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Abstract

The broad trajectory of housing policy since the 1980s has been to reject the paternalism and bureaucracy of traditional local authority landlords and to encourage voluntary sector housing providers. The rationale for these strategies has been to use a diversity of landlords (to create synergy and avoid monolithic structures) and to encourage a mix of tenures (to develop sustainable communities and avoid 'ghettoisation'). However, to date the practical management implications of such schemes have not been subject to detailed empirical research. Consequently, this article considers the application of contemporary ideas about housing management in the UK within the context of a consortium development built in the early 1990s. Based upon an in-depth study of one of the first and largest housing association consortium schemes, the article critically considers the central management issues facing the different participants in the scheme. It illustrates how the management of the post 1988 housing association developments has brought considerable difficulties, which have been exacerbated within multi-landlord developments. In such cases the consequence has been to entrench problems of marginalisation and social exclusion. The conclusion identifies the problems that registered social landlords will need to address if they are to improve their management systems.

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Introduction: the policy context

Multiple landlord and mixed tenure developments have been a key strategy for UK housing providers since the late 1980s. Rather than simply improving council estates, a policy of tenure diversification was intended as a 'central plank' (Capita, 1996: 41) of council housing schemes in the 1980s and 1990s, particularly through programmes such as Estate Action, Right to Buy, Tenants Choice, Housing Action Trusts, and Large Scale Voluntary Transfer (Malpass and Means, 1993)

The 'brave new world' of housing finance heralded in the Housing Act 1988 brought registered social landlords (RSLs, formerly called housing associations prior to the 1996 Housing Act) into a new regime of public grant combined with private finance, development risk management and competition which has offered a stark contrast to the comfort of the pre 1989 environment (Walker, 1998; 2000). In particular, RSLs found themselves confronted with the challenges of managing large developments whereas their previous experience had mainly been limited to smaller developments or scattered street properties. The financial incentives offered to housing organisations by the Act also encouraged an innovative type of development, in which a number of diverse landlords in terms of size and needs groups bid for funding to develop large numbers of properties on a single site as part of a development consortium. The

advantages that these consortium schemes offered were that they allowed risk to be shared amongst a range of landlords; provided greater funding opportunities through joint bids submitted to the Housing Corporation; enabled economies of scale through the sharing of professional expertise and avoided the construction of monolithic housing estates dominated by a single landlord. Studies throughout the 1960s and 1970s had shown how the problems of local authority housing management resulted from hierarchical structures, paternalism and a lack of concern for residents (Burbidge *et. al*, 1981; Dunleavy, 1981; Power, 1987). Influenced by new management approaches, housing policy delivered through the housing association sector would allow a combination of organisational styles; a more effective pooling of resources; a more flexible response and a more pluralistic policy environment. The theory was that these approaches would avoid the dramatic mistakes witnessed in the mass housing era.

RSLs were at the forefront of new initiatives in the late 1980s as local authorities were relegated to a strategic enabling role, facilitating new development and funding housing association development via land use arrangements or the use of funding (through Local Authority Social Housing Grant). RSLs were seen as part of the private sector using the newly created 'assured' tenancy agreements created by the 1988 Housing Act. As private sector institutions, RSLs were generally viewed by central government as more professional, business-like, with a single purpose and operating on a smaller scale than their municipal bureaucratic forebears (Randolph, 1993). Government policy was also designed

to increase the diversity of tenures and to encourage RSLs to develop rented property alongside shared ownership schemes (Martin and Wilkinson, 2003).

A policy of stock transfer was also pursued with the result that between 1991/2 and 1993/4 over 23,000 council properties were transferred in to housing association ownership (Crook *et. al.,* 1996). Additionally, as Tunstall (2003, p.154) comments, throughout the 1990s, planning policies (through Section 106 agreements) increasingly sought to create a social mix by incorporating social housing properties into developments originally intended for private occupation.

A further direction for housing association activities, which emerged in the second half of the 1990s, was the Government vision for them to play a key role in the regeneration of local areas. This objective was aimed at providing effective strategies means to tackle problems of social exclusion through improved management, joined-up working and participation arrangements. This theme emerged with the 'housing plus' agenda and has grown and been ever present in government urban renewal strategies such as 'City Challenge' and the 'Single Regeneration Budget' programme (Hill, 2000). The strength of the housing association sector was seen to rest in its ability to work in an effective partnership with a range of service providers free from the bureaucratic constraints that typified local authority service provision. Thus the key to developing an effective community structure rested on joint problem solving, project management and synergistic strategies. Over the last 5 years a focus on 'neighbourhood effects'

(Atkinson and Kintrea, 2002) has resulted in initiatives that have targeted communities as much as physical redevelopment. Such initiatives have been strongly supported through central government programmes such as the New Deal for Communities launched in 1998 and Neighbourhood Renewal strategies (see the Social Exclusion Unit 1997; 2001 and the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit, 2002). RSLs have been strongly encouraged to play a leading role in developing innovative partnership schemes (Forrest and Kearns, 1999). The 2000 Urban White Paper encapsulated these approaches based on partnership, participation, and social cohesion (DETR, 2000b) with planning guidance recommending that development plans specify the level and amount of social housing to be provided in specific sites.

Consequently, a policy of consortium development and mixed tenure is now broadly accepted as part of the 'professional orthodoxy' of UK housing policy (DETR, 2000c). In 2002 a survey found that 48% of RSLs and 58% of local authorities claimed that they 'usually' or always' provided mixed tenure in new developments (Martin and Wilkinson, 2003). In the London area, the draft Mayoral Plan stipulates that new housing developments should have a minimum of 50% affordable housing (comprising 35% social rented housing and 15% 'intermediate' housing) (Mayor of London, 2002). Whilst such figures are subject to debate about how 'intermediate' is defined, what is clear is that the notion of tenure mixing within consortium development has become a clear policy objective for housing providers.

From the RSL perspective a number of studies have looked at the opportunities for effective multi-landlord working (for example Groves *et. al.*, 2002; Knox *et. al.*, 2002). However, there is an unproven claim in some of the literature that there was a real efficiency gain arising from the transfer of the development of new social housing from the local authority sector to the housing association sector (Walker and Jeanes 2001 and Webster and Wai-Chung Lai 2003). In fact there is little detailed evidence for these claims or evaluation of the specific form of RSL development and management consortium covered in this paper (exceptions being Zipfel and Hare, 1995; Page and Boughton, 1997; Jupp, 1999). Whilst research is beginning to be collected on the effects of tenure mix and the impact of owner occupation and diversification (Capita, 1996; Atkinson and Kintrea, 1998; Pawson *et. al.*, 2001; Ostendorf *et. al.*, 2001; Martin and Wilkinson, 2003) there has not been a great deal of critical evaluation, based on empirical work of the schemes developed after 1988 Act. The current study provides an in-depth analysis of an estate in what may be termed its 'mature phase', when the scheme has become embedded within the community. The reports written by David Page (1993 and 1994) provided early warnings of a number of issues likely to be encountered by RSLs in managing large estates. Page stated:

> *It is still too early to predict whether large housing association estates built using the 1988 Act finding will become future areas of residualised housing.*

> *Very few of these large estates are yet fully tenanted and even fewer are clear of the settling-in period* (Page, 1993, p.52).

These 'Cassandra' warnings (Cole, 2000, p.166) can be evaluated ten years after the initial Page report. Page argued that the policies to create large RSL estates in isolated locations and to allocate properties according to the principle of the greatest level of need (via the homelessness allocation process) would not be conducive to the development of stable communities. In addition, neighbourhood deprivation is driven by various 'concentration effects' of accommodating large numbers of deprived groups in one location. The effects of such policies can be identified through a case study approach. Whilst other studies have looked at some of the costs of partnership working (Macarthur *et. al.*, 1996) the current article provides a detailed critical discussion of the practical impact of RSL developments in consortium schemes alongside other tenure types.

Overview of the estate

The case study estate is a large mixed-tenure consortium development of over 600 units, begun in 1992 and completed in 1996 in an outer London location.

The development was completed in four stages, involving two separate consortium arrangements, plus a private development. Work commenced when one large housing association and a private developer purchased 144 acres of land on a hospital site from the Department of Health. The association then developed 144 homes and sold 64 homes to 6 other housing associations. The private developer built 142 homes and sold them to a second group of associations. The private developer sold the old hospital building and linked land to a second private developer.

As a result of these development stages eight social landlords became managers of 550 properties on the estate (and 80 units of shared ownership). The private developments resulted in a 'gated' development of 200 units of owner occupation and a private rented sector block of 130 units.

A total of eight social landlords (with a complex mixture of ownership and management arrangements) became responsible for the social housing development. The development included houses and small blocks of flats. Three of the social landlords own around 87% of the properties. The other landlords include specialist associations dealing with minority ethnic groups and organisations specialising in disability and health issues. Some of these organisations were highly sensitive about anonymity. Consequently, the article does not identify any of the landlords by name.

The ward in which the neighbourhood is located features as one of the twenty most deprived in the country as measured by the Index of Multiple Deprivation (DETR, 2000a). The estate qualified with three other estates for neighbourhood renewal funding in the borough in 2002. Since 2001 the governance of the scheme has been conducted through a management consortium, consisting of all the social landlords, local authority officers and members, resident representatives (including private leaseholders) and other stakeholders, including health and education authority representatives. Monthly partnership forums are held with a steering group comprising these members. However, at the beginning of the research period in 2001 the steering group was seen as of limited effectiveness due to a lack of participation by the smaller landlords. A widespread perception had gained root that each landlord was managing alone with minimal opportunities for joint contact. What changed the situation was the injection of neighbourhood renewal funding which helped to concentrate minds on the management issues in a much more rigorous way than hitherto.

Methodology

The initial study of the estate was commissioned by the local authority as part of a 'neighbourhood profiling' exercise conducted in 2002. This exercise focused on a number of estates within the local authority area. Following the results of the resident survey, the main social landlords requested the research team to conduct a more detailed qualitative analysis of the estate to inform management

improvements. The article therefore utilises a case study approach based upon two main sources. One is the neighbourhood profiling exercise incorporating a survey of 185 households comprising roughly one-third of the social housing residents. When aggregated to represent the residents in the estate this was accurate to within a sampling error of ± 6%.

The local authority specified that the survey should only cover the social housing tenants. This had a significant impact on the measurement of poverty, income deprivation and social attitudes on the estate. The local authority did not regard the gated community of owners and the private rented block as part of the estate for neighbourhood renewal purposes.

The second study was funded by the major RSLs working on the estate and therefore was limited to the social housing residents. However, the research included interviews with a range of local stakeholders, including private leaseholders and owner occupiers. Interviews included representatives of all the RSLs involved in the consortium development and responsible for management of the estate. The practitioners included: residents; senior managers with responsibility for the scheme; development officers; who had been involved in the initial plans; management committee members of the main associations and front–line staff. The interviews also included: representatives from the local authority, the Primary Care Trust, community and voluntary services, and residents. A total of 30 interviews was conducted, with interviewees selected on

the basis of their knowledge and involvement in the scheme. The purpose of the interviews was to gather more detailed information about the management of the neighbourhood, local service delivery and priorities for improvement. Additionally, observation and participant observation methods were used over a period of 6 months on the estate through attendance at meetings of the main decision-making forums connected with the scheme. The research team were asked to produce proposals for improvements to the management arrangements on the estate and to give presentations to the main stakeholders on this topic. The following sections consider some of the key problems identified as part of the research study.

Development Issues

The estate was initially developed during 1992 at a time of deep recession in the housing market and building industry. The Chancellor of the Exchequer announced in the budget statement for 1992/93 a 'Housing Market Package' designed to encourage private developers to sell excess empty properties and development sites to social landlords. Thus the estate's final mix between social and private developments was much more a product of market conditions than a planned mixed tenure development.

The location of the estate was in an area that had no existing neighbourhood infrastructure of services. A minimum of community services therefore had to be

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provided for the development such as a community hall, play spaces, surgery, post office, and bus route.

In the early 1990s, the policy imperative was to encourage RSLs to increase units of housing without detailed planning for what we now call sustainability. Crucially, most of the associations had little experience of large-scale development. With respect to the case study estate, as with other similar schemes, there was therefore an initial problem linked to development coordination and a lack of knowledge about what other landlords were planning to develop on the estate. Managers commented that '*We had not previously developed on that scale. It was mixed-up tenure. One housing association put in supported housing, unbeknown to others. There was considerable uncertainty about who was doing what'* (Interview, development manager).

The lack of experience of developing and managing large developments was evident in a number of responses from RSL managers who felt that *'we replicated the social problems of the council sector'* (Interview, development manager).

It was the scale of the problems and the tendency to concentrate a large number of vulnerable groups in one small area that was seen to be at the root of many of the difficulties in the neighbourhood. These development issues identified a number of critical problems including a lack of experience, poor planning, and

ineffective coordination. However (and crucially) the local authority admitted that they did not perceive their responsibility was to exercise effective oversight. As one local authority senior officer commented:

> *It was not on anybody's radar. I think that the concept of being a housing association site made it invisible. There were so many housing associations with a stake in it and all of them politically seem to have baled out* (Interview).

This meant that later problems, which emerged linked to environmental issues and road adoption, were not seen as the responsibility of one specific organisation. Other planned amenities such as a leisure and fitness centre (open to all residents at affordable prices), and a bus route either did not materialise or were withdrawn due to lack of demand.

Allocation policies

A central theme in the interviews conducted was the problems associated with the local authority nomination agreements and the allocation policies adopted by the social landlords. The local authority policy of giving priority to households in the greatest level of need mean that high numbers of dependent children, single parents, and vulnerable tenants including people with mental health problems were housed in the area. These are familiar concerns for contemporary social

landlords, but it was the level of concentration of such groups within the estate over a relatively short period of time that had led to severe management problems. Many of the comments stressed the point that real deterioration took place with a 'tipping point' (Gladwell, 2002) occurring in the late 1990s. Thus, the estate was viewed as relatively settled when it was built, but the high child density had brought later consequences: '*The problem is that now the children have grown up'* (Interview, RSL manager).

The Page (1993) report warned that the child to adult ratio on new RSL estates was likely to be unsustainable. Page recommended that developments consist of one third family housing to two thirds single person flats. In contrast consortium estates witness much higher child densities.

The resident survey conducted in 2002 supports the view that the estate comprises a disproportionate number of family households. Figure 1 illustrates the socio-economic profile of the estate compared to the ward and borough data. The social, economic and demographic picture, which emerges from these figures, strongly contrasts with the surrounding area, with disproportionate number of young person households, very low numbers of elderly households and low levels of economic activity.

The concentration of poverty, families with children and young people on the estate was the direct result of how the social housing finance regime of the first

half of the 1990s interacted with the wider housing market and the nature of housing need and homelessness of that period. The neighbourhood and any so called 'neighbourhood effects' are the latent effects of the housing policy that created this estate and its socio-economic profile.

Table 1 to be inserted here.

This profile has compounded some of problems of marginalisation of groups found within the neighbourhood. Many respondents mentioned who gains access to the properties as a key issue, needing strategic intervention. *Thus 'the only transfer offers on to the estate have been management priorities, these are people who are already vulnerable. Others who are given properties are people who have been homeless, refugees and rough sleepers. 95% of these people are extremely vulnerable'* (Interview, RSL manager).

A number of interviewees expressed criticism of local authority policies in this respect, stressing that they had little choice and autonomy in who was housed into the neighbourhood. *I don't think the local authority have looked at the issue strategically* (Interview, RSL manager).

One respondent contrasted the experience of local authority and RSL residents: '*On a local authority estate you have normally had 25-30 years to develop a sense of community. You cannot develop a community over 8 years'* (Interview,

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community development officer). A similar view was expressed by a local authority worker: '*There is no cultural core of working class people who have lived a different life. There are low levels of employment and training. They are not estates where people have chosen to live; where there is pride and affection through the living memory of people Theirs' has been an alienating experience from day one'* (Interview, local authority officer).

Many respondents mentioned that the area was seen as a *'dumping ground for some real bad elements in society'* (Interview, owner occupier). The estate therefore was perceived as a magnet for a range of social problems that '*this was an unnatural community; the mix was unnatural*' (Interview, neighbourhood manager).

The lack of joined up working

The third main difficulty resulting from the consortium structure was the management problem that the variety of housing providers was unable to exercise adequate control and to establish clear lines of responsibility. A strong theme in the interviews was the problems caused by a lack of standard procedures, protocols, service level agreements, and management staff continuity. These issues have exacerbated the management problems. One of the main complaints was that there was a lack of clearly agreed procedures, that policies were haphazard and not clearly understood. In particular, there was

condemnation that other landlords were failing to provide an adequate level of service.

The way the scheme has been managed has created problems. We have dealt with our problems but others have not (Interview, RSL manager).

Similarly, with regard to specific services, a lack of co-ordination was affecting the quality of service delivery with complaints about '*Landlords not pulling their weight'* (Interview, RSL manager).

A recurring theme in the interviews was that a lack of cohesion in service delivery had been exacerbated by the lack of continuity in personnel. Hence, the knowledge base was low with little written information collected; when staff left they were often not replaced or were replaced by temporary staff. There was not one person who had gained knowledge of the local area who had carried out their duties since the beginning of the scheme. Normally this would not matter but in the case of an estate where there was confusion from the start, the neighbourhood appeared to be exceptionally difficult manage.

Problems included a high turnover of staff in management posts and the demands and frustrations of dealing with situations where control was very difficult to exert. The high turnover, which was mentioned by all the RSL interviewees, related to what was seen as the unpopularity of having to take

responsibility for a highly complex and frustrating 'patch' of properties. Residents and staff were unclear as to who had responsibility for different parts of the estate (particularly when another landlord was involved) and knowledge of the local area suffered as a consequence. In particular vital documents such as contract management agreements and specifications for service delivery had either been mislaid or had never been written. There was a lack of clarity about lines of responsibility for cleaning, caretaking duties and ownership of common areas due to the lack of an effective management agreement and database.

The research team found great difficulty in obtaining accurate information about property ownership (including basic information such as numbers of units owned and how many RSLs were involved). The small RSLs did not attend the management group meetings and people were not aware of who the key contacts were for many of the landlords. There were also problems of confidentiality relating to some of the specialist managing associations who did not want their properties to be identified. One of the key individuals in the estate was the community caretaker. An individual who had formerly carried out this role commented:

> *the main road has 140 properties and 6 different landlords on it – so each landlord is doing their own thing…I had 7 different lists of maintenance contracts. It was like a telephone directory; you had to know which housing*

association was responsible for this bit of grass and this bit of pavement
(Interview, former caretaker).

Part of the difficulty for the RSLs was that they had very different resource bases. Not only are residents paying widely different rents and service charges but also the ability to fund the services varied considerably. Thus:

the rents are all different, which the tenants all talk to each other about. Some of the rents were varying by as much as £20 a week for the same properties in the same road and the services the tenants were getting varied from association to association. Some of the bigger associations have bigger pools of money while the smaller one's don't. So what the smaller associations offer is going to be vastly lower than what a bigger one could offer (Interview, RSL manager).

Other managers mentioned that there the lack of a co-ordinated approach continued to hinder the active development of the estate: *'it's the consortium not talking to each other that is the real problem'* (Interview, community development manager)

Many of the above problems are common to all social landlords, but there was a feeling that the style of post 1988 consortium developments exacerbated the management difficulties and presented barriers to the implementation of effective

practical solutions. Such commentators drew a distinction between different types of RSLs. Consequently, some were viewed as innovative whereas others were seen as far more conservative. '*It seems that they [the progressive HAs] constantly have to drag others along behind the*m' (Interview, local authority officer). The research team found that there were significant differences in the approaches of the separate organisations both large and small. One specific problem related to information gaps, particularly where there was a highly confusing mixture of owners and managing agents. In such circumstances, it was almost impossible to determine ownership patterns (without in-depth research involving the triangulation of many data sources). The community caretaker only acted for the four largest organisations and did not have details of all the managing agents. This information gap was often due to confidentiality but made reporting repairs for vulnerable residents extremely difficult. One commentator expressed the central problem in the following terms:

> *It operates by divide and rule. As there are so many different landlords and different systems they cannot coalesce around any issue. Problems become extremely complex* (Interview, local authority officer).

In addition to these three problems of development, allocation and coordination a number of specific consequences have followed.

Anti-social behaviour (ASB)

One of the main consequences of the consortium structure was that the issue of anti-social behaviour assumed great prominence in resident perceptions of the area, particularly given the high number of households with children and low number of elderly residents. The management difficulties were compounded by the fact that a number of different landlords had responsibility for separate properties adjacent to each other.

> *Anti-social behaviour is a particular problem when you have multi-landlord disputes…There is a tendency to believe what your own tenant is saying against a tenant of another landlord. There is little communication between front-line officers* (Interview, RSL manager).

Consequently the estate was not only likely to be more susceptible to Anti Social Behaviour (ASB) due to the child density but also less equipped to deal with these problems once they had manifested themselves. Figure 1 illustrates a sharp decline in residents feeling safe on the estate compared to in their own homes (from 95% to 55%). These figures compare unfavourably to the same question asked of residents on a local authority high-rise estate in the ward where 76% reported that they felt safe on their estate.

Figure 1 to be inserted here.

Source: resident survey, 2002

Moreover, such figures also compare unfavourably with national data. The Crime survey for England and Wales 2002/03 (Home Office 2003) found that 13 percent of respondents said that they felt 'very unsafe' walking alone in their area after dark and a further 21 per cent felt 'a bit unsafe'. Only one percent felt unsafe alone in their own home and five percent reported being 'a bit unsafe'. While a direct comparison is not possible given the different wording used in the survey questions it is important to note that the percentage feeling unsafe in the street and the area appears to be much higher on the estate than in the national survey (45% compared to 24%).

ASB was linked with particular areas of the estate. There appeared to be a number of specific flashpoints where youths congregated and where confrontations were commonplace. In particular some owner-occupiers suffered as one of their gated entrances was next to a shop where youths tended to congregate. This created a threatening environment with some youths attempting to gain entrance to these properties:

> *we stay away from the shop and gym area. Things have really gone down over the last two years – muggings, graffiti, rubbish dumping, break-ins and drugs. People are afraid to go out … they are shocked by what is going on* (Interview with resident)

Resolution of these problems requires careful co-ordination of a range of service providers (particularly involving police services) and may require strong action in the form of evictions. However, the evidence of the study showed that consortium schemes presented significant barriers to bringing together these different agencies.

Cross-tenure conflicts

A second consequence of the consortium structure was that the estate was divided not only by landlords but also by different tenure types, thus exacerbating conflicts between tenants, leaseholders and owner-occupiers. A number of earlier studies have identified the potential for conflict between social housing residents and owner-occupiers (for example Pawson *et. al.*, 2000; Beekman *et. al.*, 2001).

As noted above, one of the central issues affecting the quality of life of the residents was the sense that they were living in an unsafe environment due to the high incidence of anti-social behaviour caused by youths on the estate. The insecurity of residents was compounded by an impression that certain groups (such as leaseholders and owner-occupiers) were being targeted by the social housing tenants and their children. These residents stressed that they were happy with their property but that the external environment was intimidating particularly at night-time. As an example an owner occupier stated: '*We really*

love where we live but there is an element that lives here that is really dragging the place down and ruining it' (Interview, owner occupier).

The owner occupiers living on the estate strongly felt that they had been specifically singled out for intimidation and vandalism, reporting numerous break-ins, theft of post and vandalism on a constant basis.

> *There is definitely a bad feeling towards the people living in these flats because we are owners. There is a definite class divide…We are really the centre of attention* (Interview, owner occupier).

The frustration felt by these residents was compounded by a sense that their voice was not listened to by the social housing managers. Their perception created an inevitable division between the different groups on the estate and constrained the ability to create a common resident body.

One of the main targets had been the caretaker of the private leasehold properties. Thus '*there has been a lot of violence and vandalism directed personally at the caretaker'* (Interview, leaseholder). Another owner occupier felt that her block, located in the centre of the development was left to bear the brunt of the estate problems: '*We are in the eye of the storm' (*Interview, owner occupier*).*

What appeared to prevent an effective response from residents was the sense of intimidation:

I made sure that I never ever gave my name on any forms. It had to be done covertly which is a shame. You can tell that people are basically frightened (Interview, owner occupier).

The leaseholders and owner-occupiers felt resentful that their voice was not effectively heard. In contrast RSL managers felt that these groups had a disproportionate influence on decisions, as they knew how to manipulate the system (Interview, community development officer). Whatever the truth, what was clear was that these conflicts prevented an effective and coherent resident view being expressed by the different groups on the estate. There was no doubt that this level of fear had had a considerable impact upon the quality of life for all residents.

Because of the people here and because they seem to have a majority now, everyone else is scared. They shut down in their little homes and no one goes out. (Interview, owner occupier).

Crucially it is this vicious cycle of fear and intimidation that constitutes a great deal of the suspicion between different resident groups. It is these kinds of problems that need to be addressed by those responsible for the development of

mixed-tenure and multi-landlord estates. The fact that the gated community and the private rented housing on the estate are completely separately managed (and excluded by the local authority from its neighbourhood definition of the estate) also reinforced a divisive 'them and us' culture which is only slowly being broken down. The driving force to rectify these problems has not been the housing management teams, but a combination of local authority involvement via Neighbourhood renewal and the community development teams of the larger RSLs working in partnership.

The absence of leadership and political marginalisation

As noted earlier, problems of coordination created a vacuum in terms of responsibility, with different landlords anxious to absolve themselves from blame whilst laying responsibility upon others. This neglect was perceived to emanate at a local authority level and thence to filter down to other organisations working on the estate. Thus as one member of staff explained: *'There were steering meetings where area directors met quarterly but each housing association still did their own thing and they very rarely ever did anything jointly' (Interview, former caretaker).* The research team observed that the participation of local authority members was negligible. The estate profile did not appear to present a strong political constituency. The two local councillors responsible for the neighbourhood only attended one meeting during the research period at which

they spoke briefly to express their support for the regeneration process and then left immediately.

This absence of leadership over time reinforced a sense that change had become impossible and residents became resigned to their conditions. As the estate began to acquire a damaging reputation, new vacancies were occupied by groups experiencing multiple deprivation and consequently the stigma attached to the area intensified. One of the consequences of the level of deprivation is that residents were seen as passive, isolated and with little voice in effecting changes. As a housing manager commented:

> *Interestingly we don't receive so many complaints from residents. It has become part of their environment. I think that the perception is that the police don't deal with it so what chance have the housing association got?* (Interview, RSL manager).

The complexity is a distinctive feature of consortium estates and is not one that has been effectively addressed in the research literature. The consortium development compounded problems of marginalisation and alienation felt by residents and staff. As one local authority officer commented, a lack of promotion for specific groups resulted in a high level of political neglect.

There are political gaps…there are obvious gaps in coordination. There is no

champion for the area…it is not seen as a local authority problem, so there is

a lack of adequate advocacy for the area (Interview, local authority officer).

In similar terms a community development officer talked of tenants as being

'silent' (Interview). It is unlikely that this lack of voice is due to resident

satisfaction. 68% of residents reported that they thought the estate was getting

worse, 74% responded that drug or alcohol abuse was a major problem and 60%

would not recommend living in the area to a friend (resident survey).

Respondents reported that the level of marginalisation felt by residents was likely

to be exacerbated in a RSL consortium development. Thus:

Housing associations are social enterprises but they put enterprise before

delivery of social capital. In that sense there is not much difference between

their management and that of a private landlord. They are interested in

delivering more houses but their tenants do not get the level of support they

need…It is peculiar that an estate so small has so many landlords. The

residents themselves have no sense of social justice, if they cannot act as a

collective body that is extremely disempowering and alienating (Interview,

local authority officer).

Such comments strike at the heart of what RSLs are attempting to achieve. They

were initially propounded as alternatives to local authority bureaucracies, but as

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they struggle with the challenges of residualisation, development and complex management structures, they may be exacerbating the political marginalisation of those they are attempting to support. What changed the perception of the estate was that finally some neighbourhood renewal funding was made available, that research was commissioned and that the problem was taken seriously by the different interest groups. Significantly the local authority adopted its strategic enabling role for the first time. It was clear that resident demands were only taken seriously when money was made available.

Conclusions

For RSLs the combination of poorly coordinated management, multiple ownership, and an allocation policy driven by addressing homelessness created a cumulative 'neighbourhood effect' that landlords struggled to deal with in the 1990s. Consortium schemes have resulted in too many management organisations being responsible for a small number of properties. Their lack of experience in this type of management arrangement meant that there was no existing template for consortium management that they could draw upon. Crucially, these management defects were exacerbated by a lack of strategic vision demonstrated by the various social landlords who had responsibility for these schemes.

The case study showed that RSLs clearly had substantial experience in development and certain forms of management. However, housing association management skills suitable for 1970s street regeneration schemes are less suitable for the challenges of the socio-economic and behavioural experiments of the 1990s. In particular all the landlords (as well as government agencies) underestimated the amount of management needed on these estates. The socio-economic features of the resident population combined with the peculiarities of the management arrangements produced a potent mixture of problems.

There are three specific problems identified within the case study estate. *First*, the initial development programme, although including plans for facilities and amenities, was not carried through. The associations were poorly prepared and inexperienced in this sort of development. Crucially, the development planning was not carried forward into an effective and sustainable management structure and there was inadequate support from the statutory agency who perceived their role as negligible.

Second, there was a lack of genuine partnership in spite of much of the rhetoric about housing association schemes. Vested interests and the pressures of competition ensured that associations continued to operate in a defensive and non-collaborative environment. The 'pepper-potting' nature of the development produced a complex set of arrangements which required careful unravelling simply to find out who was responsible for addressing day-to-day problems.

RSLs found themselves caught in a variety of inter-landlord relationships without an awareness of who held ultimate responsibility for many of the issues. Those who did have some level of knowledge were found to have left their jobs and the organisations had not put in place systems to capture this knowledge. Not only was management information about ownership hidden from residents; it was also hidden from managers themselves. There were significant difficulties in even finding out accurate lists of ownership. These problems were compounded by management from afar in remote housing association central offices and where housing officers rarely visited their properties.

Third, the allocations policies have been well-documented but the case study estate shows how these cumulative pressures of allocating to large numbers of children, vulnerable and deprived groups helps to create a highly unstable community, which aggravated the anti-social behaviour of the residents as well as drawing other anti-social behaviour onto the estate. Equally importantly there was no evidence of willingness to learn from mistakes as those dealing with the day-to-day problems did not appear to possess the ability to see the wider picture.

A lack of clarity about responsibility linked to property rights and a failure to develop an effective multi-landlord management vehicle stand out as the key weaknesses on this case study and other similar estates. Interviews with housing staff revealed that wherever they have developed via a consortium structure

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these types of management failures have resulted. Disproportionate consequences follow from the lack of an effective multi-landlord management vehicle and the related weaknesses in the coordination of all the different agencies working on such estates. The tendency of the RSLs to operate on the basis of mutual suspicion rather than partnership was compounded by reluctance on the part of the local authority to view issues on the estate as a high political priority. Other agency involvement was dependent on highly motivated individuals taking the initiative to make changes on the estate. The key lesson from such schemes is that joined-up working requires a joined-up vision.

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Table 1 Selected socio-economic profile of the estate, compared to ward and borough data (percentages)

Household features	Estate	Ward	Borough
Aged 0-15	43	23	20
Aged over 60	3	13	19
Family and lone parent households (HH)	69	42	52
One parent HH with children as % of family HH	28	19	15
Economically active	55	42	52
Un-employed as a % of economically active	33	8	7
Caring for family member at home	25	6	8
Long-term sick/disabled	14	3	2
Annual income below £10,000	36	24	18
Receiving income support	39	33	19
Receiving council tax & housing benefit	64	39	18
Pupils attaining 5 GCSEs A-C	38	44	47
Pupils with free school meals entitlement	48	33	26

This table is constructed from three data sources: the resident survey, 2002, local authority ward data and the 2001 census.

Figure 1. Percentage that feel safe or very safe

	In the home	In the street	On the estate