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RAGWORTH: THE EMERGENCE AND DEVELOPMENT OF A DISADVANTAGED
ESTATE. A Study in the Residualisation of Public Sector Housing in
a De-industrialising Conurbation.

by

Clive Vamplew

Submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in 1992.

ABSTRACT

The primary objective of this thesis is to explain how a particular council estate in Stockton-on-Tees became run-down and disadvantaged. However, the pursuit of such an explanation demands a historical, social, political and economic perspective embracing the conurbation within which the estate is located. In fact, it is necessary to go beyond the confines of Teesside and take account of national and international processes and forces.

With regard to national influences, these have played a crucial role in the urban growth of Stockton and in the progressive diminution of its public housing sector to create an increasingly residualised welfare tenure. Moreover, central mechanisms and decisions taken by international capital have de-industrialised the Teesside conurbation and led to high and long-term unemployment. So disadvantage has increased for this and other reasons, and the minority of the population suffering it are largely housed in council accommodation.

Local characteristics and factors also play a crucial part in the way that central forces impact on a locality, mediating and modifying their consequences depending on the particular

configuration of industrial, social, etc., features that impart to local areas their unique traditions and identities. Yet, significant as this interaction is between central forces and local factors in creating a poorer stock of council housing and the disadvantaged families who live in it, to explain how and why particular run-down areas arise can also demand a closer focus on individual estates to explore specific causes.

A further theme of this study concerns the possibilities and mechanisms of change on disadvantaged estates. One such period of change on Ragworth is examined in the light of before-and-after survey research, as is a new regime of decentralised management which followed. Finally, the effects of current policy initiatives are measured against the immense problems posed by the shifts in the social class structure represented by the growth of disadvantage and the emergence of what has been described as an underclass.

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For my parents,

Fred and Louisa

RAGWORTH:
THE EMERGENCE AND DEVELOPMENT
OF A DISADVANTAGED ESTATE.

A Study in the Residualisation
of Public Sector Housing in a
De-industrialising Conurbation

CLIVE VAMPLEW

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Thesis Submitted for the Award of Doctor
of Philosophy, Department of Sociology
and Social Policy, University of Durham,
July, 1992.



22 SEP 1994

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly, I would like to thank David Byrne, my supervisor for this thesis. His enthusiasm and guidance did more than anything else to sustain my motivation over a long period of study and research. For this and the many hours he unstintingly spent with me I am much in his debt. My thanks are also due to my employer, Cleveland County Council, for their sponsorship.

I would also like to thank the residents of Ragworth, especially for their co-operation in making the two social surveys in 1979 and 1984 a success, and the interviewers for collecting rich and detailed data and for their persistence in achieving such high response rates.

As for the many others who have been kind enough to help me and give me their time, not least officers of Stockton Borough Council, I hesitate to try and name them all for fear of missing someone out. I hope they will bear with me if I simply offer them my sincere thanks and gratitude.

Lastly, I would like to express my thanks and affection to my family. Nearly six years is a long time to remain tolerant and encouraging, but Gill, my wife, has been supportive throughout. As for my sons, Tim and Joss, they have been getting on with their own lives and education but they have never been discouraging nor questioned - as I sometimes did - the wisdom of making such an investment of time.

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ABBREVIATIONS

A. H. A	Area Health Authority.
B. ARCH.	Borough Architect.
B. L. S.	British Labour Statistics.
C. C. C.	Cleveland County Council.
C. D. P.	Community Development Project.
C. H. A. C.	Central Housing Advisory Committee (Ministry of Health).
C. S. S.	Cleveland Social Survey.
E. G.	Evening Gazette.
H. A. T.	Housing Action Trust.
H. R. E. W.	Housing Returns for England and Wales.
M. H. L. G.	Ministry of Housing and Local Government.
N. E. A. S.	North East Area Study (University of Durham).
N. E. D. G.	North Eastern Daily Gazette.
O. P. C. S.	Office of Population Censuses and Surveys.
S. H. D.	Stockton Housing Department.
U. W. A.	Unemployed Workers' Association.

INTRODUCTION

The idea of pursuing the course of study and research of which this thesis is the conclusion occurred to me in the mid-1980s. By this time I had conducted before-and-after surveys of a run-down estate in Stockton-on-Tees called Ragworth. The first survey, in 1979, had been both disturbing because of the evidence it produced on the extent and meaning of spatially concentrated disadvantage there, but it was also intriguing in terms of the possibilities of change and the challenge to policy which it presented.

The course of events following the release of the first report of survey, leading to a decision by the local council to put substantial resources into the estate, fuelled my interest further. It added a new dimension of the dynamics of change to the descriptive, awareness-raising nature of my initial research. With all this and the implementation of an improvement programme on the estate in the early 'Eighties, I was enthusiastic to maintain an involvement as far as possible within the constraints of my other commitments in the Cleveland Research and Intelligence Unit at that time. The experimental variable which the modernisation work could be seen as constituting suggested the desirability of an evaluative follow-up survey, and I was able to extend my involvement by carrying this out in 1984. Once I had reported the findings, however, the opportunities for continuing my interest ran out and I had to turn to other research priorities.

Yet by this time I was keen to follow through my interest in what was obviously a fertile area of study both sociologically and because of the important policy issues it raised. Moreover, my

research on Ragworth was taking place during a period of intense and far-reaching social and economic structural change across Britain and not least in old industrial areas like Teesside. My relatively newly-found interest in disadvantaged estates co-incided with societal change clearly emanating from central state policy and other more global mechanisms. The extent of certain consequences of these central mechanisms was being revealed by another long-term research responsibility, namely the Cleveland Social Survey.

This survey had been monitoring trends in Cleveland since 1975 and ten years on was a unique chronicle of change from the early years of the post-modernisation period through to its most extreme expression in the Thatcher years. This resource was at my disposal and would clearly be a complementary source of data to the estate-based research. Given these advantages, it seemed to me that the opportunity to carry my interest further could not be resisted. In view of my patchy knowledge of this field at the time, further study and research within an academic framework seemed the best way of giving structure and discipline to my effort at understanding a complex set of theoretical and empirical issues and of perhaps enabling me to make a contribution of some kind myself.

This initial concern with policy and the power of agency in the struggle for better housing conditions has remained an important objective of the study together with the question of the aetiology of run-down estates and Ragworth in particular. In exploring how best to approach such a study, it soon became clear that a contemporary investigation of Ragworth in isolation from the history and development of Stockton and the Teesside conurbation

would yield only a very partial understanding. So, the history of the provision and consumption of housing, especially since the 1920s, seemed crucial in accounting for Stockton's tenurial structure and the position within it of the increasingly disadvantaged council sector. Similarly, a consideration of the growth and decline of the industrial base of the locality seemed essential to explaining the origins of the disadvantaged council tenants on Stockton's worst estates. The value of a historical perspective is evident in explaining the intermeshing of these social processes of the provision of housing and the unequal access to its consumption.

As the thesis evolved, other concepts, theories and approaches were drawn on. A structuralist analysis with an emphasis on central capitalist mechanisms impacting at the regional and local level was one thread which could not be ignored, but the value of the notion of locality and locally contingent factors in mediating central forces also had to be tested. Such local contingencies and characteristics had to be regarded as at least potentially useful in interpreting social outcomes. Other contemporary issues and ideas forced themselves onto the agenda. For instance, one such issue which has broken out of the confines of academic debate on both sides of the Atlantic concerns the so-called underclass. Amorphous as the concept has become over years of definitional imprecision and use as a handy label to denote the ghettoised poor - often with depreciatory and sensationalist overtones - it nevertheless demands attention, and any study dealing with spatially contained disadvantaged segments of the population can hardly avoid at least some reference to its utility and relevance.

Neither can the ideas of Newman and Coleman on the relationship between forms of the built-environment and crime be left out of the reckoning in view of the publicity and credence their work has attracted, even though their emphasis on this single characteristic of disadvantaged estates - crime - is a very partial and restricted perspective.

So, the emergence and development of disadvantaged estates, and Ragworth in particular, the historical, social and economic forces that created the people who live on them, and the possibilities and realities of change, both in the fabric of the estates and the status and opportunities of their residents, are the broad themes of this thesis. In pursuing them I have not been primarily concerned with attempting theoretical advance but to draw on theories, concepts and ideas and to subject them to examination and empirical review in the light of my own research. Yet, in the process of this I believe that I have thrown some fresh light on certain sociological and policy concerns and problems.

I think I have achieved this, for example, in accounting for tenurial re-structuring and development and identifying the contingent factors that can create very different outcomes even in socially, economically and politically similar locales. Further, the longitudinal data presented on the extent and depth of disadvantage and the increasing inequality related to tenurial position add something, I feel, to understanding the changing social class structure and polarisation in de-industrialised areas of old, traditional industries like Teesside. And as a final instance, I consider that in explaining Ragworth's emergence as a disadvantaged estate I have described a prototype which, although

established explanations like allocation policy and stigmatisation have played a part, locates the primary cause in a decision taken by the council in the 1950s which introduced a crucial element of instability into a hitherto ordinary, stable estate.

The rest of this introduction will be devoted to presenting a guide to the thesis.

The first chapter is very much an introduction to the theories, issues and debates which set the context within which the presentation and analysis of the thesis' major themes take place. It raises the complex of substantive, theoretical and empirical issues which reappear throughout the rest of the study as they inform my thinking and are related to and gauged against my own research data. A good deal of the chapter revolves around questions of the production and consumption of housing - especially recommodification and residualisation - and covers, consequently, the sale of council housing, the growth of home-ownership, the changing pattern of tenure, social polarisation, and the shifts in the socio-economic and other characteristics of public sector tenants. The result nationally, over the last twelve years in particular, is shown to be a reduced council sector which contains a large proportion of the welfare-dependent, disadvantaged residuum. It also draws attention to the importance, in the creation of this residuum, of industrial re-structuring and economic recession; in fact, the whole set of processes which define the term post-modernisation. In connection with structural changes in social class relations it touches on the underclass concept, although this is discussed in more detail in later chapters. While the evidence confirms the trend towards the

residualisation of public sector housing, and the disadvantaged are accounted for largely through displacement and exclusion from employment consequent on the post-modernist manoeuvring of capitalism in response to crisis, the importance of place in terms of the differential effect of these processes is demonstrated.

It also looks at the theoretical stance of structuralism and registers the importance of local, contingent factors in explaining different local consequences of central forces, considering especially Sayer's ideas. This concept of locality and the relevance of local factors are emphasised as an important interpretive perspective in the thesis. The chapter concludes with a set of questions which summarises what the rest of the thesis will be attempting to achieve.

The focus shifts in the second chapter to Stockton and Teesside as the context within which a complex of local characteristics and factors interacted with central mechanisms to shape the social and economic profile of the town in the inter-war years. To this end, the chapter describes briefly its origins as essentially a market town and its growth in the 19th century as an engineering and shipbuilding centre. It moves on to the industrial recession and industrial re-structuring of the 'Twenties and 'Thirties with the attendant massive unemployment. It also provides some evidence on the health of the working-class both in the 19th century and again, by touching on M'Gonigle's research, in the 1920s and 1930s. It considers the provision of housing as contingent on local political ideologies and working class protest movements between the wars although the dearth of extant

documentary evidence on working class action for this period limited research in this case.

The development of council housing to 1939 is dealt with in some detail, and it takes in the slum clearance and growth of owner-occupation in the 1930s. The effect of all this is graphically represented by extracting data from Ordinance Survey maps to illustrate the growth of both council and privately-built housing in this period. The logic of this chapter is to establish the pattern of Stockton's urban and industrial growth and decline as a necessary historical background against which more contemporary events and developments can be comprehended. The social structure and housing and industrial legacy of the industrial revolution and the early years of this century did not, of course, all disappear with the outbreak of war in 1939. The poor and inadequate housing and the industrial base of Stockton, the lingering poverty and its effects on the health and life-styles of many working-class families were still the realities of life in the town after 1945, and they were to persist in certain important respects for many years to come.

The third chapter continues with the same themes after the Second World War until the present time, starting with the level of housing demand immediately after the war and the central and local states' responses during three periods: 1945-50, 1951-64, and from 1964 onwards. Inevitably, it describes the slum clearance drive of the 1960s and 1970s and the re-housing provision. It then considers the growth of owner-occupation, drawing on Cleveland Social Survey data to reveal the patterns of tenure movement in the 'Sixties, not least the inflow into owner-occupation of new households, a

substantial proportion of which originated in the council sector but were edged out in large measure by the virtual cessation of provision for general needs. Evidence on the sale of council property is given as is further Ordinance Survey-based information on the post-war pattern of urban development. The result by the end of the 'Eighties is shown to be a reduced council and a dominant owner-occupied sector to give a very different tenurial structure from the north-east in general.

The fundamental industrial re-structuring and rationalisation of the past thirty years or so are discussed along with the consequences for employment. The focus at this juncture is narrowed down onto Ragworth by describing how its residents were affected at two points in time - 1979 and 1984.

Chapter Four begins by discussing definitions and labelling of run-down estates, especially the use of the 'problem' label. It moves on to consider sociological explanations such as the disruption of established communities through slum-clearance and the supposed consequences of social disorganisation through, among other things, the weakening of informal social control. Labelling theory and allocation policies as well as Coleman's ideas on the impact of the built environment are also addressed.

The relevance of these explanations to Ragworth are examined, as is the underclass concept for its possible utility in elucidating the emergence of a dispossessed residuum. The spatial and social dimensions of this residuum, underclass, or whatever label is attached to it, is explored in Stockton by the use of cluster analysis. As well as isolating the most disadvantaged cluster, containing about 9 percent of Stockton's population, it

usefully categorises the whole borough in terms of the key affluence-poverty indicators of employment status, tenure, car ownership, etc.

The final part of the chapter advances an explanation of Ragworth's emergence which depends in the main on the deleterious effect on the estate's image and popularity of the in-fill building of 'no-fines' property close to the railway. The allocation responses of the housing department to this difficult-to-let housing and the reputation that Ragworth gained as a problem estate were mutually re-inforcing as it declined over a number of years.

Chapter Five presents the results of the first survey conducted in 1979, describing the extent of deprivation on Ragworth and the residents' perceptions of the state of the housing and estate environment. It shows evidence of stigmatisation and discusses at some length the issue of troublesome families on the estate, a negative attribute raised in the interviews by a large number of residents.

The next chapter dwells on the period after the release of the first survey report by giving an account of, and analysing the processes and events leading to the adoption of, a policy strategy for the estate and the implementation of an improvement programme. It considers the interaction of the report itself with the Press handling of the findings and reporting of the progress of events, tenant action, the part played by community development, and the role of local politicians.

The main objective of the second survey of the estate which is considered in Chapter Seven was to evaluate the improvement programme from the residents' perspective. It shows that positive

gains were achieved in the quality of life both as a result of housing modernisation and improvements to the estate environment. However, the period between surveys witnessed dramatic changes in Cleveland in terms of massive job losses in the major industries and this was reflected in a marked increase in disadvantage on Ragworth with, for example, unemployment doubling.

So Chapters Two to Four are concerned with the local context of Stockton and Teesside, the growth of Stockton, the creation of disadvantage and the emergence of Ragworth within this context. Chapters Five to Seven focus entirely on the estate itself during a period of tenant action and change. They establish Ragworth's status as disadvantaged estate in the first instance but are also an account of a before-and-after design in that the second survey measured the impact on residents' views of an improvement programme. And sandwiched between the chapters dealing with the surveys is one which analyses the process of change and the interplay and influence of specific local factors.

The theme of these chapters of bringing about improvement on Ragworth is continued in Chapter Eight whose main thrust is a consideration of the various national policy initiatives of the past ten years or so and their relevance to, and consequences for, disadvantaged estates. The policy of de-municipalisation and privatisation is discussed including, for example, Tenants' Choice, partnership schemes between public and private sectors, Housing Action Trusts and the Business Expansion Scheme. Yet the chapter is mostly concerned with the new approaches to management by councils confronted simultaneously with the possibility of losing control to

another landlord and the difficulties created for them by increasingly impoverished tenants.

In particular, decentralised management and the social work model, with its echoes of the Octavia Hill approach and which is advocated by the Priority Estates Project, is considered in some detail. The components of this approach and the way it has been applied on Ragworth are described. While it can bring certain benefits to tenants, the chapter concludes by discussing the limitations of such micro-level initiatives in achieving significant change in the social and economic position of residents. The point is made that, for example, it does nothing to improve people's levels of income and ability to pay their rent, nor to meet other items of expenditure, and it seems impotent in the face of the level of social disorganisation found on estates like the Meadow Well. Ethnographic evidence from a housing worker on a Middlesbrough estate describes a breakdown of informal control there in spite of that authority's efforts to decentralise, consult its residents, etc. The relevance of Coleman's ideas on the causality of crime and its prevention are also considered in the context of low-rise estates like Ragworth.

CHAPTER ONE

Issues and Approaches in Explaining Disadvantaged Council Estates

Introduction

To explain the emergence of disadvantaged council estates is to undertake an exploration of a number of substantive and theoretical issues concerned with the provision, distribution and consumption of housing, as well as taking account of changes in the economy and industrial structure and the varied explanations put forward - not least by sociologists. Prima facie, the coincidence of the most socially and economically deprived members of society living in the worst areas of public sector housing may seem to point a causal finger at one or more of the explanations that have been advanced over the years, not least the allocation policies of local authorities. Yet, while allocation practices frequently do play a part, in a sense they are the final act in a play in which the fate of the characters has already been decided. They might more correctly be seen as distribution responses to problems and constraints chiefly created elsewhere. They do little or nothing to explain the evolution of the marginalised poor who populate run-down areas, and they are just one factor in explaining the formation and uneven spatial development of unpopular housing estates.

A large part of this chapter, then, will be devoted to an examination of the issues surrounding housing provision, not least

as they elucidate the creation of disadvantaged estates. It takes a structuralist explanation of state housing as a starting point with its emphasis on wider, central forces and the notion of top-down uniformity in outcome. Given the inadequacy of structuralist explanation when subjected to empirical review, the value of the approach offered by the realist philosophy of science and the concept of locality is assessed. It is within this theoretical framework of system forces and locally-specific factors and causal influences that the substantive issues and empirical material in this study are interpreted. From this theoretical foundation it then moves onto the issue of socio-tenurial change by looking at evidence on the commodification of housing and at the ramifications of the residualisation thesis. Residualisation embraces such issues as central government policy on housing subsidy and benefit, the sale of council houses, and increasing owner-occupation.

Another phenomenon which has to be addressed is not only the process by which the social and spatial segregation of the disadvantaged and excluded members of society takes place, but how they *become* disadvantaged and powerless. A key concept raised here is that of postmodernism which denotes a collection of centrally-determined processes, spatially differential in their impact, which have had far-reaching social and economic consequences.

The existence and characteristics of the disadvantaged and excluded poor raises other questions in relation to a contemporary debate on the underclass which has fairly recently crossed the Atlantic, even though the structural differences between the USA and Britain mean that the emphases of the debate have inevitably

shifted. Among the questions raised are: What light does the concept throw on the aetiology of run-down estates, and when we consider the ghettoised poor in Britain are we seeing evidence of the emergence of an underclass?

Whether 'underclass' or, perhaps more appropriately, 'dispossessed' is used to refer to the deprived residents of run-down estates, a further important question to be addressed is how such ghettos and their characteristic manifestations of poverty, neglect, social stress, etc., come into being. In pursuit of answers to such questions, the contribution of sociological interpretation and environmental determinism are considered within the wider context of tenure restructuring and de-industrialisation.

Structuralism, Realist Philosophy and the Concept of Locality.

The Role of Housing in Capitalist Reproduction

As a generalised explanation of the state provision of housing, structuralist analysis certainly has its strengths and is a good starting point. It views the welfare state, of which housing is, of course, an important part, as a capitalist structural mechanism essential to the reproduction of the social conditions necessary for capitalism to be sustained. At the most basic level, housing conditions which are of a sufficiently high sanitary standard to reduce the incidence of ill-health and the spread of disease are necessary for that most essential social condition - the reproduction and continuation of the labour force.

The 19th century witnessed the first significant operation of this mechanism. The drift from the land into urban, industrial areas continued, a process made essential not only by the increasing demand for labour but by the squalid and unhealthy

living conditions in towns and the consequently high mortality rates. However, by the 1840s the supply of labour from the rural areas was dwindling, and it was only when the survival of the urban proletariat in sufficient numbers to meet the increasing demands of industry was seriously threatened that public health legislation was introduced nationally and improvement commissions were set up. Throughout the rest of the century, building was increasingly regulated by public health bye-laws in order to reduce the loss of industrial workers - both actual and potential - through physical incapacity or death.

Economically, housing provision plays other roles than a reproductive one in capitalist societies, for example by creating employment and opportunities for capital accumulation, and subsidised public housing as part of the 'social wage' can help bolster an incomes policy. Cheap, subsidised housing can function as an indirect subsidy to industry by keeping down wage demands and hence labour costs.

However, there is another important aspect of housing which is social as opposed to economic in nature. There is the sense just referred to in which the home is the milieu in which socialisation and social reproduction take place. It is here that the work ethic and normative values concerning punctuality, discipline, work and consumption aspirations, and so on, are passed on to the next generation. So the house and home are perceived by our structural interpretation as being essential to the perpetuation of capital in a number of crucial ways. Yet, in another sense, the home is also an important setting for political socialisation and the inculcation of values and beliefs which are inimical to the

efficient operation of capitalist societies and may even pose a threat to their continuation. It is this potential of civil society for creating structural change and challenging capitalism's power to shape society for its own ends which helps to undermine structuralism's insistence on the overriding importance of structural mechanisms. It is the limitations of structuralism in explaining development that we turn to next.

The Limitations of Structuralist Explanation: The Relevance of Local Factors

In referring to structuralism, my main - though not exclusive - focus is on the work of Marxist re-interpreters, like Castells, writing chiefly in the 'Seventies. In particular, it is their emphasis on the primacy of structure and the very subordinate role they accord to local diversity and the capacity of class actors to interpret and define their social and economic contexts that is principally at issue. I am persuaded by an approach which gives far more significance to human agency and specific local factors in contrast to what has been called 'the 'mechanical', system-directed, system-given conceptualisations of the Althusserians' (Elliott and McCrone, 1982, p16). It seems obvious that only by adopting such an approach can, for example, differences between localities in the provision and consumption of housing be adequately understood. The point is made by Dickens et al in 'Housing, States and Localities' that 'it is not possible to read empirical events directly out of abstract Theory' (Dickens et al 1985).

It has become increasingly evident over the past decade or so from empirical evidence and a realist interpretation of events that

all-encompassing theoretical approaches of the Marxist-structuralist kind cannot be applied either intra-nationally, trans-nationally or trans-historically to provide 'blanket' explanations of housing provision. Neither is it adequate to assume that national data and trends can be scaled down pro rata and applied to constituent local areas. Similarly, it is fallacious to regard central government policy as being more or less uniform in its consequences irrespective of which sub-national area is under consideration.

Therefore, the importance of the different characteristics of local areas - be they political, industrial, historical, etc. - which may have causal significance needs to be assessed. For example, there are at least two aspects of a historical perspective in the context of housing. There is the more obvious point that a local configuration of circumstances and factors which lead to a particular outcome at one moment in time may well change over time. Shifts in the demography of a local area, changes in the supply or consumption of housing or perhaps in the local labour market with its attendant impact on levels of prosperity, may, for instance, remove the cause of former protest over housing. Such changes may alter the willingness or propensity to take, say, the collective action of a previous stage in its history. In short, time as well as space can play a part in housing outcomes.

The second aspect of a historical perspective is concerned more with continuity in that the present can sometimes only be adequately understood by some reference to past events. Thus, popular action over housing or other issues may be a contemporary manifestation of a specific area's tradition or past experience of

militancy and protest. Glasgow's history of protest and resistance over housing issues - especially over rent levels - is the example that springs most readily to mind here. The contemporary working class resistance to the Poll Tax in the Glasgow area should come as no surprise to anyone acquainted with its history over the last two hundred years or so (Damer, 1990). Further, the consequences for the quality and quantity of present-day public sector housing of earlier political domination by landowning interests is another example of why it is necessary to have an appreciation of an area's history. The significance of history, of course, applies equally in comparisons between countries as in comparisons within them.

The Concept of Locality and Realist Interpretation

Before going on to illustrate the importance of locally contextual factors with examples from the work of Dickens et al (1985), this seems an appropriate juncture at which to consider in somewhat more abstract terms what is meant by the notion of locality, to examine its value in accounting for social phenomena, and then to outline the realist approach to explaining outcomes in society. For it is the concept of locality as a spatial-temporal context for the understanding of social processes embracing, as it does, the realist approach, which provides an important element in the interpretative orientation of this thesis. This is not intended to imply a rejection of structuralist analysis but a recognition of its limitations and the need to explore other avenues of explanation.

The structuralist work of Marxist interpreters in the 'Seventies has been criticised on a number of counts, but underlying the criticism is its insistence that within a general

theory of the structure of society it is possible to explain all concrete events occurring in a society. Thus, it is deterministic and allows no place in its explanatory framework for human agency and factors operating at a subnational level which can mediate the supposed inexorable and imperative force of the structure of capitalism. The point is made by Elliott and McCrone (1982) with reference to the 'reification' of 'Capital'.

It accurately conveys a conception of society and man in which the latter is stripped of his ideas and ideals, deprived of his culture and history and his capacity to act, to struggle, to resist. He is an actor for whom the script is written and the director (Capitalism) allows little improvisation.

There is in all this a conspicuous failure to examine how men make sense of their lives, how they live the experience of dominance or repression, how they interpret their positions and with these interpretations fabricate institutions, organisations and ideals - both defensive and subversive (p 19).

In a recent polemical article, Pahl (1989) attacks what he regards as the facile acceptance in the study of social class of the structuralist assumption of the structure-consciousness-action model. The crux of his criticism is that the links in the chain are assumed instead of being properly theorised, and that it is therefore a theory of action still awaiting adequate demonstration. Subsequent comment on Pahl's stance, while arguing against it in some cases (Crompton, 1991, Marshall, 1991), lends some support notably because 'it draws attention to the fundamental, though invariably neglected, question of how development occurs' (Mullins, 1991).

Mullins laments that, along with other social forces, what he calls 'urban community' has been neglected in the quest to understand development - that is, the transformation of social structures. He argues that the urban community is important because

it is "the most usual social base for urban movements" (Mullins, 1991, p 122). What both Pahl and Mullins are advocating is the need to pay greater heed to what the former calls:

...informal social networks through families, kinship links and the whole range of formal and informal associations of civil society [where] people are engaging in voluntary solidaristic and collective action for a variety of goals (Pahl, 1989, p 719).

There is considerable convergence here with the concept of locality and the significance of local factors in understanding different outcomes.

However, the human actor's capacity to interpret his or her class position, create structural change, etc., should not, warns Sayer (1984), lead us into the opposite danger of 'voluntarism' by placing too much primacy on the significance of human agency. While he is critical of structuralism's 'rule-governed character of action' which relegates human activity and motivation to a virtually insignificant role, he asserts that:

...the proper response is not to abandon structural analysis, for this would give actors' accounts a false privilege and open the door to 'voluntarism', that is, the view that what happens is purely a function of the unconstrained human will. Rather we should keep in mind not only the power of this mode of abstraction [i.e. structural analysis] but also its limits (p 89).

In discussing structure and causality, Sayer draws a distinction between necessary and contingent relations. In the case of the former, a relation is 'necessary' because the particular attributes of one object are dependent on another object. In the case of a contingent relation, however, two objects may or may not affect the other. Where a set of objects or practices are necessarily related they are 'structures', and he gives the example of the landlord-tenant relation which 'presupposes the existence of

private property, rent, the production of an economic surplus, and so on' (Sayer, 1984 p 84).

'Social structures, though, do not persist in some kind of in-built automatic way, according to Sayer, but require people to reproduce them, and 'Actors are not mere 'dupes', automata or 'bearers of roles', unalterably programmed to reproduce' (ibid p 87). The obvious implication is that human action can affect events and transform structures.

Eschewing the positivist regularity model of causality, Sayer represents the realist position in terms of the 'causal powers' or 'liabilities' of objects, such powers and liabilities existing 'whether or not they are being exercised or suffered' (1984 p 95). Realist causality is also concerned with the 'ways-of-acting' or 'mechanisms' of powers and liabilities.

He defines an important concept in the realist approach called 'retroduction' which he explains as a 'mode of inference in which events are explained by postulating (and identifying) mechanisms which are capable of producing them' (1984 p 97). He goes on to describe an element of realist philosophy which is crucial to a method of analysis adopted in this thesis.

Whether a causal power or liability is actually activated or suffered on any occasion depends on conditions whose presence and configuration is contingent... So although causal powers exist necessarily by virtue of the nature of the objects which possess them, it is contingent whether they are ever activated or exercised.

When they are exercised, the actual effects of causal mechanisms will again depend on the conditions in which they work. *The relationship between causal powers or mechanisms and their effects is therefore not fixed, but contingent* (1984 pp 98-99).

He gives, as an example, the law of value which is held, in structuralist terms, to lead to greater productivity. Yet its effects will be varied by 'such contingent conditions as labour resistance, availability of new technologies, the nature of the product, management characteristics, etc.' (1984 p 100). Further concrete examples of the effects of contingent conditions will be outlined when we return to the work of Dickens et al (1985).

In attempting to explain events using the realist approach it seems essential to introduce a spatial dimension, notably the concept of 'locality' about which there has been much debate in recent years, although it is well to bear in mind as a prelude to the discussion the conclusion of two commentators that:

Locality... is a confusing, even infuriating idea - witness the 'locality debate' which has developed in the attempt both to define the concept and estimate its usefulness. No consensus has yet emerged (Duncan and Savage, 1991).

The significance of localities does not lie in some causal forces inherent in space per se, a notion which has been described as the 'fetishisation of space' (Sayer, 1984, p 113). The more accepted view is that space consists of the social and material objects within it, although as Sayer and Urry (1981) among others have asserted, space is more than the objects it encloses in that their location in relation to each other cannot be ignored.

.. spatial relations never have a general effect separate from the constitutive properties of the social objects which are in some determinate spatial relationship with each other [but].. such spatial variations, of contiguity, or distance, or betweenness, do matter in ways which social science has generally failed to recognise (Urry, 1981 p 462).

Duncan and Savage's collection of essays on the locality concept (1991) characterise it in very different ways. Morris

(1991), adopting the original definition as the local labour market, finds it of limited analytical value, although 'a necessary contextualising element.' In her work on changing household roles she finds national influences, ideological influences and local social networks more potent in explaining the phenomena with which she is concerned. Elander et al (1991) define locality in terms of the power of local government to effect policy objectives. And Paasi, focusing on the concept of region, places emphasis on culture in accounting for social change. In particular, he draws attention to the creation over time of regional identities which persist and help to create and mediate change. Duncan and Savage conclude that:

..'locality' is a variable concept dependent on what is being studied. How important spatial variation is, and how centrally research should place this, is very much an operational question (1991).

In an earlier paper, Duncan (1986) defines locality as a combination of 'significant local variation, locally contextual action and locally referent consciousness'. It is broadly in this sense that the term is used in this thesis, to encompass the explanatory power of locally specific social objects such as the labour market, social movements and civil society, whose causal powers and liabilities are activated - or not, as the case may be - by local contingent conditions all of which vary by local social area. Essentially, it is a recognition of the variability from one locale to another in the way space is socially constructed and the necessity of taking account of local factors in explaining such variability.

The significance of contingent factors and conditions in different local contexts is further demonstrated in their

comparative study of Britain and Sweden by Dickens et al (1985). They demonstrate the very different outcomes, not only in tenure patterns but in quality, quantity and cost of housing by isolating the historical and political differences that have mediated structural mechanisms in the two advanced capitalist nations and led to very different consequences. Given that they are both advanced capitalist, social democratic states, structuralist theory would suggest very similar outcomes in housing when, in fact, they are very different in terms of its production and consumption. But of more relevance for the sub-national focus of this thesis, their case studies of localities in Britain similarly show the crucial importance of the characteristics of specific localities in determining the outcome, at the practical level, of capitalist structural mechanisms. Two of their case studies which are set in very different locales - rural Norfolk and Sheffield - are outlined in the section below which looks at some local differences in housing provision.

The Recommodification of Housing

One feature that Britain and Sweden had in common during and for a short period after the Second World War was a major increase in de commodified housing financed by the state. This meant housing divorced from market forces, being rented on a subsidised, non-profit basis. While this system has been largely maintained in Sweden, Britain has swung back to a system which is much more under the sway of supply and demand. This movement toward recommodification has taken the form of increasing owner-occupation while council housing has declined.

There are a number of reasons for this concerned with Labour governments' wavering commitment to the principle of socialised housing, periods of Conservative government with their emphasis on promoting owner-occupation, and public expenditure cut-backs aimed at council housing. But underlying this, the causes of the demise of 'general needs' public housing are economic and, especially since 1979, ideological.

Economically, owner-occupied housing shows a higher rate of return on capital. Public housing also allows for capital accumulation, although once it is sold it loses its status as a commodity while individualised owner-occupation retains its commodity status because it can be re-sold. This has advantages for agencies such as building societies, estate agents and solicitors who derive income from house sales (Murie and Forrest, 1980).

Ideologically, the Conservative Party have long favoured the idea of a 'property-owning democracy'. It is not difficult to see behind the Thatcher administration's zealous pursuit of this ideal a vision of the weakening of Labour's traditional support among council tenants. As Forrest and Murie (1984) put it: 'Rightly or wrongly, the Conservative Party believes that the dismantling of the public rental sector is one means of undermining allegiance to socialism. Crudely, the equation is that more home owners means more potential Conservative voters'. There is the further assumed 'advantage' noted by Clapham et al (1990, p 54) of 'Social stability in the workplace (since secure, regular incomes are a prerequisite of mortgage repayment) and a reduction in politically embarrassing pressure from Labour-controlled local authorities'.

Although in overall terms Labour governments have encouraged the building of public sector housing while the Conservatives in power have supported private housing, it has never been quite as predictable as that. For example, allocations were cut back in 1947 in response to the sterling crisis, and the first Conservative administration after the war built the 'Macmillan houses' even though they also eventually encouraged the private rented market and owner-occupation. The returning Labour Government of 1964 encouraged the building and rehabilitation of the private sector at the same time as they adopted a policy of large-scale council house building. But in spite of the 'mixed-front' approach to housing tenure, there is no doubt that the emphasis was shifting toward owner-occupation so that by the 1970s most houses were being built for that tenure category.

The process of recommodification has also been in evidence in Europe and not Britain alone. Even Sweden, exemplifying the social-democratic model of housing provision, has been affected. At its peak in 1978, 71 percent of new building there was for owner-occupation, even though by 1983 it had declined to below 50 percent (Dickens et al 1985). Yet recommodification is by no means uniform between countries or over time. Some evidence of this has emerged in the comparisons we have noted between Britain and Sweden, and Barlow and Dickens (1984) produce more in their comparative study of seven European countries.

Differences in Housing Provision Between Sub-National Localities

Tenure restructuring and the pattern of housing provision varies within nations as well as between them. For example, a study of North Shields demonstrates the necessity, in an adequate

explanatory framework, of taking cognisance of local as well as national politics, and the connections and inter-relationships between the different sections of capital (e.g. construction, property and landed interests, banking and building societies).

Throughout much of this century the North Shields-Tynemouth area was dominated by the Conservative Party, the Labour Party being late in establishing locally partly through the local trade unions' affiliation with the Liberal Party. Even after its formation in 1918 Labour's impact was weak, the more militant Independent Labour Party having had little ideological influence on it. This dominance of capital through the Conservatives meant that Labour's demands over housing were rebuffed. The presence of so many councillors who were also slum property owners goes a considerable way towards explaining why the council was unwilling to conflict with the interests of its members by building council houses.

As well as being councillors, landlords might also be builders and building society directors, forming a powerful network of control over housing. This was exercised in their self-interest especially throughout the early part of the century. An instance of this concerns the cessation of building after 1906 because too few tenants could afford the high rents, and a collapse in rents and capital values was feared. Building was brought to a standstill by builder-landlords and building society directors withholding funds. (CDP, N. Tyneside, 1977).

Two other local cases described by Dickens et al (1985) also demonstrate the causal importance of contingent factors on housing provision. The areas in question are Sheffield and a locality in

rural Norfolk. The general outcome in terms of council house provision is similar in each - paradoxically so in view of their very different configurations of social relations.

Sheffield has a long history of support for radical political movements. For instance, by the 1840s many Chartist councillors had been elected, and its radical tradition in common with its industrial structure of heavy steel and engineering resulted in the early establishment of radical socialism. With this came a high priority on municipal housing which figured prominently in local elections. The first Labour council in 1926 established a large public works department, and the period leading up to the Second World War witnessed an enormous expansion of high quality council housing. After the war the council continued to build on suburban estates, and the 1960s saw large-scale building using industrialised methods. Although pressure and subsidies from the national government were instrumental in their decision to build high-rise accommodation in the 1960s, shortage of building land also played a part.

The history of housing provision in Sheffield clearly shows the interplay between national influence in the shape of legislation to encourage or restrain building and local factors such as political priorities, land shortages and growth of the local economy leading to population increases.

Smallburgh RDC in Norfolk affords an interesting example of a particular locality which not only adopted a housing programme which was contrary to what might be expected on a superficial appraisal of the local political structure, but also went against trends at national level. In the inter-war years it almost compared

with Sheffield in council houses built per 1000 population and was well above the national rate, and yet the council was dominated by farming and landowning interests concerned to keep rates low. The answer to this apparent enigma lies in the local social structure, the type of farming at the time and the introduction of legislation beginning with the Wheatley Act of 1924.

There were conflicts between worker and employer which stemmed from the nature of farm work. For example, disputes arose over differential pay for seasonal work, over the length of the working day, etc. Moreover, the large labour force required by the intensive arable farming was located in large villages which facilitated unionisation compared with the smaller farmstead communities generated by less labour-intensive farming methods.

Unionisation brought the poor housing conditions of the labourers to the fore as an issue to be addressed. As farmers and landowners, councillors wanted to restrict both rates and wages and yet the housing conditions of their employees had to be improved sooner or later given the political agitation and the need for a healthy - and more docile - workforce. The solution to this contradiction came with the Wheatley and subsequent Acts which not only subsidised the provision of public sector housing but gave more generous subsidies to rural areas.

The trend toward recommodification already remarked upon was given added impetus by more explicit ideological support around the mid-1970s culminating in the extreme stance taken by the Conservative Government elected in 1979. This ideological change was a reversal of the Keynesian prescription of state-subsidised housing as a stimulant to the economy, such public expenditure

subsequently being regarded as a barrier to capital accumulation and industrial productivity. The solution of the 'new right' was a monetarist policy of reducing personal and corporation tax, expanding the private sector, and cutting back public sector spending. The mechanism of regulating the social wage to suppress wage claims has now been superseded by the use of mass unemployment - and the threat of more - to counter 'unrealistic' pay claims and resistance to rationalisation. Public housing has taken the brunt of this policy change along with the unemployed and other disadvantaged groups who rely on it. The following section draws out some of the consequences particularly for the changing role of public sector housing.

The Residualisation of Council Housing

Residualisation is an extension of the commodification process into the realm of social and economic consequences, for it refers to the process of public sector housing evolving into a welfare tenure where the 'residuum' of society - the long-term and young unemployed, the chronically sick, single-parents and the elderly - are increasingly housed. A further distinguishing characteristic of a residual public sector concerns the economic power of the people whom it houses in that they have no other option but to rent.

This association of the poor and economically inactive with the public housing sector has increased markedly since the beginning of the 'Seventies and especially after the General Election of 1979. Yet, several observers (e.g. Hamnett and Randolph, 1987) trace the beginnings of the present situation back to virtually the start of the century, since when changes in tenure patterns related to socio-economic status have been generally

moving in the direction of ever-increasing socio-tenurial polarisation. In fact, as recently as the 1950s, an important role of the public sector was to house the better-off working class, the disadvantaged and poor being mainly catered for by the private rental sector. While Forrest and Murie (1987) acknowledge the long-term change that has been taking place, they draw attention to the particular character of contemporary trends:

The marginalised poor have always been in the worst housing in each tenure. What is new is their concentration in the public sector as their housing opportunities contract and their numbers increase.

The sharp decline in private renting from 62 percent in 1945 to 33 percent in 1961, to no more than 15 percent by the mid 1970s, and as low as 8 percent by 1990 (OPCS, 1991), has obviously had fundamental consequences. Since the 'Sixties, these have been the flow of the marginalised poor into the public sector, partly taking the place of those better-off members of the working class who have gravitated toward owner-occupation. The slum clearance effort between the late-'Fifties and early-'Seventies also had the effect of transferring the relatively less prosperous working class in general from the private to the public rented sector. This is confirmed by the greater proportion of the public sector catering for the low-paid over the past twenty five years. Between 1963 and 1972 the percentage of public sector households in the lowest three income deciles increased from 26 percent to 41 percent, and by 1979 the proportion had increased even further to 47 percent (Forrest and Murie, 1987).

There is no dearth of published statistical evidence to show how, by the early 1980s, there were two main tenures, owner occupation and public sector, each distinct in terms of the

socio-economic status of those they predominantly accommodated. Using Census and Housing Policy Review data, Hamnett has demonstrated just how significant the changes have been in tenure structure and socio-economic occupation of the main tenures since the Second World War (Hamnett, 1984). His analysis shows how the decline in the privately rented sector between 1945 and 1961 was compensated for by growth in owner-occupation (up 18 points to 43 percent) and the council sector (up 12 points to 24 percent). As far as socio-tenurial change is concerned, over the twenty years to 1981 owner-occupation increased by up to 18 percentage points among the top three socio-economic groups, by 9 points among the ranks of unskilled heads of household, but amongst those not in paid employment it remained the same. By contrast, the proportion of council tenants classified as semi-skilled grew by 10 points, as unskilled by 17 percentage points, and by 25 points for non-working heads of household. The proportion of skilled manual tenants increased by a mere 2 percentage points while non-manual representation decreased. Such trends led Hamnett and Randolph to the conclusion that:

Whilst owner occupation has percolated progressively further down the socio-economic hierarchy, it has done so in a very uneven manner. Meanwhile, council housing has increasingly become the tenure of those unable, by reason of occupation, income or other circumstances, to enter owner-occupation. Whereas skilled manual workers have moved into owner-occupation the semi-skilled, the unskilled and the economically inactive have moved into the council sector. The socially heterogeneous private rented sector has been replaced by owner-occupation for the more skilled, and by council tenancy for the less skilled and the economically inactive (Hamnett and Randolph, 1987, p 39).

Further evidence of the impoverishment of council tenants is offered by Forrest and Murie (1987). Drawing on a range of

statistical sources they show, for instance, that the proportion of council households with no earners had risen from 39 percent to 47 percent between 1974 and 1984; that the 45 percent of council tenants on supplementary benefit in 1967 had increased to 61 percent by 1979; and that the number of council tenants aged 60 or more had increased by 10 percentage points between 1971 and 1982. Later evidence (Forrest and Murie, 1990) showed that the increase in households with a female head was greatest in the council sector between 1977 and 1987; and the percentage of people on supplementary benefit who were council tenants in 1979 remained virtually the same through to 1987 in spite of the decline in the council sector during that period. Data from the General Household Survey shows a particularly sharp rise in one-person aged 60 or more households, from 20 percent in 1981 to 27 percent in 1990 compared with a one percentage point rise from 15 to 16 percent among all tenures (OPCS, 1991). Returning to the earlier theme of the importance of local variability, Forrest and Murie make the point that:

Local housing market factors such as the relative sizes of the tenures, the level of differentiation within the council stock and the relative costs of buying and renting, interact with broader economic and labour market processes to produce different outcomes. And apparently similar outcomes can be the product of different combinations of factors (Forrest and Murie, 1990, p 53).

It is not only that council housing has increasingly become the tenure of the disadvantaged; the housing itself in terms of its material state and general quality has deteriorated. This has occurred for a number of reasons, one of which is the decline in real terms of the capital allocation to local authorities and the restrictions placed on councils over the use of revenue from sales.

As well as having drastic effects on council house new build, the consequences for existing council stock were described in a D.O.E. report (D.O.E. 1985). It found that over the next ten years, £20,000 million would be needed to carry out the necessary repairs and renovation to the remaining 4½ million council dwellings - an average of £5000 per house. Usher also points out that:

... spending has fallen in real terms from £6.6 billion in 1979/80 to £3.0 billion in 1983/84 and a planned £2.4 billion in 1988/89. This represents an overall reduction of 64%. The effects of these cuts, manifest in historically low levels of new build and a growing crisis of disrepair, combined with the sale of the better elements of the stock, have resulted in a greater stigmatisation of the tenure in addition to qualitative and quantitative decline (1987, p 1).

Another reason for the decline in the quality of public sector housing stock has been the sale of council properties, and this together with the rise of owner-occupation are considered next.

The Sale of Council Housing and the Growth of Home Ownership

It was noted earlier that both main political parties have encouraged home ownership since the early years of the 1950s. They have done this through tax concessions and improvement grants and, before 1980, the sale of council houses at the discretion of local authorities. In the 1970s the exercise of these discretionary powers by some councils led to substantial transfers from the public sector to owner-occupation. The highest point was reached in 1972 with 45000 sales, and by the end of the decade the number of council properties for rent was actually declining.

However, the Housing Act of 1980 saw the beginning of a marked increase in this trend so that the 34 percent of households provided for by local councils or New Towns in 1979 had declined by the mid-'Eighties to 28 percent and by 1990 to 24 percent (OPCS,

1991). This has happened not simply because the Act conferred the right to buy on council tenants but because large discounts - eventually of up to 60 percent - on the market price of council properties were given. In addition, council tenants who could afford to buy but showed hesitancy in taking up the option were given the extra 'incentive' of large rent increases and the withholding of rent rebates. Given this combination of imperatives, many tenants chose to reduce the cost of housing by buying rather than renting.

As McCulloch (1987) observes, the essence of central government's strategy was largely to replace direct subsidy with indirect financing through means-tested housing benefit. It has involved massive cuts in subsidies to local authorities (e.g. reductions in real terms of around 85 percent between the financial years 1979/80 and 1983/4). Added to this, the government has made it virtually impossible for councils either to buy private sector property or to obtain land for general needs building.

The consequences of this 'on the ground' is vividly described for the tenants of the London borough of Hackney. The increases in rents between 1980 and 1982 amounted to an average rise of 76 percent compared with a Retail Price Index rise of 29 percent. Between 1979/80 and 1982/83, the loss in central government grants to Hackney amounted to £418 per household. (Harrison 1983, p 176). More recently, a Guardian article reported imminent rent increases of 30 percent and more in the south of England which would translate into increases of £40 a month for many tenants. Although mortgage rates were also rising at that time, the increase on a £30,000 mortgage was only about £20 per month. The largest rent

increase set for the coming financial year was 53.6 percent in Harlow (Miller, 1990).

The overall effect of the sale of council property on the quality of what remains has been to reduce it. Sales have been highest of conventional, traditionally built houses with gardens. Sitting tenants are much more resistant to buying flats, system-built and single-bedroom dwellings, and housing built before the Second World War. For example, while flats constitute a third of council-owned dwellings in England and Wales, by 1984 they had accounted for only 4 percent of sales (Forrest and Murie, 1986).

In general, then, it is beyond dispute that public sector housing is seen by the present government as, and has moved significantly towards becoming, a residual tenure. At the same time, and returning to a recurrent theme in this chapter, data at the national level obscure the differential consequences that are taking place when they are examined on a more spatially disaggregated basis

The Local Pattern of Council House Sales

Analysing sales particularly since 1980, Forrest and Murie (1986) have observed a disproportionately high volume of sales in the south - where the public sector had a smaller share of the market to begin with - compared to the north, and see a consequent north-south polarisation of tenure. In addition to this regional divide, they point to the high rate of sales on the suburban fringe of large cities by contrast with the inner areas with their concentrations of high rise flats, and system-built dwellings, along with disadvantaged tenants, where sales have been low. They go further than this generalised observation to show how

privatisation has had differential impacts from locality to locality, emphasising the importance of differences in property values, housing quality, income levels and other local factors.

They illustrate this by comparing two areas of high unemployment, Derwentside and Hackney. Practically all of the council dwellings in the former are houses or bungalows with gardens, while in Hackney 83 percent of dwellings are high-rise flats. Added to this, while council properties are relatively cheap in Derwentside, the majority being valued at under £10,000, half the properties in Hackney cost more than £30,000. By 1982, the result was that only 2 percent had applied to buy in Hackney compared with 18 percent in Derwentside. It is factors such as quality of stock, age and affluence of tenants and calculations of rent versus mortgage payments which influence the decision to buy or continue renting and which lead the authors to conclude that: 'What makes sense and what is feasible for individual households is a product of specific local factors rather than an expression of innate desires.'

Looking at the geographical pattern of sales, other commentators have stressed the importance of local factors in the face of the negligible scope for discretion of local councils in moderating a uniformly national policy. For in spite of this, they describe a complex pattern of sales across the country. They found a number of correlates of the rate of council house sales including areas with already high levels of owner-occupation or low levels of council renting; areas with a large percentage of council houses as opposed to flats, one bedroom dwellings etc.; low unemployment

rate; and tenants with children aged between 5 and 15. (Dunn, Forrest and Murie, 1987).

Home Ownership: Class-Determined or Preference-Led?

The process of public sector residualisation can only be fully understood by taking account of developments in the private sector as well. So far the transformation of the housing market in terms of the demise of the rented sector and the growth of owner-occupation has been explained by housing market conditions, the effect of incentives and disincentives, and socio-economic and occupational status. However, not everyone sees housing tenure as primarily a reflection of labour market position. For Saunders it is:

...analytically distinct from the question of class; it is neither the basis of class formations - nor the expression of them - but rather the single most pertinent factor in the determination of consumption cleavages (1984, p 207).

What Dunleavy (1979) calls 'sectors' and Saunders 'consumption cleavages' deny the primacy of class in the Marxist sense in determining access to housing, asserting instead that they cut across class divisions. In other words, it is not position in the relations of production but access to consumption resources that is most important in deciding, for instance, tenure and quality of housing. Further, Saunders postulates that home owners share a common set of interests and social meanings by virtue of their tenure position which sets them apart from non-owners. The basis of this cleavage is the financial asset that the house represents and the accumulation and inheritance of wealth along with what Saunders regards as control and identity from being owners - what he describes as 'ontological security'.

Saunders' position has been roundly criticised on a number of counts. Gurney (1990) concentrates his criticism on Saunders' claims for the psychological benefits of owner-occupation, the notion that it restores a sense of control and meaning which has been lost, it is assumed, with industrialisation and the erosion of shared values and hence social cohesion. By contrast, tenants are not, by virtue of their lack of possession, able to enjoy this sense of meaning, security and control in their lives. Throwing doubt on the supposed 'lost world' of close-knit communities which has been replaced by a 'new' privatisation, Gurney draws attention to the increasing incidence of repossessions and mortgage arrears since the late 1980s, arguing that the insecurity engendered in many home-owners will seriously detract from the benefits that Saunders claims.

In 1988 Saunders and Harris regarded problems over payments as an acceptable risk given the benefits of ownership, and they minimised the extent of the problems anyway. Since then, however, the economic recession has seen dramatic increases in arrears and repossessions. While in the latter half of 1988, 8500 homes were repossessed and about 100,000 mortgages were in arrears by more than six months, in the first half of 1991, 36,610 homes were repossessed and 220,000 homeowners had not made a mortgage payment for at least six months (Eliot, 1991). Moreover, many owners who bought in the late 'Eighties scramble for home-ownership or to go 'up market', have since seen prices decline to such an extent that they are now stuck with mortgages greater than the value of their property.

It is not only differences in ability to pay for ownership that undermine the notion of home owners as a more or less uniform sector united in their shared enjoyment of the benefits of the tenure. Forrest et al draw attention to its enormous variety and the growing differences within it. Thus, there are wide variations in income levels, condition and locale of the property and the financial ability to maintain it, as well as regional differences in property values. The significance of government policy has been outlined in this chapter and is described in more detail in later chapters on the growth of Stockton. This does not support Saunder's contention that the demand for ownership is a preference-led expression of a kind of innate, 'natural' desire, and the work of Forrest and colleagues leads them to the same conclusion:

..it is clear that the current overwhelming preference for home ownership is not natural, inherent or cultural but reflects the current realities of the stock of dwellings, the means of access to them, the way they are managed and the financial and policy framework. If and when these circumstances change preferences will change (Forrest et al, 1990).

Postmodernisation: Industrial Restructuring and Social Polarisation

Shifting the emphasis from the contribution that tenure restructuring is making to a residualised public sector tenure, but not forsaking the crucial relevance of local factors, it is necessary to also consider another residualising pressure, namely the economic recession of the 'Eighties. Industrial decline and unemployment have affected all regions of Britain in some measure, yet they have affected certain sectors of industry and of the workforce in particular. The consequences of the recession have fallen most adversely on the traditional heavy industries such as shipbuilding and metal manufacture which characterise the north of

Britain and the Midlands. The workers worst affected are the semi-skilled and unskilled, the low-paid and irregularly and insecurely employed. In common with other politically and economically weak groups they make up the industrial 'reserve army' of the unemployed, whose numbers have been dramatically swollen during the past decade. And again, the relevance of place is evident in the north/south divide in terms of the uneven impact of unemployment. Moreover, its relevance extends beyond this simple spatial dichotomy for within both north and south the effect of the recession varies from area to area.

De-industrialisation and massive job losses are just part of the consequences of an ideological sea change. While the 1980s have witnessed the most profound effects, the changes can be traced back to the mid-1970s at least, the period which marks the watershed between the end of the post-war modernisation era (Massey, 1984, pp 237-254) and the beginning of the postmodernisation policies that signalled its failure. What this signalled in actuality was a reversal of the policy of regional development, relatively full employment and collectivised consumption in favour of the privatisation and free rein given to market forces which achieved its most extreme expression in Thatcherism during the 1980s.

Cooke describes what he calls the postmodernisation paradigm as:

..an increase in the unevenness of developmental potential between 'inner' and 'outer' British regions, growing polarisation in income and unemployment indices over space, a shift towards economies of scope by producers, a growing dynamism in localities with large service-class components displaying a privatistic consumption culture, and a growth of casualised and informal labour-market opportunities at the expense of 'lifetime' employment (Cooke, 1987, p 1289).

As well as the consequences in increased unemployment and restricted job opportunities, there has also been a greater use of contract work and hence a dilution of the employer's responsibility for the welfare of the workforce through the provision of pensions and sickness and holiday entitlements.

The post-Fordist state is less involved in securing the means of collective consumption (as in the Fordist welfare state) and more interested in selective social policies and the disciplinary operation of welfare benefits. State intervention is therefore being restructured, moving away from an emphasis on reproduction and being re-oriented to provide support for market solutions and to meet the needs of the private sector (Kearns and Smith, 1989, p 12).

The re-commodification of housing described above is a manifestation of this new order, replacing 'Fordist forms of collective consumption - of standardised commodities, often provided by the state - with the privatised, individualised consumption patterns that feed a regime of flexible accumulation' (Kearns and Smith, 1989, p 13). Forrest and Murie perceive the co-incident changes in the economy and the housing market as creating an increasingly marked marginalisation of the disadvantaged.

The broad picture of social trends in the 1980s is of a polarisation between an 'included' majority and an 'excluded' minority with relatively less choice, less income, less wealth and with lifestyles and living standards progressively diverging from those of the bulk of the population (1990, p 2).

Although Forrest and Murie do not use the term in this instance, there are other observers of this trend who would describe the excluded poor as an 'underclass'. This concept has been employed by social scientists and others over the last thirty years or so to refer to a residuum of those who fare worst in the competition for capitalist society's economic and social rewards,

although the notion of 'an intergenerational underclass' has recurred for much longer than that (Macnicol, 1987). Much of the debate has been characterised by a concentration on the failing and inadequacies of individuals and families to compete for resources and basic rights. In particular, poverty cultures have figured prominently in explaining the existence of the underclass (e.g. Lewis, 1966), a notion which has been seized upon by the New Right - especially in the U.S.A. - to lay the blame on subcultural values which militate against taking the opportunities for self-advancement which democratic capitalism is held to offer to all members of society (e.g. Murray, 1984). In Britain the emphasis has been on blaming the plight of the poor on 'welfare dependency' leading to a 'benefit culture' which saps the will and determination of disadvantaged people to improve their position in society - although this is Murray's position as well.

In contrast to this marginalised sector is a larger, relatively well-off sector which includes the more affluent, often multiple-earner, working class households, and a smaller, very affluent sector of high earners. Pahl (1984) conceives this class distribution as being onion-shaped with what he calls the 'middle mass' constituting the bulk. Similarly, Therborn draws attention to the significance, in terms of working class fragmentation, of this hierarchical structure:

In the middle will be the stably-employed or those with the possibility of re-employment. They will make a reasonable living and congratulate themselves on the widening distance between themselves and the unemployed (1986, p 33).

For Britain and other countries of high unemployment, he foresees the possibility of what he calls their 'Brazilianisation',

with permanently high mass unemployment consequent in large measure on the state's creation of unemployment in the service of capital accumulation. Precisely what he means by this term is societies:

..like a richer and somewhat more humane Brazil, with increasing trichotomous socio-economic divisions. At the bottom will be the permanently and the marginally unemployed, with certain welfare entitlements which are almost certain to be reduced over time. Some will make a living in the black economy. Where social assistance and unemployment benefits are relatively generous, some will initially adapt to a position of supported marginality. But after a time, benefits will be reduced, social contacts tightened, marginality will become exhausting (Therborn, 1986, pp 32-33).

Byrne and Parsons (1983) link the process of fragmenting the working class - by 'development' and 'underdevelopment' - with the spatial segregation of the 'Stagnant Reserve Army' which results. Their explanation of ghettoisation in terms of state re-creation of a 'surplus population' after its virtual disappearance during the full employment of the 1950s and 1960s, and its spatial peripheralisation, is considered further in Chapter 4 along with the underclass concept. The same chapter also examines theories and ideas which have been advanced to explain the creation or emergence of 'dump' or run-down estates and their characteristic problems.

Not the least of such problems is crime, and the latest work which claims to explain its prevalence is the environmental determinism of Alice Coleman (1985). Virtually ignoring the contribution that economic and social factors may make to the level of crime, she postulates a theory for which she claims empirical validation and which takes for granted the innateness of human weakness to behave criminally ('there are a few who will always be sluts or criminals'). This propensity to wrong-doing is, she

asserts, encouraged to express itself in actual criminal behaviour by the built environment in which people live.

Her focus is almost exclusively high-rise, deck-access council property with its multiple entrances and escape routes which make crime easier to commit, and her solution is to 'design out' such features which give cover to criminals and impede preventative surveillance by members of the community.

While it is clearly possible to make life more difficult for the criminal by the methods that she advocates, her claim to explain the causes of crime in terms of the shortcomings of ghetto-dwellers allied to features of their environment has been subjected to swingeing criticism for, among other things, its spurious interpretation of correlations and disregard for the case of low-rise council dwellings (e.g. Dickens, 1985). It has nothing of substance to offer in explaining crime in ghettoised semi-detached and terraced housing with gardens in which, for example, most of Stockton's disadvantaged are to be found. Here, crime and vandalism are very much in evidence in the absence of the design features which her theory so heavily relies upon.

As far as Ragworth is concerned, the only slight relevance of her emphasis on the built environment is in the low quality of some of the housing and the generally poor state of repair and neglected maintenance of the estate which partly resulted in its demise and were partly a result of it.

The Formation of Ghettoes

The residualising processes of tenure restructuring and the swelling of the surplus population are, of course, crucial in

understanding the developments at the core of this chapter, that is, the profound socio-tenurial changes particularly as they affect the public housing sector. Yet, they stop well short of explaining what is happening at the very local level of the council estate in terms of the spatial distribution of residualised dwellings. Key questions here are the extent to which they are conglomerating into run down estates and, nearer still to the central theme of this thesis, how is the ghettoisation of residualised housing to be explained?

As well as the work of Byrne and Parsons (1983) and that of Coleman, many explanations have been suggested over the years concerned with, for instance, disruptions of communities through relocation and the destruction of family support networks, and stigmatisation of specific housing estates. And at least part of the answer must be sought in the allocation policies and procedures of local councils who have been free to shape policies on the allocation of tenants to dwellings in a way that they considered appropriate to their own local situations. The implementation of policy is usually the role of council officers who are likely to have their own prejudices and beliefs about housing management and consumption. So the formal policy can be variously interpreted by those who implement it.

Gray (1982) considers that, in the main, councils see their ideal tenant as respectable, well-behaved, someone who will not abuse property and will pay his rent on time. It is to such an applicant that they will, where possible, allocate their most desirable properties.

A study of the allocation system in Glasgow showed how, in spite of the council's policy of abolishing tenant grading and the discretion of allocations officers, social segregation still occurred. Poorer applicants and the economically inactive were still being channeled into the less desirable housing. Among the reasons identified for this, one related to the ability to wait for better housing. Lower income applicants were likely to be in more urgent need and therefore to accept the first offer (60 percent did so compared with 39 percent among the highest income group). The ability to wait meant the accumulation of more points as well as allocators gaining a better idea of the applicant's requirements from his reasons for refusing. Another reason for the relationship between income and housing popularity is that allocators know, on the basis of cues picked up about income and status, who is likely to accept particular dwellings (Clapham and Kintrea, 1986).

Harrison's study of Hackney describes the inevitability of council housing evolving into a welfare tenure in times of scarcity when it has to be allocated according to need. The best housing goes to those who have to be rehoused through, say, redevelopment. They get the best housing because the council wants them out of their present accommodation as soon as possible. Next in order are the medical and high social priority cases who get the less popular housing and last are homeless families who get the very worst housing. Those who are seeking transfers or are on the waiting list have virtually no chance of being rehoused. So council housing increasingly caters for slum clearance tenants, the homeless and others in direct need. For a time, hard-to-let flats were offered

to the homeless - who only got a single offer and so had little option but to accept. (Harrison, 1983).

Conclusions

My motivation in embarking on this thesis arose in part from a fascination with the question: How do run-down estates like Ragworth come into existence? I have attempted in this chapter to invoke the empirical and theoretical issues that I consider it is necessary to address in order to move toward a better understanding of the emergence of such estates. Needless to say, these issues have informed my own empirical research and influenced the direction it has taken.

However, it is not only the question of the genesis of run-down estates, important as it is, which captured my interest. Of equal importance was the question of change and improvement of such areas. In fact, it was a concern with policy and the possibilities of the transformation of estates like Ragworth that first exercised my mind on my acquaintance with it in 1979. The research that I carried out on the estate in 1979 and 1984 was solely concerned with helping to hoist the problems and the quality of life of its residents into prominence as a policy issue to be confronted and then, after improvements had been implemented, with evaluating their impact on the lives of the people living there. The intervening period between the surveys transpired to be of particular interest as an instance of change brought about by a combination of interacting variables, although of central significance was the effect of tenant protest and action.

What I am attempting in this thesis can probably best be expressed in terms of a series of questions around these two major themes of the aetiology of run-down estates and bringing about changes in policy. I shall be presenting empirical evidence from primary and secondary data sources in the course of the thesis to address the following questions:

The emergence of disadvantaged estates

What part have allocation policies played in Ragworth's status as a run-down estate?

What light do sociological explanations throw on its emergence as a disadvantaged estate?

What contribution does a study of the residential and industrial growth of Stockton, especially during the Twentieth century, make towards explaining the existence of run-down estates in the borough?

What are the respective contributions of the central state and specific local factors to the tenurial pattern of Stockton and the residualisation of the public sector?

How far does environmental determinism explain crime and vandalism on estates such as Ragworth?

The creation of disadvantage

What part have economic recession and postmodernisation processes played in creating the disadvantage experienced by Ragworth's residents?

How useful is the underclass concept in helping to understand the emergence of disadvantaged, spatially segregated sectors of society?

The characteristics of disadvantaged estates and the process of change

Comparing Ragworth's residents with the population of Stockton as a whole, how do their differing social and environmental circumstances translate into differing perceptual assessments of their quality of life?

What locally specific factors might explain the activation of what could be described as the causal liability of tenant protest which played a significant part in the decision to implement an improvement programme in Ragworth?

What effect did the improvements to the housing stock and the estate's environment have on resident's perceptions of their social and environmental conditions?

And finally, looking at contemporary policy initiatives designed to address the disadvantaged estate problem, what have they achieved so far and what hope might they offer to residents of an improved quality of life and a reversal of the process of disadvantage and ghettoisation?

CHAPTER TWO

The Historical, Economic and Political Context Before the Second World War

This chapter begins the process of describing and explaining the development of Stockton and the emergence of the so-called problem estates within it. In attempting this, some of the theoretical perspectives discussed in Chapter One guide the exploration of the historical, economic and political processes involved. The material on industrial growth and decline draws heavily on the study by North (1975) of Teesside's recent history.

The Course of Industrialisation and Growth to 1918

In contrast to Middlesbrough, which was no more than a few farm dwellings at the beginning of the 19th Century, Stockton has a long history. It had a medieval castle which was destroyed in 1652 and of which there is now no visible trace. Its population of 4200 in 1801 made it easily the largest town in the Teesside area, its position on the north bank of the Tees with an agricultural hinterland accounting for its economic *raison d'etre* at that time. It was the main port on the river, shipping out agricultural produce along the coast and abroad.

It had a shipbuilding tradition which had been boosted by the need for warships at the time of the American War of Independence and the Napoleonic War, but its economy was fundamentally rural in character, with industries such as fell-mongering and tanning

prevailing. Indeed, in spite of its growth as an industrial town, J.B. Priestley's first impression of it even in 1933 was still that of a market town.

At first it does not look too bad. It was market day when I arrived there, and the uncommonly wide High Street was filled with stalls and women shoppers and brick-faced lads from the country. The hotels along the street were loud with farmers roaring for beer. I began to think that I must have arrived at the wrong place, for I expected to find a decaying shipbuilding and marine engineering town, not this scene of an agricultural fiesta (Priestley, 1934, p 341).

Even so, over a century before Priestley's visit, a development had taken place which was to be of great significance for the industrial growth not just of Stockton but the whole area within a few miles of the mouth of the Tees. This was the opening of the so-called 'Stockton to Darlington' railway, although its economic importance resided in the fact that it did not stop at Darlington but extended into the south Durham coalfields.

Initially, the coal was largely exported - from Stockton and Middlesbrough at first, although Hartlepool eventually became the main coal port when the railway reached it. Before long, however, much of the coal was destined for Teesside itself for the production of iron and - later in the 19th century - steel, using iron ore from the Cleveland hills.

While Stockton certainly had its ironworks, increasingly these were centred on Middlesbrough and, further east still and nearer the mouth of the river and the ironstone mines, at Eston. The tremendous demand for iron, particularly as a result of the spread of the railways and the advent of iron-built commercial ships and warships, meant that by the third quarter of the century more iron was produced on Teesside than any other centre in the world (North,

1975). A measure of the area's importance and the volume of production was that it made most of the rails for countries such as France, Belgium and India as well as Britain itself.

However, Stockton's role was increasingly less that of a producer of iron and steel and increasingly that of a consumer as engineering and shipbuilding became its main industries. The major difference in the manufacturing bases of Stockton and Middlesbrough is summarised by Harrison in his introduction to Sowler's history of Stockton.

From the mid 19th century onwards, we are accustomed to viewing Stockton as an unsuccessful rival to Middlesbrough. Although contemporaries sometimes spoke in these terms, the industrial base of Stockton was in fact fundamentally different from that of Middlesbrough, though complementary to it. Although a few iron works were established in the town, it is nevertheless generally true that while Middlesbrough made the iron, Stockton used it. Stockton was, and to some extent still is, characterised by its engineering industries - foundry-work, marine and locomotive engine building and iron shipbuilding, in all of which it surpassed Middlesbrough. As a result, Stockton enjoys to this day a more variegated industrial base than its larger neighbour. (Sowler, 1972).

During the course of the century, engineering firms like Head Wrightson were producing a wide variety of products. Prominent among these were stationary, locomotive, and marine engines, bridges and piers, gas holders, iron castings, and sheet metal and plumbing for the shipbuilding industry. As far as shipbuilding was concerned, while there had long been a tradition in Stockton, relatively rapid growth took place in the 1830s with the opening of three new yards. By 1892 the North East's share of world production amounted to 42 percent, with Stockton and Middlesbrough along with Hartlepool and Whitby accounting for a third of this. Ominously for

the future of the industry in the area, the North East's share was down to 30 percent by 1914. (North, 1975 p 37).

While this rapid industrialisation was taking place, Stockton declined as a port. In spite of the building of cuts in 1810 and 1831, the difficulties of silting up, caused by the meandering course of the Tees, and other hazards to navigation meant that as ships increased in size more of them used Middlesbrough. The navigational difficulties were such that it was often quicker to travel from the mouth of the river to London than the fifteen miles to Stockton (North, 1975 p 6).

Population Growth and Health in the 19th Century

Commensurately with this enormous industrial development, the borough expanded spatially and, of course, in population terms. Two borough extension Acts in 1852 and 1889 increased its acreage from just 17 to 3030, and in 1913, Norton and East Hartburn were added. The 1852 Act in particular not only increased its size, but also, in response to a General Board of Health enquiry (Ranger, 1850), significantly extended the corporation's jurisdiction over the provision of better sewerage, drainage, cleansing and paving. While population growth was substantial to mid-century, thereafter it accelerated until by the end of the century it had increased more than twelvefold since 1801. However, the period from 1861 to 1891 saw easily the most dramatic increase - from around 13000 to around 50000. So 80 percent of the century's growth took place in those thirty years.

Table 2.1

Stockton's Population Growth, 1801 - 1901

1801	4009	1861	13357
1811	4229	1871	27738
1821	5006	1881	41015
1831	7763	1891	49731
1841	9925	1901	51478
1851	10172		

Source: Censuses of Population

It is worth looking in more detail at the Board of Health report mentioned above not only because it throws light on the conditions of the working-class at the time but also because it is relevant to the housing conditions of the working class a century later during the period of clearance and council house building of the 1920s and 1930s. Areas singled out in the Board of Health report, although improved by subsequent public health legislation, were still being cleared this century.

The Board of Health report was called for because it was 'the desire of the petitioners for the inquiry to reduce the amount of sickness and premature mortality to a minimum'. Such 'premature mortality' is exemplified by just a few statistics quoted in the report. For example, in 1831-2 there were 604 cases of cholera resulting in 126 deaths; and between 1844 and 1848 there were 526 deaths from T.B. and zymotic diseases alone, the worst year being 1847 when 132 people died from zymotic diseases, principally scarlatina and to a lesser extent typhus and diarrhoea.

That conditions in the town were considered serious even by the standards of the time is indicated by this extract from the 1849

General Medical Report:

The fact that the annual number of deaths is sufficient to bring it within the range of the Health of Towns Act shows that some further improvements are necessary before Stockton can be rendered as healthy as even the average of towns in the kingdom (Ranger, 1850).

The General Medical Report for 1847, while drawing attention to the poor water supply and drainage also blames:

..the destitute Irish who, by locating themselves in great numbers in the dirtiest and most confined streets and lanes, increased its [a contagious fever] virulence and caused it to spread into all those parts where a due regard to cleanliness and ventilation had not been sufficiently attended to (Ranger, 1850).

In the following year's report, the author also blamed the worst epidemics on tramps bringing diseases into the town:

Particularly a case of small-pox, by a tramp's child, 13 years of age, from which it spread and a large number of malignant cases ensued, many of which proved fatal. Scarlet fever was brought into the town by a tramp, and also propagated through the same channel, i.e. the lodging house in York Street (Ranger, 1850).

Given the appalling water supply, sewerage and drainage, the overcrowded and sordid housing conditions and the consequent endemic disease, it is curious to single out immigrant minorities in this way and amazing in an environment where ill-health and disease were rife to be so confident in tracing sources of infection. It looks like an early instance of stigmatising what, even in an area of such abject poverty, would have been the lowest social stratum, an apparently marginalised minority of the time.

As far as the physical conditions were concerned, there were no waterworks, a few wells being the source of most water. Analysis showed it to be a cocktail of bacteria, chemical and other matter.

The sewers, where they existed, were often close to the surface and badly constructed with the consequence that they were frequently blocked. Refuse of all kinds was allowed to accumulate for days even on the main streets of the town and was rarely removed from the back streets. The instance of York Street, mentioned above, illustrates some of this squalor.

York Street. The nuisances in this street are much complained about, and nearly all the houses are without drainage, or it is very defective; there is no descent, and the water remains stagnant all down the street, and there is a general complaint of having to empty the cesspools into the street every night, and most of the privies very offensive (Ranger, 1850).

The report contains many such descriptions of streets and yards in the town, but one in particular is worth mentioning because it was finally cleared in the late 1920s and features as a case study in M'Gonigle and Kirby's study of health and nutrition which will be referred to in more detail later in the chapter. The area in question is the Housewife Lane area.

Lane itself clean; houses very crowded, dirty and ill-ventilated; in one lodging house there were about fourteen (men, women and children) and no bed; most of the houses were very offensive (Ranger, 1850).

The Inter-War Years: Industrial Recession and Restructuring

This period was one of acute recession, high and persistent unemployment, and movement of labour consequent on the restructuring of industry. Stockton had, of course, experienced cyclical unemployment during its growth as an industrial centre, but the long-term nature of structural unemployment on a massive scale together with cyclical unemployment had not been experienced before. With the exception of the chemical industry, there was

little new development between the wars to counter the decline of its major industries.

In terms of the employment structure of Teesside at this time, one member in three of the insured labour force was employed in engineering, shipbuilding and iron and steel production. If chemical workers are added, it brings the proportion up to a half who were employed in these major industries. The fact that they accounted for only 14 percent of the employment profile of England and Wales illustrates the area's dependence on a narrow industrial base and hence its vulnerability (North, 1975, p 79).

The chief reason advanced by North (ibid Ch.7) for the recession was that the staple industries were export-dependent and the inter-war period saw a marked decline in demand from abroad. The disruption of trade during the war led many countries to look elsewhere than Britain for their supplies or set up their own industries. In addition, exports were restricted by the shortage of raw materials and the necessity to satisfy home demand as a priority. In fact, shortages in Britain led to a rise in imports helped by exchange rates which were, at the same time, disadvantageous to British manufacturers.

Massey explains the dominance of the coal, iron and steel and shipbuilding industries before 1914 in terms of Britain's powerful imperial position.

It was the United Kingdom's position as an imperial power, its early lead in the growth of modern industry, and its consequent commitment to free trade and to its own specialisation in manufacturing *within* this international division of labour, which enabled the rapid growth, up to the First World War, of these major exporting industries (Massey, 1984, p 128).

With the changed trading relations and the growth of competition after the war, the drastic fall in demand led to the loss of production in the geographically concentrated staple industries. Local industry attempted to diversify and introduce new processes. Dorman Long moved into structural engineering, building the Sydney Harbour Bridge in the 1920s, and Head Wrightson expanded into the production of floating docks, bridges and blast-furnaces. Ashmore, Benson, Pease & Co. also managed some expansion, notably in the design and construction of chemical plant at a time which saw the burgeoning of a significant industry in terms of future employment on Teesside - the chemical industry and notably I.C.I. In spite of all this, the consequences for Stockton's engineering was serious decline. Moreover, although the production of iron and steel had been centred mainly on Middlesbrough, Stockton nevertheless had 11 of the 39 blast-furnaces on Teesside in 1858; by 1939 they had all closed down (North, 1975, p 63).

Stockton not only suffered the complete demise of its iron and steel-making capacity, but more importantly, it lost its remaining shipyards in the 1930s. As North (1975, p 67) explains, after the First World War: 'International trade patterns were seriously broken and relationships between buyers and sellers became uncertain. This led to dramatic falls in orders for cargo vessels and naval vessels.' This was shown by the enormous decline in production in the space of just three years in the early 1920s.

Table 2.2

The Decline in Shipping Production on the Tees, 1920-23

1920	200,000	gross	registered	tonnage
1921	130,000	,,	,,	,,
1922	46,000	,,	,,	,,
1923	34,000	,,	,,	,,

Source: North, 1975

Other factors were also instrumental in this decline, not least the lack of growth in world trade and the loss of coal markets to foreign competition, both of which suppressed demand for cargo vessels. The final *coup de grace* was delivered when the ironically-named National Shipbuilders Security Ltd., a company owned by shipbuilding interests, first bought up then closed down most of the Teesside yards including all remaining ones in Stockton and Thornaby (North 1975, p 67).

The effect of all this on Stockton's economy and working class was catastrophic. Nicholas (1986) extracted data from the Labour Gazette for 1924 to 1939. She points out the difficulties of arriving at accurate unemployment rates because of, among other things, governmental 'massaging' of the statistics which is reminiscent of the Conservative administrations of the 1980s. For instance, women losing their jobs were not regarded as unemployed, and only the unemployed who were formerly in 'insured' jobs were counted as being out of work (Nicholas, 1986, pp 18-24). So, bad as the unemployment rates were, she concludes that they were an understatement of the real situation.

Table 2.3

Unemployment in Stockton, 1924-1939

	Percentage of total workforce
1924	19
1926	32
1928	16
1930	26
1932	48
1934	34
1936	27
1939	20

Source: Nicholas, 1986

Stockton was hit even harder than the rest of Teesside in the early 'Thirties. Moreover, there was significant long-term unemployment, Nicholas comparing it to the Rhondda Valley in this respect where unemployment for five years or more was the lot of 45 percent of workers (1986, p 37) In terms of the devastation of its industrial base, it is also reminiscent of Jarrow at that time.

Priestley's visit to Stockton coincided with the nadir of its economic fortune.

Stockton...has a large number of citizens, excellent skilled craftsman, who have been unemployed not merely this year and last year but for seven and eight years, who might as well be crossbow-men or armourers, it seems, for all the demand there is for their services. The real town is finished. It is like a theatre that is kept open merely for the sale of drinks in the bars and chocolates in the corridors...as a thriving industrial town its life has been pitifully brief (Priestley, 1934, pp 341-2).

It is true that the town was 'finished' in one sense - in that it would never regain its pre-war position in terms of its engineering and shipbuilding capacity. Yet, its restructured and reduced engineering industry did survive and a relatively new industry, chemicals, emerged to compensate for jobs lost in the old, staple industries.

Although chemicals were produced on Teesside before the First World War, given initial impetus by the presence of salt deposits in the area, it was the inter-war years that witnessed the beginning of large-scale growth at Billingham. A measure of Billingham's rise was that the ten years after 1921 saw a rise in population from 8000 to 19000 (decennial Census statistics) and the conferral of urban district council status. North explains why it was chosen originally as a site for chemical production. British explosives during the First World War depended on imports of nitrates from Chile, but a U-boat blockade cut off that source of supply. Billingham had the necessary natural resources and a local labour supply for the production of ammonium nitrate (1975 p 70).

As this took place toward the very end of the war, its future prospects looked unpromising until Brunner-Mond acquired it and started to manufacture synthetic ammonia not for explosives but for fertilizers and dyestuffs. The site was sitting on large deposits of anhydrate, used in the production of sulphate of ammonia which had saleable by-products such as nitric acid. In fact, the first granular fertilizer - nitrochalk - was an early product. I.C.I was created in 1926 when Brunner-Mond merged with three other companies. Other chemicals were added to their range of products up

to the outbreak of the Second World War including sulphuric acid, cement and petrol- the latter from coal and creosote (North, 1975).

An indication of the scale of growth achieved was the increase in nitrogen production from 10,000 tons in 1924 to 200,000 tons six years later (North, 1975). Although not on the same scale as I.C.I., two other companies began chemical manufacture in this period - British Oxygen and British Titan. While the chemical industry could not make up for the massive loss of employment in the traditional industries, it nevertheless provided many jobs and its continuing growth as a major employer in the area was of great importance in succeeding decades.

Health, Poverty and the Local State

Inevitably, the level of unemployment took its toll on the living standards of Stockton's working class between the wars. This in turn, and given the prevailing housing conditions, had its effect on the health of the population, although it is worth mentioning one local factor - the work of the Medical Officer of Health's department - which countered the deleterious consequences of poverty in at least one important respect, namely that of child health. Most of the material for this section derives from three sources: Nicholas' study of the effects of unemployment in Teesside during the twenty years leading up to the Second World War (1986); the annual reports of the Medical Officers of Health for Stockton and notably those of M'Gonigle who was in post between 1924 and 1938; and M'Gonigle and Kirby's study of health and malnutrition published in 1936.

People who were unemployed in the 1920s had recourse either to unemployment benefit or parish relief. If they had been in

'insured' occupations, this meant that they had payed contributions into a self-supporting Unemployment Fund which entitled them to relief for a limited period of time after they became unemployed. Those who had not been in 'insured' jobs, whose entitlement to unemployment benefit had expired or who for other reasons were not eligible for it, had to turn to parish relief paid for out of local rates and administered by the Board of Guardians. Because of the long-term nature of unemployment in this period, entitlement to unemployment benefit ran out for many people and they had to turn to the parish. In fact, in the 1930s the majority of unemployed people on Teesside had lost their entitlement to unemployment benefit and were forced to turn to the Public Assistance Committee which replaced the Board of Guardians in 1930 (Nicholas, 1986, Chapter 6).

Benefit payments allowed a subsistence level of existence at best, and the principle of less eligibility at a time of falling wages led to several cuts in parish relief. M'Gonigle and Kirby's research demonstrated clearly that unemployment typically meant extreme deprivation for unemployed men and women - especially if they also had families to support.

The response of the local state to this situation was an ambivalent one largely of compliance with central state policies, but with support for some ameliorative measures and with occasional signals of protest to central government. It was a response which perhaps to some extent reflected the political complexion of Stockton then, for it had been traditionally a Liberal seat, but in the 1920s, with the decline in Liberal support, general elections eventually became contests principally between Labour and

Conservative, the latter usually emerging victors by relatively small majorities.

Table 2.4

Stockton General Election Results Between 1922 and 1935

	1922	1923	1924	1929	1931	1935
Liberal	9041	<u>11734</u>	8971	10407	----	5158
Conservative	<u>12396*</u>	11661	<u>15163</u>	16571	<u>24416</u>	<u>23225</u>
Labour	11185	10619	11946	<u>18961</u>	18168	19217

* 'National Liberal' candidate - no Conservative candidate as such

Source: Nicholas, 1986.

An example of the ambivalence of the local state was its resistance to appeals to restore cuts in parish relief while at the same time paying out all relief in cash rather than toeing the government line and awarding half in cash and half in kind. They also complained to government of the injustice of relief having to be funded from the rates in areas of high unemployment. They did not, however, go as far as Middlesbrough in so completely opposing the Means Test that they refused to administer it, necessitating the sending in of civil servants to do so.

They also, on the one hand, restricted pay increases for men employed on test work while on the other hand the Unemployment Committee supported schemes for the relief of unemployment to the extent that they incurred debts and had to borrow heavily on several occasions to meet the cost of the works. The council also sponsored a centre for the use of unemployed men where they could pass the time on leisure pursuits and learn skills. The Juvenile Employment Committee established an employment bureau and a 'Juvenile Instruction Centre' whose apparent aim was mainly to keep

young people out of trouble rather than to impart any usable skills. Attendance was obligatory for those on benefit and it earned the pejorative name of 'dole school' (Nicholas, 1986, pp 165-6).

Stockton council sent or supported resolutions demanding state-supported job creation such as one from Oldham that central finance should be used to keep men employed in their own trades, or from Stockton itself to the Ministry of Health in 1923:

...in order to reduce the cost of housebuilding the cost of laying out the land be borne by the national Exchequer (including the purchase price of the land) thus making it possible for each locality to employ all those men now idle who are capable of employment on housebuilding (Nicholas, 1986, p 170).

Yet, they took actions that did not seem politically consistent with such interventionist demands like refusing permission for a house-to-house collection for miners' families and delivering an ultimatum to striking bus crews to return to work or be dismissed (Stockton Council minutes 1926-7). Although politically inconsistent, the actions of local politicians were perhaps understandable as those of a council being tugged by opposing forces and interests. For while a substantial sector of the electorate was seen as Tory-voting and concerned about rates, another was predominantly working class and concerned, among other things, about the problems of housing, poverty and unemployment.

The evidence on the responses of the working class at this time seems very patchy. In her research, Nicholas came up against the problems of missing records and inadequate council minutes. For instance, she found that the records of the Trades and Labour Council, which had been an influential group, had been lost.

However, she did find evidence of grass-roots and minority group action particularly in the early 'Twenties and early 'Thirties, fighting primarily in the former period for higher benefits and in the latter against the Means Test.

Support for working-class groups like the Unemployed Workers Movement or the I.L.P. was ephemeral, membership and enthusiasm gaining momentum and then dwindling just as quickly. Yet there was apparently very considerable support for some movements on Teesside as is indicated by the hiring of Middlesbrough Town Hall for meetings. And at one time the Middlesbrough Unemployed Association was said to have a membership of 500, and not too far away, Nicholas found evidence of 14 percent of unemployed people in Darlington belonging to the Unemployed Association. These associations in Stockton made representation to the council and Board of Guardians on issues like the level of benefit as well as targetting campaigns on central government and organising marches and meetings (Nicholas, 1986, pp 150-3).

Nicholas concluded that the end-result of this campaigning and protest was very little either at local level on Teesside or nationally. Certainly, she found no evidence of any concessions being wrung from the politicians. Yet they may, nevertheless, have had some effect. Although admittedly speculative, it is possible that local councillors and Board members may have been influenced in some of the decisions they made which benefited the working-class. There was one instance, which is mentioned later in the chapter, of organised labour bringing pressure to bear which played some part in the reversal of a council decision on the building of a housing estate on the edge of the town centre. This

question of working class influence is returned to later in this chapter in connection with the provision of housing in the 1930s.

During this period the health of the working class was the subject of pioneering research by M'Gonigle and Kirby. In fact, M'Gonigle was an influential figure in the field of public health, achieving significant improvements in child health and welfare as well as constantly drawing the attention of the council to the problems of poor housing and overcrowding and their deleterious effects on the population's health and general well-being.

In child welfare, he felt the need to appeal for resources by emphasising the importance for reproduction of maintaining and improving services.

The rearing of healthy, disease-resisting children is of tremendous economic importance. The service to the community occasioned by diminished sickness, invalidity, inefficiency and premature death is... a splendid return for the comparatively small sums spent on such services as Maternal and Child Welfare and the School Medical Service (Annual Report, 1924).

Not that such economic justifications for improving health provision were characteristic of the way he saw his responsibilities. His philosophy in delivering services was one of caring and sensitivity.

... Individual teaching is of far greater value than mass teaching, and at the Centres each mother and child is considered as an individual, given individual consideration and individual advice. By this means the lessons of hygiene and mother-craft are so impressed upon the mind of the mother that real efforts are made to carry out the instructions given (Annual Report, 1924).

The proof of the effectiveness of his methods is the extent of the decline in infant mortality. From being well above the national average in the 1920s, the infant mortality rate fell below it by

the end of the 1930s. Yet this was by no means uniform throughout Stockton's working class as evidence given below demonstrates. The rate varied according to economic circumstance, crucially whether or not there was unemployment in the family.

Central to M'Gonigle and Kirby's "Poverty and Public Health" published in 1936 was a comparative study of two populations from adjacent slum areas of Stockton. One had been declared an 'unhealthy area' and was demolished in 1927. It was known as the Housewife Lane area and had been singled out for mention in the Board of Health report nearly a century earlier. Its displaced families were rehoused in a new council estate called Mount Pleasant. The slum-dwellers left behind in the Riverside Area served as a control.

In essence, what the researchers found was that, contrary to expectations, the health of the rehoused population actually deteriorated in subsequent years relative to that of the Riverside Area, although both were significantly worse than the population of Stockton in general. They compared crude death rates in the two areas for two quinquennia - 1923-7 and 1928-32 - weighted for sex and age in order to standardise the comparisons. They found that although the Riverside Area had a higher mortality rate than the Housewife Lane population before 1927, the effect of moving the latter population was to reverse the position.

Table 2.5

A Comparison of Death Rates for the Housewife Lane and Riverside Area Populations

	Housewife Lane	Riverside Area	Stockton
1923-1927	22.91	26.10	12.32
	Mount Pleasant		
1928-1932	33.55	22.78	12.07

M'Gonigle and Kirby, 1936, p112

Where Mount Pleasant and Riverside differed significantly was in the levels of rent they had to find. On transferring from the Housewife Lane area to Mount Pleasant, each family's rent almost doubled on average to 9 shillings a week which had to be found from a mean family income of about 30 shillings a week. Consequently, the amount spent on food in unemployed families on Mount Pleasant was 34.7d per head, a little over a half the amount spent by employed families on the estate and about 24 percent less than the unemployed families in the Riverside Area - with their much lower rents - spent on food.

At about this time, the B.M.A. arrived at a minimum 'normal' diet sufficient 'to maintain health and working capacity'. M'Gonigle and Kirby, in comparing the diets on Mount Pleasant and Riverside concluded that:

The two groups of unemployed families show a woeful shortage of all dietary constituents except carbohydrates. These shortages were more extreme in the group of families living upon the Mount Pleasant Estate...the deficiencies in the diets cannot be attributed to temporary causes but that, owing to prolonged unemployment, the deprivations were, in the majority of cases, of long standing... (M'Gonigle and Kirby, 1936 pp 126-7).

What the evidence in this chapter on the scale and duration of unemployment and on the health of the working class clearly shows is the presence of a large residuum, a marginalised sector of the population that fluctuated in size throughout the inter-war years but never shrank to anything approaching negligible proportions. So the presence of a residualised population such as that which now inhabits Ragworth, Blue Hall, the Eastbourne Estate (as it was), Hardwick, etc., is not only a post-war phenomenon but dates back at least to the years of massive and long-term unemployment consequent on the economic recession and industrial restructuring and rationalisation of the years following the First World War. During this time, poor housing and overcrowding were serious problems in Stockton, and how the local authorities confronted them is addressed next.

Housing Development Between The Wars

At the commencement of the First World War there were already serious deficiencies nationally in housing provision; by 1918 the situation in terms of low housing quality and overcrowding had deteriorated. In 1919 the estimated need for new housing to meet existing demand was officially put at 500,000 (Burnett, 1986, p 226), although this figure has been disputed as an underestimate. Bowley put the shortage at 20 percent higher than the official estimate (Bowley, 1945). Burnett (1986, pp 220-222) attributes the worsening of the housing problem during the second decade of the century largely to three causes:

- a. The introduction in 1910 of Land Values Duties which drastically reduced housebuilding.

b. The fixing of rents in 1915 at pre-war levels to combat rising rents but more particularly the serious discontent to which they were giving rise. This had the effect of discouraging speculative building to be let at what would have been regarded as uneconomic rents.

c. The conduct of the war meant a diversion of resources to the war effort and consequently relatively few houses being built.

The situation nationally was echoed in Stockton. The 1911 Census showed that 10.5 percent of the borough's population were living in overcrowded conditions (i. e. more than two people per room), largely concentrated in 690 tenements. The mandatory survey of housing need carried out in 1919 (which was required by the Housing and Town Planning Act of that year) revealed that the problem had worsened. There were now 759 overcrowded tenements housing 10 percent of the population, and the survey also revealed 1212 houses which had originally been built for one-family occupation but which were now occupied by two or more families without special adaptation for multiple occupation.

To understand the state's response to the housing crisis which was expressed in the two Acts passed in 1919, it is necessary to take account of at least two phenomena or forces for change during the first twenty years of the century. One was the widespread social unrest in Europe, principally in Russia, but also in Britain, albeit, of course, on a much smaller scale and perhaps best exemplified by the Glasgow rent strike of 1915. The other was the growing lobby for better town planning and the garden cities movement.

There is a body of opinion which holds that the 1919 Acts were the culmination of a continuing debate during the war which arrived at a consensus on the need to offer the working classes a 'new deal' on housing which held out the prospect of significantly improved housing conditions. And the reason for what appeared a dramatic concession, embodying greatly enhanced standards of housing, was fear of serious unrest or even revolution. The dangers feared were of mass demobilisation, war workers being released onto the labour market and high unemployment. The central state saw in this the seeds of social and political instability especially as ex-servicemen returned to housing conditions even worse than those they left when they joined up. Warnings were sounded that if rioting broke out the rioters would be better trained than the troops. Swenarton (1981) articulates this line of argument as convincingly as anyone in 'Homes Fit for Heroes.' He asserts that:

..government action was determined less by questions of housing *per se*, than by the uses to which housing could be put for wider political and ideological ends. During the war announcements of housing policy were used by the government as a pawn in its complex relationship with labour. In the wake of the Armistice, the 'homes fit for heroes' campaign was adopted as the major weapon of the state in the 'battle of opinion' on which, it was believed, the future of the entire social order depended.

Concessions were finally made which were to become embodied in the Addison Acts of 1919, and it is difficult to agree with those who dismiss the weight of evidence in support of Swenarton's counter-revolution theory in favour of a gradualist explanation of state involvement which postulates the notion that increasing state interest in housing was somehow inexorable and led to the post-war improvements.

However, another claim for credit for the advance in the cause of social housing is made on behalf of the advocates of the town planning and Garden City movements during the first twenty years of the century. While it is highly unlikely that the lobbying of this movement for better housing would, in isolation, have led to the legislative changes marked by the 1919 Acts, it seems incontrovertible that, initially at least, they had a strong influence on housing quality and house design.

They were represented on the Tudor Walters Committee set up in 1917 to consider and make suggestions on constructional specifications and layout of working class housing after the war. Its report made a number of recommendations on house-type, internal amenities, floor-space, width of frontage, housing density and street layout which represented a major stride toward superior working-class housing. Its findings fed into the Local Government Board's Housing Manual which laid down the ground rules under which grants would be given. For instance, its space recommendations for three-bedroomed non-parlour type houses were 900 square feet, and for parlour types, 1080 square feet, and it also provided guidelines regarding the layout of housing estates.

The 1919 Addison Acts

The Housing and Town Planning Act and the Housing (Additional Powers) Act became collectively known as the Addison Acts after the Minister for Reconstruction during the war and the first Minister of Health. The innovation which particularly distinguished them was the subsidisation of local authority housing. The subsidy consisted of Treasury grants to cover all losses in excess of a penny rate, which effectively indemnified local authorities against the

consequences of heavy spending on their house-building programmes in that, above the fairly minimal rate of a penny, local ratepayers would not be called upon to bear the cost. Moreover, economic rents were not to be charged until the high building costs of the early post-war years had fallen. In other words, it was the government's intention that rents for the new housing should be in line with controlled rents and therefore affordable by even the poorer sections of the working-class. In addition to this, there was a concession to private builders in the shape of a one-off subsidy of up to £130 for smaller houses built either for sale or rent.

At the time of the survey of housing needs in Stockton carried out in 1919, there were an estimated 13454 houses in the borough to house a population of around 63,114 (MOH 1920). The Medical Officer of Health estimated that a further 1700 houses were needed:

700-800 to meet 'unsatisfied demand',
500 to rehouse from clearance areas, and
400 to replace dwellings 'which fall definitely below a reasonable standard'.

The council's housebuilding programme after the war commenced on 12 acres of land bought at a cost of £2000. It consisted of two fields on the western edge of the town and became known as Gray's Estate. The Housing Committee in 1919 was enthusiastic about constructing good housing, ordering that 78 should be Type B (with parlour) and 44 Type A (no parlour), all intended for working class occupation. They further stipulated that some houses should have bay windows. The estate was completed by 1922 and was the only one built in the borough entirely under the 1919 Act without the restrictions that were soon to be imposed. The first 50 houses

built on Blue Hall were up to the high specifications of the Act, but by the time that specifications for the second 50 had been submitted to the Minister in 1922, the economy was in recession and the threat of mass protest was seen to have receded. The Minister rejected the proposals on the grounds that the quoted price for houses of 1,012 sq. feet was too high and directed them to invite tenders for kitchen type houses of 770 sq. feet instead.

The problem of fixing a rent which could be afforded by working class tenants was recognised well before the first houses became available. The Housing Committee sent a letter to the Ministry of Health in 1920 expressing the view that a rent of 10/- for kitchen type and 12/6 for parlour type houses was beyond the ability to pay of the intended future tenants. The Minister's reply was that he would nevertheless require the council to impose the required 'economic rent'.

Only some 220 houses were built (on the Gray's Estate and Blue Hall Estate) under the 1919 Acts, and nationally the Acts failed to provide anything like the 500,000 houses that were estimated to be urgently needed in 1919. Some 170,000 council houses resulted from the Act while around 39,000 private houses were subsidised under it (Daunton, 1984, p 9). Moreover, although intended for 'general needs', in practice the rents were affordable by only the better-off working-class and by white-collar workers.

This relative failure of the Act and the retreat from subsidised, good quality housing is explained largely in economic terms by Daunton (1984), and he also addresses the question of why the private landlord was rejected as part of the solution to increasing the housing stock. He saw part of the explanation for

the latter as lying in 'the political and social isolation of the private landlord' who 'had no real voice within either the Conservative or Liberal approaches to local taxation'. But most importantly for him, 'it was the specific context of wartime rent control which was to determine in large part the development of council housing after the war.' He accuses Swenarton of emphasising 'political and ideological rather than economic explanations' for the watering down of the Addison Acts two years after they came into force, arguing that support for council housing was 'a temporary *ad hoc* response to post-war price distortions' resulting from the rent control legislation of 1915.

Of course, it is true that in 1919 the government knew that private capital, given the high cost of building during the war and which would prevail for some time after the war, would not build only to see their capital assets depreciate when costs eventually fell - as they were correctly predicted to do. However, to place the emphasis on a narrow economic interpretation is, as Byrne argues, to 'present a bland and assertive administrative history' which is 'uninformed by holistic perceptions of the structure and tends to ignore non-administrative actions.' (Byrne, 1985). While the supporters of the Addison Acts no doubt had different motives for supporting them, the thesis that they were *primarily* regarded as a temporary expedient to buy off social unrest is persuasive. This interpretation sees the erection of superior housing as a ploy to give the working class a foretaste - albeit for most of them vicariously - of what they could expect if they stayed with the existing political system. But with the rise in unemployment after the brief post-war boom and with the perceived

threat from labour declining, the Treasury, which had never supported the principle of subsidised municipal housing, asserted the necessity to reduce expenditure. Cuts in the housing programme started in 1921, and with the return to power of the Conservatives in 1923, the retreat from state provision was given further impetus.

The 1923 'Chamberlain' Act

This Act, introduced by the new Conservative administration, reduced the subsidy which local authorities could pay as a lump sum to £6 per house. While it applied to both local authorities and private builders, the former had to demonstrate that they could perform more effectively than the private sector in order to qualify for the subsidy. The Act also laid down minimum and - more significantly - maximum standards, which had the effect of reducing the size of housing compared to that built under the 1919 legislation.

In his first Annual Report as MOH, M'Gonigle made special mention of the borough's housing problems and of the difficulties of his department in enforcing the law on unfit housing.

The present shortage of houses which can be let at a reasonable rent makes it difficult to deal with houses which should be closed as unfit for habitation. It is easy to make a closing order but until alternative accommodation is available, the enforcement of such an order simply means that the unfortunate occupants would be turned into the street to find their way eventually as sub-tenants into one or two rooms of an already occupied house, so accentuating the existing state of overcrowding. (MOH, 1924).

Nevertheless, during the 1920s 737 houses were rendered fit after Informal Notice and 3574 after Formal Notice through the efforts of his department.

He also mentioned the problem of high rents charged for furnished rooms which seriously reduced income available for food purchase (and, incidentally, foreshadowed his later study of high rents and associated malnutrition on the Mount Pleasant Estate). A total of around 360 houses were built by the council under this Act in Stockton; more were added to Blue Hall, 152 were erected to create the Mount Pleasant Estate, and 106 were built for sale on the Grangefield Estate (although in 1934 39 were still owned by the council). In addition, a further 318 houses were built privately with benefit of subsidy between 1924 and 1929. At the national level, 438,000 houses were built in England and Wales under this Act during the six years it was on the Statute Book, but only 17 percent of them by local authorities. (Burnett, 1986, p 231). So a much higher proportion were built by the council in Stockton than nationally.

The 1924 'Wheatley' Act

In 1924, the first Labour government introduced another housing Act which increased the subsidy by a third (to £9) compared with the Chamberlain Act and for twice the number of years. However, this had to be matched with a contribution from local rates of £4.10s. But significantly, the subsidy was available to local authorities without the proviso laid down in the 1923 Act which favoured private building, and so the balance was firmly tilted this time in favour of municipal provision. The consequence was that about a third of all local authority housing built between the wars came under this Act, while it encouraged relatively few privately-built houses (Burnett, 1986, p 233).

Table 2.6

Housebuilding in Stockton Between 1921 and 1929

	Under housing Acts		Non-subsidised
	council	private	private
1921	79	0	12
1922	14	0	22
1923	131	0	48
1924	98	27	25
1925	106	16	29
1926	235	50	10
1927	229	54	9
1928	0	54	188
<u>1929</u>	<u>56</u>	<u>117</u>	<u>101</u>
Totals	948	318	444

Source: MOH Annual Reports, 1921-1929

In Stockton, a total of 1710 houses had been built between 1921 and 1929. Given that the 152 houses on Mount Pleasant were built to re-house slum-clearance families and not to meet the growing demand, the MOH calculated that 1114 in total had been built for working-class occupation (i. e. the council and subsidised privately-built less the 152 on Mount Pleasant).

In view of the fact that the housing shortage ten years earlier had been estimated at 1700, and that it had grown by 613 since the war just to maintain the pre-war rate of increase, clearly, a serious problem remained (MOH Annual Report, 1930). The more so because most of the extra housing was to relieve overcrowding and not at all to replace unfit housing. Even so, the problem of overcrowding was not greatly reduced during the 1920s.

The position in 1920 was one of 759 overcrowded homes plus 1212 houses which were intended for single families but which were actually occupied by two or more families. By 1925 these figures were, respectively, 568 and 1756, a situation which only improved slightly by the end of the decade (MOH, Annual Report, 1930).

The problem in Stockton reflected the rest of the country in that council housing went mainly to the better-off working-class enjoying stable employment.

The housing problem continued to be unsolved in the twenties because private enterprise built very few houses for letting, because local authorities did not build sufficient houses, and because those that were built were let at rents too high for lower-paid workers, for those for whom employment was insecure, and for the unemployed whose numbers grew to reach 3,000,000 by 1931. The fundamental problem was the level of rents in relation to earnings... the mass of poorer workers... everywhere continued to live in old, rent-restricted property, much of it turning into slums (Burnett, 1986, p239).

Some of the same points were being made at the time by the MOH for Stockton who reported the large number of applications for council housing, and the large number of small houses occupied by more than one family. He laments the shortage of houses at rents that the poor could afford and attributes most of the overcrowding to low income and therefore an inability to meet the rents of available houses (MOH, 1930). The instance of the Housewife Lane slum clearance tenants was evidence of the council's inability or unwillingness to provide decent accommodation at a rent the poor could afford (M'Gonigle and Kirby, 1936).

A possibility when the housing stock increases as it did in the 1920s is that 'filtering-up' may take place whereby the property vacated as a result of the better-off moving into new

housing is occupied by poorer tenants for whom it is an improvement, perhaps affording them more space. The Census returns for Stockton for 1921 and 1931 show an increase in 'private families' of 2299, but a smaller increase in the number of structurally separate dwellings occupied of 2171. Apart from this net decrease in the supply of housing over demand, at this period of very high unemployment, many people were not in a position anyway to afford the higher rents that 'filtering-up' would have incurred. There is also Burnett's point that the Rent Restriction Acts were a deterrent to moving since the next house would usually have a decontrolled rent and further, that the security of tenure that the tenant probably enjoyed in his old house would have been forfeited (1986, p 242).

Nevertheless, the number of dwellings occupied by more than two families, although increasing in absolute terms from 951 to 1082, dropped relatively over the decade from 7.5 percent to 6.9 percent. Similarly, the proportion of families living at a density of more than 2 persons per room declined from 13.4 percent to 10.9 percent. However, given that the number of rooms per person declined slightly and the number of families per occupied dwelling decreased by only 0.01 percent (0.96 to 0.95 and 1.09 to 1.08 respectively), these improvements in household density were minor, to say the least (Decennial Censuses, 1921 and 1931).

The actual pattern of housebuilding by the council before 1930 resulted from the creation of four estates, three of them small in size and a relatively very large one at Blue Hall. The three smaller estates - which have already been noted - were Gray's in 1922, Grangefield (intended for owner-occupation) in 1926, and

Mount Pleasant (to rehouse slum clearance tenants) in 1928. In total they only provided around 380 dwellings, but Blue Hall was on a quite different scale, accounting for approaching 900 houses by 1930. Its growth can best be described as incremental, as the next table shows. In fact, it was increased significantly in the 1930s as well so that it had houses added under every major piece of housing legislation of the inter-war years. However, it was bisected by a main road, Norton Avenue, which effectively created two estates although bearing the same name, with the better 1920s housing predominating to the north and the largely 1930s slum clearance replacement housing to the south. In fact, the latter estate is now differentiated by the name of New Blue Hall. This should not be taken to imply that the property in New Blue Hall is especially inferior, for much of it is, to outward appearance, solid, mainly brick-built, traditional semi-detached housing in spite of other signs of problems - debris littered about the streets, boarded-up houses, etc - and the generally deprived population which inhabits it.

Table 2.7

The Growth of the Blue Hall Estate in the 1920s

Year	No. of Dwellings Added
'23	100 (1919 Act)
'24	100 (1923 Act)
'25	100 (1924 Act)
'26	120 (, , ,)
'27	278 (, , ,)
'30	86 (, , ,)
Total	884

Annual Reports of MOH for Stockton, 1923-30

The Greenwood Act, 1930

The building effort of the 1920s had done practically nothing to improve the plight of the poorer families still living in slums, some areas of which had been lamented nearly a century earlier, in the Board of Health report of 1850, as being insanitary and unfit for human habitation. The Labour Government which was returned to power in 1929 was determined to address this problem, and the following year witnessed the passing of the Greenwood Act which offered a subsidy for slum clearance of £2.5.0d for 40 years for each person rehoused, the local authorities' contribution from rates being set at £3.15.0d for the same period of time. It also required local councils to draw up a programme of rehousing and clearance with a time limit for completion of five years. The Act's implementation was delayed by the intensification of the economic recession and the establishment of a coalition government which passed a further Act in 1933 preserving the Greenwood Act but abolishing the subsidy for general needs housing of the Wheatley

Act. In effect, this limited the role of public sector provision to slum clearance replacement and left the way open for private builders to increase the housing stock - by sale to owner-occupiers as it turned out.

It is worth mentioning the MOH's general assessment of the position of the poorer working class in 1930.

The cheapest Corporation houses at present available are 68 three-roomed flats on the Mount Pleasant Estate let at a rent of 7/- weekly including rates, and 128 two-bedroomed houses on the Blue Hall Estate, which are let at a rent of 8/6 weekly including rates. These... are not suitable, as a rule, for the accommodation of the families under consideration, but as they are let at a lower rent than houses having more accommodation, the poorly paid workers apply for them for that reason... These people, generally speaking, occupy the worst of the old houses in the Borough and their need for better housing conditions is therefore more urgent than those in better circumstances... Many families are compelled, on account of reduced income owing to unemployment, to share their houses with other families (MOH Annual Report, 1930).

Before the slum clearance effort later in the decade, there was a final spate of general needs building and planning by the borough council. An estate of 378 houses was completed in 1931 at Primrose Hill close to Blue Hall. In 1929 three additional estates - Sunderland Glebe, Newham Grange and Eastbourne were proposed. As it turned out, Eastbourne was actually used for slum clearance rehousing and the Newham Grange Estate had to wait until after the Second World War.

Controversy surrounded the development of the Sunderland Glebe Estate in the early 1930s, for it was the subject of working class agitation which was to focus especially on the issue of housing - in the early part of the decade at least. In May 1932 a tender was accepted of £42,751 to build 162 houses on the estate which was to

be built on the south-western edge of the old town. However, the builder withdrew his tender and the council decided not to accept a higher tender and therefore not to proceed with the construction of the estate.

This decision brought a forceful response from the Stockton and Thornaby UWA who had passed a resolution carried with a 'huge majority' at a meeting held at the Market Cross and in the Jubilee Hall. It was received by the Housing Committee on the 16th of May 1932 and read:

That this meeting of the unemployed citizens of Stockton condemn the action of the Town Council in refusing to build Council houses to replace the vile and inhuman conditions that prevail in our midst, and we demand that the Council rescind the Minute, and proceed at once so that decency and progress may again prevail in our town.

This appeared to have little effect for a motion to accept the new tender was defeated at a council meeting in October. However, the Housing Committee of the 18th November 1932 received letters of protest about the Sunderland Glebe decision from the Stockton branch of the United Patternmakers Association, the AEU and also the Stockton and Thornaby Trades Council, a combination of working-class representation which appeared to carry far more political influence than the unemployed. The minutes record that a discussion took place and ultimately a resolution was passed to proceed with the building of the estate. It was completed, at a density of 14.8 houses to the acre, at the end of 1933.

Other efforts by the unemployed workers' organisations to influence the council met with similar uncompromising responses. The Stockton and Thornaby UWA, claiming a membership of 1700, wrote to the Parliamentary and General Purposes Committee meeting in

December, 1933, requesting a meeting regarding the use of land at Newham Grange for housing purposes. The committee voted not to grant an interview. On a different issue, the implications of the Unemployment Bill, the National Unemployed Workers' Movement wrote to the council in May 1934 requesting that they receive a deputation to discuss the following recommendation:

1. That the council should grant unemployment insurance benefit to all unemployed workers who refuse to enter the 'unemployment re-conditioning camps'.
2. That they should not employ men on 're-conditioning' work but pay trade union rates.
3. That they should seek powers from the Ministry to start 'extensive work schemes of social utility'.

Again, the council refused to receive a deputation.

In 1933 the MOH for Stockton responded to a Ministry of Health circular to submit a programme and time-table of slum-clearance schemes designed to 'eradicate slums within five years'. The programme laid down that 639 houses should be demolished in Clearance Areas to be replaced by 741 houses, all to be completed between 1934 and 1937. In addition, 300 houses were to be cleared in Improvement Areas and 300 built to replace them between 1935 and 1938. The Ministry of Health confirmed the council's five-year programme in 1935. This total of 939 condemned houses represented 6.2 percent of the borough's total housing stock (15,219 dwellings in the 1931 Census). This compares favourably with the national proportion of 2.6 percent and Newcastle's 1.6 percent, although well behind Leeds with its Labour council highly committed to public sector building (Burnett, 1986, p 244). This tremendous

variation in houses condemned cannot simply be explained in terms of differences in housing quality between towns like Leeds and Newcastle. As Burnett (1986) mentions, precisely what constituted a slum requiring demolition was left vague in the legislation so that councils were free, to a considerable extent, to construct their own definitions and hence to determine the extent of their clearance and rebuilding programme.

The 1935 Housing Act

The purpose of this Act was to relieve overcrowding. As under the Greenwood Act, councils had to carry out surveys of their administrative areas, but in this case it was to determine the extent of overcrowding. Dwellings built to relieve overcrowding received up to £5 a year for 20 years, and extra help was given for building on expensive sites and for flats. In this case, the density of a household had to be high to earn the description of 'overcrowded' and so qualify for inclusion under the Act.

Under this and the Greenwood Act housing standards deteriorated, both floor space and density of houses per acre declining. For example, the 1922 Gray's Estate of 122 houses was built at a density of just over 10 per acre while the Eastbourne Estate built in 1935-36 had a density of nearly 17 per acre. Moreover, the Ministry of Housing sent Stockton a directive that the floor space in the original proposal for Eastbourne be reduced. Thus, the *maximum* floor space of a three-bedroomed house was to be 800 sq.ft., a far cry from the *minimum* of 950 sq.ft. laid down in the LGB Manual at the time of the 1919 Act. The MOH's survey reported 665 families living in overcrowded conditions (607 in

privately owned and 58 in council dwellings). He calculated the need for 257 new houses to deal with the problem.

The MOH's Annual Report for 1936 described rapid progress with demolition and rehousing; 299 houses had been demolished in the year and 406 local authority houses built, most to rehouse slum clearance families, of course. By the end of 1937 the five year slum clearance programme submitted in 1933 had been completed except for 22 individual unfit houses. However, the original proposals had been modified somewhat. Public Enquiries resulted in clearance orders for 578 houses, but 83 were excluded on undertakings by owners to recondition them (47 were eventually made fit but the rest were demolished). Moreover, the 300 houses in Improvement Areas had to be dealt with individually under the 1935 Act. So the result by the end of 1937 was the demolition of a total of 720 houses while 89 had been rendered fit and 28 put out of use for habitation.

The replacement housing was concentrated on the Blue Hall Estate in particular and on adjacent land such as the Gilpin Brown Estate where 123 houses were erected for the relief of overcrowding. By 1938 the MOH reported that the number of overcrowded families had been reduced from 665 to 419 and 400 houses had been rendered fit under the 1936 Act (MOH Annual Report, 1938). It has to be remembered that the overcrowding standard still allowed relatively high living space densities, only the worst cases qualifying as legally overcrowded. The next table shows the rate of council house building through the 1930s but also the increasing significance of the private sector in housing provision.

Table 2.8

Housebuilding in Stockton Between 1930 and 1938

	Council	Private
1930	330	233
1931	178	144
1932	178	144
1933	162	226
1934	0	489
1935	278	345
1936	406	400
1937	287	744
<u>1938</u>	<u>62</u>	<u>381</u>
Totals	1881	2962

Source: MOH Annual Reports, 1930-1938

The MOH Annual Report for 1939 records a further 227 new houses but does not differentiate tenures. The total of 5070 houses built in the 1930s outstrips the number added to the housing stock in the 1920s by a factor of about three. However, there were two major differences between the two decades apart from sheer numbers. One was the difference in quality, floor space and density per acre, with a general decline on all three counts in the 1930s in the drive to house more people at a lower cost. The other was the predominance of building for owner-occupation in the 1930s, outnumbering local authority building by one and a half times.

However, comparison with national statistics reveals that in Stockton local authority housing accounted for a higher proportion of new build than in England and Wales in the inter-war years. Nationally, 28 percent of new housing was erected by local

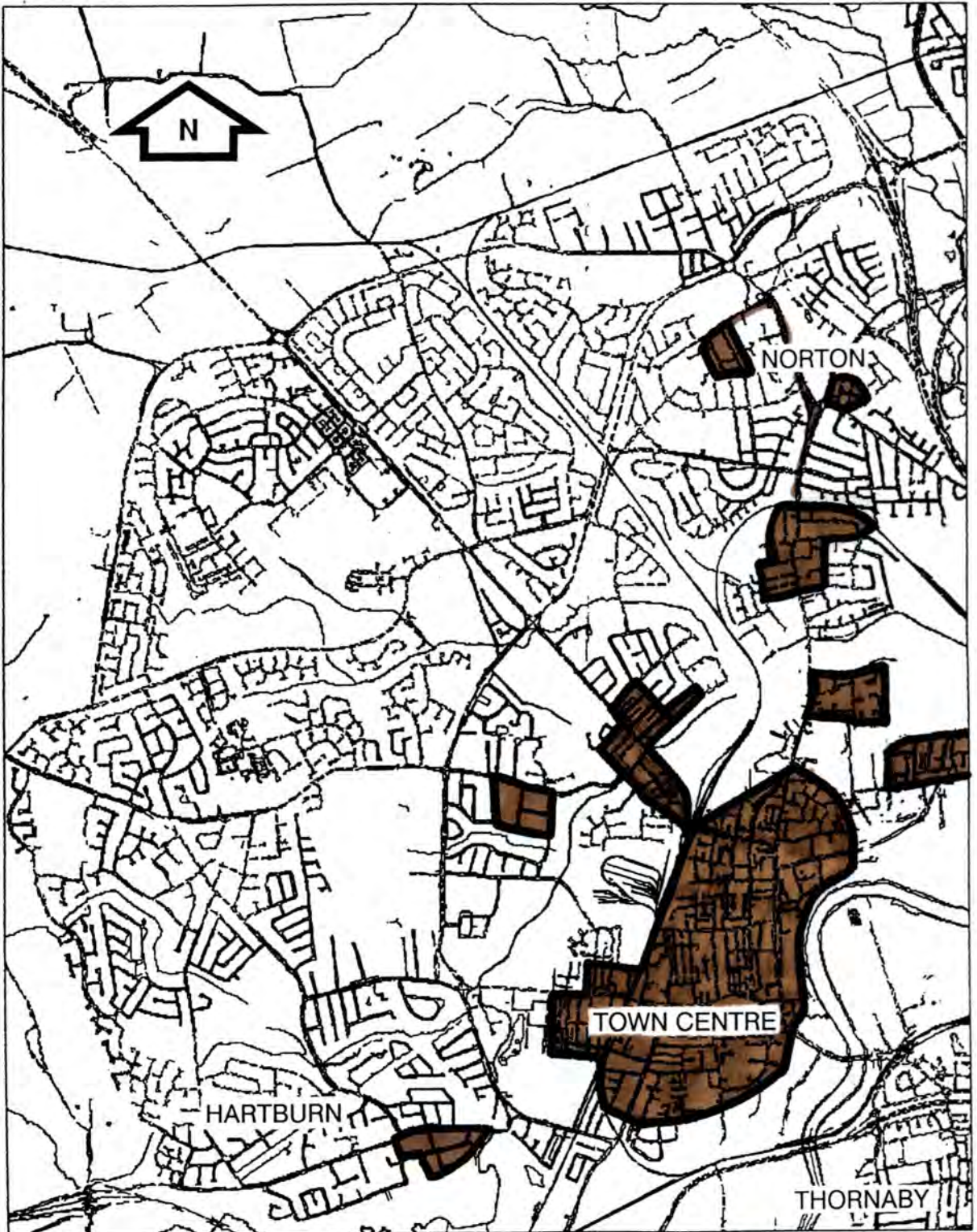
councils, 72 percent by private enterprise (Burnett, 1986, p 249), while in Stockton, of the 6780 houses built between 1921 and 1939, some 43 percent were council-built and 57 percent privately constructed. Stockton does slightly better than the national average in terms of new houses built in the period as a proportion of all housing. Nationally, according to Burnett (1986, p 249), by 1939 about one-third of all houses had been built since the First World War. In Stockton, there were 13071 dwellings in 1921 (Census for 1921) which was reduced by approximately 1000 mainly through slum clearance by 1939. Therefore, the 6780 new houses which brought the stock up to nearly 19000 represented around 36 percent of the total.

The Inter-War Pattern of Growth of Stockton

To depict how Stockton grew spatially in the 20th century, 6-inch and 1:10000 Ordnance Survey maps were used to make comparisons at several points in time. The two maps shown in Fig. 1 and Fig. 2 were constructed from the O.S. maps for 1923 and 1938 respectively, although they are not completely accurate representation of Stockton for either year (1). Although there is an inevitable historical 'blurring', the maps delineate with sufficient accuracy the broad pattern of Stockton's growth during the inter-war period. However, in order to better represent historical accuracy, the reconstructed maps shown in this and the following chapter are given an approximate date to reflect the time span of the master maps.

Fig. 1 shows Stockton at around 1920 with the mainly Victorian town centre area accounting for most dwellings with a few scattered small developments to the north and west, including the then

Figure 1



STOCKTON-ON-TEES
circa 1920 (1)

Scale 1 : 30,000

 Privately built

Figure 2



STOCKTON-ON-TEES
circa 1938 (1)

Scale 1 : 30,000



villages of Hartburn and Norton. Fig. 2 shows the extent of growth by the second half of the 1930s. The estates to the west in the Hartburn and Oxbridge Lane areas and the two smaller areas to the north-west in Newham Grange are private developments; there is very little public sector building to this side of the main town apart from the 1922 Gray's Estate and the Grangefield Estate which was built by the council for eventual owner-occupation. Today, both of them are desirable estates of mixed private and public sector dwellings. Most public sector housing was erected to the north, the most northerly being the incrementally-developed Blue Hall, with the next largest housing area between Blue Hall and the town centre being Primrose Hill/Eastbourne. Mount Pleasant is the small estate nearby to the north-east, and on the southern tip of the town centre lies the Sunderland Glebe Estate. It was largely to the northerly-situated Blue Hall and Eastbourne that the former slum tenants were directed in the 1930s. There is a further cluster of private estates in the Norton area around Blue Hall, mainly built in the 1930s when private enterprise took the opportunity, in the relative absence of general needs building by the council, to become a major provider of housing again. The question of who they were catering for and how they achieved their market share is considered next.

Building Housing for Owner-Occupation Between the Wars.

With the local authorities' role being confined to slum clearance, replacement housing and the relief of overcrowding, the chances of those not living in slums obtaining decent council accommodation receded into the distance. It has to be remembered that, given the predominance of 19th century terraced housing in

Stockton despite the increase in new housing, many skilled manual and white collar workers would be living in these old terraces and no doubt looking to move their families into something more sanitary, modern and spacious.

At that time, the present fiscal advantage associated with owner-occupation and the inflated land values which have made home ownership such a profitable investment since the 1960s did not exist. Nor is there much evidence that it was a particular aspiration among the working and lower middle classes who were accustomed to renting as the 'normal' tenure form. The shortage of good housing for rent in the 1930s left the way open for capital accumulation through exploiting this market, unencumbered by a hitherto serious competitor in the shape of subsidised public sector housing, by targetting the better-off working and the lower middle classes. Byrne regards the 1920s and 1930s as being:

..of very great importance because in this period the largely new system of private building for owner occupiers who financed the purchase of their dwellings by mortgages was put together in its modern form. This included the development of existing relations among builders, 'exchange professionals' (solicitors, estate agents and accountants), and finance capital from a concern with the organisation of the provision of privately rented accommodation towards the modern system which underpins mass owner occupation (Byrne, 1992).

As far as this process in Stockton was concerned, the pages of the local newspaper, the North Eastern Daily Gazette (N.E.D.G), at that time are informative. By concentrating on one year, 1936, when the rate of speculative building for private sale in the borough reached a high level, the competitive marketing methods and 'deals' on offer to attract buyers partly illustrate why the drive to make new 'recruits' to home ownership was successful. However, while

private builders no longer had public sector housing to contend with, as Burnett points out:

By the later thirties the speculative housing market was glutted, and builders in fierce competition with each other were anxious to make house-purchase as painless as possible by negotiating the most advantageous terms for their clients (Burnett, 1986, p254).

The emphasis of the advertisements was on the low level of mortgage repayment - comparable with rents, they claimed - and on the soundness of house ownership as an investment. Lane Fox & Co. of Norton, offered houses on the Norton Hill Estate at £375 and £475 which were 'up-to-date in every detail. Easy-clean fittings, tiled bathrooms, kitchenette, etc., and of sound construction.' These were available for a £10 deposit, 11/3d weekly. They added, 'This method is far cheaper than paying rent. Now is the time to buy as ALL prices are rising. A WRITTEN GUARANTEE WILL BE ISSUED TO EACH PURCHASER. Arthur J. Blackett offered 'modern labour-saving villas' on the Greylands Estate, Norton which contained two downstairs living rooms, three double bedrooms, bathroom and separate lavatory for a deposit of £25 and 16/2d weekly including rates. On the nearby Hartburn Hall estate Lawrence Brown of Stockton was offering a few remaining houses at £495, 'deposit and mortgages arranged to suit purchasers.'

The above advertisements and others similarly couched appeared in two advertising features on housing in the North Eastern Daily Gazette on 8th April and 30th July 1936. The text of these features re-inforced the points made in the advertisements but included interesting asides on the pace of development and, to some extent, on the market it was serving.

Facilities for purchasing houses have never been better. The mortgaging business has now reached tremendous proportions, and it is now possible to pay for your

house while living in it at a cost which, in many cases, is even lower than ordinary rent charges.

Of course, whether house purchase was comparable with rent payment depended on such factors as the price of the house and whether mortgage repayments were being compared with controlled or de-controlled rents. Certainly, weekly mortgage repayments did not compare very favourably with council house rents at the time, for a 3-bedroomed house built under the Wheatley Act could be had on Primrose Hill at a weekly rental of 6/6d or a 2-bedroomed house under the same Act on Blue Hall for 5/9d a week. However, this may not quite be comparing like with like, but even if the best council housing, on the Gray's Estate and built under the Addison Act, is taken as a comparison, the new private housing could not compete, for the rent of a 3-bedroom parlour house was 10/- a week, and the same type of house on Blue Hall was 8/9d weekly (Housing Committee minutes, 16/2/34).

Nevertheless, good quality council housing was unavailable to the majority of people looking to move out of inferior housing, and consequently:

Never in its long history has Stockton made such rapid strides in housing development as it has during the past three or four years. What is more, there appears to be no sign of this advancement abating. All classes of the community are being catered for, and in this respect, although due credit must be given to the Corporation for the great work of housing the people which it has undertaken, it is the private builder who has built up Stockton's new suburbia (N. E. D. G, 8/4/36).

The Gazette edition of 30th July, 1936, claimed that 2-bedroomed houses on the Ashfield Estate at £385 were 'within the range of most working class families'. Later in the same feature it continues:

Few people should be unable to buy their own house with terms as low as those offered by Messrs. Lane Fox and Company of Norton. On the Norton Hill Estate, where a small type of semi-detached house is being erected, it is possible to obtain possession of one on the payment of a total deposit of £10. Following this the weekly payment is only 11/3d until the house eventually becomes the property of the tenant. It is a much cheaper method than the mere payment of rent, and in the end the house belongs to you and not to the landlord (N. E. D. G., 30/7/36).

Clearly, the housing boom owed much to low interest rates at the time. The Darlington Equitable Building Society were advertising mortgages at 4½ percent with repayments from 2/9d per week per £100 (N. E. Gazette, 4/2/36). The Leeds P. B. Society enticed customers with: 'NO MORE RENT. the Leeds Permanent Building Society advances at 4½ percent up to 90 percent of valuation at 2/7d per week per £100' (N. E. D. G., 3/2/36).

The particular advantage of Norton and the reason why so much private building took place there is explained - again in the same Gazette feature.

With the coming of the tremendous works of Imperial Chemical Industries, Ltd., at Billingham, it is only natural that Norton should experience boom in building operations almost as great as that of Billingham itself. The potentialities which Norton offered for the housing of the workers of the great I. C. I. works were quickly realised by Mr. Arthur J. Blckett. Land was soon purchased by him... (N. E. D. G., 4/2/36).

This raises the question of who was attracted by this barrage of publicity for home ownership. Certainly, the estates in Norton, being close to Billingham, had potential appeal to I. C. I. workers, but the more interesting question concerns the social class composition of the new home owners. Did the proposition of home ownership and the appealing advertisements attract the working

classes and was it financially possible for them to enter this tenure form anyway?

Certainly, Byrne found that in the cheaper 1920s and 1930s owner occupied housing of four Tyneside county boroughs the skilled working classes were represented in significant numbers. This contradicted Swenarton and Taylor's conclusion that the working classes did not gain a real foothold in this tenure except for 'the elite of the working class... and even then only at the cost of self-sacrifice and thrift' (Swenarton and Taylor, 1985, quoted in Byrne, 1992). Byrne contends that his findings demonstrate the necessity of looking at localities rather than making top-down generalisations on the basis of national statistics, although he does admit that this point 'is one of degree rather than substance'.

Fortunately, the Ward's Directories contained details of the occupations of heads of households in Stockton and the final edition to be published for 1938-9 was invaluable in throwing light on this question of social class composition. They are admittedly incomplete both in term of their street coverage and occupational status. In the latter case, not every householder gave an occupation and sometimes the description was vague. Yet, the data were adequate for the broad two-fold categorisation employed here of white collar/shopkeeper on the one hand and skilled manual and semi-skilled/unskilled manual occupations on the other. The 'other' category in the tables below comprises those householders for whom no information is given - often women who in many instances were probably not in paid employment. The directories were erratic in street coverage in that, for example, they included some poor

working class areas like the Housewife Lane area but a mid-'Thirties private development of relevance to this study was omitted. As Byrne found on Tyneside, the 'white collar/shopkeeper' category did not include any professional occupations but was made up of occupations like traffic inspector, timekeeper, school officer, teacher, policeman, analytical chemist and insurance agent.

Two categories of housing were selected, the good Addison Act council housing on the Gray's and Blue Hall Estates on the one hand and some of the less expensive owner occupied housing built in the mid-'Thirties suggested by the advertisements described above, ranging in price from £460 to £500. The former yielded 423 households, the latter 338.

Table 2.9

1930s Owner-Occupied Housing - Social Class of Heads of Households

	N	Percentages
White collar/shopkeeper	113	33
Skilled manual	112	33
Semi/unskilled manual	29	9
<u>Other</u>	<u>84</u>	<u>25</u>
Totals	338	100

Source: Ward's Directory, 1938-9

Table 2.10

1920s 'Addison Act' Council Housing - Social Class of Heads of

Households

	N	Percentages
White collar/shopkeeper	51	12
Skilled manual	197	47
Semi/unskilled	115	27
<u>Other</u>	<u>60</u>	<u>14</u>
Totals	423	100

Source: Ward's Directory, 1938-9

The most interesting finding to emerge was that skilled manual workers equalled white collar heads of households in the owner-occupier sample. Further, in contrast to what Byrne (1992) found on Tyneside in his admittedly much larger sample of houses and higher price ceiling, there was a higher than expected proportion of owner-occupiers who were unskilled heads of households. In fact, he found that unskilled HOHs constituted a very small proportion even of council tenants while the lowest percentage of white collar council tenants he found was 18 percent in east Newcastle and the highest 29 percent in North Shields. White collar council tenants were very much the minority category in Stockton. What his results do have in common with Stockton, however, is the large proportion of skilled HOHs in both tenures. Clearly, on this evidence, a significant amount of the cheaper owner-occupied housing at least was going to the families of manual workers.



Influences on Inter-War Housebuilding

While a full discussion of the issues surrounding housing provision - which were raised in Chapter 1 - is left to the end of the following chapter, this is an appropriate point at which to mention some influences during the 1920s and 1930s. Quite clearly, the effect of central government policy was of greatest significance overall, directing local authorities to adopt certain courses of action and offering subsidies for both public and private sector building depending on the reigning ideology of the ruling party. Yet within these constraints there was room for local councils to mediate and modify these central imperatives depending on their political ideology and other local factors.

Different localities produced very different outcomes. While council housing represented only 12 percent of total inter-war housebuilding in Darlington (Ryder, 1984, p 48), in Stockton, its near-neighbour, the percentage was 43. Yet Stockton, like Darlington, was Conservative-dominated throughout the period, although they called themselves 'Moderates' or 'Progressives' at various times. In fact, a scan through the corporation year books shows that in the early 'Twenties particularly the local middle-classes were heavily represented by company secretaries, shopkeepers, and 'gentlemen'. In the 1919-20 year book around 75 percent of the 32 seat council was middle or upper class. With the gradual replacement of the Liberals by Labour, by 1929-30 working class representation had almost doubled to around 12. Moreover, in Stockton, Labour held onto its gains even when nationally and in the rest of Teesside it was losing ground. In the disastrous local elections for Labour of November 1931, the party in Stockton

retained its seats when every Labour candidate in Middlesbrough was beaten. By 1934, Labour had a one-seat majority over the Moderates in the borough, although the latter retained power through their 10 to 1 superiority in aldermen. It was not until after the Second World War that Labour won outright power in Stockton. So although the Conservatives could always out-vote the opposition on housing issues, it is not unlikely that the real threat of Labour gaining power would have had some influence on their housing policy. The reversal of their decision not to proceed with the Sunderland Glebe Estate in 1932 after pressure from within the council chamber and from a powerful trade union alliance suggests an awareness both of their increasingly tenuous hold on power and even of the housing plight of the working classes.

This issue will be taken up again in the following chapter within the post-war national and local context and in the concluding chapter. The next chapter focuses on the post-1945 era which ultimately saw the domination of the housing market by owner-occupied housing and the residualisation of the public sector consistent with the post-modernisation movement towards privatisation and increased social polarisation.

Chapter 2 Notes

1. These and the later 1:10000 O.S. maps were compiled from larger-scale (1:1250 and 1:2500) maps which were frequently drawn-up several years earlier. For example, in the case of sheet NZ41NW which is used to construct Fig. 4 in the next chapter, the copyright date is 1973. However, much of it was taken from maps surveyed in 1971, and it was partly compiled from maps surveyed in 1966 to 1970 and, in the case of one small area, 1950. Therefore, in order to better represent historical accuracy, the reconstructed maps shown in this and the following chapter are given an approximate date to reflect the time span of the master maps.

A further point is that, especially in the post-1945 period, some council developments - especially in the town centre - are too small to represent on the scale of Figures 1 to 4. The same point applies to small private developments sometimes found adjacent to or on the perimeter of council estates.

So, the maps are not completely accurate; to have achieved that would have required a research effort incommensurate with the purpose of the maps which was to show the *broad* pattern of growth in terms of tenure.

CHAPTER THREE

The Historical, Economic and Political Context After the Second World War

Stockton's Housing Need in 1945

By the time of the declaration of war on Germany in 1939, 36 percent of all housing in Stockton had been built during the previous 18 years and the council had achieved its slum-clearance target. However, to put these achievements in perspective, only some 8 percent of the dwellings which had been standing in 1921 had been demolished, so a large proportion still consisted of housing from the Victorian period of rapid expansion. In addition, with the cessation of clearance of unfit housing and the diversion of resources to the war effort, the condition of the housing stock would inevitably have deteriorated over the next six years to the end of the Second World War. While some major industrial areas lost large numbers of dwellings through war damage, the evidence from the government's Housing Returns indicates small losses in Stockton in that only 16 buildings were erected in the years immediately following the war to replace war-destroyed buildings (H. R. E. W.).

Apart from the decline in housing conditions, other changes nationally in the population structure had taken place - and would continue to do so - which were to create great demand for housing both in the immediate post-war period and later. Burnett points to a number of pressures at the national level, particularly the outstripping of the population growth by the growth of household

formation, a greater proportion of the population marrying and marrying younger, and smaller family size. More latterly, there has been the growth in lone-parent families. The overall consequence of such changes has been to reduce the size of households and therefore to increase the number potentially requiring separate accommodation, and all this in the context of an expanding population (Burnett, 1986, pp 278-281).

In common with the rest of Britain, Stockton's population continued to expand so that by 1951 it had increased by 9.3 percent since 1931 to 74,024 (decennial Census returns). It might be supposed that housing was off the agenda during the war given the paramount demands of the military effort, but such was its importance that it clearly could not be completely left in abeyance. Well before the end of hostilities it was being debated and plans were being made. A Stockton Borough Council memorandum dated the 27th of May, 1943 described a meeting in Newcastle of the Durham and Northumberland Conference with the secretary of the National Housing and Town Planning Council and a Ministry of Health representative. While the immediate priority was stated to be the repair of war damage and some housing provision in agricultural areas, Circular 2778 was mentioned which required local authorities to submit a one year's housebuilding programme which was not conditional on an end to hostilities. Also mentioned was a house design manual which was, in fact, published the following year.

A year after this meeting, the Medical Officer of Health for Stockton wrote that 'The housing of the people remains the most urgent of all social problems at the present time' and referred to a council instruction that a complete housing survey be carried out

immediately (MOH Annual Report, 1944). The survey appears to have involved visiting the large majority of dwellings in the borough mainly to gather data on overcrowding. Three thousand questionnaires were even sent out to areas of, from local knowledge, low household density.

Using the overcrowding standards laid down in the 1936 Housing Act, they found a total of 549 overcrowded houses, 16 percent of them council-owned, the rest privately occupied. Within these dwellings they found 849 overcrowded families; in 1939 there had been 257 families living in overcrowded conditions, so the situation had markedly worsened during the intervening 6 years. The MOH concluded from this that, in order to allow one house per overcrowded family, a further 300 new houses were required, the majority being 4 and 5 bedroomed.

A further problem revealed by the survey was the large number of houses which, while not statutorily overcrowded, were occupied by young married couples sharing accommodation with relatives and friends. They found 1812 such houses, 90 percent containing 2 families and 10 percent containing 3 or more families. Put another way, there were 2010 families for whom separate accommodation was desirable. So the survey demonstrated the need for at least an extra 2300 houses in total in 1945, and bearing in mind that further demobilisation had still to take place, this figure would soon be exceeded. Moreover, no consideration was given to the condition of the housing at this period; if it had been, many more than 2300 would have been necessary to decently house all families in the borough.

The Response to Housing Demand, 1945-50

The Labour Government which returned to power in 1945 was fervently committed to meeting the demand for housing through public sector provision. To this end, local authority provision was encouraged through a generous subsidy from central funds of £16 10s each year for a period of 60 years to be matched by a further £5 10s from local rates. Moreover, loans were made available to local authorities at historically low interest rates. The deletion in the 1949 Housing Act of a proviso about working-class only provision testified to the true general needs objectives of the Labour Government who clearly saw public sector housing as meeting the bulk of demand irrespective of social class. In addition, the size and quality of the new housing was a significant improvement on that erected during the 1930s. At the same time as public housing was being encouraged, the private sector was kept under control by a system of licensing (CDP, 1976, p16).

While the completion target of 240,000 houses a year of the post-war administration was never fully realised at a time of materials shortage, financial crisis, and other claims on resources, 900,000 were built by the time of its electoral defeat in 1951. Moreover, in terms of size and quality they were, in general, among the best council houses built in Britain before or since.

In Stockton, 1945 heralded not only a political watershed nationally but locally too with the election of a Labour majority on the local council which gave the party control for the first time. It was, not surprisingly, ideologically committed to public

sector housing, and one of its early decisions was to consider establishing its own DLO for house building purposes.

An indication of the scale of the task facing the council is contained in a report to the Housing Committee in November 1946 on the current waiting list. It told of 2,086 Service or ex-Servicemen's families living in rooms or lodgings. In addition, there were a further 3000 applicants, 900 of whom were also in rooms or lodgings. The first housing construction to make inroads into this demand was on the Ragworth Estate where work started in 1946 on 338 houses after the lowest tender of £1062 for a 3-bedroomed house had been accepted. Other contracts announced at about this time were for developments on the western side of the borough. The largest was Newham Grange (216 houses), and there were three others of less than 100 properties. All are now in the more sought-after areas. At the end of the decade, building started on the Roseworth Estate to the north of the pre-war Blue Hall Estate. This was to be the largest development to emerge from the immediate post-war period and the generally good quality of the housing sets it apart even today as one of Stockton's better and more popular estates.

Although this housing was not built to replace slum clearance, an indication of the condition of the housing that some, at least, of the waiting list applicants were living in was implicit in a recommendation agreed at a Housing Committee meeting in April 1947. Infested rooms which were currently occupied by applicants were to be sprayed 3 weeks prior to their moving house, and infested mattresses had either to be destroyed or steam-treated at the isolation hospital. They went even further by ordering that

rooms in the new housing had to be sprayed with 'Gammexane' in order to coat the walls and woodwork with an insecticidal film. So although no ostensibly slum clearance tenants were rehoused in Ragworth, inevitably some of the new tenants would have moved from poor housing conditions that a decade or so later would very likely have been designated for slum clearance. As it was, allocation to Ragworth was made on the basis of certain priorities as shown in the next table.

Table 3.1

Basis of Tenant Allocation to the Ragworth Estate

	Families	Percentages
TB cases	25	6
Forces families in rooms	225	56
Non-forces families in rooms	100	25
Families in overcrowded conditions	25	6
Retired people	25	6

Source: Housing Committee minutes, November, 1946

A significant feature here is the high proportion of Forces families allocated to Ragworth. Such families, as a general rule, would not have been regarded unfavourably as potential tenants in contrast to tenants from slum clearance areas who imported the social and economic disadvantages of their old areas into the new. The main point here is that Ragworth was not built for slum-clearance replacement and therefore not destined from its inception to become the disadvantaged estate that it eventually was thirty or so years later. The explanation for that lies elsewhere and will be returned to in the next chapter.

All approved applicants were asked to assess the amount of rent they could afford, 29 percent stating a figure either below or on the borderline of the proposed rents of 10/6d or 11/6d a week plus rates. This was dealt with by reminding applicants of the actual cost and by looking at the possibility of transferring existing council tenants who could afford the new - and higher - rents to the new estates, thereby leaving the older and cheaper council properties vacated by them for poorer applicants.

As well as the commencement of the permanent-building programme, 200 temporary 'pre-fabs' were erected on one site by 1947 as well as 20 'aluminium houses' a year later. This represented the totality of the council's temporary-buildings programme. Ignoring this temporary housing, by the end of the financial year 1950-51, a total of 1238 houses had been built by the council (B. Arch. 1/4/51), the annual peak of 557 being reached in 1948-49. While private building had made a quicker start in that approaching 100 were built by March 1947 compared with only 2 council properties, by the time the Conservative Government came to power in 1951 the private sector accounted for less than a quarter of new housing since the war in Stockton.

The Response to Housing Demand 1951-64

The new government was committed to exceeding Labour's house-building record. With Macmillan the minister in charge of housing, it more than achieved its target of 300,000 houses a year, partly through an increased subsidy but also at the cost of reduced quality and size. New specifications sent to local government in 1951 were designed to enable the maximum number of houses to be erected with available resources; less material would be used per

house and they would therefore be cheaper to build. While the emphasis was still on public sector provision, this first post-war Tory administration began to loosen restrictions on private building by, for example, increasing the permitted ratio of private to public housing, and by removing licensing restrictions and elements of the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act which had inhibited private building (CDP, 1976, p18).

Toward the end of this administration's life, it was giving more support to private and less to council house building. Subsidies for general needs building were removed in the 1954 Act, although they were kept for slum clearance replacement housing. This Act also made it incumbent on local authorities to enumerate unfit housing and submit plans to deal with them. Moreover, they were also forced to seek loans at less favourable rates on the open market instead, as hitherto, from the Public Works Loans Board. The latter measure depleted local authorities' housing revenue, a greater proportion of which was lost to them through higher interest charges which in turn inevitably led to higher rents, thus meeting one of the objectives of Tory party policy - to make tenants pay more toward the cost of their housing. All this marked the beginning of a protracted period of slum clearance replacement by local authorities and - particularly with the local authorities' obligation to provide 100 percent mortgages from 1959 - the increasingly dominant role in the provision of general needs housing of the private sector (CDP, 1976, pp19-20).

Inevitably, all of these central constraints impacted on the production and consumption of housing in Stockton. Floor space was reduced and construction standards were affected. A government

circular (28/52) was referred to the Housing Committee (20/3/52) requesting local authorities to consider employing non-traditional construction methods. This had the immediate effect of a decision to include 200 such houses in the 1952 housing programme.

One of the first estates to be affected was Ragworth; later in 1952 negotiations were held with Wimpey for 132 'no-fines' houses to be added to the existing development. In early 1953 a tender was accepted at a price of £1336 per 3-bedroomed house with a superficial area of 789 sq. feet. This floor-space compares with the 800-900 sq. feet stipulated in a report to committee in 1945 on a two-year building programme (Housing Committee 30/4/45). These - what transpired to be - inferior and unpopular houses were completed by 1954 and let at a rent of 15/3d per week.

During the 'Fifties and early 'Sixties construction continued on the Roseworth Estate along with relatively small additions to the west (e.g. Newham Grange), in more central areas like Newtown, Portrack and Victoria, but overwhelmingly on a new estate adjacent to Roseworth called Hardwick, where 3500 houses were under construction or proposed in the mid-'Fifties (B. Arch. 1/4/55), and where incremental building was to continue into the 'Seventies. Low-rise flats and maisonettes began to make their appearance, particularly in the central town locations.

Table 3.2

Housing Construction in Stockton. 1945-64

Year ending 31st March	Public	Private
1945-51	1203	353
1951-55	2121	410
1955-60	1796	1268
<u>1960-64</u>	<u>1362</u>	<u>1272</u>
Totals	6482	3303

Sources: Housing Returns for England and Wales (Appendix B), and C.C.C. Planning Dept.

It is clear from this table how central government policies influenced events at the local level in Stockton. The fluctuations in council building certainly reflect the incentives and disincentives contained in legislation and this is even more marked in the case of private sector building. Yet the rate of council building never dropped below that of the private sector in any of the above periods in spite of the latter's rapid growth from the mid-'Fifties onwards. Ignoring 1945-6, in only 3 years did private sector building exceed that of the local authority between 1945 and 1964. There were at least two local factors at play here. During the whole of this period the local council had been under Labour control, and their commitment to building is likely to have been a countervailing force to the increasing central pressure away from public provision. Nevertheless, the impact of the local council's policy should not be exaggerated; the council to private-sector ratio was not markedly different from Britain. Between 1945 and 1965 the ratio was 66:34 council to private in Stockton compared with 60:40 in Britain (Malpass and Murie, 1990, p 64).

The Labour administration in Stockton resisted the pressure, in the shape of favourable subsidy arrangements, to build high-rise flats. This drew the fire of the Ministry in 1963 who wrote to them regretting their decision to exclude high-rise flats from their building programme. Even now there is relatively little of this type of accommodation in what was the pre-1968 borough council area. In fact, the 313 multi-storey dwellings in the council sector by 1989 in the pre-1968 Stockton MBC area accounts for some 3 percent of the borough's total housing stock. Moreover, of course, had it not been for the disproportionate sale of semi-detached and terraced housing compared with multi-storey flats, the percentage of the latter would have been even lower by 1989 (SHD statistics).

Slum Clearance

Although council building largely prevailed over private provision between 1955 and the end of Stockton MBC in 1968, the point has already been made that most of it was for slum clearance as opposed to what had been, until then, mainly general needs housing. Stockton's return under the 1954 Act put forward a figure of 3,075 unfit houses for clearance over a 10 to 15 year period. In the event, this number was exceeded by almost 1000 houses being demolished or closed by 1967, the last year for which returns are available before Stockton was temporarily absorbed into Teesside County Borough.

Table 3.3

Post-War Slum Clearance in Stockton

	Houses demolished or closed
1950-55	204
1956-60	1426
1961-67	2631
<u>1974-79</u>	<u>1479</u>
Totals	5740

Sources: Housing Returns for England and Wales, Local Housing Statistics, and Annual Reports of MOH for Stockton.

Slum clearance in Teesside County Borough amounted to 7860 during the six years of its existence, so on a proportional basis a further 1500 to 2000 could probably be added to the total in the above table making over 7,000 slum properties cleared in the former Stockton MBC over the period.

In his 1966 Annual Report, the MOH for Stockton claimed that the supply of new houses had broadly kept pace with the rate of submission of clearance areas. The bulk of this new building was on the Hardwick Estate, undoubtedly a significant factor in its status today as an estate containing a disproportionate share of the borough's disadvantaged tenants. Nationally, the slum clearance programme hardly stemmed the tide of deterioration in the housing stock. A survey carried out in local authorities in 1965 showed that the number of slum dwellings was practically the same as ten years earlier.

Through the sixties demolition was at the rate of 60-70,000 houses a year, and at this level the solution of the problem constantly receded. In all, some 900,000 slum dwellings were demolished in England and Wales between 1945 and 1968 and more than 2½ million people removed, but a huge problem of decayed, unfit houses

still persisted in the older industrial towns (Burnett, 1986, p 288).

The Response to Housing Demand 1964 Onwards

By the end of their three consecutive periods in office the Conservatives had effected a transformation in housing consumption. When they came to power in 1951 they adopted the previous administration's policy of providing housing for general needs very largely through public sector provision. Thirteen years later owner-occupation was the obvious route to better accommodation if a family's circumstances did not qualify them for what was, by then, beginning to look like the welfare tenure of council housing.

The significance of this ideological shift was that it did not disappear with the defeat of the Tories in 1963 to be replaced by the incoming Labour Government's reassertion of the predominance of the public sector. Instead, they came to power committed to a building programme of 500,000 houses a year with responsibility for construction to be divided equally between the public and private sectors. As one critic has observed, their one-time championing of council housing for all needs had been replaced by the view that council housing was regrettably still necessary though inferior to owner-occupation (CDP, 1976, p22). The same source quotes part of the Labour Government's White Paper 'The Housing Programme for 1965-70':

..once this country has overcome its huge problems of slumdom and obsolescence and met the need of the great cities for homes to let at moderate rents, the programme of subsidised council housing should decrease. The expansion of the public programme now proposed is to meet exceptional needs. It is born partly of short-term necessity, partly of the conditions inherent in modern urban life. The expansion of building for owner occupation however is normal: it reflects a long-term

social advance which should gradually pervade every region (MHLG, 1965).

Labour ideology on housing had, then, gone a long way toward converging with that of the Tory party, although measures like those for the protection of private tenants and to prevent the disruption of public sector building by rising interest rates and costs still differentiated them from their opponents.

Nevertheless, the Labour Government did achieve a high level of building during its term of office. The Heath Government continued to foster the private sector partly by increasing subsidies for house improvement and financing artificially low interest rates to borrowers. By the end of its term of office in 1974, as well as an overall decline in house building, relatively fewer were being built by the public sector. In 1970 out of 307,266 completions, 133,705 were built by the public sector compared with a total in 1974 of 239,954 of which 96,636 were public sector built (H. R. E. W., 1967-).

The return of a Labour Government in 1974 brought about an increase in completions to a peak of 278,660 in 1976, although the economic crisis of that year and the consequent cut in the housing grant to local authorities led to a decline until, by the last year of its administration the figure had fallen back to 212,269 with local authority building representing around 31 percent of total completions for the year (H. R. E. W., 1967-).

The election of Tory governments for three successive periods of office under Margaret Thatcher saw a dramatic impact on the production, consumption and physical condition of housing consequent on the most uncompromising application of right-wing

ideology this century. This period has been discussed elsewhere in this thesis, but one or two further points should be made about the consequences. The main one is that not only did the draconian and unrelenting cuts in grants for housing to local authorities have the effect of drastically reducing public sector building (most of what there was being for the elderly) but, together with measures such as prohibiting local councils from spending the proceeds of sales on improvement to stock, it has resulted in an alarming backlog in necessary repairs and maintenance. Moreover, this attack on council housing has not even been compensated by a high level of production by private builders. The 212,192 total completions in 1980 fell to a low of 154,515 in 1982 and by 1989 to only 177,612. By this time local authority building was 13,505 dwellings representing 7.6 percent of total completions (H. R. E. W., 1967-).

The effect of these central government policy decisions between 1964 and 1989 at the level of our particular locale can be discerned from the next table. The figures for the six years of Teesside County Borough's existence are not available for Stockton separately.

Table 3.4

Housing Construction in Stockton, 1965-89

	Council	Housing Assn	Private
1965-67	914	--	853
1968-73		data unavailable	
1974-79	1553	891	3857
1980-85	612	304	3179
<u>1986-89</u>	<u>40</u>	<u>190</u>	<u>1896</u>
Totals	3119	1385	9785

Sources: Housing Return for England and Wales, Local Housing Statistics, and Borough Architect's Annual Reports.

(This table is derived from sources which display the statistics either on an annual basis or for financial years. Hence some slight overlapping and therefore precision is lost in simplifying the presentation here).

From 1964, the course of council building was initially to increase the Hardwick Estate chiefly for those displaced from clearance areas. Apart from Hardwick, building in the 'Sixties was to a large extent concentrated in or adjacent to the town centre area. For example, the Portrack and Tilery areas which had been slum clearance areas saw new construction. The Housing Committee minutes of 3/6/66 mention a development in Tilery being used to rehouse families from compulsory purchase order schemes.

Building in town centre locations continued in the 1970s, and in addition, the Elm Tree Farm estate on the western side of the borough was increased. In the second half of the 'Seventies, apart from the significant continuing development of Elm Tree Farm, the borough council was responsible for large-scale developments

outside the confines of the old borough with which this chapter has been concerned. There was small-scale development in Billingham centre, including high-rise flats and, on its northernmost boundary, High Grange. As well as this public sector development, there was large-scale private building to the west, in particular in areas such as Fairfield and Hartburn, to the north of Norton edging close to the borough boundary, and to the south in a new overspill area called Ingleby Barwick.

Since 1974, the number of privately-constructed properties has been more than double the total of public sector new-build and four times the local authority level. Comparison with the 6482 council houses and 3303 private houses built between 1945 and 1964 illustrates the demise of local authority building and the dominance of owner occupation by the end of the 'Eighties.

The Rise of Owner-Occupation from 1955

To the incentives given to the private sector already mentioned above should be added the abolition of Schedule A tax in 1963. This resulted in a substantial subsidy to owner-occupiers who in effect were renting to themselves free of the tax for which landlords were liable for renting to others.

As well as this 'carrot' to encourage owner-occupation, legislation was brought in which introduced the 'stick' of higher rents for the better-off council tenants and the disincentive of higher rents for private tenants who would be driven into the arms of what was increasingly seen as the last housing resort for those too poor to buy or rent privately - the council sector. The 1957 Rent Act de-controlled rents on those privately rented properties which had a sufficiently high rateable value and on all properties

when they became vacant, which had the predictable effect of driving up rents. Of course, as well as driving out poor tenants, those forced to pay higher rent will no doubt have begun to see the advantages of home ownership too.

As for the public sector, the Tory administration was increasingly exercised about what it saw as affluent working class tenants benefiting from pooled rents and therefore not paying 'economic' rents. This group of tenants came under attack first from the 1961 Housing Act which decreased the subsidy on council housing with the intention of driving up the rents of better-off tenants and, it was calculated, of encouraging councils to means-test those who could not afford the higher rents. As Merrett and Gray (1982) succinctly put it:

.. Councils with relatively low HRA expenditures relative to gross values, the result of vigorous earlier building programmes, were to receive an annual subsidy per dwelling only one-third of that in other districts. The 1957 Rent Act aimed, in part, to drive the needy out of the private market and into the arms of the state; the 1961 Housing Act attempted to drive the affluent worker out of their council houses *into* the market (1982).

The favourable conditions enjoyed by the private sector and the public sector's enforced role as provider of slum clearance replacement housing recalled the position in the 'Thirties. Then, families in need of decent accommodation who were not moving out of clearance areas had little prospect of achieving it unless they could afford to buy. Evidence that that was the situation in the late 'Fifties and 'Sixties lies in comparison of the number of slum clearance houses with the number built by the council in the same period. Between 1957 and 1965, 2771 houses were built in Stockton while 2985 were demolished, so clearly housing for general needs was simply unavailable. Therefore, the obvious question arises:

what did families do who, for whatever reason, needed alternative housing?

An important difference between the 'Thirties and the 'Fifties and 'Sixties was that there was full employment in the latter period and therefore there were more who could afford to buy. Another difference was that the advertisements did not make cost comparisons with council renting; it was no longer such a serious competitor. A third difference was the growth in population after the war and the consequently increased demand for housing. The doubling of the population between 1971 and 1981 shown in the next table was, of course, largely a result of the 1974 boundary changes.

Table 3.5

Stockton's Population Growth from 1951 to 1990

1951	74,024
1961	81,198
1971	84,926
1981	171,890
1990	176,900

Sources: Decennial Censuses and Cleveland R&I Unit population estimates.

The newspaper advertisements of the late 'Fifties and early 'Sixties were featuring houses to the west of the town centre, particularly in the Fairfield area, where one builder was claiming: 'Prices are to suit every pocket and range from £2,350', while another offered properties from £2,200 upwards which gave 'easy access to shopping facilities and schools *and the kind of environment that your family needs and deserves* (my italics). To

the north-west of Norton village homes for £1900 upwards were on sale for a £100 deposit and £2/14/4d per week mortgage repayments. Bainbridge was offering houses in the sought-after Hartburn area and Wimpey advertised 95 percent mortgages with a £50 deposit. And all this marketing was underpinned by a low interest rate - the Gazette of 16th June 1959 carried an announcement from the Bradford Building Society of a new interest rate of 5½ percent.

The levels of mortgage repayment on offer certainly could not compete with council rents. In 1958 the average rent on the 1920s Grays Estate was about 15/- per week, tenants of town houses could be paying as little as 11/- per week (Housing Committee, 6/12/60), while on the new Roseworth Estate the average was about 18/- per week (Housing Committee, 29/4/58). The latter is probably the best comparison in terms of age and quality with the private housing which was coming onto the market at that time.

The diminishing private rented sector was much more expensive than council renting and in cost terms was closer to the cheaper end of the owner-occupation market. The small advertisements in the local paper on 5th March, 1963 contained an unfurnished flat to let in South Bank (an industrial, working-class area of Middlesbrough and certainly not one which would have been commanding high prices relative to other areas) for a rent of £2 per week (no children). The 'no children' condition was often applied and it was not uncommon either to be asked for references. A number of the other advertisements were from people *wanting* accommodation. A mother with 2 children urgently needed a furnished house or flat in the Middlesbrough area, a 'lady pensioner' required a small house or cottage, and a young couple wanted a furnished house or flat in the

Stockton area. Clearly, privately rented property was not freely available at this time and costly when it could be found.

The private building sector was, then, in a strong market position. In cost terms it could not offer accommodation anything like as cheaply as the public sector, but council housing was not a realistic option anyway for most families seeking another home. And compared with private renting it could be had at a cost which was not significantly greater, was accessible so long as a mortgage could be raised, was secure so long as the buyer was able to maintain the mortgage repayment, and was not beset with some of the petty restrictions associated with council tenure,

However, there were local characteristics which interacted with the centrally-determined forces, leading even further to the growth of owner-occupation and distinguishing Stockton from the North-East as a whole in its much higher proportion of owner-occupied dwellings. Slum clearance clearly had the effect of increasing the public sector at the expense of the private-rented sector, but it is likely to have been the differential extent of clearance and replacement council house construction which explains part of the tenurial divergence that has taken place in the North-East. This would constitute part of the explanation for Stockton having a smaller council housing sector than the region as whole, although even by 1961, with the greater part of the clearance effort still to come, Stockton's tenure structure was very different from, say, Newcastle's. The tenure distribution in Stockton from the 1961 Census returns was 45 percent owner-occupied, 33 percent council and 19 percent private-rented. The pattern in Newcastle County Borough was 27 percent

owner-occupied, 27 percent council and 42 percent private-rented, so even before the post-war slum clearance Newcastle clearly had established a tradition of housing provision in which owner-occupation played a relatively minor role. Moreover, over the next ten years, the growth in the council sector in Newcastle, along with the decline in the private-rented sector, resulted in the council sector drawing away from the owner-occupied sector to give it the largest share of the market. By 1971, the private-rented sector (including housing association property) had declined to 31 percent, the council sector had increased to 41 percent, while owner-occupation virtually remained the same at 28 percent. So the public sector grew in part as it replaced the private sector. By contrast, in Stockton, owner-occupation increased its share disproportionately to 57 percent by 1971, the council sector by a relatively small margin to 36 percent, while the private-rented sector (again, including housing association dwellings) shrank to only 6 percent, a drop of 68 percent in 10 years which represented a much bigger loss than in Newcastle.

A closer examination of the inter-censal changes between 1961 and 1971 reveals some interesting differences. The number of households in owner-occupation in Stockton rose by 6,309, yet the number of private houses constructed between 1960 and 1967 (there is no data available for Stockton separately when it became part of Teesside) was only 2,125, so there must have been a substantial amount of tenure transference to account for the rest of the increase (there was also an inter-censal loss of 3184 in households living in privately rented accommodation). As far as Newcastle is concerned, the number of households living in owner-occupation

actually fell by 2194 over the decade, although the overall population decline meant that it kept its share of the market.

The divergence between the two towns since 1961 can be explained in part, at least, by certain historical differences, particularly Tyneside's earlier development. Although it expanded in the Nineteenth century in common with other industrial areas, a good deal of working-class and other housing was in place by mid-century. Stockton's growth, by contrast, was concentrated in the period 1860 to 1900 as Table 2.1 in the last chapter showed. The importance of this is that Stockton's housing stock was newer and likely to have been in generally better condition than that of Tyneside's at the time of the major post-war clearances. Moreover, it took a different form, being predominantly terraced housing compared with the Tyneside flats which constituted a large proportion of the housing stock in Newcastle, Gateshead and South Shields by the end of the Nineteenth century (Burnett, 1985, p 78).

The significance of these differences is two-fold. Firstly, it seems inevitable - especially given its poor clearance record in the 1930s - that Newcastle would have had to clear more of its housing than Stockton in the 1960s and 1970s and rehouse cleared families in council housing. By contrast, Stockton retained a substantial proportion of its late Nineteenth and early Twentieth century terraced housing having demolished the worst of it from the earlier half of the last century. Much of this will have passed into owner-occupation as sitting tenants exercised their right to buy from landlords who were usually only too keen to sell. Evidence from the 1978 Cleveland Social Survey demonstrates the extent to which older property, nearly all of which would originally have

been built for private renting, was in owner-occupation by the late 'Seventies. Two hundred and fifty of the dwellings in the survey were built before 1919, representing 14 percent of the total, and of these, 70 percent were in owner-occupation by 1978. Moreover, the grants for improvement in the 'Seventies would have been an extra encouragement to owner-occupiers and prospective buyers. By contrast, the Tyneside flats that remained would have been less attractive to any tenants who might have been seeking home ownership and who would therefore have been more likely to opt instead for the modern council housing being built. Another crucial local factor which militated against Tyneside flats being bought by sitting tenants was the fact that, until around the mid-1970s, there was no legal mechanism by which a single flat could be bought separately from the other flat under the same roof.

The Teesside Structure Plan, while proposing some redevelopment in the old town centre, designated a large area for improvement, endorsing the point made above about the sound condition of much of the older housing in Teesside.

Much of the housing of the inner areas, though old and in many cases deficient in certain facilities, is basically sound. To allow the deterioration of housing in these areas to continue would shorten their useful life, ultimately adding to the community's burden of rehousing and inviting the unhappy personal and social consequences of housing clearance (CCC, 1983, p 93).

The proposals of the structure plan for encouraging private development and the issue of land ownership are two other locality characteristics affecting the tenurial structure in Stockton which are discussed later in the chapter.

The New Home Owners

In view of the demand for housing for all types of need at this time but with council housing priority going to tenants displaced from the slums and to elderly people, the question arises of to what extent and in what ways the demand was met. Who bought the new private houses? What happened to newly-married couples after leaving, say, the council or privately-rented parental home? And how did families living in unsatisfactory rented accommodation (but which was not statutorily unfit) solve their dilemma? Obviously, many will have continued to share accommodation with relatives, resigned themselves to their present situation if their income was too low and family commitments too great to buy, perhaps found a privately rented dwelling if they could, and so on.

We have evidence of tenure mobility in the Teesside area during this period from the Cleveland Social Survey of 1977 and 1978 which goes a long way toward answering this question. In these two years respondents were asked three items of information: present tenure, immediately previous tenure and length of residence in their present domicile. It was thus possible to select those respondents who had last moved house between 1958 and 1970 and to determine the extent and direction of tenure change during this heyday of private development.

The samples for these two surveys were random selections of individuals drawn from the Electoral Register, so for the purpose of this analysis the data is reweighted to redress the over-inclusion of larger, and under-inclusion of smaller, households. Most respondents or their spouses were tenants. A

smaller percentage of respondents were other adult family members, mainly children of the tenant.

Table 3.6

Tenure Mobility on Teesside Between 1958 and 1970

<u>Present</u> <u>Tenure</u>	<u>Previous Tenure</u>			
	Owner-occ	Council	Private rented	Other
Owner-occ	86%	44%	44%	54%
Council	12%	54%	46%	32%
Private rented	1%	1%	7%	2%
Other & N.A.	-	<1%	3%	13%
Totals	100%	100%	100%	101%
	n=491	n=357	n=257	n=56

Not surprisingly at this time, most of those previously in owner-occupation stayed within that tenure when they moved, only a small percentage - most of them presumably from cleared property - moving into council tenure. Of those formerly in private-rented property, 44 percent moved into owner-occupied property. (Private tenants who purchased from their landlord will not show up in the above table, nor in Tables 3.7 and 3.8 below, because they are concerned only with tenure change on actually moving house). The majority of council tenants, on the other hand, moved within the same tenure, although a large proportion also moved into owner-occupation. Indeed, 45 percent of the respondents moving from all tenanted households went into owner-occupation. Looked at another way, of *all* movers between 1958 and 1970, 26 percent went from tenancies into owner-occupation against only 5 percent making a move in the opposite direction.

Apart from the major constraints created centrally and already discussed above, at least two other factors come into play in this pattern of tenurial mobility. In the case of movement within the council-rented sector, housing transfer will have played a significant part, council tenants at least retaining the right to move into other council property under certain conditions. Furthermore, new household formation will also have created demand, although the direction of tenure movement in this case is not so obvious. In fact, the literature contains little or no evidence on where young people leaving the parental home actually went in tenurial terms.

While the Cleveland Social Survey does not identify those leaving the parental home to form new households, it is possible to isolate, say, those who were aged between 18 and 27 years old when they moved from their previous accommodation. While a proportion of them will have moved with their parents, this age group is likely to contain a relatively high proportion of individuals breaking away from the parental home to form new households. The 1977 and 1978 samples produced 304 respondents within this age range who last moved house between 1958 and 1970 either with parents or to form a separate household.

Table 3.7

Tenure Mobility on Teesside Between 1958 and 1970: Movers Aged 18 to 27

<u>Present Tenure</u>	<u>Previous Tenure</u>			
	Owner-occ	Council	Private rented	Other
Owner-occ	87%	65%	56%	67%
Council	9%	35%	40%	11%
Private rented	3%	-	5%	-
Other & N. A.	-	-	-	22%
Totals	99%	100%	101%	100%
	n=106	n=110	n=73	n=15

Although the number of cases is fairly small in Table 3.7 and the sampling error therefore quite large, the differences for the owner-occupation and council tenure sub-samples are significant (see Appendix 1) and the table does throw some interesting light on the decisions being taken by new householders at this particular time. In two respects this group is behaving very much like the whole population of movers shown in Table 3.6. In the case of both groups, very similar tenure mobility patterns are in evidence among those moving from both owned and private tenanted accommodation. Where the younger sub-sample differs markedly from the sub-sample of all movers is in the instance of those moving out of council tenanted accommodation. In this case, many more of them moved into owner-occupied property in contrast to the general group of movers, the majority of whom stayed in the public sector. The difference between younger and older movers is seen to be particularly marked if Table 3.7 is compared with the next table of movers aged over 27 years old.

Table 3.8

Tenure Mobility on Teesside Between 1958 and 1970: Movers Aged Over

27

<u>Present</u> <u>Tenure</u>	<u>Previous Tenure</u>			
	Owner-occ	Council	Private rented	Other
Owner-occ	86%	35%	40%	44%
Council	13%	62%	49%	39%
Private rented	<1%	2%	9%	2%
Other & N. A.	<1%	<1%	1%	15%
Totals	100%	100%	99%	100%
	n=385	n=247	n=184	n=41

The patterns of movement in the last three tables show how, at a time of full employment, many families solved the problem of poor or inadequate housing. The unavailability of council housing and other housing for rent, coupled with the financial inducements and the well-organised marketing of this commodity by the private housing industry, and the transfer of tenure from private rented to owner-occupation - which is discussed in more detail next - effected a tremendous push toward home ownership which had started in the 1930s and which was to maintain momentum well into the 'Eighties.

The Decline of Private-Rented Housing

As well as the inducements to tenants to leave their present housing and buy another property, there was the option of buying their present dwelling as sitting tenants. This applied to both private and public sector tenants, and although the latter is the particular concern here because it was on them that the ideological drive of successive legislation impinged the more, the scale of

loss of private renting to home ownership is a factor in the changing tenurial structure whose importance has already been discussed.

Berry (1974) estimated a leakage out of private renting of around 100,000 house a year after the 1957 Act, although as Merrett points out, most legislation and government directives concerned with this sector since as long ago as the First World War have conspired against the private landlord.

... Since 1915 successive Conservative, Coalition, Labour and 'National' governments have sought to keep private rents below their market clearing rate, in time of peace and in time of war, in order to head off social and industrial unrest; and to check the upward pressure of housing costs on wages which would be inflationary and also might have the final effect of transforming industrialists' profits into landlords' rents (Merrett, 1982, p 136).

Both he and Berry (1974, pp 112-115) account for the decline in private renting largely by rent controls and rent freezes. Not only did these depress landlords' income from rents, but they also had the effect of increasing the attractiveness of owner-occupation to sitting tenants and others who had to make a tenure choice. The advantage of owner-occupation over private renting lies in the differential tax treatment of those buying and living in their own home (with the abolition of Schedule A tax and with mortgage interest tax relief) compared to owners renting to others. Owner-occupiers can thus get more for their money than if they rented privately, the more so with the introduction of capital gains on profits from rents after the Second World War. As well as encouraging tenants to buy the property in which they were living, with the added incentive of the lower selling price on those houses without vacant possession (Merrett, 1982, p 138), these

disadvantageous conditions for investment in property led both to a decline in private rented accommodation and in the construction of houses for private renting - not least after the 1957 Act. The effect of all this on the availability of property for private rental nationally has been an unrelenting decline from the estimated 80 percent share of the housing market in 1914 to about 11 percent by the early 1980s. Between 1956 and 1970 it went down from 36 percent to about 15 percent. Another important cause of this decline was that a high proportion of slum-clearance dwellings were in the private rented sector. The position with regard to private renting in the early 1970s is described thus by Berry:

No one in their right mind is going to invest in housing to let in present-day circumstances (except perhaps at the luxury end of the market) and probably not in any foreseeable circumstances at all. Landlords of existing rented property will in most cases sell off as soon as they can get possession and so it is hardly worth the householder's while to look for private-rented accommodation; it isn't there to be had. And sitting tenants lured by the twin possibilities of greater security and the chance of making a profit will often, if and when the opportunity presents itself, buy from their landlords (1974, pp 131-132).

The Sale of Council Housing

Although council house sales to sitting tenants - or others, in the case of vacant property, who needed the accommodation for their own use - was permitted from 1951, the rate of sales nationally was very small. Between 1953 and 1965 the annual average in England and Wales was about 2,300 with a steeper increase from 1966 to 1970, the peak year being 1968 with 8,726 sales. The 'Seventies witnessed tremendous fluctuations in sales, ranging between 2,089 in 1975 and 45,058 in 1972, but in 1980, with the introduction of the Thatcher government's 'right to buy' Housing Act in that year, 78,535 council houses were sold, and through the

'Eighties the policy made tremendous inroads into the public housing stock (Merrett, 1979, p119).

With Stockton Municipal Borough's incorporation into Teesside CB in 1968, and later the redefining of its boundaries under the 1974 local government reorganisation, it becomes impossible to maintain the comparability of data during and after this period. Whilst Census data can be manipulated for some variables to provide data for the original Stockton MB, in the case of statistics on, say, council house sales, it is not always possible to isolate figures for the old boundaries. However, various sources do provide sufficient information to delineate reasonably accurately the trend for Stockton.

The minutes of the Housing Committee for 20/12/73 report a total sale of council housing stock of 1533 houses, since the inception of sales to tenants, in the Stockton, Thornaby and Billingham areas (which, with Yarm and Eaglescliffe to the south and Stockton RDC, largely formed Stockton BC in 1974). Between 1974 and 1979 a total of only 217 houses were sold (H.R.E.W.), but between 1980 and 1989 there was a surge in the sale of council houses.

Table 3.9

The Sale of Council Houses in Stockton BC and England and Wales,

1980-89

	Stockton	England & Wales
1980/1	14	70,100
1981/2	830	118,429
1982/3	1,202	201,081
1983/4	375	138,295
1984/5	218	101,315
1985/6	255	91,081
1986/7	321	94,300
1987/8	219	114,023
<u>1988/9</u>	<u>362</u>	<u>160,937</u>
Totals	3796	1,089,561

Source: Housing Returns for England and Wales, H. M. S. O.

So, approximately 18 percent of council stock as at 1989 (i.e. remaining plus sold stock) had been sold by 1989 in the post-1974 borough, which is virtually identical with England and Wales for the same period.

Mention was made in Chapter 1 of the fact that some types of council dwelling and residential areas were more popular than others among buyers. Comparing sales in Stockton between the various housing areas reveals large variations. For example, the volume of sales between 1980 and 1989 in the less desirable areas built largely in the 'Fifties and later, such as Hardwick and much of Thornaby, represents 12-14 percent. On Roseworth, by contrast, 24 percent of housing was sold and in areas like Yarm and the outlying areas on the rural edge of the borough the percentage rises to 38 (SHD).

Table 3.10

Tenure Change in Stockton and Britain, 1971-89

	Stockton	Britain
1971: owner-occ'n	51%	51%
council	38%	31%
1981: owner-occ'n	58%	57%
council	34%	31%
1988: owner-occ'n	67%	65%
council	27%	25%

Sources: Forrest, Murie and Williams (1990, p 57), Cleveland C. C. Census-derived statistics, Cleveland Social Survey, 1988. The 1971 figures relate to the borough boundary as at April, 1974.

The consequence of the influences discussed in this chapter on tenurial change is illustrated by the above table, particularly the continuing rise in owner-occupation and decline in the council sector. The 17-year period witnessed a 31 percent increase in the owner-occupied sector of the market and a 29 percent decline in council tenure in Stockton, while other tenure forms were further marginalised.

In terms of the effect of local factors, slum clearance and the transfer of tenure has already been mentioned, but 1974 marked the end of Labour domination in local politics. While Labour has retained power through most of the post-1974 period, its majority has been slender compared with the situation before local government reorganisation. The closeness of the contest between the two main parties now is evidenced by, on one occasion in the 1980s, Labour needing to retain a single ward in a by-election in order to stay in power.

There is certainly nothing in the council minutes during the

'Seventies and 'Eighties to suggest either any real opposition to council house sales in Stockton or support for them. In 1974, the maximum discount to tenants was increased to 30 percent, although the sale of certain types of property was prohibited. This meant that property in G. I. A. s or under 10 years old, flats, bungalows, OAP dwellings and large houses were not for sale.

Indeed, an enthusiasm for depleting the council's housing stock would have been surprising from a Labour council given the shortage of available building land. The Housing Committee meeting of 12/3/74 discussed the need to increase housing output. At that time nearly all available land in Teesside C.B. was committed and the need for new developments in adjacent counties was raised. While councils nationally have varied in their enthusiasm for selling off their stock, their power to intervene during the most intensive period of sales, the 1980s, has been very limited in the face of the rights and incentives given to tenants in the 1980 Act.

Yet, while there was no apparent desire on the part of Labour locally to reduce the stock of council housing, the ideological shift in the party centrally appeared to be filtering through to the local level of decision-making judging by the posture taken in the Teesside Structure Plan which was drafted in the late 'Sixties and early 'Seventies. A study by a team at Durham University drew attention to the plan's emphasis on the private sector provision of homes for owner-occupation in meeting demand on Teesside (NEAS, 1975, pp 48-50). Although specific proposals were included for increasing the number of council dwellings in the course of a 20-year housing programme, the plan also put forward proposals which advocated assisting private development. By way of example, Policy A5, dealing with how the demand for private housing might be

met, proposed that:

Part of the demand for private housing may be met by:

- (i) the sale of local authority housing
- (ii) the release of local authority owned land to private builders, housing associations and societies, and
- (iii) granting licences to private builders to build and sell housing on local authority owned land (TSP, 1983, p 90).

A further crucial local factor in explaining the dominance of owner-occupation in Stockton is the control of building land. Certainly since the 1960s at least, this has to be taken into account. (There is no available evidence on land ownership before this time). The North East Area Study (1975 p 83) lists the extensive ownership of land by private developers in Stockton and the other Teesside boroughs. The authors interpret this control over building land as constituting:

..a powerful "lobby" seeking to influence the direction of housing progress and policy. The interests of the lobby are to ensure that council direct labour departments are not built up and that council building is done at times and in such ways as to suit private builders' requirements for full order books. Moreover, these interests effectively control much of the housing land in Cleveland (NEAS, 1976, p 5).

Some two decades later, the hold of private owners over building land in Teesside was equally powerful, as a Cleveland County Council document listing housing sites in the county reveals. The sites were allocated for housing with or without planning permission or was under construction. Of the sites under 3 acres in Stockton, 31 were privately owned and in total had a capacity for 419 dwellings, while 6 were owned by housing associations (one partly privately owned) with a capacity for 132 dwellings. None were local authority owned. As for the sites over 3 acres, 14 were privately owned with a capacity of 6,592 dwellings

and a further site was owned by the Teesside Development Corporation with a capacity of 750 dwellings (this was intended for mixed development of housing, offices, etc). The local authority owned 3 sites sufficient for 561 dwellings which were intended for private or housing association development. In total, then, and excluding the TDC owned land, 83 percent of available building land in terms of dwelling capacity in 1989 was privately owned, and 7 percent was in the hands of the local authority (CCC, 1989b).

The Post-War Pattern of Growth of Stockton

In the previous chapter the inter-war pattern of growth was described. By the second half of the 1930s there were scattered developments mainly to the north and west of the largely Victorian town centre. Such developments as there were to the west were of private housing with the exception of two small areas of 1920s council housing. To the north were some half-dozen private estates and the larger council estates of Blue Hall and Eastbourne/Primrose Hill and the relatively small Mount Pleasant.

As Fig. 3 shows (1) by about the mid-'Fifties a small further amount of private housing had sprung up to the west but more significantly the area of council housing had increased adjacent to the existing council estates to the north. Easily the largest of these was Roseworth, and Ragworth had also made its appearance by this time.

Figure 3



STOCKTON-ON-TEES
circa 1954 (1)

Scale 1 : 30,000



Figure 4



STOCKTON-ON-TEES
circa 1973 (1)

Scale 1 : 30,000



By the early 'Seventies, Fig. 4 shows a dramatic change over the previous 20 or so years. In terms of public sector developments, the further expansion of Roseworth and the addition of the adjacent Hardwick Estate were the most notable. Further scattered developments near and to the north of the town centre along with a couple of small ones to the west more or less complete the picture of council building.

However, it was the extent of private development, particularly to the west of the town and to a lesser degree to the north of Norton, that was more significant quantitatively during this time. Moreover, it is clear from Fig. 4 that private and public sector developments were very largely spatially segregated notwithstanding the few scattered areas of council housing on the western side of the town.

Comparison of Figs. 3 and 4 conveys the extent of Stockton's expansion over this 20-year time-span, and yet between 1951 and 1971 the population increased by only around 15 percent from 74,024 to 84,926 (Decennial Census). So there had clearly been a reduction in density of the population, particularly in the post-war era. This was envisaged in the Town Plan (Town Map No. 9, 1957). Its proposals for housing foresaw:

.. a thinning out of the population around the town centre, where much of the older housing is expected to be demolished, and where redevelopment must be at lower densities than now exist. They will also cause an increase in the population in the outer areas of the Borough, particularly in the north and west.

A reference is also made in the Town Plan (p 7) to the present density in some of the proposed inner area development sites being

up to 180 persons per acre while new development there was to be at a density of approximately 65 persons per acre.

Industrial Growth, Decline, and the Rise in Unemployment Since 1945

The last chapter described the narrow industrial base of Stockton after the First World War. Engineering and shipbuilding, the production of iron and steel and, later in the inter-war period, the rise of the chemical industry, accounted for about a half of the labour force. Consequently, the drop in demand, particularly from abroad, for its products and the loss of trade for other products which depressed the demand for merchant shipping, badly affected the town's main industries leading to their decline and, in the case of shipbuilding, its eventual demise. Even though unemployment had dropped significantly from the catastrophic levels of the early 1930s, at the outbreak of war in 1939 20 percent of the insured workforce of the town was still out of work.

Prosperity returned to the area after the war with more or less full employment resulting from demand for heavy engineering, steel and chemical products and the large state investment in these industries during the post-war modernisation era. Unemployment rates for the North between 1949 and 1968 were very low, although the 'Sixties witnessed a widening gap between the North and the U.K. even though the North had traditionally had a slightly higher average level anyway (BLS 1986-68).

Table 3.11

Unemployment Rates for the U. K. and the North, 1949-68

	North	United Kingdom
1948	2.6%	1.6%
1952	2.6%	2.2%
1956	1.5%	1.3%
1960	2.9%	1.7%
1964	3.3%	1.7%
1968	4.7%	2.5%

Extracted from: British Labour Statistics: Historical Abstract
1896-1968, Tables 165 and 168.

Unemployment Since 1970

By contrast, the 1970s and 1980s have seen a dramatic increase in unemployment on Teesside consequent upon the decline of its traditional industries.

Table 3.12

Unemployment In Cleveland and Great Britain, 1960-1988

	Cleveland	Great Britain
1960	2.2%	1.5%
1964	3.3%	1.6%
1968	4.7%	2.4%
1972	7.3%	3.8%
1976	7.7%	5.4%
1980	12.8%	6.7%
1984	22.5%	12.9%
1988	16.9%	8.2%

Source: Cleveland C.C. (April, 1989), figures based largely on Dept. of Employment statistics. Cleveland figures for 1960-72 are the June figure for each year. From 1976 onwards, the annual average is shown as for G.B.

As high as the level of unemployment has been in the 'Eighties, it also has to be remembered that, just as in the 'Thirties when the exclusion of certain categories of people from the official statistics underestimated the actual level, this obtains to an even greater extent now. This is well illustrated by Robinson and Gillespie's (1989) explanation for most of the decline in unemployment in the North between 1986 and 1988.

Our analysis suggests that *only about one-fifth of the fall in the official unemployment figures in the North can actually be attributed to an increase in the number of jobs over the past two years. Unemployment fell by 50,000 while the numbers employed (employees and self-employed) rose by 25,000; however, we estimate that only about 11,000 of these jobs would have been taken by people on the unemployment register. The rest will have been taken by women ineligible for benefit so not counted as unemployed and by new entrants to the labour market. Most of the 50,000 drop in unemployment is thus accounted for by two main sources: the 16,000 increase in places on government schemes and the 20,000 or so*

leaving the register as a result of more stringent eligibility criteria.

By 1990 there had been 29 changes to the way the number of unemployed people was arrived at in the U.K., nearly all of which resulted in a reduction in the number of unemployed appearing in the official figures. Five of these changes have had a major effect, such as the stipulation that only those signing on at the U.B.O. should be counted instead of, as formerly, those registered for work at Job Centres. It has been calculated that these 5 changes alone reduced the unemployment total in Cleveland by 8000 as at December 1989, and thereby reduced the unemployment rate in the county from the 16.4 percent it would have been to the 12.3 percent shown in the official statistics (CCC, 1990a).

Just as significant as the level of unemployment since 1979 has been the duration of unemployment consequent to a large extent on the Thatcher administration's implementation of monetarist economics and the use of unemployment to control pay levels. While in 1978 about a fifth of unemployed people in Cleveland had been in that situation for more than a year, by 1989 the proportion had risen to nearly a half (D.O.E. and CCC 1990b).

Stockton suffered lower rates of unemployment than the other three boroughs in Cleveland with an overall rate in January 1989 of 12.2 percent against 16.6 percent in the worst-affected borough, Middlesbrough. However, it is necessary to focus on small areas within the borough to appreciate the differential impact of the recession. For example, while the largely owner-occupied areas such as Hartburn and Fairfield to the west and Yarm to the south had rates below 6 percent in January 1989, council owned areas such as

Portrack and Tilery (24 percent), Blue Hall (20 percent) and Hardwick (21 percent) had much higher levels (CCC, 1989a).

Industrial Restructuring in the Postmodern Era

These post-war fluctuations in employment levels have been reflected in changes in the industrial profile of Cleveland. For example, in 1971 33,000 people were employed in Cleveland in the chemical and oil processing industry; by 1981 the number had fallen to 22,600, and to 18,700 in 1986 (CCC, 1985 and 1986). Since then it has declined, and is predicted to decline, further (Chapman, 1986). In 1990 I.C.I announced the closure of fertilizer plant with the loss of an estimated 640 jobs, in October 1990 the company announced a 48 percent drop in pre-tax profits, and at a Chemical Industries Association conference held in January 1991 the industry's heavy chemical side was predicted to suffer the worst effects of the current economic downturn. Although jobs in Cleveland have been predicted to grow by 12000 by the turn of the century, 70 percent are expected to be in the service sector. Even if this forecast proves accurate, there will still be a shortfall in jobs of around 25000 by the year 2001 (CCC, March 1990).

Metal manufacture, mechanical engineering, and construction have all drastically reduced their labour force as well over the last twenty years while the service industries and professional and scientific services have experienced growth in numbers employed.

Table 3.13

Employment Trends in Cleveland 1971-1989

	1971	1975	1978	1981	1984	1989
Oil and chemicals	33,001	27,900	28,600	22,600	21,300	17,000
Metal manufacture	30,008	28,100	25,200	18,200	10,100	9,000
Mech. engineering and shipbuilding	19,560	18,100	12,900	8,900	7,300	7,000
Food and drink	6,588	7,300	8,000	5,900	3,100	3,800
Clothing & textiles	5,974	6,900	4,200	2,800	2,700	3,500
<u>Other manufacture</u>	<u>17,315</u>	<u>17,200</u>	<u>14,400</u>	<u>12,700</u>	<u>10,300</u>	<u>13,000</u>
Total manufact'g	112,446	105,500	93,500	71,100	54,800	53,300
Primary industries	4,948	4,800	5,000	5,500	4,500	4,400
Construction	18,807	22,700	22,200	14,100	10,700	11,900
<u>Service industries</u>	<u>97,360</u>	<u>112,500</u>	<u>114,500</u>	<u>109,600</u>	<u>114,000</u>	<u>118,700</u>
Total employees	233,561	245,500	235,200	200,300	184,000	188,300

Sources: Department of Employment censuses, CCC estimates

(February, 1986). The 1971 figures are based on those employment offices covering Cleveland County which included 6,000 more employees than in the actual local authority area in 1981.

The decline in employment is concentrated in Teesside's traditional industries: chemicals, metal manufacture and engineering. As far as the chemical and oil industries on Teesside are concerned, one company, I.C.I., has for a long time accounted for the majority of employment, and so explaining the industry's decline must inevitably focus on this multinational concern. Recent studies of the industry on Teesside have identified a number of factors in explaining the massive job losses since the early 'Seventies which were consequent on I.C.I.'s inability to sustain the high growth rate of the 1950s and 1960s.

Chapman (1986) characterises Cleveland's chemical industry as concentrating on:

...its 'heavy' end, associated with dependence upon natural gas and naphtha feedstocks, high volume, low value production derived from large scale, continuous flow, processing plant. An awareness of wider trends in these sectors, which are broadly synonymous with the term 'petrochemicals', is essential to an understanding of recent events in the chemical industry on Teesside.

One such 'wider trend' were the oil price rises of 1973-4 and 1979-80 with their significance for an industry heavily dependent on crude oil and energy. Another problem which the chemical industry has had to confront has been overcapacity, especially, during the 1980s, of ethylene production.

As well as international pressures, the slower growth in the British economy has inevitably had an impact. Chapman points to the the national economy's performance resulting in a lack of investment which in turn depressed investment in the chemical industry given its 'enabling role as a strategic supplier to other industries.' (Chapman, 1986, p 38).

I.C.I.'s response has been to reduce its dependence on the low-value, high volume side of its production, which is most vulnerable to economic downturns, through rationalisation and a move toward high-value products. Overcapacity and low productivity have been tackled by rationalisation, closures, mergers, etc. And a significant policy shift has been an increase in investment and production outside the U.K. As Beynon et al (1986 p 32) commented:

...the rundown of capacity in the U.K. was part of a broader pattern of increasing internationalisation of production by I.C.I. During the period 1974-84 investment in fixed assets in the U.K. was only 56% of I.C.I.'s global investment. One result of these trends was that I.C.I. employment in the U.K. fell from

three-quarters to one-half of the global total in the period 1971-84.

As Table 3.13 shows, even more jobs, both relatively and absolutely, have been lost since 1971 in the iron and steel industry than in oil and chemicals. Yet the early 'Seventies were optimistic times, with B.S.C.'s proposals for enormous investment and expansion to meet the predicted growth in world demand. The optimism soon dissipated as the forecasts proved grossly inaccurate and, with increasing international competition, by the mid-'Seventies the expansion was halted and set in reverse by the closure of plants.

The unemployed and their families in Cleveland have paid the price of over-dependence on an industrial base which has proved vulnerable to national and global economic forces and trends. But to leave the explanation for Cleveland's industrial decline there begs the question of why the industrial structure has not diversified so as to 'spread the risk' of economic downturns.

Beynon et al (1989) draw attention to the priority given to the labour needs of I.C.I. with the development of its second major site on Teesside at Wilton. In the late 'Forties consultants to the Ministry of Town and Country Planning emphasised 'the high national priority accorded to the expanding chemical industry,' and in an area of male labour shortage argued against industrial diversification so as not to 'prejudice the redeployment of Teesside labour in heavy chemicals.'

Support for investment in chemicals and steel was evident in the 1963 White Paper which set out a programme for development and growth in the North East. Concentration on these two sectors on

Teesside was seen as bringing benefits to the rest of the region by encouraging new employment to offset job losses. As Beynon et al observe in relation to the state subsidies that were handed out for fixed capital investment, while it encouraged a good deal of investment, a consequence in the chemical industry was that the modernisation of plant led to labour shedding. They conclude that:

...the growing mass of long-term unemployed in Teesside also has to be seen in relation to the failure of the 1960s brand of modernisation policies to succeed, even in their own terms. The dominant political response to this at national level culminated in Thatcherite policies which, with further international competitive pressures meant faster and further decline in manufacturing in the U.K. (Beynon et al, 1986, p 21).

The one significant example of diversification is the service sector which has been important in providing work largely for women, although it has done little by way of filling the employment gap created by redundancies in the traditional industries. Nor, in fact, should its role be exaggerated in providing much-needed opportunities for women.

Service sector growth has been dominated by unskilled and poorly paid part-time female employment, vulnerable to renewed technological change in the case of financial services, and to government-imposed financing limits in the case of the health service (Beynon et al, 1986).

The massive economic and social changes in Cleveland are the reality of the postmodernist ideology mentioned in Chapter 1. All the elements of the postmodernisation process of the 1970s and 1980s are found here in their most extreme manifestations.

De-industrialisation and unemployment, a retreat from welfare-centred employment conditions, and the associated casualisation of the labour market, all of which have been accompanied by the growth of a low-paid service sector. Added to this, there has been a shift away from the democratic state's

concern with labour reproduction and welfare provision (now even less adequate and more punitively administered). With the shrinking of public sector housing and a massive reduction in Exchequer support, these processes have converged to disadvantage in particular the people who now live in council housing and even further on run-down estates, producing the social and economic conditions already mentioned but which will be more fully described and discussed in later chapters. The next section is confined to the results of de-industrialisation on the socio-economic status of the residents of Ragworth in the early 'Eighties.

Consequences at the Estate Level

The national and international pressures and influences briefly outlined above clearly are crucial in the creation of unemployment in Cleveland. Its differential impact on a small-area basis within the county as evidenced by unemployment rates was also demonstrated. Yet how does this filter down to small estates like Ragworth? The next table looks at the industrial classification of the occupation of heads of households. If he or she was not in paid employment at the time of interview then details of the last job were taken. There are definitional problems over the label 'unemployed', and as we noted above, its definition has been increasingly 'squeezed' by central government during the 'Eighties. So, if we included in our definition only those who are signing on at the Unemployment Benefit Office, we would be excluding many who, while not unemployed officially, might well be seeking work, need paid work, and would take up employment if the opportunity arose. The next table, therefore, while retaining those signing on or 'seriously looking' for work as a separate category, also includes

the so-called economically inactive (housewives, students, chronically sick and retired people) as a third category.

Table 3.14

Industrial Classification of Heads of Households on Ragworth by Economic Activity in 1984.

	Empl'd		Unemp'd		Econ. inactive	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Metal manufacture						
and engineering	4	11	24	19	17	18
Chemicals & oil	2	6	4	3	4	4
Other manufacture	2	6	16	12	5	5
Primary/utilities	0	0	1	1	4	4
Construction	4	11	30	23	11	11
Transport	7	19	4	3	7	7
Financial services	3	8	4	2	0	0
Education, health	1	3	1	1	6	6
Distribution	4	11	10	8	8	8
Public admin.,						
personal services	9	25	28	22	12	12
Never in paid work						
<u>or unclassifiable</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>24</u>
Totals	36	100	130	100	97	99

Source: Ragworth Social Survey, 1984.

The proportions who have lost jobs in metal manufacturing, engineering and construction reflect the trends for the whole county shown in Table 3.13. That table showed losses of 60 percent in metal manufacture, 43 percent in mechanical engineering and shipbuilding, and 52 percent in construction between 1978 and 1984.

In 1979, 15 (12 percent) of employed HOHs on Ragworth worked in metal manufacture and engineering and 24 (19 percent) in the construction industry. The petrochemical industry also employed 14 (11 percent) of all working HOHs.

Public administration and personal services were also a significant source of job loss on Ragworth by 1984. Here, most losses were accounted for by the hotel and catering sector, and manual work in local government and sanitary services, and lastly, cleaning. So, even compared with 1979 which, on Ragworth, witnessed a high unemployment level, the intervening five years saw marked reductions in numbers employed in the major industries. It should be mentioned that the decline in absolute numbers employed cannot be explained by any fundamental change in the economic activity levels on the estate. In 1979 66 percent of HOHs were economically active compared with 63 percent in 1984.

Ragworth and the Concept of 'Work-Rich, Work-Poor' Households

A final point about Ragworth's increasing polarisation and level of disadvantage concerns Pahl's work on social and economic change which focuses on the household rather than the individual (Pahl, 1984). Of particular relevance is his concept of 'work-rich/work-poor' households relating to findings which show a tendency for income and work opportunities to be concentrated in some households but to be at a much lower level in others.

He observes that unemployed people are not only less likely than the employed to be able to participate in the 'black economy', to do work 'on the side', but they are also disadvantaged in finding employment and are less likely to belong to households with other workers.

...certain households are becoming increasingly more fortunate, whereas others are becoming increasingly more deprived. Thus, to put it positively, some - but certainly not all - households with 'core' workers and other members of the household also in employment (either full or part-time) are able to achieve and to maintain high household incomes and substantial affluence, despite the individually weak labour market position of some of their members...the decline of male full-time employment in manufacturing has been offset by the growth of female part-time employment...Such part-time workers are less likely to be in households headed by an unemployed worker and much more likely to be in households in which there is an established full-time worker (Pahl, 1988, p251).

An important reason for this dichotomy is that the unemployed have less access to tools, transport and social contacts with those who can steer them towards opportunities for both informal and formal work. As far as the concentration of workers in certain households is concerned, an employed member is more likely, because of work and informal contacts, to be aware of any work opportunities that arise. An unemployed worker is more socially isolated from those in work, and increasingly so the longer he or she is out of work. Another important reason relates to the DSS rule about earning limits for wives of unemployed men which mean that there is little financial incentive for wives to find work (Pahl, 1989, p 256).

In order to determine whether a similar relationship exists on Ragworth, the economic activity status of HOHs was crosstabulated with the number of other workers in the household in 1979 and 1984. Separate analysis to examine the effect of male compared with female working heads was not feasible given that only 6 females in 1979 and one in 1984 were working full-time and very few part-time. Even the number of male heads working full-time was relatively small (39 percent in 1979 and 11 percent in 1984 of all HOHs).

Being in employment for the HOHs who were working at the time of both surveys, denoted full-time employment for 91 percent of them.

Table 3.15

Number of Workers, Excluding H. O. Hs, in Households by Economic Activity of H. O. Hs in Ragworth, 1979

Number of other workers in h'old	Economic activity of HOH					
	Empl'd		Unemp'd		Econ. inactive	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
None	78	62	58	74	81	77
One	36	29	17	22	19	18
Two	7	6	2	3	3	3
<u>Three or more</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>
Totals	125	100	78	100	105	100

Table 3.16

Number of Workers, Excluding H. O. Hs, in Households by Economic Activity of H. O. Hs in Ragworth, 1984

Number of other workers in h'old	Economic activity of HOH					
	Empl'd		Unemp'd		Econ. inactive	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
None	23	64	116	89	81	84
One	9	25	13	10	11	11
Two	2	6	1	1	5	5
<u>Three or more</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
Totals	36	101	130	100	97	100

Pahl's relationship between the economic activity status of the head of household and the presence of other members of the household in paid employment is confirmed on Ragworth. Moreover, as

unemployment increased, as it did significantly on the estate between 1979 and 1984, although the numbers employed dropped absolutely for all three economic activity categories, households headed by a working HOH more or less retained their relative share of other workers. However, those households without a working HOH suffered a relative as well as an absolute loss of other members in work.

The effect of a working head of household on the chances of other members working, while demonstrable, cannot be exaggerated in terms of the whole estate. While some households were obviously better off in that 7 percent had more than one worker and, because of the small ratio of part-time to full-time workers, they were likely to be in full-time work, 75 percent were, nevertheless, devoid of anyone in paid employment. A small fraction may have been relatively 'work-rich', but the overwhelming number were living on a very low level of income.

Ragworth's particular configuration of disadvantage is reminiscent of descriptions of the 'underclass', a concept that has been gaining considerable currency in recent years with the increasing marginalisation of the poor in the West. One of the proponents of the concept is W. Wilson who has applied it more specifically to inner-city black America, the particular social and economic characteristics of which, while clearly very different in some respects - not least in terms of race - from British outer estates like Ragworth, also share some similarities.

Rejecting the 'culture of poverty' theorisations and explanations which attempt to account for divisions of extreme poverty 'as a mere aggregation of personal cases, each with its own

logic and self-contained causes,' Wilson and Wacquant explain the underclass as consequent on:

... the dramatic growth in joblessness and economic exclusion associated with the ongoing spatial and industrial restructuring of American capitalism [which has] triggered a process of hyperghettoisation (Wacquant and Wilson, 1989).

Of course, historically and in class, racial, political and other terms there is a wide divide between Wacquant and Wilson's Chicago and Stockton. Yet they focus on variables which have a common relevance to both localities. For example, their notion of the disintegration of social and kinship networks and the consequent lack of the 'social capital' needed to get out of their predicament, echoes some aspects of Pahl's work that we have just touched on. To them, underclass is a structural concept denoting:

... a new sociospatial patterning of class and racial domination, recognisable by the unprecedented concentration of the most socially excluded and economically marginalised members of the dominated racial and economic group (Wacquant and Wilson, 1989).

This is one contemporary description and explanation of the term but there are others. Its utility in elucidating the kind of deprived council estates with which this study is concerned is considered more fully in the next chapter.

Conclusions

This and the previous chapter have been concerned to trace the development of Stockton over the last two hundred years, although since the focus of this study is on the form and effects of industrial and urban change as it bears on the making of run-down estates like Ragworth, it has concentrated on the last 70 or so years.

The rapid development of Nineteenth century Stockton necessary to house and reproduce its labour force was largely confined to the cramped terraced housing in the centre close to the river Tees. This was apart from its purely spatial growth with the annexing of surrounding rural land.

After the First World War residential development began to encroach more substantially onto this land with the pressing needs of a growing population and a returning army not prepared to tolerate the post-war housing situation. This expansion was largely council-led at first, encouraged by the introduction of the first subsidies for public housing, closely followed by some private building in the 'Twenties. However, because of the high rent levels at the time, this building activity did little to ameliorate the conditions of the mass of low-paid and unemployed working-class.

The 1930s witnessed a slum clearance and rebuilding programme. At the same time, private building accelerated to overtake the public sector. With the end of general needs building and helped by low interest rates, the way was open for the private developer to fill the market gap - not just for middle-class families but also for the mainly better-off working-class now denied access even to the inferior slum-replacement council housing being erected. Nevertheless, poor housing conditions persisted throughout the period in spite of a succession of Housing Acts designed to address the problem.

During much of the inter-war period the town was badly affected by the recession and consequent high and chronic unemployment. Yet, in spite of the poverty and housing shortage, housing appears never to have been a significant focus of

working-class struggle in Stockton. The exceptions to this were the unemployed workers' organisations which were largely ignored by the Tory-dominated council and the occasional intervention by the more powerful trades union interests - as for example in the case of the Sunderland Glebe Estate. However, the Medical Officer of Health during most of this time constantly drew the council's attention to the housing and other conditions of the population and certainly reminded them of their responsibilities.

The first ten years of the post Second World War era saw the election of a Labour government and the entrenchment of the party in power locally in Stockton. A council building programme took place on the outlying greenfield estates, but in the latter half of the 'Fifties the Conservative government set in train what was to be a protracted period of slum clearance and the rise again, as a serious competitor to the local authority, of the private developer.

Indeed, this was to be a watershed for the days of general needs public sector housing provision. Henceforth, it was increasingly to be seen by both main political parties as a welfare tenure, the 'natural' and assumed desirable tenure form being owner-occupation. We have clear evidence of tenants moving into this tenure in the 'Sixties. Young people forming new households were much more likely to move into owner-occupation when a few years earlier they were more likely to have applied for council accommodation. This push toward owner-occupation was to persist more or less to the end of the 'Eighties.

For this and other reasons to do with age of stock and tenure transfer from private to home-ownership, Stockton has increasingly

become a town predominantly of owner-occupation. There has been a massive shift from public to private as the norm, starting in the 1930s, interrupted by the immediate post war period, but resuming in a more sustained and fundamental way from the 1960s onwards. In tenure terms, it is now very close to the national average and very different from other areas in the north-east like the Tyneside conurbation where the council sector is much larger.

The chapter has also described the consequences for Teesside and small estates like Ragworth of economic recession and industrial restructuring. Decisions made at national and local levels, local contingent factors, the strategies of major corporations competing in an international market do affect and filter down to small communities and crucially affect them. In attempting to answer the question: 'Why do run-down estates come about?' it is not enough to look at, for example, allocation policies and all the other explanations that have been advanced and which will be discussed particularly in the next chapter. Prior to all this is the question of how the disadvantage was created in the first place.

Notes

1. See note 1 on page 104.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Aetiology of Disadvantaged Housing Estates

Disadvantaged Estates: Labels and Definitions

Estates such as Ragworth have been and still are variously labelled as 'dump', 'problem', 'deprived', 'disadvantaged', 'difficult to let', 'run-down', etc., depending often on the particular characteristic that the person applying the label wishes to emphasise. The choice of label will sometimes depend on what is considered to be the most apposite in describing the social, economic and environmental character of the estate; or the label may allude to what is seen as the chief causal element leading to its present state. So 'dump' may well impute a policy of allocation by the council aimed at congregating what it regards as its most difficult or troublesome tenants on the same estate, thereby segregating them from the 'good' tenants who cause them, as managers of the housing stock, few if any problems.

'Difficult to let' has been a well-used label over the past twenty years or so implying, as it does, a problem for councils through high vacancy rates and therefore a loss of revenue. It also, more obliquely, implies unattractive features of the estate which deter others from moving onto it. However, it is increasingly a misnomer because, in a period of housing shortage for low income families who have little option but public sector housing, it has become much less difficult for councils to let property on unpopular estates. For families desperate for housing, a choice

hardly exists when the alternative may be homelessness or living in poor and overcrowded conditions. This point was made in a Housing Development Directorate publication on so-called difficult to let housing in the early 'Eighties.

In most cases the problem was not that estates had numbers of unfilled vacancies but that they were unacceptable to applicants at the top of the waiting list or with high priority for transfer. The term is misleading therefore in that such estates may be easy to let, but only to households in need of immediate rehousing who cannot afford to wait for an offer which really suits them (HDD, 1981b).

Problem Estates and Problem Tenants.

'Problem' estate is probably the most enduring label but also probably the most unsatisfactory. Its main weaknesses is its ambiguity; for example, what is the problem and for whom is it a problem? It is possible to argue that, in part at least, the problem resides fundamentally in features of the capitalist economy; that is, the need for a reserve army of labour and recurrent unemployment consequent on capitalist crises which are a precondition for restructuring and relocating industry (O'Connor, 1981). If this is accepted, then it follows that it is in capitalism and the capitalist state that the responsibility lies although the 'problem' label is seldom, if ever, employed in this sense. More typically over the years it has betokened something about the character and values of the people who live there; their inadequacy, inability to cope with a budget and run a home, their fecklessness, criminal tendencies, and so on. In other words, it implies that the fault lies with the people themselves and it is they who are the problem and who must, therefore, be helped,

reformed, coerced, or whatever it takes to force their conformity to rules and modes of behaviour demanded by the local state.

At this point it becomes primarily a problem for the council, but the orthodox assumption that the cause of the problem is, on the one hand, the type of people who live there or, on the other, the result of a kind of social mismanagement on the part of the state in, say, splitting up communities or spatially isolating them without benefit of social amenities like shops, transport or community centres, means that the fundamental causes may to a large degree be evaded. The premiss is that any solution lies in somehow changing the character or behaviour of the people and, perhaps, the quality of their housing and social amenities, but never, it seems, in changing economic and social priorities which might create employment or in some way radically effect a more equitable distribution of resources.

A further ambiguity of the 'problem' label arises when it is applied to the families who are assumed to prevail on problem estates. Those employing the description frequently have different qualifying criteria in mind. Damer (1989), referring to a 1955 government report, relates that local authorities gave rent arrears as the most frequent reason for considering a tenant unsatisfactory; this came before such criteria as poor housekeeping habits and offensive behaviour. Tucker (1966) refers to the fact that different sources define problem families in very different ways. At one extreme he quotes medical officers of health using pejorative and condemnatory language such as 'social defectiveness', 'subnormal behaviour', 'back-sliding', 'substandard mentally', etc. More soberly, other sources admitted that economic

and social factors beyond the control of problem families at least played a part in their present circumstances.

Tucker provides pen-portraits of families that he interviewed in the course of his research, and while he discovered instances of neglect, mental ill health, parents and children with learning difficulties, criminality, etc., a simple lack of financial resources was nearly always present in the background resulting in rent arrears, poor material conditions domestically, and so on. His research supports the conclusion that the transformation of their financial status in the shape of an adequate income, while it would not erase all their difficulties immediately, would make a significant contribution to improving their lives and making them less of a 'problem'.

Damer (1989) describes the evolution of the 'problem' concept and its changing spatial focus as succeeding users of the term came to redefine it. Referring to what he calls 'state representations' of people and housing areas labelled 'problem', he notes that the first use of the term, while acknowledging that poverty played a part in the state of tenants' households -their poor standard of hygiene, inability to cope, and so on - also draws attention to a minority of troublemakers who create problems both for the council because of their lack of care for their house and through their rent-dodging and for their neighbours through their quarrelsome nature.

As the concept was re-shaped, what were 'pockets' of problem families immediately after 1945 multiplied in the 1950s to form a large proportion of problem estates. From the 'Sixties onwards the number of problem estates themselves had proliferated. In the

'Seventies the role of housing management in creating and sustaining such estates was admitted. Solutions which included improving the material fabric of problem estates and a social-work approach to tenants by housing staff were put forward. Finally, Damer notes how the spatial location of problem areas was first centred on the inner-city and then, by the 'Eighties, peripheral areas (1989, pp 2-13).

Damer (1989) quotes two reports published in 1930 and 1950 (CHAC, 1930, and Wolfinden, 1950) which consider problem tenants and whose ideas are echoed in Stockton's housing management approach as stated in council minutes of the mid-'Fifties. The 1930 report advocated grading of tenants not for the purpose of ghettoising the problem tenants but so as to ensure their dispersal among 'good' tenants who would have a reforming influence on them.

Bad habits are not easily broken and when these habits govern the behaviour of a small community, such as sometimes exists in a slum street, they persist for want of better alternatives. The bad tenant will learn more readily by eye than by ear; example is better than precept. We therefore favour the principle of separating unsatisfactory tenants from one another, so far as this is possible, and interspersing them among families of a good type (CHAC, 1930).

The 1950 report advocated a transition stage between slum and slum clearance housing which entailed intermediate housing where displaced tenants could learn 'acceptable' behaviour traits (Wolfinden, 1950). Stockton's joint Housing and Health Sub Committee minutes of February, 1956 reflected these ideas as well as revealing the council's thinking about problem tenants at that time. Their concern was not, it seems, with rent arrears as such for in this period of full employment they were of much less consequence, but rather with hygiene and the moral character of

some tenants. In defining what they called 'unsatisfactory families' they were:

..not concerned with the small class of council tenants who, through financial difficulties, are unable to pay rent or with the class, likewise very limited who, though incomes are adequate, cannot be induced to pay rent with regularity.

They define the 'hard core' of the problem as:

..cases where there is an apparent indifference on the part of the parents to the cleanliness of the house and the children, a general unwillingness to accept family obligations and an inability to plan the essentials of family life, coupled with, in some cases, an estrangement between parents with a consequent failure..to assume financial responsibility (Housing and Health Sub Committee, 6/2/56).

Their solution was to recommend increasing the pool of suitable dwellings as half-way accommodation. They suggested that this should be done under the 'patching' provisions of the Housing Repairs and Rent Act of 1954 by buying an area that was due for demolition within 10 years. Moreover, the problem families were to be interspersed between 'normal tenants' so that they could 'benefit by example.' A final proposal was to make furniture (for example, 'steel furniture of an appropriate design') available on H.P. terms. It is not clear how far this policy was implemented, for no mention of it was found in subsequent minutes or other documentation. A reference was made to it by a tenant in the first Ragworth survey quoted in the next chapter, but whether this refers to an actual instance of the policy being put into practice or is simply a rationalisation used by the allocation officer to justify a decision is impossible to say.

There were by this time a number of case studies of the problems created by the influx into estates of what the 'host'

population perceived as undesirable families, and this policy of deliberate 'interspersion' seemed to be courting the same difficulties. One study carried out in Birmingham into such a scheme as Stockton adopted described the familiar conflict between the established residents and the immigrant families who had been placed there because of their 'problem' characteristics (Means, 1977).

Sociological and Other Explanations of Disadvantaged Estates

So far in this introductory discussion of run-down estates, a few explanations and theorisations about their origins and emergence have been adumbrated. It is important now to identify more systematically the ideas that have been put forward over the years to account for such housing areas. It is not intended, though, to present a detailed bibliographical report of the literature which would cover material that has been well summarised by others (for recent accounts see, for example, the introductions to Reynolds, 1989, and Mooney, 1989). Instead, the main threads of various schools and approaches, particularly since 1945, will be drawn out, culminating in the environmentally deterministic claims of Newman and Coleman.

A variety of themes run through the numerous studies carried out over this period. Among those most prominent in the literature are social disorganisation, the absence or breakdown of extended family and community networks, crime and delinquency, labelling and stigmatisation (discussed in Chapter 5 in connection with the work of Damer, 1989, and Armstrong and Wilson, 1973), the residualising effects of central government policy (already discussed in Chapter 1), the unanticipated consequences of the planned environment

(particularly system-built high-rise developments), and tenant allocation.

Few studies can be neatly compartmentalised into one or other of these categories. Often, more than one will feature in an explanatory framework. For example, a high incidence of crime on an estate may be highlighted as the most salient characteristic in defining its problem nature, but it might in turn be causally attributed to specific subcultural norms prevailing there, or the weakening of family and community bonds as a controlling influence on behaviour, which in turn might be seen as a result of a council's allocation policy. However, there is usually sufficient emphasis on a particular theory or approach to allow a broad categorisation.

The classic pioneering work of the Chicago school of urban studies in the three decades after the First World War was an influence on urban sociology for a long time afterwards. They conceptualised concentric zones of transition and drew attention particularly to the zone around the city centre with its high rate of population turnover, inflow of poor ethnic minorities, etc., which led to a state of social anarchy, or 'disorganisation' as they termed it, characterised especially by a high crime level, all of which were a consequence of an absence of commonly-held values. Such values make for the kind of cohesive communal structure which can exercise control over the more unacceptable behaviour of its members.

The Chicago school's influence can be seen, for example, in the approach of workers in the field such as Howard Jones (1958) who attributed the high rate of delinquent behaviour in one estate

he was studying to rapid tenant turnover and the consequent inability of the community to form a common set of values. Community controls were said to be tenuous because of the instability of the population and the stream of tenants from slums. Such conclusions were challenged by the work of Baldwin and Bottoms (1976) who, in their Sheffield study, found no significant correlation between population change and rate of offending.

A common theme of sociological studies of communities in the 'Fifties and 'Sixties was the disruption wrought on established neighbourhoods by clearance and redevelopment. The general drift of this work was that extended family networks and community relationships were destroyed when whole communities were uprooted and moved to other areas. Young and Wilmott's "Family and Kinship in East London" (1957) typifies this genre, describing the consequences in terms of social isolation and a 'loss of community'. This was seen to result from the spatial and social break with the extended family which in Bethnal Green had functioned as a link between residents and community.

Morris and Mogey's study of an Oxfordshire village built for slum clearance families similarly lamented the disruption created by the breaking up of the social fabric of the slums. While such upheaval must indeed have been disruptive and socially disorientating for slum clearance families, the assumptions about the support networks and neighbourliness of the slums now seems overstated. Nevertheless, Morris and Mogey were in no doubt about the cause and remedy.

..it seems unreasonable that clearance families should be expected to face simultaneous changes of home, neighbours and residential community. Wherever possible, families who face compulsory rehousing should be allowed to remain near their old area or to be rehoused, if they

wish, alongside familiar neighbours and kin. There seems little justification for scattering clearance families, or for rehousing them according to physical needs only (Morris and Moge, 1965).

A number of solutions to the lack of community were put forward including, for example, constructing more balanced populations on estates in terms of such variables as age, social class and stage in the family cycle, the assumption being that getting the demographic building blocks right would result in the eventual emergence of self-regulating communities (e.g. Mitchell et al, 1954). One solution that gained a good deal of acceptance in the 'Sixties' and 'Seventies, and whose appeal persists to some extent even today, was the provision of community centres as spaces where the residents of estates could come together and through social interaction form bonds and recognise their common interests and purpose. In practice, while they have brought benefits to some estates, they have fallen far short of the high expectations of their early advocates. Often, they are not the thriving centres of communities, but are typically under-used, failing to attract the majority of residents, and on the more deprived estates stand isolated, vandalised and covered in graffiti, a resented presence like a remote fort in hostile 'indian country'. Similarly, the provision of youth facilities were seen as a remedy for delinquent behaviour, but as Baldwin and Bottoms (1976) pointed out, 'Such studies usually talk about the effect that well-staffed and equipped youth services *could* have'. However, in their Sheffield study they failed to find a strong link between the provision of youth services and delinquency rates.

When an estate acquires the characteristics of a dump estate it is frequently labelled and stigmatised as criminal, notorious,

etc., by the outside. And when this stage is reached, people are reluctant to move onto it and the economically more powerful will often endeavour to move away. In this way, a spiral of decline is set in train which it is extremely difficult to reverse. Some writers have argued that the decline is accelerated when the residents internalise the label and live up to their criminal reputation (e.g. Armstrong and Wilson, 1973). Gill (1977) adopts this kind of explanation in his study of Luke Street when he describes the emergence and growth of delinquency as stemming from the enforced street-life of the children; the apparently inevitable small-scale local vandalism and trouble on the streets leading to increased policing, stereotyping of the area by the police in particular, and finally the boys creating an identity through conflict with the police.

Their position *vis-a-vis* the control agencies increasingly became one of the central elements of their self-identity. With other channels of identity construction blocked to them the boys therefore sought contact with the police in order to develop a meaning for their lives. They flirted with the police and the police were ready suitors (Gill, *op. cit.* p186).

He traces the origins of Luke Street's problems back to the local authority's allocation policy which he saw as the first and crucial link in this chain of causality. This study lays itself open to criticism for paying insufficient attention to the history of Luke Street and economic and industrial factors in explaining its present state. Yet his concern with allocation is a valid one, and there is no denying the abundant evidence in Britain of segregational allocation policies leading to the ghettoisation of disadvantaged minorities in the poorest public sector housing which

becomes difficult to let to any but those who are most in need of any accommodation, usually at the lowest available rent.

The Effect of Allocation Policies

This segregation occurred on a massive scale during the two major phases of slum clearance during the 1930s and the 1950s and 1960s. It is important to note here, before going on to consider the role of local councils in allocation, the significance of the different housebuilding subsidies in creating the different strata of housing quality. To a large extent, such subsidies determined the housing quality parameters within which local authorities were constrained to operate (see, e.g. Gray, 1975). Apart from the almost inevitable allocation of slum clearance families to the low quality housing built in the above two periods, segregational allocation has been carried on to varying degrees throughout the history of council housing as a consequence of housing management policy.

Once such areas of poor housing and poor families are established their persistence and the perpetuation of their social and economic deprivation is remarkable. Slum clearance estates can carry their problems through the decades; Stockton's Mount Pleasant estate is still recognisable as a run down estate both visually and in terms of census-derived measures of deprivation nearly 70 years after it was built.

Allocation policy has often meant nothing less than assigning applicants to various estates on the basis of certain criteria. Tucker, for example, describes quite explicit and unashamed allocation practices based on economic and social class criteria (Tucker, 1966, Ch. 5). He and other commentators (e.g. Murie et al,

1976, Short, 1982) draw attention to the role of the home visit in this assessment process. Short quotes examples of housing visitors referring to 'good' and 'poor' types of tenants, and taking cleanliness, the condition of the furnishings and the applicant's appearance into account in arriving at 'suitable' accommodation.

Segregation has also taken place whether or not such actively discriminatory policies were in place. An apparently unbiased priorities and points system can have the effect of filtering the poor into unpopular estates just as certainly as a deliberate selection decision of the kind just outlined. Such priorities are sometimes imposed by legislation as, for instance, in the case of the obligation placed on councils to house homeless families under the 1977 Act. Yet, apart from legal obligations councils have traditionally had a good deal of latitude in deciding who should be housed and where.

It is in the field of housing management that local authorities operate with a minimum of legal control, the legislative framework being phrased in such a way as to allow considerable freedom in deciding who should be housed, when and where. They have almost a free hand in devising policies to suit their own areas, particular housing problems, resources, political beliefs, aspirations and prejudices...

Whatever the precise relationships, there is considerable scope for informal processes and discretion which may reflect either individual or group beliefs, assumptions and prejudices about correct management policies. The discretion may be masked by a superficially objective policy. The effect is to obscure the basis on which decisions are made and to weaken the ability of prospective tenants to challenge them (Gray, 1975).

Harrison (1983) found that an inner London borough gave priority to the following categories of need: First, people who are rehoused because of redevelopment or modernisation, second, medical needs cases, third, homeless families in hostels, fourth,

transferees, and lowest in priority order, waiting list applicants. The latter were having to wait an average of some 11 years by 1982.

A further and crucial element was that allocators had to do their best to ensure that, as far as possible, offers were accepted because a rejected offer prolonged the time that a property stayed vacant and therefore not bringing in revenue. Harrison (1983) noted that allocators, therefore, offered properties to match the perceived ability of prospective tenants to find the rent.

(Researchers in Glasgow observed that in some authorities in Britain, lettings officers attempted to avoid rejections by informally offering less desirable properties in order to sound out prospective tenants) (MacLennan, et al, 1988). Inevitably, this meant that the more desirable properties went to the more prosperous and - in housing management terms - better tenants who were less likely to cause the council problems. Consequently, as English (1982) noted, 'Criteria of need are usually central to determining priority for access, but they are not so effective as far as access to sought-after accommodation is concerned.'

A study of housing allocation in Glasgow identified several important allocation factors which most favoured existing council tenants and least favoured the homeless when it came to assigning the best housing. As well as the more obvious reason that the low income applicants were offered the less attractive housing, poorer applicants themselves sometimes opted for such housing if it was in an area from which they originated or if it was cheaper (Clapham & Kintrea, 1986). The process of the low priority applicants being directed into the worst accommodation was facilitated in one authority by the production of a handout to applicants which

categorised estates in terms of turnover, thus giving a clear indication of which choice was likely to produce an offer without too much delay (Reynolds, 1986, p 175).

Returning to Clapham and Kintrea's study, a particularly important factor which they identified and which has been noted by others is the ability of higher income groups and transferees to wait for the right offer. By being able to wait they not only collected more points but, because the allocators wished to minimise rejections, they were made offers of more suitable housing. A further important point here is that homeless families were only made one offer. The researchers concluded that:

It seems likely that in any housing system where the best houses have a lower turnover and time is an important factor in gaining access to them that income segregation will continue (1986).

In summary, the formal and informal rules of allocation together with the largely income-determined ability to exercise choice have played a very significant part in the social and spatial segregation of disadvantaged minorities within the public housing sector. This does not in itself, of course, explain the oft-observed higher incidence of crime in dump estates. A contemporary school which claims to do that places emphasis above all on the physical environment of such estates, and this approach is revealed in the work of its two best-known proponents, Oscar Newman and Alice Coleman which is discussed below.

Allocation and housing management policies are an element in the work of Damer (1989) and Byrne and Parsons (1983), although the burden of their thesis is that the spatial polarisation of the 'reserve army' into ghettos is principally a consequence of the

state serving the needs of capitalism. This includes the collusion of the local state in the way the tensions between the 'reserve army' and the better-off working-class are fostered and manipulated by the local state - not excluding Labour councillors (Damer 1989).

Byrne and Parsons draw attention to 'the actual mechanisms by which 'capital' maintains its hegemony and creates a hierarchical fragmentation of the working class' (1983 p 136). Posing the question of why the 'reserve army' is not distributed throughout the working class housing market, they find the answer in the contradiction between creating the conditions for the reproduction of labour on the one hand and the political consciousness engendered in the working class by their position not only in the system of production but in the sphere of civil society and its reproductive role.

On the one hand, these communities serve the interests of capital in that they reproduce their labour for the service of capital. On the other, they can reproduce themselves in a manner frequently antagonistic and autonomous to the interests of capital. Capital thus seeks both to maintain and to destroy these communities at the same time. Capital maintains its hegemony and suppresses this contradiction by the hierarchical fragmentation of the working class, spatially as well as through the intra-class divisions of other sorts (waged-unwaged, central-peripheral etc)...Development coexists with underdevelopment as a strategy of enforcing this spatial fragmentation...Thus reserve space is utilized by capital in the sense that a particular segment of the labour market is concentrated and in fact immobilized in space by various social controls and constraints. It is in this sense that Montano (1975) speaks of "ghettoization" as an advanced capitalist tool (1983, p 141).

The Built Environment and Crime

A totally different perspective and emphasis is revealed in the writing of Newman and Coleman. In recent years their work - particularly that of Coleman in Britain - has been eagerly seized

upon as offering a seemingly uncomplicated remedy for crime and anti-social behaviour of certain kinds without having to confront the much more intractable concomitants of social and economic deprivation. The promise held out by them is that by making changes to the built environment it is possible to design crime and other offending correlates of poverty out of existence - or at least significantly reduce them.

Newman (1974) attributed the high levels of crime in some estates and blocks of flats in his New York study to anonymity and the related absence of surveillance by residents, along with the presence of easy escape routes for criminals. He perceived this anonymity and 'cover' enjoyed by wrong-doers as a consequence of design factors such as size of block, the number of people using entrances, the number of exits and the responsibility - or lack of it - assumed by residents for public spaces. He found that this sense of responsibility decreased in proportion to the number of people using the public spaces.

Inspired by his work, in her study of inner London tower blocks, Coleman (1985) identified indicators of 'social malaise' such as litter, graffiti and damage by vandals which she quantified and correlated with a number of design features. She found particularly high correlations in the case of five of them, one being the number of dwellings per entrance and another the layout of the blocks and the extent to which this impeded or facilitated community surveillance.

There is undeniable validity in the basic contention that the built environment can be designed to frustrate criminal and nuisance behaviour even though this begs the question of whether it

simply displaces it to other locales. However, Coleman in particular goes beyond this to claim the primacy of design in *explaining* crime. There is little or no room in her explanatory model for the contribution of economic and social disadvantage. The furthest that she is prepared to go in that direction is to postulate a simplistic notion of the vagaries of the human personality.

Human beings are all individuals, and react in different ways. At one end of the spectrum there are a few who will always rise above adversity, no matter how appalling their environment, while at the other end there are a few who will always be sluts or criminals, even in ideal conditions (Coleman, 1985, p 20).

It is regrettable that she rejected a perceptive conclusion of her mentor who recognised that:

The root causes of inner city and ghetto crime lie deep in the social structure of our nation. Criminal and victim alike come from that strata of the population without the power of choice. In the United States, the correlation of criminal and victim with poverty is unmistakable. To both, access to institutions which lead out of their condition has been denied (Newman, 1974, p 13).

If she had recognised at least the potential relevance of structures of opportunity she might have achieved a more convincing and comprehensive explanation instead of making the basic error of:

..the equation of correlation with causality and explanation..Graffiti writers no doubt choose places and times when they are least likely to be caught, but the locale of the graffiti or other examples of 'social malaise' tells us very little about what caused it (Dickens, 1985).

Instead, she reaches for that ready cliché of the Right that inadequate training in behaving according to the norms of middle-class society, personal misfortune, and the shortcomings of individuals underlie the problems that good design can help to combat.

Babies, toddlers, primary school-children and teenagers all suffer from the lack of appropriate training in fitting into society. This does not mean that adults are immune to detrimental designs. They may suffer severely from the traumas of unsuccessful parenting, marital breakdown or mental illness (1985, p 24).

Finally, even even if criticism is confined to her narrow, environmentally deterministic explanation, its weaknesses are evident. For example, it has little to offer by way of explaining high rates of crime and vandalism on estates of ordinary semi-detached and terraced housing. It is a totally inadequate refutation of this criticism to declare somewhat imperiously:

Although we have not surveyed such estates in detail, we have been able to visit several of them in the Midlands and North of England, and in every case there seemed to be sound design-based reasons why the social-malaise measures should be worse than those observed in London and Oxford (1985, p 118).

Moreover, even on her own 'territory' of high-rise developments, all tower blocks of the same design are clearly not equally affected by 'social malaise'. For example, in Cleveland I can think of one high rise block which is a virtual 'no-go' area where, for instance, in 1991 a census enumerator was threatened with a knifing if he returned. In contrast, other blocks of basically similar design are graffiti and vandal-free environments. The difference lies not in their design features but in their residents. The first is a difficult to let property tenanted largely by single men while the relatively trouble-free blocks are not difficult to let and contain single people and married couples who were not offered a tenancy or forced to take one simply because they had no option or because they were seen as 'difficult' in some way.

However, Coleman will not allow the possibility of allocation policies and 'dumping' to muddy the waters of her theory and is content to accept the assurance of the local authorities in the areas she researched that they do not have 'sink' estates. It seems that the gravitation of poor families into the worst housing for reasons other than the deliberate policy of local authorities did not occur to her. In a rejoinder to Coleman, Dickens succinctly expresses the basic weakness of her study.

Its explanatory weaknesses stem from its overconcentration on spatial and architectural features as a means of explaining social behaviour and its almost total reliance on the interrelation of observed facts as a form of explanation. It is deceptively dangerous in offering apparently simple explanations (dressed up as 'statistical truths') for particular kinds of behaviour which actually result from highly complex social processes (Dickens, 1987).

In spite of the criticism, she continues, undeterred, to put forward solutions that seem curiously at odds with how life is lived on estates like Ragworth. A Guardian report on her paper to the British Association for the Advancement of Science in August 1991 stated:

Adding front gardens to houses on problem housing estates can reform the conduct of hooligans, turning anonymous gangs into polite individuals, a geographer, Professor Alice Coleman, said. Children who once banged on doors to call their friends, then ran on, now waited for them to be opened, so the parents got to know them and had normal conversations with them when they met them elsewhere (Guardian, 29th August, 1991).

The Underclass Debate

The aspect of Coleman's explanation which relies on weaknesses and flaws in the human personality is a contemporary example in a long tradition of locating causes of crime and other contraventions of middle-class norms within individuals and communities. The

'underclass' is the latest term used to denote that stratum of society alluded to by Coleman. It dates back to 1960s America in the main and has more latterly become fashionable in Britain as a term, albeit imprecisely defined, to denote the dispossessed and excluded residuum. However, the concept has a much longer history than that. Although it has been reshaped and given various labels over time, certain constant elements can be identified. The point is made by John Macnicol in reference to the notion of a cycle of deprivation that:

The concept of an intergenerational underclass displaying a high concentration of social problems - remaining outwith the boundaries of citizenship, alienated from cultural norms and stubbornly impervious to the normal incentives of the market, social work intervention or state welfare - has been reconstructed periodically over at least the past one hundred years, and while there have been important shifts of emphasis between each of these reconstruction, there have also been striking continuities. Underclass stereotypes have always been a part of the discourse on poverty in advanced industrial societies (Macnicol, 1987).

From the beginning, assertions were made, or at least hypotheses were advanced, concerning the perpetuation of the characteristic social problem nature of the stereotypical constructs. Usually this was explained by intergenerational genetic or cultural transmission. Early attempts to demonstrate the biological basis of an arbitrarily-defined 'problem group' occurred in Britain in the interwar years when proponents of eugenics were powerfully placed to propagate their beliefs and carry out research which would provide the required evidence to support calls for the ultimate control of 'social undesirables', namely, sterilisation.

What is striking about the writing of the eugenics school and those who were persuaded by its theories at this time was its pejorative tone, its sometimes ranting invective against a minority

which had little or no control over its position. Macnicol describes how they drew together under their 'genetically defective' category a disparate range of medical and social conditions including criminality, insanity, pauperism, prostitution, unemployment, welfare-dependency, alcoholism and feeble-mindedness. Its flawed attempts at problem-definition were matched by its methodological ineptitude, and they were no nearer the proof they sought by the time the Second World War broke out.

The re-emergence of the underclass concept from the 1950s onwards in America saw a change in emphasis from genetic to cultural transmission but at the same time a strong similarity in that the focus of attention in explaining the formation and persistence of the phenomenon was still largely the individual and the family. A particular distinction in American work on the underclass compared with the European tradition is the significance of race, the predominant concern being citizens of African descent.

Chief among the earlier theorists were writers such as Franklin Frazier, Nathan Glazer and Daniel Moynihan. Given their credentials as social scientists, their language in describing the characteristics and way of life of the American negro is derogatory and judgemental, their perspective and bench-mark being their own middle-class values. Valentine (1968) roundly criticises them both for this and for the methodological spuriousness of their use of official statistics as evidence of lower-class negro culture. As far as Frazier is concerned, Valentine concludes that:

...one comes to suspect that "social disorganisation" is little more than an academic-sounding label for behavior which Franklin Frazier feels is contrary to his own value system (1968).

Glazer and Moynihan's particular contribution to the debate was to locate the situation of the urban negro in the deterioration of the family, an observation consistent with the tradition of looking for deficiencies in the individual's way of life. As with Frazier,

One still finds nonconformity with middle-class norms uncritically equated with instability and disorganisation. Pejorative moralism remains a prominent theme. One still searches in vain for any integrated portrayal of life among the people in question (Valentine, 1968, p 27).

Valentine quotes from a speech by Moynihan which reveals in the most unequivocal language the class-bias underpinning his thinking. It is a rare instance of an academic commentator on society laying bare the class motives underlying supposedly value-free observations (Valentine, 1968, pp 41-42).

The integrated culture of the poor which the above writers and others failed to provide was attempted with more apparent success and much less overt moralistic condemnation in Oscar Lewis' culture of poverty. He expounds his model at some length in *La Vida* (1966). Drawing a distinction between poverty and the culture of poverty he perceives the latter as 'a culture...with its own structure and rationale, as a way of life which is passed down from generation to generation along family lines.' The intergenerational transmission occurs because children from an early age absorb 'the basic values and attitudes of their subculture and are not psychologically geared to take full advantage of changing conditions or increased opportunities which may occur in their lifetimes.'

Lewis adopts the familiar Mertonian analysis in explaining the emergence of the culture of poverty in terms of anomie. He sees it as:

..both an adaptation and a reaction of the poor to their marginal position in a class-stratified, high individuated, capitalistic society. It represents an effort to cope with feelings of hopelessness and despair which develop from the realisation of the improbability of achieving success in terms of the values and goals of the larger society (Lewis, 1966, p xli).

While he cautions that his model is 'provisional', he confidently asserts that the culture of poverty 'can be described in terms of some seventy interrelated social, economic and psychological traits' which are largely a way of adapting to their social and economic position in society. Prominent among these traits are powerlessness, inferiority, passivity and a lack of ambition consequent on poor opportunities. Among others he lists:

..a high incidence of maternal deprivation, of orality, of weak ego structure, confusion of sexual identification, a lack of impulse control, a strong present-time orientation with relatively little ability to defer gratification and to plan for the future, a sense of resignation and fatalism, a widespread belief in male superiority, and a high tolerance for psychological pathology of all sorts (Lewis, 1966, p xliv).

One major weakness of Lewis's concept is a serious absence of empirical validation. He certainly provides a mass of mainly verbatim ethnographic data from his intensive work with poor families, but he presents the data in an undifferentiated fashion without any real attempt to relate them to the elements of his central concept. Valentine (1966, Ch. 3) criticises him for this but also on several other counts, not least that virtually all the evidence presented in *La Vida* comes from *one* family in Puerto Rico. Summarising Lewis's culture of poverty work in general he finds that:

What we end up with is a series of overlapping family portraits or self-portraits presented in isolation from their natural or actual context. Introducing these portrayals with a highly abstract model of the context - a model we must also suspect to be somewhat artificial -

only seems to resolve this difficulty (Valentine, 1966, p 66).

Neither does Valentine absolve him from the charge of class prejudice, finding that in describing groups which live in a poverty culture Lewis dwells on:

..negative qualities, lacks, and absences. Group disintegration, personal disorganisation, resignation, fatalism, and lack of purposeful action (1966, p 77).

However, it is difficult to believe that Lewis would have approved of the way that the New Right in America have used aspects of his concept to support their own laissez faire beliefs and to criticise liberal policy measures designed to combat poverty. They have virtually ignored all but his notions of how the poverty culture is perpetuated through the family, individual values, etc. Prominent among these New Right thinkers is Charles Murray who claims that attempts to attack poverty through social welfare measures of any kind not only fail to help the poor but actually increase their numbers. What his argument comes down to in the end is that inequality is progressive but welfare destroys the will to succeed, that the 'better' members of society should be allowed to take the reward that is their due, and the wastrels get what little they deserve. It is the tired and naive belief that equality of opportunity reigns and that we are all responsible for making our way in the world and can grasp the opportunities if only we have the ability and a mind to do so:

I am proposing triage of a sort, triage by self-selection. In triage on the battlefield, the doctor makes the decision - this one gets treatment, that one waits, the other one is made comfortable while waiting to die. In our social triage, the decision is left up to the patient... The options are always open. Opportunity is endless (Murray, 1984, p 234).

A prominent liberal critic of this kind of re-hashed conservative dogma is W.J. Wilson whose analysis of the formation and persistence of the ghetto underclass was outlined in the previous chapter. In contrast to the poverty culture theorists his explanation rests on the unequal distribution of resources and opportunities to achieve acceptable societal goals. On the notion of self-perpetuating cultural traits his analysis leads him to the conclusion that:

It would be dogmatic to rule out this possibility, however... as economic and social situations change, cultural traits, created by previous situations, likewise eventually change even though it is possible that some will linger on and influence behaviour for a period of time. Accordingly, the key conclusion from a public policy perspective is that programs created to alleviate poverty, joblessness, and related forms of social dislocation should place primary focus on changing the social and economic situations, not the cultural traits, of the ghetto underclass (Wilson, 1987, p 138).

This is reminiscent of the work of Lee Rainwater almost twenty years earlier. He attributed what he called the 'lower class subculture' to the need to 'adapt to their disinheritances from their society' and also to the need to establish a 'valid identity' which is acceptable to their own subcultural group. But he saw attempts at changing culture directly as an illogicality:

..if culture is an adaptation to life situations, and if that knowledge is systematically reinforced by the experiences of individuals as they grow up and go about their daily lives, then one can predict that any effort to change culture directly by outside educational intervention is doomed to failure. People have no incentive to change their culture, indeed they would suffer if they tried, unless there is some significant change in their situation (Rainwater, 1970, p 514).

Although the racial element is not so central to the understanding of the underclass in Britain and the rest of Europe as it is in the U.S.A., there are basic characteristics of the

concept which are common to both continents. Thus, in descriptive terms, extreme economic and social deprivation is one common element. More particularly, this refers to gender-related poverty - in the case of poor female lone-parents and female-headed households - and also to age-related poverty in the case of pensioners dependent on state pension and benefit payments and young people with few, if any, qualifications and training.

In addition, Dahrendorf (1987) among others points to the decreasing demand for labour in the manufacturing sector and the increasing labour force in the poorly-paid service sector. In this connection Mellor (1989) notes, with reference to 'command' cities, 'the global concentration of advanced or producer services in core cities and the ensuing generation of high income and low income jobs.' Of course, during the 'Eighties the high level of unemployment consequent to a large extent on government policies (Therborn, 1986), was a significant factor in the creation of disadvantage in Britain, especially because of its duration for many formerly employed men and women.

This use of the term 'underclass' to denote little more than the most socially and economically disadvantaged segment of society has come in for criticism from, among others, Macnicol (1987) and Mellor (1989), the former regarding it as essentially 'a resource allocation problem', and Mellor finding it 'ideologically laden' and, for reasons somewhat reminiscent of the criticism levelled at the eugenicists between the wars, that,

..in empirical terms it is slippery. As more heterogeneous categories are drawn into the 'non-working working class' (Gorz, 1982) the defining criteria - poverty, race, unemployment, informal work, life-style, inner city residence - become ever more contentious. The concept does little more than recognise that modernisation and growth debar categories of the

population from recognised paid work, that these are defined as welfare-dependent and hence as the poor, that the stigma of poverty isolates them in quarters of the cities defined as peripheral by the 'official society', and that the response to the denial of social mobility may in some circumstances, be violence (Mellor, 1989).

This is certainly the way Field (1989) uses the concept although the burden of his argument is to place the responsibility for the growth of the underclass firmly on the Thatcherite administrations of the 'Eighties. However, in company with writers such as Dahrendorf, he adopts another theme from the American debate, namely that of exclusion from citizenship. Following Marshall (1950), this means exclusion from legal rights, from the ability to take part in the political life of the nation, from sharing in the benefits of the economy through participation in the labour market and exclusion from social welfare. Dahrendorf explains the underclass in this sense as consisting of 'people who have lost touch with what one might call the official world. It is no longer an obvious world for them; they no longer feel a part of it' (1989).

Bauman sees this exclusion especially in the realm of welfare payments where former rights are increasingly eroded by oppressive interference in the private lives of recipients, what he calls their 'infantilisation' by taking away their autonomy to organise their own financial resources. Current instances of such measures would be direct payment of housing benefit and fuel-direct payments by the D.S.S., and the withdrawal of single-payment rights now replaced by the discretionary grants and loans of the Social Fund.

Dahrendorf does not regard the underclass as having the potential for revolutionary change; rather, its exclusion leads to

apathy and therefore an aversion to participation in politics. He further argues that they will not rebel collectively because they are not needed: 'Revolutions result where needed groups have to fight for their place.' But although he is asserting that the underclass is not, therefore, a reserve army of labour, he seems to suggest that it serves a similar function in disciplining the work force as an example of a condition into which they might descend (Dahrendorf, 1987).

Bauman similarly perceives the declining significance of the poor in its traditional role in the 'recommodification of labour and limitation of working class militancy' (1987, p 21). Capital's lack of dependence on labour and the central state's diminishing role in ensuring the survival of the poor means that, in Bauman's view, the principle of responsibility for the poor has to be asserted on the basis of 'political democracy'. As things are now:

..the poor are not just growing poorer. They are being made into a deviant category: a section of the population defined as a separate entity by the withdrawal, or at least suspension, of political and personal rights which were thought to be the lasting and universal achievement of modernity (Bauman, 1987).

Lister (1990) makes a plea for citizenship rights which, for the poor, can only be restored by measures to improve their material conditions through, for example, income maintenance. In a review of Lister's work, Spicker (1991) points out that the concept of citizenship is very much open to interpretation and can be a weapon in the hands of the Right as well as the Left when 'duties' are given equal or more weight than basic rights: 'Citizenship has often been held to be contingent, for example, on contribution to society, civic competence or independence'.

I can endorse the validity of this from my experience as a researcher for Cleveland County Council. In the mid-'Eighties I wrote a report which received a good deal of local publicity and was also used by the Labour-dominated council in a widely-distributed newsheet to justify maintaining and increasing local services. The report demonstrated, in line with results elsewhere in the country, that most people wished to see services maintained or increased in spite of the consequence for the rate level. This provoked a prolonged attack from a local Tory M.P. and the local Press. The main thrust of the criticism was that many of my respondents were unemployed and therefore not paying rates. What right, therefore, the argument ran, had they to express an opinion on the quantity and quality of the services they received. In other words, I should have *excluded* those not contributing to local taxes from my analysis. The irony of this criticism was that when the opinions of heads of households receiving no rate rebate were compared with those receiving a full or partial rebate, there were no clear-cut differences between them in terms of the level of service and rates they preferred (Vamplew, 1987).

An important consequence of all this definitional confusion which often seems to be overlooked in the debate is that it renders the concept of less value as a policy tool.

The different groups of people (and self-evidently, overlapping groups) within the underclass face different problems and barriers. Thus, for women bringing up small children alone, a key requirement for breaking out of the underclass trap may be the provision of adequate and affordable childcare, while for a long-term unemployed ex-steelworker relevant re-training may be the single most important need. Unpacking a catch-all concept like the underclass (or, for that matter, 'the unemployed' or 'the poor') is vitally necessary to reveal where solutions lie (Robinson and Gregson, 1992, p49).

The Spatial Structure of Disadvantage in Stockton

The spatial dimension of the underclass is also common to the work of most writers on the concept. It is characterised as being spatially concentrated, typically in inner-city areas or outer estates. In an attempt to understand the relevance of this to Stockton and Ragworth's position within it, a cluster analysis was carried out on 1981 Census data. This is a useful heuristic technique in revealing the socio-spatial patterning of a population.

The hierarchical method developed by Ward (described in Everitt, 1974), was employed to typologise the 333 EDs of the borough. The analysis was based on a set of what may be termed social deprivation variables, e.g. tenure, employment status and car ownership. Everitt discusses various definitions of the term 'cluster' that have been advanced and concludes that no single one is adequate. He quotes Bonner (1964) as suggesting that its use to the investigator is determined by his value judgements. That is, if the procedure produces results that he feels make sense or which accord sufficiently with his conception of the social phenomena under study, then it has served a useful purpose.

The contribution of the technique to this study is in the description it affords of the socio-spatial distribution of housing in Stockton. It is an important preliminary step in the process of understanding how the interaction of various forces has led to this particular differentiation. As well as throwing light on the question at hand, namely the spatial structure of disadvantage, it has obvious relevance to the issue of :

How..the use of land for residential purposes interacted with the labour market positions and the impact of state

policies to produce a spatially as well as socially differentiated working class? (Byrne, 1989).

It was at the five cluster level that a typology emerged which seemed to bring out a sufficient diversity, including an extreme-deprivation cluster which embraced Ragworth and other areas of disadvantaged public sector housing.

Table 4.1

Social Deprivation Clusters in Stockton - 1981 Census

	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	All Stockton
% pop. aged 0-4	5	6	11	9	5	7
% pop. aged 5-15	13	16	23	21	16	17
% pop. aged 65 plus	24	16	9	6	16	14
Fertility rate	21	26	61	33	19	28
% male unemployment	29	20	44	6	9	17
% female unemployment	16	10	22	6	6	10
% owner occupation	17	44	7	94	82	59
% council tenure	71	47	91	2	9	34
% other tenure	12	9	2	4	9	7
% one-person h'holds	37	20	16	8	17	19
% h'holds without car	73	54	77	11	25	41
% 65 plus only h'holds	32	21	13	7	21	19
% h'holds with child'n	22	35	56	55	35	40
% one-parent h'holds	6	7	18	3	3	6
% purpose-built flats	25	5	3	1	3	6

Cluster 1 contained the second largest proportion of public sector housing and of unemployment. Car ownership was very low. A particular characteristic was the large proportion of people aged 65 years old or more; in fact, almost a third of households in this

cluster contained pensioners only. In tune with such a relatively old population, it had the lowest proportion of children and one of the lowest fertility rates. Another prominent feature was the large percentage of one-person households - over twice as large as any other cluster. The EDs of this second most-deprived cluster were often located adjacent to the most deprived EDs. This cluster comprised nearly 10 percent of the population of Stockton.

Cluster 2 displayed a fairly equal division of the two main tenure categories which distinguished it from the other four in that they were predominantly either council-owned or owner-occupied. In most other respects it was close to the borough average. This was the largest cluster, accounting for 35 percent of the borough population. They were found in some of the north Stockton post-war estates such as Roseworth bordering the Durham Road, the mixed council and private area of Norton (including the pre-war part of Blue Hall), in the town centre area and south Billingham.

Cluster 3 consisted of the most disadvantaged EDs. Both male and female unemployment were more than double the average for the borough, there was a large proportion of children, the fertility rate being almost twice that of any other cluster. The great majority of households rented from the council, and car ownership was very low. Almost 9 percent of Stockton's population was to be found in this cluster in 1981. Many of the EDs were located in north Stockton, especially a swathe of council estates comprising New Blue Hall, Ragworth, and Eastbourne. In addition, a little further north-east, a section of the Hardwick estate formed part of this cluster. Other areas were part of or adjacent to Portrack and

Tilery on the other side of the town centre. This area was partly built for slum-clearance in the 'Thirties, housing tenants of the notorious Housewife Lane made famous in M'Gonigle and Kirby's study of poverty and health (1937), and was subsequently extended in the the post-Second World War period. Another area which made up this cluster was located in Thornaby, and finally, there was the isolated and blighted Port Clarence and Haverton Hill consisting of some Nineteenth century terraced housing but chiefly council-built 'Thirties housing.

By complete contrast, Cluster 4, whose population accounted for approximately 26 percent of the total, was the most affluent. Its only similarity with the previous cluster lay in its large proportion of children, but in virtually every other respect it was the polar opposite in having a high level of car ownership, being almost exclusively owner-occupied, and enjoying a very low rate of unemployment. In terms of location, these EDs are to be found on the fringes of the borough, especially on the west on the estates of Fairfield and Hartburn, and at the southern extreme in Eaglescliffe and Yarm. The housing is very largely 'Sixties and 'Seventies private development.

Cluster 5 was also a relatively affluent group of EDs, differing from the previous one partly in its smaller proportion of children and larger percentage of pensioners. It had a slightly higher unemployment rate and proportion of households without a car, but essentially it contained a relatively well-off population, and made up 21 percent of the total. Its EDs tended to border those of cluster 4, although it included some areas of older, 'Twenties and 'Thirties stock. As well as Hartburn and the more established

part of Eaglescliffe, it was also located in the High Grange area of north Billingham.

Given the ambiguities of the concept, whether or not residents of estates like Ragworth can be said to belong to an underclass is very much a matter of debate. It would appear to qualify on the basis of its deprivation, although whether it is so excluded that it has no part to play in the capitalist economy either in consumption, reproduction, or as part of the 'reserve army' is very doubtful. Although unemployment was high at the time of the first survey in 1979, it was still a working estate. Five years later changes in the economy had reduced it to virtually a non-working estate with unemployment having almost doubled. The effect of an economic boom might provide sufficient employment opportunities to erase one dimension of underclass status, although the industrial restructuring of the 1980s must throw doubt on such an outcome. However, in the context of central government's current low inflation, low wage increase policy, it is difficult to demonstrate that they are not still part of the 'army in waiting', ready to take the jobs of workers who struggle to maintain or increase their wage levels. But whether or not residents of estates like Ragworth are included in the underclass, the cluster analysis at least demonstrates the spatial concentration of disadvantage in Stockton, some of it in fairly small pockets while much of it is found in quite large areas such as the Blue Hall-Eastbourne-Ragworth area of adjacent estates. The question of the utility of the underclass concept in understanding Ragworth's position is returned to in the Conclusion.

The Causes of Ragworth's Decline

Having reviewed the literature of the past few decades on the aetiology of 'problem' estates, it remains to examine their relevance to the particular case of Ragworth. To begin with, it is as well to assert that Ragworth is essentially different in origin from most disadvantaged, run-down estates, the majority of which were built in the 1930s and 1960s to directly re-house families from slum-clearance areas. The 1930s stock is generally high-density terraced or semi-detached housing of relatively poor design and quality; the 1960s disadvantaged estates are more typically system-built high-rise blocks and maisonettes. By contrast, most of Ragworth is well-built, relatively spacious housing erected soon after the Second World War to house 'respectable' families as Table 3.1 in the last chapter shows. Priority was accorded to Forces families principally, then to other families 'living in rooms'. A much smaller allocation was for T.B. cases and retired people. There was no allocation for tenants from slums as such.

So the explanations which rest on the breakdown of family support networks, social disorganisation consequent on high tenant turnover, stigmatisation from the start as in the case of 'Wine Alley', and so on, are not relevant in explaining the initial deterioration of a good estate. However, some have relevance in explaining how the deterioration gathered pace and in why its run-down status has persisted.

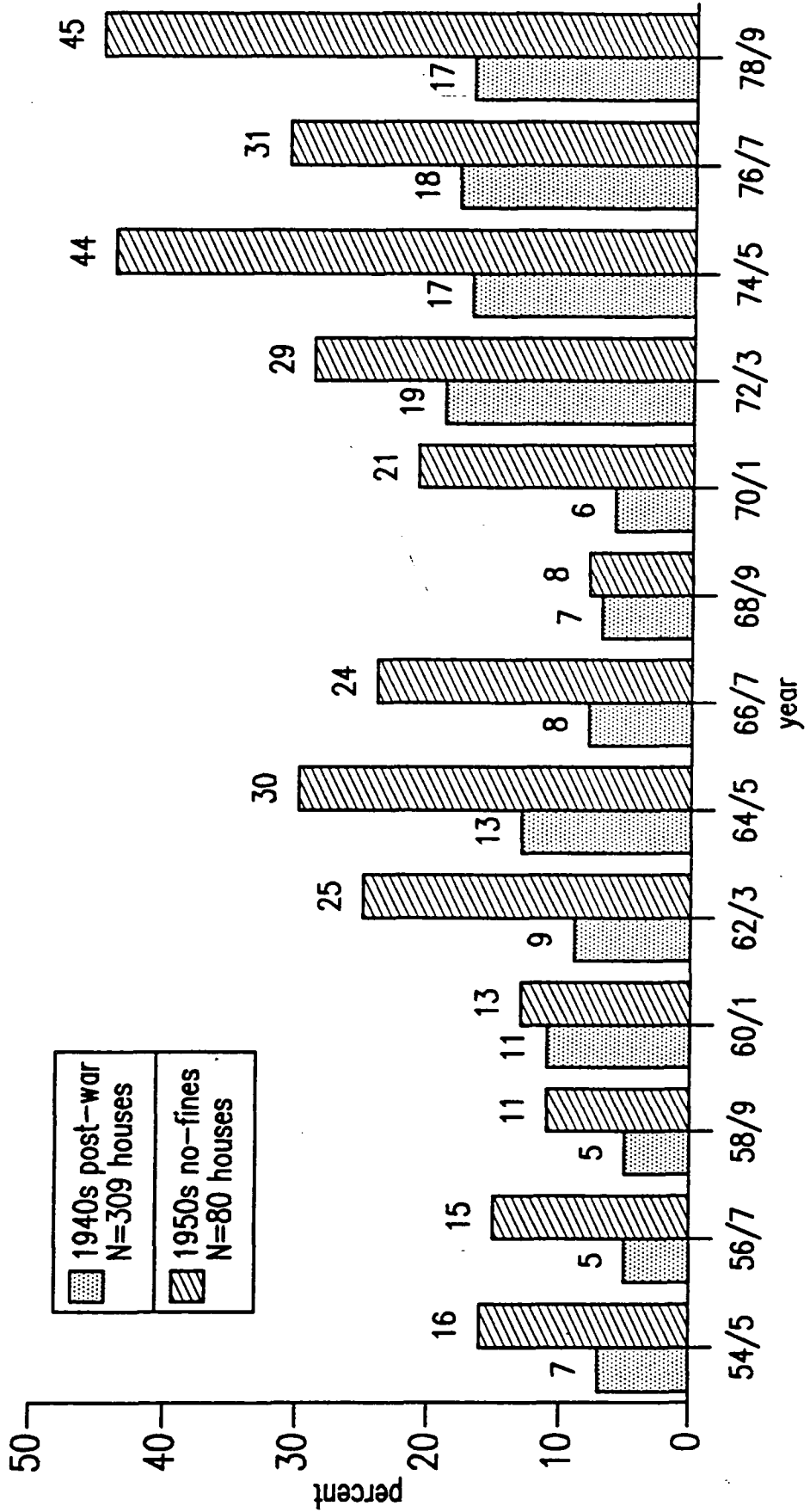
It seems that the major change which initiated Ragworth's decline was the building in the early-'Fifties of some 120 system-built 'no-fines' houses as infill on the land nearest to the

railway line to help satisfy the demand for housing at a time of high employment. Data on turnover of tenancies extracted from housing and debit control files reveal that as soon as they were built they were less popular than the original stock. Figure 5 is based on most of the housing, although missing files - some of them for the demolished 'no-fines' properties - mean that the data are unavoidably incomplete. However, it shows clearly that for most of the two-year intervals, turnover in the 'Fifties-built housing was two to three times the rate in the 1940s properties.

Although I could find no documentary evidence about the characteristics or previous areas of residence of the first tenants of the 'no-fines' houses, given that there had been no demolition of Clearance Areas since the war, there could have been no wholesale displacement of ex-slum dwellers to the estate. Moreover, since there is no evidence that it had acquired an adverse reputation at this early stage in its history, it is also very unlikely that it had been designated a dump estate or was rejected by waiting-list applicants. So it seems reasonable to infer that the first occupants of the 'Fifties housing would have been more or less representative of waiting list tenants at the time.

As far as the higher turnover of tenants in the 'no-fines' housing is concerned, the most likely explanation resides in the quality of the housing and the location of much of it close to the railway. Yet, it only made up about a quarter of the total stock, and by the end of the 'Fifties, although the turnover rate indicated increased dissatisfaction with the estate, it had by no means acquired the difficult-to-let characteristics as we understand that term today.

Figure 5
Turnover on Ragworth for 1940s and 1950s 'No-fines' Housing, 1954 - 1979



The large and increasing growth in turnover in the 'no-fines' stock in the 'Sixties and 'Seventies which, especially in the latter decade, also affected the immediate post-war stock, was a sure indicator of the estate's decline to the status of difficult-to-let (bearing in mind the earlier reservations about this term) by the early 'Seventies. So how is Ragworth's relentless demise to be explained? Some hints were provided in the social survey interviews by respondents reminiscing about the estate having once been a pleasant place to live without the social and economic problems which plague it today. While council minutes and other available documentary sources provide virtually no clues, other ethnographic evidence helps to reveal the course of its decline. Interviews with official informants, some of whom had had a long acquaintance with the estate, provided valuable insights into some of the dynamics of its evolution.

One respondent described his first acquaintance with the estate in the late 'Seventies, singling out the poor physical state of the 'Fifties housing:

I suppose the area that did hit you was Doncaster Crescent. Once you got into the 'no-fines' housing where you had this drab cladding which was falling off - particularly the houses by the railway - it just looked like some of them had been abandoned. Particularly on the houses by the railway the vibration had removed large chunks of cladding.

He recalled gaps appearing in the concrete wall sections of the newer housing and remembered long-standing residents asserting that the 'no-fines' was temporary infill designed to cope with an urgent need for accommodation at the time. A senior member of the borough architect's department echoed these observations and related the condition of the stock to Ragworth's decline.

If you look just at Ragworth, I think possibly why the skids got under that certainly in the early 'Seventies was dissatisfaction with the 'no-fines' dwellings. They'd been built fairly close to the railway and they were unpopular stock basically for that reason because they were literally so close to the railway. They were obviously not of the soundest construction so they were in a deteriorating condition and if you'd been around in 1970 you'd have seen obviously the deterioration in that stock, and I think it had an effect on the surrounding area and it was at that time completely untypical of the rest of the estate. But to put your finger on why Ragworth deteriorated would be mainly to do with the rapid deterioration over a twenty-year period of the stock and significantly the 'no-fines'...

One possible reason why it was doomed to some kind of deterioration in built form was the speed at which it was developed as infill. I understand when Ragworth was built it was under pressure to build houses quickly, and there were some misgivings about the suitability of the site, and certainly about the density and the proximity to the railway. The 'no-fines' area in particular was a rapid decision.

This is further confirmation, then, of the significance of the deteriorating housing stock and it being badly sited. It is not surprising that the systems-built stock became unpopular and led to high tenant turnover. Moreover, this co-incided with the massive slum clearance drive of the 'Sixties when it might be expected that the release of so many families from the worst housing would lead to some of them ending up in such low demand housing as the 'no-fines' on Ragworth. In fact, ethnographic material is quoted below which supports this.

To understand why the rest of the estate should also take on a difficult-to-let image, the consequences of the 'no-fines' on the inflow of tenants must be crucial. The rest of the estate became stigmatised by association. In Chapter 5 the problems created by incompatible neighbours will be seen to be a serious cause of discontent and many residents blamed the council for allocating troublesome tenants to the estate. The mechanisms by which this

happens were outlined earlier in this chapter when allocation policies were discussed, and there is evidence from the ethnographic data that discriminatory allocation took place on Ragworth.

At the time that my report was being discussed in 1980 I remember the acting chief housing officer admitting his department's responsibility for the preponderance of families with young children on Ragworth. In the late 'Eighties, a senior officer in the housing department, commenting on a new points system of allocation, remarked that it should:

..do away with personal discretion - allocation officers deciding that a tenant doesn't deserve to live on a good estate, which was the case in the past...In the past, tenants' choices were very much decided by allocation officers' discretion.

He went on to say that everyone would now freely admit that this kind of bias led to problem estate formation. Another informant who knew the estate well during the 1970s and 1980s was in no doubt that families had been 'dumped' there and that, moreover, it was in a sense an educational dump as well.

Even the staffing of the school had been neglected. The staff was old on average, people who'd been moved from other schools by head teachers because they were not up to standard. So even the county education had used it almost in similar terms. The housing in earlier days had been very good housing, a very good estate with a very good school to start with had gradually been used as an estate for problem families...And the housing policy has definitely gradually evolved to use it when they've cleared certain areas notably round about Tilery. So it had turned from a very good estate in the 'Sixties to a problem estate by the early 'Seventies.

Even after the estate improvement in the first half of the 'Eighties, he perceived council policies as making the position worse. This confirms some aspects of the deterioration in social conditions found by the follow-up survey in 1984.

One of the tragedies was that after the money was spent to upgrade the estate..they said: 'right, anybody who at this stage wants to leave the estate, as long as they've paid their rent, as long as they've kept their house in good condition, can transfer. Now, a lot of them opted to do that - the better tenants - and what they did was refine, unfortunately, down to the people who didn't pay the rent, didn't keep their houses well, and so what happened then was there was an influx of people from Thornaby - problem families came in...the residents' association fight very hard against it..but it's a battle against a great temptation of local authorities to use certain estates as dumping grounds and Ragworth is ideal from that point of view.

A final piece of evidence came from a chance conversation I had with an allocations officer whilst I was sorting through the housing files one morning at the estate office. He was a man who clearly had had a long acquaintance with the housing department and its allocation practices as well as Ragworth itself. The following is a paraphrase of his comments that I made from memory soon after I spoke to him.

You can't have all estates the same - you've got to have some good and some not so good. On this estate, if you move a rotten apple in the person he moves next to wants to be out. And then you can't put somebody good back so you put a rotten or scabby apple in. And that's how you get several bad houses together.

Of course, all this is not to suggest that the social composition of Ragworth is completely a consequence of discretionary allocation. It would be very surprising if some of it were not also the result of families in urgent need opting to go to a low-demand estate. After all, one of the council's rules was that a six-month waiting period followed the refusal of 'suitable' accommodation.

In summary, then, the start of Ragworth's decline into a disadvantaged estate was the erection of poorly-built and ill-sited housing in the early 'Fifties. As this deteriorated and became more

difficult to let, families considered troublesome by other residents were allocated to the estate by design or because they had no other choice.

In time it achieved a notoriety which led to the whole estate - good and bad houses alike - being stigmatised. The effect of this was to create a spiral of decline which concentrated the disadvantage further. Even after the improvement programme was implemented the council's decision to allow its 'well-behaved' tenants to move away made the situation even worse. Add to this the adverse impact of the economic recession at the time and central government housing policies which reduced the available stock of good housing in the borough, and the consequence is the highly disadvantaged estate of today.

The next three chapters are concerned with Ragworth over a period of 4 to 5 years. Chapter 5 reports the findings of a survey carried out in 1979 and is largely descriptive of the conditions on Ragworth as the residents perceived them. Chapter 6 describes the months following the release of the survey report and analyses the factors which were involved in the decision about modernising the estate, and Chapter 7 evaluates the impact of the renovation programme on the residents' quality of life and measures some of the consequences for residents of other change which had taken place in the locale between 1979 and 1984.

CHAPTER FIVE

RAGWORTH IN 1979 : THE FIRST SURVEY

Background to the Survey

The first social survey of the Ragworth estate was carried out in September of 1979, and the purpose of the first part of this chapter is to describe Ragworth within the limitations of the data that a highly structured interview produces. It is necessary to remind the reader that it was carried out to produce a positive response of some kind in policy terms, and not at all to provide material for a Ph.D thesis! The idea of using it for the latter purpose emerged much later with my growing interest in housing issues and disadvantaged areas. Had the notion of incorporating it into the framework of a thesis occurred to me at the time, the questionnaire would undoubtedly have been different, although as I mention below, the content of the interview schedule was not entirely at my discretion.

There were some conflicting views among local actors about the origins of the idea for the survey, but it is certain that it was not part of a planned strategy to effect radical change on the estate. It is important to understand the reasons behind it in order to better comprehend its significance in the whole process of change that followed the publication of its results. The neighbourhood worker on the adjacent Eastbourne estate recalled that it was the headmaster of the local junior school who initially drew him in to look at Ragworth. The head was principally concerned

by what he saw as a high turnover of children through his school, a symptom of the transient nature of the estate's population with families arriving and moving out fairly rapidly. He was also instrumental in the setting up of an inter-agency group which began to meet at the school and of which the neighbourhood worker became a member.

The neighbourhood worker recalled an early meeting of the group when the idea of a survey was raised:

I do remember people saying 'well, look at us, we're sitting round this table here, we've come from all these different agencies, and we don't actually know what sort of a community Ragworth is'... people didn't seem to have a great deal of knowledge of the estate, and it was on that basis that they said 'why don't we do a survey?' It was just to get factual information on the problems...nowhere on the agenda at that time was the idea of stimulating community responses to it.

A somewhat different slant on why the research was commissioned was given by the headmaster who happened to occupy a powerful position in local politics at that time, and when I interviewed him in 1988 was Chairman of the Stockton Conservative Association. His party held power on Stockton Council between 1976 and 1979, and he was chairman of the Policy, Resources and Finance Committee. He perceived a need to put more resources into Ragworth, and he saw a survey as a consciousness-raising exercise about the estate's problems. His ideas for remedying the estate focused on putting more resources into the school so that it could provide more and better youth club and community facilities for the residents of Ragworth. In other words, he saw the solution more in providing social and leisure facilities for the residents than in changing their physical environment. The chairperson of the Housing

Committee was reported in the local newspaper, at the time of the survey aftermath and tenant agitation, as describing the survey as a tool to identifying the problems on Ragworth as a prelude to solving them.

I was first brought onto the scene as a representative of the County Research and Intelligence Unit in the spring of 1979 when I attended a meeting of the Ragworth Community Project Group which had evolved from the inter-agency group mentioned above. It then comprised borough and county officers, representatives of the Area Health Authority, local clergy, and parent representatives, and was chaired by the headmaster. It was obvious at this first meeting that no ideas for the survey had emerged beyond probing residents' attitudes to using the school for community activities (there was felt to be considerable resistance among parents to using the school in this way) and finding out what kind of activities were wanted. Again, no wish to see the survey as a tool to effect radical change to the housing stock or environment was apparent. The limited objectives of the survey are clearly stated in the Stockton Council minutes of 12th June, 1979:

A recent meeting with representatives of the Social Services, Parents and Community Health Service has been held concerning the use of Ragworth Junior School for community use and as a focal point for the community.

At the meeting it was considered that the social profile of the area should be updated as the present information available was based on the 1971 population census.

It was soon after the first meeting of the Ragworth Community Group that the local government elections in May saw a change in political control, Labour having gained a majority on the local council. Although the survey was a Tory initiative, the now

Labour-dominated Policy and Resources Committee authorised it, the costs of which were shared between the county and borough councils and the Area Health Authority.

With the change in political control came a change in the chairmanship of the project group; the councillor for Ragworth succeeded the headmaster. If the local councillor felt any enthusiasm about the prospect of a survey she disguised it perfectly and took exception to some of the questions in the interview schedule which I submitted to the project group in the summer of 1979. I had sufficient support for my approach in the group to retain the schedule more or less intact, although a few questions had to be taken out. Among these were satisfaction with the kitchen, with crime, safety on the streets at night and the sort of people who live on the estate. In the event, little was lost by these deletions because respondents took the opportunity through other open questions to express their views on these issues. For example, a question on experiences of vandalism allowed for views on other aspects of crime to be raised, problems with the kitchen were brought up when the repairs service was discussed or when respondents were invited to talk about any features of the house, and the comments on the sort of people living on Ragworth emerged through various questions in the schedule.

The original intention of the survey was to record the realities of life on a disadvantaged estate as a stimulus to change. So it collected objective data on various demographic variables and subjective data on how people perceived their physical and social environment. Of course, disadvantaged estates

have been graphically described elsewhere (Burbridge et al, 1981), so in a sense there is nothing unusual about Ragworth in that it shares many of the characteristics shown in these earlier studies. Yet no two such estates are exactly the same, and the chief purpose of this chapter is to describe the configuration of demographic characteristics, structural and social problems which established its particular identity.

In addition, one thread of this thesis is to measure and explain the very considerable change that took place on the estate between 1979 and 1984. Portraying it at the beginning of this process is a necessary first step. It sets down the bench-mark, so to speak, against which the subsequent change can be gauged.

The survey took place in September 1979, the data being collected by experienced interviewers employed by the Research and Intelligence Unit. Since there were only 393 dwellings, it was considered feasible and desirable to attempt to interview a representative of every household. Whilst a randomly selected adult from each household would have been preferable in terms of securing a representative sample, respondents were restricted to the head of household or his/her spouse. This was done for two reasons. In the first place, because a number of questions were about satisfaction with detailed aspects of the house, about the efficiency of the council's repairs service, and about the household members, it was felt that it was more appropriate to ask the household head or spouse than, say, a seventeen year old son or daughter. There was the equally important point that if decisions were to be made about renovating the house or even about whether to demolish (as, in fact

they were), then for reasons of consultation with the most appropriate people, the tenant or his or her spouse had to be given the opportunity to express their views.

In order to give males and females an equal chance of inclusion in the sample, equal proportions of addresses were assigned to each sex on an alternate-household basis. As it transpired, because more single-adult households contained women, females made up 61 percent of respondents. A total of 386 addresses were allocated to interviewers of which 55 were ineligible mainly owing to 40 houses being void. Of the 331 potential respondents remaining, 308 were interviewed. Only 3 percent refused to be interviewed and 4 percent could not be contacted. The response rate, then, was 93 percent.

Before turning to the findings, a brief reminder is necessary about the comparative survey data used in this chapter. In order to set Ragworth within the context of the borough, where possible the survey findings are juxtaposed with those relating to the whole of Stockton extracted from the county-wide Cleveland Social Survey (CSS) of 1978. This provides a convenient yardstick against which to measure conditions and life-quality on Ragworth (Appendix 1 discusses the significance of differences between samples).

The Population of the Estate

The interview schedule started by collecting details of household composition and information on occupation and economic activity. Making due allowance for the 7 percent of households where no interview took place, the estimated population of the estate was close to 1300. The age distribution was markedly

different from that of Stockton as a whole in having a much higher proportion of children and a quarter as many people of pensionable age.

Table 5.1

Age Distribution of the Population - Ragworth and Stockton, 1979

Age	Ragworth	Stockton
0 - 4 years	16%	7%
5 - 15	29%	21%
16 - 64	53%	60%
<u>65 years and more</u>	<u>3%</u>	<u>12%</u>
Totals	100%	100%
Bases	308	545

As might be expected from such an age distribution, there were proportionately more large households and many fewer one- and two-person households than in all Stockton.

Table 5.2

Household Size - Ragworth and Stockton, 1979

	Ragworth	Stockton
One/two persons	19%	49%
Three/four persons	46%	39%
<u>Five or more persons</u>	<u>35%</u>	<u>12%</u>
Totals	100%	100%
Bases	308	545

The next table, which uses the General Household Survey typology of households, combines these two variables of age and household size to show the large number of young families -

especially containing children aged under five - and the correspondingly low proportion of all-adult households compared with the whole borough.

Table 5.3

Household Type - Ragworth and Stockton, 1979

	Ragworth	Stockton
1 or 2 persons aged		
16 to 59 years	6%	21%
1 or 2 persons at least		
one aged 60 years or more	10%	27%
3 or more persons aged		
16 or more	8%	10%
Any number of persons,		
youngest under 5 years	41%	17%
Any number of persons,		
<u>youngest 5 - 15 years</u>	<u>35%</u>	<u>25%</u>
Totals	100%	100%
Bases	308	545

To add to this picture of predominantly young families, there was also a much higher proportion of lone-parent families. While in Stockton 3.4 percent of households contained a lone-parent (CSS, 1978), on Ragworth the figure was 20.2 percent. Related to this, the DHSS returns for April '78 to March '79 showed the Eastbourne/Ragworth neighbourhood area as having between 10 and 20 children per 1000 in local authority care, making it one of the four worst areas in Stockton.

Although data on income were not collected, car ownership was very low with only 19 percent of households containing someone who owned or had the use of a car or van, and two variables were explored which are powerful indicators of the level of disadvantage, namely, economic activity and occupational status.

Table 5.4

Economic Activity of All Aged 16 or Over - Ragworth and Stockton, 1979

	Ragworth	Stockton
Working full-time(30 or more hrs)	29%	50%
Working part-time(less than 30 hrs)	7%	8%
Unemployed(seeking work)	18%	4%
Unemployed(chronic sick)	6%	2%
Retired	4%	9%
Student	1%	2%
<u>Other (mainly 'housewives')</u>	<u>35%</u>	<u>25%</u>
Totals	100%	100%
Bases	308	545

Again, Ragworth differed markedly from the whole borough with less than a third in full-time paid work against a half in Stockton. Expressing the number of unemployed in the conventional way, i.e. as a proportion of the economically active (those who are working plus the registered unemployed), the rate was 33.2 percent. This compared with a rate for the Tees District of 9.4 percent (Department of Employment figure, September 1979). Singling out

heads of households alone, 40 percent were in full-time work compared with 75 percent in Stockton (CSS 1978).

Full occupational details were gathered for the head of household, and the next table employs the Registrar General's classification to show the distribution of occupational skill levels. This includes the last main job of the retired, the unemployed, etc.

Table 5.5

Occupational Classification of HOHs - Ragworth and Stockton, 1979

	Ragworth	Stockton
Non-manual (R. G's Groups I, II and IIIi)	4%	33%
Skilled manual (Group IIIii)	42%	41%
Semi- or unskilled (Groups IV and V)	46%	26%
<u>Not applicable</u>	<u>8%</u>	<u>--</u>
Totals	100%	100%
Bases	308	545

While it matched the borough for the fraction of skilled manual workers, the obvious main difference was the much greater percentage of semi-skilled and unskilled HOHs and the virtual absence of non-manual HOHs.

So to summarise, the findings thus far depict the estate as having had a very young population, with threequarters of households containing a child aged 15 or less. There were more large households than the average, and a fifth included a

lone-parent. The unemployment rate was strikingly high, and this along with the preponderance of manual HOHs and low car ownership betokened a low income level. Clearly, the estate exhibited, on the basis of these features of its population, many of the characteristics of a residualised housing area. The majority had no choice but to rent, and the standard of housing and the environment which are examined next provides evidence of another crucial indicator - poor material quality of accommodation and generally inferior social and physical surroundings.

The Quality of the Housing

As might be predicted from the larger households, there was a higher level of household density on the estate than in the surrounding borough. For instance, 69 percent of households had a density of less than one person per room while in Stockton 92 percent of households lived at that density. Yet only 1 percent of households in both Ragworth and borough contained 1.5 or more persons per room - a widely adopted, albeit severe, criterion of overcrowding. So while its consequences were real enough for those four families on the estate who were living at this highest density, overcrowding was not a serious problem.

An 11-point scale was used throughout the survey to measure satisfaction, with 0 denoting complete dissatisfaction, 10 complete satisfaction and 5 the mid-point. Respondents were asked to express their satisfaction with nine aspects of their dwelling as well as arriving at an overall assessment with the dwelling as a whole. One observation needs to be made about the satisfaction tables in this

chapter and in Chapter 7, namely that they are based on those respondents able to select a satisfaction rating. Those who said they knew too little to give an opinion are excluded. More often than not they followed their satisfaction ratings with spontaneous explanatory remarks which were recorded by the interviewers. Beginning with overall satisfaction with the house, it is clearly well below the level of the whole of Stockton.

Table 5.6

Overall Satisfaction with the House, 1979

Satisfaction score	Ragworth	Stockton
Ten	14%	19%
Six to nine	44%	72%
Five	12%	5%
One to four	16%	3%
<u>Zero</u>	<u>14%</u>	<u>1%</u>
Totals	100%	100%
Bases	308	545

Although more Ragworth tenants were located in the 'satisfied' top half of the scale, 30 percent nevertheless fell in the 'dissatisfied' lower half compared with only 4 percent in Stockton. The reasons underlying these differences soon began to unfold when detailed aspects were explored. The problem of keeping the house warm in winter was a serious source of discontent, 68 percent registering a score of 4 or less against 23 percent in Stockton. The main cause of this complaint lay in the absence of central

heating in most of the properties, although this was made worse by draughts coming from ill-fitting doors and windows.

No matter how large the fire in winter - these houses are still bitterly cold.

They're too cold, not fit to live in. It's the concrete.

The windows don't shut properly and you can't keep warm even with a great big fire on.

It's very cold. I have no central heating and I can't afford the fuel to keep a large fire going.

Given that so many houses were poorly heated, condensation was inevitable. In fact, 52 percent scored their satisfaction at less than 5 in contrast to 19 percent in Stockton who were dissatisfied with their houses' freedom from damp and condensation.

It's a nightmare in winter - our clothes are always damp and the walls run all the time and the windows.

Upstairs, there's black fungus all over the walls and the front bedroom can't be used.

If it rains the window sills inside get flooded and the wallpaper drops off the walls in the bedrooms.

In addition to many of the houses being cold and damp, another feature which excited a great deal of criticism was noise. Fifty two percent compared with 18 percent in the borough gave a score of less than 5 on the scale. The three worst sources of noise were trains, children in the streets and neighbours.

When there is anyone living next door you can hear them cough. We can even hear them in the other house and we aren't even joined on to them.

There's noise from the neighbours banging at all hours of the night. I think they pinch lead and break it up at night.

You can't hear the telly when the trains are going past - we are only eight yards from the railway.

Noise from the children, drunks at night, foul language, the buses. And you can hear the neighbours easily through the walls.

A majority of 54 percent gave a low rating to the outlook from their house (i. e. a score of under 5). This was well above the Stockton level of 19 percent falling into the lower half of the scale. The condition of the houses and gardens, the housing density and the state of the open spaces all figured prominently in people's poor assessment.

A wilderness at the back and neglected properties at the front.

It reminds me of a concentration camp the way it looks - grey concrete walls all over and windows boarded up.

It's like a tip. I lived on Eastbourne and that was bad enough but this place beats it. There's no pride in the place.

People keep horses and carts in their front gardens here.

Forty four percent gave scores below 5 (14 percent in Stockton) with their gardens. Among the problems were broken fencing which allowed easy access to dogs, people taking short-cuts, etc., vandalism, and poor soil. The latter is probably a legacy from Wimpey whose tender for the roads and sewers serving the 'Fifties-built houses was accepted by the council.

Unfortunately for the future tenants, their pricing was on the basis that surplus excavation would be deposited on site, and a quarter of a century later its consequences were still making themselves felt.

It's too hard to dig. My husband's broken three spades trying to dig it - it's a tip.

You can't put a shovel in it - it's like concrete.

We have been here ten years and we still haven't got a fence. People use the garden as a thoroughfare to get to the allotments at the back.

It's open. People and dogs are always cutting through it. We get rubbish thrown into it, plants are uprooted - it's no use trying to do anything with it.

It's full of rats - I can sit and watch them playing.

A particular complaint by council tenants which has emerged in a number of studies (e.g. Harrison, 1983) is the poor repairs and maintenance service. A study of council tenants in Hartlepool in 1987 found that 36 percent thought they had to wait too long for repairs, and a third of them had to remind the council at least once that the repair had not been completed. Moreover a quarter of them were not satisfied with the repair when it was done (Vamplew, 1988). This problem is usually even more acute on disadvantaged estates, Ragworth being no exception.

Thirty four percent gave a score of zero to express their complete dissatisfaction and a further 30 percent selected between one and four on the scale. Only 7 percent were completely satisfied with the service they were receiving. Easily the most common complaint was the length of time that elapsed between reporting it and the repair being done. The rest mainly complained that repair requests were ignored or that the quality of workmanship and materials left much to be desired.

I get rats in the pantry because there's a big hole in the wall. We need a fence round the garden to keep the

kids in and a washing post. The interior walls are in a deplorable condition - all cracked.

The guttering came down and split my son's head open. Repairs aren't done properly - I've reported things and you wait weeks and weeks. Everyone passes the buck, someone else is always responsible.

Real batch-up jobs - they paint without opening the windows. We can't open the windows since they painted them.

About two-thirds of the housing was built in the late 'Forties, and most of the rest in the early 'Fifties. A further small terrace of one-bedroomed flats were added in the early 'Sixties. Although tenants in both 'Forties and 'Fifties housing were less satisfied than the borough average, those in the systems-built houses were least satisfied with their accommodation.

Table 5.7

General Satisfaction with House by Age of House, 1979

Satisfaction score	'Forties-built	'Fifties-built
Ten	12%	15%
Six to nine	52%	30%
Five	12%	13%
One to four	14%	21%
<u>Zero</u>	<u>11%</u>	<u>20%</u>
Totals	101%	100%

These differences are not sustained for all the housing features examined in the last few pages. For example, residents of the two housing groups share very similar satisfaction levels over keeping the house warm and freedom from damp and condensation. Large differences do emerge, however, over noise, the view and the garden. Just taking the proportions who gave a score of four or

less, for noise, 66 percent of 'Fifties tenants were dissatisfied compared with 45 percent of tenants in 'Forties housing; for the garden 51 percent against 41 percent, and for the view from the windows 66 percent against 48 percent, scored four or less.

Apart from the fact that all the properties were in need of modernisation, the structural quality differed significantly between the traditionally-built semi-detached houses of Dover Road at one extreme through the terraces of Dumbarton and Dundee Avenues which were also erected in the 'Forties to the system-built terraced housing, much of it adjoining the railway, of Doncaster Crescent, Dunoon Close and Dartford Close. The diversity of feeling emerged when respondents were invited to mention anything else that they felt was important or to summarise their feelings about their housing. The comments of a resident of Dundee Avenue revealed the conflicting attitude that some residents had about their housing and the estate:

If only I could put this house on another estate I would be happy. The house is perfect but the area is hell on earth.

We love this house. We're really lucky to live along this end of the estate. We have friends who live further into the estate (i.e. nearer the railway) and their lives are a misery through dirt and vandalism. (Resident of Dumbarton Avenue)

We left a better house to come here. We did an exchange with the previous tenants but I've cried every night since. This place stank when we came and I've used three cans of Jeye's Fluid since I came, but we still can't get rid of the smell. There is no bannister on the stairs and all sorts of things need doing, but I've been told I would have to pay for them myself and they were like that when we came in. This place was a disgrace to move into it was so filthy and broken down. There were no handles on the doors, cupboards hanging off the walls, electric

sockets sparking when you plugged anything in. (Resident of Doncaster Crescent)

I've wanted out for thirteen years. I'd like a smaller house out of this area, right off Ragworth altogether. We want peace. We've been ill since we came to this house; we had trouble with the gas leaking, broken windows and the police here because of peculiar neighbours. We haven't any heart. (Resident of Dunoon Close).

In summary, although over a half of respondents were, on balance, more satisfied than dissatisfied with their housing, their feelings about individual aspects of it revealed a good deal of, often, intense dissatisfaction. Part of this stemmed from the physical and social environment of the estate itself and this will be explored next. Yet most of it was undoubtedly engendered by the condition of the house itself. Many were damp, cold and difficult to heat; and other serious sources of dissatisfaction were noise, the outlook from the house, the garden, and what was commonly regarded as a breakdown in the repairs and maintenance service.

The Quality of the Environment

Other studies of difficult-to-let estates describe not only run-down housing but areas blighted by crime and vandalism, ill-maintained and unhealthy physical environments, and often inadequate facilities for health care, shopping, etc.

(Burbridge, 1981). From respondents' opinions of their area - including fourteen aspects specifically put to them ranging from schools to air pollution - it is clear that Ragworth in 1979 satisfied enough criteria of social and environmental malaise to qualify decidedly as a disadvantaged estate.

Two opening questions which gave them free-rein to voice their feelings about the estate asked them what they liked and disliked

about it. The question on dislikes proved easily the most fertile in the number and variety of responses it encouraged. Four general areas of concern were mentioned most: the general appearance of the estate (mentioned by 45 percent of respondents), the type of people (mentioned by 42 percent), the external appearance of houses and gardens (mentioned by 38 percent), and children's play facilities (mentioned by 27 percent). Crime and vandalism were not raised as problems by many residents, not because they were insignificant, but because they were often encompassed by, or implicit in, the complaints about the people who lived there who were described variously as 'undesirables', 'rough', 'riff-raff', etc., and whose children were said to run wild and were 'abusive' and 'insolent'. When vandalism was raised specifically, later in the interview, it transpired that it was indeed a serious problem for many residents.

Stigma and the Estate's Residents

Because it was not possible to focus on 'the type of people' as a separate item (for the reason mentioned earlier), this is an opportune juncture at which to cover an issue which has an obvious bearing on the quality of life and also features in the history of the estate's decline. A number of respondents made unequivocal reference to the demise of what they remembered as a pleasant estate, laying the blame on the kind of people the council had allowed in. Those who were not totally pessimistic about the estate's future saw a large part of the remedy for its predicament in halting the influx of what were - to them - problem families and, in fact, reversing the process by relocating them elsewhere. Although slightly more respondents disliked the estate's appearance

than the people, analysis of the content of their remarks reveals that they spoke at greater length and with a greater intensity of feeling when on the subject of the other inhabitants of Ragworth. Complaints about the physical condition of the estate were not infrequently a sort of corollary to complaints about the people, who were held to be largely to blame for the area's appearance.

It's the people - they seem to shove all the problem people here. It's those who don't work or are in gaol or have their kids in care. They are lower class than us - they are a rough type of people.

It's turned into a slum now. It's really gone down since 1970. At night-time it's noisy - you can guarantee to be woken up by someone being kicked or something. It's terrible. It was brilliant when we first came here but you can see it going down. We'd have been out long ago if I'd been working. Who'd come to Ragworth?

When we first came here it was a decent estate but now the tenants are dreadful. They'd take the coat off your back if they liked it. You could never go away on holiday feeling content - you'd worry about vandals moving in. (Resident for 9 years).

The people. They used to be good - some still are - but these days the council stick anyone on here at all - the eviction cases, the bad types, convicts. It's not fair to the rest of us. These people use the place as a tip, throw rubbish all over. Untidy people, drunks, with untidy, dirty houses.

It used to be a beautiful area twenty years ago but it's gone right downhill because you get all the riff-raff round here. I've had a lot of trouble with the neighbours since my husband left with them knocking me up at all hours of the night for something.

A common characteristic of run-down estates like Ragworth is that they gain a bad reputation in the rest of the area. Some respondents spoke explicitly of being stigmatised and of being

denied access to credit. They spoke also of feeling ashamed and demeaned by their association with the estate.

The area's got a bad name. Living here you are "blackened", unable to get hire-purchase because of the bad address. There are too many cats and dogs roaming loose, barking and biting people. There are a few bad tenants that don't care for their houses and create a slum appearance.

I don't like any of it. You mention Ragworth and you get looked down on. We're fighting hard to get out at the moment. It's a place you can't say where you live. People class it as a down, rock-bottom area, class you all the same.

You feel ashamed, down-graded by living here.

This place has a bad reputation. It started off with a handful of bad families and now the council is shoving all the rough-necks up here.

As far as many of the residents were concerned, certain tenants were being 'dumped' on Ragworth as part of a policy of containing the nuisance that some of them caused. There was a hint, in the comments of a few respondents, that the council may also have been attempting to 'reform' them by housing them among conforming and well-behaved tenants. However, since they tended to be concentrated within the estate - especially down the 'no-fines' housing end - it is more likely that such explanations for the council's allocation policy were, if anything, idiosyncratic to particular housing officers or rationalisations offered to tenants who complained.

They should put the wicked ones on their own, the bad can't mix with the good. It's been tried - they thought they'd alter the bad but it doesn't work, life is spoilt for the ones that try.

We don't like the area at all. It has deteriorated terrible since we came. I was told [by a housing officer] that they were trying to keep some clean people up here

and hope it rubs off, but it works the other way.
(Resident for 31 years).

The remedies suggested by some tenants were either to prevent any further influx of problem families or, ironically, to move them all to their own housing area away from 'decent' families. As the family cycle leaves more houses occupied by parents whose children have left, and vacant council properties are increasingly taken by lone-parents and young couples who cannot afford to buy, there seems some likelihood of an increase in the kind of inter-generational conflict intimated by this sixty year-old married woman:

It's the people that's moving in. It used to be a lovely estate but not now. They're rough people who don't keep their gardens nice. It used to be a pleasure to look out of the bedroom windows, but not now - it's a tip. You get broken windows and children climb on our garden shed and cheek you when you tell them. They should get rid of them. I'm not unsociable but it's all the young ones who aren't married living with fellas bawling and shouting around. (Resident for 24 years).

They should scatter some of the people who are on the estate. Some of them are only fit to live in caves. There's a chap up the road who keeps his horse in the wash-house. It's not right, you know.

Residents' perceptions of this division between 'good' and 'bad' tenants are well-documented in the literature on run-down, deprived areas. The way the people of Ragworth classified their neighbours has parallels with Damer's study of Wine Alley in Glasgow in the early 'Seventies, although in contrast to the post-war Ragworth, Wine Alley was a 'Thirties slum clearance estate. Yet in both cases the residents recalled former days when they were pleasant places to live but which had since declined into undesirable areas. And to a considerable extent the blame for this

decline was laid at the door of other residents who moved into the areas subsequently and of the local council.

Initially, Damer's explanation for the low opinion that the people in the surrounding area and in Wine Alley itself had of others living there derived from labelling theory and the residents' internalisation of the stigmatised image of the area held by outsiders (Damer, 1976). This was along the same theoretical approach taken by Armstrong and Wilson (1973) at about the same time. They placed particular emphasis on the image of Easterhouse being largely created by the police, politicians and the media which exaggerated the estate's reputation and which was internalised by the residents themselves eventually. Hence, 'what began as a myth ended as a real social problem.'

Damer's initial theorisation was criticised by Byrne (1976) for not being 'located within the general framework of relevant working class and anti-working class politics', and for explaining the tension between the residents of Wine Alley and those outside it in terms of a conflict about the allocation of housing. In his subsequent writing on Wine Alley (1979, 1989), Damer takes account of Byrne's assertion of the need to reckon with the contribution of housing legislation and housing management but adds the rider that it is imperative also to take account of particular local factors.

His revised explanation focuses on a state-created ideology which, by fabricating divisions between 'roughs' and 'respectables', thereby reduces the solidarity of the working class and its ability to organise and exercise its power. This Marxist perspective interprets the building of poor slum-clearance housing

in the 1930s as a means to continue the 'ghettoisation' of the very poor, the 'reserve army', in order to perpetuate these divisions.

Even as it produced housing for the very poor, the state managed to do it in such a way as to reproduce the very splits in the working class it had engineered in the Victorian years; that between 'labour aristocrats' and 'respectables', and between 'respectables' and 'roughs' (Damer, 1989).

I have no difficulty in accepting that exploitation of class divisions by the central and local state takes place. Byrne observed how councillors in North Shields played off one working-class group against another to hide their own failure to provide housing (Byrne, 1976). And the threat of the use of the 'reserve army' to keep wages down and the labour force quiescent is a weapon ever to hand. There is no need to look further than the use of scab labour to break strikes and the dismissal of striking workers and their replacement by the unemployed for evidence of this.

However, at least one difficulty I do have with this line of analysis is that it seems to deny any genuine motivation to improve the lot of slum-dwellers which, it seems to me, was discernible in, say, the 'Thirties. For example, it does not seem conceivable that people like M'Gonigle, the MOH for Stockton during the inter-war years, who urgently addressed the problems of bad housing and threw the efforts of his department behind the slum-clearance drive did so with the aim of perpetuating the corralling of the slum dweller. A similar point is made by a critic of Damer who entertains the view that the state was acting altruistically in some respects by trying to 'improve' the poor.

...it is certainly possible to argue that the terms 'problem tenant' and 'problem family' emerged because socialism, or at least civic idealism, had taken on the responsibility of housing the poor and saw it, like education, as a way to improve their condition...the new public landlords...were proud of what they had built and invested their houses with a purpose far beyond revenue in rents. Families which obstructed this idealism...became problems not only for their managers and neighbours, but also for the ideal which said that bright new homes would 'cure' the human failure which planners believed had been caused by the slums (Jack, 1989).

Of course, the moralising frequently was oppressive and demeaning, and the quality of the housing was typically poor even though it was more sanitary than the slums. Even so, I cannot make the theoretical leap from such criticism to embrace, in its entirety, an interpretation in terms of class division and domination. Damer's Marxist analysis takes too exclusive a stance and does not sufficiently acknowledge the possibility of the play of human factors, even though he himself draws attention to the danger of denying 'members human agency and its political expression' (1989, p 171). Certainly, his interpretation seems to have little relevance to explaining Ragworth's position as a run-down estate, for it was not slum-clearance replacement and was - originally, at least - good post-war housing. As I argued in the last chapter, its decline was marked by the decision to add what turned out to be inferior housing in the early 'Fifties.

A final point he makes about the reality of Wine Alley's reputation is that it is ill-founded and even mythical. At one juncture he says that 'The people whom locals in Moorepark view as the 'riff-raff' were actually very hard to pin down, and there were at the end of the day only a very few of them.' And later he says,

'the legend of Wine Alley is alive and well. It persists because it plays some kind of function within Govan. Its criminal and cultural characteristics are no different from any other area in Govan.'

While I agree that the stigma attaching to estates like Moorepark and Ragworth have the effect of exaggerating the extent of crime and bad behaviour, their existence cannot be denied - in Ragworth anyway - if the evidence of the residents is heeded. They were not internalising a label or being taken in by a capitalist ideology when so many of them railed so vehemently against the unconventional and troublesome families next door. It seems to me that the unsubtle reason was that sufficient numbers of such households *had* filtered onto Ragworth and imported behavior which offended many residents. Of course, this in itself begs the question of how these disadvantaged tenants came into existence - an issue which was addressed earlier.

Other Aspects of Living on Ragworth.

The material produced by asking residents what they liked about the estate is relatively sparse, easily the largest number of replies - 14 percent - being about its convenience for the shops. In fact, 52 percent said there was nothing that they liked about it. As before, some respondents drew attention to the differences within the estate, namely the contrast between the better, 'Forties housing and the system-built housing on the opposite side of the estate. Both the following two respondents were residents of Dover Road.

We like this road - it's the best on the estate. The people are fairly well-behaved about us here. It's peaceful, safer and more quiet than the other roads.

The people in this road have been here a long time and care for their houses. I like the friendliness of the people in this road.

Just as they were asked to express their satisfaction with their accommodation as a whole, respondents were asked to use the 11-point scale to indicate the extent of their satisfaction with the local area as a place to live.

Table 5.8

Overall Satisfaction with the Local Area as a Place to Live, 1979

Satisfaction score	Ragworth	Stockton
Ten	6%	19%
Six to nine	26%	73%
Five	14%	5%
One to four	24%	2%
<u>Zero</u>	<u>30%</u>	<u>1%</u>
Totals	100%	100%
Bases	308	545

The 32 percent who were at least moderately satisfied with their local area contrasts starkly with the 92 percent in Stockton as a whole. The gap in satisfaction between estate and borough was, in fact, considerably wider even than it was for the quality of housing. Some of the reasons for this discontent with the local area have just been explored, and in looking at the other aspects that were examined separately in the interview, while some will be

looked at in depth, others are much less central to the main concerns of this thesis and will be passed over or only touched on.

There were very few facets of the area with which Ragworth residents were happier than the residents of the whole borough, but the primary schools were one such exception. Twice as many residents - who felt in a position to judge - as in Stockton were completely satisfied with primary school provision on the estate. Similarly, although comparative data are not available for Stockton, satisfaction was high on the estate with nursery facilities for the under-fives. However, in every other respect, satisfaction was well below that expressed in the borough-wide survey.

Turning next to four features of the estate's physical environment, 66 percent against 27 percent in the borough gave a score of four or less for the state of the roads and footpaths. Easily the most frequent complaint was the cracked and uneven pavements followed by potholed roads and the amount of litter strewn about - much of it in the shape of broken glass and bricks.

It was obvious that the process of declaring areas of the borough smokeless had not reached Ragworth by the time of the survey, for 48 percent registered their satisfaction at four or less with how clean and free of fumes and dirt the air was. This was approaching three times the dissatisfaction level of the whole borough. Smoke from domestic fires was perceived as the main contributor to the problem (34 percent of respondents), while

bonfire smoke, industrial pollution and fumes and dirt from trains were the other main sources.

The third feature - the general appearance of the area - was touched on earlier when the outlook from the house was being considered. It engendered a great deal of almost unabated discontent when it was raised as an estate-wide issue. The next table shows the sharp contrast in feeling between residents on the estate and in the rest of Stockton.

Table 5.9

Satisfaction with the General Appearance of the Local Area, 1979

Satisfaction score	Ragworth	Stockton
Ten	1%	15%
Six to nine	16%	65%
Five	11%	8%
One to four	39%	10%
<u>Zero</u>	<u>33%</u>	<u>2%</u>
Totals	100%	100%
Bases	308	545

Although some respondents spoke about litter and rubbish on the streets and open spaces, most dissatisfaction centred on the external appearance and condition of the houses and gardens. They were described as looking uncared for and derelict, drab and depressing.

It's disgusting - there's no words to describe it, just a big eyesore. Parts look like a corporation tip, rubbish and old mattresses which kids set alight.

It's rubbish. It wants bulldozing. It's like Colditz - you're penned in. It's just a filthy, mucky place and it stinks of rubbish all over.

It's a shambles and the grey pebble-dash - it should be coloured or bricks - it's depressing as it is. The council just don't care about us here.

The houses are terrible. They look as though they've just been left to rot.

Some residents compared it unfavourably with its condition in earlier years, like this resident of twenty years:

It's very shabby, but it was lovely when I first came to live here. That was before all the dirty people came.

Others spoke of the stigma of being a resident although some pointed out that the differences depended on which part of the estate was being discussed. The first two respondents quoted next lived in Dover Road where the houses were traditionally constructed in the 'Forties.

This end is pretty tidy, the houses and gardens. But further into the estate is untidy with rubbish dumped everywhere.

They're a decent class of people here - they do look after their property.

It's disgusting. I feel ashamed of it. It's filthy all over. I daren't tell anyone where I live, I just say Stockton.

With all the empty houses it's terrible. There are people waiting for houses but once you get on this estate you can't get off because Ragworth has a bad name.

The problem of noise associated with the house itself has already been touched on, the main sources being trains, children, and neighbours. When noise on the estate as a whole was discussed, more respondents mentioned trains and children than before, and

traffic and people arguing and fighting were brought into the picture.

Table 5.10

Satisfaction with Freedom from Noise on the Estate, 1979

Satisfaction score	Ragworth	Stockton
Ten	2%	14%
Six to nine	35%	63%
Five	12%	10%
One to four	28%	10%
<u>Zero</u>	<u>23%</u>	<u>3%</u>
Totals	100%	100%
Bases	308	545

Although noise from the railway offends the most people, the other sources just mentioned also obviously created a nuisance-level for many residents.

You can't watch T.V. unless you can lip-read. When the trains go past you shake in your chair.

There are trains every twenty minutes. The whole house shakes.

After ten-thirty at night it develops into a snake-pit. Just a few houses do it - the ones where they drink cider all day.

It's brawls and drunks and police flying up and down.

It's terrible after school. The kids just scream and shout till very late.

Given the large proportion of children on the estate and the absence or inadequacy of play facilities and youth clubs, it was more than likely that children occupying their time on the streets

would create some conflict. In fact, it led to a situation with which the majority of respondents were unhappy, many of them finding it distressing in varying degrees. Asked about their satisfaction with the estate's freedom from vandalism, 82 percent selected a low score of below five on the scale, 42 percent of them showing their total dissatisfaction with a score of zero.

When residents explained their dissatisfaction it was plain that they were not talking just about motiveless acts of destruction or defacement of communal property like telephone kiosks or bus shelters. In most instances they were referring to acts directed against their own and neighbours' property, but vandalism being a broadly-defined term, theft and acts of violence were included as well. The most frequently mentioned cases were windows being broken (19 percent of respondents), the wrecking of void houses (15 percent), stone-throwing and banging on doors and windows (12 percent), break-ins and theft (12 percent), and damage to fencing and walls (10 percent).

All respondents who had given a low satisfaction score of less than five were asked whether they or a member of their household had been affected by acts of vandalism, and 73 percent reported that they had. Here, the main nuisance - which 37 percent reported - was broken windows followed by break-ins (12 percent) and broken and stolen fencing (11 percent). But there was a daunting variety of misdemeanours which clearly, from the residents' own accounts, must have helped destroy their sense of security and peace of mind.

We have our bin turned over and set fire to regularly.
The fence was taken down for firewood. Bricks, eggs,

bottles are thrown at the door when you open it by gangs. Fireworks are set off on the doorstep.

They took the roof off an out-building. The telephone was ripped out and windows taken out. They ripped the coal-house door off and thieved the coal.

Bricks come through the bedroom window when the children are asleep - my son has nightmares now through this. The gas meter has been broken into and a radio and tape-recorder stolen.

Clothes are taken off the line, windows broken, the girls have been knocked off their bikes. Fences are broken and flowers and plants pulled up and flung anywhere. What the hell can you do? The police can't be here twenty four hours a day.

Vandalism is rife round here. Children and older youths pull down fences and burn them and just run all over your garden pulling things out. My husband set the garden after taking months to dig it and prepare it when we first came here. But everything was just pulled up and scattered about.

We've had a bad time here. My daughter was nearly shot in the eye with a gun. I don't know that anything can be done, there are too many gangs - gangs of teenagers looking for trouble.

I went outside to check kids for climbing over into my garden, so they threw a brick through a bedroom window where a child was sleeping. Then then they fired an air-rifle through the window.

It's dreadful here and you can't say anything or you get it worse. I've had a brick thrown through my window, washing stolen and used toilet paper through my letterbox.

Our windows are systematically broken. The fish-pond out in the garden was filled with rubbish and the goldfish killed. They put graffiti all over the front of the house.

We were away for a week once and the house was destroyed, ransacked. We had to stay out seven weeks while it was put right. They dragged the fire-place out, smashed the water tank, wrecked and stole furniture, used the floor

instead of the toilet, daubed paint all over the windows.

Kinship and Mutual Support

The main terms of reference of the survey centred on housing and the physical and social environment of the estate, but some further data were gathered on social contacts for the light they might throw on aspects of mutual support and caring among the residents. So while no attempt was made to construct detailed kinship networks, respondents were asked about spatial proximity to relatives and subjective data were gathered in relation to this variable and to proximity to friends.

Table 5.11

Proportion of Respondents' Relatives Living Near to Them, 1979

	Ragworth	Stockton
All or most of them	19%	43%
About a half of them	10%	17%
Only a few of them	40%	22%
<u>None of them or has no relatives</u>	<u>31%</u>	<u>18%</u>
Totals	100%	100%
Bases	308	545

The differences between Ragworth and the borough were probably partly a result of the much lower car ownership on the estate, 'near' being interpreted in some measure as 'accessible'. Yet, however they arrived at the answer, the consequence of living on Ragworth for many people was above-average isolation from kin and therefore reduced opportunities for interactional ties with them. Indeed, these perceived differences in proximity were reflected subjectively in felt satisfaction with being near to family.

Table 5.12

Satisfaction with Proximity of Family and Relatives, 1979

Satisfaction score	Ragworth	Stockton
Ten	25%	32%
Six to nine	42%	54%
Five	11%	7%
One to four	16%	5%
<u>Zero</u>	<u>6%</u>	<u>2%</u>
Totals	100%	100%
Bases	308	545

Comparison between Ragworth and Stockton over satisfaction with the proximity of friends reveals even larger disparities, with 26 percent of estate residents offering a low satisfaction rating of four or less compared with only 3 percent in the wider area.

The meaning of this relative isolation for the estate dwellers was not explored in depth, although two further indicators were employed to provide some assessment of the possible implications. One of these was the extent to which respondents felt that they shared a common identity and purpose and the second the degree to which there was mutual assistance in times of crisis or need. However, in interpreting their responses it seems inevitable that other factors, such as feelings about other residents no doubt come into play in respondents' deliberations. The first indicator was operationalised by a question which asked the extent to which there was a feeling of 'togetherness and belonging' among the local people. This particular question had been used in other surveys in Cleveland and it was a form of wording which people had found no

difficulty in interpreting and responding to, even though the concepts used lack precise definition.

Table 5.13

Extent of a Feeling of Togetherness and Belonging in Local Area.

1979

	Ragworth	Stockton
To a great extent	2%	16%
To a fair extent	24%	57%
To a small extent	33%	20%
Not at all	37%	4%
<u>Don't know</u>	<u>4%</u>	<u>3%</u>
Totals	100%	100%
Bases	308	545

These very large differences between the estate and the whole of Stockton are certainly predictable in their direction - given what has been revealed in this chapter about attitudes to neighbours, family proximity, etc., - if not in their size. The second indicator was derived from replies to the following question: 'Do people around here generally help each other out - say in times of trouble or illness - or do they usually have to manage as best they can on their own?'

Table 5.14

Whether There is Mutual Support in Local Area, 1979

	Ragworth	Stockton
People usually help each other out	48%	76%
People usually manage on their own	43%	19%
<u>Don't know</u>	<u>9%</u>	<u>5%</u>
Totals	100%	100%
Bases	308	545

Summary

Although Ragworth, being an estate of conventional two-storey dwellings, avoids some of the very worst features of flatted difficult-to-let estates so graphically described by Harrison in 'Inside the Inner City' (1983), this chapter makes clear the extent of the material and social disadvantage of its residents. It shares most of the characteristics of the difficult-to-let estate described by Burbridge and colleagues in their study of thirty such areas. (Burbridge et al ,1981).

The next chapter examines the aftermath of the survey, the course of conflict and change that ensued after the survey report was released and the resulting policy outcomes. ---

CHAPTER SIX

RAGWORTH FROM 1980 TO 1984: THE POLICY PROCESS

AND ESTATE IMPROVEMENT

This chapter examines a short period of some two years in the history of Ragworth after the release of the survey findings in 1980. It will trace the course of events which eventually resulted in a change of policy and the implementation of a partial modernisation and estate improvement programme.

Responses to the Survey Report

The survey report was sent to the Town Clerk and Chief Executive of Stockton Borough Council at the beginning of April, 1980 and in mid-April to the members of the Community Project Team of council officers and members, representatives of the A.H.A., clergymen, and a few residents who were members by virtue of being on the primary school parents' committee. It was accompanied by an invitation to comment critically on its contents. However, apart from two detailed replies to this from the borough architect and the social services department, it stimulated no response at all from the housing department or Chief Executive some ten weeks after its release.

It is difficult to interpret this in any other way than the pace of decision-making in local government on issues that are not regarded as requiring urgent action or which cannot be dealt with in the short-term. The problems of Ragworth and other similarly afflicted estates in Stockton had been known for a long time, and no doubt the council's view must have been that years rather than

months were likely to elapse before they were fully remedied. Such a view would have been engendered to some extent and reinforced by the Government's stance on public sector housing and the likelihood of continuing contractions in grants to local authorities. It would be very difficult to sustain the argument that the report had been suppressed, since around 150 copies were distributed in the two months after its publication - to residents of the estate among others. Probably the most damning interpretation that could be placed on the council's inaction - although it is not one that I would particularly subscribe to - was that they took the view that the potential impact of the report could be attenuated or even avoided if it were simply ignored for as long as possible. They had not, after all asked for a report with its broad remit and had made no preparations to respond to it in policy terms.

Press Reporting of the Issues

However, whatever the council's intentions, this period of relative calm eventually came to an abrupt end on the 17th of June, 1980, when the report was featured on the front page of the local evening paper with the banner headline: 'The Estate of Unhappiness - Shock report with no hope of change'.

A controversial report on Stockton's Ragworth Estate says it is the town's major problem area - yet little or nothing can be done about it.

The report, yet to be published, says the housing is poor, vandals and hooligans run riot, homes are overcrowded, there are no community facilities and it is generally a bad environment in which to live.

After this somewhat hyperbolic opening, it went on to give a reasonably sober and accurate summary of the findings, and concluded with a response from Councillor Derek Cooke who at the time was Mayor and chairperson of Stockton Housing Committee.

Although he agreed that the problems were severe, he was guarded and careful not to raise expectations about improving the estate.

We have no authority from central government to expend any finance in carrying out the recommendations of the report. If the council agrees with the report's recommendations we will have to make a special approach to the Department of the Environment to ask for permission to borrow the money, but there are severe restrictions.

A more muted report in the following day's edition contained a similar response from him, making the point that the council had no resources to pay for widespread improvement on the estate, and expressing the hope that the Government accepts the report findings and makes it a special case. The article concluded with comment about conditions on the estate from several residents. In a report on the 20th of June, M.P. Bill Rogers made some non-committal remarks about the estate's deterioration 'from a pleasant, well-kept estate into a problem area'. So within a few days of the report being published in the Press, conditions on the estate had been well publicised and it was firmly on the local political agenda. On the 23rd of June, it was reported that the local councillor for Ragworth, Winifred Hodgson, was to call an early meeting of the estate working party to discuss the survey findings - although this did not take place until the middle of July.

The Start of Tenant Action

On the estate itself, feelings were getting very heated both about the contents of the report and because of a suggestion in a Gazette edition of a few days earlier that prostitutes and wife-beaters were prevalent in the area. Interestingly, the reactions of residents to the survey report were understandably ambivalent. For while it drew attention to the plight of the

estate, because of the manner of its release, the glare of publicity was too strong for many residents and, as they saw it, reinforced and spread the stigma of living there. However, it is clear that the anger that it aroused - in that it was perceived to tarnish the image of the estate further and because it heightened awareness of the way that the council had neglected it - stimulated community action for change. The neighbourhood worker on Ragworth at the time found the people apathetic when he began his involvement there.

We had, shall we say, difficulty in gaining entry into the community. It could have stayed like that had we not ...done the social survey. Once we'd done that it opened up the whole thing - it was the reaction to the Press that really stimulated people to come together. Had that not happened I think we'd have had a long, painful attempt to get people involved.The immediate thing was that within a day of that report coming out was the public meeting. And it was at that public meeting that the whole tenants' organisation grew. So it became the focus of anger and got people actually motivated enough to call a public meeting.

On June 26th the Evening Gazette reported that the residents were 'set to join forces to fight the council in a bid to get something done', and were holding a public meeting in the local primary school that evening. More than 100 people were said to have attended the meeting in the next night's edition headed: 'Estate Plans Hard Line Tactics'. The mood of the meeting was very militant and they decided to set up a campaign committee which eventually was formally constituted as Ragworth Residents' Association. The local vicar warned in Churchillian style: 'The fight is going to be long, it's going to be hard, and we are not going to win every battle - but the object is to win the war'. He also advised them

against picketing a meeting of the local council the following week for the curious-sounding reason that they would be laughed at.

One cause of irritation among residents at this first meeting was the absence of local councillors and the Housing Committee chairperson who had been invited to attend, and charges of 'cowardice' were directed at them (although they claimed that the notice was too short). Without the presence of the councillors to whom they could have put their grievances and made demands for action, there was a feeling of frustration in spite of the impressive 'show of strength' and demonstration of their resolve to press for change. Other attempts had been made in April and May - soon after the report was published - by the local vicar to arrange meetings with the two local councillors but he claims they did not even reply to his 'phone calls.

One significant outcome of the first residents' meeting was a decision to begin to formalise their proceedings and to improve their organisation of future action. The neighbourhood worker played a prompting and enabling role in this. They had already called on his help in organising the meeting and he saw the outcome as turning residents' anger into 'a more positive and productive force by organising and looking at ways of using the information we had to orchestrate change.'

At the end of the meeting what we tried to do is form a small group of residents because one of the things that happened at the first public meeting is that the local councillors weren't there nor was Derek Cooke. So the idea of forming a small steering group was to organise the second public meeting at which these people would be present. For the first time people were having to learn chairing skills and agenda skills and they were taking control of the meeting and they were saying 'shut up missus Bloggs, let the man speak.' They wanted it to be quite clear that it would be a well-organised public meeting. So it was about getting information out on the

estate, making sure it was well-attended and there was some kind of agenda.

At the beginning of July, the chairperson of the Housing Committee made a speech to the full council about the estate in which he made an appeal to the residents to join with the council - rather than focusing their anger on it - in pressing the Government for more resources to improve the estate. During the course of his address he promoted the survey to the status of an important instrument of policy planning, although it was not seen in that light when it was commissioned:

The local authority is well-aware of the social and environmental problems of the Ragworth area - so aware, in fact, that the council commissioned the survey as a prerequisite to deciding future policy commitments... Rather than organising an association to take on the council, it would be better that the community joins with the local authority to build a case to present to the Government to achieve our agreed objective (E.G. 3/7/80).

Three days after the council meeting the Gazette reported an apparent near-accident when large pieces of concrete cladding fell from the wall of one of the 'no-fines' houses close to the railway narrowly missing a toddler. The tenants stated their intention of withholding their rent - as they had in the past - until repairs were carried out. A week after this there was the story of a woman complaining about a rat infestation in her garden. She claimed they came from the two boarded-up houses next door, and expressed her fears that her three-year old son would get bitten, complaining that she had reported the rats to the council but that nothing was ever done. In the same edition Derek Cooke was reported to have committed the council to ameliorating the problems on Ragworth. However, he pointed out that the Project Group had to

meet and arrive at recommendations, and that once that was done the council would make an approach to the Government. Meanwhile, the local vicar was still assuming the role of spokesperson for the residents and was to meet the Mayor on the 15th of July, although from this point on he faded into the background as key members of the residents' association began to exercise the power vested in them and speak on behalf of their members.

Initial Policy Responses from the Council

By this time, a month had passed since the first front-page report of the survey findings, and during that time the issue of Ragworth had been kept alive in the Press on an almost daily basis. The council would have found it very difficult to ignore the pressure for action even if they had wanted to. One response was the setting up of a small project sub-group of four councillors, two officers from the social services department -including the neighbourhood worker - the chairperson of the residents' association and myself to discuss the report of survey and make recommendations to put before council.

This took place on 16th July on the estate, chaired by the local councillor who correctly asserted the view that the report described the problems but was bereft of solutions. The outcome was that the report should be accepted but that I go away and write a supplementary report of policy recommendations which would then be discussed at the next meeting of the group. The report that I produced over the next few weeks was comprehensive, my brief, as I saw it, being to represent the wishes and aspirations of the residents as expressed through the social survey. I did not see it as part of my remit to be selective and isolate priorities for

action but for the sub-group and ultimately the Project Group - especially the estate representatives on it - to have the final say in what was to go forward to the council. The report was sent to all seven members of the sub-group during the first week in September 1980 with a letter stating that it was a basis for discussion and that it was my hope that the group would have significant contributions to make. The report was primarily prescriptive in its recommendations, leaving the detailed working out of solutions and implementation to the appropriate service departments. In summary, it recommended:

1. A reappraisal of allocation policy so as to ultimately restore a more balanced population structure both in terms of age and social disadvantage.
2. The speeding-up of the re-letting of empty property.
3. Improvement of heating capacity and thermal insulation, as well as further investigation of dampness problems.
4. The double-glazing of houses backing onto the railway, with consideration being given, in view of their condition and position, to the demolition of some of them. Also, that methods of sound-insulation for thin party walls should be investigated.
5. The replacement of wooden and missing garden fencing with non-combustible, vandal-proof material.
6. A speedier and better quality repair and maintenance service.
7. The construction of a safe play area for younger children and an adventure playground.
8. The development of youth and junior club facilities.

9. As a short-term measure, an increase of on-the-beat policing.
10. Looking at alternative uses of open spaces.
11. Looking at the feasibility of making the area a smokeless zone.
12. Repairing footpaths.
13. Exploring the possibility of providing dispensing facilities at the nearest health centre.
14. Looking at the problem of traffic speeding through the estate.
15. Developing community facilities on the junior school base.

In the meantime, toward the end of July, members of the residents' association met local councillors to discuss moves to address the problems, but a statement in the Gazette on July 24th from the association's Press officer declared that the meeting had not been very productive.

...Mrs Joan Walker said: 'An exchange of views concerning problems on the estate were discussed at length, also opinions were given on how improvements could happen, but no satisfactory conclusions were reached.'

The survey report will soon be discussed by the council committees who will decide what action to take, but one estimate says it could take several million pounds to put the estate right.

Then in the middle of August the Principal Housing Officer at the D. O. E. in Newcastle visited Stockton to discuss Ragworth - among other issues (it had been included in the council's H. I. P. submission to the government). She visited the estate with council officials. The Housing Committee chairperson saw her as being crucial in the decision about whether extra finance would be made available for Ragworth. Following this, another meeting was held

with her early in September. A Gazette report of September 4th
... quoted the housing chairman as saying:

'We want to see what possibilities there are of seeing the new schemes at Ragworth and Wiley Flatts being accepted by the regional office of the D.O.E. which will make the final decision'....

The Ragworth scheme, expected to cost several million pounds over the next few years, was included in the council's plan after a special report outlined major housing and environmental problems on the estate....

'The Ragworth problem is uppermost in the council's minds', said Councillor Cooke.

At about the same time, the residents' association was calling a second public meeting to discuss progress and to hear from Councillor Cooke. Joan Walker, the association's Press officer, appealed for the support of residents at the meeting if they were to achieve their objectives on the estate. In preparation for what they regarded as a confrontation with councillors, the estate had been canvassed to produce a dossier of complaints which they intended to present to them. Every home was also leafleted about the meeting. A report in the Northern Echo of September 8th quoted a spokesperson as warning:

'I think a lot depends on what happens on Wednesday and we are all waiting for that meeting before deciding what to do next. We eventually may have to take some form of action ourselves.'

In the event, 80 people turned up for the meeting on the 10th of September and protested strongly to the housing chairperson about the repair and general problems on Ragworth. He promised to visit their homes to see the situation first-hand.

Three days after this the Housing Committee set up a special sub-committee to address Ragworth's problems because, as the chairman felt, there needed to be some council group to deal

directly with the local people. He also specified an allocation of £500,000 which he hoped the D.O.E. would agree to the council spending on the estate. The day after this on the 12th, news was released of a newly established group of teachers, social workers, clergymen and parents to look at the development of community amenities.

Around the middle of September, Shelter announced that they were to contact the residents' association to advise them on pressing their demands for improvements. Although this seems to have remained little more than a statement of intent, its appearance in the local newspaper was another element in the maintenance of pressure on the council.

The report which I had drawn up on the policy implications of the social survey results was discussed for the first time on September 25th at a meeting of the sub-group of the Project Group. Few changes were suggested, the main one being at the suggestion of the chairperson, the local councillor, who demurred at the proposals for double-glazing and sound-proofing party walls. There was no resistance to this from the rest of the group, so it was deleted from the final report which went to the full Project Group in mid-October where it was approved for submission not only to Stockton Borough Council but to the appropriate County Council departments such as social services and education as well as to the police and the Area Health Authority.

Towards the end of October, the Environment Secretary, Michael Heseltine, imposed a moratorium on all new house-building and modernisation programmes and this was initially regarded as an

insurmountable obstacle to further progress on Ragworth. The response from the residents' association was one of defiance.

The people of Stockton's controversial Ragworth estate haven't given up hope that something will be done to improve their houses - despite a block on all new improvement schemes by the Government...

Mrs Marian Newbould, secretary of the local residents' group formed to fight for an improvement scheme, says the campaign to get something done must go on...

'It will be shattering for the people here if we don't get the repairs done, particularly in the concrete houses...

Since we had our open meeting, we have just been sitting, waiting and waiting. There's nothing we can really do. If we don't get the money I think there's going to be hell on'. (E.G. 28/10/80).

The prospects for the residents were looking very unhopeful toward the end of October. On November 12th, members of the housing sub-committee visited residents in their homes, spending over two hours on the estate. The housing chairperson promised to return the following month to consult the residents after the D.O.E. had made their decision on funding improvements. By this time there were signs of an alliance developing between council and residents rather than the confrontational exchanges that characterised the period immediately after the publicity about the report in June. The residents' association Press officer adopted conciliatory tones after the visit, declaring it to have been very worthwhile.

'The people on the estate have seen an interest being taken in their problems and hope now that they will see something done', she said (EG, 12/11/80).

The next meeting of sub-committee and residents took place just before Christmas, 1980. There was still no governmental decision on funding for the estate in the next financial year's allocation, although the council had been told the size of its housing grant for 1981/82, namely £4.8M, which represented a cut of

22 percent on the present financial year. However, by that time, the details of the expenditure breakdown, and whether it included the £500,000 asked for by the council to put into Ragworth had not been released. The housing chairperson was by now making statements that had a somewhat contradictory-sounding ring to them. On the one hand he was holding out little hope of a government grant for Ragworth and reminding everyone that the £4.8M allocation was set aside for improvement programmes elsewhere in the borough and already at contract stage. On the other hand he was promising that whatever happened the estate would be improved, meaning, although it was not made clear in the media, that the council would do what it could on a piece-meal basis and within the limits of their resources to give it priority. In fact, the latter is precisely what had begun to happen by this time. Even within a short period of the report's release there was an obvious increase in the frequency of street cleaning, and by the end of the year housing repairs had been speeded up and some environmental and other improvements had begun to take place.

The Beginning of a Tenant-Council Alliance

The comments of the vice-chairperson of the resident's association, Florence Stapleton, which were reported in the Gazette on December 24th showed a further shift away from the bellicose attitude of the summer toward the council. The council's steps to improve the estate along with the Housing Committee's (and particularly chairperson Derek Cooke's) consultations with the residents and their statements of support and commitment to further improvement, had moved the two sides away from confrontation and in the direction of alliance.

'The council has done a lot for Ragworth since our committee was formed. They have done lots more repairs, pavements have been repaired and the roads are better. The council are also trying to get us a play area for the youngsters.'

Other improvements for the estate include a weekly visit from a health visitor and regular councillors' surgeries. Mrs Stapleton says the people of Ragworth have accepted money to improve their houses will never be forthcoming.

'We will be disappointed. But it won't be the end of the world as long as the council keeps its promise and continues repairs.'....

Councillor Cooke said.. 'We have said regardless of what happens, we will work for improvements on Ragworth estate'.

The strength of this convergence became apparent when a row broke out between Derek Cooke and a Tory councillor over an attack by the former on Housing Minister John Stanley who had refused an invitation to visit Ragworth and see the problems first-hand. This provoked the Tory councillor to accuse the Mayor of being 'too political.' The response of the residents' association was reported in the Gazette on January 9th, 1981:

Outraged residents of a controversial Stockton housing estate have sprung to the defence of the town's Mayor in his row with a Conservative councillor.

A terse statement issued by the Ragworth Residents' Association said: 'We agree with the Mayor that it is about time some of the Conservative Government came to the so-called notorious Ragworth Estate and saw for themselves the condition of some of the houses. Would they live in them?'

The residents applauded the Mayor's efforts to help them. 'We are behind him all the way,' they said. 'He is the only one so far who has tried to do something for us.'

Soon after this, news broke of a new initiative to fund improvements when it was clear that government finance would not be forthcoming. This was to consider the possibility of using capital receipts from land and council house sales to at least fund a first-stage improvement programme. At a special meeting of the

Housing Committee called on January 23rd, Councillor Cooke recommended that a request should go forward to the Policy and Resources Committee to release part of the proceeds from sales said to amount to £2.9M. The committee agreed to ask for an additional £480,000, £526,000 in total, for the financial year 1981/82 and a minute dated February 3rd approved the implementation of a first phase of improvement works for the financial year 1981/82.

Even before this formal sanctioning of the funding, there was a declaration that a consultation process would soon be underway with the estate residents on the details, timing and implications of the improvement scheme. Towards the end of February, 1981, the council's deputy architect, who was committed to the principle of participation by tenants in decisions which affected them, met residents to talk about the council's proposals for demolishing some of the worst housing by the railway line while improving other properties. Some two weeks later in mid-March, a public meeting was held to describe the proposals and answer questions. In the meantime, council officers had been getting in touch with residents who would have to be transferred from the condemned houses. Others, whose houses were to be modernised, were informed that it may be necessary for them to be temporarily housed elsewhere for up to six months with a commitment that they would be rehoused on the estate wherever possible.

Improvement Proposals

The package of improvement proposals was finally agreed by the Housing Committee in April, 1981. The minutes of April 9th drew attention to the findings of the original survey report, and while a comprehensive report was to be considered at a later meeting, the

proposals under consideration at this meeting were 'to enable immediate short term change.' The programme consisted of :

1. The clearance of 29 'no-fines' houses in Doncaster Crescent and Dartford Close, which were nearest the railway. Mention was also made of a phase two clearance of 'those areas of the estate that might provide reasonable scope for the provision of badly needed dwelling types in furtherance of a policy to restore a more reasonable balance of housing stock within the estate'. What this meant eventually was the demolition of 10 more houses in Doncaster Crescent and their replacement by sheltered accommodation for the elderly, and the demolition of a further 12 dwellings in the 'Forties-built Dewsbury Close.
2. The improvement of 'no-fines' houses which was to include the installation of full central heating, renewal of bathroom and kitchen equipment, complete re-wiring and redecoration, renewal of doors, general repairs and external work to paths, fences, etc. The estimated cost per dwelling was £5,500.
3. 'The provision of facilities aimed at the improvement of the quality of life within the estate', with emphasis on children's play space and community accommodation. In the event, this amounted to the building of a simple fort-like structure on cleared land and the erection of a prefabricated building on the primary school base for community activities.
4. Environmental work such as the creation of lay-bys, raised planted areas in brick surrounds, landscaping cleared areas and the replacement of fencing around the railway line.

The total capital cost set aside for this first phase was £526,000. The minutes envisaged a rolling programme of about 80 dwellings in each subsequent contract depending on the necessary finance being available. (Minute 2101, 9th April, 1981).

On the first of May the Evening Gazette sketched the course of events since the previous summer:

A campaign stretching back to last June will start to reap its rewards for the people of Stockton's estate of unhappiness, almost a year to the day it started. Last June, a controversial report highlighted Ragworth as the town's major problem area. The report, compiled by the Research and Intelligence Group of Cleveland County Council, said housing was poor...and it was a bad environment in which to live.

Residents, pleased that their problems had been highlighted, organised an early public meeting to try and get something done about the estate and its problems.

Now, despite many setbacks, families are already moving out of some of the worst houses for them to be demolished and make way for a play area for local children.

It was, however, the report which stirred the local people to action.

Over the next two months money was awarded under the Urban Aid scheme to fund workers employed to counsel residents, deal with grievances and generally smooth over the problems inherent in the 'decanting' process. This was described as 'astonishing' by the borough Treasurer for the council had already been told that the money would not be made available. It amounted to £20,500 in 1981 and £27,000 in subsequent years. The Treasurer was reported as saying: 'It was all rather odd. I have never experienced an additional approval like this before.' Then in June the North Tees Health District announced the start of a monthly family planning clinic on the estate.

In the middle of September the policy document presented to and confirmed by the project sub-group a year earlier was discussed by the Housing Committee. The conclusions of the committee was that the borough council was taking action within its sphere of responsibility and that other agencies like the education and social service departments and the police should make a greater input to dealing with the estate's problems.

At the beginning of October 1981, tenants started to move back into the renovated properties. The housing chairperson sounded a cautionary note about the council's ability to fund future renovation given the cuts in the H. I. P. allocation in recent years. Nevertheless, resources were found in subsequent years until by 1984 the renovation and renewal programme had been completed.

Forces for Change: the Interplay of Factors

Before the Ragworth improvement programme, Stockton's policy was that the age of property should decide the order of priority for renovation and modernisation. In other words, they were improving their older estates first and working through them on an ascending age basis, which meant that Ragworth, part of it having been built in the 'Fifties, came after, for example, the neighbouring Eastbourne estate which had yet to be dealt with. In fact, Stockton had a another 'rule' that estates had to be a minimum age in any case before they could be improved. In 1980, when conditions on Ragworth were given such wide publicity, such criteria ruled out any improvement programme there for some years to come.

Yet within a year of the first account of the survey findings appearing in the local Press, the estate had become the focus of a

great deal of attention by the local authorities and had been made a top priority for improvement. Indeed, within that year a range of improvements had already taken place and others were underway, not least moves toward demolishing some of the worst 'no-fines' housing and renovation and modernisation of part of the housing stock.

This scale and pace of change was unusual in the context of local government and a number of interacting factors accounted for it. Most significantly, the forces leading to change were the social survey, media attention, pressure from the residents, the presence of a community worker and the political composition of the local councils at the time.

There seems little doubt that the social survey report played a part in overcoming the inertia against change on the estate. However, in no sense did it produce revelatory material which came as a surprise to local government officers and councillors. They could not have known the precise extent of the disadvantage or dissatisfaction of the residents which it brought to light, but in general terms they were well aware of conditions on the estate.

It served two main functions, the first being to provide a 'hard copy' of what life was like for residents in place of impressionistic views which were open to interpretation and debate. The report was accepted as an accurate and definitive account of Ragworth and was never challenged as such. Given this, it was invaluable evidence for those seeking change, although as far as the residents were concerned it said nothing more than they already knew and had been asserting to no avail for years. Although it was a prime mover in the change process, there was considerable resentment toward it at first because it seemed to give wider

currency to the bad reputation of Ragworth and the stigma residents experienced by living there.

The second function of the report was its use in more precisely targetting resources when the improvement programmes were being drawn up. It was in one sense a detailed consultation exercise with residents about how they wanted their housing and environment improved and did play an important part in shaping the actual changes that eventually took place.

In assessing the report's impact, it is important to remember the point made in the last chapter about why it was commissioned. It was not part of a planned approach to major changes, but seen as a means to giving up-to-date basic information about the estate's population as an input to improving community and youth club facilities. So the survey was seen as a routine information-gathering exercise, mainly to update census data and little more when it was approved.

The second factor which played a part in the change process was the local Press. Although the survey report had been quite widely distributed in the few weeks after its release, until the publicity it received in the Press, its impact was muted, and there is a possibility that had it not been exposed to this publicity its potential impact might have been dissipated as it became more out of date. As it was the media exposure put the problems of Ragworth in the public eye and the borough council at least was under irresistible pressure to respond. The Evening Gazette in particular kept the 'story' going right through to the following autumn. Between the first, front-page account of the survey in June 1980 to September of the following year, there were some fifty reports in

this newspaper alone tracing the course of events concerning Ragworth. Apart from helping to place the issues on the political agenda in the first place, the continuous coverage ensured that they stayed there.

The third and most central factor in bringing about change was the power of the residents. They had been active in the past in trying to force the council to tackle the repairs problem in particular. For example, shortly after the survey fieldwork had been completed a 160 name petition had been handed to the local M.P. who met a deputation from the estate. All that this appeared to achieve was a statement from the chief housing officer that they hoped to include Ragworth in their programme in the future, government finance permitting, although he was not willing to concede that the railway caused serious problems. There is no record of a response from a politician.

Yet it was not until the publicity the estate received in that first newspaper report that the residents began to assert themselves in an organised way and began to talk of more direct forms of protest. Thereafter they put pressure on the council to meet their demands with, in the early stages, an underlying threat of direct confrontation if the council failed to respond more sympathetically and constructively. In time, as the council began to take a more conciliatory and sympathetic stance, a transformation began to take place in its relationship with the residents. Instead of confrontation, they began to regard the council as an ally and see the Government as the main culprit.

The fourth factor was the political composition of the council, the fact that it was Labour-dominated and more likely to

treat seriously the demands of a Labour estate than a Conservative administration is likely to have done (although events in North Shields, discussed below, remind us that the significance of this should not be exaggerated). But in addition to this, the importance of the intervention of the housing chairperson should not be underestimated. For whatever reasons - inherent sympathy with the plight of residents virtually across the road from where he himself lived as a council tenant, accommodation of community protest, perceiving an opportunity for favourable publicity or whatever - he eventually 'adopted' the estate and played an important role in the final outcome. His commitment and powerful position enabled him to successfully champion the cause of the residents - and not without risk of disaffection from his fellow councillors representing areas which would suffer a decline in priority order as a result.

The particular course of this change process on one housing estate recalls the points made in the first chapter about the importance to outcomes of local contingent factors. The recommodification policy and drive toward increasing owner-occupation of the Tory Government elected to power in 1979 has been manifested partly in drastic reductions in grants to local government and restrictions on the use of capital receipts from council house sales for building and improving the remaining stock in the public sector. The prospects for an estate like Ragworth under such a regime did not look hopeful. And yet the example of Ragworth supports the contentions of Dickens and colleagues (1985) that 'top down' generalisations are inadequate unless the explanatory framework includes the influence of local factors and historical period. It is not difficult to imagine a different

outcome had the survey fallen in the middle of, say, a Tory local administration.

Moreover, the survey results, the way the Press 'took up' the cause of the estate, the propensity toward militancy of the residents, the attitude to the issues of one powerfully-placed local politician, all made for a particular configuration of contingent factors which mediated national influences to lead to a certain set of consequences. The comparison below of Ragworth with another estate in the north-east underlines the significance of time and space. In both cases modernisation of run-down housing was the major issue and both had Labour majorities. Yet the struggle in Ragworth was shorter and less militant in terms of the protest action it was necessary to take to achieve the residents' aims.

Community Action and Community Development.

Another factor which demands further scrutiny for the part it played in the change process was the role of the neighbourhood worker attached to Ragworth. Neighbourhood work is the term used in Cleveland to describe what is more usually called community work or development. Lees and Mayo (1984) describe how the concept has been transmuted since the 'Sixties into varying forms or hybrids which have emerged largely from differing ideologies.

The 'Sixties saw a burgeoning of community work projects to restore the kind of 'loss of community' that, for example, Young and Wilmott had described in "Family and Kinship in East London", and which was commonly blamed for social deprivation, the absence of the working class values of mutual support and of norms of law-abiding behaviour in children, etc. But by the end of the 'Sixties, elements of participation and grassroots pressure for

change were being introduced into the objectives of community work and being supported - for different reasons - by both the political right and left.

So by the beginning of the 'Seventies, three different strategies of community action were evident. The first was advocacy on behalf of the poor typified by the welfare rights movement; the second involved collective protest action by working-class groups with grievances over important issues such as the provision or improvement of housing; the third strategy emphasised participation by the poor in decisions affecting their lives in order to avoid the conflictual polarisation that had characterised earlier events. The essence of this latter approach was the encouragement of the use of formal democratic procedures and the supposed redundancy of protest action that would almost certainly follow. The flavour of this particular movement is stated in the work of the study group set up in the 'Sixties by the Gulbenkian Foundation (Younghusband, 1968).

Community work.. is part of the whole dilemma of how to reconcile the 'revolution of human dissent' with the large-scale organisation and economic and social planning which seem to be inseparably interwoven with the parallel revolution of rising expectations. This boils down to the problem of how to give meaning to democracy.. The question for community work is whether organisational structures can be devised and people trained to facilitate citizen participation and make it more effective.. In short, community work is a means of giving life to democracy.

An illustration of this approach, if one looks no further than the formal definition of its role, was the Community Development Programme of the 'Seventies.

In contrast, the official sponsorship for community development rested on the assumption that in expressing and discussing problems, that is in articulating community need, it would become possible to resolve

difficulties without open conflict...

The original conception of CDP was one of carefully controlled experiment aimed at tackling conditions of social deprivation by improving service delivery, encouraging self-help and participation, experimenting with new ways of providing social welfare and combining the skills in research with action in order to monitor and evaluate this new departure in meeting needs. (Lees and Mayo, 1984, p 23)

This view of community work anticipated the channeling of a community's energies and ideas into outcomes that were acceptable to the central and/or local state; in other words, it was partly seen as an agent for social control. In practice, however, this model of community work was far removed from what actually emerged. The work of the North Tyneside CDP, for example, involved the facilitation of tenant action to achieve aims that ran counter to those of the local authority. This outcome had been presaged by Halsey who pointed out that to assume that social problems could always be tackled in this reformist way ignored intractable conflicts of interest of a political and social kind (Halsey, 1970).

Another interpretation of community work - which appealed to the right - was based on the notion that the situation of the disadvantaged was of their own making and that community work could help them overcome their inadequacies by participation in decision-making, combatting apathy, and encouraging self-help to replace state intervention.

Elements of the non-conflictual, progress-by-voluntary-effort, philosophy outlined above can be found in the avowed objectives of Cleveland social service's neighbourhood work section, although they would have rejected any assumptions that the fault lay with the poor. But in addition, their aims encompassed a strong

commitment to identifying need and helping communities to win more resources for their area. The head of the neighbourhood work section in Cleveland defined it as:

A short-term measure for improving communication and creating more cohesion in communities experiencing difficulties through change or deprivation.

He identifies these three components:

- (a) Work with people in specific neighbourhoods to help identify local needs and meet them by developing resources within the community.
- (b) Work with members and officers of county and district councils and staff of other agencies to help ensure that policies and services are sensitive to the needs of particular neighbourhoods.
- (c) Social planning to meet the social and welfare needs of new communities and to anticipate the effects of environmental changes upon existing communities. (Gallant, 1984).

In general, community work in Cleveland has taken this approach of enabling communities to stake their claim to more resources by acting 'responsibly' and within the parameters of acceptable action as laid down by the authorities. To achieve this it has striven to:

- . Strengthen existing local organisations like residents' associations or establish new ones.
- . Help them identify local needs and find ways of winning and developing resources to satisfy them.
- . Encourage contacts and consultation between local people and those responsible for providing services so as to try and ensure that services are adequate for and sensitive to communities' needs.

In Ragworth the neighbourhood worker attempted to involve the residents in some of the problems of the estate, although in the beginning, as noted earlier, they were peripheral issues to do with community leisure. He admitted that overcoming apathy was very difficult, and this was no doubt largely because he was trying to mobilise action (although this was not a decision over which he initially had much control) around an issue that was relatively very trivial compared with the major ones of housing and environment. It was not until the furore created by the release of the survey report that these issues came to the surface in a major way and predominated. Once they had, his role assumed a greater importance as he helped the residents constitute an association with an organisational structure designed to make them much more effective in pressing their demands for change. And during the crucial months after the establishment of the residents' association and the start of modernisation work, he acted as advisor to the association in their campaign for change and facilitated liaison between residents on the one side and officers and members on the other.

Even before all this, it should be mentioned, he was an advocate of the social survey, and it was he - not Stockton Council - who initially approached the R&I Unit about the possibility of carrying out a survey in Ragworth. He was my main contact throughout with whom I developed a fruitful working relationship.

So, in spite of the formal objectives of community work in Cleveland, the neighbourhood worker's input was partly instrumental in bringing about radical change by forming part of a movement which actually challenged one sector of the local authority and

forced concessions from it. How this came to happen must be understood in terms of the complex change process that ensued after June 1980 and also in terms of the political orientation of the worker himself, both of which mediated and to a considerable extent overrode the formal - if implicit - proscription against direct conflict with the local state. While he helped steer the course of change, the motive power came from the residents themselves and would almost certainly have found expression in some form of protest irrespective of a community work presence. All he could do was to help direct it more effectively. Although his employment as a county council officer meant that his support role for the residents was potentially precarious, he was in a much more protected position than if he had been a borough council employee with the clearly divided loyalties that that would have involved. As it was, the direct challenge was to the borough, not the county.

The Ragworth experience bears strong similarities with - although, at the same time, it differs instructively from - the course of events on the South Meadow Well estate in North Tyneside where CDP involvement began four years before community work in Ragworth (CDP, 1978). The basic issue of gaining a commitment from the council to imminent modernisation was the same on both estates, but the style of community work differed in that the CDP workers embraced more overtly partisan objectives. They were regarded at times by the council as provocative and confrontational in supporting the tenants' cause, but given the council's treatment of their tenants, it is difficult to see how the kind of conciliatory, mediating role envisaged by the architects of the Community Development Project could have achieved the tenants' demands.

The first phase of action on the Meadow Well appeared to win a commitment from the council to modernise but this was reneged on a few months later when the estate was omitted from the council's housing plan. Clearly, this was a different political milieu from that of Stockton; until the mid-'Seventies, the council had been dominated by Tories and independents whose record of public sector housing provision had been poor. Their attitude to tenants during the demands for improvements, particularly in the 'Sixties, is typified by persistent attempts to blame them for the state of their housing when the fault lay mainly with the cheapness of its construction. But the Labour administration which came to power in 1974 did not deal in a sympathetic way with its tenants either.

As a consequence of the council going back on its promise to modernise, the tenants' renewed campaign against the council was much more aggressively directed with, for example, the setting up of action groups, lobbying of councillors, organising petitions, the production of a 'shock report' on the estate, and disruption of the housing committee. Ragworth tenants did not go so far as this - with the eventual support they received from the mayor they did not need to - but embarrassing pressure was maintained in both instances on Labour administrations. As the CDP report on the South Meadow Well campaign asserted, confrontation paid off.

One immediate point to burn into the memory is that it was when the tenants took the offensive in no uncertain terms that they got the results. Of particular importance was the explicitly political offensive on the Labour Party. North Tyneside's controlling Labour Group was threatened not only with the potentially crucial loss of seats in the Percy Ward, but with sustained political embarrassment around the housing issue (CDP, 1978).

Both Ragworth and South Meadow Well illustrate the catalytic nature of community work and why, in complex situations of change, it is so difficult to weigh its impact. In Ragworth it did not initiate or significantly motivate change; the driving force in the shape of anger over living conditions had been simmering for some time and finally manifested itself in protest when the report was publicised. The neighbourhood worker's main contribution was as an enabler, helping residents to organise for effective action, showing them how to mobilise the estate and equip themselves to deal with the council and the Press. He was certainly not a charismatic leader stirring the residents to protest. Indeed, without his presence the community action might well have been more militant and disruptive.

The Role of Research in Social Change

The role of the survey in the change process in Ragworth has already been briefly discussed, but I would like to take it a little further by considering it as an example of action research. The action research model was an integral part of the overall strategy of the CDP movement but, in terms of the expectations of the framers of CDP strategy, it was a failure. It was not the original intention that research in Ragworth should take an action research approach but in the event, a variant of that is what emerged.

In essence, action research is akin to what Bulmer (1982) calls the 'engineering model' of the relationship between research and policy. This approach has research providing the knowledge and understanding which will enable policy-makers to arrive at a solution to a problem usually on the basis of a one-off piece of

research. Action research, as conceived by the CDP strategists was more sophisticated in that research interacted with policy, feeding in information and insights to provide solutions, and then evaluating the applied solutions in order to refine them further.

Unfortunately, this was asking research to perform a function which was beyond it.

A further assumption found in the original model [of CDP].. is the belief in the 'superior vision' of research: that it could without difficulty discern success or failure, or that it had techniques to identify problems and priorities rapidly at the local level. Yet the conventional weapons of research are cumbersome; heavy fieldpieces dragged slowly into position, and aimed with difficulty, hardly suitable for the swift moving, rapidly changing targets of an action programme. (Lees and Smith, 1975).

The research-policy solution-implementation-evaluation model ultimately employed in Ragworth was not so ambitious. The first survey was an 'engineering model' application which clearly identified the problems and helped shape policy - although there were other influences, for example, from officers and members as well. However, it would be wrong to conclude that this strategy was carefully planned. Without a commitment from Stockton Council to use the research as a rational and empirical instrument of policy formulation, planning an action research approach would have been premature and over-optimistic. Given the narrow terms of reference of the survey at the outset, it was impossible to be too hopeful that it would achieve any significant improvements on the estate.

For reasons such as this, research strategies cannot always be determined in advance. The process is sometimes dynamic, depending on available resources, perhaps, and on perceiving research opportunities as events unfold. There may also occasionally be

'hidden agendas' in research strategies where the stated or ostensible objectives of a research project may hide other - informal - aims which can be potentially of greater significance. Certainly, in the case of Ragworth, the introduction of housing and environmental issues in addition to those on community leisure produced dramatically different consequences than would otherwise have been the case. Not that this broadening of the survey's aims was in any way devious; the interview schedule was circulated in advance and scrutinised in detail. Yet it might have been vetoed if its potential for change had been understood in advance by those who would have wished to avoid the community action that it precipitated.

As far as the survey conducted in 1984 is concerned, in view of the energy and resources that had gone into achieving the changes, evaluation in terms of how the residents perceived their altered environment, perhaps identifying any problems that had not been resolved or any remaining gaps in services, was obviously a desirable extension to the research project. And, of course, there was the urge to satisfy one's curiosity as to how far the events of the past few years had effected a real shift in the quality of life of the estate's residents. Given the procedures for generating research projects in the Research and Intelligence Unit, before I could begin it was necessary to find a client. It was agreed that the social services department should sponsor what would officially be regarded - in part at least - as an evaluation of the neighbourhood work input, although its scope was much wider than that.

In fact, it did fulfill this purpose insofar as it could, although in the complex and dynamic situation that obtained from 1980 onwards, measurement of community work's impact in isolation was impossible. The community worker's role was a catalytic one, stimulating and enabling, but there were too many other forces at work to single out his contribution and attempt to attribute causality. So what the second survey did was measure any improvement in terms of the subjective feedback from the residents. It should be mentioned that the cost of the survey was met from the Unit's research budget this time. Meetings were held with Derek Cook and the local councillors and agreement was reached for the survey to proceed, although one local councillor spoke against the survey. There was also a bitter aside from the same councillor about the manner of the release of the first report to the Press and a requested assurance that the same thing would not happen again. We said that the borough would have the report in advance as before, although Derek Cook pointed out that as this was a county initiative the borough was not in a position to make too many conditions even if they had wanted to.

Before moving on to consider the second survey in detail, to conclude this section it is worth expanding a little on an earlier point about the survey's influence. The survey report provided what was regarded by the agencies who had requested it as a technically authoritative account of conditions on Ragworth. To their credit, those involved - in the housing department especially - accepted its findings, and no-one made any attempt to undermine them. But even if they had wanted to, it could not readily have been dismissed as partisan by the authorities because it was carried out

by, as far as they were concerned, an 'outside', impartial researcher whom they had commissioned to do the study.

Lastly, although it had caused some annoyance to the residents because of the manner of its presentation in the Press, it did crystallise tenants' feelings and opinions about conditions on the estate. It was an account which, on the whole, they thought was accurate, and it perhaps represented a collective statement of how things were. On the other hand, it did not function like a call to arms; they did not rally round the report like a regiment around its colours for they did not need an outsider tell them how grim the estate was or to point out how badly they were being treated. But it was useful that it raised Ragworth as a political issue and that conditions there were well-documented and accepted as valid by their landlord, the council. It put that issue, at least, beyond contention.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Ragworth in 1984; The Second Survey

Background to the Survey

The second survey was carried out in the spring of 1984, about four and a half years after the first. The reasons for doing it were primarily to assess the impact of the improvements on the quality of life of the residents and to identify any remaining housing and environmental problems.

It had not been the express intention of the three bodies who commissioned the first survey to evaluate the consequences of the programme they had implemented. However, in view of the way the policy had been arrived at, the resources that had been devoted to the whole exercise, and the questions it raised about this particular use of research as a policy instrument, a follow-up evaluation seemed a necessary and desirable objective. Consequently, I sought support for a second survey, and it went into the field in March, 1984.

As in 1979, an interview was attempted with a representative of every household on the estate, although by 1984, because of the demolition of some of the 'no-fines' stock, there were now 335 dwellings as opposed to the 393 at the time of the first survey. Chiefly for two reasons, it was decided not to try and interview the same respondents as before, desirable as this would have been in reducing sampling error. One reason was the expected high

population turnover on the basis of the findings in 1979 when almost a half of the respondents had been resident at their address for four years or less. Another reason was that for reasons of confidentiality no records were kept of respondents' names and addresses, and self-identification after more than four years would have been unreliable. It would have been unsafe because of possible confusion with other surveys and because the interviews in 1979 were typically conducted in the presence of other household members, and spouses in particular were wont to make unsolicited responses. After such a lapse of time there would have been confusion in some people's minds as to who the original respondent had been.

In the event, these doubts were substantiated, for while 64 percent of respondents claimed they were living in Ragworth at the time of the first survey, only 44 percent of them could remember any member of their household being interviewed, even though someone was interviewed in over 90 percent of homes.

As in the first survey, the intention was to interview either the head of household or his/her spouse by interviewing a member of each sex on an alternate-address basis. In the case of one-adult households, an interview was attempted irrespective of the gender sequence. The result was that, as in 1979, more women than men were interviewed because more households were headed by females (63 percent of respondents were female). Out of the 335 dwellings, 52 were ineligible because, for example, they were unoccupied or were retail premises. Of the remaining 283 addresses, interviews were achieved at 263 of them to give a response rate of 93 percent - as in 1979.

Three sets of survey data are usually included in tables in this chapter: the 1979 and 1984 results from the estate surveys, and, for broader contextual comparison, Cleveland Social Survey data, mostly from the 1984 survey.

Changes in the Population

The same demographic variables as in 1979 were measured again to determine what changes had taken place in the intervening years. Some shifts in the population characteristics would have been expected given that 36 percent of the households we contacted were incomers since the first survey, and also, of course, because of the 'ageing' of the households that were still there from the time of the first survey.

The reduction in housing stock through demolition resulted in a drop in population size of about 200 from approximately 1300 in 1979 to 1100 in 1984. However, as the first table shows, the age distribution of the population had hardly changed.

Table 7.1

Age Distribution of the Population - Ragworth and Stockton, 1979 and 1984

Age	1979	Stockton	
		1984	1984
0 - 4 years	16%	16%	9%
5 - 15	29%	30%	18%
16 - 64	52%	53%	61%
<u>65 years and more</u>	<u>3%</u>	<u>1%</u>	<u>12%</u>
Totals	100%	100%	100%
Bases	1207	1008	1497

While, superficially, the composition of the estate's population appeared unchanged, this hides the consequences of inward and outward migration, and an examination of these reveals a more interesting picture which takes account of the dynamics of change. One way of doing this is to split the sample into those respondents who were living in Ragworth in 1979 and were still there in 1984 and those who moved onto the estate after the first survey. For simplicity, they will be referred to as the 'originals' and 'newcomers' respectively. Crosstabulation of this 'length-of-residence' dichotomy with age shows some interesting differences.

Table 7.2

Age Distribution by Length of Residence - Ragworth, 1984

Age	'Originals'	'Newcomers'
0 - 4 years	11%	28%
5 - 15	32%	25%
16 - 64	56%	47%
65 years and more	1%	0%
Totals	100%	100%
Bases	666	342

The population remaining from 1979 changed in that while the proportion of 0 to 4 year-olds had decreased from 16 to 11 percent, the next three age bands had all increased slightly in proportion. The percentage of retired residents, however, had shrunk to a mere one percent. Two obvious explanations present themselves for these shifts, although it is not possible to disentangle their respective effects. One is the result of outward migration which is likely to

have left its mark on the remaining population, and the other is that inevitably the non-movers had aged.

Nevertheless, more or less the original population balance as far as age is concerned was restored by the influx of a large proportion of young families containing children under 16 years.

Table 7.3

Household Type - Ragworth and Stockton, 1979 and 1984

	Ragworth		Stockton
	1979	1984	1984
1 or 2 persons aged			
16 to 59	6%	11%	18%
1 or 2 persons at least			
one aged 60 years or more	10%	5%	14%
3 or more persons aged			
16 or more	8%	10%	29%
Any number of persons,			
youngest under 5 years	41%	43%	18%
Any number of persons,			
youngest 5 - 15 years	35%	31%	21%
Totals	100%	100%	100%
Bases	308	263	542

There was a small increase during the four and a half years after the first survey in younger all-adult households and a corresponding decline in all-adult households containing at least one member aged 60 years or over. There had also been a slight increase in households with children under 5 and a decrease in those with older children. Yet, the overall picture of a large proportion of young families and a low proportion of all-adult

households remained much the same. But again, household type cross-tabulated by length of residence shows the underlying changes that took place between the two surveys.

Table 7.4

Household Type by Length of Residence - Ragworth, 1984

	'Originals'	'Newcomers'
1 or 2 persons aged		
16 - 59 years	10%	13%
1 or 2 persons at least		
one aged 60 years or more	7%	2%
3 or more persons aged		
16 or more	15%	1%
Any number of persons,		
youngest under 5 years	30%	66%
Any number of persons,		
youngest 5 - 15 years	38%	18%
Totals	100%	100%
Bases	169	94

These distributions are consistent with those for age in Table 7.2, with a relative loss of households with very young children from the 'original' sub-group and increases in all-adult households and those containing older children. The proportion of households with at least one member of 60 years or more had - expectedly on the evidence of Table 7.2 - declined. The 'newcomers' sub-group, however, is remarkable for the percentage of young families containing children below school age. There was little evidence that the Project Group's recommendation that the allocation policy should be reviewed had been adopted. The first

survey report had demonstrated the pressures and stresses exerted on the estate by the large number of children it had had to absorb. If any efforts had been made to address this issue, they had clearly made no impact, and this particular problem was very much of the same order of magnitude as in 1979.

Added to this, the proportion of lone-parent families had risen between 1979 and 1984 from 20 percent to 27 percent. In Stockton as a whole, the CSS results showed a rise from 3.4 percent in 1979 to 4.5 percent in 1983 - which is just as likely to be a result of sampling error as a real change. In the case of this variate, proportionally fewer such households were lost to the estate by out-migration after 1979. So, in fact, the proportion went up, with 25 percent of the 'original' households containing a lone-parent by 1984. There is no way of telling how much of this increase is due to more lone-parents being left behind - for whatever reason - after 1979 and how much to their generation within the existing population. Among the in-migrants since 1979, approaching a third (31 percent) of households contained a lone-parent.

Changes in Economic Activity

In September 1979 the unemployment rate for the Tees District was 9.4 percent; by March 1984 it was 20.2 percent. Given that the low-skilled are disproportionately affected by unemployment in economic recessions, it was inevitable that Ragworth would be hard-hit. In fact, the rate on the estate doubled from 33.2 percent to 66.3 percent. The way this changed the economic activity status of adults on the estate is shown in the next table.

Table 7.5

Economic Activity of Adults Aged 16 or More - Ragworth and Stockton, 1979 and 1984

	Ragworth		Stockton	
	1979	1984	1979	1984
Working full-time (30+ hours)	29%	13%	46%	39%
Working part-time (10-30 hours)	6%	4%	7%	8%
Working part-time (up to 10 hours)	1%	1%	2%	1%
Unemployed	18%	34%	8%	10%
Chronic sick	6%	4%	2%	2%
Retired	4%	2%	10%	10%
Student	1%	3%	2%	3%
<u>Housewives & others</u>	<u>35%</u>	<u>39%</u>	<u>23%</u>	<u>28%</u>
Totals	100%	100%	100%	101%
Bases	661	536	1108	1492

The stark change over the four and a half year period was the halving of the proportion of people in paid work on Ragworth from 36 percent of all adults to 18 percent and the virtual doubling of the number registered as unemployed. It is clear that these changes were not a result of large movements in the relative proportions of the economically active and inactive on the estate, for these hardly changed in the time between the two surveys.

So for every three people who were economically active in 1984, two were without a job, and even then, 38 percent of those in work were only working part-time. Looking just at heads of households, out of the 263 households in the 1984 survey, only 28 had a full-time working head. Economic activity is another variate which is related to length of residence.

Table 7.6

Economic Activity by Length of Residence - Ragworth, 1984

	'Originals'	'Newcomers'
Working full-time or part-time	20%	12%
Unemployed	32%	38%
Chronic sick	6%	1%
Retired	3%	0%
Student	4%	1%
<u>Housewives & others</u>	<u>36%</u>	<u>48%</u>
Totals	101%	100%
Bases	377	159

These two sub-groups had virtually the same proportion of economically active members at around 50 percent, but the residual group from 1979 had fared better in employment terms than the newcomers. The economically inactive also differed between the two groups, notably in the greater percentage of 'housewives' among the more recent arrivals. This indicates a larger fraction of young mothers, many of whom had never worked, and who, although some of them at least would no doubt have liked paid work, saw little prospect of achieving it and so defined themselves as housewives rather than as actively looking for a job, i.e. as unemployed.

Table 7.7

Occupational Classification of HOHs - Ragworth and Stockton, 1979
and 1984

	Ragworth		Stockton	
	1979	1984	1979	1984
Non-manual (R.G's Groups I, II and IIIi)	4%	5%	33%	37%
Skilled manual (Group IIIii)	42%	33%	41%	38%
Semi- or unskilled (Groups IV & V)	46%	51%	26%	25%
<u>Not applicable</u>	<u>8%</u>	<u>11%</u>	<u>--</u>	<u>--</u>
Totals	100%	100%	100%	100%
Bases	263	308	493	542

These groupings correspond with the Registrar General's Social Class Categorisation.

Most of those in the 'not applicable' group were single women who had never had a job. This table shows the further 'de-skilling' of what was already, in 1979, an almost exclusively manual work-force as far as heads of households were concerned. Further light is thrown on this process by again comparing the 'originals' and 'newcomers' dichotomy.

Table 7.8

Occupational Classification of HOHs by Length of Residence -

Ragworth, 1984

	'Originals'	'Newcomers'
Non-manual (R.G's Groups I, II and IIIi)	4%	7%
Skilled manual (Group IIIii)	36%	29%
Semi- or unskilled (Groups IV & V)	52%	49%
<u>Not applicable</u>	<u>8%</u>	<u>15%</u>
Totals	100%	100%
Bases	169	94

The remaining population from 1979 had lost skilled manual HOHs, the low-skilled being somewhat disproportionately 'stranded' on the estate. The main features of the newcomers was the lower proportion of skilled manual HOHs and the high percentage who were unclassifiable through never having had a paid job.

The results of the first survey depicted the estate as having a very young population with three out of four households containing children of school age or below. Superficially, little appeared to have changed by 1984 except that an examination of the dynamics of inward and outward migration revealed that the fraction of the households remaining from the first survey exhibited some marked differences from the post-1979 influx. In particular, the latter included a very high proportion of under-five year-olds and lone-parent families. These newcomers were also economically even more disadvantaged in unemployment terms than the host population remaining from 1979.

The level of disadvantage found in 1979 had not mitigated at all; in fact, it had increased. The overwhelming deterioration lay in the doubling of unemployment to a level which, less than a decade earlier, would have been unthinkable. For most residents, their opportunities were circumscribed by a psychological and financial ring fence of unemployment and State benefits. In this respect, Ragworth was even more of a residualised estate than in 1979. The rest of this chapter examines the degree to which attempts to improve the material conditions of the estate, as well to alleviate some of the social stress described in 1979, had succeeded in reversing that other dimension of residualisation, namely, the inferior quality of housing and environment.

Perceptions of Housing Quality

The housing improvement programme agreed by Stockton Borough Council in 1981 was actually a partial modernisation scheme unlike the comprehensive schemes that had been carried out on neighbouring estates over the previous decade or so. Moreover, on the evidence of tenants, not all dwellings appear to have been treated the same. For example, some had rooms divided, some were rewired, had floors re-tiled, etc., while others did not. However, every house had had central heating installed and new kitchen and bathroom fittings, and had been redecorated inside. A substantial proportion of tenants had moved in after modernisation and were uncertain about what work had been done. The rest recited a variety of improvements (not that they were always perceived as such as is remarked on later) which, in addition to those just mentioned, included new interior doors, garden fencing, new gas fires, loft insulation and, in the case of the 'no-fines' houses, external wall resurfacing.

Some methodological considerations concerning migration of tenants in the inter-survey period are dealt with in the Appendix.

That perceptions of the quality of their accommodation had changed since 1979 is obvious from the next table which shows that although satisfaction with the house overall is still well below the borough level it has, nevertheless, risen.

Table 7.9

Changes in Overall Satisfaction with the House, 1979 and 1980

Satisfaction score	Ragworth		Stockton	
	1979	1984	1978	1984
Ten	14%	19%	21%	24%
Six to nine	44%	53%	68%	65%
Five	12%	12%	5%	6%
One to four	16%	11%	5%	3%
<u>Zero</u>	<u>14%</u>	<u>5%</u>	<u>1%</u>	<u>2%</u>
Totals	100%	100%	100%	100%
Bases	308	263	545	542

In common with most of the data for Stockton in this chapter, the differences between the two years are very small, most of them could be attributable to sampling error, and they betoken no real change in satisfaction in the borough as a whole. Any fluctuations in Ragworth, therefore, cannot be explained merely as part of a broader movement in satisfaction with housing. The appreciable increase in satisfaction on the estate is statistically significant, and the underlying causes are revealed by looking at some of the detailed features of housing. However, in view of the resources that were devoted to improvement, the rise in satisfaction might have been expected to exceed that of Table 7.9,

and explanations for this perhaps disappointing result soon began to emerge as residents elaborated on their satisfaction ratings.

In the first survey, the coldness of the houses was clearly an important reason for respondents' low assessments of their housing. Many complained of the lack of adequate heating then, so given the installation of central heating - which many residents asked for - a substantial rise in satisfaction would not have been unexpected.

Table 7.10

Changes in Satisfaction With House Warmth in Winter, 1979 and 1984

Satisfaction score	Ragworth		Stockton	
	1979	1984	1978	1984
Ten	6%	22%	24%	27%
Six to nine	15%	25%	42%	46%
Five	11%	10%	8%	9%
One to four	35%	28%	17%	15%
Zero	33%	15%	9%	3%
Totals	100%	100%	100%	100%
Bases	308	263	545	542

While there was a substantial upward shift in satisfaction, bearing in mind that every dwelling on the estate had central heating by now, the level was still well below that in Stockton. As it happened, the latter showed an increase over the four and a half year period, although it was much smaller than on the estate. Why central heating installation did not have an even bigger impact on Ragworth is explained in the comments of tenants which they offered by way of explanation for their satisfaction score. This issue was raised again particularly in answer to the question on how far they

considered the housing had been improved, and so it will be returned to below after other housing factors have been discussed.

The reason given by most residents for being discontented with their ability to create a comfortably warm environment was the cooling effect of draughts around doors but especially around windows. Some draught-proofing had been included in the modernisation process, but it appeared to have little impact on the problem. So although there was a definite improvement in this aspect - as one comment below demonstrates - the improvements had not extended to replacing ill-fitting and rotten window frames and this was a very serious shortcoming as far as many residents were concerned, with over a third complaining about draughts. The only other complaint of note was the expense of running the system.

It makes a lot of difference to when we had a coal fire - it's much easier.

It costs a fortune - you have to have the radiators on all day. It's no good having them on for an hour because the room gets cold straightaway.

Due to draughts from the windows and gaps in doors, heating doesn't solve the problem.

I can't afford the cost of central heating. It costs £17 a week for the gas fire alone.

Draughty windows and doors let the heat out almost as quickly as it builds up.

As would be expected, improved heating had affected satisfaction with damp and condensation, 53 percent giving a rating in the top half of the scale compared with 40 percent in 1979. Yet this was still well below the 77 percent in Stockton who were more satisfied than not. There was, however a change from the previous survey in that complaints then were about dampness and condensation

throughout the house while by 1984 they were more confined to kitchens and bathrooms, so it was at least more limited in its effects.

In 1979, noise in the house gave annoyance to the majority of people, and the increase from 35 percent to 50 percent in those choosing a score of more than 5 is very largely due to demolition of the houses closest to the railway. By the second survey, noise from trains and children had been replaced by the problem of domestic noise from neighbours as the most frequent complaint. The Project Group's recommendation that this problem should be tackled in some way was not - regrettably for the residents - taken up.

You can hear them cough next door - the walls are paper-thin.

You can hear the people next door banging doors and pulling the toilet chain.

Dogs are on the prowl from six-thirty in the morning barking and creating a noise.

They're putting a playground right outside and it's going to be hell. At half past eleven there were twenty two kids playing there the other night.

A much higher rating was given to the outlook from the house in the second survey. Most notable was the reduction from 31 percent to 10 percent in those feeling complete dissatisfaction (i.e. a score of zero) while at the opposite end of the scale, 20 percent were now completely satisfied (score of 10) compared with only 8 percent before. Most of those who complained in 1984 just mentioned the monotony of overlooking other houses while before the main complaint was about unsightly houses and gardens.

Residents were more satisfied with their gardens in 1984, although roughly the same proportions complained about its size and the poor soil quality as before. What had changed was that fewer complained of vandalism to gardens (2 percent compared with 9 percent) and while around 1 in 10 criticised the lack of fencing in 1979, only a few raised this problem in 1984 and chiefly in relation to back-garden fencing.

The first survey unearthed a great deal of discontent with the council repair and maintenance service. I was asked to omit this question from the second survey by Stockton Council because nothing had been implemented by way of reorganisation of the service and so it was assumed that there would therefore be no change in residents' views. Comments about the service nevertheless emerged when respondents were asked if they had any other or general points to make about their housing - after the more focused questions had been asked. It is not possible to say how representative they were of all the tenants, but in themselves they did not betoken any change since 1979.

We're waiting for new window frames at the back - this one is rotten - and it needs new floorboards upstairs - they're all rotten. They've been coming with weatherproof paint for a year and we're still waiting.

The central heating pipe is hanging off the wall and the bathroom basin has been badly fitted. The kitchen door is off because they didn't fix it properly. You wait ages before the council comes to fix things. Even though faults are reported no-one comes.

I've had to buy a door for downstairs. The council gave us £40 to redecorate and it cost us £400. There were no floorboards upstairs - we had to re-new them ourselves. We were told if we didn't stay in this house we would be put on the street and our grand-daughter, who we've adopted, would be taken into care. We have photos of the

state of this house before we started on it - including excreta all over the walls.

In the period between the surveys the council had been in consultation with the Department of the Environment's Priority Estates Project who had advised them to decentralise their repair service on Ragworth and establish an estate-based service run from an office on the estate. But since this would not have been established by the time of the second survey it was felt that the results would give an inaccurate impression of the council's efforts to make improvements.

The estate office was subsequently established with the aim of a more rapid response to repair requests by its repair and maintenance team. It also served as a rent office and housed officers who were responsible for allocating tenants sent them by the central department. They claimed to be more responsive to tenants, to be more in touch and accessible, to keep on top of arrears problems better than if they had been centrally sited, and to have reduced the numbers of void properties.

Although I have no evidence from the consumers of the service to confirm or deny these claims, the Priority Estates Project's own research elsewhere in Britain lends support to the view that estate-based services are an improvement on centrally organised ones (Power, 1987). In addition, one of the conclusions of a study by the University of Glasgow Centre for Housing Research was that in general de-centralisation of management services led to better delivery without increased costs (MacLennan et al, 1988). This question of the Priority Estates' approach to housing management is considered more fully in Chapter 8.

While the increases in satisfaction with housing were not dramatic as a result of modernisation, they did signify an improvement in housing quality. As well as these straight comparisons at two points in time, respondents were also asked more directly to what extent, if any, they felt that the changes had improved their house and curtilage. The next table analyses the replies of the 169 respondents who were living on the estate before the modernisation process started.

Table 7.11

Extent to Which House Has Been Improved - Pre-Modernisation

Residents

To a great extent	23%
To a fair extent	33%
To a small extent	28%
Not at all	10%
<u>Unsure</u>	<u>6%</u>
Total	100%
Base	169

With almost a quarter considering that their housing situation had been improved to a great extent and a third to a fair extent, the improvement scheme had undoubtedly enhanced the quality of life of many of the estate's residents in some degree at least. Nevertheless, the input of resources, if they had been deployed optimally, might have been expected to bring even greater benefits in their wake.

Looking at tenants' reasons for their assessment of the improvements, the extra and more convenient heating capacity is mentioned most often. Negatively, an equal number criticised the

failure to cure the problem of draughty and leaking windows, and the poor quality of the workmanship was raised quite frequently. Another point that was mentioned often was that by comparison with neighbouring estates the improvement programme on Ragworth had been less comprehensive and thorough. The first respondent quoted below from the 'Forties-built Dumbarton Avenue reported having new fencing, a partitioned room, central heating, rewiring, floors tiled and doors renewed downstairs, loft insulation, a new sink unit and cupboards in the kitchen, a new bathroom suite and toilet, and complete redecoration. He thought it had achieved improvement 'to a great extent,' in contrast to the second respondent below whose house in the same road had had identical modernisation but which left her feeling that the improvement was only 'to a small extent.'

The solid fuel stove in the kitchen before was dirty - the gas central heating now means we have heating upstairs. The kitchen is now much pleasanter to work in. But modern windows would be a further improvement. The French window in the living room has a rotten frame and needs renewing and the windows here are still draughty.

I thought they would have put new windows in and new doors upstairs. They should have put new skirting boards and door frames in. And it's very badly painted - the front door has no gloss paint on, only undercoat. I like this house but I feel they could have done better with the big lot of money they spent on these houses.

It's warm - they were freezing before modernisation and very damp. The men were very good and put the radiator just where I wanted it... There are plenty of power points and they fitted the kitchen out beautifully - everything easy to get at and plenty of cupboards and shelves.

Examples of the unalloyed praise expressed by this last resident were rare, as was such approval of the workmen who carried out the refurbishment. The second respondent above thought the

money should have achieved better results; some of the residents quoted next are unequivocal in their explanations of why it did not, while others assert that the council was anything but sensitive to what they wanted. These next two respondent did not think any improvement had been brought about.

They were all cowboys on the job. Poor workmanship and cheap jobs done - I would call it half-modernisation. They've made it worse because it's colder. It costs more to heat, there are draughts through the windows. The door frames are falling apart and the stairs are fitted wrong. The council admit it is wrong but have done nothing about it - I will sue them! I hate it. The fire-place is in the wrong place and pipes from the heating are all on show. The fences were not replaced at the back and we had a beautiful garden before and they left it a wreck.

The existing central heating had to be removed to allow the council to install their own and the sink unit which I had installed had to be taken out to let them put in their units and so on. I just feel it's been a waste of time as I had modernised myself and this all had to be removed to let the council do what they saw fit - it's no advantage to me at all. I don't like chip-board on the walls all over the house. To do this the workmen pulled off perfectly good paper and 'Contour' in the kitchen and bathroom which had cost me a considerable amount of money. We had to have new carpets as they fitted different fire surrounds which meant the existing carpets no longer fitted. I am just wholly dissatisfied.

For a kick off, there are gaps in all the windows and the putty doesn't keep the rain out, it all pours in. The bathroom basin is holding on by one screw and the wallpaper is dead rough - all coming off..all the floorboards upstairs are loose..The council used real cowboys to do the work. We are all disgusted.

The improvements are over-ruled by the damage that was done. Cowboys did the work. Door frames have been split, floorboards are loose, there's frequent flooding from the radiators, radiators fall off the walls..I'd like a good contractor in to repair all the damage and I'd like new windows.

I've said it all - the modernisation was just a 'con'. Most people feel let down. It was just a shoddy job to shut us up, good enough for the crowd who live on Ragworth. We are classed as scum.

It is a common observation that when talking about and evaluating the quality of public services, respondents have more to say and seem more eloquent in delivering their opinions when they have a complaint. No doubt this has much to do with a satisfied need losing its potency while an unsatisfied or only partially satisfied need often provokes a more urgent and compelling response. This must offer some explanation for the predominance of negative comments from respondents quoted above. But these comments represent a very substantial feeling of discontent and frustrated expectations, even though it is clear also that definite advances were made in improving the housing conditions on Ragworth. There are clearly lessons to be learnt here for any housing authority carrying out estate improvement schemes.

The Quality of the Estate Environment

Broadening the perspective to embrace the social and physical context of the whole estate and of the local area, the 11-point scale was again employed to measure satisfaction with the same range of features as in the first survey before asking for a comparison of the pre-change with the post-change situation.

However, the same open-ended questions on what they liked and disliked about the estate were asked first to allow respondents to express their feelings about those aspects of the estate which were uppermost in their minds. In 1979 four main areas of concern emerged over dislikes about Ragworth: the general appearance of the estate, the type of people, the external appearance of houses and gardens and children's play facilities. By 1984 some very marked changes had taken place. The house and garden hardly featured at all (mentioned by only 4 percent compared with 38 percent in 1979),

and the number of times that the estate's general appearance was mentioned had dropped from a total of 45 percent to 13 percent. Somewhat fewer complained about play facilities for children. Yet almost as many made critical comments about the people who lived there, and vandalism was mentioned more often. In fact, these latter two issues were now the main problems nominated by 37 percent and 22 percent respectively. It is one measure of how far the estate had improved that 16 percent could think of nothing that they disliked about it when in 1979 everyone criticised some aspect of it.

Respondents became most animated when talking about others who lived on the estate and to a lesser extent about noise and dogs. And the improvements to the estate had not erased Ragworth's bad reputation as far as some residents were concerned.

The houses have been modernised but the people are still the same. There are some mucky ones and some clean. But we're all tarred with the same brush - if you live in Ragworth outsiders think you're all the same.

The attitude of people, the bad language. We don't come from round here so they don't like us. We have been robbed twice, and I'm trying to do something with the garden and they walk right through it as a short-cut. They couldn't give a monkey's for anyone, no regard of right or wrong.

You're degraded. It's the name 'Ragworth' - people turn away when they find you live at Ragworth.

As long as people leave me alone I'm alright but people throw stones at my windows. There's one broken now and my nerves are in a bad way. The bother I've had from people round here. I had a handicapped boy who doesn't live with me now but people used to shout names at us and my nerves are in a state. I sit waiting for windows to be broken.

The people - they're scruffy and foul-mouthed. Kids are out at all hours of the night and dogs are running

around all the time pulling bin-bags open and scattering litter about.

The kids, the people - the way they live. If they don't want anything they just throw it onto the road or into other people's gardens. They live like pigs.

The persistent stigmatisation of the estate was still causing embarrassment and a sense of shame by association among residents. A few years later in 1989 Stockton Council attempted to combat this problem on the adjacent Eastbourne estate by adopting the 'Sellafield ploy' of renaming the estate in the hope of expunging its reputation in the borough. For many years this estate had also been beset by similar problems to Ragworth. In fact, one informant - a senior council officer - considered that it had been in a much worse condition even than Ragworth. While there had been a first phase of clearance and improvement in the early 'Seventies, ten years or so later there was a lot of pressure from residents and ward councillors - being only too aware of the improvement of Ragworth - for further work to be carried out. As well as the housing, there was serious vandalism, the community centre being a constant target. By 1989, according to this informant, the number of voids had at least quadrupled during the previous four years.

The council's solution was to enter into a partnership scheme which involved them in improving part of the stock for continuing public sector renting while the Bradford and Northern Housing Association took over the rest of the estate to improve the housing for resale and reletting at 'economic' rents. Further, an elderly persons' new-build development is planned within the estate. By March of 1989, the first tenants had returned to their newly-modernised homes and the following two and a half years were

to see the renovation of a total of 234 homes. However, the name 'Eastbourne' has been replaced by the more fragrant 'Primrose Hill'. While this may be partly out of consideration for the feelings of the council tenants, no doubt fears over the possible difficulty of selling and letting houses at high rents on an estate with Eastbourne's reputation must have had much bearing on the decision.

In reply to the question on what they liked about the estate, a larger proportion of respondents were able to say something positive than in 1979. The shops and the convenient bus service were still among the best-liked features. It was seemingly paradoxical in view of the dislike directed against other residents that almost a fifth of respondents also said that they liked the friendliness of the people. However, that such opposing views should be held simply testifies to the diversity of types of tenant along with the usual patterning of allocation leading to some households finding themselves with compatible neighbours while others did not. And of course, some residents, while deploring what they regarded as too many troublesome families on the estate, will have had friendly and supportive relationships with others. Again, it is indicative of some degree of improvement that only 21 percent said they liked nothing about Ragworth compared with 52 percent saying the same thing in 1979.

It's near to the shops, there's a community centre for the kids and all our relatives live near us.

People are very friendly and I've got good neighbours.

My neighbours are excellent. I've lived here for seven years on my own as a one-parent family and they've given me a lot of support. They're not neighbours who've

always been in and out, but if I need anything they come and help me.

The first survey revealed a low level of satisfaction overall with the local area as a place to live. Fifty four percent gave a rating of under 5 compared with only 3 percent in Stockton. A significant upward shift had occurred by the second survey.

Table 7.12

Overall Satisfaction with the Local Area as a Place to Live, 1979 and 1984

Satisfaction score	Ragworth		Stockton	
	1979	1984	1978	1985
Ten	6%	19%	19%	22%
Six to nine	26%	44%	73%	63%
Five	14%	9%	5%	7%
One to four	24%	19%	2%	6%
Zero	30%	9%	1%	1%
Totals	100%	100%	100%	99%
Bases	308	263	545	484

Although satisfaction is still below that for the borough, the intervening years between surveys had seen a marked closing of the gap with the percentage of respondents rating the local area in the top half of the scale virtually doubling. In order to gain some idea of what had most impinged on residents' perceptions of their changed environment, they were asked to describe the changes made to the estate during the previous three years. Of course, relative newcomers were not usually aware of all the innovations and improvements, and even the longer-established residents did not mention all of them by any means, either because of imperfect

recall or perhaps because they were of little interest or relevance to them. In the next table the percentages are based on the number of respondents, and since many reported more than one change, the percentage total exceeds 100.

Table 7.13

Changes Perceived on Ragworth During the Previous Three Years.

	Percentages
Trees and flower beds planted	26
Improved access/paving around the shops	20
Houses demolished	20
Old people's bungalows built	16
Roads and pavements improved	14
Community centre opened	12
Traffic barrier erected	11
Open spaces landscaped/tidied up	10
Rent/housing office opened	8
More parking space	8
More play areas for children	8
Community house opened	7
Other	14
Don't know/none	18
Base	263

It appears to have been the more visual or aesthetic improvements that were foremost in residents' minds rather than the social and welfare amenities. However, this should not be taken to mean that the community house and community centre were not providing a valued service. The community house was used as a baby clinic, a base for the family planning service, for welfare rights

and legal advice, as a councillor's surgery and library, for coffee mornings, and its telephone was available for residents' use (there was no public kiosk on the estate at that time). Fifty two percent said they had used the community house at least once, nearly everyone saying that it provided a useful service. Virtually the same proportion said that they or a member of their household had used the community centre during the past two years. They mainly mentioned its use as a youth centre, and its relevance to changes in the level of vandalism on the estate is discussed later in the chapter.

General satisfaction with the estate had risen, as Table 7.12 shows, but what of the detailed features that often revealed so much dissatisfaction in 1979? One of the few which revealed higher satisfaction than the borough average then was the primary schools, and by 1984 satisfaction had increased further with 46 percent offering a scale rating of 10 against 19 percent in the borough.

The four aspects of the physical environment which engendered much dissatisfaction four years earlier had, by 1984, clearly improved as far as residents were concerned. More were satisfied with the state of the roads and footpaths, only 34 percent scoring 0 to 4 compared with 66 percent before. The main criticisms in the first survey were cracked and uneven pavements and potholed and uneven roads but the proportions making these complaints dropped from 43 to 24 percent and 20 to 5 percent respectively. The most frequent comment made in the second survey was that the roads had been, or were being, improved. However, as many residents were still complaining about the broken glass and litter scattered around.

Fouling of roads and footpaths by loose dogs and broken glass and bricks left there by kids playing.

Parts of trees, wrecked cars left on the road, big bricks all over the place and the paving stones are broken in lots of places.

It's all getting done now - it should be great when its finished.

In 1979 nearly three times as many as in the borough had registered a low satisfaction score with the amount of air pollution, but since then the area had been declared a smokeless zone, and this had led to a marked increase in satisfaction.

Table 7.14

Satisfaction with Air Purity, 1979 and 1984

Satisfaction score	Ragworth		Stockton	
	1979	1984	1978	1984
Ten	3%	21%	18%	16%
Six to nine	35%	52%	57%	51%
Five	14%	10%	8%	9%
One to four	27%	12%	14%	18%
<u>Zero</u>	<u>21%</u>	<u>5%</u>	<u>3%</u>	<u>6%</u>
Totals	100%	100%	100%	100%
Bases	308	263	545	542

This is one of the few aspects where the increase in satisfaction takes Ragworth above the borough-wide level. Given that the prohibition of domestic fires removed the most frequent complaint about air quality, a large decrease in dissatisfaction was predictable, other things being equal. Although many fewer had any complaint in 1984, smoke from bonfires, scrap-burning and fumes and dirt from industry were complained of most.

You're joking asking that question in this filthy place. They're always lighting fires and burning rubbish.

It's clean now since the clean air scheme and the gas fires.

You get smells in the air from I.C.I., fumes from burning plastic off the wires - from the garden opposite.

Great! We all have gas fires - there's no problems with the washing getting dirty now.

The third environmental feature - the general appearance of the local area - provoked a great deal of criticism in the first survey, much of it concerned with the external appearance of houses and gardens. The follow-up survey recorded a significant improvement here, too.

Table 7.15

Satisfaction with the General Appearance of the Local Area, 1979 and 1984

Satisfaction score	Ragworth		Stockton	
	1979	1984	1978	1984
Ten	1%	8%	15%	18%
Six to nine	16%	45%	65%	55%
Five	11%	15%	8%	9%
One to four	39%	24%	10%	15%
Zero	33%	8%	2%	3%
Totals	100%	100%	100%	100%
Bases	308	263	545	542

The improvements had clearly effected a large change in residents' perceptions of their immediate surroundings. While complaints about the house and garden had receded, the failure of tenants to maintain their gardens still rankled a substantial

minority of residents, as did the quantity of litter and rubbish lying about the estate.

The estate isn't quite finished yet. If they get it finished and the trees growing it will be better. It'll take another year or two before we see the benefit of the trees.

Terrible. They don't look after the property or gardens on this estate and this is what gives it its bad name.

It's improved a lot since the houses were improved. It used to look like a slum. But a lot of people in Dunoon Close have scrap cars, fridges and rubbish in their gardens, and if they make them dispose of it it would improve the appearance. Everyone else is trying to keep their properties nice and clean.

The roads are often dirty when the workmen are about, but people are trying to keep their gardens tidy more than they did before.

Now it's all done it's champion. All the gardens have been done and they've stopped them keeping horses and carts in their gardens.

The fourth environmental aspect - noise - while falling well short of the borough level of satisfaction, was less of a nuisance than in 1979. By 1984 52 percent gave a score of above five compared to 37 percent before. As in the case of noise associated with the house, fewer now complained of trains (21 percent against 29 percent) and children playing outside (9 percent compared with 19 percent). Demolition of housing close to the railway has obviously accounted for the reduction in complaints, although less obviously, according to the first respondent quoted below, this housing also accommodated troublesome tenants. The diminution of noise from children is less readily explained, and is mainly attributable to the opening of the community centre which is discussed below when changes in vandalism are described.

It's much better than it used to be. There's not the fighting there used to be in this street before the houses were knocked down.

There's noise from the drunks at night fighting. And men repair cars - even in the middle of the night they're clattering and banging.

I find it very quiet here. In fact the kids go to bed without any trouble.

There are too many drunks and glue-sniffers, kids making a noise from five o'clock, and fights all over the place at night. You can hear them coming from the pub.

Vandalism

Chapter five described vandalism on the estate as a serious problem impinging on most households to some degree. It manifested itself in many ways, but especially in broken windows, wrecking of empty houses, creating a nuisance by throwing objects at and banging on doors and windows, break-ins and theft, and damage to gardens and fencing. By 1984, although it was still a considerable problem as the comments below testify, there had been a large reduction in dissatisfaction from the very high level of five years previous.

Table 7.16

Satisfaction with Freedom from Vandalism, 1979 and 1984

Satisfaction score	1979	1984
Ten	0%	7%
Six to nine	9%	35%
Five	9%	12%
One to four	40%	27%
<u>Zero</u>	<u>42%</u>	<u>19%</u>
Totals	100%	100%
Bases	308	263

(There is no data available for Stockton for this variable).

The same variety of acts of vandalism were complained of in 1984, although in general somewhat fewer residents complained about it. Moreover, although many people were clearly upset by vandals in 1984, a perusal of all the completed interview schedules by way of comparing responses for the two years clearly shows that, in terms of the length and emotional tone of their verbatim accounts and the extremity of the offences, a definite mitigation of this problem had taken place.

Lads break up property as soon as it's empty. You've got to be tough to live on this estate. A lad was giving me lip and I told him to clear off and he threw a brick. It missed but hit our window.

I got a railway sleeper through the back window and I've had writing on my walls and bricks in the garden.

It's not too bad - we haven't been bothered. It depends which part of it you live on. We have had windows broken and there's a lot of vandalism down by the shops. A neighbour had a tin of white paint thrown over her car.

It's quietened down now although my bedroom windows were broken by big seventeen year-olds throwing bricks.

There used to be a lot but all the kids have grown up that used to cause trouble. Now I've no bother.

My windows were broken with them throwing stones but it's much better than it used to be since the houses were improved.

It is not difficult to point to a number of likely explanations for the easing of this problem, although it is impossible to make causal inferences with any certainty. One innovation by Stockton was the introduction of a nightly security patrol intended particularly to protect empty properties. Both the council and the police are convinced of the efficacy of such patrols and they have since been extended to other run-down estates in the borough.

Another measure which has almost certainly played some part in the decrease of vandalism has been the erection of metal fencing. This has been much more resistant to efforts to destroy it and has had some effect in marking out territory i.e. the curtilage of each property, thereby making trespass and damage to gardens less easy than they were in 1979. The newly-erected fort may have created a diversion from destructive play although this is very speculative for it falls far short as an attraction to children of the adventure playground recommended in the policy report.

It seems likely that the opening of the community centre has also had an effect, even if it has done nothing more than divert children from playing in the streets. The youth club based in the centre accepts children of almost any age. On a visit to the centre in 1985 I spoke to the women from the estate who ran it as volunteers. They told me that it attracted some 80 or 90 children a session - which is a sizeable proportion of the estate's child

population. It was used by children of below school age up to those in their mid to late teens, the chief organiser being a matriarchal woman whom the children responded positively to and addressed as 'mum'. It was pointed out to me that although the centre is situated in the primary school grounds very close to the school buildings, damage to the school was then almost unheard of when in earlier years it had been a prime target for vandalism.

Another influence in the decline in vandalism may have been the overall material improvement in the estate. It is possible that, albeit a perhaps temporary phenomenon, the residents felt that they had discovered their collective power and exerted it successfully to win resources from the council. For a time the estate was a focus of interest and publicity followed by major investment and improvement. To the extent that this created a new-found sense of self-worth, it may be that such psychological change may have changed their perceptions of their environment which they now felt more in possession of and which they consequently valued more.

A belief which has gained credibility in recent years and has informed some policy initiatives aimed at reducing vandalism is that, in some measure, physical environment can generate vandalism in that, for example, the more run-down and neglected an area the more likely people are to ill-use it.

An atmosphere of dereliction and neglect evokes misuse and careless, if not wilfull, destruction by some users, while good maintenance and surfaces of good quality are respected and sometimes cherished. The environment, in other words, transmits signals to which we respond. (Ward, 1973).

By the same token, a so-called 'law of diminishing vandalism' has been advanced which suggests that persistence in speedily repairing damage done by vandals is repaid because although the damage may well be repeated, eventually the perpetrators appear to get tired of destruction and 'learn better'.

One recommendation put forward in the policy document was that there should be an increased on-the-beat police presence, and eventually a policeman was allocated to the area although Ragworth was only part of his beat. Satisfaction with the police was not probed in 1979 as it was in the second survey, so comparison is impossible. However, compared with Stockton, satisfaction in 1984 was much lower with 33 percent scoring their satisfaction below five on the scale compared with 11 percent in the borough as a whole. Following up the satisfaction rating, unfavourable remarks about the policing of the estate far outweighed favourable ones. For example, while 10 percent observed that the police patrolled regularly, three times as many asserted the opposite.

There was evidence that changes had taken place in that 26 percent said they had noticed some differences in policing during the previous three years, chiefly that there were more regular patrols and more foot patrols. Yet when all respondents were asked whether policing had improved, deteriorated or stayed the same, very little net improvement was registered. Virtually a half reported no change and a further 25 percent could not make a judgement, primarily because they were relative newcomers to Ragworth. The remaining 26 percent practically cancelled each other out in that while 15 percent perceived an improvement, 11 percent thought that policing had deteriorated. It is difficult, therefore,

to attribute much of the reduction in vandalism to differences in the way the estate had been policed after 1979.

Kinship and Mutual Support in 1984

The first survey revealed that, compared with residents of Stockton as a whole, people on Ragworth had fewer relatives living near them - or at least, fewer that were accessible - and this was reflected in a somewhat lower level of satisfaction with the proximity of relatives. Further, they were even less satisfied with the proximity of friends. By 1984, isolation from family had eased to a small extent in that 38 percent against 29 percent before said that at least a half of their relatives lived nearby, although satisfaction had changed very little. Satisfaction with ease of access to friends had increased by a similarly small margin.

The first survey also showed that in terms of the two measures of 'community' employed, Ragworth exhibited far less social cohesion than was seen in the rest of Stockton. Yet in the meantime, there had been developments on the estate which might have had an impact on how residents related to each other. Primarily, the collective action that had mobilised so many of them in bringing pressure for change to bear on the council might have engendered a more common identity and sense of mutual interest than had existed hitherto. Also, the material improvement of the estate might have been seen as a positive influence on residents' morale which would increase their attachment to it. The lessening of the tensions caused by so many children playing on the streets could also conceivably have reduced friction between neighbours.

The possible consequences of the massive increase in unemployment are less easy to predict. While it might have led to a

greater sense of a shared fate to bind residents together, it is likely to have increased domestic stress, straining personal relationships, which is not conducive to more positive cooperation and mutual support. To attempt some assessment of whether these or other factors had changed relationships within the estate, the same two questions were again put to respondents, the first concerned with whether people helped each other out in times of trouble or illness and the second with the extent to which they identified with each other and experienced some kind of common bond.

Table 7.17

Extent of a Feeling of Togetherness and Belonging, 1979 and 1984

	Ragworth		Stockton	
	1979	1984	1978	1984
To a great extent	2%	14%	16%	15%
To a fair extent	24%	34%	57%	49%
To a small extent	33%	21%	20%	21%
Not at all	37%	21%	4%	11%
<u>Don't know</u>	<u>4%</u>	<u>10%</u>	<u>3%</u>	<u>4%</u>
Totals	100%	100%	100%	100%
Bases	308	263	545	542

Table 7.18

Whether There is Mutual Support in the Local Area, 1979 and 1984

	Ragworth		Stockton	
	1979	1984	1978	1984
People usually help each other out	48%	59%	76%	73%
People usually manage on their own	43%	30%	19%	20%
<u>Don't know</u>	<u>9%</u>	<u>11%</u>	<u>5%</u>	<u>7%</u>
Totals	100%	100%	100%	100%
Bases	308	263	545	542

Whatever the explanation, there had plainly been a shift toward greater mutual support and attachment to and identity with the other residents. Obviously, in view of the evidence presented earlier on the animosity felt toward certain 'types' of tenant, this cannot be exaggerated, but nevertheless a real change had occurred in a positive direction.

The Extent of Change Overall

The above two tables are the last of the straight comparisons of two sets of data resulting from identical 'stimuli' at different points in time. It remains in this chapter to consider the results of the question which asked respondents to retrospectively make a comparison between the estate in the years of the two surveys. The question simply asked to what extent they felt that the estate had been improved, replying in terms of a five-point scale. The next table displays the replies of the 169 respondents who lived on Ragworth before the improvement programme was implemented.

Table 7.19

The Extent to Which the Estate Has Been Improved

To a great extent	21%
To a fair extent	40%
To a small extent	23%
Not at all	8%
<u>Don't know</u>	<u>7%</u>
Total	99%
Base	169

This confirms the total impression formed from the results on the individual features of the estate described in this chapter. A fifth considered that it had been improved to a great extent and a further two-fifths to a fair extent. Looking at their reasons for their overall opinion of the changes, it is the modernisation of the housing (14 percent) and the generally cleaner and tidier look of the estate (12 percent) that head the list of reasons. Negatively, two complaints already discussed earlier re-emerged, namely, irresponsible tenants who do not look after their house and garden and the lack of modern and sound windows. But a better idea of what they felt is given by turning to some of their own verbatim comments.

The houses are better and people didn't used to bother about their gardens but they are now. Our garden was very muddy and we're doing it now. But they've just done a cowboy job on the houses - they could have made a better job of them. The whole place would have looked smarter if they'd done a proper job on the houses - taken everything out and built them up again.

Since the houses were modernised tenants seem to be caring more for their properties.

Everything is much better now. Before the modernisation the whole estate was like a jungle, now it looks nice

with all the things the council have done - even the street lighting is much better.

It just can't improve with the type of folks getting on this estate. They just pull anything down that's put up. I just want to get off the estate.

They have tried with the community centre and trees in the gardens but these are superfluous things. They haven't got to the root of the problem - it is a social problem, the people need educating on how to look after the place.

The council have looked after us much better since the modernisation. Repairs are done quicker and they take more interest in what we want. They send people round like you to find out what we need.

If anyone had seen the estate before modernisation they would understand. It's a lot cleaner and tidier in general and the pavements are in a much better state.

When asked whether there were any improvements they would still like to see made to the estate, 70 percent answered affirmatively. Not surprisingly, the replacement of window frames was one of the two most requested improvements (19 percent) along with more and better-equipped play space for children. These two plus, to a lesser extent, better fencing around back gardens (9 percent) were the chief remaining demands for further improvement.

Conclusions

Between 1979 and 1984 there had been an overall rise in satisfaction with housing on Ragworth. The improvement work had left a trail of complaints in its wake about both the quality of materials used and the standard of workmanship. On the other hand, many residents considered that an enhancement of the quality of their housing had been achieved. If it is possible to arrive at a summary of people's feelings it would be that the council had made advances but could - and should - have done better. It would be

hard to deny that the quality control of the modernisation should have been more effective, while at the same time remembering the tight restrictions on capital spending imposed on local authorities by central government.

Turning to what may be called the estate environment, satisfaction with some aspects remained relatively unchanged, for example, play facilities for children. Yet there were marked increases in satisfaction with features crucial to the quality of life there. Two modest improvements were evidenced by the increase in satisfaction with the state of the roads and footpaths, and more residents found it a quieter area to live in. Beyond these there were more impressive improvements. While vandalism remained a problem and caused offence and concern to many people, inroads were made, reducing the percentage of those selecting a scale rating of below five from 82 percent to 46 percent. Satisfaction with air purity increased greatly with twice as many offering a score in excess of five than in 1979. Again, in 1979 only 17 percent felt that the estate's general appearance warranted a score of more than five but four years later this had risen to 53 percent.

By coincidence, the year of the first survey marked the beginning of the Tory party's resumption of power nationally with its radical economic and social programme. The impact on Ragworth in the years leading up to 1984 was a doubling of unemployment and a further impoverishment of its population to the extent that they can best be described as living at the subsistence level on state benefits. Since then, social security reforms have had the effect of reducing their real income levels even further. The Government's pursuit of its aim of undermining what they prefer to define as

'the dependency culture' seems unrelenting. Given the conditions on the estate in 1979 along with these attacks on the poor, for all the shortcomings of the improvement programme, one can reflect on how much worse the quality of life would have been in the absence of this intervention by the local authorities.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Policy for the Disadvantaged Estate

Introduction

The contribution of central and local state policy to the residualisation of public sector housing and to the creation of disadvantaged estates was discussed in the first three chapters. The main purpose of this chapter is to consider policy measures over the past decade or so which have been aimed at combatting the problems on run-down council estates. The prime question about such initiatives and the ultimate test of their effectiveness concerns the degree to which they affect the major structural problems of the disadvantaged residuum. Of course, it is more than doubtful that such a fundamental objective was ever at the forefront of the minds of the originators of the initiatives. Yet, if they do not effect radical change in the social and economic status and life-chances of residents on run-down estates, what is their purpose? If they are intended as palliatives, then although anything which makes such estates more tolerable and less stressful should be welcomed, disadvantaged estates will persist.

Admittedly, it may be argued that certain policy measures have not run their full course and that judgement at this stage would be premature. Yet, critics perceived some of them to be inherently flawed before they were implemented, and sufficient evidence has emerged already to form some basis for assessment and for prognoses to be attempted of their likely outcomes. This is especially so in

the case of the chief concern of this chapter - innovations in de-centralised estate management.

While some recent housing policies are not directly or solely aimed at tenants of disadvantaged estates, they nevertheless may be of benefit to them as tenants per se if the claims of the policies' proponents are justified, and so they will be considered here. An example of such a policy would be one intended to increase the size and quality of the private rented sector and which might, therefore, increase the consumption opportunities of ghetto residents along with others in need of better housing conditions. It is, though, policies directed specifically at run-down estates that are the chief concern of this chapter, and particularly housing management strategies.

The chapter, then, begins by touching on the progress of the last decade or so toward privatism in the housing market and the gathering crisis of increasing demand and inadequate supply exacerbated by lack of maintenance and repair, especially in the public sector. It goes on to examine central government's further attempts at de-municipalisation in the second half of the 'Eighties and incentives to encourage the private rented sector.

These are policies aimed at restructuring housing tenure, but another aspect of tenure is the tenant-landlord relationship and here relatively recent approaches in the public sector are considered. Bearing in mind the central concern of this study with run-down estates, the 'social work' model of housing management which has impacted on the lives of many tenants of such estates will therefore be the main focus of the discussion. So the Priority Estates Project management philosophy will be paid particular

attention both in terms of its basic principles and how it has been interpreted and applied on Ragworth. The chapter concludes with an assessment of the value of this approach.

The Course of Policy in the 1980s

Throughout their thirteen years in power from 1979, successive Conservative administrations have pursued a policy of promoting owner-occupation and reducing the size of housing stock under local authority control. It has been characterised as 'subsidised individualism', denoting a movement away from collective provision through subsidy to local authorities for building and renovation to be replaced by subsidies to individuals in the form of tax relief on mortgage interest and housing benefit for poorly-off tenants. Former council tenants who bought their dwelling enjoyed, in addition, the benefit of large discounts on the market price, and for much of the Tories' time in office this was the main strategy for achieving their objective of changing the tenurial structure of housing.

The consequences for remaining council tenants in terms of a shrinking stock of increasingly poorer housing were discussed in Chapter 1. Not only has stock deteriorated further through lack of investment in maintenance, but new building in all tenures has been inadequate to meet the increasing demand. It is the ageing and decline in all housing stock - not just in the council sector - along with the demographic pressures of an expected increase of over two million households between 1983 and the end of the century that leads Malpass (1986) to describe the present situation as a crisis in housing. The most pressing aspect of this crisis is the large increase in homelessness in the 'Eighties, and this together

with problems like the restrictions on mobility of labour as a result of the housing shortage - which received much publicity before the economic recession starting in the late 'Eighties - and the declining numbers of tenants exercising their right to buy, led to a change in strategy although not in the ideological drive towards more privatisation and the diminution of the importance of local councils as landlords.

The 1988 Housing Act confirmed the government's change of strategy by introducing a rash of measures which allowed for the wholesale disposal of council property to private landlords, in part through Housing Action Trusts. In order to encourage the provision of private rented properties, rents were decontrolled for future private lettings. Further, reforms were made in the housing association movement which would make them more dependent on private finance and more commercial as landlords. The same year also saw the introduction of tax relief to private companies which let properties for rent (the Business Expansion Scheme). The intention of these measures has been described as putting more emphasis on changing the basis of rented housing provision rather than on further owner-occupation.

Perhaps partly in recognition of the limits to which owner-occupation can be extended down market (even with the generous subsidies available), the government is determined, wherever possible, to substitute the private for the public sector in the provision of rented housing and to restructure the remaining public provision to bring it more closely into line with private provision and more in tune with the market model (Clapham, Kemp and Smith, 1990).

De-municipalisation and Privatisation

Privatisation and 'partnership schemes' involve local authorities, private developers and housing associations in

renovating run-down areas of council property. Sometimes new building is included in a scheme. The refurbished estate is often partly re-let and partly sold into owner-occupation, although sometimes it is sold to developers entirely for eventual resale to owner-occupiers. Stockton Borough Council has been a party to at least two partnership deals - on the Eastbourne Estate and in Port and High Clarence which have involved a mix of re-letting and sale to private buyers. The Clarences project is a partnership between the council, Teesside Development Corporation and Lovells, the latter having interests in, among other projects, the London Docklands.

The so-called Tenants' Choice provision of the 1988 Act is another approach to transferring ownership from public to private landlords. In this case, landlords, who have to be approved by the Housing Corporation, have the right to put forward proposals for buying council estates at market prices. There is, in fact, no element of choice for tenants because competing bids are forbidden. Tenants are allowed to vote against the bid, and while under the original proposals abstentions were actually to count in favour of the bid, now a simple majority of voters decides the issue. In a vote in Bromley in 1991 which resulted in the transfer of 12500 properties to a housing association, a majority was secured on a turnout of 75 percent even though less than half of the tenants eligible to vote voted in favour (Cook, Guardian, 9/10/91).

In their effort to achieve the de-municipalisation of rented housing, the government also devised a variant on Tenants' Choice called the Housing Action Trust (HAT) which was mentioned earlier. These are government quangos having the power to take

responsibility from local authorities for specified run-down areas with the intention of improving them before handing them back to other forms of ownership such as the private sector, housing associations, and tenant co-operatives. While tenants' views are taken account of, there is no right to vote before HATs are set up, although they do have a vote over their preferred landlord when the houses have been renovated. However, although 20 estates were designated originally, after reports on the cost of the project to the Exchequer it was reduced to 9 estates in London, Leeds and Sunderland (Travis, 1989). As well as the cost implications, more importantly there has been fierce tenant resistance which has resulted in most HAT proposals being withdrawn, putting the viability of this particular initiative in doubt - in the short term at least.

The attraction to local authorities of selling off housing stock is that it circumvents the impasse they find themselves in over the spending restrictions placed on them by central government which has prevented them carrying out necessary repair and maintenance work. However, they frequently sell cheaply to private developers, and although the objective of upgrading the property is achieved, they can only spend part of the proceeds of the sale in any single year. Further, the loss of revenue from rents can often outweigh the advantage of a reduced debt from sales (Clapham and English, 1987 pp 148-149). Moreover, as Morris and Winn point out:

..the policy of large-scale transfers is primarily about shifting properties from one tenure to another and in the process, while the conditions of the dwellings concerned may improve, housing inequality is increased. The evidence is that the less control there is over tenancies, the higher the rent will be and the lower the standard of accommodation (1990, p 23).

With the transfer of the original tenants into the private sector or to a housing association, rents will increase because decontrol and the abolition of fair rents for new tenancies are more than likely to have that consequence (Morris and Winn, 1990). No advantage, therefore, is likely to accrue to tenants of a disadvantaged estate which is disposed of in this way. There is also the same mechanism at work as in the case of 'right to buy' transactions in that it will tend to be the better council estates that are targetted by prospective developers who are, after all, principally motivated by profit accumulation. So, contrary to benefiting council tenants, it seems more likely to accelerate the trend toward a smaller and less attractive council housing stock than to improve the housing quality for disadvantaged tenants.

As far as the effect of the Business Expansion Scheme and decontrol of private rents are concerned, far from increasing the stock of dwellings for low-income families, Morris and Winn (1990, p 27) perceive the main beneficiaries as high-income households who can afford the high rents. Similarly, the reduced Housing Association Grant under the 1988 Act and the greater reliance on private finance together with the decontrol of rents of future lettings will have the effect of increasing rents. Morris and Winn see no advantage accruing to poorer households:

Housing renewal of this kind will therefore make access to rented housing for low income households more difficult as the low-rent private rented sector speedily declines and any 'revival' takes the form of high-rented provision (1990, p 28).

Another central state initiative consistent with the above aims is Estates Action which was started in the mid-'Eighties. By giving extra borrowing approval to councils, this scheme demanded,

in return, commitments from councils with the intention of increasing the rate of privatisation and improving estate management. Its main objectives have been summarised as:

- (a) To develop new or relatively untried solutions to the problems facing these [run-down] estates, including transfers of ownership and/or management to management trusts, involving tenants, or to tenants' cooperatives;
- (b) To encourage authorities to adopt, where appropriate, one or more of a range of existing disposal solutions such as:
 - i) sale of tenanted estates to private trusts or developers;
 - ii) sales of empty property to developers for refurbishment for sale or rent;
- (c) To encourage authorities to improve the management and maintenance of their own estates by establishing local autonomous estate-based management schemes on Priority Estate Project lines (Pinto, 1991, p 47).

Although this is a further instance of local government's loss of autonomy, the problem for central government has been that the main motivation of local councils for co-operating with the scheme has been to increase resources for housing investment. Their enthusiasm for certain of the government's objectives has been much less in evidence. Hence, the transference of ownership or responsibility for management has achieved very limited success so far (Pinto, 1991, pp 48-49). On the other hand, de-centralised management has figured more prominently in schemes approved by the Estate Action unit, and it is to this aspect of local housing policy that the rest of this chapter is devoted.

Managing Disadvantaged Estates

Management policy in the public sector has varied over the years in order to contend with a combination of changing housing stock and variations in the characteristics of tenants occupying it. Chapters 2 and 3 described the high quality of most council housing built in the 1920s which chiefly housed the better-off

working and lower middle-classes; the deterioration that took place in the 1930s when tenants were re-housed in the first major slum clearance drive; the return to general needs provision after the Second World War, when some of the best council housing was built, before the decline resumed in the 'Fifties with the increase in the use of system-building; and the second great slum clearance drive in the 'Sixties and early 'Seventies along with the worsening quality of new housing.

The way that housing management fluctuated in response to these changes is described by Clapham et al (1990) for whom 'the overall social class of tenants has determined the changing emphasis between a commercial and a social welfare approach.' Consequently, in the 1920s housing management was largely a contractual matter and not seen as raising any serious problems. However, the influx of much poorer tenants in the 1930s led to a regime of closer surveillance and intervention. Although this persisted after the War, it became increasingly inappropriate as housing for general needs and full-employment meant that council tenants were, by and large, 'respectable' members of the working class. With local government re-organisation in the 1960s and 1970s resulting in fewer local councils and consequently larger housing stock commitments, the typical response to dealing with this enlarged responsibility was centralised, impersonal organisations which were thought best suited to meet the need for efficient management. Power describes how the problems faced by local councils at this time - including the pressures of the slum clearance programme as well as re-organisation - resulted in a fragmentation of functions, further bureaucratisation, and remoteness from tenants.

Power was increasingly concentrated in fast expanding town halls, and estate-based staff became more and more divorced from decision-making and control, as well as increasingly ineffectual in relation to tenants. They were expected to cover more and more ground with less and less power to deliver. Contact was reduced to a bare minimum, and often done away with altogether, with the withdrawal of rent collectors, the centralization of repairs, and the reduction in cleaning and caretaking services (Power, 1987, pp 235-36).

The long-term trend towards residualisation of the public sector has been accelerated over the past ten or so years concomitantly with the worsening physical condition of the stock. Added to the opportunities under the 1988 Act for tenants to opt out of local authority control, there has been great pressure on local councils to take a different approach to help them respond better to these realities and provide a more responsive service to their tenants.

De-centralisation and the Social Work Model

Faced with the increasing problems of run-down estates, a number of local authorities have adopted the housing management philosophy advocated by the D. O. E. -sponsored Priority Estates Project. In essence, they recommend that all housing services should be administered locally, not from a centralised office.

Where an estate had declined through neglect, poverty and lack of coherent management, a local base was needed from which essential services, contact with residents and supervision of work could be organised...
...only a meticulous, detailed, day-by-day approach to all aspects of running an estate - rents, repairs; lettings, caretaking and cleaning, welfare and communal law enforcement - would win back the confidence and self-respect of the residents, thereby providing a base for rebuilding a sound housing investment and a workable housing community (Power, 1987, p 185).

Although they are not all adopted in every decentralisation scheme designed along the lines of the P.E.P. management model, the main elements are:

1. An estate-based housing office to make the range of housing services more accessible to tenants. This is possible both because the officers responsible for services are personally accessible and by virtue of their having the power to administer the service without reference to the central department. This means, for instance, that the local office has autonomy over letting empty property, transfers, collecting rent and dealing with arrears. For de-centralisation to be effective in improving the service to tenants it is considered necessary for the local office to have a good deal of autonomy and control. This includes having all necessary records located in the estate office and procedures in place to avoid constant and time-consuming reference to the central department.

2. Not surprisingly, arrears are one of the main concerns on run-down estates, but the P.E.P. approach advocates a less mandatory attitude without so much emphasis on written warnings and legal threats of eviction and more on debt counselling and budget-management advice to tenants.

3. Another major task for local offices is the repair and maintenance of property. The advantage of the estate-based service for tenants is that it is easier to report repair needs and to identify the officer responsible for handling their requests. In other words, it is much less remote than having to deal with someone on the other end of the telephone or in an office perhaps a bus ride away in the town centre. An essential requirement for the

success of local repairs in terms of getting a job done more efficiently and satisfactorily is to have a repair team also based locally and under the control of the local office.

4. Involvement of residents in the running of the estate and in decision-making on important issues affecting the estate as well as more day-to-day business. Such tenant participation would include matters like modernisation plans at one extreme to organising a social event at the other. As well as these more formal contacts, another characteristic of the P.E.P. approach is more contact between office staff and tenants on a less formal basis by 'getting to know' tenants and winning their confidence in the local officers as allies in improving life on the estate.

The welfare or social work component of this management style is often taken further than, say, debt-counselling by implementing a corporate approach involving a co-operative effort with other local authority departments, the health authority, the police and so on. This would entail involving such agencies in local committees with tenants and perhaps the housing department making available a 'community house' as a base for the provision of services and as a meeting place for residents. Another frequent feature of this management style is a beat patrol of security wardens to protect void properties.

In 1982 a study was carried out of twenty estates (of which Ragworth happened to be one) on which full-time offices had been established. The results are summarised in Power (1987, pp 239-40) who reports that, where the P.E.P recommendations were more or less fully implemented along the lines described above, gains were made in improving the quality of life on the estates. For example, the

introduction of local offices 'brought about an impressive improvement in landlord-tenant relations;' investment in modernisation was repaid by increases in the popularity of the estates, but 'responding to tenants' priorities was a pre-requisite of success;' local repair teams proved 'highly popular, efficient and cost-effective;' letting properties locally 'brought about a significant reduction in the number of empty dwellings and also substantial savings in vandal damage and loss of rent income;' the more autonomy a local office had, the better the results it achieved in terms of an improved service to tenants; caretaking organised by the tenants themselves was seen to be a crucial ingredient in the better standards that generally resulted. Significantly, rent arrears, while they were 'contained', did not diminish on most estates.

The Application of P. E. P. Ideas on Ragworth

The P. E. P approach has been pursued to some extent on Ragworth since the early 1980s by successive office managers and their staff, and how it has translated into practical measures on the estate is described next. A respondent in the housing department related how housing managers came under a lot of political pressure from the early 'Eighties onwards, after the modernisation programme, to prevent Ragworth's decline, hence the adoption of P. E. P. guidelines. There never was, though, a worker seconded from the D. O. E., just the giving of advice. Up to that point in time, he said, it was a very traditional housing service concentrating on collecting the rent on time, attempting to get repairs done and keeping tenants in check. A point made by another officer was that such a basic change in approach is difficult to achieve with staff

inured to running a centralised, remote service. When he first joined the authority, he recalled a member of what he called the 'old guard' showing him around an estate, which he managed from the central office, saying that he did not go there much because 'it wasn't very nice.' Now, what my respondent described as 'the best young staff' are put into priority estates.

A key feature of the P.E.P. approach which has been adopted on Ragworth is local lettings which means that they have more or less complete discretion over who they accept as tenants. What this means in practice is that they advertise vacancies and anyone can call in at the estate office to apply for a house. Consequently, it is claimed, the response is much quicker, with the new tenants sometimes moving in on the same day that the old ones move out, the loss of revenue being minimised as are the chances of the houses being vandalised. Moreover, they have a small waiting list so that if a house is turned down by one applicant they have another one to whom they can immediately offer it. In 1991, the estate manager told me that while voids on the estate used to be at around 25 overall, at that moment he had 3 true voids and another 3 pre-allocated. As he pointed out:

That way we don't incur the cost of the 'Citex' grids that we put up for security reasons. So the vacancy re-let means that the revenue hasn't been stopped for a week, it's just a continuous flow of tenancy and it stops an awful lot of vandalism.

This means that they do not have the restrictions that surround lettings from the central office operating, as it does, a points system and only accepting applicants who have an address because a home visit is a requirement of the procedure by which tenants are selected. As a local officer remarked, 'We would accept

somebody from Darlington railway station or park bench number three'. The same officer told me that although they probably still accept 80 percent of homeless families referred to them by other sections, they are able, because of their local knowledge and total discretion over whom they accept, to turn down anyone if they think they will create particular problems or if they are aware of a feud or bad relations with existing tenants. Having a waiting list for the estate is seen as allowing more flexibility over who is accepted:

We're juggling between those in greatest housing need and those who will create some sort of stability for us... Previously when they were let centrally just on a dated-order list, the allocators were dealing with that big a volume and they hadn't got a clue who was living where and whether there was a need to have a better social mix. But we're able to combat that now - which I think has paid dividends.

An instance was given of the advantage of local lettings and the 'social work' approach in the case of a family made homeless on the estate by a fire. Within two hours, the mother had been taken to hospital by a member of staff and an offer of a choice of two houses for immediate occupation had been made.

Another aspect of lettings is the policy of showing prospective tenants around the property and the estate - in contrast to the former procedure of sending them a standard letter and telling them where to collect the keys. They find that applicants are less likely to turn a tenancy down with this personal approach. Similarly, they do post-allocation visits within two weeks of someone moving in in order to check that there are no problems. They have also produced a 'welcome to your new home' booklet which contains information and advice on the heating system, where the stop-cock is in case of leaks, etc.

It's educating them instead of being dependent on the council. It tells people who the local beat police are and how they can be contacted, how to get TVs and videos security marked, who the head teachers, vicars, are, about the residents' association, etc.

The policy of the local office on arrears demonstrates that the P.E.P. philosophy is not necessarily adopted in full. Arrears rose sharply after the Housing Benefit reductions in the 1988 Act and the response of the local office at that time was to attack the problem with repossession orders. In 1989, an officer in the local office informed me that more than 600 orders had been served on Ragworth and Primrose Hill, which comprised a total of 1000 properties, in the previous year, and that elected members and senior managers were more inclined to support evictions than they had been in the past. Moreover, if an evicted tenant had children, they could be taken into temporary accommodation 'but it's spelt out quite forcibly that it is only temporary and they've got 4 or 6 weeks or whatever to seek other accommodation.' Yet 18 months or so later, a new housing manager having taken over the local office, the policy had decidedly changed. His approach is best described in his own words.

I don't believe in sending out a load of letters - arrears letters and stuff like that. I believe in the personal touch - going and knocking on the door and finding out why you can't pay your rent. Some people can - they can pay the rent but because they can't pay a couple of quid 'off the back' they won't show their face. So instead of us receiving £2 to £2.50 [£2.50 was the weekly rent at that time with full Housing Benefit] we don't receive anything. So what we're trying to is, again, it's coming back to educating them. To me, if you evict somebody it's a lost case. I don't think that's the solution. Anything 'off the back' you've got to welcome it. Because if you evict somebody today on a run-down estate like this, where are you going to put them? Three or four kids, that's the average for the estate, down to the hostel. It maybe goes through

committee and gets approval for rehousing... Ragworth is one of the lowest estates the authority has, so where are you going to put them? To a better estate? Or are you going to put them back on the estate where their friends are? Eviction is not the solution - it puts the problem onto somebody else.

He felt the measure of success of his approach was the fact that arrears, which were £94,000 when he took over a year earlier, were down to £74,000. Yet this is a very elusive problem for housing managers, with tenants' ability to pay obviously depending mainly on how much they are earning if they are one of the few in work, or what their benefit levels are against their outgoings, both of which fluctuate. Just how significant central government policy can be on an estate like Ragworth was related by a local officer in 1989. Remarking on the effect of the April 1988 Housing Act on Housing Benefit, he said that arrears were around £77,000, a rise of 150 percent on the pre-Act figure.

As far as repairs are concerned, the local office does not have its own repair team. Repairs are carried out by a team based fairly close by but responsible for three estates. An inspection is usually carried out within two or three days and a 'ticket' is then sent to the repair team specifying the work needed. Each job is prioritised according to its urgency. There appears to be reasonably close liaison between members of the repairs team and the local office, although local officers are aware that a better service could be achieved if repairs were estate-based. One officer felt that the presence of 'jobbing' repair workers operating from the office could get the small jobs, like changing locks or tap washers, done the same day instead of having to go through the

delay of the inspection and submission of reports just described. This would leave major repairs for the existing repairs team.

One development which is akin to local control of repairs is the encouragement given to three men on the estate, by way of a local employment initiative, to set themselves up to do house clearances, gardening, and other similar work. Work is now passed onto them by the local office instead of to a contractor. As well as providing a cheaper service they respond more quickly and provide a more comprehensive service. Whereas the contractor used just to clear out any furniture left behind, the local team also clean the house and rotavate and tidy the garden. They are also on hand to do other jobs around the estate such as the removal of grafitti.

Another vital feature of the P.E.P. ethos is tenant involvement and participation in the running of the estate, and the local office has made efforts, with varying success, to put this into practice. Tenant involvement on estate committees was in evidence in the 1970s when I first became acquainted with Ragworth, and successive local managers have tried to encourage it further. The position in 1991 was that a liaison group existed to which a wide range of people were invited who had any responsibility for services and activities on the estate. Previously, the list of participants was more limited although the objective was the same, that is, to give residents a chance to comment on the way the estate was being managed, to directly question those responsible, to bring ideas for improvement and to raise problems and try and arrive at solutions.

The manager in post in 1989 was frank about the effectiveness of tenant participation and had ideas on how it could be improved. The residents and officer committee met once a month, although he had contact with the resident members daily on a less formal basis - usually when they called in to see him at the estate office. Resident membership of the committee was static in that they put themselves up for re-election *en bloc* and continued as members. The intention is that they should represent the rest of the residents and bring ideas forward from the community, but at the time this was not happening to a sufficient extent.

It's not meant to be a two-way dialogue between ourselves and the half-dozen residents who turn up. The information's meant to percolate down from them to other people on the estate and then percolate back up again. That's not happening to a great extent at the minute... We've done things like additional boarding at the back of Dover Road to protect it from the school, but they don't bring enough of that kind of idea forward. It tends to be 'why hasn't Mrs so-and-so's repair been done? - their next-door neighbour or their daughter or their sister.

It is more major issues that generate enthusiasm and tenant activism such as during the period after the release of the survey report and, more recently, the temporary closure of a bridge during a road development which caused inconvenience for the tenants with, for example, the bus service being affected. In this case they lobbied bus companies for additional bus services and pressed the county council to meet its completion targets. But when such issues are resolved, tenant involvement recedes to its former level of just a few keen stalwarts. A possible mechanism for maintaining interest in the estate would be to provide the committee with a budget which would be under the residents' control. The local manager felt that the residents would get interested in how it was

to be spent and that it would be a way of sustaining their involvement in the running of the estate. It is certainly consistent with P.E.P. ideas.

The residents are consulted more on a one-to-one basis over decisions directly affecting them such as house improvements. The successor to the above manager described the approach at the beginning of the 'Nineties.

Before, the architect had drawn up his plans before you knew where you were - the way he was going to do it, end of story. That's changed - we ask the tenants now. What's top of our list is maybe double-glazing, what's top of the tenant's list is maybe a spy-hole in the front door, a solid, hardwood door and maybe a security light in the front and back of the property. So they're educating us. We do it by going round and talking to everybody.

The 'social work' element of the local office's role is evident in how new tenants are helped to set up house by providing them with second-hand furniture and domestic equipment. The local office presently has an agreement with officers on other estates to inform them when they have unwanted furniture - as, for example, when a tenant dies. They collect and store it until it is needed by one of their tenants. Also, tenants who move out of a house on the estate are encouraged, with a payment, to leave effects like carpets behind for the next occupant who is likely to have difficulty in affording them. Cookers are serviced and passed on by the local office.

So a £200 cooker which would take your emergency loan or crisis loan, we provide for something like £18 which is for the Gas Board to come out and check it over and install it.

The local office attempts in other ways to help tenants. They have assisted in setting up a credit union, and were considering

providing transport to the hospital because there was no direct service from the estate. One manager related the case of a woman on the estate who had a reputation for violence - she had actually hit one member of staff twice, and the manager, as a newcomer, had been warned to watch out for her.

But the woman had been terrorised on the estate when it came down to it. She'd always felt as if she'd been fobbed off - nobody would ever listen to her and because she got this reputation it just followed on. Now, she's so pleasant. She comes in if she's baked a cake or with a bottle of Concorde at Christmas for the staff... We've got to show that we're not all like some of the older ones who say 'why should we do it, we're not here to do that'. Whereas really we are supposed to be providing a good service.

Another P.E.P. recommendation which has been put into practice on Ragworth is the introduction of beat policemen who, in fact, cover a wider area than the estate, and patrol wardens employed by the council. The latter appear to have been very successful for a time, particularly in combatting vandalism to void property. Not only were their night-time patrols a deterrent but they alerted the police immediately a house had been broken into and anything had been stolen.

..the police were more willing to respond because it was a 'hot' crime and they would get round to the scrap yards and they did actually catch people like that.

The wardens were very 'visible' on the estate and had, apparently, friendly relations with the residents and children.

Jimmy and Eric were well known on the estate. They'd worked here for seven years so the kids had grown up to know them and had a very good relationship with them and they didn't get a lot of hassle from them. Even the older ones who were getting into glue and cider by then still seemed to have a respect for Jimmy and Eric and they could talk to them a lot better than the newcomers.

So successful were the wardens that a decision was made to mobilise them so that they could cover a wider area. However, it seems that this has diminished their effectiveness.

What happens now is that the unruly element stand and watch the wardens ride onto the estate and behave themselves for an hour or so, then once they see them ride off again they know there's nobody on the estate whereas before they didn't. There were only two people who worked from this office and they didn't know where they were - they may have been sitting having a cup of coffee, they may have been a mile down the road, but on the other hand, they may have been just round the corner.

A final P.E.P.-type initiative worth mentioning is the community house which is a multi-function facility for the community's use. It is used for such activities as the child clinic, the family planning clinic and the credit union.

There seems no doubt that this approach to managing run-down estates can bring benefits to the tenants. A study that I carried out in Hartlepool in 1987 sought tenants' opinions of one variant of decentralised housing services on one of its most run-down estates situated well over a mile from the housing department in the town centre (Vamplew, 1988). Easily the most frequent use made of the office was to report repairs. Eighty four percent of users (and over 90 percent of respondents had used it during the previous year or so) did so to report repairs; only 29 percent used it to pay rent.

Satisfaction with the repairs service was low, however, for although most tenants appreciated the ease of access and found the office staff generally helpful, they were much less satisfied with both the speed of repair and its quality. A half of those reporting a repair considered that it took too long, and 41 percent did not

think that repairs were done properly or well. They frequently complained that the repair was ineffective and needed doing again and that the repair itself created other repair problems.

Yet, 76 percent were in favour of the local office, mainly because it was accessible and convenient. Only 8 percent, though, gave a quicker response to repair requests as a reason. This was because, while certain functions of housing management had been detached from the central department, a crucial one had not. The repair and maintenance service itself, instead of being organised from the estate, was still run from the centre. So, the local office staff were not in close and direct contact with a repair team devoted only to the estate.

The Limitations of Estate-Level Policy.

While benefits can result, what this approach, along with the other policy initiatives considered in this chapter, cannot affect are the fundamental structural problems of poverty and unemployment; many residents still had great difficulty in paying their rent on the twenty P.E.P. estates as they still do on Ragworth. Local authorities, of course, must try to ameliorate conditions for disadvantaged residents but is it more than tinkering at the micro-level of policy with the consequences brought about by macro-level forces?

Not every disadvantaged estate exhibits the alienation and degree of social disorganisation of, say, Meadow Well in North Tyneside, but given the level and duration of deprivation and exclusion there, with male unemployment at around 85 percent at the time of the riots in September 1991, it hardly seems likely that the kind of measures described above will effect a significant

change. A recent television programme about the Meadow Well described how youths in particular are engaging in crime to make money in the absence of opportunities for paid employment. Crime seems to be substituting for a job as a means of making a living even to the extent of crime taking on some of the characteristics of paid work. An anonymous 'ram-raider' interviewed on the programme described the 'professionalism' of what he did and how he regarded it as a job.

When they're doing a ram-raid the premises have got to be checked out first. Checked to see where the beams are, check the alarm system. You get a squad, get someone that pinches the cars, you've got one with a scanner which is a radio which tunes into the police frequency. You treat it like a job, don't you? They'll come up and say, 'do you want to be the driver tonight?' That is like employing somebody, isn't it? It's well-organised - you've got to know what you're doing (Panorama, 4/11/91).

A housing worker on an estate in Cleveland whom I spoke to in October, 1991, related to me the level and nature of crime on part of the estate. She described the way of life and some of the incidents there over the past year or so:

1. There appears to be a network of criminal families in control of the area to such an extent that at times seemingly unfettered criminal behaviour takes place. For example, a burglary was carried out in the middle of the day by simply breaking in through the front door and carrying the stolen goods into the front garden. They did not try to protect their identity but made it obvious to bystanders that they would be victimised if they reported it to the police. They then took the stolen property and left it in the front garden of a house further down the road until they could get round to disposing of it.

2. One woman who did inform the police about crimes she was aware of had to be moved to another estate. Another woman who threatened to inform had her house broken into by masked men who, in her presence, smashed it up. When she was moved to another area they discovered where, visited her and repeated the crime.
3. The housing worker was herself attacked in her car on the estate by youths.
4. Workmen get pelted with stones and have their tools stolen. One was erecting metal garden fencing which was being immediately dismantled and thrown onto the back of a lorry by thieves who told him they may as well do it then as later after he had gone.
5. There are several outlets on the estate for drugs, and it has been possible to buy counterfeit money and recently-stolen credit cards at a local pub.

The particular local authority responsible for this estate has been at the forefront of the kind of de-centralised housing services described above, consults its residents, encourages tenants' associations, and so on, yet these measures are not equal to the degree of social disorganisation now being witnessed on some of its estates.

Moreover, that other much-vaunted 'solution' to criminality, namely Coleman's prescriptions for designing-out crime has nothing to contribute on such estates as this. It was built in the 1930s and is basically sound semi-detached housing with gardens. Although it would be naive to expect the kind of vicious criminal behaviour just described to quickly disappear with the return of full employment, Spicker's point about Coleman's explanation has

relevance to low-rise housing with gardens as well as to high-rise flats in inner-cities.

One of the obvious rejoinders to *Utopia on Trial* is to ask why high-rise flats in Bayswater or the Barbican are not slums. Many of the problems in council estates would not occur if the occupants were not poor people with children. Rich people without young children could afford the heating, pay for caretaking and maintenance, furnish to avoid noise... (Spicker, 1987, quoted in Morris and Winn, 1990).

This question of the value and effectiveness of the social work model of housing management is raised again in the Conclusion.

CONCLUSION

Introduction

Two main perspectives are taken with regard to disadvantaged council estates in this thesis. The first is an explanatory one in terms of their creation or emergence and the second a policy perspective concerned with the problems that they present both to the state and to the residents who live on them. In pursuing the first of these themes, this concluding chapter starts by restating the complex of theoretical and empirical issues and approaches that need to be addressed in attempting to explain how disadvantaged estates arise. Included among these are macro-level mechanisms such as central state legislation and direction and capitalist mechanisms directed toward ends such as capital accumulation, manipulation of investment, reproduction of labour and containment of reserve labour. However, it is argued that structuralist explanations, dependent as they are on global, top-down generalisations miss the effect of local factors which can mediate and deflect the intended outcomes of central forces.

More concretely, the discussion initially revolves to a large extent around questions of the provision and consumption of housing, especially recommodification and residualisation. Inevitably, consideration of these questions entails an exploration of their more detailed elements, particularly the sale of council housing, the growth of home-ownership, the consequently changing

pattern of tenure, socio-tenurial polarisation and the shift in the characteristics of public sector tenants.

Yet, important as the centrally determined mechanisms of recommodification and residualisation are, none the less significant are the effects of economic recession and industrial restructuring in the creation of an economically and socially marginalised sector of the working-class, spatially peripheralised in inner area and outer estate ghettos. In other words, the burden of this argument is that, integral as the mechanisms leading to socio-tenurial shifts are in accounting for the role of council housing as a residual tenure for the growing numbers of the disadvantaged, prior place must be accorded to long-term displacement from employment consequent on central government's economic and fiscal policies and the post-modernisation manoeuvring of multi-national companies.

The exploration of these issues and ideas takes place against the empirical background of Stockton and the wider Teesside conurbation and takes the form of historically charting their industrial and urban growth and decline from the 19th century onwards. The industrial and housing legacy of the last century as they impacted on the inter-war period are discussed, the industrial restructuring and the recession of the inter-war period, the consequences for the town of central and local state action in the sphere of housing and slum clearance, and the development of segregated private and public sector estates.

This exposition is continued into the post-1945 era with the initial legislative impetus given to general needs building in the public sector eventually giving way to the ascendancy of

owner-occupation concomitantly with the gradual relegation of council housing to the position of a residualised tenure. The post-modern period of de-industrialisation and restructuring are considered next along with the way that the consequences of these mechanisms are experienced at the local level, both the sharp differential impact according to tenorial position for Cleveland as a whole and the spatial distribution of the economic and social outcome down to the level of Ragworth itself.

At this point in the Conclusion, having established the theoretical and empirical context to account for the creation of poverty and the residualisation of council housing, an explanation is advanced for Ragworth's emergence as a disadvantaged estate which draws on the effect of infill building in the 'Fifties, allocation policies and stigmatisation.

The second main concern of the thesis is discussed next, starting with the period of improvement in the late 'Seventies and early 'Eighties and the generative forces which led to the improvement programme. Finally, an assessment of Ragworth's position at the beginning of the 'Nineties and the value of the social work model of housing management is attempted along with an examination of the underclass concept in understanding Ragworth.

Structuralist Explanation Versus Local Factors

While central systems-forces are fundamental in helping to account for disadvantage and public sector residualisation, they represent a level of understanding which is too sweeping when the focus is on particular locales or on individual estates and how they come into being. To attempt to 'fine-tune' explanation so that the actual formation of run-down estates is to be understood - as

opposed to the broader structural conditions necessary for their existence - requires a consideration of other ideas, mechanisms and social forces. Prominent among these are various sociological explanations based on concepts of social disorganisation, the fragmentation of established communities and the consequent weakening of informal support and control, as well as theories of stigmatisation and labelling. Another factor which is often argued to play a part of varying significance in ghettoising the poor is the allocation of tenants by local housing departments (see, for example, Tucker, 1966; Gray, 1975; Clapham and Kintrea, 1986).

One Marxist interpretation of the class fragmentation and spatial isolation of the 'reserve army' into run-down housing areas sees this as a capitalist mechanism of control and containment (e.g. Byrne and Parsons, 1983). Damer follows a similar interpretation but adds an important rider by way of a further element of explanation, namely the necessity of also taking into account the local social, political and economic context of the disadvantaged estate.

..the combination of original housing legislation, and subsequent housing policy, constitute a necessary but not sufficient part of the explanation of the whole ambience of any one 'problem estate'. One has to add to the explanation the context of local class struggle, traditions in the local labour movement, and the nature of the local state (Damer, 1979).

Damer's advocacy of the potential significance of locality picks up a central theme of Chapter One which, while recognising the importance of forces exerted from the centre, draws attention also to the possibilities of mediating factors found within the local context. Such factors may be historical, political or industrial and exercise causal influence over outcomes and

structures. As the examples given in Chapter One demonstrate, the results in, say, the production of housing, can be dependent on combinations of local factors which have the potential to modify or thwart the intentions of the the central or local state to achieve particular outcomes. Yet the essence of local factors is their contingent nature; that is, their relationship to central mechanisms is uncertain - there is no necessary relationship between them in terms of predictable consequences. The effect of a central mechanism depends on the configuration of local contingent factors whose causal powers may or may not be activated. Among the contingent factors identified in our locale are industrial structure, local state ideologies, actors' interpretations of their social environment and the demographic characteristics of the local area.

Chapters Two and Three were concerned to describe how central state policies on housing and the economy along with other centralist - including international - mechanisms such as industrial restructuring and relocation largely created Stockton as it is today. But it has also been one of the concerns of this thesis to identify local contingent conditions for their potential to impinge on these central forces and create variation in their impact on localities, at the same time attempting some understanding of the mechanisms by which they do so. A vivid illustration of the causal power of locality characteristics is afforded by Warf's (1990) social ecological study of the growth and decline of neighbourhoods in Brooklyn. Central to his analysis is the interaction of ethnicity, the division of labour and the pattern of occupation of urban space. He arrives at the conclusion that the formation and transformation of neighbourhoods is:

...a function of the changing types of jobs at successive historical moments, the structure of the housing market, the geography of pre-existing residential formations, and the cultural and ideological characteristics of immigrant communities (Warf, 1990, p 73).

Stockton's Growth and the Interwar Responses to the Housing Crisis.

Although the main focus of the thesis is the 20th Century, Stockton's growth in the 19th Century cannot be totally ignored. An appreciation of its development is a precondition for understanding the social and industrial parameters within which more recent history was played out. In other words, an acquaintance with 19th Century growth and conditions throws light on its legacy to the present century in the shape of social structure, industry and housing.

Aside from it obviously having taken place within a capitalist economic system during the era of Britain's imperial dominance, the development of Stockton's industrial structure in the 19th Century was primarily due to a conjunction of geographical, geological and historical factors and circumstances. It was already an established port, was close to the south Durham coalfields and the iron ore in the Cleveland hills, and it had a shipbuilding tradition. Add to this the building of the Stockton to Darlington railway, the demand for iron and steel, shipping, locomotive engines, etc., and materials necessary for the construction of the infrastructure required by burgeoning industry, to explain Stockton's own rapid industrial growth in the last century.

Stockton's narrow industrial base of shipbuilding, engineering and metal manufacture was devastated by the recessionary conditions that persisted throughout much of the 1920s and 1930s. During this

time it lost its iron and steel and shipbuilding capacity with dire consequences in terms of high and persistent unemployment in the town. The serious problems of slum housing and overcrowding which confronted the local council were compounded by the widespread and long-term deprivation. Less than a century earlier the prospect of relative prosperity had drawn in labour from the rural hinterland, but now, only a generation or two later, many of their offspring belonged to an unemployed army living in slum housing on a bare subsistence level of income.

As far as working class housing particularly in the first half of the 19th century was concerned, a good deal of it was insanitary and squalid, but with the massive population growth in the second half of the century the familiar grid-iron terraced housing was built and was reproducing labour well into this century. This deteriorating housing stock was Victorian capitalism's bequest to the working classes of Stockton, and it was against this background of poor and overcrowded housing that the insistent demands came in 1918 of a returning army and an increasingly organised working class. The state's response at the end of the First World War, recognising the threat of working class protest, was the introduction of placatory legislation which, for the first time, provided Exchequer subsidies to encourage the building of good quality council housing.

However, as the threat of serious unrest was seen to diminish, the quality of the housing declined along with the level of subsidy. At the same time, starting with the Chamberlain Act, encouragement was given to private development, and with the emphasis on slum clearance signalling the end, until the

post-Second World War period, of building for general needs, private housing for owner-occupation began to account for a larger proportion of new housing. It was with the construction of inferior slum replacement housing in the 'Thirties that council housing began to acquire a residual, welfare tenure image. Up to that point it had been regarded as respectable and socially acceptable; in fact, it was largely the better-off working-class and lower middle-class who could afford the rent. Evidence from the Ward's Directory for 1938-39 suggests that approaching a half of tenants of the good Addison Act housing in Stockton were skilled manual workers and 12 percent were white collar workers; less than a third were semi-skilled or unskilled workers. The majority of the poorer working-class was restricted to the generally inferior private-rented property which, in Stockton, usually meant the Victorian terraced housing in the town centre.

The consequences in Stockton of the upsurge in the private sector market was that while housing built for council renting in the 'Twenties accounted for 55 percent of the total, between 1930 and 1938 it accounted for only 39 percent. In the 1930s private developers seized the opportunity given by the demise of council house building for general needs to attract those who now found themselves debarred from the public sector. One indication of their success is given by looking at the occupations of occupants of some of the cheaper housing built for home-ownership around the mid-'Thirties. The information on occupation is again derived from the Ward's Directory for 1938-9, and of those for whom an occupation is shown, 56 percent were manual workers. Although private developers marketed owner-occupation partly by claiming

cost comparability with renting, mortgage repayment even on the cheaper housing was in excess of the highest local authority rents.

The Significance of Local Contextual Factors Before 1940

Returning to the theme of local characteristics mediating central mechanisms, the material presented on the provision and consumption of housing in Stockton illustrates the usefulness of the locality concept in understanding growth and structural change in the borough during the course of the last 70 years. Starting with the inter-war period, the result of the housebuilding effort in Stockton was approaching 6800 new houses in total, representing a 36 percent increase on the total number of dwellings in existence in 1921, which was a slightly greater increase than the national average. However, Stockton differed more markedly from England and Wales in other important respects, one being that the local authority built a larger proportion of housing for rent than the average - 43 percent against 28 percent. During approximately the same period, the local authority in Leeds built 39 percent of the total number erected, and to give a more local comparison, nearby Tory-controlled Darlington council built only 12 percent for rent and West Hartlepool 27 percent (Ryder, 1984, p 49). Further, Stockton condemned a larger proportion of its total stock than the national average and nearly four times the proportion condemned by Newcastle. By 1939, council housing in Stockton represented 15 percent of the total, close to the average for County Durham and above the average of under 10 percent for England and Wales (Ryder, 1984, p 42).

Clearly, without the impetus of central state policy on housing with its essential subsidies to local authorities, very few

dwellings for council renting are likely to have been built. But the evidence of this study demonstrates that national averages cannot be applied to local situations on the assumption that the effect of national policies is uniform across the country. Yet why should Stockton differ in its housebuilding record from England and Wales? Perhaps more interestingly, why should it differ so sharply from, say, Darlington, for both, after all, had Conservative-controlled councils throughout the inter-war years? Differences in clearance programmes between authorities will be partly a consequence of differences in stock, although there is little standardised evidence on condition of stock to indicate how significant this factor was. It is not feasible that the differences in clearance rates at this time between Stockton and Newcastle were attributable to this. While both threw up a large amount of working class housing in the 19th Century, given Newcastle's earlier growth and therefore even larger proportion of older housing, its stock was almost inevitably inferior to Stockton's. In fact, the criteria by which a house was condemned were so open to interpretation that councils could manipulate them in order to decide the scale of their slum replacement programmes, and so to a considerable extent the size of such programmes probably reflected each council's commitment to improvement as much as anything else.

In one respect, Stockton's achievements are surprising given that the Conservatives held power throughout the inter-war period in the town. At the beginning of the 1920s there was very little working class representation on the council, although by the end of the decade it had doubled to about 38 percent of the 32 seat

council. Labour gained support more quickly in the 1930s, even retaining their seats in 1931 when elsewhere the party was being decimated. By 1934 they had achieved a majority but were kept from control by the aldermanic vote. The point I am leading to is that, given the housing plight of so many residents of the town, the Conservatives, seeing their strength gradually being eroded, had to adopt a housing policy which would show them to be addressing the problem. Furthermore, bearing in mind the extent of poverty, an emphasis on solving the housing shortage chiefly by the encouragement of private development would not have been an appropriate response. The council had to build for renting simply because house purchase would clearly have been beyond the means of many of those in need.

Another admittedly more tenuous point with reference to the ideology of the Tories in Stockton at this time is the possible influence of Harold Macmillan, the M.P. for Stockton throughout much of the inter-war period. He was certainly well to the left of his party, advocating partial public ownership in the 1920s and later Keynesian solutions of increased public expenditure to stimulate the economy. The cross-party Next Five Years Group of which he was a member prescribed such measures as increased public control of utilities and planning at national and local levels. A passage from his autobiography suggests that the extreme problems of unemployment and poverty in Stockton at that time had had the effect of tempering both his and the local party's ideology. He wrote the following referring to the time of the 1935 General Election.

My Conservative supporters had treated me, in spite of what must have seemed to them strange aberrations, with marked patience and understanding. Facing day by day the

harsh realities of a 'distressed' area, they were not so easily affected by criticisms of my political behaviour... They had not objected to the policies on economic and industrial affairs (Macmillan, 1966 p 423).

The influence of M'Gonigle, joint author of "Poverty and Public Health" (1936) has to be accorded some importance in bringing these 'harsh realities', not least that of poor housing conditions, periodically to the notice of the council. Although he had powers to initiate the process of condemnation of unfit housing, he had, of course, none when it came to decisions on house building. Yet he was a prominent local actor whose statutory role ensured his input to the debate on matters relating to the health of the population, and as such he at least contributed to the climate of concern. He frequently reminded the council of its responsibilities for providing decent housing and described the consequences for a great many of having to pay council rents which were beyond the means of unemployed families. In his Annual Report of 1925 he described in unequivocal terms what was needed.

Houses and yet more houses are the great need of the people at present and any differences of opinion which delay the erection of more houses place an added burden upon the shoulders of those who suffer from this scarcity.

As far as civil society is concerned, contemporary documentary sources such as council minutes and the local newspapers throw up relatively little evidence of housing being a campaigning issue arousing any grass roots protest. Nicholas (1986) found, as I did, a disappointing lack or inadequacy of documentation which might have provided useful data. What evidence she did find on working class protest was concerned more with issues of higher benefits and the Means Test. My own research produced evidence of working class action in the early 1930s over the decision to abandon a plan to

build the Sunderland Glebe estate. Both the Unemployed Workers' Association (U. W. A.) and powerful trades union interests sent letters of protest to the council. Public meetings organised by the U. W. A. passed resolutions condemning the council's action although they appeared to carry little weight at a Housing Committee meeting in May 1932. However, the minutes of a meeting of the Housing Committee in November of the same year recorded that a debate followed the letters of protest from the trades union groups which led to a resolution to build the estate after all. It is impossible to judge from this tantalisingly brief item in the minutes what course the debate followed but it suggests a likelihood that the intervention of bodies representing organised and 'respectable' labour played a part in influencing the council's decision. Another 'glimpse' of protest in civil society is given by the local newspaper fulminating about what it described as seditious street meetings, although what this betokens in terms of the working class's inclination for protest action in Stockton at that time is open to conjecture.

Why so much setition should be permitted in Stockton and suppressed in other towns is something which the law-abiding people of the town cannot understand. It is certainly not the fault of the police. They have listened times out of number to people being incited to a breach of the peace by the political malcontents who regularly occupy the market cross.

Everyone, be he Communist or of any other political creed, is entitled to express his opinion, but he must be careful that the effect does not arouse people to rebellion against the laws of the State. Stockton is certainly getting more than its share of such dangerous incitement... (N. E. D. G. , 21/12/32).

However, apart from the Sunderland Glebe controversy as an instance of civil society organising, with some apparent success, to exert pressure on the local state's housing policy, the policy

that resulted between the wars was a consequence of local state ideology mediating and interpreting, within its own social and economic context, the legislative force of a dominant central state.

Apart from the numerical provision of housing, of special relevance to the aims of this study is the way it was spatially distributed and consumed. In 1920, apart from the villages of Hartburn and Norton and one or two small scale developments to the west of the town, the population was mainly confined to the largely Victorian town centre. By the end of the 'Thirties, building to the west of the town, such as it was, was nearly all private sector. Most building, and certainly nearly all council housing, was located to the north. As far as the public sector is concerned, most of it was on the Blue Hall and Eastbourne/Primrose Hill estates. Apart from the obvious segregation in tenurial terms with council and private housing being in separate developments, the beginning of segregation was evident within the council tenure itself. Many families which were impoverished, not least as a result of the chronic unemployment, were transferred wholesale from the slums in and around the town centre to the 1930s-built estates like Eastbourne and part of Blue Hall. Even half a century later these estates are still characterised by social and economic disadvantage.

This latter observation is not intended to imply that the explanation lies in succeeding generations who never escape the poverty of their parents and remain on the same estate. Still less does it imply that a cycle of deprivation through a process of intergenerational cultural transmission - the idea of which so

appealed to Keith Joseph in the early 'Seventies and which has been advanced by 'culture of poverty' theorists - took place. What it is intended to demonstrate is the persistence of certain 'reserve spaces' in which are contained the long-term unemployed and other categories of the marginalised poor.

Far from postulating a stagnant population, over time there will be inward and outward migration. The economically successful will move out - say through getting a sufficiently well-paid job or marrying someone financially better-off, and buy or rent better accommodation in a more desirable area. The disadvantaged may also move out for various reasons, often to another similar estate, perhaps in the belief that it must be better than their present one, because it gets them away from troublesome neighbours, or to be closer to relatives and friends. Whatever the reason for leaving, their place is likely to be taken perhaps by a homeless family, a lone parent on benefit, or even former owner-occupiers whose homes have been repossessed. In turn, some of these will enjoy more prosperous times and 'escape', while some former residents may, through losing their job or getting a divorce, be forced back or onto a similar estate. In more prosperous times, as in the 'Fifties and 'Sixties, the 'problem' nature of the whole estate may well recede as people find employment and as dependence on state benefits declines. However, many of them will be in low-skilled work, and in times of recession and de-industrialisation it is the peripheral workers who are among the first to lose their jobs.

Post-1945: Recommodification and Residualisation.

In spite of the pre-war building programme there was a serious housing shortage in Stockton by 1945 when a Labour government intent on providing council housing for general needs on a large scale was elected. During the life of this first administration, whose housing legislation was implemented in the town by a Labour council, more than 75 percent of new housing was for council renting. Although the first post-war Tory government continued building for general needs, they introduced legislation starting in 1954 to encourage private sector development and later supplanted housing for all with slum clearance replacement. Nationally, between 1945 and 1965, 60 percent of housebuilding was for local authority renting (Malpass and Murie 1990, p 64) compared with 66 percent in Stockton.

While this general magnitude of public to private sector building in Stockton is not remarkable given a Labour council with a substantial majority, the issue of high-rise building provides an instance of local variation created by resistance to central state pressures. Stockton excluded high-rise development from their programme in the early 'Sixties in spite of the favourable subsidies between 1956 and 1967 which were aimed at encouraging what was seen as a quick building method to reduce the housing shortage. As a result, very little high-rise building took place in the borough, much of it now being found in Billingham which was a separate authority at that time although now part of Stockton Borough. Taking just the pre-1969 boundaries of the old Stockton MBC area, multi-storey developments accounted for only about 3

percent of total stock in 1989 against nearly 7 percent in England in 1985 (Emms, 1990, p 34).

The slum clearance and rise in home-ownership of the 'Sixties and 'Seventies had obvious echoes of the 'Thirties. Just as then, families not in slum clearance areas who needed housing had to look elsewhere than council housing, and with the contracting private rented sector this usually meant owner-occupation. A study of the tenure choice of movers in Teesside between 1958 and 1970 demonstrates the drift into home-ownership by those previously in tenanted accommodation. It shows that the majority of movers aged 18 to 27, most of whom are likely to have been forming new households, moved into owner-occupation. This was most evident in the case of those moving out of council tenure, two thirds of whom moved into home-ownership, and hence the explanation of the phenomenon of 'disappearing waiting lists' during this period. Nevertheless, the incentives to buy and the end of the principle of public sector building for all, although reminiscent of thirty years earlier, this time signalled a watershed for council housing. Building for general needs was rejected by succeeding Labour as well as Conservative governments, both parties now regarding owner-occupation as the desirable tenure form, the public sector being necessary only for those who could not afford to buy.

The 'Seventies and 'Eighties witnessed one notable housing change in Stockton compared with the national picture. This was the council's share of new building between 1976 and 1989 which amounted to 15 percent compared to the 27 percent for England and Wales. This coincided with marked changes in the distribution of political power locally as a result of the 1974 reorganisation

boundary changes. For the first time since the Second World War, Labour lost its majority to the Tories in 1976, and although they regained power in 1979, since then their majority has tended to be precariously narrow. This was shown by the state of the parties on the eve of the local government elections of May 1991 when Labour held 28 seats, Conservatives 18 and S.L.D. 9 seats. As a result of the election the position was: Labour 26, Conservative 17 and S.L.D. 10 plus one Independent Labour councillor who usually voted with Labour. Labour held all the committee chairs but had to agree its budget with the other parties, and for some time it was largely a case of rule by political consensus.

In Chapter 3 I suggested that local characteristics other than local state ideology were relevant in the domination of the market by home ownership. These were the retention of a substantial proportion of the better private-rented 19th century housing, much of which transferred to owner-occupation; the emphasis on the role of owner-occupation in meeting housing demand in the Teesside Structure Plan; and the fact that the great majority of building land was privately owned. They all played some part in Stockton's particular tenure structure and help to account for why it differs so markedly from most of the North-east in which the council-sector is much larger.

A consequence of these tenurial differences between Stockton and towns like Sunderland is that the meaning of council tenure in these localities will be different. While the council sector in Sunderland will certainly contain the majority of disadvantaged families, because of its large share of the housing market it will also contain a larger proportion of better-off families with

workers. Many such families living in council accommodation in Sunderland would be in owner-occupied housing in Stockton.

What this means, then, is that disadvantage is concentrated to a greater extent in the council sector in Stockton, that is, it is a more deprived tenure than it is in most of the North-east. This has been recognised by Peter Phillimore, one of the authors of *Inequalities in Health in the Northern Region* (1986). In research into the different mortality rates between Middlesbrough and Sunderland he eventually omitted the rented sector as one of his material deprivation factors, arriving at the conclusion that it is a much less reliable indicator of deprivation in Sunderland than it is in Middlesbrough.

As well as all the factors already mentioned favouring a dominant owner-occupied sector, the recommodification of housing was also achieved through the sale of council property. This only amounted to a little over 200 houses in the borough between 1974 and 1979, but with the election of the first Thatcher government with its 1981 'right to buy' legislation, this trickle became a flood. Such were the rights and incentives to council tenants embodied in the Act that there was virtually nothing that local councils could do to resist sales, and between 1980 and 1989 nearly 3800 or 17 percent of the total stock was sold in Stockton - which was very close to the average for England and Wales. Apart from an overall depletion in its stock, in common with national trends, council housing in the most residentially desirable areas was most attractive to buyers, tending to leave what remained in the less popular 'Thirties and 'Sixties-built estates.

Council house sales and increased private sector building resulted in a relative decline in the council rented sector in Stockton from 38 percent to 27 percent between 1971 and 1988, which represented an absolute decline in council stock of about 1800. However, council sector building which offset sales during this time was mainly 'social needs' housing for elderly people, and so what was mainly lost through sales was property suitable for families which was likely to be in the more sought-after areas. The sale of council housing - particularly in the 'Eighties - and the barrier to entering council tenure and the consequent reduction of tenure choice for new households have markedly restructured housing tenure, resulting in a shrinking and deterioration of the council sector.

So the process of residualising council housing which began in the 'Thirties, although arrested for a decade after the war, has been sustained since then - with the ideological convergence on housing policy of both major political parties - and accelerated in the 1980s. With the end of the long economic boom of the 'Fifties and 'Sixties, these changes in tenure and in the size and condition of council stock have been accompanied by significant changes in the local labour market and the demography of the borough, not least increases in the retired and lone-parent families, all of which have contributed to an increase in the numbers of disadvantaged households in the borough.

The Post-Modern Era: De-industrialisation and Unemployment

The rise in unemployment on Teesside, particularly from the 'Seventies, was consequent mainly on the large-scale reductions in the labour force in its traditional industries of chemicals, metal

manufacture and engineering. The area's dependence on this industrial base was not simply an accident of history, the continuation of a Nineteenth century industrial tradition. In the late 1940s the Ministry of Town and Country Planning was advised against a policy of diversification which, at a time of labour shortage, would have retarded the growth of the chemical industry. And in the modernisation period of the 'Sixties, chemicals and steel were encouraged by state subsidies. Ultimately, this policy failed, and with the lack of investment particularly from 1980, the effect in the post-modern era has been a growth in the long-term experience of deprivation as jobs have been destroyed.

So the causes of unemployment during this period have their roots to some extent in central mechanisms carrying through an ideology of modernisation. The international crisis of capitalism in the 'Seventies and 'Eighties clearly led to recession and unemployment on an international scale, and it was the world-wide nature of the crisis which the Conservative administrations of the 1980s seized on to account for unemployment in Britain and which they contended could best be combatted by the tight money, low inflation policies that they adopted. However, as Therborn (1986) demonstrates, there were marked differences in the unemployment rates of various countries which he attributes to differences in political priorities. Restructuring of industry has been achieved in other countries, as he shows, without the consequence of the massive unemployment experienced in Britain.

Government responsibility for and concern with (un)employment has everywhere in the postwar period become part of mainstream political discourse. But rhetoric is one thing, institutionalised norms and priorities, backed up by policy-making mechanisms and by

internalised expectations of the political and the economic factors are something else (Therborn, 1986).

So it is largely central state and capitalist mechanisms that have resulted in the closures and the transference of production abroad as global restructuring has taken place, and many of the workers and their families who were cast adrift in the process, not to mention those who have never had the opportunity to work, now constitute a large part of the public sector in general, and by no means only the so-called problem estates to which many have gravitated. The burden of de-industrialisation has fallen disproportionately on council tenants as opposed to those living in owner-occupation. The enormous extent to which this is true of Cleveland is revealed by analysis of data for the whole county from the Cleveland Social Survey for 1977 and 1990.

Table 9.1

Economic Activity of all Household Members by Tenure: 1977 and 1990

Compared - All Cleveland

	Owner-occupied		Council	
	1977	1990	1977	1990
Working full-time	52%	48%	43%	18%
Working part-time	12%	11%	10%	9%
Unemp'd/on scheme	3%	5%	6%	13%
Chronic sick	1%	3%	3%	8%
Retired	7%	13%	10%	20%
<u>Housewives & others</u>	<u>26%</u>	<u>19%</u>	<u>28%</u>	<u>32%</u>
Totals	101%	99%	100%	100%
Bases	1960	2526	1220	815

Source: CSS, 1977 and 1990. Cleveland CC Research and Intelligence Unit.

It is clear from this table that those living in owner-occupation have, to a very large extent, escaped the adverse consequences of the de-industrialisation and recessions while council tenants have borne most of the costs. Moreover, the possibility that the massive drop in the percentage of workers among council tenants can be accounted for largely by the rise in the proportion of economically inactive is not sustained if a comparison is made for the economically active only.

Table 9.2

Economic Activity of Economically Active Household Members by Tenure: 1977 and 1990 Compared - All Cleveland

	Owner-occupied		Council	
	1977	1990	1977	1990
Working full-time	79%	75%	72%	43%
Working part-time	18%	18%	17%	23%
<u>Unemp'd/on scheme</u>	<u>4%</u>	<u>7%</u>	<u>11%</u>	<u>34%</u>
	101%	100%	100%	100%
Bases	1295	1622	728	330

Source: CSS, 1977 and 1990. Cleveland CC Research and Intelligence Unit.

As high as the level of unemployment is among council tenants, estates like Ragworth are still distinct. The unemployment rate among all council tenants in 1990 was the same as Ragworth was experiencing in 1979 and about a half Ragworth's 1984 rate. To return to the differences between the two tenures, the above two tables mask a further difference to emerge over the period in question, namely over multiple full-time worker households. These are brought out in the next table which focuses on households with dependent children to support.

Table 9.3

Number of Full-Time Workers in Households Containing Children Aged Under Sixteen - All Cleveland

	Owner-occupied		Council	
	1977	1990	1977	1990
One worker	70%	68%	47%	25%
Two or more workers	24%	22%	32%	5%
<u>No Workers</u>	<u>6%</u>	<u>10%</u>	<u>21%</u>	<u>70%</u>
Totals	100%	100%	100%	100%
Bases	459	407	242	155

In the case of young families living in owner-occupied tenure, they have virtually maintained their economic status; between a fifth and a quarter were, and still are, to use Pahl's term, 'work-rich'. By stark contrast, the economic well-being of young families in council tenure has plummeted. Not only has the proportion of households with only one full-time worker almost halved, but the third which contained more than one full-time worker in 1977 declined to one in twenty by 1990. That 70 percent of young families are without a full-time earner is perhaps the most poignant indicator presented in this thesis of residualisation and what it means to council tenants in Cleveland.

In explaining these changes, tenure could almost be regarded as a surrogate measure of occupational status. Although, of course, there is some fuzziness in the relationship between occupational status and tenure, clearly manual workers at all skill levels are to be found disproportionately in the council sector while higher

socio-economic status workers are concentrated in the owner-occupied sector. While Cleveland's industrial decline has affected all occupational levels to some extent, the loss of manual jobs in manufacturing industries has been most significant.

Although this accounts for most of the changes in the above tables, recent trends in tenure movement are likely to have had the effect of impoverishing the council rented sector further. In the first place, the majority of tenants buying their council houses are likely to have been in work, while less importantly in terms of numbers, some owner-occupiers who have lost their jobs will have dropped out of that sector into council tenure. So as well as the changed economic activity of those who have been council tenants since the latter half of the 'Seventies, shifting between tenures according to level of household income will undoubtedly have further increased the economic activity gulf between the two main tenures.

It is clear that council tenants in Cleveland as a whole are far more impoverished than in the 'Seventies. One perspective of the extent of the change in the role of council housing was given by a contact in the housing department whose major responsibility was in the allocation of tenants. He told me that in the space of a decade or so the type of applicant he deals with had changed radically. In the 'Seventies and earlier he had dealt mainly with married couples with children. Now, excluding transfer applications and those from elderly people, he deals mainly with lone-parents, young married couples without children, recently divorced or separated applicants, and so on. As he put it, with not a little regret, the department now provided 'social' housing. The sort of

disadvantage found on Ragworth is now being experienced by many more tenants than in the 1970s. Certain estates like Ragworth are still more disadvantaged than the average, but an evening-up process is taking place.

In view of the unemployment levels shown in Tables 9.1 to 9.3, it is not surprising that in April 1990 66 percent of council tenants were claiming housing benefit (Stockton Housing Department data). Moreover, comparison of the Cleveland Social Survey data for 1979 and 1990 shows a number of significant differences in the characteristics of council tenants across Cleveland. Omitting those household heads aged 65 or more, there was an increase in the proportion of female heads of households (up from 21 percent to 36 percent); fewer heads of households were married (down from 70 to 50 percent). Further, over the same period, the number of all households containing a lone-parent rose from 9.3 to 15.8 percent.

Ragworth's Emergence as a Disadvantaged Estate

Ragworth was among the estates built in the immediate post-war era which saw, by the mid-1950s, more local authority building to the north, notably on the Roseworth estate intended for general needs, and still one of Stockton's more popular estates. It was subsequently increased in size and the nearby Hardwick Estate built for slum clearance replacement. By the early 'Seventies there were other smaller-scale developments in and near the town centre and to the west. The western side of the borough, though, saw massive private suburban development and the northern boundary above Norton was also privately developed. Part of Hardwick is still characterised by the disadvantage imported by its original residents.

While the poverty of the slums accounts for the problem status of a number of the town's run-down areas, this does not explain Ragworth. Most of it was built soon after the war, before any clearance areas had been demolished, to house families that, on the whole, would not have been regarded as likely to be 'bad' tenants. To start with, then, it was a good early post war estate, housing tenants who were probably reasonably representative of the waiting list at that time in terms of socio-economic characteristics. With the decline in housing quality of the 'Macmillan houses' and the encouragement to local authorities to use non-traditional construction techniques in the early 'Fifties, the high standards of the early post-war years were lost in the drive for cheaper and quicker building.

It was decided to build a limited number of system-built houses in Stockton, one of the first estates to have them being Ragworth. They were built close to the railway, and turnover figures indicate that they were immediately less popular than the original housing. The noise and vibration from the trains and the inferior quality of the housing soon led to a higher turnover of tenants than in the rest of the estate. The unpopularity of this 'no-fines' housing increased through the 'Sixties and 'Seventies and it seems that even the good housing eventually became stigmatised as the influx of families which other residents found troublesome as neighbours helped to give it a bad reputation. There is ethnographic evidence of the 'dumping' of so-called problem families on the estate, and disadvantaged families will have elected to go there in the absence of a better offer. The decline gathered pace in the 1970s particularly, and by the time of the

first social survey, Ragworth showed the characteristics of a disadvantaged estate. So its emergence set it apart as a prototype run-down estate in view of its distinctive pattern of development. In terms of local decision-making, Ragworth sounds a warning about the consequences of infilling, on estates of good quality housing, with inferior housing.

Of the sociological theorisations and other explanations of run-down estates discussed in Chapter 4, the process of stigmatisation and the consequences of allocation policies have the most relevance to Ragworth. But their contribution has to be placed in the context of the higher-level central mechanisms discussed above which have created social and economic disadvantage and residualised the council tenure. The significance of this point is that without the creation of a disadvantaged sector of the working class, the construction of physically inferior estates, the imposition of resource constraints leading to further deterioration, and the recommodification of the better council stock, without these structural mechanisms the questions of stigmatisation and differential allocation hardly arise. The building of the 'no-fines' housing did not, in itself, cause the decline of Ragworth. What it did was 'position' Ragworth, albeit unintentionally, for its future role as ghetto for disadvantaged families which were largely created by central mechanisms.

Creating Improvement: Local and State Policy

The second main perspective of the thesis concerns the issue of how disadvantaged estates like Ragworth can be improved and the quality of life of the people who live on them significantly increased. In pursuing this theme, I have not considered

macro-level solutions such as economic planning to direct investment to underdeveloped areas or fairer distribution of income. Crucial as I believe fundamental economic reform to be in creating significant change in the lives of disadvantaged people, the political likelihood of a British government adopting such policies in the foreseeable future appears so remote that my analysis has largely been confined to what is happening now and to what seems more immediately possible. Accordingly, my main focus has been on the possibilities of change emerging from communities themselves by looking in detail at the example of Ragworth over a five year period, but also at the impact of certain state policies directed at run-down estates, mainly in the form of new managerial approaches which have come to the fore during the past ten years or so and are exemplified in the Priority Estate Project initiative.

Chapter 5 described conditions on Ragworth and residents' perceptions of their material environment after a long period of deterioration in the fabric of the estate and after changes in the composition of the population resulting from the combination of high turnover and certain allocation practices. There were the typical, well-documented characteristics of a run-down council estate; a large proportion of families with young children and lone-parent families, a much higher than average unemployment rate, a low-skill occupational structure and low car ownership.

The neglect of the adequate repair and maintenance of the estate was revealed particularly in the low level of tenant satisfaction with heating and in the amount of dampness and condensation in the houses. The overall level of dissatisfaction was higher in the 'no-fines' 'Fifties housing. Beyond the confines

of the house itself, life and conditions on the estate were grim. Many of the tenants were convinced that the council used the estate to 'dump' troublesome families on, and attributed much of the estate's image and stigmatisation, of which they felt they were innocent victims, to the council's allocation policy. The vandalism, the noise and the whole appearance of the estate blighted it as far as most tenants were concerned.

By 1984, after much of the modernisation and estate improvement programme had been carried out, it had, in the eyes of the residents, changed very considerably for the better. While this applied to the housing in some respects, the quality of materials and standard of workmanship attracted a good deal of criticism. In fact, it was in certain aspects of the estate environment beyond the confines of the house that the most marked improvement in residents' satisfaction had taken place. For example, although vandalism had by no means been eradicated, many residents were less dissatisfied than in 1979, and approval of the general appearance of the estate increased substantially.

Clearly, making improvements in line with what tenants want can result in definite improvements to their quality of life. However, a particularly interesting aspect of this period in the estate's history is the process by which the local state conceded to the residents' demands for change in deciding to allocate resources to the estate. It is important before going on to analyse this process to remember that the council had no plans to modernise Ragworth in the near term, nor did the decision to commission a survey of the estate betoken any intention on the council's part to use the findings to guide policy other than in an ill-defined and

limited way. To reinforce this point, it is also worth remembering that the tenants had made representations to the council before 1979 over the conditions on the estate without achieving any improvements of any significance.

It was against this background that the first survey was carried out in the autumn of 1979 and the report published the following spring. The latter event did not create much response from the council for over two months, and if nothing further had happened it is not unlikely that its potential to contribute to change would have been lost. What did, in fact, happen to immediately elevate Ragworth into prominence as a policy problem was the local newspaper's decision to make a front-page feature of the report. Even this might have been played down and contained by the council if it had wished to do so but for one further and crucial intervention, namely the reaction of the residents.

They were initially provoked by the publicity the newspaper report gave to conditions on the estate which they, not unreasonably, condemned as reinforcing and exacerbating the stigma of living on Ragworth. They also took exception to another article which appeared soon afterwards giving prominence to derogatory allegations about life on the estate. Their reaction was not simply defensive, though, but was also an aggrieved response to the real problems of neglect by the council. This initial outcry was to persist as a sustained campaign to win concessions from the council.

Another factor which impacted on the dynamics of the protest action was the presence of a community worker already working on the estate. One can only speculate on the course of tenant action

in his absence; it might have been more militant or it might have foundered through a lack of organisation or both. The contribution he made was in helping them to publicise and formalise meetings the better to mobilise support as well as facilitating liaison between tenants and representatives of the local state.

In realist terminology, the research report, the chronicling of events as they occurred by the local Press and the publicity this gave to the tenants' case, the tenants' struggle and the influence of the community worker are contingent factors in this episode of community protest which ultimately led to change in council policy. The tenants had not been a force to which the council had had to make concessions until the publication of the survey results which were then, in a sense, magnified and given prominence by the Press which also helped keep the issue prominent in the domain of local politics. As well as giving the residents a platform this also placed the council in the position of having to respond to the residents' campaign. The two factors of the report and the Press in combination clearly played an important part in activating the causal power of community protest. This in turn was directed by the influence of community development skills into channels of action which almost certainly caused it to take a different course than it otherwise would have done and probably increased its effectiveness in achieving its goals.

In addition to the improvements resulting from this action, the Priority Estates Project approach has been adopted as a local housing management strategy designed for the mutual advantage of tenants and housing department. There is no doubt that the modernisation certainly improved living conditions on the estate,

and it seems likely that the de-centralised managerial approach has brought some benefits. Measures like these are honest attempts by the local authority to bring about improvements for residents and without them, over the last decade in particular, the estate would have been a much harsher environment in which to live. So they are important, but are they anything other than palliatives which do little or nothing to lift the economic and social status of tenants or improve their life chances? It appears from the increase in disadvantage (e.g a doubling of unemployment) registered between the two social surveys, not to mention the overall increase in disadvantage in the council sector in Cleveland, that the answer is not a hopeful one. Yet, to explore it further, it is worth looking at Ragworth now, at the beginning of the 'Nineties, after a period of 10 years or so of policy inputs designed to improve life on the estate.

Ragworth in the 1990s: Is It Part of an Underclass?

A contemporary debate in sociology is centred on the idea of an underclass which was discussed in Chapter 4. Superficially, at least, Ragworth looks as though it might represent a case of an emerging underclass, and it would certainly fit some writers' definitions of the term. Both academics and journalists are currently applying the term 'underclass' to people with the level of disadvantage found on run-down estates like Ragworth. It is even possible that it may be entering everyday discourse if the words of a resident of North Shields in a recent television documentary are any indication: 'You've got the haves and the have-nots. You've got the working class but here in Geordie-land you've got the underclass and they have nothing' (Panorama, 4/11/91).

The problem with the concept in empirically relating it to an estate like Ragworth is that it is ill-defined and diverse in meaning. It has been criticised on this and other counts recently by Hughes (1990) because of what he calls its 'unbounded' conceptual, geographical and theoretical character. Even W. J. Wilson (1991-2) himself suggests that the time may be approaching when academics should stop using the term because of 'nonsystematic, arbitrary and atheoretical usages.' Bagguley and Mann criticise the concept on these grounds, but also because the current debate is simply the latest 'rediscovery' of an inter-generational residuum:

In many respects it is no more than value laden speculation about the future. The concept of the 'underclass' is a recurrent political and social scientific myth, or, at best, a statistical artefact (1992, p 122).

As they point out, such self-perpetuating working-class groups have been identified in the past as inadequate, unmotivated and unemployable, only to disappear when labour market opportunities or the needs of the armed forces gave them a route out of their disadvantaged state. While I substantially agree with this critique, I am not convinced that it is possible to be so confident that today's most disadvantaged groups will similarly eventually escape. There are now plenty of young people of working age concentrated on estates like Ragworth who have never had a job, and with predictions that the current recession could extend into the next millenium (e.g. Godley, 1992), and given the extent of de-industrialisation since 1980, the possibility that many of them will remain unemployed for a long time to come cannot be dismissed.

This may happen concomitantly with the inevitably decreasing presence of older residents with their different experiences of the labour market and assumed different set of norms and attitudes to work, informal social control, etc. In this scenario, the likelihood presents itself of areas of public sector housing where the majority are out of work and have never experienced paid work or even lived in a household which contained a paid worker. In other words, the possibility of the emergence of sub-cultural adaptations and attitudinal and behavioural changes of a nature never before seen in Britain cannot be ignored.

In view of the amorphous and shifting nature of the underclass concept, its value in explaining or describing run-down estates is obviously problematic. Yet, as expounded by Wilson, it has a coherent theoretical framework which persuasively integrates structural and cultural variables in accounting for the ghetto poor in America. Although Holloway (1990) considers its measurement almost impossible if taken in its complex entirety, it is susceptible to empirical investigation - particularly in terms of its elements - and it has certainly spawned a great deal of research in the U.S.A. since the publication of 'The Truly Disadvantaged' in 1987.

Although a gross oversimplification of Wilson's ideas, the following description of the elements of his formulation draws out its salient characteristics.

1. In the context of American society, the underclass is depicted as ethnically distinct, consisting of Afro-Americans living in inner-city ghettos of high poverty concentration, although Wilson

asserts that the concept can be applied irrespective of race or ethnicity (1991-2 p 653).

2. De-industrialisation has resulted in high levels of chronic unemployment in underclass ghettos. The displaced workers are unable, because of their residential location and lack of appropriate training - among other reasons - to fill the growing number of service jobs in the suburbs. One consequence of this has been the decline in the number of marriageable men (in the sense of being able to financially support a family) and the growth of unmarried mothers and female-headed households.

3. The formerly socially heterogeneous neighbourhoods have lost the middle classes through out-migration, and with them role models who embodied the possibility of black working class social advancement and who 'invested economic and social resources in the neighbourhoods, patronised the churches, stores, banks, and community organisations, sent their children to the local schools, reinforced societal norms and values..' (Wilson, 1991-2).

4. The unconventional life styles, criminality and limited aspirations characteristic of the underclass are understandable as rational responses to the consequences of changes in the economy.

5. Members of the underclass are trapped in the ghetto.

Research on these ideas has given some support to them, expanded them, but has also challenged them. For example, Santiago and Wilder (1991), while presenting evidence to support Wilson's contention that female-headed households are more likely to be poor, quote studies that do not corroborate his claim that middle-class blacks are deserting the ghettos in significantly

large numbers. Similarly, Rose and Deskins (1991) found that in Detroit there was little evidence of increased segregation of middle-class and working-class blacks between 1970 and 1980, and with regard to lone-parenthood as an underclass measure uncovered 'little evidence that the problems of teen fertility seriousness is limited to so-called underclass neighbourhoods. This outcome casts serious doubt on the validity of using such measures as a surrogate for underclass behaviour.' And while Johnson and Oliver (1991) do not fundamentally disagree with Wilson's emphasis on the role of de-industrialisation in the growth of the underclass in Rustbelt cities like Chicago, they find this explanation wanting in the case of cities like Washington, for instance, which always lacked a large industrial sector. They argue that 'he ignored a range of other structural forces' in his emphasis on class domination.

..our understanding of the dynamics of economic restructuring includes a racial dimension as well. Economic restructuring does not develop in a vacuum. Changes in the economy are both the product of, and exist in, a historically produced context in which class, race, and gender relations are all of central importance (Johnson and Olivier, 1991 p 559).

Wilson's rejoinder to some of the criticism is that it misses a crucial aspect of his theory which is concerned with the *concentration* of poverty in conjunction with extreme social isolation so that the behaviour and values of those who share this level of disadvantage and exclusion are mutually re-inforced. Further, he argues that the underclass concept's component parts cannot be unravelled if his explanation is to be fully understood because his concept 'derives its meaning from a theoretical framework that links structural, social-psychological, and cultural arguments' (Wilson, 1991-2). For these reasons, he maintains that

the underclass cannot be adequately researched through national data but investigation must focus on inner-city neighbourhoods of concentrated poverty in the large conurbations.

If, as Wilson argues, ethnic and national contexts are irrelevant to the applicability of his ideas, what might be the value of the underclass concept in the case of Ragworth; can it add anything to the theoretical approaches and empirical material already advanced in this study to explain and depict the estate, and conversely, what empirical light has the case of Ragworth to throw on the validity and applicability of the concept itself? Peterson (1991-2) calculates that even in the U.S.A. Wilson's latest revision of his concept means that it is relevant for only a small proportion of the poor, which raises the question of whether it is applicable to any but the most extreme cases of deprived areas in Britain - if even to these.

Before examining what empirical evidence there is on Ragworth, it is worth repeating the point made in the Introduction that at the outset of the research on the estate in 1979 and 1984, the underclass concept was, not surprisingly, not an issue for the commissioners of the research and, to be frank, it was not exercising my mind nor that of the academic community in Britain very much at that time. Consequently, any data I can call on which is relevant to the debate is purely fortuitous.

To begin with, as far as Ragworth is concerned, there are obvious similarities and dissimilarities between it and the kind of ghettos on which Wilson based his ideas. For example, Ragworth is ethnically a white suburban estate in what is, by comparison with Chicago or Detroit, a small town. Yet, although precise comparison

is not accessible, in terms of some key deprivation indicators it bears quite strong similarities to Wilson's areas. For example, de-industrialisation has taken a heavy toll in both neighbourhood types as the very high levels of unemployment demonstrate, and in neither case are their occupational skills matched to the demands of the kind of service jobs on offer - in the big city suburbs of America at least. In addition, both have well above-average incidences of lone-parents and households headed by females.

It is when some of the other structural and cultural facets of Wilson's concept are considered that the lack of fit between Ragworth and the underclass 'template' becomes evident. While Ragworth and Wilson's ghettos are now socially homogeneous, Ragworth would never have experienced the degree of social heterogeneity described by Wilson as being characteristic of the black communities before the civil rights concessions of the 'Sixties removed some of the barriers to black social and geographical mobility and enabled the better-off and better qualified to escape the ghetto areas (Kasarda, 1990, p 238).

Not that the consequences of migration are irrelevant to Ragworth's social structure just because the issue of middle-class loss on any significant scale was not an empirical possibility. Hughes (1990) raises the problem of '...the extent to which impacted ghetto tracts are formed by a change in status among residents and/or the selective outmigration of people without the characteristics being measured', and this is certainly an issue of relevance to Ragworth.

On the estate between 1979 and 1984 both inward and outward migration contributed to it becoming a more disadvantaged estate -

more like an underclass, at least in terms of this dimension of the concept. This was revealed in Chapter 7 where analyses of the 1984 survey data were presented in terms of those who had been residents since the previous survey ('originals') and those who had moved onto the estate since the previous survey ('newcomers'). No change of any consequence in the age structure could be attributed to out-migration, for such change as there was among the 'originals' over the four and a half year period was consistent with ageing. For instance, the smaller proportion of under-fives was more or less balanced by the increase in the 5 to 15 year-old group. The 'newcomers', however, introduced a much larger proportion of under-fives than was found among the 'originals'. In fact, two-thirds of the 'newcomer' households contained children aged under five.

As far as growth in the size of the lone-parent group among the 'originals' is concerned, the data are inadequate to investigate the possible effect of migration which might, say, have left more lone-parents on the estate compared to other household types. Nor do the data allow any conclusion to be reached about the other possible explanation for the increase - the greater fertility of single women who had been resident since 1979. What is clear, though, is that a bigger pro rata contribution was made to the number of lone-parent households by 'newcomer' households, nearly a third of which contained a lone-parent.

In-migration also had consequences for the levels of economic activity. It is not possible to say to what degree the loss of people in paid work among the original population was a result of the migration of workers from Ragworth on the one hand or of

de-industrialisation and other causes on the other. What is certain, however, is the low proportion of 'newcomers' who were in work. Much of this is accounted for by the large proportion of them who defined themselves as 'housewives' or another residual category. Among these were a sizeable number of young mothers, most of whom had never worked.

A comparison of occupational skill levels demonstrates that Ragworth was even less skilled in 1984 than in 1979. The small skill losses among the 'originals' suggest that the out-migrants tended to be higher status occupationally. The 'newcomers' were somewhat less skilled than the population they were joining, and nearly twice as many as the 'originals' could not even be classified occupationally because they had never been in work.

In short, then, a disproportionate amount of disadvantage was imported to the estate by in-migrants, the effect of out-migration being less significant. But the combined effect of both during a period of rapid de-industrialisation was to give the estate the look of an underclass as far as the poverty element of the label is concerned.

With regard to cultural adaptations to economic change, the data are not available to explore the extent to which such a process might have taken place on Ragworth. So it is not possible to assess the degree of, say, any limited aspirations, less still whether they are rationally consistent with the economic and social positions of residents or their self-perceived prospects of upward social mobility. What can be said is that although there is such high and chronic unemployment, the question of scale and proximity to higher status residents cannot be ignored. In particular,

children on the estate share secondary education with children of more affluent parents; in other words, they are by no means educationally segregated in the way that the ghetto dwellers described by Wilson apparently are.

Another key characteristic of the ghetto is the incidence of serious crime. Ragworth has a problem with crime and vandalism, as crime statistics for January to May, 1992 shown below demonstrate. Yet from observational and ethnographic evidence there is a very wide gulf between Ragworth and the level of serious crime - especially violent and drug-related crime - found in the U.S. ghettos, or even in Mosside and parts of Glasgow for that matter. Ragworth cannot compete with the level of social disorganisation found in some of these communities. It still has stable, long-term residents who are committed to the estate, to improving it and doing what they can to make it a decent place to live. These are typified by the group of women who involve themselves in communal activities such as running the youth club and representing residents' interests in the officer/resident committees. People like these will not easily ignore crime and other behaviour likely to cause problems for residents and reflect on the estate's reputation. It was these women and others like them who were so active in the struggle for better conditions in the early 'Eighties.

Finally, Wilson's description of the underclass which has them trapped in the ghetto does not apply to Ragworth. Tenant turnover on the estate was described in Chapter 4 where Figure 5 showed an increasing rate of turnover as the estate deteriorated. Data passed to me by the local housing office in 1991 revealed that about a

third of tenancies had turned over during the previous year. The intriguing question that this raises is: what happens to them? Is their departure due to a change in circumstances such as getting a job or marrying someone in work, or have they simply moved to another council tenancy on a similar estate? Similarly, a question relevant to the assumption that families are trapped on run-down estates concerns the extent of fluctuating 'membership' of them. That is, to what extent do people move in and out of areas of extreme poverty - even changing tenure - as their socio-economic status varies? Other research questions suggested by this study are what evidence, if any, is there of cultural and behavioural change as a response to changes in the economy in areas of concentrated poverty? For example, does long-term exposure to living on a disadvantaged estate result in withdrawal from the economic and normative life of society into a self-contained subculture, and if it does, under what circumstances, and what variables might be countervailing influences to sustain commitment to mainstream societal values? It seems to me that questions on these lines recognise two of the salient aspects of the underclass notion - structural causes and behavioural responses - which need to be addressed. Robson and Gregson make the point that:

The debate is.. trapped in a classic polarity between structuralist and behaviouralist approaches, between structure and agency. However, the reality is that both are important: we need to acknowledge both the determinacy of structure and the creativity of agency (Robinson and Gregory, 1992, p 42).

Ragworth has undergone a long period of change and disruption, experiencing since the 'Sixties a more or less unremitting and accelerating decline into increasing disadvantage. Given the relatively major modernisation effort in the early 1980s, and since

then the changes in housing management practices, what is the estate like now, at the beginning of the 'Nineties, and what might be the prospects for its young population?

It has obviously changed a lot since I first saw it 1979. The very worst housing in Doncaster Crescent and Dartford Close next to the railway has gone, and in their place is a swathe of well-kept, grassed open ground. The 'no-fines' houses are no longer drab-grey and losing their cladding. Although there are plenty of uncultivated front gardens, their fencing is largely intact, presumably giving tenants more of a sense of security from clearly demarcating curtilages than had been the case over ten years earlier. During school time it is usually quiet with very few people in evidence. Sometimes someone will be repairing motor vehicles, one of the few 'occupations' of the unemployed which is practised on the estate and tolerated by housing management so long as it does not create too much of a nuisance for other residents.

Yet, it is still immediately recognisable as a run-down estate. The few shops at the entrance to the estate are partly boarded-up and defaced by graffiti. A little further in, the row of 'Sixties flats now used to house young single people are very ill-used and unsightly. The 'no-fines' houses still look better than they did in 1979, but, although fewer are boarded-up, those that are contribute to the run-down appearance of this stock compared to the 1940s housing which looks, by comparison, in generally good condition. With regard to the 'no-fines' housing, plans to spend £1m on improving them in 1992 is testament to the council's commitment to the estate. Its appearance apart, all available evidence shows that in terms of social and economic

indicators it is clearly one of Stockton's most deprived council estates. On a visit to the estate in June 1991 I asked the manager of the local estate office to what extent he regarded it as a disadvantaged estate. He was in no doubt that, in spite of bricks-and-mortar improvements, the fundamental problems still dominated life there.

It still is disadvantaged. I think it still has the stigma attached to it - it is still there. You only have to go round and look at some of the living conditions inside the properties. When we're going to see these people with maybe two or three mouths to feed and we're saying 'about your rent arrears Mrs Smith, you've got to do something otherwise its going to end up with court costs'. She turns round and works it out and she's on £39 a week and she's got all the bills to pay and it's at times like that that you think, 'wait a minute, what can I accept here 'off the back'? I already mentioned the single mums, and its very difficult as well because of the low number of people who work on the estate. When we did a survey on the Primrose Hill properties [adjacent to Ragworth] out of a hundred properties we had three people that worked.

He mentioned incidents over the past two years or so which depict it as having more than the usual everyday problems to be found on most estates in Stockton. He spoke about a knifing, problems with children and teenagers playing out late, a break-in in which the tenant involved said he was too afraid to return (this was picked up by the national as well as local Press), and a dog problem. In mid-1991 there were three known Pit Bull terriers, a Rotweiller and a number of Alsatians on the estate as well as the less notorious breeds. Dogs were in evidence at an eviction he had to supervise some 18 months earlier.

I went to an eviction in my first week - I was told it had to go through. I was confronted by two Pit Bull terriers and a Rotweiller dog, and a mob of twenty or thirty people. The police didn't turn up as requested and the bailiff was informed that if he didn't turn his car round they'd turn it over for him.

More recently, for two nights in mid-June 1992, rioting broke out on Ragworth. In response to a report of a gun being fired from a car which was traced to the estate, armed police entered the area. The now familiar pattern of confrontation observed elsewhere in Britain between the police and mainly young men took place. The latter came from the estate and the surrounding area, bricks and petrol bombs were thrown and police dressed in riot gear were deployed. (In little over a month, similar confrontations have also taken place in the Hartcliffe area of Bristol and on an estate in Burnley). Within a week, a dossier had been prepared which was used in Stockton's City Challenge bid. It claimed a 55 percent male unemployment rate and produced figures for the first five months of the year showing that 274 crimes had been reported - which was greater than the borough rate by a factor of five.

All this is mentioned not to depict Ragworth as a completely lawless estate, which it is not, and I would deplore any such material in this thesis being used to further stigmatise it. These events are mentioned only to convey some of the tensions and serious problems which still beset it. Then there are the perhaps less visible problems of poverty such as the 90 percent of tenants who were claiming Housing Benefit in 1991 (Housing Department data). So what hope is there for the people of Ragworth? While a small minority of residents are currently in work, many have never experienced the sustained discipline of paid work in the way that the working classes did in earlier periods of prolonged and full employment, most notably in the 'Fifties and 'Sixties, leading routine working lives as part of a disciplined work-force. In the eventuality of an economic boom and industrial expansion, how

well-fitted would the long-term unemployed or never-employed be to take advantage of it? How seriously disadvantaged would they be in competition with others for jobs, particularly those already in work or with a proven work history?

Ragworth has the hall-marks of a casualty of post-modern society, an uncomfortable refuge for the losers in the unequal competition for economic and social rewards. De-industrialisation, industrial re-location, successive recessions, and the loss even of many poorly-paid service sector jobs have largely excluded them from the world of secure, paid work and its benefits. It is difficult to imagine their prospects improving much in the foreseeable future. Of course, some will 'escape' the estate, perhaps to find more prosperity, but for many it is probably more of the same: subsistence-level welfare dependency and continued exclusion from many of the benefits of citizenship. But it was still, to some extent, a working estate in 1979, and my impression is that even now it contains many people who would be ready and able to work should what seems now a remote possibility present itself. It is still part of the reserve army of labour, although its links with the world of work grow more tenuous as opportunities to participate in the economy are denied it.

The longer this exclusion persists, however, the more the possibility of attitudinal and behavioural change as the disadvantaged adapt further to a post-industrial world without paid work and the power and status that it bestows. What this might mean, in the increasing absence of the countervailing values within the community of an older generation, is open to speculation, but

the urban riots of recent years in white as well as black areas
look portentous.

APPENDIX

Methodological Issues Concerning Social Survey Data.

Methodological Issues Concerning Social Survey Data

The Introduction began a discussion of the practical realities of the research drawn on in this thesis and Chapters 5 and 7 described the rationale behind the sampling methods of the two estate surveys. The purpose of this section is to extend the discussion into a more technical arena. To this end, not only is a more detailed description given of the social surveys but their validity and representativeness are examined. Given that the presentation of sample results and the comparison of results from different population samples inevitably raise the question of sampling error and the statistical significance of differences between samples, these points are discussed below. Further, the approximation to a controlled experiment attempted in Chapters 5 and 7 is also considered.

The 1979 and 1984 Surveys of Ragworth

The 'before and after' nature of these two surveys was not planned. At the time of the first survey, there was no thought of carrying out a follow-up for the simple reason that it was not originally intended to be part of a policy strategy of consultation, improvement and evaluation. The value of carrying out a second survey only became apparent after the improvement programme had been won, largely by tenant action, and set in motion by the local authority.

The first survey, therefore, was designed to quantify the extent of disadvantage and elicit residents' opinions of the estate and the quality of the housing. For reasons explained in Chapter 5

concerned partly with the need to consult tenants and partly with the selection of the most appropriate household members in view of the subject matter of the questions, in both 1979 and 1984 it was decided to sample only from heads of households and spouses. Consequently, about 17 percent of adults on the estate in each survey were effectively excluded from the sampling frame, the rest being sampled systematically by selecting alternate male and female on a house-by-house basis.

So while the sampling technique was not representative of the total adult population, because it included a respondent from 93 percent of households in both years and ensured proportional gender representation, it is argued that this compensates for its somewhat unconventional design and incomplete coverage to give highly accurate demographic data and reliable attitudinal data which would almost certainly have been only marginally different had the sampling frame included all adults. The missing population fraction would have partly comprised the adult children of tenants and therefore, of course, would probably have consisted of younger than average residents of the estate, but the estate population was relatively young anyway and so even assuming any age-related effects, any differences in attitudes to the domains covered in the interviews are likely to have been minimal.

Evaluation of the modernisation process described in Chapters 5 and 7 was complicated by two effects which have to be taken into account. One was the influx of new residents who moved onto the estate either during the period of housing improvement or after it had been more or less completed and who therefore had little or no direct experience of the estate as it was in the late 'Seventies.

So their assessment of the impact of the changes was obviously less useful than those who were in a position to compare the 'before' with the 'after' situation. These post-improvement newcomers represented 36 percent of the achieved sample. As far as the two questions which directly asked for before-and-after comparisons were concerned, a small proportion of this group of respondents felt able - from the knowledge they had acquired about the state of the houses and the estate as they were before modernisation - to make a judgement, but most simply did not feel able to offer an opinion. Consequently, they are divided from the longer-standing residents for the results of the two questions which asked about the extent of improvement to the housing stock and to the estate environment.

The other effect was the movement of residents who lived on the estate before modernisation to different houses on the estate. Ideally, it would have made for a better experimental design if everyone had moved back to their original dwellings, but 51 percent of them did not do so. This was because most were moved out of their original homes while the work was carried out, and many elected to stay or move to another house that had been modernised rather than wait to return to their original dwelling. In such cases they were asked to compare the quality of their present with their previous accommodation.

However, very little of the interview consisted of asking residents to make direct before-and-after comparisons. For the most part, exactly the same satisfaction scale and question wording were used as in 1979. That is, two sets of 'readings' were taken, separated by a lapse of some four years, using the same research

instruments. In this way, the fact that some were living in different properties was not particularly relevant since comparison of the two sets of results revealed overall changes for the estate as a whole.

One danger which can arise in any study which attempts to measure the impact of change on those affected by it is the 'Hawthorne effect'. In constructing the interview schedule, it was important to take care not to create any assumptions which could have been conveyed to respondents that 'change' was synonymous with 'improvement'. This could have led to respondents tending to offer more *approving* replies than they might otherwise have been inclined to give and to temper any critical comments they might have wished to make. In other words, I tried to make the content of the interview as neutral as possible - especially by restricting the use of words like 'improvement' to the minimum necessary. The aim was to allow respondents to feel free to express their views unhindered by any perceived expectations that they should be pleased with the changes and should not appear 'ungrateful' to the interviewer by voicing any criticism.

The analyses in Chapter 7 consist almost entirely of juxtaposing satisfaction levels for 1979 and 1984, and a further issue which has to be addressed is the extent to which any apparently significant differences are a consequence of changes in the characteristics of respondents rather than a reflection of objective changes in housing and environmental quality. The possibility always exists that after a period of time social class or status changes, say, of sufficient magnitude may occur to alter the pattern of expectations in a population, and since expectations

are crucial in a person's evaluation of his or her quality of life, this variable may conceivably be at least as important as material changes in assessments of satisfaction.

There were differences - as the first tables in Chapter 7 show - between the 1979 and 1984 populations in that the estate became even more disadvantaged and residualised between surveys; unemployment rose sharply, more workers were low-skilled and there were more lone-parent households. Yet the age and household-type distributions are relatively unchanged. I suggest that in terms of their life chances and their class and market position, the populations for the years in question are so similar that there is little room to argue that differences in perception can be attributed to changes in their social and economic composition.

The Cleveland Social Survey

The Cleveland Social Survey (CSS) which I was responsible for establishing and organising for a number of years has been launched annually since 1975. The sample is a random one of individuals selected from the Electoral Register. It is drawn proportional to population size from the whole of Cleveland, the sample size annually over most of its history being 2200, and the response rates averaging around 85 percent.

Although it has served a great variety of the ad hoc information needs of the borough and county councils, it was originally conceived primarily as a source of longitudinal data designed to monitor demographic and attitudinal change in Cleveland. In this respect it now constitutes a set of trend data, during a period of fundamental change in Cleveland, which is almost certainly unique in local government. Some of the same monitoring

variables that it used were also appropriate to the Ragworth survey research and there were obvious advantages, in providing a comparative context, of using them in Ragworth.

The Experimental Design and Statistical Significance.

The two estate surveys and the Cleveland Social Survey clearly offered an opportunity to approximate a controlled experimental design by which the 'stimulus' of the improvement programme is measured by attitudinal changes. So the estate samples are the experimental group and the CSS sub-sample for Stockton the control group. Of course, this falls well short of the classic design, not least in that the experimental and control groups in our case are not matched in terms of measurable characteristics such as age, social class and tenure, and it was not possible to retain the same sample members for the 'after' stage of measurement.

However, classical experimental designs are rarely feasible in sociological research and such improvised approximations are often the best one can achieve. Moreover, in spite of the inherent imprecision in comparing our samples, such comparison is still valuable. The differences between the two estate samples are frequently so large that they cannot be attributed to sampling error. Given the large sampling fraction, such standard error would be very small. Added to this, the results from the two CSS 'control' samples show little change over the four-year period, such change as there is usually being less than the differences needed for significance at the 95 percent level of confidence. In other words, the statistically significant differences between the estate sample results could not be explained by similar changes taking place in the borough population at large. So, in spite of

the methodological imperfections, there seems little room for doubt that the effect of the modernisation programme and other changes taking place at the same time was to bring about real and substantial attitudinal change in particular on Ragworth.

In order to substantiate these conclusions, Moser and Kalton's (1971, pp 75-6) formula for testing the statistical significance between two sample proportions is used to provide a few examples. Taking first the two Ragworth samples, the minimum differences needed for significance at the 95% level of confidence for a proportion of 10% or 90% would be 5; for 30% or 70% it would be 7.7; and for 50% it would be 8.4. And this ignores the fact that the samples represent very large fractions of the population - which means that the minimum differences quoted above should, in fact, be smaller. Even so, when this test is applied to the differences in, say, Tables 7.10 and 7.12, the statistical significance is striking, some of the differences being significant at the 99% level of confidence. Because of the size of the differences, it seemed superfluous to attach measures of significance to each table in Chapter 7. As for the two Stockton sub-samples of 545 and 542 from CSS for 1978 and 1984 respectively, minimum differences for significance for a proportion of 10% or 90% would be 3.5; for 30% or 70% it would be 5.6; and for a proportion of 50% it would have to be 6 or more.

Finally, CSS data is presented for different purposes elsewhere in the thesis, for example, in the case of Tables 3.6 to 3.8, to throw light on tenure changes in the 1960s. In these instances, the significance of differences between proportions within the same sample is of interest, especially in the case of

Table 3.7 where the sub-sample sizes are relatively small. The obvious question here would be whether the differences in present tenure of former council tenants could be due to sampling variability given that they are based on only 110 cases. The differences in question are the 65% of former council tenants who moved into owner-occupation and the 35% who moved into council-rented property. In fact, the standard error for both proportions is about plus or minus 9, which means that the population estimate for owner-occupiers is between about 56% and 74% and for council tenants between 26% and 44%. So even with a sub-sample of this size, the differences in present tenure are significantly different. The same cannot be said of the evidence on present tenure of the 73 former private-rented tenants, however. The 16 percentage point difference between present owner-occupiers and council tenants cannot be regarded with such confidence for with a sampling error in the region of plus or minus around 11, the difference could well be accounted for by the vagaries of a small sample. The 56 percent of present owner-occupiers could in reality be as low as 45% and the 40% in council tenure could be as high as 51%.

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