recent consultation and research, the officers were able to work directly with all the Priority Groups of the LSP. It was stressed that this had been a two-way process; on the one hand officers had missed items and on the other, the groups did turn down particular proposals but also helped to develop the aims, objectives and actions.

The South Tyneside Enterprise Partnership and the Environment Forum showed the closest links with spatial planning. From the former, particular points from business men and senior officers had reached the final strategy. The Environment Forum was established to take forward key projects identified in the Transformational Plan, but its brief was widened to pursue environmental regeneration in the whole area, thus writing in the Council's greening strategy including recycling, sustainability, renewable energy and Local Action 21 at large. The Chair of the Environment Forum, also Director of Groundwork South Tyneside, argued that environmental opportunities generally were sadly neglected until the arrival of the LSP enabled him to pursue projects in regular meetings. As far as he was concerned there was no structure for cross-cutting dialogue before its existence.
9.5 Public Consultation

Preparing two versions of the Community Strategy accumulated a good range of consultation, which were documented as a Statement of Consultation in the second Strategy and are reproduced on the following page.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Developing our first strategy</th>
<th>We also completed a series of transformation commissions with experts in their field and local people, 500 in all, as part of our Transformational Plan.</th>
<th>Representatives from the priority groups helped to develop the aims, objectives and actions.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Much of the work we did to put together our first community strategy has been carried forward into this, our second.</td>
<td>Much of that consultation and research remains valid but we have supplemented it in a number of ways to agree this strategy.</td>
<td>Representatives from the priority groups helped to develop the aims, objectives and actions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The first strategy fixed our vision and priority areas and agreed them with our community.</td>
<td>Developing this strategy</td>
<td>We have agreed with our Citizen’s Panel the things that are most in need of improvement in their local area and in the Borough overall. We have also begun to explore some of the land use planning issues as we move towards a new development framework that is linked to our community planning process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People’s views were collected in different ways; surveys, interviews, focus groups, workshops and special visioning days.</td>
<td>We have taken a much more strategic approach to the development of this strategy, our primary concern was to develop a detailed articulation of the vision we published in the first strategy with the LSP.</td>
<td>Over 100 people participated in more detailed workshops at six neighbourhood events to explore in more detail the things that are most in need of improvement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We listened to different voices in the community including young people, disabled groups and our black and minority ethnic community.</td>
<td>We began with a desktop study of the key strategic policy influences on each of our six priority areas including government policy, partners strategic plans, the Transformational Plan and results of recent consultation and research.</td>
<td>We also completed our annual MORI residents survey and a special community survey with the black and minority ethnic community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We held a partnership visioning day in June 2001 and four local area events in February 2002 to develop the vision and agree local priorities.</td>
<td>This time we have been able to work with all six priority groups, visiting each twice, once to agree the approach and policy influences and a second time to agree aims, objectives and actions.</td>
<td>During Local Democracy Week in October 2003 we held a special event for young people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We surveyed our Citizen’s Panel to check our proposal to set six priority areas.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Community and voluntary sector held seven special workshops to consider the strategy.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We worked with our lead partnerships to agree the strategy and approach.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: South Tyneside Community Strategy, 2004 (p. 59)
The researchers of this report sampled one of the "neighbourhood events", the special event for young people in Local Democracy Week, and the final launch of the Strategy with a day-event for 250 organisational leaders of the area (see Minutes at Appendix). The basic form of consultation, whether with Community Area Forums or the young people's event, comprised a short politician's introduction followed by a video of the Transformational Plan and a summary of the substantive content of possible proposals. At this point the room was divided into workshop groups which were facilitated well by relevant staff, community sector workers in the case of the neighbourhood of Jarrow. Both cases confirmed of course that lay people make no distinction between Planning and non-Planning issues. The young people were strong on employment, training, IT and hospital provision, and the worlds of leisure, alcohol and crime. However, there was environmental comment on the re-use of buildings, tipping, the needs for a clean river and more green open spaces. Both groups were worried by a school closure and merger issues. However, the Jarrow group quickly ignored the invitation to consider ten points about South Tyneside as a whole in favour of Jarrow itself. The things they would like to change were physical, cultural and attitudinal. The physical items included river access for cruise ships, details of transport links and quality of the urban environment. Items like a new theatre and ice rink depended on finance and support, while their siting in the land use pattern would be a facilitative matter.

Jarrow was also consulted by visiting consultants for the riverside and the town centre. It was just one of the six Community Area Forums to be visited by the last consultation, attended by over 100 people in all. However, their normal role was much more for regular routine business (such as Planning applications); when they got onto bigger issues they "tended to get them out of proportion", so their input, although carefully minuted and tabulated, was definitely seen as subsidiary by the Corporate team.

That leaves the Citizen's Panel of 1000 as the main source of cross-sectional opinion across the Borough. In this case, the August 2003 survey was designed to combine general Community Strategy issues in the first part with land use and the built environment in the second, arguably a textbook solution to the central issues with which we began this report. "The second part of the questionnaire asks what you think of some of the options that we have to build new buildings and structures in the Borough" and was introduced by stating that "the next set of questions will help us decide

- What gets built (and what is unlikely to get built)
- Where things should be built
- How new developments should appear
- What land should be use for"

After six pages concerned with the LSP priorities, part 2 comprises 17 pages on each of a number of Planning topics, which are illustrated by colour maps and photographic illustrations. In Part 2 respondents are asked to respond to each of four or five propositions on each topic by applying one of five codes from "essential" to "very undesirable".
The overall response to this design was good for a postal survey, one of 50.2 per cent of the Panel of 1068, and the consultants provided cross-tabulation by gender and broad age groups in the Appendices. There were no divisions by area except that a question about people's local areas in general showed crime issues to predominate.

The Community Strategy questions as such didn't elicit Planning issues much until it came to the question on "Housing and the Environment", which came behind employment, community safety and health in importance. Within the field of employment ("enterprise and jobs"), the land-use question of "meeting the land and premises needs of business" was prioritised by less than one percent of respondents. Within Housing and Environment, more than 40 per cent stressed choice of housing, but less than one percent mentioned "promoting cutting edge planning and inspirational urban design" or "making South Tyneside a world leader for sustainability"! The questionnaire clearly is a little forced in the interests of Planning.

However, the same respondents showed remind us strongly of the conventional political case for Planning. Responses to the 17 questions enable us to rank 55 propositions according to their strength of support. Thus, the most popular propositions presented to the Panel were "protecting historic buildings from damage and decay", "restricting development in the countryside", and "building mainly on greenfield sites", whilst the second most unpopular was of "leaving to developers the identification of potential development sites", followed by extending existing urban areas, building on greenfield land and expanding village boundaries. On the other hand, the most unpopular statement of all was for "higher restrictions on the use of the car".

This work by market research consultants was felt by Planners to give a strong sense of feel for people's pattern of views. However, they do not translate into mappable proposals for the work now proceeding on the Development Plan. The 17 issues were expanded to 22 Key Land-use issues for consultation from the Community Strategy in a document of August, 2003, which appears at the next page.

What is immediately evident is that these are in principle all Borough-wide policies, which vary in their land-use content. It is clear, however, that some propositions can refer to only a limited number of sites, for example seven possible windfarm areas are named (without a choice being required). In several cases the policy can refer to only one site or location; the leading town centre, South Shields, the Tyne riverside, the only limestone quarry, or a major economic development site proposed in Regional Planning Guidance.

One aspect which stands in opposition to the consultation exercise is the imposition of housing limits in the proposed Regional Spatial Strategy for the North East which proposes a net total of only 150 houses per year. The spirit of the South Tyneside consultation was directed to improvement, confidence-building and expansion.
Translating the Community Strategy into land-use issues

Community Strategy
(Incorporating transformation and modernisation agendas)

Social Care and Health key challenges
Community Safety key challenges
Employment and Enterprise key challenges
Education Key challenges
Inclusion key challenges
Environment key challenges

Key Land-use issues

• Improving the image of South Tyneside
• Improving quality of design across the Borough
• Protecting South Tyneside’s Countryside
• Protecting and enhancing historic buildings
• Maintaining sustainable greenbelt villages
• Finding the best use for South Tyneside’s quarry resources
• Ensuring the best use of the Borough’s brick shale deposits
• Increasing recycling and minimising waste
• Contributing to providing renewable energy
• Meeting housing requirements
• Avoiding unpopular and obsolete housing
• Meeting the broad aims of the North East Regional Housing Strategy
• Ensuring efficient land development
• Providing land for jobs
• Developing cultural and natural assets
• Diversifying the economies of the greenbelt villages
• Improving the trading health of our centres
• Achieving a diverse, accessible and reliable transport system
• Enhancing the role of river transport
• Providing excellent sports pitches
• Improving open-space provision in the Borough
• Achieving social inclusion in our neighbourhoods

South Tyneside Council, August, 2003, p.5
9.6 Planning Issues in Retrospect

This start to consultation needs setting in the context of past local Planning experience which perhaps indicates limits to what might be achieved from the Issues Report onwards. Some of the grander consultations at the Custom House might have raised expectations possibly too far, especially in view of the workload required under the pending Parliamentary Bill.

The area was subject to two previous pieces of Regional Planning Guidance. RPG 1 for Tyne & Wear dated back to 1988, whereas the first RPG for the North East was issued in November last. As regards possible collaborative sub-regional Planning, there were general invitations to key stakeholders, and the House Builders Federation and Housing Associations were prominently allied with the Local Authorities. The main objections came from the Secretary of State himself, because of concern over housing numbers in relation to household growth. Other attention focussed on future employment numbers, and a strategic employment site north of Sunderland was added by the Secretary of State long after the Panel report and in the wake of joint lobbying by South Tyneside, Gateshead and Sunderland Councils.

In South Tyneside there was extensive consultation for the earlier Unitary Development Plan, which took to 1999 to reach adoption (including over a year's wait for the production and revision of an Inspector's report). It was not considered advisable to consult before the consultation draft. This was valuable in eliciting points which were contentious and were subsequently dropped or changed. There were six main venues for meetings/exhibitions, advertised by local radio, with a PR firm's video upfront and questionnaires to collect at the back (translations into several languages). Some 26 “mini-exhibitions” were held in diverse locations across the Borough.

A general comment was that the most active people were not concentrating on the Planning issues themselves. Much of the business overall lay with "vested interests" of land agents and builders, who had extensive land options for which they sometimes claimed there were no objections, “although they tended to keep their powder dry for the Deposit draft”. The Council held its position and the Inspector was fully supportive. Another contentious issue was a proposed Boldon Business Park II, involving much public comment, and a political party’s pro formas for objections. This question over industrial land in the Green Belt delayed things for well over a year, until the Town Development Committee considered alternatives with the support of a local MP. There were also transport issues, for example a riverside and a proposed Boldon By-pass attracted both objectors and supporters.

The Community Strategy and the accompanying postal survey, with planning questions initiated by Planners, must contain merits; the new Issues Report will be wider than it would otherwise have been. However, in the light of the last comments, the new approach cannot solve everything:
• Some issues of the area have been solved or committed by past Plans

• Regional Guidance or the Regional Spatial Strategy that it will become remains important, with political support from the Regional Assembly

• On past precedent, much of the debate surrounding the next Plan will concern larger sites at the site-specific later stage There was really little scope for the public in the last Inquiry as the battle lines were drawn before it started

• The Plan will be different because of extraneous factors, the acceptance now of reappraising industrial land, but that was prompted by the market rather than by interfacing in the LSP.

The revised Community Strategy is larger and more thorough than in other areas, and was distinctive for the overall use of consultants. However, much of the consultation and research concluded last year was too late to alter the new version of the Strategy. Ideas did not come from spontaneous discussion among LSP members or from the grassroots, but separately from officers.
10. CONCLUSIONS

As agreed at the outset, the scale and timespan of the project were not of the kind to allow definitive results, but we will offer some pointers towards the questions at issue. We are dealing with three local authorities and providing data which is complementary to some wider surveys.

- All three of the Regions known to us provide examples of substantial integration of Community Plans and Development Plans. The examples in our three case studies all arose in contingent fashion from the interplay of internal local authority dynamics, between Planning and corporate staff groups; there was nothing pre-ordained about the liaison given that the staff groups are inevitably in separate sections. In Hambleton, the Planners took the lead, and in South Tyneside it was a Planner in a corporate section.

- The whole range of possible innovations in consultation and publicity was in evidence across the three areas, together with the employment of outside consultants. South Tyneside was most notable for their flair in staging major events including the launch of the “Transformational Plan”. Redcar & Cleveland attracted sufficient publicity to get a rich set of questionnaire responses. Hambleton were notable for varied and sometimes large efforts in many small towns and large villages, and were good exponents of E-governance.

- Success in Hambleton arose from persistent commitment to community groups, culminating in area groups making explicit strategic choices of a spatial kind for the Local Development Framework (LDF). It was helped by the area’s prosperity, and by regeneration funds and regional assistance. In Redcar & Cleveland, strict commitment to the Community Plan was employed in the drafting of questions for the Issues Report, which was well answered on area topics. South Tyneside has completed only the pre-Planning stages, but the ground had been thoroughly prepared for the land use Planning elements at the point of launching its Community Plan.

- It is difficult to find evidence pointing to a Herriott-Watt et al. (2003) view, that stakeholders and residents could get together over an area’s future without official instigation. Stakeholders only got together when they had to in the days before the existence of each LSP. Many of the Planning issues had been fought out before, and have changed because of extraneous factors, for example national and local acceptance that redundant industrial land in South Tyneside could pass to residential use.

- Even the “Collaborative School” has its limitations. Although the “Environment” (rather than Planning as such) has benefited from gaining a place at the LSP table, it appears that much of the intellectual traffic in the preparation of LSPs has been between local authority staff and their separate specialist groups (for Health, Crime...
etc.) rather than among groups at the plenary board or even at meetings of group chairs.

- Some “Community Plans” have little spatial content for “communities” within their area, at least as yet. Although their main aims are remarkably similar as between different authorities, their level of detail and monitoring vary strongly between our three areas and across the North East at large. Along with problems of the relative timing of action, they provide a somewhat variable and inconstant peg on which to hang all LDFs. ODPM (2004) are right not to insist on a strong link.

- The possible merging of Area Action Plans with spatially articulated Community Plans provides a distinct prospect, and has already in effect occurred across Hambleton’s widely spread five market towns, with the past support of the Single Regeneration Budget. However, social regeneration under SRB in deprived wards of the other towns, while involving community consultation, has not opened up Planning consultation. Other than in the big areas of physical rebuilding, it is clear and now agreed in print that Planning is only one input to Regeneration. Many of its aims and methods are social and political, perhaps involving the ‘social or informal economy’: it may be an incidental matter whether a particular landscaping, housing improvement or neighbourhood scheme does or does not attract planning permission. Redcar & Cleveland, and South Tyneside were not giving high priority to area consultations, partly because the response to a District-wide document could be partial and “parochial”.

- Nonetheless, consultations in all three areas show support for the Planning system, through for example the use of brownfield rather than green field land. Even where the loss of population has become a major issue around Greater Eston and a concern of ODPM on Tyneside, there is a sharp reaction against new industrial and housing provision on greenfield land and adjoining historic settlements. Landscape and amenity are very important in East Cleveland.

- The pattern of response clearly varies by social class of area. This distinction is quantitatively apparent in questionnaire responses within Redcar & Cleveland, with much higher responses to the Issues Report in commuting areas, and very little from the manual workers of Greater Eston. South Tyneside has adequate provision for consulting its longstanding ethnic minority; Hambleton are aware of failing to reach their very small ethnic minority group, but feel they are doing a bit better now with less wealthy residents.

- As indicated by the Audit Commission, there is considerable ambiguity over the reality of consultation, even where appearances are satisfactory. Hambleton’s Consultation Audit records some disappointment over publicity for events and response. Redcar & Cleveland’s spontaneous answers to “open” questions are difficult to group together, contrasted with South Tyneside’s pre-coding of the
final draft of the relevant Citizen’s Panel enquiry. However, the Audit Commission have argued elsewhere that merely extending a Panel enquiry to Planning questions is insufficient without probing reasons for the answers.

- The Commission’s criteria for an honest and successful consultation are very difficult to attain. It would be difficult to say that the questions raised for consultation in these three areas were freshly elicited from people. (The Planners may have learnt the topics through hard experience last time.) It is difficult to say that results are all being given full weight in the next stage of Planning going on in these offices at the moment. There is concern over residents’ self-selection in making a consultation response. What is the relative weight to be given to activists who turn up to meetings when we all know that they vary in their capacity to represent the community? What is the value of questionnaires collected at the end of a meeting?

- It was suggested to us that Planning Aid could come to the assistance of communities in giving a view of LDFs. We therefore interviewed a senior official concerned with reviewing this possibility for Teesside. He had come to a negative view, that Planning Aid would be useful in dealing with situations of regeneration on the ground, for example the replacement of outworn terraces, but that it would not change Plan consultation outcomes.

- These results unfortunately add to a considerable volume of work in what are relatively small Development Plan sections in most Authorities. We have therefore to ask whether loading consultation “upfront” will reduce work at later stages. Most of the evidence in this report predates the identification of site-specific elements in the respective Plans, with their specific externalities. We were repeatedly advised that institutional interests, the major housebuilders, would be holding their fire to this later stage, which they would dominate. Thus, the concept of a shortening of Inquiries on these grounds alone might be missing the main point.

- There was general agreement that running Development Plan consultations off the back of Community Plan work would enhance the end-product and produce a deeper and more satisfying result. However it involves considerable investment in advice, training and staff time. Longer term trust is best provided by seeing to feedback from a consultation. It was felt worthwhile for Planners to reach out to the community, in achieving a more broadly based Plan, when they had often been inward-looking within a mechanistic world of PPGs.
RECOMMENDATIONS

• Capacity building for local communities, including use of the Community Empowerment Fund, needs extending to SCI and Parish Plan purposes.

• The Audit Commission’s criteria for an honest and successful consultation are very difficult to attain. We recommend that professional academic and market researchers be employed in preparing a technical manual to be used in connection with Statements of Community Involvement, including “do’s and don’ts” in running meetings and in questionnaire preparation, sampling, analysis and feeding back of results. Use of this by Inspectors would go some way to indicating the quality of consultation opportunities being promised rather than just a list of those bodies who would get letters and invitations.

• In conjunction with that, Local Authorities would be well-advised to check that their arrangements for staff “Time Off In Lieu” (TOIL) was suitable for extensive rounds of evening meetings.

• Some further attention needs to be given to standards of representativeness and consultation in Community Strategies. This would make for better harmonisation with Planning consultations. This may become even more important if more Authorities extend their Strategies to an area base within their respective Districts. The integration of Community Strategies and LDFs might be overseen by Regional Office staff where it is not already done.

• In these type of Regions and in some cases, the role of the RSS may have to be to reduce aspirations developed by the CS process and to disappoint any people consulted in local areas for the RSS: the earlier the problem is realised then the lesser the chance of such disputes protruding in Planning Inquiries.
APPENDIX, EXAMPLES OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION MEETINGS

The following five records cover all public meetings occurring in the study period in two case study areas (there were none to attend in Redcar & Cleveland in this period). The University also attended two invited meetings.

HAMBLETON DISTRICT, COMMUNITY PLANNING

Local residents were responsible for preparing the Community Investment Prospectuses and have worked together in each of the five areas of Hambleton including their surrounding villages, some in conjunction with outside consultants to facilitate the process. The process of consultation has been similar in all areas. Due to the rural nature of the district, most consultation has been through postal questionnaires and a mobile unit toured villages in some cases.

As mentioned in Section 7 above, however, Northallerton and Bedale were in receipt of funding from Yorkshire Forward, the Regional Development Agency, for the Renaissance Market Town Initiative, a fund to help regenerate market towns. This enabled them to employ external consultants to co-ordinate the consultation process.

NORTHALLERTON

Background

The Northallerton and Villages Community Plan Forum hosted two “Northallerton and Villages” Exhibitions at the Town Hall, Northallerton in 2002 and 2003. They have been held to enable members of the community to have the opportunity to view the overall actions contained in the Community Plan. Comments received at the events have helped the group to prioritise actions in the Plan. The group have also toured three villages in the area (Morton on Swale, Brompton and Appleton Wiske) in March 2002.

Building on work done previously, in July 2003 the group were awarded Renaissance Market Town status by Yorkshire Forward. The group used the funding to employ consultants from London to undertake detailed research to help develop a long term vision and masterplan for Northallerton. WSP Consultants were taking the lead on this project, who have also brought in further experts in the field of transport, tourism and the economy.

The Forum’s steering group has met on a monthly basis. It consists of representatives from the public and private sectors i.e. Area Traffic Management – North Yorkshire County Council; York and North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service; Barkers of Northallerton; Lewis & Coopers and other representatives of the community.

Towards a vision for Northallerton - Northallerton 3rd December, Town Hall, High Street.

The main public consultation for a Master Plan was held in early December which will be used to influence an Area Action Plan seen as a tool kit to help regenerate the town over the next 10 to 15+ years. It was held in Northallerton Town Hall on the main shopping street on market day, to ensure maximum footfall from 10am to 7pm. The event was up a flight of stairs and did not at first seem accessible to the infirm
etc. The average number of people at any one time during the middle of the day was 10-15.

The event was advertised by way of posters, local BBC radio, a town crier on the day and some invitations to target groups and individuals. These target groups often consisted of important players in the town, for example major retail stores (Barkers / Lewis & Coopers) and other businesses. The partners in the event were: Northallerton and Villages Community Plan, a partnership with representation from the voluntary, community, public and private sectors; Yorkshire Forward and Hambleton Strategic Partnership.

The Master Plan is to be used a tool to identify issues that a ‘Town Team’ will eventually be charged with taking forward. The eventual end point will be a one or two page Town Charter or Mission Statement for the development of the town over the next 20 years.

The event was organised and run by outside consultants from London-TimpsonManley and CalfordSeadon. It was felt that by using an outside consultant that the public were more forthcoming with opinions and concerns as they were deemed to be independent of the Local Authority. The public were welcomed by the consultants themselves, various members of the Northallerton and Villages Community Plan, and workshop technicians. Free tea, coffee and biscuits were offered.

The actual display of the proposed Master Plan consisted of several boards, with one board per issue (see below), each having an additional board that posed questions for people to consider and comment on. The final board suggested a vision for Northallerton for comment. All were colour coded to relate to each particular issues, i.e. Green Spaces was green etc. The boards

- Displayed the process and context of the Plan
- Linked the Plan with the current Community Plan- essentially the consultants brief
- Presented the history of the town and its assets, with change over time
- Highlighted the drawbacks of the town- i.e. poor pedestrian routes, transport and buildings
- Brought in other qualitative themes including visitor friendliness/ a green town/ the impact of local landscape/ connectivity/ thriving business/ leisure & shopping/ a town for young people

Issues that were to be considered in the vision included:

- ‘Repairs’ to the east of the town
- Links to car parks
- Safer pedestrian routes
- Forging links with the east and west of the town
- Gateways into the town
- Development opportunities
- Railway level crossings
- Auction Mart/Applegarth site
- Tourist Information Centre
- Green spaces
- How big should the town be?
- How can the town be sustainable?
• What is the focus for the town?

People were then given the opportunity to comment on each proposal and make suggestions by way of pens and ‘Post-it’ notes provided nearby and to place these in the space next to the relevant boards. People’s views were then on display to subsequent onlookers. It was then straightforward to identify the ‘burning’ issues. Issues that were instantly recognisable included criticisms of too many charity and card shops as well as bakers. Affordable housing for young people was also significant because this is obviously an expanding town. Other issues tended to be more local-specific. Multiculturalism is not an issue as it would be in boroughs of London.

The largest hurdle to overcome in any event in which you consult is gaining the public’s trust. It was felt the boards were pitched at just the right level to the public. Complicated issues were presented in a way that was easily digestible to the public, enabling them to feel there was still room for them to contribute ideas.

Several different interest groups were encouraged to take part on the day including school children and those with learning disabilities. These groups in particular were encouraged to take part through the medium of art and crafts, supported by a local artist groups. Schoolchildren were encouraged to think about and design a logo for the town. Engaging the children is another way of engaging parents and adults who would not otherwise have been aware of the consultation process.

“It’s about getting people to engage in different ways”; Planning Consultant.

Opinions were also sought via a Vox-Pop style video camera ‘booth’. During the visit this was not so well used, perhaps due to the exposed nature of the set-up; if a more private booth could have been erected this might have encouraged more. Nevertheless, nearly an hour of footage was shot. This was the first time the consultants had tried this method.

The eventual results will be collated in the New Year and will be fed into the Master Plan in early spring (March) the public will then have yet another opportunity to comment.

BEDALE

Background

Bedale Steering Group primarily worked in liaison with the consultants, Business Environment Group, to develop their action plan. This was funded by the Vital Villages scheme (Countryside Agency), Yorkshire Forward and Hambleton District Council. The Group co-ordinated the distribution of Parish questionnaires to residents in Bedale town and surrounding areas as well as holding two consultation days in the town in February 2002. Many people in the area commented on issues that were important to them and these were prioritised and included in the final Action Plan.

Like Northallerton, in July 2003 the group were awarded Renaissance Market Town status. The group have likewise employed external consultants who are funded by Yorkshire Forward to undertake detailed consultation and planning to develop a long term vision and Master Plan for Bedale, also for completion by 31st March 2004. (Spawforth Associates, Leeds). In this case, a series of public meetings was started in September, 2004 to develop the vision, including one in January at the local high school, two in February and two in March all held in Bedale Hall. The series then is
different from the Northallerton style of one or two large consultation events, providing more of a ‘drip-feed’ process, with a range of smaller, monthly, face to face meetings. All events are in a timeslot after office hours, 7pm to 9pm.

Public Meeting, Bedale High School 13th January 2004

The event on this evening was facilitated by representatives from the consultants in a very cold large hall of the High School, with chairs were arranged in a theatre style with a power point presentation dominating at the front stage. Nine boards with planning schemes were leant next to the stage behind the presentation. No explanation was given as to what the boards showed. No refreshments were present.

A signing in sheet was passed round to collate who was present and where from. Some 24 people were present including 3 consultants and 3 representatives from the District Council. Five members were present from the Bedale CIP. Turnout was biased towards the over 50’s; not one local resident there was below the age of 40 and the split in gender was 60% female, 40% men. A perennial problem for these meetings was seen to be getting other interest groups interested and represented, especially the younger age groups.

The aims of the evening were to present the objectives distilled from previous workshops involving some 200 or more people, and to achieve some sort of consensus on the wording and sentiment of each, which will then be placed in a Town Charter. Comments were invited on each of the 20 objectives when they were displayed on the powerpoint screen, and then noted down by an associate consultant. Questions were raised by the participants about the meaning of words, for example richness vs. diversity etc. A consensus seemed to be reached when the most vocal member of the audience spoke last and nodding heads agreed. Burning issues once again seemed to be the loss of shops, attracting and retaining young people, street cleanliness and pedestrianisation. However, overall the process took less time than anticipated (an hour), a sign of good presentation, good research or under-representation of the groups it concerns?

The second stage of the presentation outlined several of 60 projects that would help to deliver the objectives. Some members of the audience had difficulty in visualising the strategic outcomes of such long term (10 year) projects. Most wanted something done in the immediate future.

It was argued that awareness of this event was poor. Leaflets advertising this event were sent home with every schoolchild and small adverts were placed in the local newspapers. Posters were used in the Local Post Office. The meeting were advertised quite clearly on the on the Hambleton District website, however, most members of the audience did not appear to be net users. Two websites, Bedale.com and Bedale-town.com did not have the meeting advertised, though some events have been advertised in the Renaissance Market Town portal- rmtportal.com. Complaints were still heard that people had searched and found no information about the event. It was suggested that local radio should be involved next time to increase awareness. For the launch event a leaflet drop of the 4,000 households would be undertaken.

Bedale Town Hall 3rd February 2004

This meeting was held in a room in the centrally located Town Hall. Parking was adequate but the event was not advertised well, signs pointing to where the meeting
was taking place were non-existent in a building that was holding other non-related events.

The room was set out in boardroom style for approximately 18 people; other participants had to sit outside when 24 people arrived (including the researcher, 3 consultants and a representative from Hambleton District Council). Of the participants 7 were women, no-one was under the age of 35 and over half were of retirement age. Approximately half of the participants had attended the previous meetings and most seemed to be well known to the consultants.

The aim of the meeting was to gain feedback and agreement on the Bedale Renaissance Mission Statement and Charter. No power point presentation was available and instead a handout was given which detailed the Mission Statement, Goal and objectives. First impressions of the handout material was that pictures or colour were absent. One consultant acted as facilitator and invited oral comments on the proposed charter.

Remarks were initially minor even pedantic with reference to the use of English. But eventually issues began to emerge - yet again disquiet over the maintenance of liminal spaces; rural Transport; aging population and health care. Of the participants the same 6 people tended to converse throughout most of the meeting. One participant left after only 20 minutes.

The session ended when a consensus was agreed on the Charter, and feedback was given to the consultants. They also held an open question and answer at the end and introduced a very complicated Gantt diagram which detailed how events should move forward. Future consultation meetings were also advertised.

SOUTH TYNE SIDE PUBLIC MEETINGS

**Jarrow Event, 15th October 2003 a Special Neighbourhood Event of the LSP, Jarrow Community Centre.**

37 people present including perhaps 5 officers.

**Background**

This was additional to the Community Area Forums’ weekly meetings which handle routine business like Planning with Councillors present. It was the sixth and last of a joint series of consultations by STRIDE and the Council. It was held as valid to have Councillors present as they could be a catalyst and later support any proposals; they stood out fairly obviously for wearing suits and ties. The best of the six had been held in West Shields, but one on Saturday morning at East Shields had been the poorest for attendance. Of all the various times used, i.e. 9.30 – 11.30 a.m., 10.00 – 12.00, 4.00 – 6.00, 5.00 – 7.00, 6.00 – 8.00 p.m., 4 – 6.00 p.m. was generally found best.

**Meeting Proper**

Was opened by the Councillor Chair of Jarrow CAF, member for Bede Ward and the Leader of Jarrow Community Association, she was non-committal, stressed that all views were important along with those of the local neighbourhood. The main introduction was given by Diane Wood of the Council, speaking on behalf of the LSP which was described as bringing together “all the bodies that can deal with development”. The presentation was balanced and clear; she stressed the familiar
priorities of an LSP, but admitted that some wards have the worst crime levels in the country.

She stressed the Transformational Plan, for which Comedia had taken a long hard look at the area for the LSP, and which stressed the history of the area, where it was on the edge of things, or a beacon for others. The consultants had spoken with 500 experts and local people. Among the things stressed in the video were riverside engineering, possible wind farms, active retirement, young people and the role of art in regeneration. It stressed that the future could be turned round or would be turned round only by masses of individual decisions, but it was possible to revive community aims. Environment was mentioned, much as usual, as "a clean and attractive place for people to live and visit".

A planner working in the Corporate Services Department, Steve Camm, gave an excellent summary of the substantive content of possible proposals. He had to knock on the head a rumour that open spaces would be used for the relocated school; he could then concentrate on town centres, economic regeneration and the environmental content shown by new community build on the Westoe Colliery site, an artists impression of a new business centre on Boldon Business Park and the possibilities for Jarrow riverside.

We were then divided into three groups for workshops, including the division of the three councillors between the groups and the three people concerned with schools; there appeared to be only one business representative. This part made the common mistake of starting with three workshops in the same fairly large hall, with people facing the flip chart in theatre style. My group revolted and got ourselves seated in the round in the coffee bar area of the excellent Community Centre.

My workshop was well facilitated by our professional Community Worker from STRIDE, with a Policy Officer from the Council completing the flip chart. An invitation to mention 10 points about South Tyneside as a whole got only as far as public transport, poverty, the economy, skills training, tourism, and the need for a positive attitude to change before views on Jarrow cut in: all the cultural groups were in South Shields and shops were limited; we had no beach or hotels and we were well behind Liverpool in opening up the riverside.

The 10 best things about Jarrow elicited Bede’s World, the church, the river, parks and green spaces, Morrisons but not other shops, the Metro stop, health services, clubs and people.

The 10 things to change were physical, cultural or attitudal including: river access as for cruise ships; recovered town centre; tourism (including bed and breakfasts) and the rail link from the Metro to Bede’s World; the Metro image and eligibility, jobs, the overall image and improving of urban environment, community safety had to be prompted and involved better Magistrates, family values and youth facilities, including a new theatre and ice rink. General discussion showed quite a lot of interest in the details of bus routes and air pollution.

Conclusions

As in other groups, land use issues were present, but in a minority. The flip charts from the other groups showed a few extra issues such as utilities, street lighting, pedestrian flows and day centres.
Steve Camm summed up claiming that the consistencies from the events’ consultations was staggering, so much so that he fed back conclusions to the morning from the draft Community Strategy itself, of course everybody wants everything, there would be a more detailed profile of things for Jarrow. There was a matter now of information and good commendation, however things went forward.

Consultants for the riverside and for the town centre were well advertised and met with half a dozen members of the public; they attracted some enthusiasts with comments again about cruise ships.

Youth Citizens Event, Friday 17th October 2003

This was part of the Local Democracy week, but was billed as a discussion of the Community Strategy, concluding with selected questions being put to the local MP, David Miliband.

Background

About 80 pupils arrived in 4 community buses, or 4 “Connect” buses of South Tyneside Community transport. These are supported by STEP, STRIDE, NEXUS, One NorthEast, the Lottery and Community Action. They were welcomed with orange drink and biscuits.

The introduction was given by the Lead Officer for Citizenship who introduced the Leader of the Council as the “boss man” and welcomed the chance to be with tomorrow’s voters today. Not only did the council provide services for young people, but their aspirations and understanding gave them a stake in decisions. He stressed that they wanted to know what children really thought. It was most important to consult on the Community Strategy and that this was “genuine”.

The programme showed 10.35 – 11.00 a.m. as an “ice breaker event”, this had party games with pupils pretending to shoot each other across the main reception room of the Council, to spread the idea that community planning was fun.

Steve Camm, a planner in the Corporate Affairs Department, said he was pleased and delighted to introduce the Community Plan about how the area would be in 10 years time. These were standard powerpoints and video material, the same as the adult consultation, but both were suitable and kept everyone’s attention. He needed only to simplify things a bit for the children with simple phrases such as there not being enough jobs to go round, or our crime rates are a bit higher. The environment of South Tyneside provided a fantastic place, but they did not do enough with it.

At this point all the schools were separated around six topic workshops according to the colour of their name badges, each facilitated by professional staff with a flip chart. Each workshop was again asked to describe 10 good features, 10 bad features and 10 things to change. The Enterprise in Jobs workshop, which I sat in on, did need a lot of elicitation. There was one very characteristic comment about the need for more jobs in the forces, there were quite perceptive comments on the need for more business schools and enterprise training, but for the main part the comment was on IT, hospitals and some on wind turbines and green industries. Flip charts from other groups showed some environmental comment on run down buildings; need to re-use buildings, the need for a clean river and to stop unauthorized tipping, together with a comment for more green open spaces. There was quite sophisticated comment about trade diversion and the lack of shops, particularly designer shops. However generally there was quite a lot of comment on crime, litter, graffiti, pubs, under-age
alcohol, there was an awareness of the need for youth clubs, theme parks, cinema, the ice rink and football. There was quite an emphasis on school closures and the need for participation in school decisions.

At the end of these reports each group put 3 questions to the vote, the whole room decided which of the questions from each group should go forward to the MP. After all this filtering the 6 questions included 2 on regional planning and 4 on young people’s particular thoughts:

1. What were the government plans for jobs in South Tyneside?
2. Why are all the big projects going to Newcastle and Gateshead and nothing to South Tyneside?
3. How do you stop young people smoking in public, can we have more police and park keepers?
4. Why is there not a young person’s council?
5. Why were two schools closed and merged?

The MP himself engaged the audience in further comments by answering their questions. One notable comment from him and others was that not all jobs could be in the Borough. At the end it was announced that representatives from school councils would be invited to the launch of the Community Strategy and be among 250 leaders who would act as ambassadors to drive the Community Strategy to transform the Borough. We also attended that all day event.
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