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| |  | | --- | | **UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON**  Faculty of Social Science  Sociology and Social Policy | | **Does taking a greener approach to new developments make mixed communities more cohesive?**  by  **Aasia Nisar** | | Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy  October 2019 | |

**University of Southampton**

**Abstract**

Faculty of Social Science

Sociology and Social Policy

Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

**Does Taking a Greener Approach to New Housing Developments Make Mixed Communities More Cohesive?**

by

Aasia Nisar

This thesis investigates the extent to which the United Kingdom’s new ‘greener’ housing policy focus can promote social cohesion by examining the case of a new mixed-tenure development known as West Green. The primary focus in this thesis is on the ‘green’ spaces within this development and their role in fostering social cohesion amongst residents. Specifically, this study addresses the following research questions: ‘Has West Green made people greener?' and ‘Does West Green promote social mixing?' By posing these research questions, the overarching aim of this study is to gain nuanced insight into the relationships and interactions between the residents of West Green, with a particular focus on the extent to which people engage in green behaviours and how the development promotes social mixing. This analysis is supported by a Communities of Practice (CoP) framework and Life Course theory.

Varying degrees of environmentally conscious behaviours are established in this study and the nature of these behaviours are contingent on three sub-community types, each with their unique characteristics, identified as part of this research: Transformers, Lifestyle Supporters and Individualists. This study argues that West Green is a CoP, within which these three sub-communities have varying green experiences that can be understood within the context of life course theory. Through the lens of life course theory, this research finds that certain social structures offer residents opportunities to investigate green initiatives from various perspectives.

Further, the categories of residents identified in this study are differentiated based on tenure, suggesting that tenure is an important sociological determinant of green behaviour.

This study also finds that social mixing takes place at West Green primarily through initiatives instigated by the residents through green community initiatives. However, it also establishes that there are variations in the level of engagement and sociability displayed by the three sub-community groups identified. No evidence of conflict was found between residents living in the development, and the research suggests that the amount of green space available, and the fact that residents are encouraged to engage in green and community activities, was a contributing factor. Indeed, it is argued in this study that the green features of West Green provide a common ground between residents who might otherwise struggle to find shared interests that can form the basis of a relationship and enhance social cohesion.

The research findings of this study make important contributions to existing literature, which currently lacks a focus on the links between mixed communities and the increasing social norms of environmentally conscious decision making, particularly in the context of mixed tenure communities in the UK. This thesis argues that although, from a policy perspective, the British government is pursuing an agenda to facilitate mixed communities, both in term of green features and social mixing of new housing developments, there are some lessons that can be learned based on new practice and research to inform this area. The role of green housing development in promoting community cohesion and solidarity is another area that requires further investigation.

**Table of Contents**

**Abstract..................................................................................................................................................i**

[**Table of Contents**](#_Toc21926323) **iii**

[**Table of Tables vi**](#_Toc21926323)

[**Table of Figures vii**](#_Toc21926323)

[**Research Thesis: Declaration of Authorship**](#_Toc21926323) **viii**

[**Acknowledgements**](#_Toc21926323) **ix**

[**Definitions and Abbreviations**](#_Toc21926323) **x**

[**Chapter 1 Introduction 1**](#_Toc21926323)

1.1 Background  [1](#_Toc21926323)

1.2 Problem Statement and Research Focus [7](#_Toc21926323)

1.3 Research Questions 10

1.4 Theoretical and Conceptual approach 11

1.5 Thesis Outline 14

[**[Chapter 2 Literature review](#_Toc21926329)**](#_Toc21926323) **[17](#_Toc21926329)**

2.1 Introduction 17

2.1.1 Mixed communities: definitions and perspectives 18

2.1.2 Definition of ‘community’ 18

2.1.3 Definition of ‘mixed’  [2](#_Toc21926323)2

2.1.4 Significance of ‘mixed communities’  [23](#_Toc21926323)

2.1.5 The importance of ‘mixed communities’ [2](#_Toc21926323)7

2.1.6 Policy approaches to ‘mixed communities’ in the UK  [3](#_Toc21926323)7

2.1.7 Have ‘mixed communities’ worked?  [4](#_Toc21926323)1

[2.2. The ‘green’ agenda and the impact on housing development](#_Toc21926338) 43

[2.2.1 Environmental concerns and ‘green’ behaviour](#_Toc21926339) 52

[2.2.2 Image and peer pressure](#_Toc21926340) 57

[2.2.3 Individual responsibility and understanding 5](#_Toc21926341)8

[2.2.4 Financial barriers and consistency](#_Toc21926342) 59

[2.2.5 Inertia 5](#_Toc21926343)9

[2.2.6 Policymaking 6](#_Toc21926344)0

[2.2.7 Green behaviours and social background](#_Toc21926339) 62

2.2.8 The future of green housing……………………………………………… 67

[2.2.9 Summary 6](#_Toc21926341)8

[2.3 Life course theory and impact on people’s lives 6](#_Toc21926348)9

[2.4 Wenger’s Framework and Communities of Practice 7](#_Toc21926348)3

**Chapter** [**3 Methodology 7**](#_Toc21926351)**7**

[3.1 Why take a qualitative approach?](#_Toc21926348) 77

[3.1.2 Applying a case study approach 7](#_Toc21926353)8

[3.2 How and why West Green was selected as a case study](#_Toc21926348) 82

[3.2.1 Selecting interviewees and sampling strategies 8](#_Toc21926355)4

[3.2.2 Ethical considerations](#_Toc21926356) 87

[3.3 Conducting the research](#_Toc21926348) 95

[3.3.1 Residents’ interviews](#_Toc21926358) 95

[3.3.2 Social housing staff and external agencies interviews](#_Toc21926359) 98

[3.4 Recording, transcribing and analysing the data](#_Toc21926348) 100

[3.4.1 Familiarisation](#_Toc21926361) 100

[3.4.2 Coding of data](#_Toc21926362) 101

[3.4.3 Interpretations](#_Toc21926361) 102

[3.4.4 Identified types](#_Toc21926362) 102

[3.4.5 My role as a researcher](#_Toc21926364) 106

[3.4.6 Limitations of the Methodology](#_Toc21926365) 109

[3.5 Conclusion](#_Toc21926348) 109

[**Chapter 4** **Context: the case of West Green**](#_Toc21926367) **110**

[4.1 Political and social policy reasons for building West Green 11](#_Toc21926348)0

[4.2 The development of West Green 1](#_Toc21926348)12

[4.2.1 Which green features does West Green have? 1](#_Toc21926370)13

[4.2.2 Key features of the development 1](#_Toc21926371)15

[4.2.3 The external environment to the development 1](#_Toc21926372)16

[4.2.4 The internal landscape features of the development 1](#_Toc21926373)17

[4.3 West Green- how to measure success](#_Toc21926348) 123

[4.3.1 Potential impacts/benefits of the development](#_Toc21926375) 124

[4.4 The significance of West Green](#_Toc21926348) 126

[**Chapter 5 Has West Green made people greener? 12**](#_Toc21926377)**8**

[5.1 Emerging ideal types at West Green](#_Toc21926348) 128

[5.2 Transformer type](#_Toc21926348) 131

[5.2.1 Why move to West Green? 1](#_Toc21926348)31

[5.2.2 Taking up the ‘green’ challenge 1](#_Toc21926382)36

[5.3 Lifestyle supporter 1](#_Toc21926348)40

[5.3.1 Why move to West Green? 1](#_Toc21926384)40

[5.3.2 Enhancing green practices 1](#_Toc21926385)44

[5.4 Individualist type 14](#_Toc21926348)8

[5.4.1 Why moved to West Green? 14](#_Toc21926348)8

[5.4.2 Taking up the ‘green’ challenge](#_Toc21926388) 149

[5.5 Summary 151](#_Toc21926348)

[**Chapter 6** **Does West Green promote social mixing?**](#_Toc21926390) **157**

[6.1 Transformers 1](#_Toc21926348)57

[6.1.1 Social mixing- is it happening?](#_Toc21926348) 157

[6.1.2 Is there a future for social mixing? 160](#_Toc21926348)

[6.2 Lifestyle Supporter 16](#_Toc21926348)3

[6.2.1 Social mixing- is it happening? 1](#_Toc21926423)63

[6.2.2 Is there a future for social mixing? 1](#_Toc21926424)67

[6.3 Individualist type 1](#_Toc21926348)70

[6.3.1 Social mixing-is it happening?](#_Toc21926370) 170

[6.3.2 Is there a future for social mixing](#_Toc21926371) 175

[6.4 Social mixing has it been a success at West Green?](#_Toc21926372) 177

[**Chapter 7** **Discussion and conclusion 1**](#_Toc21926426)**83**

[7.1 Research findings 1](#_Toc21926348)83

[7.2 Theoretical implications 18](#_Toc21926361)7

[7.3 Policy implications 18](#_Toc21926362)8

[7.4 Limitations 1](#_Toc21926361)90

[7.5 Future research 1](#_Toc21926362)91

[7.6 Being a housing professional: my thoughts](#_Toc21926348) 192

[**Appendices**](#_Toc21926323) **197**

**[References 212](#_Toc21926323)**

**Table of Tables**

[Table 1: Building regulations in relation to 9 different design categories 4](#_Toc21926323)6

[Table 2: Property and tenure type in West Green 8](#_Toc21926323)5

[Table 3: List of interviewees 8](#_Toc21926323)6

[Table 4](#_Toc21926323)**[:](#_Toc21926323)** [Resident breakdown in tenure type, age, family make up and](#_Toc21926323)

[ethnicity](#_Toc21926323) 90

[Table 5: Typologies 10](#_Toc21926323)5

[Table 6: Potential impacts/benefits of West Green 12](#_Toc21926323)5

**Table of Figures**

[Figure 1: Map of West Green 11](#_Toc21926323)5

[Figure 2: Allotment at West Green 11](#_Toc21926323)8

[Figure 3: Allotment at West Green 11](#_Toc21926323)8

[Figure 4: Seating area at West Green 11](#_Toc21926323)9

[Figure 5: Seating area at West Green 11](#_Toc21926323)9

[Figure 6: Greenhouses at West Green 1](#_Toc21926323)20

[Figure 7: Play area at West Green 1](#_Toc21926323)21

[Figure 8: Play area at West Green 1](#_Toc21926323)21

[Figure 9: Community Hall West Green 1](#_Toc21926323)22

[Figure 10: Tenure and type 1](#_Toc21926323)30

Research Thesis: Declaration of Authorship

Aasia Nisar

Does taking a greener approach to new housing developments make mixed communities more cohesive?

I declare that this thesis and the work presented in it are my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

I confirm that:

1. This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
2. Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
3. Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
4. Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
5. I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
6. Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
7. None of this work has been published before submission.

Signed: Date:

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Definitions and Abbreviations

**CABE** Commission on Architecture and the Built Environment

**CLG** Communities and Local Government

**CoI** Communities of Interest

**CoP** Communities of Practice

**CIH** Chartered Institute of Housing

**DETR** Department for Environment, Transport and the Regions

**HCA** Homes and Communities Agency

**IPPC** Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

**MCI** Mixed Communities Initiative

**NPPF** National Planning Policy Framework

**ODPM** Office of the Deputy Prime Minister

**PPG3** Planning Policy Guidance

**SDS** Sustainability Development Strategy

**UNFCCC** United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

**VBN** Value-Belief-Norm

# Chapter 1: Introduction

## 1.1 Background

Recent housing policy in the United Kingdom has been driven by the two overarching goals of social diversity and sustainability. On one hand, discourses of social diversity have gained traction within the housing policy sector, whereby a dominant policy narrative is to pursue social mix policies in order to challenge segregation in housing. The current focus on mitigating segregation in housing is driven by the goals of strengthening social cohesion amongst citizens and, thus, addressing social inequality more widely. Indeed, much of the policy literature on housing segregation has shown the negative externalities that are concomitant with concentrations of housing on the basis of race, ethnicity or socio-economic groups (Van Ham and Manley: 2009). British policymakers are increasingly espousing the social and economic integration of communities as part of the ongoing discourse concerning equal opportunities within housing. Such policy narratives have found support within theories of social mixing, which purport that such approaches play a salient role in explaining social exclusion and socio-spatial inequalities within communities (Nast and Blokland, 2014).

Alongside this focus on social diversity, the housing policy space is increasingly incorporating more environmentally friendly policies and practices, guided by the aim of promoting ‘green’ behaviours and improving environmental standards to ensure that we can achieve global emission reduction targets. Through initiatives, such as the ‘Decent Homes' standard (2000) and ‘Building for Life' (2001) criteria, government policies are actively encouraging housing developments to adhere to sustainable practices. Sustainable housing discourses within government policies emerged in the 1990s, describing it as “analytical or social construct[s] useful in bringing together a heterogeneous set of policies which affected housing sustainability either directly (Building Regulations, planning policy) or indirectly (energy policy, fuel poverty policy)" (Pickvance: 2009: p.331). It was not until 2005 that housing sustainability became formally enshrined in public policy, via the publication of the Code for Sustainable Homes, followed shortly after the announcement of its target of ‘zero carbon for new homes by 2016' in December 2006 (Gibbs and O' Neill: 2015).

The publication of the *Housing Green Paper and Building a Green Future: A Policy Statement* in July 2007, additionally marked a crucial turning point in terms of the promotion of environmental sustainability in housing policy. Over time, this promotion also became overlapped with concerns about social diversity.

The shift in housing policy via the introduction of the Code for Sustainable Homes (2006) presented an environmental assessment method for rating and certifying the performance of new homes. It was a national standard used in the design and construction of new homes, with the aim of encouraging continuous improvement in sustainable home building. The Code also emphasised both the internal and external ‘green' credentials of new schemes. This led to the promotion of zero-carbon or carbon-neutral developments showcasing their advancement both technologically as well as the drive for community integration by enhancing the home and its environment in an energy-efficient manner. Critics, however, noted that making the house itself more ‘smart' or ‘greener' didn't necessarily modify or increase people's ‘green' behaviour (McManus et al.: 2010).

Research by Stern (2006) has shown that homes and housing play a key role in terms of human impact on the environment, with recent sociologically informed perspectives highlighting housing as being instrumental in the way that humans interact with each other and play a part of a larger process of negotiation between the self and wider environment. The home and the environment are, therefore, “better thought of as a process than a product” (Ball: 2002: p.426). It has been hypothesised by Scott et al. (2016) that communities that are socially cohesive, owing to their strong sense of place and social identity, are more likely to engage in environmentally sustainable and green attitudes and behaviours. In this way, the literature highlights the compatibility between social and environmental resources, and proposals for social mixing are predicated on such assumptions.

In 2013, the Government, via its Housing Standards Review consultation, promoted a wider debate concerning the technical standards of new homes and its impact on housing. In this way, housing policy invariably became interlinked with proposals for social mixing, underpinned by the goal of promoting social cohesion and diversity with the focus on social sustainability.

The concept of social sustainability has formed an integral and implicit part of policy discourse that seeks to investigate the social outcomes of housing and urban development in general. Public agencies and programmes, such as the Sustainable Development Commission (SDC), the Egan Review and the Commission on Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE), promoted the concept of sustainable communities as part of the housing policy agenda by critically exploring the nexus between the built environment and social experiences (Crilly and Lemon: 2018).

The overlapping of social and environmental concerns within housing policy emanates from the increasing number of studies which suggest that new homes built to higher eco-standards, with spatial environmental surrounds, play a crucial role in knitting communities together (Seaman: 2010). Peters et al. (2010) have shown that new homes characterised by green building standards engender a vital locality, which forms the basis of shared and negotiated experiences between residents, thereby fostering social cohesion. At the core of sustainable housing proposals is a focus on concepts such as mixed-land use development, sustainable design, green spaces and buildings, safety and accessibility (Joss: 2011; Akotia and Opoku: 2018; Stevenson: 2019). Within such concepts, some studies suggest that communities that have green spaces encourage more community collaboration than those that do not. Mixed-land use developments, in particular, have been associated with a myriad of social benefits, including community engagement and enhanced social cohesion (Stevenson et al.: 2016; Eizenberg and Jabareen: 2017). The policy narrative on mixed-land use developments has increasingly prioritised environmental factors and environmentally friendly designs. Indeed, more recently, UK sustainable housing policy has primarily concerned itself with the changing physical infrastructure of buildings, with little attention given to the non-physical features of sustainable housing (Gibbs and O’Neill: 2015).

Scholars such as Pullman (2008), Straightener (2009) and Rubuk (2010) are of the view that such an approach has been endorsed because of the influence of the climate change agenda as a policy priority for governments all over the world, including the UK. Policymakers are questioning how the construction, design management and use of buildings must be changed to reduce carbon dioxide emissions. Increasingly, the imperative for sustainability in housing in the form of energy-efficient housing design and ‘green’ developments are being asserted as part of goals to achieve a holistic environmental response.

Within such discourse, there are proposals that mixed communities are more likely to engage with public spaces, whereby mixed land-use encourages a high level of street activity, boosting community cohesion and interactions and, as a result, creating a sense of belonging (see, for example, Kabisch et al., 2013: Haaland and van den Bosch: 2015; Bertram and Rehndanz: 2015). At the core of this perspective is the idea that the sustainability of a community is more or less contingent upon the provision of well-integrated housing of different tenures, to encourage a diverse range of households of different income levels and ethnic backgrounds. In as much as government policy has been geared towards the creation of sustainable communities with a focus on issues of social integration and cohesion, there has been an increasing focus on how such sustainable communities encourage green behaviours.

Importantly, discourse on social mix and balance has featured extensively in the UK’s history of housing and urban policy, although the tenor of the policy space regarding this subject has been invariably linked to the political assumptions of the time. Social mixing, or the objective of countering segregation, has been pursued by policymakers based on the proposition that the creation of mixed communities will enhance the living standards and well-being of inhabitants, while at the same time, promoting social cohesion. However, with a growing population, rising housing costs and housing providers struggling to meet the demand for affordable accommodation, more and more people are seeking alternative living space to meet their needs (Heath, et al.: 2017). Nevertheless, within the discourse of social mix, there is a perceived need to create mixed housing stock because it is understood that this will boost the social capital of less deprived groups within such communities (Bolt et al.: 2010). According to Haworth and Manzi (1999), ideas about social mixing and balancing first appeared within British housing policy circles based on moral assumptions about “how people, particularly the poor, should behave and how the state should respond” (pp.161-163).

Social mixing within the policy space formed part of a broader, idealist vision in urban planning, mainly applied in the development of new housing initiatives. Bennett expresses the view that “the concept of mixed communities incorporates both old and new elements, embodying historic attempts to deliver equality and social cohesion through housing and planning policies, particularly from the 1940s and the introduction of ‘New Towns’” (2005: p.56).

Between 1945 and 1951, the Labour government systematically adopted assumptions about social mixing, which became integrated into the housing and New Town programmes. Aneurin Bevan, the Minister of Health and Local Government with oversight of the housing programme, particularly espoused ideas on social mixing amidst what he perceived as profound failures of earlier patterns of urban development. In the place of council estates, he expressed the goal of building “the living tapestry of a mixed community” (Foot: 1975: pp.75-76), underpinned by the objective of achieving social balance through the provision of a single and inclusive tenure.

The idea of having balanced communities gained significant traction in the 1990s (Page:1993). However, the overlap between environmental and social concerns within housing policy emerged following the Labour government's inclusion of the definition of mixed communities. This definition sat within a broader conceptualised framework of social sustainable communities’ policy, underscoring the imperative of integrating a “mix of decent homes of different types of tenures, to support a range of household sizes, age and incomes” (ODPM: 2003: p.5)[[1]](#footnote-2). It is worth noting, however, that the social inclusion goals of sustainable communities did not purely focus on tenure mix, but also on the idea of encouraging people from different social backgrounds to simply ‘get along’, in the hope of allowing a natural evolution process to take place (Bailey et al.: 2006). Despite these dominant policy narratives, critics such as the economist Paul Cheshire (2012) are of the view that mixed communities are nothing more than a temporary solution to a problem that is deeply entrenched in the processes of spatio-social inequalities. In response to such criticisms, Peck and Tickell (2002: p.57), have suggested that “it’s the configuration and the multitude of political conjecture that has caused social policy mixing to face such criticism.”

It is now an accepted orthodoxy within British central housing policy that mixed tenure communities should be an essential component of both new housing developments and the redevelopment of existing mono-tenure estates (CLG, 2006a). As has been outlined, the policy focus has increasingly shifted to how a ‘greener’ approach can also be achieved within such broad policies of social mixing.

As part of the government’s consultation to support the planning policies of ‘mixed communities’, it emphasised two key contributory objectives; namely, ‘sustainability’, which it regarded as, “creating an environment where people want to live and work, now and in the future” (ODPM: 2003: p.8) and ‘social inclusion’ in supporting the initiative (Kearns and Mason: 2007). With regards to sustainability, it acknowledged that this comes from knowing you have the ability to meet the changing needs and aspirations of those people who live in the community, be that through changing life stages, household configuration or variations in income(Tunstall and Fenton: 2006). With regards to social inclusion, the consultation paper highlighted the need for a balanced community, enabling a balanced housing market, thus allowing for diversity and affordability to permeate to a fairer, tolerant and cohesive community. The cohesiveness would also, it was claimed, enable people of different backgrounds, cultures and beliefs to be able to integrate more fully (ODPM: 2005). According to the Local Government Association, a cohesive community is one in which;

*“There is a common vision and a sense of belonging for all communities; the diversity of people’s different backgrounds and circumstances are appreciated and positively valued; those from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities; and strong and positive relationships are being developed between people from different backgrounds in the workplace, in schools and within neighbourhoods” (Ratcliffe et al.: 2011: p.67).*

Such conceptualisations reflect the importance ascribed by the government in building and supporting people within communities to form positive relationships and develop a shared identity. As individual concepts, therefore, sustainable living and social cohesion have their own limits and merits. However, the synergy between the two is only possible when people acquire or have a certain ‘quality of life'.

Only then are they able and willing to engage in sustainable practices and put roots down. If this commitment is not present then the drive to remain and build cohesive communities is more than likely to fail (Houston: 2013).

This view coincides with the need for social policy, in particular housing policy, to become the conduit to knit communities and their spatial environment more closely together (Seaman: 2010). As Seaman postulates, “where you live and how it makes you feel is important as to why you want to stay somewhere in the long term… the environment around where you are and how it can help and support the people who live there is just as important- this is where previous housing policy has failed” (Seaman: 2010: p.68).

Despite the interlinking of social and environmental concerns in government housing policy, the ultimate concern of governments has, generally, revolved around notions of ‘aspirational opportunities’ and the objective of fostering a community spirit, regardless of social background (Campbell: 2004). Due to lack of financial government support, or the lack of collaborative working between agencies, initiatives within this framework were largely unsuccessful, although they have recently been invigorated, inspired significantly by international policy factors such as climate change protocols, which have impinged on local government policy direction.

As this thesis shows, the distinctive policy concerning social mix and balance is not a new policy direction in the history of UK housing policy. However, the gradual incorporation of environmental concerns and discourses of sustainability is a recent development that will be examined in more detail.

## 1.2 Problem statement and research focus

The aim of achieving a social mix and balance within communities, based on the objective of overcoming community segmentation, has made important strides politically, especially in terms of improving the quality of housing for all types of people across various housing tenures. By achieving a degree of social and economic mix, such policies have contributed to the mitigation of pockets of deprivation in several parts of the UK.

From a political perspective, such policies have been driven by the notion that families can climb up the social ladder if they are moved outside of uniformly poor neighbourhoods.

These goals are inherently political (and social) as they seek to break up concentrations of poverty, thereby enhancing the quality of life, and life outcomes in general, for vulnerable groups. Ultimately, this policy focus is linked to important government priorities in terms of key public service outcomes in areas, such as crime and health within deprived communities. Such goals are purportedly easier to achieve when communities are more economically and socially integrated. In addition to these broad goals and political success, this policy focus has been successful in linking social and environmental concerns under an overarching policy framework.

Yet, while at the policy level, the overlapping of social and environmental goals is being reinforced through the idea of mixed communities, a notion supported by studies such as those by Seaman (2010) and Peters et al. (2010). However, there is a notable lack of research that critically assesses how the purported interactions between social cohesion and green behaviours are functioning. In particular, while there is a wealth of literature that focuses on the sociology of green behaviours, these linkages have not been adequately investigated in the context of mixed communities and tenure. This is a serious omission in the literature, given that, within the UK housing policy discourse, mixed communities have been rationalised on the basis of environmental sustainability, social diversity and social cohesion. It is argued in this study, by highlighting gaps in knowledge, that an investigation of how these linkages function is crucial for planners as new housing developments must now follow sustainability codes. However, these are based on assumptions that have limited empirical backing. The interactions between environmental and social variables must be critically investigated in a nuanced way as people and communities have various needs, lifestyles and expectations that ultimately influence such interactions.

While debates on the environment and housing have gained significant traction, the ways in which this has translated into housing policy have not been extensively investigated. The changing architectural landscape of new housing developments has brought the social dimensions of housing designs to the fore, based on objectives of facilitating communal activities and interaction.

Amidst these trends, the ways in which mixed communities offer opportunities for interactions, thereby improving social cohesion, must be further investigated against the backdrop of sustainable housing and the encouragement of environmentally conscious behaviour. The linkages between mixed communities and social cohesion have been widely researched but this has not been the case when the variable of green behaviour is introduced. The nexus between social mixing and green behaviour are still very much unclear.

To address the research gaps noted above, this thesis investigates the extent to which the UK’s new ‘greener’ housing policy focus can contribute to promoting social cohesion within a new mixed-tenure development. The investigation of this study is made within the context of a new housing development, ‘West Green’ (a pseudonym); an ambitious project designed with the aim of mitigating environmental impacts. The West Green development is a 7 hectare, 185-property, carbon-neutral housing development located in South West England, consisting of 12 acres of landscaped grounds. The key features of the development include meadows, allotments, greenhouses, cycle paths and play areas. The mixed-tenure development features a combination of 5, 4, 3 and 2 bedroom houses as well as 2 and 1 bedroom flats. One-third of the development consists of affordable social housing, of which 8 are wheelchair accessible, while two-thirds consist of private homes available for sale and shared ownership (part rent and part buy). In this study, the primary focus is on the ‘green’ spaces within this development and their role in fostering social cohesion. It is worth noting, however, that West Green supports a holistic approach to sustainable living and a series of energy-conserving features are included in the design of its homes, which are discussed in further detail in Chapter 4.

The impetus for the development of West Green was primarily driven by political and social policy motivations. Specifically, the need for ‘green’ infrastructure and housing, which facilitates greater social mobility, are ever-present themes in British politics and policymaking. A core goal was to lead the way in meeting the standard of carbon neutrality. This was achieved in a number of ways; the structure of the buildings and the materials selected are designed to minimise heat loss; the shape of the roofs and other surfaces enables rainwater to be harvested for use in toilets and washing machines; the homes also are fitted with mechanical ventilation with heat recovery systems, photovoltaics and solar shading systems.

The development also incorporates a wide range of green infrastructure, such as meadows and allotments. Notably, existing trees and hedgerows were retained and improved and new native species were planted to engender carbon neutrality, improve air quality and enhance the wellbeing of residents. The development also has an innovative community management structure, whereby it is run by its residents who have a share in a Community Interest Company, which was set up to manage and maintain the buildings and grounds. Such initiatives have played a crucial role in achieving sustainable and holistic design.

The choice of West Green in this research is significant as it provides the much-needed empirical evidence concerning new approaches to housing development that encourage social connectivity through green spaces and through innovative community initiatives. By focusing on West Green as a case study in this research, it is anticipated that important empirical findings can be made to inform future policy.

It is important to note that, whilst this study has been carried out in the UK, the impact of its findings may also be useful for international policy making. The direction of building housing and its link to green behavioural change and social cohesion are synonymous with societal change and evolution wherever you are in the world. Recent research undertaken in peripheral boroughs of Dutch cities, for example, has highlighted the government’s new narrative for the need to develop a ‘global urban strategy’ as an attempt for state actors, housing associations and developers to support generating social order in disadvantaged neighbourhoods through means of urban cohesion and engagement (Uitermark, Duyvendak and Kleinhans: 2018). Findings from this study will hopefully enhance the thinking and enrich the dialogue around this subject area, with potential changes in the approach being adopted.

## 1.3 Research questions

Against the backdrop of the research gaps identified above and the research focus of this thesis, the questions explicitly investigated are as follows; ‘Has West Green made people greener?' and ‘Does West Green promote social mixing?' These research questions will help to attain a better understanding as to why, or why not, we expect people to adopt ‘greener’ behaviours or promote social mixing when they move into a green development.

The research questions also reflect the aim of gaining a nuanced understanding of the relationship and underpinnings of interactions amongst people living in West Green through the lens of the case study. How greener housing policies are contributing to social cohesion in mixed tenure developments and how, or to what extent such developments encourage environmentally conscious behaviours, will also be investigated. These research questions are significant not only because of the potential of uncovering empirical data that is useful for future house-building programmes but also because the research findings will have important implications for social policy decisions attached to funding long term, sustainable housing developments; a key priority for any future government to address.

For private developers, it is the intention that this research will provide insight into the necessity of partnership with local authorities and housing associations, in order to ensure that houses are built in areas where shortages are greatest as well as where segregation is most prevalent. It will also help developers identify whether or not it is important to incorporate green elements within their housing developments if they aim to support social mixing.

It is important to note that, while this study aims to investigate the extent to which West Green promotes social mixing, and whether it encourages green behaviour, it focuses on tenure type and not class. Whilst class is widely recognised and has much traction in British society, for this study it was decided that the focus would be on social tenure as it is an easily measurable indicator and relies less on participants to self-identify.

## 1.4 Theoretical and conceptual approach

Two theoretical frameworks will be used to address the two research questions; Communities of Practice (CoP) and Life Course theory. CoPs are defined as “groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis” (Wenger et al.: 2002: p.7). While the use of the term has become quite widespread, it stems from theories based on the idea of learning as social participation (Wenger: 1998).

The term was originally used by Lave and Wenger (1991) in a study of situated learning and has increasingly become influential in analysing and facilitating knowledge transfer and collective learning in a wide range of organisations. Moving beyond organisational environments, however, and looking more specifically at community engagement, Wenger et al. (2002) have utilised the overall principle of ‘aliveness’ to demonstrate how communities can evolve and generate excitement, relevance and value to attract and engage members.

This overall principle of ‘aliveness’ is encapsulated within these seven components;

* Design for evolution
* Open dialogue between inside and outside perspectives
* Invite different levels of participation
* Develop both public and private community spaces
* Focus on value
* Combine familiarity and excitement
* Create a rhythm for the community.

Wenger et al. (2002) explain that these components are not rigid entities or recipes for ‘aliveness’ to be achieved, but rather that they embody their understanding of how communities reflect the flexibility and diversity in order to mould successful communities. It is this sharing of knowledge, information transfer and cultivation, which will form the basis for this research analysis, which focuses on how, and in what form, interaction takes place within the open ‘green’ spaces amongst the residents in the mixed housing development of West Green. Such interaction, through the lens of ‘aliveness’ will be examined in depth and will inform this study’s findings. In particular, it will be used to understand how it can be related to green behavioural change.

Life Course theory (or more generally termed the life course perspective) refers to a multidisciplinary paradigm for the study of the lives of individuals, structural contexts, and social change. Much of life course study crosses levels, as in the relationship between historical change and life experience (Hunt, p.203, 2006). There is a growing awareness of the link between human lives and the historical context, which underscores the multiple levels of social change taking place as part of life course theory.

Issues of timing, linked lives, and human agency identify key mechanisms by which environmental change and pathways influence the course and the substance of human lives.

Human lives are typically embedded in social relationships with kin and friends across their life span, whilst social regulation and support occur in part through these relationships. Processes of this kind are expressed across the life cycle of socialisation, behavioural exchange, and generational succession (Elder, 1994). This approach, therefore, encompasses ideas and observations from an array of disciplines in order to direct attention to the powerful connection between individual lives and the historical and socio-economic context in which these lives unfold, especially when it comes to where people live. This is an important factor to take into account when considering the research questions under examination in this study. The different tenure type and the life experience brought by residents who move to live in close proximity can and will influence the success of the development, both in terms of engagement and cohesion.

This study is also interested in how life courses are affected by wider issues of social change, in particular by the increasing interest in issues of environmentalism and sustainability in the UK. It is evident that the life span of an individual will be influenced, directed and shaped by the wider social circumstances in which they live and this thesis will analyse their impact on ‘green’ behaviour.

This thesis will, therefore argue that, in the context of West Green, the overarching aim is to create social cohesion within a CoP that focuses on ‘green’ behaviour and environmental initiatives. Via the creation of a community that is formed on the basis of mixed tenure, the community is not so much predicated on socio-economic status in as much as it draws upon personal values and beliefs and where life course plays a significant part in each person’s journey. It shall hypothesise, that since the residents of this community share a common purpose, being part of the CoP will motivate all residents to share their ideas that this will stimulate community living by bringing people with varying backgrounds together via the ‘aliveness’ principles, underlined by their life course experience. Both of these theoretical frameworks provide a useful basis for investigating whether green behaviour can be an effective means for community cohesion within an area of mixed tenure.

## 1.5 Thesis outline

The following chapter will examine more fully, in its literature review, the social policy impact of ‘mixed communities’ as well as unpack the term in more detail to understand the nuances placed upon it. The literature review will then proceed to examine the ‘green behaviours’ agenda in more detail, the evolution it has gone through and where discussions are today on this subject. This section will also survey how, and what, motivates people to take more of an interest in ‘green' behaviours and the arguments surrounding this debate.

The next part of the literature review will examine life course theory and outline the importance of this concept within the scope of the research questions and the impact such a significant event, as moving home has on people's lives and their routines. Finally, the literature review will look in more detail at the theoretical application of the Communities of Practice framework and how it will be used in this thesis to examine the changing relationships and connections within West Green. The chapter also critically discusses the limitations of this theoretical framework.

In Chapter 3, an outline of the methodological framework and rationale that underpins this study and the choice of methods applied in the research is provided. The chapter commences with a summary of the philosophical approach adopted in this thesis and offers insight into the logic that informed this choice. This study is based on a qualitative case study design and this research approach will be justified and how it aligns with my philosophical framework will be highlighted. The data collection methods, specifically interviews and the sample selection process will be discussed in significant detail. It will also reflect on my role as a researcher, and provide an overview of the ethical considerations involved in this study.

Chapter 4 consists of the findings chapters and will interrogate the evidence to address the two research questions within the context of the theoretical framework that underpins this study. This analysis will begin by presenting interviews with stakeholders, which are positioned within the political and policy context within which West Green was developed.

Central to this analysis is the contribution of external agencies, such as the Homes and Community Agency, architects and local councillors, among others, who provide valuable insight, through their interviews, into the underlying motivations of the project.

Chapter 5 proceeds to establish the impact of the development on green behaviour by its residents. This discussion is positioned within the current debates in the literature and examines the implications for the current scholarship. In particular, the chapter draws on CoP theory to understand the support that residents have for the development and their engagement with one another but recognises the limitations of the application of this theory in all contexts. Drawing again from the data and interviews, the narratives of the residents are examined and the chapter engages in a critical discussion of the extent to which social mixing is taking place. It includes detailed discussion of the three sub-community groups identified as part of West Green; Transformers, Lifestyle Supporters and Individualists. Each of these types operates differently and this study has found that their behaviour, and its sustainability, is related to their tenure type. The chapter includes a close examination of each of these sub-community types, including detailed analysis of tenure type, and reflects on their identification as an original contribution to understanding community approaches to sustainability in housing developments of this kind.

In Chapter 6, this is followed by concluding whether a cohesive community has developed in West Green. This includes analysis of the sub-community types. Finally, I go onto present my own thoughts and opinions as a housing professional.

The final chapter of this thesis draws these discussions together to offer a final narrative on the research findings of this study. It discusses the implications of the research findings within the context of the limitations of this study and provides some directions for future research based on the remaining gaps in the literature, which require addressing. In doing so, it addresses the current lack of focus on the links between mixed communities and the increasing social norms of environmentally conscious decision making, particularly in the context of mixed tenure communities in the UK.

The inclusion of my research findings into the wider community of knowledge would, be beneficial for UK policymakers as it offers unique insight into ways that mixed communities can use certain social norms to change a community for the better. It also shows how the ‘green’ element of a housing development can promote social mixing and offers a detailed analysis of this mixing through the identification of sub-community types and an engagement with theory. These findings will also benefit housing professionals as they navigate the social, economic and environmental needs of the contemporary housing context.

The findings will be significant not only in a UK context but also for international policy making to inform the building of housing worldwide as we face global environmental and social challenges.

# Chapter 2: Literature review

## 2.1 Introduction

As outlined in the previous chapter, this thesis sets out to examine green housing developments in the UK and the possible links that such developments can have with the promotion of social mixing and mixed communities, with the aim of making them more cohesive and greener in approach and application. In this chapter, I will critically evaluate the relevant literature and address the gaps in the available research. The literature will be explored in five parts, examining their interconnection and evolution. Firstly, I will outline the contribution made to understanding the term ‘mixed communities.’ Connotations pertaining to this term are many but, through my review, I will highlight the importance of the term in relation to its significance and progression in definition and the impact it has today. Secondly, I will explore key housing policies which have led to both political and social changes, leading to the construction of policies for social mixing and a review of how effective they have been in the past. My literature review will consider some of these key policy milestones, including defining the term ‘mixed communities’ which I will use for my thesis. I will also reflect on how this has a bearing on new mixed housing communities, social cohesiveness as well as ‘green’ living. This discussion will include an overview of factors affecting individual preference for green housing. Thirdly, I will summarise the literature directly relevant to environmentalism and its affiliation towards behavioural change. The exploration of this literature will present the emergence of this debate and discuss whether green housing can influence behaviours and promote social mixing within the housing sector and how it is being utilised. In the fourth part, I will bring to the fore and present the importance of how life course theory helps to signify and illuminate people’s life journey in relation to the choices they make about where they live and how they live. Finally, I will outline the second theoretical framework I will be using; Communities of Practice (CoP) by Wenger (2011) and how it will be developed to underpin my research, as well as secondary supplementary theoretical schools, including those relating to green behaviour and behavioural change.

By navigating through each part of the literature review I will present why and how the links between each section form an important illustrative pathway in answering my research questions and identifying any gaps in literature within this area.

## 2.1.1 Mixed communities: definitions and perspectives

Over the past few decades, the concept of ‘mixed communities’ has gained increased prominence under successive governments, as well as within academia. The term itself, a combination of two distinct words, ‘mixed’ and ‘communities’, brings with it various definitions, thus making it a difficult term to define. For the purpose of this research, this section will begin by breaking down the term to explain the significance of both of these words individually and then go on to examine how combining them has led to a new concept being developed and its importance in today’s society. This concept will then be used as the basis for this research.

### 2.1.2 Definition of ‘community’

The concept of ‘community’ lends itself to many interpretations. Much has happened in recent years to warrant a re-examination of approaches to researching communities, including critical appraisals of the community studies tradition of research (Brunt: 2001; Crow: 2002b: Day 2006). Hillery (1995) refers to it as “either being geographically specific, refer to a local social system or a type of relationship and mutual identification/identity” (p.65). Others describe ‘community’ as one of the “most common points of reference for social scientists, policymakers and the wider public” (Day: 2006: p.77). Day (2006) goes on to say that, “communities represent a particular kind of social bond, involving direct personal relations and intimate knowledge of others” (p.78). The term is also used to indicate, “... a sense of common identity, enduring ties of affiliation and harmony based upon personal knowledge and face-to-face contact” (Lee and Newby: 1983: p.98), whilst to others it has a more holistic definition as a “... layer of society in which interaction takes place between people who are neither close family and friends, nor yet total strangers. From such definitions, we can recognise that community is neither private nor fully public. It shapes our social identity and helps us make sense of a complex and dynamic world” (Gilchrist: 2000: p.122). Williams (1976) famously argued that community is treated almost universally as positive. However, many scholars have disputed this understanding, noting the ‘darker’ side of communities, relating to exclusion, inequality, oppression and social divisions (Crow and Maclean, 2006; Hoggett, 1997).

These varying viewpoints only reiterate the complexity of the term and how it is used and inform this thesis as both the positive and negative aspects of community will be examined.

The lack of a single definition allows for various interpretations to be used in a manner most suitably required and needed to justify different standpoints. Just as the theoretical discussions around community have evolved over recent years, interestingly, the concept of community also has a long history of being associated with the process of modernisation and industrialisation, linked to urbanisation and globalisation in the 20th century. The distinction, for example, between *gemeinschaft* (community) and *gesellschaft* (society) (Tonnies: 1955) has been used to describe the term as, “the transition in change from rural-type communities to urban societies where relationships are not close or enduring, but heterogeneous, distant and highly mobile” (p.67). More recently, there has been more ‘fluidity’ surrounding the term, whereby it is not only recognised as a place base but, “the emergence of shared interests easily provides itself to more complex and mobile identities ... these attributes have given rise to ‘hypermobilities’ associated with the multi-dimensional mobilities and flows of people, goods, services and knowledge” (Scheller and Urry: 2006: p.210).

Such changes have also had a profound impact on economic structures and lifestyles that have manifested themselves differently across various production/consumption spheres, with environmental repercussions. The rise in car ownership, linked with increasing mobility, the increasing size of retail centres and changing labour markets, are all key examples of this change in lifestyle (Barton and Taylor, 2000). This argument is developed further by recognising that “... community is no longer defined or characterised by a sense of loss, a critique of modernisation or planning, rather it has intrinsically embedded within social and civic relationships which are now being perceived as central for tackling major social problems (e.g. social exclusion and deprivation) including unsustainability” (Marsden and Hines: 2008: p.134).

These changes have increased the ‘rise of new communitarianism’ and the growing popularity of localism and localisation (Barton: 2000). Others advocate the need to “recapture communitarian social values that emphasise the moral dimension and move away from radical individualism towards the need for collective responsibility ... by adopting a more balanced approach between personal autonomy and respect for others” (Etzioni:1995: p.55).

However, ideal notions of community as described by theorists rarely match the reality of communities on the ground as revealed by empirical research, denoting a juxtaposition between reality and theory (Day: 2006). An understanding of this tension is critical for this study, which applies theory to a real-world context. Nevertheless, there is a wide-ranging concern that there is a ‘decay of the community’ (Hope: 2007), which needs addressing through active citizenship and reigniting interest. However, it is not fully addressed here what the full impact of this ‘decay’ might be. An understanding of this is rooted in Giddens (1998) argument that the theme of community is key to the welfare reform programmes in the UK and Europe;

*“The theme of community is fundamental to the new politics. The advance of globalisation makes a community focus both necessary and possible, because of the downward pressure it exerts. ‘Community’ doesn’t imply trying to recapture lost forms of local solidarity; it refers to practical means by furthering the social and material refurbishment of neighbourhoods, towns and larger local areas” (p.238).*

To summarise, therefore, this discussion of ‘community’ has highlighted that there are a number of definitions and concepts for the term but also notable similarities particularly around the social benefits of community on individuals. The delineation of community being underpinned by a sense of belonging and social ties is worth noting, whilst traditional approaches embodied in research have tended to conceptualise communities as being “a spatially compact set of people with a high frequency of interaction, interconnections, and a sense of solidarity” (Wellman and Leighton:1979: p.47). This study recognises community as being strengthened by a sense of belonging and social ties, particularly in relation to social beliefs.

Another common feature of the definition is a focus on geographic location (Mancini et al.: 2003; Mahoney et al.: 2007), whilst for Chaskin (2001) it is conceptualised specifically as a geographical area within which there is a common identity between people in which functional units exist to facilitate the delivery of services. This is evident in West Green as the community is initially bound together by their shared living environment in the form of the housing development.

While most definitions of community entail a discussion about shared values and norms, geographic location and social cohesiveness (Willmott: 1986; Crow and Allen, 1995; Lee and Newby: 1983; Chaskin, 2001; Mancini et al.: 2003; Mahoney et al.: 2007), there is still a polemical debate regarding the dimensions of the definition. Specifically, the ongoing debate about the definition of community concerns whether the concept truly involves groups of people who are united through shared common interests and whether geographic locality and/or interest is a prerequisite of a community.

Traditionally, Willmott (1989) has argued that a sense of shared identity is not a prerequisite for a community and, instead, proposes the presence of attachment in understanding the workings of communities, drawing from the work of Cohen (1982: 1985). For Cohen (1985), communities are best understood when they are conceptualised as ‘communities of meaning’, where the focus is on how they create a sense of belonging in a symbolic way. Cohen’s proposition is based on the idea that “people construct community symbolically, making it a resource and repository of meaning, and a referent of their identity” (1985: p.118). Thus, for members of a community, social capital and the vitality of the community’s culture are conceptualised as fundamental for the reality of the community. In contrast to this view, and drawing from the traditional dichotomy of *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft*, the other side of the debate focuses on weakening social ties within communities, owing to factors such as urbanisation, industrialisation and modernisation. However, what is not fully conceptualised is that a community might be made up of people with varying levels of belonging or commitment.

The current debate has shifted towards a conceptualisation of community as a network of people who are tied or joined together on the basis of a shared set of norms, identity and solidarity, but who are not necessarily bound together by geographic location (particularly in the current era of transnationalism), although dissenting views still remain. This last definition of community proposed above is a ‘post-place’ approach to defining community in a way that reconciles the reality that cities and urban spaces may be devoid of the social interactions of *gesellschaft*, although individuals may still find *gemeinschaft* solidarity in the form of global networks. This concept of communities will be further discussed within the context of the theoretical framework of Communities of Practice in section 2.5.

The nuances within these different definitions, therefore, clearly illustrate the intricacy on which the emphasis of the term is based upon but essentially, it remains a concept which garners ongoing debate. The term ‘mixed’ in relation to communities will be discussed next, highlighting how the term is understood and explained.

### 2.1.3 Definition of ‘mixed’

The term ‘mixed’ has various interpretations. In simple terms, it can mean “combining characteristics of two or more elements” (Dorrin: 2010: p.12). In urban literature (Dunston: 2008; Peters: 2009; Sunderland: 2009), however, this concept of ‘mixed’ is variously referred to as ‘social mix’, ‘tenure mix’ and linked to ‘sustainability’. The term sustainability itself is often regarded as “the ability to keep something going, be that for societal practice or practice that a business, industry, or community does” (Pecker: 2007: p.82). The feature that all these definitions have in common is the connotation that “‘mixing’ in society is primarily an argument about the consequences of social patterns. It rests on the belief that there is an ideal composition of social and income groups which when achieved, produces optimum individual and community wellbeing” (Lees: 2008: p.450). Social mixing is recognised as beneficial to the strength of communities as they will include people at different life stages with varying commitments, interests and knowledge. However, it does not address any negative implications of social mixing, including a lack of balance in the mix.

### 2.1.4 Significance of ‘mixed communities’

Having examined the meaning behind the words ‘mixed’ and ‘communities’, and considered research relevant to a conceptual understanding of each, the following sections will look at how the combined term of ‘mixed communities’ has emerged and how it is being utilised. It will also put the term into a UK policy context to illustrate these changes.

The term ‘mixed communities’, in part, came about through the inability of planners to manage the urban sprawl of the 1980s, which was accompanied by a range of social and environmental problems (Agyeman and Angus: 2003). Greater emphasis was also being placed on the term by global organisations, such as Greenpeace, World Wildlife Fund, World Resource Institute amongst others, to heighten their claims of climate change, increasing carbon emissions, as well as the causal damage of our ecological footprint, in order to support their environmental objectives. From a theoretical point of view, Marsden and Hines (2008) have explored the term ‘mixed communities’ by using three different dimensions/parameters to illustrate their perception.

The first dimension they allude to distinguishes between spatial/geographical communities and Communities of interest (CoI). This describes spatial or geographical communities as usually identified as a physical entity or delineated by physical boundaries (for example, a particular village or town). The latter describes communities that are not necessarily bound by geography or social structures but emerge from a shared/common feeling or thought in response to a certain issue (for example a community group concerned with waste or an online forum discussing renewable energy). However, CoI can also exist within a specific location or organisation/institution (for example a community group focused around the issue of waste in a particular local authority/town/village). This often corresponds closely to a Community of Practice (CoP), namely “groups of people who share a concern or passion for something they do” (Wenger: 2011: p.1). The distinction between a CoP and a CoI may be subtle but is highly significant, in particular for this study. According to Wenger’s framework (Wenger: 2011), a CoP is distinctive because it entails not only a shared concern or passion, but also the co-operation and dedication to implement practices to secure a particular outcome.

Wenger’s (2011) framework provides the basis for the theoretical analysis in this thesis and is discussed in greater depth in the final section of the literature review.

The second dimension that Marsden and Hines (2008) explain involves focusing on the relationships between the state, businesses/firms and communities in the management of natural resources within a geographical area or a local scale ‘interest’ group. This recognises that communities do not operate in a vacuum and that each of the stakeholders mentioned plays a different role in the economic, environmental and social aspects of a community. However, they do not specifically address the fluidity of these roles as stakeholders have different levels of commitment and influence at different times, depending on a wide range of factors, such as time and resources. Finally, their third dimension involves an investigation of the degrees of governance and engagement of the community. This aspect is important for determining how actions at the community level are equitable, inclusive, strategic and sustainable. It also considers the extent to which interventions aimed at sustainability are ‘top-down’ or bottom-up’ and explores how these affect the levels and quality of engagement.

Although Marsden and Hines (2008) have illustrated their thinking in dimensional terms, this study suggests that this can be further developed to reflect the fact that communities are not static but are nebulous and interchangeable. The definition requires sufficient scope to allow for changes in communities, which reflect the changing environment in which they operate and evolving expectations imposed upon them and, in particular, recognises the influence of different lives. One of the ways in which the environment is changing is the shift by citizens and governments towards greener living, which largely aligns with Marsden and Hines (2008) definition of a Community of Interest. Considering the trend in the 1990s, which tended to be dominated by consumption, in the last decade the focus of UK citizens has shifted away from this mantra towards greener and more sustainable lifestyles (Prothero, McDonagh and Dobscha, 2010). The recent climate change protests and strikes illustrate this point clearly, highlighting “nearly 70% of British people want urgent political action to tackle climate change and protect the natural environment” (YouGov poll: 2019). Theresa May, in one of her last acts as British prime minister, enshrined in law a commitment to reach net-zero carbon emissions by 2050, making Britain the first large economy to do so.

Two-thirds of people who were questioned by researchers for Greener UK (2019) and the Climate Coalition (2019) believe Britain needs to cut its carbon emissions to zero far faster. The surveys suggested demand for action to tackle the climate crisis is becoming part of a mainstream view. Of the 2,000 people surveyed, 71% said they wanted their MP to support ambitious plans to protect the natural environment and tackle climate change, and a majority wanted to see strong new environmental laws. With this shift, there has been an increasing trend towards social responsibility with a focus on ‘green’ or environmental issues. However, we must address the issue of social class in relation to this shift, which will be examined in more depth later in this chapter. Communities of Interest share these perspectives on green living, whilst emerging Communities of Practice have advanced and perpetuated lifestyles through which they can be put into practice. For example, a community concerned with securing a sustainable energy supply is likely to mean that all members adopt a similar means of achieving this, such as installing solar panels, rather than individual households taking divergent approaches.

One of the key arguments of this thesis is that a Community of Practice is essential for solving many issues present in the housing sector because the views or interests held can only be implemented with the co-operation of the community as a whole. This is not only true of the housing sector, as described in this thesis, but also includes the consumption of commodities, as the mind-set of consumers shifts away from the mentality that ‘an increase in consumption makes a person happy’ (Prothero, McDonagh and Dobscha: 2010).

A growing body of research shows that being green has become ‘trendy’ and typically trendiness is appealing to a wide audience, as people attempt to demonstrate that they are up to date with the latest issues (Gifford and Nilsson, 2014). Trendiness is significant for two key reasons. Although we must be critical of who is engaged with this ‘trendiness’. Firstly, it is self-perpetuating in that it spreads popularity without the need for any advertisement or campaigning (indeed, any such input can be detrimental to maintaining ‘trendiness’). Secondly, it increases the value of the resource or concept without adding anything to the cost, as people are willing to pay more for the same physical product if they believe it will improve their social standing. However, these benefits only last as long as the trend in question prevails, which can be unpredictable, after which, behavioural patterns often shift back to the previous status quo.

In order for patterns developed as a result of a trend to have a long-term impact or sustainability, the trend must be (unusually) enduring. When considering a community that is constrained by spatial or geographical boundaries, maintaining involvement and motivation to be ‘green’ is often based upon various components. On a macro level, people choose to be environmentally conscious because they are worried about global warming or pollution (Kennedy, Krahn and Krogman: 2013) but on a micro-level people choose to be green because they care about their local area (for example drinking water, landfill concerns) (Ozaki: 2011). However, we must also be aware of the fluid nature of these commitments as well as their motivations. Yet within the context of a community, the macro and micro components are only one continuum on a complex spectrum (Prothero, McDonagh and Dobscha: 2010). It is also important to consider a person as both an individual and also as a citizen within the larger context. Individuals may opt for greener choices because they want to save money (i.e. through a change to their financial circumstances) or they might want to buy organic produce because they believe there are personal health benefits in doing so (Whitmarsh and O’Neill: 2010). On the other hand, the ‘green’ citizen is motivated by the public good of others and makes choices for the collective good. The ‘green’ citizen is more likely to engage in community projects that would encourage the changing of policies or practices to make an area more environmentally conscious (for example, community recycling/composting products, the incorporation of solar-powered streetlights and so on).

The changing nature of public thought and a greater appreciation of greener living is significant for this thesis, particularly because of the ‘trendy’ nature of the topic. This is a critical moment for the proposed study to be undertaken as it is hoped that this will allow policymakers to harness the present trend in favour of sustainability and greener living. These conditions cannot necessarily be replicated in the future and this thesis argues that it is important to seize this opportunity to promote green living while the trend continues. Based on the literature identified by this thesis, those with a proclivity towards environmental choices would likely become ‘greener’ if surrounded by others with similar backgrounds and values. Yet, despite this assumption arising from the literature, there are limited studies that offer recent empirical findings on the link between living in a green community and becoming ‘greener’ as an individual or as a citizen.

Therefore, this has been identified as a gap in knowledge and research as to whether bringing people together from different backgrounds to live within a ‘green’ housing development, changes behaviours and/or identities.

### 2.1.5 The importance of ‘mixed communities’

In recent years there has been a resurgence of interest amongst national and local government policymakers in the concept of ‘mixed communities’ as part of broader concerns around issues of social cohesion and tackling inequality.

Encouraging socially mixed neighbourhoods and communities is becoming a major urban policy and planning goal in the UK as well as in Ireland, the Netherlands, Scandinavia, Australia, Canada and the USA (Rose: 2004). Rose goes on to allude that, “… since the image of the ‘liveable city’ has become a key aspect of a city’s ability to compete in a globalised, knowledge-based economy, post-industrial cities have a growing interest in marketing themselves as being built on a foundation of ‘inclusive’ neighbourhoods capable of harmoniously supporting a blend of incomes, cultures, age groups and lifestyles” (Rose: 2004: p.281). The desirability of social mixing lends itself to expanding the prospect of opportunity, as Plymer (2011) alludes, “the interconnectedness and the aspiration to create equability and to increase life chances…opens up the narrative that social mixing needs to be considered wherever possible to deter societal layering and division” (p.129).

However, others are more sceptical about the merits of social mixing (Pitt: 1997). Pitt acknowledges that social balance or ‘mix’ is an argument about the consequences of social class patterns and partly rests on the belief that there is an ideal composition of social and income groups which, when achieved, produces optimum individual and community well-being.

Complementing his concerns, there are other arguments noting the lack of evidential base for social mixing as a mechanism for tackling inequality and arguing that it is, instead, likely to be detrimental as it “makes it more difficult to find neighbourhoods populated with other compatible households with similar tastes and lifestyles” (Cheshire et al.: 2008: p.14).

The criticism made by Pitt (1997) over two decades ago, that very little is known about the advantages and disadvantages of different kinds of social mix, was reiterated 10 years later, in 2008, by Cheshire et al., indicating a lack of progress in research in this area. It remains true today that there is no evidential basis to support an optimal social mix from street, neighbourhood, district or community level, whereby a social balance would be a worthwhile goal for policy objectives.

The pursuit of ‘mix’ and ‘social’ balance can, however, be linked back to early planning visionaries in the UK, such as Joseph Rowntree’s New Earswick Village in York, Ebenezer Howard’s Garden City movement or George Cadbury’s Bourneville village. The aim of these developments was to provide well-constructed homes in spacious green locations to allow synergy between people and their environment (Sarkissian: 1976). Today, specifically within the UK, the concept of ‘mixed communities’ has provided an example of how policy discourses have had to adapt to the changing role of the state in public provision, forms of social divisions, inequality and transformation within the housing market (Cole and Goodchild: 2000). The beneficial outcome of social mixing also lends itself to determining the grounding of social policy discourse in providing a platform for equality and sustainable growth for society overall (Howie: 2009). It is the importance of such inter-relations that has brought with it subsequent challenges for consecutive governments, ensuring housing developments are nurtured to ensure that they remain versatile. In response to these inter-relations, the UK government has pursued a myriad of policies that are tied to broad aims of reducing poverty that is concomitant with the spatial concentration of public housing, through social mixing.

A key policy intervention strategy is the use of tenure mix to ensure a social balance in communities, in a sustainable way (Monk et al., 2011), aligned, potentially, with the provision of additional services in neighbourhoods beyond just housing management to include youth activities to health and training and regeneration (Pleace & Tunstall, 2018). However, it must be questioned how sustainable such communities can be when there may still be unequal access to services and facilities, dictated by the inequalities inherent in tenure type.

The Government has enacted several directives to facilitate the creation of mixed communities across the dimensions of architecture, household type, income level, community and use. Santos et al (2018) use the example of Claremont House in Edinburgh as a case study to illustrate what they regard as the important connection between, architecture, home and the community. They highlight the design of domestic architecture as embodying a hierarchy of values that represent a particular notion of what *home* and *community* mean. They propose that the relationship between architect, home and community is not deterministic but the making of the home and community is enmeshed with the architectural affordance that the dwelling represents” (p.4).

The new build development of the Greenwich Millennium Village however, concentrates more on the household type, income level and community. Here the combination of housing for social tenants and low-cost households, as well as market-rented occupiers and outright sales is focussed upon. The development itself consisted of approximately 70% of market homes/homeowners and 30% of social housing. The Greenwich Millennium Village initiative was also reflective of the fact that, at the time, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister’s (ODPM) planning policy guidance for housing, known as Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) 3, instructed planning authorities to espouse “the development of mixed and balanced communities in order to avoid areas of social exclusion”, by ensuring that affordable housing formed a proposed component of any housing development that consisted of 15 or more dwellings (Berube: 2005: p.76). In addition to such directives, the majority of affordable housing is funded through subsidy programmes or grants facilitated through Section 106 agreements; a feature which is part of the conventional planning process, clearly aimed at promoting the inclusion of affordable housing (Barker: 2004). Revisions to PPG3 have also entailed directives which mandate new developments to achieve a mix in housing according to affordability, size and type, in addition to the edict that affordable housing must form a component of any proposed new development.

As a result of such policies, there has been a shift from mono-tenure social housing developments and this has been concomitant with reductions in the spatial concentrations of social housing. According to Berube, “the percentage of small areas (100 to 200 households) in England where social tenants made up 90% or more of all tenures dropped from 1.6% in the 1991 census to under 0.3% in the 2001 census” (2005: p.26).

The impact that Berube (2005) refers to suggests that a degree of social residualisation has taken place as a result of the policy, where there has been a reduction in social housing dwellings in deprived neighbourhoods (Burrows: 1999).

There are several reasons to suggest that these policies have not been successful in terms of social mixing owing to these dynamics.

Jones and Murie (2006: p.153) expand on this point further when they suggest that;

*“In urban areas the coincidence of Right to Buy sales and a period of widening social inequality has exacerbated the funnelling of poorer sections of the community or marginalized groups into the least desirable estates. Obtaining a house in these neighbourhoods, whatever condition and quality, demonstrates some elements of social disadvantage by tenants. At the same time the changes in the characteristics of the council tenant population, encouraged by the Right to Buy siphoning off those with financial resources, has meant that the council housing stock is subject to higher turnover. The Right to Buy has therefore destabilised the remaining council housing stock and the least desirable estates in particular. This has inevitably increased social exclusion and economic marginalisation and reduced the sustainability of communities in these areas through the instability of local populations.”*

As a caveat, residualisation does not solely account for the policy challenges with respect to the Right to Buy Scheme but also factors such as the proliferation of processes of residential movement (Lee et al.: 1995), which have undermined the goals of social mixing. The Right to Buy Scheme, arguably, has not altered the social mix in housing developments and council housing areas. However, “[w]hen resales started to occur…relatively young people, often in white-collar occupations, moved into neighbourhoods previously dominated by social housing tenants.

At this point, the existing social mix became more dynamic” (Kleinhans and Van Ham (2013: p.110).

Although the social mix became more dynamic, the contrast in the socio-economic backgrounds of tenants culminated in social tensions that undermined community solidarity and cohesion (Jones and Murie: 2006). In contrast to the position of this 2006 study, Munro (2007) has conceptualised it as a successful policy, enabling the mixing of communities on the basis of tenure. Munro (2007) suggests that the policy has “achieved almost iconic status, representative of high Thatcherism; a key effort in the general drive for privatisation, aimed both at rolling back the frontiers of the state and also in the creation of a ‘property-owning democracy.’ It has been instrumental in changing the aggregate tenure structure in Britain” (p.247).

More recently, however, the housing green paper (2018), ‘A new deal for tenants’, has stimulated a healthy debate around social housing and tenure prejudice. It focused on five key themes to tackle tenure prejudice; (1) how to tackle stigma and celebrate thriving communities, (2) strategies for expanding supply and supporting home ownership, (3) the effective resolution of complaints, (4) empowering residents and strengthening the regulator and (5) ensuring homes are safe and decent.

An understanding of this is crucial for interpretation of West Green as the development includes several tenure types and inequalities which could develop, including economic and social instability that may lead to a reduction in sustainability for the community as a whole. Drawing on ‘a new deal for tenants’ (2018), West Green recognised that social mix is needed for community solidarity and cohesion and so actively adopted strategies to minimise tenure prejudice. In particular, attention was paid, during the planning stage of the development, to ensuring that all housing and its surrounding environments were ‘safe and decent’ and steps were put into place to ‘celebrate thriving communities’, including the setting up of social initiatives and supporting all residents to set up their own. This also addresses the issue of a high turnover of residents in social housing by both tackling stigma and ensuring that homes are of a good quality. Through also empowering residents by offering space to raise issues, it serves to challenge tenure prejudice and support wellbeing.

However, there is no mention of the issue of reduced space being reserved for social housing (Berube: 2005), which may be a critical factor in social housing residents being dissatisfied and may also lead to prejudice as they are seen as a lower tier of resident in a mixed development. There is also a focus on ‘supporting home ownership’, which places this at the top of the housing hierarchy and overlooks, in part, the needs and concerns of social housing residents. Tenure prejudice will be discussed further in chapter 6.

From a policy perspective, however, the government is pursuing an agenda to facilitate mixed communities, especially in the area of new housing developments, but there are still some lessons that can be learned based on new practice and research that is informing the development of new mixed communities. The role of a green housing development for promoting community cohesion and solidarity, which, thus far, has been missing from policies such as Right to Buy, is an area that requires further investigation. By focusing on this dimension, this thesis provides nuanced insight that is useful for policymakers who seek to achieve social mixing in new communities but who have, thus far, been limited by a skewed focus on mixed tenure and mixed-income thresholds. For instance, how can green behaviours serve as a platform through which this ‘mix’ is achieved? It is this question that this thesis seeks to answer.

In summary, the policy evidence in the UK demonstrates a support for mixed tenure, which is currently serving as a proxy for mixed communities, particularly in the case of new housing developments. The efficacy of tenure mix in regeneration areas and new developments is not so clear. Thus far, the workings of Right to Buy suggest that contrasts in the socio-economic backgrounds of tenants have culminated in social tensions that undermine community solidarity and cohesion, which is arguably, a fundamental premise of social mixing.

It is the nebulous nature of ‘mixed communities’ that evidently illustrates the diversity in their composition. This has led academics, such as Rebecca Tunstall (2009), to develop and expand on how the theme of mixed communities can be subdivided into more specific categories. For example, the manner of their emergence (natural or intentional), and the nature of their geographical location (a pre-existing area or a new one developed through policy subsidy regimes).

Tunstall (2009) illustrates that each ‘type’ brings with it its own challenges to the community it wants to create, and therefore queries the wisdom of the search for defining the characteristics of a successful and prosperous mixed community.

Rather, the conditions of success and prosperity may be highly individual to the community in question and not transferable to other locations.

In addition, with the rise in house prices, current homeowners have made fantastic wealth gains but this rise has also impeded many aspirational householders from progressing into homeownership as demand for affordable units outstrips supply. This has raised debates about the critical functions of housing and planning.

Thus far, the policy has tended to promote cities and urban vitality and to achieve environmentally sustainable development but many feel that this focus has come at the expense of policies to secure an adequate supply of affordable housing particularly for first-time buyers (Berube: 2005). Consequently, this issue has recently come to a head as a major point of contention in the debate surrounding inter-generational fairness and equality (Coulter: 2017). There is a recognition that consecutive governments have tried to pursue active and aggressive agendas to ensure the housing market has delivered better outcomes on all fronts, by recognising the link between the condition of the housing market-through trends in price, quality, tenure and mobility and the long-term viability of places.

But the balance to attain this equilibrium has not been straightforward (Berube: 2005). However, through recent policy discussions, public statements and research literature, the narrative surrounding why governments have been particularly vocal in promoting mixed communities has highlighted three recurring key themes. The first being to achieve consistency in the level of social and/or economic mix to avoid creating and, hopefully eradicating, the concentrations of deprivation that exist in some parts of the country. Secondly, to provide an avenue for government to achieve other important policy goals, e.g. crime, health, education, and thirdly to support the notion that mixed places tend to avoid a ‘cycle of decline’, requiring less government investment and intervention in regeneration for the future (Rattan, 2004). A more linear view taken however exposes the view that the core premise of this concept is merely to “de-concentrate the poor” (Fraser et al.: 2012: p.129) by bringing in middle-class residents to advocate a solution.

The assumption here is that spatial proximity to the middle-classes would provide low-income urban residents with access to social and cultural capital, as well as political and economic resources which would improve life chances for them**.** However, whilst this view has been advocated, there are problematic elements to this division.

From one perspective, there is the argument that the lines of the class system have become increasingly blurred over time. For example, as class identity and awareness are disintegrating as people do not typically participate in ‘class-specific’ activities and this impacts upon their engagements with and commitment to ‘green’ behaviours. This process, known as ‘dis-identification’, indicates that, while class may have been a valuable marker for social inclusion post-World War 2, it no longer has the same influence among the citizens in Britain (Le Roux et al.: 2008: p.1051). One of the reasons why this might be the case is the complex nature of class and how it is defined. For example, Marx defined class as being rooted in relations of production under capitalism (Wright: 2003) and highlighted the fundamental division of labour. These divisional boundaries have become obscured with the plethora of employment opportunities in a wide range of sectors. Therefore, if this division by class is obsolete, class may be better defined in the way it was by Weber; as a function of market power, expressed through property markets (for example housing) and, under this framework, an individual’s ability to generate wealth through the accumulation of property (Schucksmith: 2012). Yet this is also problematic because it fails to consider other characteristics in the accumulation of property (for example rural/urban, living preferences and so on). The issue with both the theories of Marx and Weber is that they come across as reductionist, and typically prioritise employment and occupation over other social elements; these elements may include aspects of gender, race, ethnicity and age, which also appear to be fundamental components of the current social structural divisions of citizens in England.

In the 1980s, Bourdieu (1984) shifted the view of class away from these narrow views to a more theoretical one that encompasses cultural, social and symbolic capital (that is, capital accumulated as a direct result of honour, prestige, or other status within the community). With this argument, Bourdieu (1984) suggests that those with similar combinations of capital tend to occupy similar social spaces, making them likely to live in similar neighbourhoods and adopt similar lifestyles. Yet, while Bourdieu (1984) takes a different perspective on class which remains pertinent in the modern-day, the specifics of his theoretical approach are less valuable to the contemporary researcher. On the one hand, his divisions have been critiqued as overly theoretical and difficult to quantify, which makes the measure of social class inferior when attempting to assess social mixing. At the same time, the narrowness of his analysis and overarching approach of sociology has led it to be criticised by some as “social reductionism” (Jenkins, 2002, p.14).

Academics Savage and Hoggart (2015) would argue that the class system is becoming more prevalent with a vast and growing disparity in wealth and power between the “elite” and the “precariat”. The old distinctions between upper, middle and working class no longer hold true, necessitating a range of new intermediate groups that reflect the reality of social mobility for an enlarged lower-to-upper-middle class. Savage estimates that a super-wealthy class now represents about 6% of the population, with an average household income of £89,000 (Guardian: November 2015).

Just like the measure of class, other ‘common’ measures that differentiate people into stratified categories are just as problematic. For example, when considering inequality, which is sometimes related to class, additional issues arise. Inequality may mean something very different in rural areas than in urban ones. Furthermore, defining the thresholds for various levels of inequality is not consistent in the literature, largely because it is such a difficult measure when considering the national scale (Gamoran: 2010).

This perspective has not deterred others from seeking to identify universal characteristics of successful mixed communities. In their March 2006 report ‘Mixed Communities-Success and Sustainability’, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation sought to answer this question. Their key findings highlighted that, in essence, “whilst residents may not have developed personal friendships across tenures, they described their relationships as ‘civil’ and ‘polite’. There was no specific evidence of role-model effects or increased social capital” (p.21).

Given these complexities, for the purpose of this research the concept of tenure identification seemed most appropriate to investigate social structural issues amongst the community of investigation, rather than social class, as it creates a finite list of categories that participants can be delegated into. Considering the mix of tenure as the focus also creates a more accurate system of classification, as it relies less on participants to self-identify than other measures (for example, as “middle-class” or “working-class”). Yet, while tenure is the most suitable concept to operationalise this research, it also allows for other concepts to be investigated as subsequent measures, making it both a simple and versatile option.

The also study acknowledges that, following Savage and Hoggart’s (2015) argument, that the class system is becoming more prevalent in contemporary society but also class means different things in different contexts. Such debates will be considered in relation to social inequality and the unequal access to resources that are made particularly visible in relation to housing developments. West Green is a critical case study for such a debate as it has been consciously designed to address issues of social inequality by considering the housing needs of a range of households with varying income levels. Such an approach to housing development, where access to resources, particularly to ‘green’ outside space is given equally to a broad range of people, will be critically examined in this study to understand who benefits. However, it will also be conscious of the fact that housing here is available at different price points and properties are of different sizes, to suit a range of families and so access to all housing resources are not the same. As part of this debate ‘tenure prejudice’ (Costa Santos et al., 2018) will further be critically examined.

The initiative in West Green is a new approach. Whether the focus on utilising environmental spaces encourages more social mix as well as making people “more green”, is the question that will be investigated in this thesis. Specifically, it poses the following questions: ‘Has West Green made people greener?' and ‘Does West Green promote social mixing?' In the next section, key policy changes in relation to mixed communities and their impact within the UK will be examined.

## 2.1.6 Policy approaches to ‘mixed communities’ in the UK

In order to answer the research question, ‘Does West Green promote social mixing?’, it is important to understand the political landscape and social policy approaches that have been undertaken concerning ‘mixed communities’ and their effectiveness. There have been a number of policy developments in the UK, which have broadly tackled the concept of ‘mixed’ communities.

Though the extensive slum clearance of the 1950s through to early 1960s brought about wide-ranging changes to urban policy, it was the use of area-based initiatives (ABI) in the late 1960s that looked to specifically tackle social deprivation. ABIs were viewed as important means of democratic renewal and community engagement but some have argued that this initiative portrayed a diversion from more fundamental policies in tackling the root causes of inequality and deprivation (Lupton and Tunstall: 2008).

The Page Report (1993) brought to the fore public debate surrounding the need to have ‘balanced communities’ and, with that, high profile initiatives such as the City Challenge which was launched by John Major’s government in 1991, calling on local authorities to bid for funds to renew areas of deprivation. There was a realisation that physical and social regeneration were dependent on each other and these needed to be tackled in unison. However, it was not until 1994 that the Conservative government launched its Single Regeneration Budget (SRB), which raised the profile of ‘mixed and balanced’ communities on the political agenda. The requirement for local partnership working, coupled with understanding local need, paved the development for some £5.5 billion to be invested in local regeneration projects over the next seven years. However, critics of this approach highlighted that private-led partnership bids. Rather than local authority or local voluntary sector bids, tended to be more successful, resulting in aid shifting away from the most deprived areas to those not necessarily in need of investment (Robson, 1994).

It was, therefore, suggested by many observers that SRB needed to be more sensitive to the necessities of local communities. For example, Shiner and Nevin (1993) suggest that a national agency for community regeneration, supported by local community regeneration units within local authorities, may have been a better way of distributing the funds available.

It was the New Labour government in 1997 that took up the mantle of ‘mixed communities’ with most vigour and further encouraged its evolution into policies through a series of high profile initiatives. The Urban Task Force report in 1999 explicitly highlighted ‘mixed communities’ as a core part of the equation for sustainable communities, outlining the need to embrace and integrate both people and homes to make successful communities. The New Deal for Communities (NDC) programme launched in 1998 was also designed to enable programmes to deliver initiatives, which involved maximum community involvement.

The NDC programme embraced the Cabinet Office’s Social Exclusion Unit definition of effective neighbourhood renewal;

*“Neighbourhood renewal starts from a proper understanding of the needs of communities. Communities need to be consulted and listened to, and the most effective interventions are often those where communities are actively involved in their design and delivery, and where possible in the driving seat” (ODPM: 1998: p.12).*

Other notable policies and initiatives used to shape the sustainable communities agenda included ‘Towards an Urban Renaissance’ (1999) by the Urban Task Force; the Urban White Paper, ‘Our Towns and Cities’ (2000); and ‘The Future-Delivering an Urban Renaissance’ (2000). According to Raco (2007), these policies laid the foundation for the focus on sustainability and sustainable communities throughout the 2000s.

The accumulation of all these programmes led to the government publishing its Mixed Communities Initiative (MCI) in 2005, which was part of New Labour’s 5-year plan for the delivery of ‘sustainable communities’. The main difference of this plan compared to previous plans was that it took a holistic approach to sustainability.

This programme therefore consisted of four key components;

* a commitment to the transformation of areas with concentrated poverty, to provide better housing environment, higher employment, better education, less crime and higher educational achievements;
* initiate changes in the housing stock and attract new populations, whilst improving opportunities for existing populations;
* financial development by recognising the value of publicly owned land and other public assets; and
* integrating government policies to produce a holistic approach, which is sustainable through mainstream funding.

Initially, the MCI was delivered through twelve demonstration projects situated in the most deprived neighbourhoods in the UK. However, more recently new ‘mixed community’ developments have emerged without demonstration project status and, as such, have become a central approach to area regeneration as part of governmental policy (Silverman et al.: 2006). There have been criticisms of the MCI approach, most notably that “mixed communities do not address the deep and persistent poverty and inequality question facing many individuals, families and neighbourhoods, nor does it stand alone in improving people’s life chances and opportunities… social change is complex and there are no fix solutions - there are still gaps in our knowledge” (Unwin in Joseph Rowntree Foundation: 2007: p viii).

Mixed housing communities attempt to amalgamate people from a wide range of social classes, diversifying the community through race/ethnicity, income level and lifestyle preferences. This can be a uniquely challenging task. From a municipal planning perspective, socially mixed housing appears to offer a reduction in concentrated poverty (that is, spreading poverty over a larger area rather than reducing the total number of impoverished individuals). The outcome, in some instances, is simply an expansion of urban ghetto-isation, rather than the creation of a diverse community divested from social stigma (Lees: 2012). Furthermore, whether these communities are truly ‘mixed’ may be questioned as, in some instances, individuals of lower socioeconomic status are encouraged to modify their behaviour to better fit in with the middle class and the corresponding social norms.

In this way, we see evident of a ‘middle class bias’ where the behaviours of a wider range of society are ignored and the behaviours of the middle class becomes dominant, particularly through media bias.

Further critics of the policy notion of ‘mixed communities’ are many (Kearns and Mason: 2006; Tunstall and Lupton: 2007; Cheshire: 2007). As Dean and Hasting (2006) explain;

*“What is the main purpose of mix communities? Is the aim to help people in British society to ‘get along’ with others from backgrounds other than their own? ... or is mixing housing tenures a means to achieve greater social integration of diverse and advantage/disadvantaged groups… or is it regarded as a way to tackle problems of area stigmatisation or poor reputation that has developed in the UK in relation to social housing estates… is there a definite answer?” (p.664).*

This is a particularly poignant issue when considering the issues associated with mixed housing initiatives. Conforming to dominant social norms can make some individuals feel inferior in their surroundings and seek changes primarily to better ‘fit’ into the community (Laurence: 2009). From the UK perspective, this change in behaviour evokes the overt paternalism of those who sought urban reforms in the nineteenth century. While there has been significant research on the conformation to social norms in mixed communities (Satton: 2010), some mixed communities have a unique feature or purpose that may have the ability to draw the focus away from socio-economic status and on to other issues. One of the ways that this can be achieved is through lifestyle preferences; communities that are focused on achieving a common goal may be more flexible on other aspects of diversification.

This may hold true where the focus is on living a greener lifestyle. In this instance, the focus moves away from the social norms into social issues and, perhaps, something that everyone seeking to reside in that community is willing to engage effort in. By switching the focus to social issues, such as greener living, there is an opportunity for mixed communities to focus less on inequality and more on other broader issues. Yet, because it is easier to focus on issues surrounding social norms (i.e. socio-economic status), less is known about how such wider social issues affect people in a mixed community.

As a result of the lack of research on these wider social issues, there is a need to pursue this topic. For example by asking questions such as, does the nature of a social issue, such as being green, encourage social mixing within the community? Or does this enable policymakers to avoid their responsibility at addressing social inequality? Secondly, does social mixing create more cohesiveness amongst one another? This research suggests that addressing such questions would allow policymakers insight into how best to design future communities when considering the larger social issues, equality, and diversity.

### 2.1.7 Have ‘mixed communities’ worked?

Critics of the policy notion of ‘mixed communities’ are many and include Kearns and Mason (2006), Tunstall and Lupton (2007), as well as Cheshire (2007). Wilkinson (1996) argues that the question about ‘mixed communities’ policy relates in essence to who benefits, or more specifically who gains from it. Wilkinson (1996) goes on to explain that social gains from mixing are primarily aimed to advantage those on low income and social renting households living in areas with owner and higher-income residents, however, this overall premise has its limitations.

Firstly, Arthurson (2010) argues that the difficulties in fostering the requisite social contract between social renting households and homeowners, in order to actualise the benefit of the integration, are difficult to achieve. In recent studies of three social housing estates in Scotland, Kintrea and Atkinson (Atkinson: 1998; Kintrea, 2000) observed that, compared to middle-income homeowners, lower-income social housing residents were more likely to spend more time at home. Homeowners carried out most of their activities outside their home and, therefore, felt more detached. Secondly, the negative impact of social inequality can impact on lower-income families, as they observe and interact with higher status households enjoying privileges which they can only aspire to, possibly resulting in feelings of envy and inferiority amongst the social housing households.

The evidence base for mixing tenure remains fragmented and insubstantial according to Graham et al (2007);

*“A clear problem for those who consistently asked for more socially diverse communities as the basis for sustainability and social equity is that this position has relied on the intuitive rather than the explicit evidence base…research points directly at complex causative processes capable of generating negative as well as positive outcomes. This will remain a challenge to policymakers who might see socially mixed communities as some kind of answer to urban problems” (p.142).*

Social mix policies rely very much on a common set of beliefs about the benefits of ‘mixed communities’, with little or no evidence to support them, and a growing evidence base which contradicts the precepts embedded in social mix policies that should make policymakers take note (Lee: 2008).

One of the harshest critics of ‘mixed communities’ policy is economist Paul Cheshire (2008), who advocates that attempting to treat or reduce deprivation by socially engineering neighbourhoods is treating the symptoms of inequality and not the cause. Cheshire also believes that social mix policies are cosmetic policies, rather than ones which are prepared to deal with the stark reality of why there is a concentration of poor and economically inactive people in our cities. For example, “in the UK research indicates that fuel poverty is prevalent amongst the following household types: those in rented accommodation, single people (both of working age and retirement age), lone parent households, those who are economically inactive, low income households, benefit recipients, and households containing one or more persons with a long term illness or disability (Baker et al 2003: Fahmy et al.; 2011: DECC: 2012a). Social inequality cannot be eliminated through spatial mixing of socially diverse households in neighbourhoods, since exclusion and poverty are mostly related to unemployment, job creation and training as well as saving and improving social and affordable housing. Therefore, if governments adequately tackled these problems rather than undertaking social engineering efforts, society would be much fairer and equitable (Ley: 2012).

A more damning view highlights that social mix policies destroy moral authority as the middle classes or middle-income households are grouped as a natural category, whilst the working class or low-income groups are demonised (Lee: 2008). Or, if people prefer to live with people like themselves, then there shouldn’t be an onus for people to mix as ultimately this will fail; rather, the possibility of mixing should remain open and not dictated to people (Atkinson: 2006).

Overall, the debate surrounding ‘mixed communities’ has been somewhat varied. The indecisiveness of its achievements has paved the way for critics to unpack and unravel the concept. Nevertheless, consecutive governments have found merit in continually taking it forward.

This thesis will use the definition coined by the Labour government (1997) as part of their ‘sustainable communities’ agenda, to which the concept of ‘mixed communities’ was central. There it is described as “a well-integrated mix of decent homes of different types and tenures, to support a range of households sizes, ages and incomes” (ODPM: 2003: p.5). As this research is examining the connection within housing and tenureship, this overall definition seems to reflect most notably what is core to the research. However, can adding a ‘green’ dimension to “mixed” housing developments, such as that at West Green, possibly change or add to the definition?

### 2.2. The ‘green’ agenda and the impact on housing development

Local authorities and builders, as well as planners, have needed to consider more thoroughly how housing developments can better utilise space, both internally within the home as well as in outside spaces and features. This heightened interest in the ‘green’ agenda, combined with the drive to support and encourage social mixing, is a relatively new phenomenon but, nevertheless, a crucial one. How these two aspects of green housing and social mixing complement each other in encouraging community cohesion is an important narrative that will be explored next in this thesis.

As discussed above, over the last 60 years, consecutive governments have been preoccupied with the notion of improving social cohesion and social mix, especially within new housing estates (Parkinson: 2010). More recently, there has been a demand that new housing developments should support a holistic approach to living, ensuring both sustainability and quality of life is enjoyed and made accessible for everyone (Scottal: 2011). Complementing this approach, particularly within the last 10 to 15 years, is the increasing emphasis on an ecological and environmentally friendly approach (ibid). This push partly came about due to international commitments made in recognition of the impact of climate change, but also the acknowledgement of the depletion of the traditional natural resources used for housing construction (Reid and Houston: 2012).

The following section of the literature review will examine the ‘pinch points’, which led to these changes and consider the implications of these developments for future house building. It will also explore the debate around ‘green’ behaviours and their relationship, if any; to social background (see section 2.2.8).

A number of important turning points in social history have heavily influenced the direction of travel and enabled housing policies to come to fruition. However, despite the obvious popular appeal of many environmental demands, the translation of such popularity into populist forms of politics that build broader political projects and alliances has been far from unproblematic for the environmental movement in the UK. Collective action problems, the prevalence of ‘Nimbyism’, the difficulties in articulating environmental demands into coherent political programmes, have all conspired to impede the construction of political projects, coalitions and alliances that could sustain demands for a better environment, and which could influence the framing, passing and implementation of more environmentally friendly public policies (Griggs and Howarth: 2007). In the case of housing and the environment, it was the culmination of a series of international, national and local measures highlighting the importance of environmental issues and the subsequent consequences that led to a number of high profiled initiatives and policies to ultimately be developed.

The publication of *‘*Our Common Future’ (more popularly known as the Brundtland Report) in 1987 helped to generate interest in the idea and introduce the concept of sustainable development.

The report emphasised the importance of a rounded approach to sustainability considering environmental, social and economic factors within this approach. As Agyeman eloquently states, “... sustainability ... cannot be simply a ‘green’ or ‘environmental’ concern … a truly sustainable society is one where wider questions of social needs and welfare, and economic opportunity are integrally related to environmental limits imposed by supporting ecosystems” (2002: p.45).

The Brundtland Report proved an important turning point, leading to a number of other key events to address climate change and sustainability. These included the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), an international environmental treaty adopted in May 1992. The UNFCCC treaty was a method to “stabilise” greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level, which would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system. Its framework set out non-binding limits on greenhouse gas emissions for individual countries" (Scarto: 1999: p.123). Other key events to address climate change and sustainability included the United Nations Conferences on the Environment and Development in 1992 at Rio de Janerio and in 1997 at Kyoto as well as the United Nations Habitat II Conference in Istanbul in 1996. More recently, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has assessed the science related to climate change providing political leaders with periodic scientific assessments concerning climate change, its implications and risks as well as publishing technical and socio-economic information concerning climate change, its potential effects and options for adaptation and mitigation on a regular basis.

In parallel, the development of environmental policy within the European Union added pressure on member states to act to improve their environmental performances. This pressure has not eased in recent years, despite some political obstacles, including the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement.

As a result of these international pledges, the UK government committed itself to a number of environmental sustainability policies including a number specific to housing (DETR: 1998);

* Specific action on tackling global warming by reducing CO2 emissions such as the Home Energy & Conservation Act 1995;
* Action to tackle key environmental problems at a local scale through Local Agenda 21 (a strategy and action programme for implementing sustainable development at a local level). Local authorities have an enabling responsibility to develop and implement policies that promote sustainable development;
* Promoting sustainable development through the town and country planning system;
* UK Committee on Climate Change sets carbon targets for the whole of the UK and has recommended a net zero emissions goal by 2050 at the latest, which the UK government has adopted.

It is argued that both housing and environmental agendas need to be linked more strongly together for them to be progressively purposeful (Brown and Bhatti: 2010). The slow response from the construction industry to Agenda 21 and the bureaucratic nature of planning policy highlighted both the lack of awareness and limited engagement leading to lacklustre progression within the sector at first. It was the Code for Sustainable Homes (2006), however, that proved to offer the intrinsic link between housing and construction. The Code was introduced to “drive the step-change in sustainable home building practice” (Code for Sustainable Homes: 2006: p.2).

The Code provided a single national standard for home designers and builders alike and formed the basis for building regulations in relation to nine different design categories;

**Table 1: Building regulations in relation to nine different design categories**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **1** | **Energy/CO2** | **2** | **Pollution** | **3** | **Water** |
| **4** | **Health and well-being** | **5** | **Materials** | **6** | **Management** |
| **7** | **Surface water runoff** | **8** | **Ecology** | **9** | **Waste** |

(Code for Sustainable Homes: 2006)

The Code was wide in its ambition to consider a holistic approach for future house building as the UK government wanted to demonstrate its international commitments locally. Though the Code covered nine categories, it was primarily the energy and water efficiency categories which required higher levels of sustainability performance for dwellings to reach the upper Code rating.

Zero carbon and low carbon housing developments, such as the BASF House in Nottingham, the Creo House in London or even the Lilac co-housing Project in Leeds were all examples of developments achieving high code ratings by illustrating their credentials through the use of materials and equally by reducing energy consumption through systems such as space-saving air source heat pumps, solar water heating, low-energy lighting systems and photo-voltaic power generation systems (Toynbee: 2011).

Although the Code was welcomed for its simplification of the procedural requirements on developers and builders, there were also key rebuttals to the Code as to its impact on carbon emission and behavioural change. Seyfang (2010) argues that “technological fixes to homes to reduce carbon emissions did not necessarily encourage changes in household behaviours of the magnitude required to prevent the impact needed” (p.265). Recent research has also highlighted that occupants of low-energy buildings often bypassed environmentally friendly solutions (uninstalling devices that impede water flow from shower heads) in order to prevent the curtailment of their activities (Reid and Houston: 2012). Moreover, it has been acknowledged that, whilst the interaction of householders with smart technologies have had some impact on levels of performance and delivered initial savings, there remains a considerable risk, insofar as this detracts from the need to engage wider society in the debate about lifestyle change. Reid and Houston (2012) go on to highlight that “the removal of the householder from the process of designing and constructing zero-carbon developments has extenuated this phenomenon and reiterates the need for more analysis of the social and cultural embeddedness of behaviour and technology” (p.132). This aspect particularly highlights the need for future research in this area.

There is also a lack of research related to the type of people who typically tend to shy away from technological fixes in the household and the reasons why people tend to behave in a certain way. For example, there is some evidence that there are areas of particular dissatisfaction which lead homeowners to make certain non-green choices. In one example, homeowners and homebuilders were concerned that home valuations did not take into account various green initiatives in the home (Leung et al.: 2013). They noted that very few home buyers were willing to pay a premium for green initiatives within the home and, therefore, there was no particular benefit from making significant financial contributions to green measures. While this was the main finding, homeowners and renters did acknowledge that, if the green initiatives already existed within the home and the initiative saved them considerable money in the longer term, the green initiative was worth the investment. The same study found that, as homeowners’ ages increased, their interest in the implementation or use of green technology in the home declined (Leung et al.: 2013).

In terms of mixed tenure, the views of renters were different from the views of homeowners. Renters indicated that they found the environmentally friendly in-home options to be preferable to homes that did not have such options (Maller and Horne, 2011). The justification by renters for such a response largely hinged on the reduction in energy bills as a result of these green initiatives. The difference between the views of renters and homeowners is not surprising, largely because renters do not have to concern themselves with the initial financial outlay of incorporating certain green features, but still get to enjoy the rewards of savings. However, in some cases, rent is often higher for ‘greener’ homes. In addition, renters typically have less financial stability than homeowners (Balta-Ozkan et al.: 2014), and the benefits of saving money on energy bills can have a larger overall effect on this population.

Another issue consistently demonstrated in the literature is the confusion in terminology surrounding green initiatives (Hostetler and Noiseux: 2010). The existing research generally suggests that consumers were confused about terms such as ‘zero carbon homes’ and ‘greywater recycling’. In a recent study, less than half of the respondents indicated that they understood such terminology. This was more prevalent among older adults (Sonnet: 2010).

The implications of this outcome are significant because, if occupants are unfamiliar with the terminology, they are also likely to be unaware of the benefits associated with such initiatives. This confusion can lead occupants to shy away from the implementation of such green options. Furthermore, not only is the terminology confusing but certain financial incentives offered by the government are confusing or not well advertised (Cohen: 2014). Some residential occupants may simply be unaware of the value in converting to green initiatives because they have not been made aware of such programming. Between 1990 and 2018, carbon dioxide emissions from the residential sector reduced by 16% (Department for Energy, Business & Industrial Strategy, 2018). Between 2017 and 2018, however, an increase of 2.8% (1.8 Mt) was recorded for residential emissions. In 2018, the residential sector emitted 65.9 MtCO2, accounting for 18% of all carbon dioxide emissions in the UK (Department for Energy, Business & Industrial Strategy: 2018). The increases in emissions from the residential sector are partly explained by colder weather in the first quarter of 2018 when compared to the previous year.

After the temperature has been adjusted for, there was a 1.5% or 1.1Mt reduction in residential emissions (Department for Energy, Business & Industrial Strategy: 2018). The main source of emissions from the residential sector has been the use of natural gas for heating and cooking and, as a caveat, emissions estimates do not include electricity-generated emissions as these are incorporated into the energy supply sector. Based on the above findings, there are still significant issues with the link between green technology and how homeowners and renters incorporate this technology in their own living.

Yet, housing plays a key role in terms of human impact on the environment, with recent sociologically informed perspectives highlighting housing as being instrumental in the way that humans interact with the environment, and part of a larger process of negotiation between the self and wider environment (Stern: 2006). According to Ball, the home is “better thought of as a process than a product” (Ball: 2002: p. 426), thus the technocentric perspective of housing fails to recognise houses as lived environments.

The launch of the Sustainability Development Strategy (SDS) in 2005 was, in part, to provide the ‘social’ element to complement the Code for Sustainable Homes. It acknowledged through its goals that “a strong economy and decent homes in places with clean, safe and green public spaces where people are able to lead healthy lives and enjoy the environment is where they want to live … this helps create sustainable communities as well as tackle environmental inequalities” (p.4). The SDS previous policy initiatives such as the Government’s Green Paper on Housing (DETR and DSS: 2000) aimed to “offer everyone the opportunity of a decent home and to promote social cohesion, wellbeing, self- dependence and sustainability” (p.6). However, as Brown and Bhatti (2010) comment, the failure of such initiatives lies partly with having no one in charge, as each stakeholder had their own agenda for involvement. There was, however, an acknowledgement within the SDS that dialogues must involve local residents and tenants, empowering local communities through a bottom-up approach as well as housing providers, developers and local authorities to ensure the principal feature of sustainable development is adhered to.

Though attaining the right balance between eco-construction and sustainability can be both costly and timely, there have been many successful projects. The combination of the Code and the SDS has led to a number of new zero-carbon housing developments such as Springhill Cohousing in Gloucestershire, Lightmore near Telford and Slateford Green Housing in Edinburgh. These boast the authenticity of robust construction as well as ensuring close partnership working with *all* key stakeholders was observed to deliver successful developments (Toynbee: 2011). All the schemes also have key amenities either on site or nearby, such as local shops, community centre, schools and nurseries, play areas and green spaces, all of which enable families and households to enjoy their environment. Saunders and Beck (2010) comment that, in new housing developments, whether ecologically focussed or not, “the importance of liking where you live and being proud of where you live is as important as the house itself” (p.76). This balance between the Code and SDS became unsettled a few years ago, however, due to the scrapping of the Code for Sustainable Homes and incorporating the rules on energy efficiency into the Building Regulations, confirmed by the government in March 2015.

The move was regarded as part of the re-organisation of housing regulatory reform with a view to reducing housing regulation by as much as 90% (Inside House: 2015), with the hope that this would encourage increased rates of building. The government claimed many of the policies contained within the Code for Sustainable Homes were already duplicated by other regulatory regimes or the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The demise of the Code has provoked a mixed reception from the housing sector, as well as developers, with many claiming it will lead to a drop in standards and, perversely, result in a more complicated system.

Andrew Eagles, former Chief Executive for Sustainable Homes, stated at the time;

*“The Code is a relatively simple and effective framework for sustainable housing, which has been successful at improving the baseline for housing in the UK. There are many elements, such as health, wellbeing and ecology, which will be lost with the new Building Regulations” (Inside Housing: March 2015: p.17).*

Pelsmaker (2015) reiterates these concerns;

*“If ministers are using consolidation as an excuse to lower standards and ambitions, particularly related to fabric energy efficiency standards and other sustainability targets, such as ecology, water use and waste minimisation, then this government will leave a dire legacy” (Energy Institute: March 2015: p.21).*

There are also concerns about the gap between the Code and Building Regulations, which will become more established. Stakeholders have echoed the view that ecological issues currently considered by the Code will not easily fit into the Building Regulations framework.

These tend to be those which pertain directly to the empowering of local councils and individual choice, and it is feared that losing the Code would result in a ‘one size fits all’ approach to residential construction (Peterson: 2014: Shorter: 2015):

*“The Code was put in place for a reason – namely, to encourage the building of sustainable properties and their environment and to set a clear direction and momentum out of which future standards could arise. Without the Code, it is feared that such momentum would be lost and that standards across the board would slip, at great detriment to prospective homeowners” (Ecopreneurist: 2014).*

The important link between building greener homes and the impact on building structures has been one which has highlighted some tension in recent years. The association between these two areas does, however, lends itself to an underlining connection which is becoming more noticeable and needs to be developed and investigated further. By moving this argument on to the next stage by asking whether social background has an impact on embracing green(er) practices, the next section provides a critical overview of mainly the sociological literature that seeks to address normative questions about the linkages between social background and green behaviour.

### 2.2.1 Environmental concerns and ‘green’ behaviour

Adopting green attitudes is a step forward but it is ultimately meaningless unless these attitudes translate into altered behaviours. The disconnect between beliefs and actions has been one of the key challenges faced by the environmental movement, which has succeeded in convincing large portions of the population of the merits of environmental responsibility, but has often failed to secure the ‘joined-up thinking’ and behaviour change requiring these views to significantly affect lifestyle choices (see for example Alcock et al: 2017). One of the main underlying questions surrounding the desire for individuals to act more environmentally is: what is the motivation behind the adoption of certain ‘green’ behaviours?

There are various studies that seek to address this question through the lens of various facets of social theory and social psychology. Stern and Dietz (1994), for example, have proposed a Value-Belief-Norm (VBN) theory, which postulates that environmental concern and green behaviours are determined by the set of values of an individual which includes but is not limited to altruism.

The basic tenets of VBN theory are that people’s attitudes about the environment are a function of their egoistic values (the value they ascribe to themselves) or biospheric values (the value they place on plants or animals). Schultz (2001) counters the propositions put forward by Stern and Dietz (1994) by suggesting that it is not norms and values that fundamentally determine attitudes about the environment but rather, a collection of valued objects. Dietz et al. (2005), drawing from Stern and Dietz (1994), similarly emphasises that altruistic values underpin environmental behaviour. This proposition is expanded by Brieger (2018) who adopts a comparatively macro-level perspective through the concept of social identity.

Brieger (2018) investigates the nexus between social identity and environmental concern and argues that “the effect of social identity on environmental concern unfolds its power not primarily as an individual attribute as recent research has shown but rather as a central element of culture” (p.2). He goes on to argue that, overarchingly, it is “an individual’s identification with a higher social unit which strengthens individual group attitudes and cohesion, group empathy and solidarity, and, in consequence, the willingness to make economic sacrifices to protect the environment in the interest of the group’s welfare” (ibid). Based on this proposition, he suggests that one examine a country’s social prevalence of social identity as a microcosm for gaining a nuanced understanding of variances in environmental concern. Thus, it is fundamentally an investigation of the social factors that underpin environmental concern not being limited to a micro-level analysis, as is typical in the case of some of the studies reviewed above but focusing on country-level manifestations of social identity. These, he argues, create an overarching mental climate within which individuals are encouraged to engage in environmentally responsible and green behaviours (Brieger: 2018). Importantly, Brieger’s (2018) conceptualisation of social identity here is contextually distinct from individuals’ personal social identity.

His suggestion that a macro-level social identity influences environmental concern is based on two propositions (Brieger: 2018). Firstly, he argues that societies characterised by strong group bonding enable individuals to conceptualise common interests as their personal interests and, consequently, they are more sensitive to the collective welfare of the social group to which they belong. Thus, they are motivated to engage in green behaviours in the interests of those social groups.

Secondly, he proposes that individuals are not driven by their own interests when seeking the collective welfare of the group. Rather, they are driven by an inherent duty to their social group, which is an innate feature of societies with strong social identities (Brieger: 2018). In this way, these influence and sanction specific behaviours that either promote or undermine environmentally responsible behaviours. For this reason, he argues that “country-level manifestations of social identity are, thus, an important cultural element that sets the rules for what is morally right and wrong. If group belonging and, as a consequence of it, group empathy and solidarity are the norm, it evokes pressure on its members to be willing to protect the environment in the group’s interest. That is why an individual not only wants to protect the environment but also feels compelled to do so” (Brieger: 2018: p.3). Ultimately, at the core of Brieger’s (2018) argument is the notion that there is a dichotomy between internal and external motivations that fuse together to inspire environmentally conscious behaviour in the interest of a higher social unit.

Brieger’s (2018) analysis, while critical, is insufficient for explaining why individuals in societies where social identity is prevalent and where there is an overarching agenda of environmentalism do not all demonstrate green behaviour. There is the implicit and erroneous assumption that behaviour is homogenised and a further unrealistic expectation that all individuals will conform to the norms of the social unit by virtue of group solidarity and group identity. This same critique can be applied to studies which posit humanistic altruism as a motivator of green behaviours in individuals. It is as a result of these limitations that scholars such as Schultz and Zelezny (1999) focus on micro-level values and how they relate to environmental attitudes.

Milfont and Gouveia (2006) have argued that individuals who have higher biospheric and altruistic values tend to be more environmentally concerned, while Schultz and Stone (1994) similarly proposed that some individuals have higher value orientations which cause them to have a higher degree of morality that influences them to be more environmentally conscious. Axelrod and Lehman (1993) suggest that those with more profound intrinsic values believe that their behaviours will make a difference and thus engage in environmentally conscious behaviour.

Theories, such as the theory of normative conduct proposed by Cialdini et al. (1990), however, converge with Breiger’s (2018) propositions. Cialdini et al. (1990) are of the view that group approval serves as a form of motivation that encourages people to engage in behaviours on the basis of established norms. Several social factors have been discussed in the literature in relation to environmental concern and environmentally conscious behaviour. This includes the work of Heath and Gifford (2006) who argue that individuals who believe in free-market principles and place their faith in technology, and its purported ability to solve environmental problems, tend not to have a high degree of environmental concern. Similar conclusions have been reached by Schultz and Stone (2002) who argue that individuals who hold conservative political views have less environmental concern. The evidence for such links are, however, limited. More importantly, such studies largely ignore the various ways in which the varied values held by individuals may conflict or interact to shape their environmental views. There is also literature on ‘attitude-behaviour gap’ which (in part) argues that existing infrastructures such as car dependency for many daily activities such as commuting to work, organising child care, shopping and leisure activities, find public transport options too expensive, unreliable or inconvenient. In addition, the lack of financial incentives, such as no carbon tax, cars often being cheaper than trains etc, get in the way of people’s good intentions and values (Buchs: 2018). Thus, the mismatch between people’s values and their actions is evident.

Political consumption, however, is widely assumed to have a positive relationship with civic and political engagement (Stolle, Hooghe, and Micheletti: 2005; Zukin et al.: 2006; Strømsnes: 2009; Baek: 2010; Ward and de Vreese: 2010; Newman and Bartels: 2011; Gil de Zúñiga, Copeland and Bimber: 2014) allowing citizens to express and enact their civic norms and ideals outside the traditional role of the dutiful citizen.

Political consumption, the conscious decision to buy or avoid products and services for ethical, environmental, or political reasons (Stolle, et al.: 2005), is closely tied to political communication. On one hand, it is a vehicle for individuals to communicate their civic and political values and preferences (Stolle and Micheletti: 2013). By selecting products that carry pro-social markers, such as FairTrade coffee, consumers are able to signal their civic orientations and communicate their own pro-sociality. On the other hand, political consumption also offers individuals the means to challenge and protest what they see as uncivic or socially irresponsible brands. Through discursive political consumption, individuals can promote deliberation and communication about corporate political and social responsibility (Stolle and Micheletti: 2013), thereby bringing the marketplace and consumer behaviour squarely into the domain of politics.

Gender differences can also go some way to explaining differences in environmental behaviours. However, the research findings are conflicting and, thus, inconclusive. Scannell and Gifford (2013), as well as Luchs and Mooradian (2012), for example, suggest that women have stronger environmental behaviours than men. Gender differentiation in environmental behaviour has also been established across various age groups except in China, where Xiao and Hong (2010) found that women exhibit environmentally conscious behaviours only with regards to domestic practices, such as recycling. In contexts outside of the home, however, they found that no gender differentiations were evident (Xiao and Hong: 2010). With regards to the question of what motivates the adoption of certain green behaviours, the answer, based on the findings in the literature, seems far from conclusive.

While the studies referred to in this section focus on the motivations that underpin environmentally conscious behaviour, for the most part, the literature is skewed towards discussions about why an individual may *refuse* to adopt certain initiatives. In the following section, a more nuanced discussion of a non-exhaustive range of motivations and/or factors is covered and linked to the broader literature discussed above. These factors include; the impact of ‘image’ and peer pressure; individual responsibility and understanding; financial barriers and consistency; and inertia. The section will then go on to consider how policymakers can take advantage of these influences to encourage the adoption of green practices.

### 2.2.2 Image and peer pressure

Considering other alternatives to the motivation for residents to adopt various ‘green’ initiatives, Ozaki (2011) suggests that image might also play a role in this type of choice. He argues that social environments are highly important in forming the values that people create, and he further suggests that innovations, with respect to environmental options, are sometimes able to change the values that exist within a certain community. In his research, Ozaki (2011) highlights the idea of peer pressure and recognises that certain individuals may be more likely to adopt green initiatives if they see it as ‘trendy’ or as a common social norm for their area. As more people view these social norms and take up similar behaviours, the trend grows and develops to become commonplace. These types of actions have an overall impact on communities, such as those that are under investigation in this study, because people in smaller communities who are invested in a certain way of life are establishing obvious social norms within the community, thus encouraging certain kinds of behaviours as commonplace. Ozaki’s (2011) propositions converge with the broad literature on social norms and how they influence environmentally conscious behaviour via common values in the interest of a higher social unit. Cialdini et al. (1990) for example, within this framework, suggested that group approval serves as a form of motivation that encourages people to engage in behaviours on the basis of established norms.

Although the findings by Ozaki (2011) were based on a relatively small study and did not necessarily provide generalisable findings within the UK, his conclusions are well supported by previous research. There are a few other studies which indicate that peer pressure might play a role in the adoption of specific practices, including residential energy use (Gram-Hanssen: 2011), adoption of new environmental technologies (Ropke: 2001) and consumption in general (Georg, 1999).

### 2.2.3 Individual responsibility and understanding

In order to translate an abstract concern for the environment into concerted action and lifestyle adjustments, it is necessary that the individual or household in question has both a sense of personal responsibility for the issue and an understanding of how they can respond to this sense of responsibility effectively.

According to the literature, an individual is more likely to make environmentally conscious choices if they feel that the choices they are making will be valued or will contribute to the larger global impact. Some of these choices may be quite simple (for example, cutting up the plastic rings on plastic bottle holders so that marine life will not get caught), while other choices are more complex (for example, the use of green technology to conserve energy, water and so on). Yet, when the feelings of support for environmental initiatives becomes too overwhelming, an individual may feel helpless in the light of overall global effort and may not engage with environmentally conscious behaviours in the same way.

Even where this engagement and sense of responsibility does exist, it is wasted without proper education as to how green lifestyle choices can be implemented. The amount of environmental information available in certain areas has been found to be, at least moderately, linked to environmentally conscious behaviours (Rhode and Ross: 2008). This link has also been shown to become stronger in areas where the information provided is very specific. This means that, for example, a marketing campaign that encourages recycling is likely to be less effective than a targeted campaign (e.g. encouraging people to turn off the lights when leaving their home). These campaigns are often most effective in relation to the groups identified above. Therefore, demographics have some role in how environmentally conscious a person or household is likely to be. Neighbourhoods that are exposed to environmentally targeted marketing may also benefit from the desire to assimilate into the community, and by simply communicating with neighbours or consciously, or unconsciously, viewing environmental actions within the area may encourage overall positive trends in certain aspects. Up until this point, however, there has not been enough research on actively green communities and the implications of living in such an area.

### 2.2.4 Financial barriers and consistency

A study by Whitmarsh and O’Neill (2010) suggests that shifts towards more environmental modes of behaviour could be grouped into ‘purchase decisions’ (i.e. shopping and re-use), ‘habits’ (household water and electricity conservation) and ‘recycling’. They suggest that, in the UK, there are spill-over effects that relate to these three areas (for example, an individual who purchases organic food is also more likely to consistently recycle). However, some environmental behaviours, such as the decision to purchase organic food, have a high financial cost to the individual or household and are, therefore, more likely to be carried out by households with higher income. Based upon this premise, Whitmarsh and O’Neill (2010) suggest that even behaviours that do not have additional costs associated with them are more likely to be consistently practised by more affluent households due to the incentive of consistency with other choices which do have a financial barrier. Conversely, if a household does not have the means to choose to eat organic produce, then consistency with this decision is a factor of little relevance when deciding whether to recycle. For these reasons, amongst others, a correlation can be identified between demographics/socio-economic status and environmentally conscious lifestyle choices.

### 2.2.5 Inertia

There are several reasons why individuals may show a lack of motivation towards 'green' choices or environmental issues. These reasons tend to lie within several themes including strategy, capacity, effort, and helplessness beliefs (Barber: 2010; Pelletier et al.: 1999). It has been reported that people are more concerned about environmental issues but that, if one of these themes becomes overwhelming, people choose to become inactive (ibid). Where such inertia prevails, the individual does not actively choose between options which are more or less environmentally responsible but automatically selects the choice which is most easily available. In these circumstances, the choice is essentially shifted to the market or to policymakers who attempt to manipulate it. Two obvious efforts that have been recently highlighted in the literature include the consideration of food packaging when making purchases and the use of kerbside recycling programmes.

With food packaging, those responsible for household decision making (in relation to food) are currently only moderately interested in making choices that have less food packaging or packaging that is recyclable. A recent study that surveyed shoppers found that 34% either rarely or never took food packaging into account when making grocery purchases. Another 50%, in the same study, suggested that they only sometimes took this into consideration (Tang and Bharmra: 2009).

A different study examined kerbside recycling. In this study, residents of communities with kerbside recycling programmes were 90% more likely to implement recycling strategies in the household than those without similar programs (Tang and Bharmra: 2009). These trends towards kerbside service use also hold true for other environmental programs, such as garden waste collection (i.e. grass cuttings, leaf services) and composting (i.e. food waste). Justification for this increase in use seems to relate to the convenience of an easy and routine collection service.

### 2.2.6 Policymaking

In light of the above, a key question for policymakers is how best to utilise the various different influences on behaviour to further the policy in question. According to Ekins (2003), there are three related features which can induce people to change their behaviour. Firstly, it is supposed that individual behaviour is responsive; hence the search for social, economic or psychological stimuli with which to trigger desired outcomes. Secondly, it is inferred it is a method of enquiry that revolves around the isolation and analysis of relevant 'factors' and, finally, it is assumed that human behaviour can be modified by restructuring the flow of information and incentives, or through education (Ekins: 2003).

Moving this line of enquiry further, Uusitalo (1990) and Moisander (1995) suggest that institutional, financial, or informational considerations are the main 'barriers' preventing people from being as 'green' as they say they want to be. Although they may be swayed by other considerations, the ability to compare the 'true' environmental costs of different courses of action is a necessary first step if consumers are to reduce the size of their ecological footprint.

Following this explanation, governments and other agencies have invested heavily in overcoming the barrier of 'popular ignorance' (Ekins: 2003) and in providing consumers with the information (labels, advice, etc) they need to act upon their environmental commitments. In the UK, for example, utilities have been involved in designing and seeking to quantify the effect of educational programmes, as part of their Energy Efficiency Commitment scheme. To simplify, consumers are positioned as key 'switches' in the environmental system. Efforts to isolate the determinants of consumer behaviour tend to rely upon economic theories of rational action.

Similarly, lifestyles are believed to reflect personal preferences and commitments, whether to 'the environment' or to goals like those of well-being, identity, and status. This kind of reasoning justifies strategies that inform consumers of the consequences of their actions and exhort them to behave differently. Either way, the individual (and his or her motivations) constitutes the primary unit of analysis and persuasion, which might also include taxation or regulation; the dominant policy tool (Shove: 2003).

In cases of inertia, the impact of policymaking may be even more profound for the reasons explored above. Conversely, however, this often means that minimal investment is required to change policy in a high impact way. Thaler and Sunstein (2008) set out in their landmark text on ‘nudge’ theory; the determinative effect which apparently insignificant policies and conditions can have on behaviour. The beauty of ‘nudges’ is that they do not require any degree of coercion or the removal of options, but rather implement *de minimis* changes that alter the ‘default’ option (that is, the path of least resistance which will generally be followed by an inert decision-maker). These insights are only just beginning to be harnessed by policymakers to influence decision making among the population and further environmental and other objectives (Cabinet Office: 2010; Service et al.: 2014).

One illustration of the implementation of ‘nudge’ policymaking in this area is the provision of financial incentives to encourage green lifestyle choices. This type of motivation might include financial incentives (e.g. returning bottles for a deposit), or it might include certain financial barriers (e.g. a free recycling program paired with a cost for the disposal of rubbish). In previous studies, the incentivising of environmental efforts was seen as somewhat problematic. The overarching problem here was that once the incentives were discontinued, environmental practices in that area returned to baseline levels.

In other studies, financial incentives had the potential to have an adverse impact on environmentally conscious behaviours (Ariel et al.: 2009) when considered over the long term, suggesting that this type of practice may not be the most practical when encouraging communities to take steps towards becoming more environmentally conscious.

## 2.2.7 Green behaviours and social background

The role of the environment in people’s lives has become a prominent focal point in everyday living. ‘Green’ behaviour is defined differently in different households and varies from the participation in community recycling/composting activities to living off the grid or the utilisation of renewable resources (for example solar, wind and so on).

It has already been suggested that, if green community programmes exist and are easily implemented in the home, the average resident is likely to be willing to participate (Tang and Bharmra: 2009). This does not, however, take into consideration people who are already invested in green living and want to reside in areas with others who share a similar mind set. People tend to relocate and migrate to areas where other people share similar interests. This is why certain postcodes in the UK that link to excellent schools are highly sought after by parents with a vested interest in education (Orford: 2018). In postcodes where competition is fierce for school places, socio-economic status plays strongly in the outcome. In the case of green living, this may not necessarily be the case, as those who commit to a green lifestyle as their primary focus may come from a variety of backgrounds, thus encouraging social mixing. In communities with mixed tenure, where the focus is on the encouragement of green behaviour and environmental wellness, it is posited that people with similar interests would be willing to reside alongside those with similar interests, regardless of factors such as socio-economic status. Despite such theory, this claim remains largely untested in research and is the fundamental focus of this thesis.

Whilst the debate and challenge amongst technocrats continues as to the physical validity of mechanisms to use when building homes in the most environmental way, the notion as to who occupies these homes and how they are utilised to their maximum, has also been an area which requires further discussion.

As highlighted in the introduction, academics such as Cotgrove and Duff (1980), Mertig and Dunlap (1995) and Rootes (1995) denote that an emerging middle class, which is both highly educated and economically secure, is more likely to advocate green attitudes/behaviours and use them effectively, due to their circumstance and opportunities. However, we must also recognise that this may be evidence of a ‘middle class bias’ towards people engaging in environmentalism. Abraham (2011) uses a comparable train of thought whereby he highlights that members of similar social backgrounds who share common values, ways of thinking, speaking and behaving are more likely to interact in a similar fashion. He uses consumer behaviour to illustrate this point, highlighting that this can be transferred to other mediums too such as environmental issues.

More recently, research undertaken (see Vermeir and Verbeke: 2008; Lorek and Fuchs: 2013; Zhao et al.: 2014; Wang et al.: 2014; Biswas and Roy: 2015; Ritter et al.: 2015; Liobikiene and Juknys: 2016) has shown that higher income earners have the capacity to, and ability to, buy and choose more ‘green’ products of their choice. Moreover, this behaviour could also enhance status (Steg et al.: 2014; Liobikiene and Jukny: 2016). Hards’s (2013) research on status, stigma and energy practices in the home also examines ways of promoting energy conservation and generation by individuals. She argues that there has been relatively little discussion on how status and stigma are implicated in these practices and may act as facilitators or barriers to behaviour change. However, Donnant (2016) points out that there is a class bias when it comes to green behaviour and social class. Whilst it is noted that the middle classes have more disposable income to spend, this does not necessarily equate to a greater carbon footprint. Donnant (2016) suggests, “the greater consumption argument and social background requires more analysis as one does not necessarily follow the other” (p.82). This study will critically engage with this debate and examine the connections between class bias, green behaviours and social class. It will, in particular, address this in relation to social mixing in housing developments where there is a mixture of housing tenure to understand whether there is an environmental benefit to this form of social mix.

Work previously undertaken on environmental issues connected to low-incomes areas has also brought to the fore the following assumptions;

* Poor local environments can contribute to people wanting to leave areas, fuelling problems of decline and collapse in poor neighbourhoods with far wider environmental, social and economic consequences (Mumford and Power: 2003);
* Environmental, social and economic problems and potential solutions are often stark at the local level. For example, poor quality housing contributes to exclusion, the economic decline of areas and energy inefficiency (Rogers and Power: 2000; Mumford and Power: 2003);
* Low-income residents react to local conditions using public transport, walking and cycling for lack of access to a car, or may not recycle because facilities are not available (Stockton: 2004);
* Despite strong constraints and pressing local concerns people living in low-income areas also act on environmental issues out of altruism. For example, buying dolphin-friendly tuna (Elster: 2004).

However, Power and Elster (2005) examined such held assumptions pertaining to links between environmental issues and human behaviour in UK low-income areas. Outcomes from their research belied many firmly held views such as those previously expressed. For example;

* People in low-income areas are aware of wider, as well as local, environmental problems and possible solutions;
* People can relate global problems to their everyday lives;
* Environmental action, motivations, and barriers to action vary depending on the action in question, the context for action and, often, on the person who is acting;
* Individual environmental action can often be dependent on a supportive context, ease of execution (and a favourable “climate” or framework);
* Barriers to action are often serious, for example, lack of options or facilities;
* Many residents in poor areas share a similar view of sustainable development with the rest of the country, agreeing that action on environmental problems is necessary, and are willing to act.

These findings lead on to complement some of the work of Ronald Inglehart (1995) who brings to the fore a ‘post materialistic’ view, whereby he postulates that “there has been a silent revolution involving basic value priorities … shifting from a materialistic emphasis to a post-materialist one … which emphasise autonomy and self-expression whereby people can direct attention to the higher-order, ‘quality of life’ or post material needs such as the environment” (Inglehart: 1995: p.63). This argument has been used to support the opinion that environmental views are becoming more evenly spread within western populations. Sociologist Ulrich Beck who coined the term ‘risk society’, argues “risk society is an inescapable structural condition of advanced industrialisation” (Beck: 1992: p.33). Modern society has become a ‘risk society’ in the sense that it is increasingly occupied with debating, preventing and managing risks that it itself has produced. The changing nature of society’s relation to production and distribution is related to the environmental impact because a globalising economy based on scientific and technical knowledge becomes more central to social organisation and social conflict. In the emerging worldwide ‘risk society’, all groups – even the rich – are threatened. But Beck makes the important point that risk and class positions overlap on a national and international scale. The concept of risk is directly bound to the concept of reflexive modernisation (Beck: 1992).

Beck also contends that widespread risks contain a 'boomerang effect', in that individuals producing risks will also be exposed to them. This argument suggests that wealthy individuals, whose capital is largely responsible for creating pollution, will also suffer. Critics such as Goodfellow (1992) and Doherty (2002), however, argue that this argument may seem oversimplified as wealthy people may have the ability to mitigate risk more easily. But according to Beck, distribution of this sort of risk is the result of knowledge rather than wealth. Whilst the wealthy person may have access to resources that enable him or her to avert risk, this would not even be an option were they unaware that the risk even existed. However, risks do not only affect those of a certain social class or place. The risk is not biased and can affect everybody, no matter your class; nobody is free from risk (Beck: 1992).

The propositions put forward by both Beck and Inglehart appear to suggest that green behaviour is not contingent on social background. However, this perspective has engendered polemical views in the literature in the form of proponents of more conservative views.

Critics of Beck and Inglehart’s position point to the role of social variables, such as income and class, in influencing green behaviour. In particular, this has led to a form of ‘middle class bias’, where it can be recognised that the middle classes, with access to more disposable income demonstrate their commitment to ‘green’ issues through the purchase of premium ethical products. This behaviour connects to a wider understanding of how social class influences consumer behaviour (Shavitt, Jiang and Cho: 2016). There is also evidence of a cultural middle class bias, whereby people belonging to middle class communities demonstrate their commitment to sustainability through actions such as recycling and engaging in the ‘slow food’ movement (Wexler, Oberlander and Shankar: 2017). This commitment can be recognised as being part of a growing consumerist approach to environmentalism, where purchasing power is connected to environmental activism.

In further research, we can see that green behaviour, as a form of social movement, is a political practice relating to consumption, and, therefore to factors such as income and class. Research by Stolle et al. (2005) recognises the practice of boycotting and ‘buy-cotting’, the purchasing of specific products, as a form of political consumption and Haenfler (2012) addresses the specifics of green behaviour as a form of ‘life-style activism’ (Haenfler: 2012). Through such research we can see that, in environmental issues, economic freedom is asserted through making statements with particular purchases. However, we must recognise the underlying assumption that middle class people are more environmentally conscious through their spending practices as they may have access to more disposable income when, in reality, this may lead to more consumption despite the ethics of the purchase,

There is the implicit suggestion that the debate concerning the links between green behaviours and social background is far from resolved. It can be argued that the unresolved debates in the literature make the research questions at the centre of this thesis very pertinent as these questions offer a much-needed contribution to ongoing arguments. Attaining some form of clarity with respect to these debates is crucial as they ultimately inform housing policies that are predicated on social mixing for the purpose of promoting social cohesion and green behaviours.

### 2.2.8 The future of green housing

The shifting priorities for the housing sector and the acute demand on the production of new house builds, leave the balance of environmental and sustainability concerns somewhat on the back foot. The ramifications of the expiration of the Code have yet to be fully felt. The question also arises whether the new Building Regulations will still allow our international climate change commitments to be delivered locally.

The relationship between creating places where people want to live and the environment their homes are situated in is never an easy balance to achieve. Has the pendulum of change swung too much to one side whereby housing demand outstrips the need to build homes which take a holistic approach to living?

The debate surrounding ‘green’ behaviours and social background is still very much evolving. As previously reiterated, this section has outlined the tension between the school of thought propounded by Beck and Inglehart to the effect that green behaviour and identity is now independent of social background, and the opposite position between green behaviour and social factors such as income and education. As highlighted earlier, it is important to note however, that much of these discussions and arguments are based on a UK perspective and the narrative surrounding the implementation relates to a housing development in the UK too. If one is to be critical then comparable studies with other countries and their housing developments may shine an alternative perspective on the arguments presented. Nevertheless, how this study’s current findings translate to the pilot housing development encouraging social mixing in terms of community cohesion and promoting ‘green’ behaviours is something which is being considered at West Green; with the success of the project remaining in the balance.

### 2.2.9 Summary

In short, there are various explanations for environmental concern and green behaviour within attitudes. However, several of the propositions in the literature lack empirical support and, in some cases, are based on erroneous and/or simplistic assumptions. There is a lack of a singular framework that adequately explains variations in environmental concern and green behaviour. This may be, in part, explained by the fact that many of the factors discussed above are inextricably linked or interact in ways that influence each other and impinge on green behaviour. The section above has attempted to summarise, albeit in a non-exhaustive way, the social factors that influence environmental behaviours and that of social background. As demonstrated in the literature, the four themes of strategy, capacity, effort, and helplessness have nevertheless been useful in determining what makes a person choose to be more (or less) environmentally conscious, which is particularly helpful for the current research study being undertaken.

The reality is the positions adopted by Beck and his conservative opposition in the debate surrounding the relationship between social background and adoption of a green lifestyle, is misplaced. What can be explicitly concluded from the literature is that social background is relevant but only as one of a number of factors at play, and is far from a determinative one at that (Stern: 2000: pp. 407-410).

It is evident that, in terms of strategy, financial incentives offer less useful outcomes than those of specifically targeted communication. Under the same framework, it is evident that residents are more likely to have the capacity to engage in greener options when the communication is specifically targeted to a task and does not require a significant amount of effort on their part. Finally, in terms of helplessness, people in communities need to believe that they are able to make a difference and that their contribution is valued within a larger context. Yet despite these themes, it is also apparent that there are other variables that must be considered in this context to determine whether certain individuals may lean towards becoming more environmentally conscious. Such variables are discussed in further detail in the next section of this chapter.

In particular, the manner in which variables such as image and pressure, individual responsibility and understanding, financial barriers and consistency, as well as inertia, impinge on the adoption of green practices is critically discussed.

Following on from this discussion, the next section will examine the importance of ‘life course theory’ and how people’s lives at different times bring choices which both challenge, as well as support, their experience and behaviour. For the purpose of this thesis, this means, in particular, looking at ‘green’ behaviour and ‘social mixing’. Therefore, the life course perspective in this instance assumes that it does not matter whether people are interested in ‘green’ issues before moving because the move to a green development may trigger a change in behaviour?

### 2.3 Life course theory and impact on people’s lives

Life course theory, more commonly termed the life course perspective, refers to a multidisciplinary paradigm for the study of the lives of individuals, structural contexts, and social change (Hunt, 2016). This approach encompasses ideas and observations from an array of disciplines. In particular, it directs attention to the powerful connection between individual lives and the historical and socioeconomic context in which these lives unfold.

As a concept, a life course is defined as "a sequence of socially defined events and roles that the individual enacts over time" (Giele and Elder: 1998: p.22). These events and roles do not necessarily proceed in a given sequence, but rather constitute the sum total of the person's actual experience. This theory offers valuable insights when considering behavioural change such as in this case and the question of whether moving to new housing development can promote or encourage particular variations in behaviour. Its advantage over other theoretical frameworks is its unique ability to “capture the dynamic, changing nature of person-environment transactions” (Hutchinson: 2018: p.xix).

Moving home is, for many people, among the key moments or events of life which have profound personal meaning. For a family or an individual moving into a new home, this change brings with it the need to adjust as well as bringing new challenges.

Sociologists, such as Vanderberg (1989), explain these periods as being part of someone’s ‘life course journey’; “life courses are a sequence of activities or states and events in various life domains which span from birth to death… life course, therefore, aims at mapping, describing and explaining the synchronic and diachronic distribution of an individual person into social positions across their lifetime” (p.86). Clapham (2017) also highlights the importance of ‘housing pathways’, which he uses to refer to the varying household forms that a person experiences and the housing routes that they take during their lifetime. This model is influenced by a consideration of temporality and, specifically, on the changes that take place during the different stages of a person’s life. Clapham (2017) argues that housing is no longer a fixed goal but that a person may move through a series of houses, related to employment and family structures. In the context of housing, it draws, to some extent, on ideas of life course theory, individual time, family time and historical time, which, at some points, converge to exert an influence on housing decisions and behaviours. An understanding of Clapham’s (2017) work is crucial for reaching an understanding of the implications of contemporary housing pathways on UK housing policy.

One major aspect of the life course is an individual’s internal temporal ordering. This means the relative duration of time in a given state as well as the age distributions at various events or transitions (Mayer and Huinick: 1990). Drawing on this insight, Mayer and Huinick (1990) outline three mechanisms which, according to them, account for the form and outcomes of life courses. The first mechanism, which is often regarded as the most important and obvious, is the degree and manner to which societies are internally differentiated into subsystems or institutional fields. The second mechanism is seen in the internal dynamic of individual lives. Here, conditions of behavioural outcomes come from prior life history or in norm-guided or rationally purposive action. The third mechanism derives from the basic fact that it is not simply society, on the one hand, and the individual, on the other, which are related to each other, but aggregates of individuals in the form of populations such as birth cohorts or marriage cohorts (Mayer and Huinick: 1990). Such mechanisms for shaping life courses focus on life trajectories and their precedents, e.g. moving into first employment, first-time mother, retirement, etc within a given time interval, be that short or across a larger, life span period (Elder: 1985).

The explanatory question for life course research is not only whether situational, personal or contextual conditions shape a certain outcome, but also experiences and resources, which are acquired at earlier stages of life, such as incomplete families in childhood (Grundmann: 1992), prior job change (Mayer et al., 1999) or prior episodes of unemployment (Bender et al.: 2000), educational careers (Henz: 1996), or vocational training and early career patterns (Konietzka: 1999; Hillmert, 2001).

Importantly, life course perspectives also elaborate on the importance of time, context, process and meaning on human development and family life (Bengtson and Allen: 1993). The family is perceived as a micro-social group within a macro-social context, as a "collection of individuals with shared history who interact within ever-changing social contexts across ever-increasing time and space" (Bengston and Allen: 1993: p.470). Ageing and developmental change, therefore, are continuous processes that are experienced throughout life and ones that tend to affect certain decisions related to environmentally conscious decision making (Scharelach: 2009).

As such, the life course reflects the intersection of social and historical factors with personal biography and development, within which the study of family life and social change can ensue (Elder: 1985; Hareven: 1996).

Life courses also need to be considered through life histories of people not as individuals but as patterned dynamic expressions of social structures, which can vary by community and the changes made to that community (i.e. when certain environmental initiatives are undertaken, such as the planting of trees, this can have a positive impact on the lives of older adults) (Thompson et al.: 2012). Carroll and Mayer (1986) have also brought to the fore the notion that life course patterns are expected to vary greatly across social classes or status groups (Widmer and Ritschard: 2009). They explain this by outlining that the distribution of initial resources results in income rewards and the distribution of positions, forming basic opportunity structures into which people are sorted or intimately tied to (such as the occupational structure, the structure of employment in various industrial sectors, and the educational systems). Others (Sørensen: 1990; Porath: 1980) argue the division of labour would also be recognised as a source of variance in life course patterns (for example, the way women and men in families and other unions allocate their lifetime for economic and family roles (Porath: 1980; Sørensen: 1990). This has implications for environmentally ‘green’ choices in the household.

For example, if women are seen to be the primary purchasers, food packaging may be decided by the women (Baxter, Hewitt and Haynes: 2008) and if women are responsible for aspects in the kitchen, recycling also may be their primary responsibility (Baxter et al.: 2008).

There is also the argument that differential intervention of the state in the form of the modern welfare state (Mayer and Müller: 1986; Huinink et al.: 1995; Mayer: 2001) has a bearing on how the relative importance and manner of the interconnection of economic markets, the family and the state across historical time and across contemporary societies are seen as major determinants of life course patterns (Esping-Andersen: 1999). According to Mayer (1989), patterns of life courses are not only products of societies and part and parcel of a social structure, but they are also important mechanisms for generating social structures by aggregating outcomes of individual steps throughout one’s life course**.**

The importance of life course theory can be influenced by many variables in someone’s life. A multitude of factors influence the path and impact of an individual’s life within their community. This is an important factor to take into account when considering the research questions in this work. Within a single development, the different tenure type and the life experience brought by residents who move to live in close proximity can and will influence the success of the development, both in terms of engagement and cohesion. For these reasons, the impact of life course theory will be further considered within the analytical chapters later in this work.

The following section will now pull together the preceding sections to discuss another of the theoretical frameworks used to underpin this research; Communities of Practice, including utilising secondary supplementary theoretical works relating more specifically to ‘green’ behaviours and behavioural change.

## 2.4 Wenger’s Framework and Communities of Practice

As outlined earlier, a Community of Practice (CoP) goes beyond a Community of Interest (CoI) in that participation in a CoP requires dedication and motivation towards achieving a particular outcome. A CoP functions optimally when the members within the group engage in active discussions and are able to learn from each other. The goal of these pursuits is to allow members to develop a set of resources, experiences, stories, and tools in an attempt to address recurring problems. As a result, and according to Wenger (2011), a CoP must comprise three elements; a domain, a community and a practice. There are no regulations on the size of a CoP as some might come across as very small/localised while others might span the globe, depending on the area of interest.

In the current time period, CoPs are often seen in many different sectors. These include areas within the governmental structure (for example, to address organisational issues), within education (for example, to expand learning, teaching and participation), within organisations (for example, to enhance the link between learning and performance) and within the social sector (for example, through the building of peer-to-peer connections). It is this last element that is particularly relevant to a physical community, such as West Green, the area used within this study.

For a CoP to be effective, the members need to subscribe to similar passions and share a collective motivation towards an outcome (Wenger et al.: 2011). Within this framework, there is the likelihood that people belonging to a CoP would undertake tasks and behave in certain ways, essentially linking their own identity to that of the other community members. More interestingly, those who enter a CoP may experience a transition in values (Hards: 2011). In a qualitative study conducted by Hards (2011), it was shown that being part of a CoP resulted in a trajectory of individuals to share the values that were central tenants to the community. Individuals who participated in her study showed a transformation in individual identity and values as a result of contributing to the contextual experiences within the community.

While the above study uses Communities of Practice to demonstrate that values can develop and shared identity can emerge, it requires community participants to self-select within the group. While Hards’ (2011) study focused on a pro-environmental CoP, her participant group was small (n = 16) and all participants were white and of similar socio-economic backgrounds. This outcome is not uncommon in CoPs, as those who are willing to come together to share their values and beliefs tend to do so with others of similar backgrounds (Davies: 2005). Because communities of practice are voluntary, over time it is their ability to generate enough excitement, relevance and value to attract and engage members that makes them a success.

It is with this thinking that Wenger (2011) developed and identified the principle of ‘aliveness’ to his rationale, connecting CoP and community engagement. To allow and develop ‘aliveness’ in communities he stipulated that you need to achieve the following;

* **Design for evolution-** CoPs are dynamic in nature, the design should reflect adaptability;
* **Open dialogue between inside and outside perspectives-** familiarity as well as adopting other tools or procedures;
* **Invite different levels of participation**- all members regardless of participation levels should be valued;
* **Develop both public and private community spaces**- utilisation of what you have around you;
* **Focus on value**- value should grow as the community evolves;
* **Combine familiarity and excitement**- appreciate what is familiar but also look for a challenge;
* **Creating a rhythm for the community**- ensure there is continuing vibrancy.

According to Wenger (2011), the requirements to plan, initiate, include and evolve pave the way for a community to become more coherent, cohesive and stronger.

Using the CoP framework designed by Wenger, Hards (2011) was able to demonstrate that, for those working within an environmental development, a CoP not only allows participants insight into their own values but allows them opportunities to place themselves in a relative position to others, offering a unique perspective.

This outcome suggests that there is value in having people with common backgrounds come together in a community to foster the growth, development and purposefulness of both individual and communal values.

In the West Green community used in this study, the focus is to create social cohesion within a CoP that focuses on ‘green’ behaviour and environmental initiatives. By creating a community that has deployed a mixed tenure, the focus of this community is less on socio-economic status and more upon personal values and beliefs. Because residents of this community share a common purpose, it is hypothesised that being part of the CoP will encourage all residents to share their ideas and promote certain aspects of community living, by bringing people from different backgrounds together through adopting the ‘aliveness’ principles. The provision of community spaces and opportunities for encounters make these practices more visible, rather than being behind closed doors. Wenger’s CoP framework is fundamental to this research as a foundation from which investigation can take place. From this foundation, this research project seeks to determine whether green behaviour can be an effective means for community building within an area of mixed tenure.

The above literature has shown that, while considerable research has been undertaken on the subject of green initiatives and the role that homeowners play in the decision-making associated with such initiatives, there are still clear gaps. Firstly, while many studies have examined both ‘mixed communities’ and the increasing social norms of environmentally conscious decision making, there have not yet been studies that have successfully combined the two, especially in relation to the mixed tenure communities that currently exist within the UK. As England continues to encourage housing communities that contain mixed-tenure, it is evident that there will always be certain groups that choose to live together because of certain communal characteristics.

It has been demonstrated that there is at least a moderate link between socio-economic status, demographics and environmentally ‘greener’ initiatives but the link between this and a mixed tenure community has not been investigated. Inclusion of this type of study into the wider community of knowledge would be beneficial because it would offer insight into ways that mixed communities can use certain social norms to change the entire community for the better.

Through the use of the life course theory, it is apparent that there are certain social structures that offer residents opportunities to investigate green initiatives from various perspectives, including occupational and domestic opportunities.

By utilising the theoretical framework highlighted by Wenger (2011), examining the above seems most appropriate as a foundation for this thesis.

The tenets of life course theory have demonstrated how CoPs facilitate participants, through peer-to-peer connections, to work conjointly towards achieving a common goal. This proposition lends credence to the hypothesis that people with common backgrounds can work collectively towards the development of a community in the interest of both communal and individual values. In as much as policy shifts within the housing sector have brought the social dimensions of house designs to the fore, based on objectives of facilitating communal activities and interaction, the ways in which mixed communities offer opportunities for interactions to promote green behaviour, based on what life course theory tells us, have not been adequately investigated. The research focus of this thesis is, thus, a very pertinent one.

The following chapter will outline the methodology used to explain the nature of this study’s data collection and the analysis undertaken to illustrate its findings.

# Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodological rationale underpinning this research project and the methods applied. It begins by summarising the philosophical approach taken in the research by explaining the logic of its approach, the use of qualitative case study including interviews, the selection process undertaken, my role as a researcher and the ethical considerations involved. The focus for this research was based on attaining in-depth accounts of people’s actions and views in helping to answer this study’s research questions. The philosophical and methodological approach was chosen carefully to attain this knowledge. The chapter outlines in detail the process undertaken and the challenges faced. The period of data collection for this research took place between February and July 2014. In this section, I begin by explaining the approaches I took to undertake my research and the ethical issues I needed to consider.

## 3.1. Why take a qualitative approach?

Qualitative research, “attempts to understand the world from the subjects’ point of view, to unfold the meaning of peoples’ experiences, to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations” (Kvale; 1996: p.1). Hence, such research allows you to take a multi-faceted in-depth approach to investigate culture, society and behaviour through an analysis and synthesis of people’s words and actions from the perspective of the research participants (Hogan et al: 2001). Since this study’s research questions were aimed at understanding just how interactions between people and their behaviours were associated with the ‘green’ spatial environments and the forming of relationships/communities, this approach was well suited to this research. Through the utilisation of semi-structured face to face interviews and walking interviews I was able to elicit this information more effectively whilst undertaking this research.

Scott and Usher (1999) express the view that, through qualitative research everyday experiences and ordinary lives can be understood, “human action is inseparable from meaning, and experiences are classified and ordered through interpretative frames and pre-understandings mediated by tradition” (Scott and Usher: p.24).

The task of qualitative research, therefore, is to work with, and, make sense of, the world in a holistic fashion.

Qualitative research is also a way of developing a detailed description of events, integrating multiple perspectives, and describing the process (Weiss, 1994). Others argue that qualitative interviews are appropriate "where individual perceptions of processes within a social unit…are to be studied prospectively" (Robson: 2002: p.271). Besides rendering phenomena such as emotions and social meanings transcribe-able through rich textual description, qualitative methods also offer the researcher access (albeit partial) to alternative perspectives on the social world by getting closer to the lived experiences of those they are studying (Bryman: 2001). They often focus on understanding processes and, therefore, qualitative methods can be used to generate and explore potential causal relations and explanations. Since both this study’s research question, ‘has West Green made people greener?’ and ‘does West Green promote social mixing?’, aim to examine the processes, behaviours and relationships associated with people and their interactions, applying this methodology supported this line of enquiry.

Qualitative methods, of course, have their limitations. For example, subjectivity of the researcher is sometimes considered to be a weakness of qualitative research. However, by making room for reflexivity in the research process, qualitative methods promote greater transparency about the subjectivity that is embedded in all research. James et al. (2004)found that policymakers were “receptive to in-depth empirical qualitative case studies, provided that these are rigorous, grounded critically in broader theoretical debates, and seek to identify what can be learned from ‘local knowledge’ that is of relevance to wider policy issues” (p.1903). Others have also argued that qualitative methods are limited by validity and reliability: “because qualitative research occurs in the natural setting it is extremely difficult to replicate studies” (Wiersma: 2000: p.211). However, Schoon (2009) highlights, “the nature of people’s lives naturally differ and this is what makes everyone an individual in approach… by capturing how we interact and network, that is what builds human life stories” (p.167).

### 3.1.2 Applying a case study approach

Within the qualitative field, there are many methodologies used by researchers to extract information but, for this research, a case study approach was selected. Yin (2003) suggests that such an approach is particularly appropriate when research questions ask ‘how’ and ‘why’ a phenomenon occurs (2003).

In other words, research that focuses wholly or partly on the process is well suited to case studies as it “allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristic of real-life events” (Yin: 2003: p.2). Many of the questions used as part of the semi-structured interviews or the walking interviews included such an approach. This enabled me to attain a deeper understanding of the motivations and reasoning behind participants’ actions. As Sullivan (2001) advocates, “the primary goal of most case studies is an idiographic explanation that focuses on an in-depth understanding of a particular case … its advantage is the richly detailed description it provides of people’s lives, experiences and circumstances” (p. 332).Stake (2005) in turn emphasises depth of understanding in the description of the value of this approach: "case studies are of value in refining theory, suggesting complexities for further investigation as well as helping to establish the limits of generalisability" (p. 460).

By framing case studies as an essential component of learning, alongside ‘rule-based knowledge’, “… human behaviour cannot be meaningfully understood as simply the rule-governed acts found at the lowest levels of the learning process and in much theory” (Flyvbjerg: 2006: p.223). In essence, case studies represent an in-depth, but narrower, understanding of human behaviour and processes than ‘‘rule-based knowledge’’ (Flyvbjerb: 2006: p.233) and are, therefore, an important and complementary strand of understanding. Stake (2005) calls the understanding gained from case study ‘‘experiential knowledge’’ (p.462) an understanding which conveys the experience of the people involved in the case as well as the researcher studying the case. Case study research, therefore, allows a reader to have a ‘vicarious experience’ or an experience in place of someone else (ibid). To this end, the primary reason for undertaking a case study approach was to utilise and anchor the deep holistic accounts of people’s experiences within an eco-housing development and its location.

Subjective data is an integral part of any case study and it is through analysis and interpretation of how people think, feel and act that many of the insights and understandings of the case are gained. Through the case study approach I was, therefore, able to facilitate and investigate more easily the shifting attitudes and behaviours of people living within the development, in their natural setting (Simons: 2009).

Research based on a single case study, however, has been open to criticism, primarily due to its limited generalisability (Silverman: 2005).There is, as Stake calls it, an ‘abiding tension’ in case study research between the general and the particular (Stake: 1995). This relates to how the case is used to make generalisations about the phenomenon under study and reflects a greater tension with the validity of case study research (Blaikie: 2000). The tension is twofold; some authors are concerned that cases are not capable of generalisation (as identified by Yin: 2003) but others highlight the urge to generalise may destroy the integrity of the case. As Stake (2005) puts it, “damage occurs when the commitment to generalise or to theorise runs so strong that the researcher's attention is drawn away from features important for understanding the case itself” (p.444) goes on to suggest that there are three different types of case study. There are; “the intrinsic case study where no attempt is made to generalise beyond the single case or to build theories, the instrumental case study where a case is used to provide insight into an issue or revise a generalisation and the collective case study where a number of cases are studied in order to investigate some general phenomenon” (Stake: 2005: p.445).

This study is an example of an instrumental case study where residents residing in the West Green eco-development have been studied to provide an insight into the understanding of how ‘green’ spaces have been utilised and relationships/communities formed. A single case study of an organisation can offer important and generalisable insight due to the level of depth of the study:

*“Single-case studies of organizational fields and even of singular organizations-as-fields can contribute importantly, despite or perhaps even because of the sheer intensity and particularity of their focus, to a generalizing and cumulative enterprise”. (Emirbayer and Johnson: 2008: p.35).*

Generalisation in case studies is a different kind of generalisation than that seen in experimental or survey research. Yin (2003) recognises that "in doing a case study, your goal will be to expand and generalise theories (analytical generalisation) and not to enumerate frequencies (statistical generalisation)" (Yin: p.10).

In practice, this means that researchers engaged in a case study use the particular to explore the general and, in doing so, question existing theories. This can be a revealing process and represents an important contribution to theory. As Flyvberg (2006) states it:

*“… researchers who have conducted intensive, in-depth case studies, typically report that their preconceived views, assumptions concepts and hypotheses may well differ and that the case material has compelled them to revise their hypotheses on essential points” (Flyvbjerg: 2006: p.235).*

So, while it is clear that something can be learned from case study research, crucially, a case study strategy allows for a certain type of analytical rather than a statistical generalisation to be formed, linking concepts into process theories based on observations. Although some of the details of this case study’s findings are specific to the West Green eco-housing development, my research is generalisable or as Mason expresses, “has wider resonance” (2002: p.38) in two ways. Firstly, it has been argued that lessons learnt from qualitative research can be relevant to a wider body of theory or knowledge (Mason: 2002). In the case of this study, the fact that the development is a pilot scheme examining a new holistic approach to eco-living by combining higher eco-building construction and its environmental surroundings with that of mixed housing tenure, lends itself to the broader theoretical argument of the relationship between the physical environment and that of building cohesive communities. Secondly, an advantage of conducting a pilot study is that it might give advance warning about where the main research project could fail, where research protocols may not be followed, or whether proposed methods or instruments are inappropriate or too complicated.

A full discussion of why and how West Green was selected is discussed in the next section.

## 3.2 How and why West Green was selected as a case study

At the core of all case study research is the goal of elucidating the characteristics of a broader population (Tellis: 1997; Gerring: 2004; Seawright and Gerring: 2008). The process of case study selection is, however, underpinned by diverse goals which have been encapsulated in a number of case selection typologies established by several scholars over the years. Starting from the classic literature, Mill (1872), for instance, proposed the method of difference and method agreement, while Lijphart (1971) developed a typology of six forms of case-study selection processes; interpretative, a-theoretical, theory-confirming, hypothesis-generating, theory-infirming and deviant. Others, such as Eckstein (1975), built upon Lijphart’s (1971) model and proposed a typology based on five variations; heuristic, configurative-idiographic, plausibility probes, disciplined-configurative and crucial case. Notable also are the propositions of Skocpol and Somers (1990) who argued that case studies may be selected on the basis of: contrast of contexts, macro-causal analysis and parallel demonstration of theory. Contemporary typologies applied in current social science research ultimately rely on the work of Seawright and Gerring (2008), as well as Gerring (2007), who have identified a typology based on nine variances; diverse, typical, deviant, extreme, crucial, influential, most-different, pathway and most-similar. Scholars such as Levy (2008), Blatter and Haverland (2012) and Rohlfing (2012) have built on such models. Blatter and Haverland (2012) for example have identified three typologies; congruence analysis, covariational case selection and process tracing.

In this thesis, I have followed Gerring and Cojocaru (2016) and their propositions on the selection of anomalous case studies, which are “those that do not conform to common understandings of a subject and therefore present an anomaly, which sets the agenda for a case study” (p.399). Specifically, the choice of the West Green housing development is informed by the fact that it serves as an idiographic case (Gerring and Cojocaru: 2016: p.399; Yin: 2017), which has been selected because of its theoretic and intrinsic importance for understanding how mixed communities encourage social cohesion and green behaviours. Idiographic cases are particularly apt when there is a lack of research and understanding of the case in the literature (Lijphart: 1975; Eckstein: 1975; Gerring: 2007; Levy: 2008).

As a result of the theoretical and intrinsic importance of the case study, I am not preoccupied with issues of representativeness as is traditional in case study research (Seawright and Gerring: 2008). Rather, I am driven by its central importance to addressing current gaps in the literature, and by the quest to explore my hypothesis that being a part of a CoP, such as West Green, will encourage all residents to share their ideas and to promote certain aspects of community living (specifically green behaviours) through bringing people from different backgrounds together via the adoption of the ‘aliveness’ principles.

The West Green housing development case is, indeed, unique and, thus, presents opportunities for adopting a novel lens for exploring the linkages between mixed communities, social cohesion and green behaviours. The housing development has presented a number of new challenges, to the housing sector as well as government agencies. As one of the first zero-carbon pilots in the country, it was designed to construct and integrate higher eco-building standards within a spacious 12-acre landscape location, dramatically deviating from traditional small concentrated housing constructions. The development also embraced mixed tenure housing provision, allowing social housing as well as market rented and private owners to live side by side. The use of space permitted a focus for environmental areas to be included in the development, such as allotments, greenhouses, orchards as well as communal seating areas, allowing a more community cohesive approach to be developed and applied, something which had not been explored in any detail before.

The uniqueness of this approach and the potential impact for future housing policy made selecting this research area both personally relevant as a housing professional as well as for the potential outcomes for the housing sector in future construction, including that of eco-living. The fact that the development was also a pilot project added greater prominence and had a reputational impact for all agencies involved. This thesis argues that the choice of West Green in this research is significant as it provides the much-needed empirical evidence concerning new approaches to housing development that encourage social connectivity through green spaces and through innovative community initiatives. By focusing on West Green as a case study in this research, it is anticipated that important empirical findings can be made to inform future policy.

### 3.2.1 Selecting interviewees and sampling strategies

In order to answer the research questions for this study, my primary interest was to engage and listen to what residents had to say about their experiences and practices whilst living in the development. This element of the research undoubtedly formed the largest part of my empirical research material. However, to gain and appreciate the overall premise of West Green, I felt it was also important to interview external agencies associated with the development such as government agencies, local authority representatives, local councillors and the architects, as well as housing association staff. Through feedback from these external agencies, I could garner a holistic overview of their thoughts and reasoning for the development and the relevance of the scheme within the context of UK house building. It also allowed me to understand what the premise of the development was founded upon and why West Green was identified as a location.

My overall sampling strategy for my interviews was selected on the basis of wanting to interview people who either lived on the development, who were involved in the construction or who occupied professional roles connected to the site. Therefore, the three categories comprised of including each grouping within the interviews schedule (residents, housing association staff and external agencies).

The sampling strategy for the residents was the most complicated aspect to negotiate. Firstly, the development itself was still under construction so, therefore, not all the houses had been occupied. For the purpose of my research, I wanted to identify people who had been residing in the development for over three months as this allowed for a period of settling in and adjustment for householders. Secondly, I wanted to identify people living in different types of accommodation on the development e.g. houses and flats as well as the size of the properties, for example, 5, 4, 3, 2 or 1 bedroom properties.

I was interested in investigating whether the configuration of family households may have had a bearing on how families and individuals used the social spaces within the development, as well as the relationships they formed. Due to the issue of data protection, I was not able to obtain the names of occupiers but was able to get the addresses and the type of properties from the housing association and the developer.

Therefore, I wrote to all households who had been living on the development for over three months. At the time, this was 52 households in total including those who had purchased as well as those who were renting. (The total occupancy of the development when full would be 185 households). I followed this up with a door-knocking exercise the following week as the initial response was low. The final sample attained and the configuration in housing tenure type was as follows; six social housing residents, six owner-occupiers and two shared ownership. The housing configuration is illustrated below:

**Table 2: Property and tenure type in West Green**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Type of property** | **Tenure type** |
| 3 x 2 bedroom houses | Social housing |
| 3 x 3 bedroom houses | Social housing |
| 1 x 2 bedroom houses | Private housing |
| 4 x 3 bedroom houses | Private housing |
| 1 x 4 bedroom houses | Private housing |
| 2 x 2 flats | Shared Ownership housing |

The sample showed an even split between the private tenants and the social housing tenants with only two shared ownership residents taking up the opportunity to be interviewed. I was pleased that I managed to get enough social housing tenants and market rented households due to the smaller percentage of these homes being built compared to private households on site (25% of the overall development).

With regards to the sampling strategy for housing association staff, this was more straight forward as I was aware of who had been involved in the development and their subsequent roles, due to working for the organisation. Again, a variety of staff were interviewed at all levels and it was noted that this research would be independent of any work being carried out by the housing organisation itself.

Finally, for the external agencies involved in the case study (i.e. house builders, architects, local authority staff and so on), I utilised my contacts with the staff at the housing association as they had previous experience of working with these.

I also utilised information from their respective websites to identify key people who may have been useful to my research. I wanted to ensure that I recruited a wide range of people to support the premise of my research, ensuring all parties’ views were heard. Once external key participants were identified, correspondence was sent out asking their permission to be involved in the project. I also highlighted the independence of my research to them at this early stage. I broke down my interviewing schedule to fit the three categories identified e.g. residents, housing association staff and external agencies.

Below are the participants I interviewed;

**Table 3: List of interviewees**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Interviewees | Who are they? | Number of households interviewed |
| Residents | Social housing residents | 6 |
| Shared Ownership residents | 2 |
| Private residents | 6 |
| Housing Association staff | Regional Housing Director | 1 |
| Regional Housing Manager | 1 |
| Regional Development Director | 1 |
| Senior Development Manager | 1 |
| New Neighbourhood Specialist | 1 |
| New Neighbourhoods Co-ordinator | 1 |
| Housing Officer | 1 |
| External agencies | Local Councillor for West Green area | 1 |
| House builder | 2 |
| Planning case officer for the local authority | 1 |
| Government agency | 2 |
| Architects | 1 |
| Total interviewees | | 28 |

A number of ethical considerations had to be noted whilst compiling the list of interviewees and carrying out the interviews themselves. In the ethical considerations section below, I will expand further the challenges encountered and the solutions I used.

### 3.2.2 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations were thought-out during the course of the research process. The primary concern for me was the issue of being considered an ‘insider/outsider’ researcher. The two opposing doctrines related to this approach argue from very different standpoints. Simmel (1950) explains “a researcher can only be objective if he/she is an outsider due to the pre-judgement we all unintentionally make” (p.43). An insider could also reveal too much sensitive or confidential information, which could distort the narrative of the research or be blindsided by some issues and not deem them as important compared to how outsiders would see them. Merton (1972) on the other hand argues that “if an outsider takes up research which is not related to a topic area of interest, culture, group and status, he will not be able to understand the issue he is working on and therefore, will find it difficult to justify his study findings” (p.76). Bonner and Tolhurst (2002) expand this argument by articulating three main advantages of being an insider researcher;

*“Firstly, as an insider you will be able to better understand any issues related to the research; secondly you will not disrupt the flow of social interaction. Finally, you will be able to extract true data from the participants as you will be relatable to them … in addition, a researcher’s familiarity with the cultural and political structure of an organisation will help save time in understanding the issue being studied because of prior knowledge. Based on the opposing perspective, both views cannot be disregarded because they offer reasonable explanation and justification despite one view reducing the importance of a researcher’s objectivity” (p.19).*

There are pros and cons to each position. A researcher with an existing relationship to a research subject, and its participants, and a sense of a shared identity, may have an advantage as they might be trusted more than a researcher without (Given: 2008). However, this insider position may also cause tensions, particularly around the gathering of sensitive data.

What is crucial in either research position, either as an insider or an outsider researcher, is that a researcher must reflect on their relationship with participants and acknowledge any benefits or challenges that they may face.

For me, therefore, as an ‘insider’ researcher, I needed to be aware of my position and the bearing it may have on my research. Before agreeing to take part in an interview, potential interviewees were given an information sheet outlining the research. The information sheet explained that participation was voluntary, that any information given was in the strictest confidence and would be anonymised, and that participants were able to withdraw their participation at any stage during the interview.

It was also explained to the residents that I was a member of staff of the housing association but that this research was independent. Some residents did question whether I could truly be independent whilst working for the housing association, however, I made it clear that the research I was undertaking was primarily for myself as a housing professional to expand my knowledge of such a unique housing development as well as potentially helping to influence future housing policy in the UK. No resident refused to take part in the research.

The interviewees themselves were categorised into 3 distinct groups; residents living on the housing development (both private residents as well as social housing residents), key housing association staff who were involved in the development in various capacities, and external staff linked to the development. Before any resident interviews commenced, the participants were asked to complete and sign a consent form to confirm that the research project had been explained to them and that they agreed to take part in the research.

I did obtain permission from the housing association to undertake this piece of research and no information specifically attributed to social housing residents was fed back to housing association staff. It was made clear to all the participants through the information sheet, consent form and reiterated verbally at the beginning of each interview, that at no stage during or after the study would any party involved in the research be given access to recorded interviews or full transcripts.

Recorded interviews, their transcriptions and the questionnaires are all stored on a password-protected computer. Hard copies of the data have also been kept in a locked filing cabinet. Hard copies of all data will be destroyed at the end of the study. After the study, electronic versions of data, recordings and transcripts will be kept on a password-protected computer for my own personal use in potential future publications.

All residents have been given pseudonyms to protect their anonymity. If reference was made to any other staff members by the participants referred to, they were also given pseudonyms when quoted.

Below is a table using pseudonym names so I can refer to them when quoting without referring to their real names. The table below also highlights the tenure type, their age and family make up as well as ethnicity.

**Table 4: Resident breakdown in tenure type, age, family make up and ethnicity**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Pseudonyms | Tenure Type | Age | Family make up | Ethnic group  (adults) |
| Sarah Nutbeem | Social Housing | Adult: 30 yrs.  Child: 7 yrs. | 1 adult & 1 child | White British |
| Dieago and Carolina Moreno | Social Housing | Adult 1: 44 yrs.  Adult 2: 38 yrs.  Child 1: 9 yrs.  Child 2: 7 yrs. | 2 adults & 2 children | Black African |
| Kate Snubbs | Social Housing | Adult 27 yrs.  Child 1: 9 yrs.  Child 2: 6 yrs.  Child 3: 3 yrs. | 1 adult & 3 children | White British |
| Tony and Somera Cartwright | Social Housing | Adult 1: 44 yrs.  Adult 2: 38 yrs.  Child 1: 15 yrs.  Child 2: 4 yrs. | 2 adults & 2 children | White British &  Asian British |
| Jane Atwell | Social Housing | Adult 36 yrs.  Child 1: 12 yrs.  Child 2: 4 yrs. | 1 adult & 2 children | White British |
| Simon Warde | Social Housing | Adult 1: 30 yrs.  Adult 2: 28 yrs. | 2 adults & 2 children | White British |
| Doreen Simpleton | Private | Adult: 58 yrs. | 1 adult | White British |
| Patrick and Jacqueline Armsden | Private | Adult 1: 68 yrs.  Adult 2: 66 yrs. | 2 adults | White British |
| James Edwards | Private | Adult 1: 45 yrs.  Adult 2: 40 yrs.  Child 1: 15 yrs.  Child 2: 10 yrs. | 2 adults & 2 children | White British |
| Paul and Valerie Searley | Private | Adult 1: 66 yrs.  Adult 2: 65 yrs. | 2 adults | White British |
| Kevin Dunford | Private | Adult 1: 38 yrs.  Adult 2: 35 yrs. | 2 adult | White British |
| Chu Hua Lennon | Private | Adult 1: 41 yrs.  Adult 2: 37yrs  Child 1: 2 yrs. | 2 adults & 1 child | White British &  Asian British |
| Peter Foster | Shared Ownership | Adult: 55 yrs. | 1 adult | White British |
| Donald and Biyu Streeter | Shared Ownership | Adult 1: 66 yrs.  Adult 2: 43 yrs. | 2 adults | White British &  Asian British |

Other participants involved in the research were anonymised. However, if individual participants explicitly wanted to be named in the research outputs, for example, those in official roles, their anonymity was not protected. Verbatim quotes have not been used where I felt that the content could identify an individual. The decision to protect the identity of the case study site was primarily taken to support the anonymity of the residents living in the development. However, people familiar with the sector may well be able to identify the development. The case study will therefore be referred to as the ‘West Green’ development within this thesis.

Throughout the research, it was important to remain mindful of the ethical issues which arose from working with such a diverse group of people and organisations (Crotty: 1998; Merriam: 1998; Orb et al.: 2001). It was necessary for me to be aware of my position, both as a member of staff of the housing association involved in the development as well as an independent researcher to ensure I did not compromise the nature of my research. According to Costley (2010), “when researchers are insiders, they draw upon the shared understandings and trust of their immediate and more removed colleagues with whom normal social interactions of working communities are developed” (p.72). This was true in my case. As an insider, I acknowledged I was in a unique position to study particular nuances about the development without the need for time-consuming exploration navigating through detailed information. The people I spoke to were either residing in their homes in West Green or working as key partners on the development, which I could easily access.

When interviewing my work colleagues, I was aware of the need to be sensitive to them when discussing the development. I didn’t want them to feel as though I was judging their processes or the manner in which activities were undertaken by them. I made it clear from the outset of the interviews that the conversations were primarily around their role within West Green and only a few questions pertained to personal opinions. I reiterated it was entirely up to the staff members if they wanted to answer the personal questions but, overall, all staff happily shared their views.

I did notice when I interviewed staff from other departments e.g. Development (Senior Development Manager and Regional Development Director) that it took a while for them to feel at ease with me in their interview. Perhaps, in part, this was because I did not have as close a relationship with them compared to my housing colleagues. However, once the interviews began, things settled down quickly.

The commitment from my employer to allow me to be independent helped me ensure that the ethics of the research were not compromised in any way. In addition, it was important to acknowledge that, through my research, I did not do anything which would cause harm to the organisation.

Interviewing external partners brought with it a different experience. Primarily I emailed all external interviewees to arrange a meeting either in their offices or, in the case of the builders, on-site at West Green. Not knowing them prior to my appointment, I consciously spent more time at the beginning of each interview outlining my research proposal in full and explaining how their input would enrich and enhance my understanding of their role within West Green. For example, when I interviewed the local authority officer, he explained how the pre-planning work for West Green was just as vital as the planning application itself;

*“Due to the complexity of West Green and its zero carbon requirements, there was far more details to get through to meet the planning conditions related to the site. There was also additional sensitivity around how West Green would integrate with the existing community as well as the fact that this new development was mixed tenured.”*

The officer went on to explain;

*“Being brought in at such an early stage, helped me to look at the proposed layout and plans for the site … this resulted in attending lots of meetings with developer, the architects, consultants the Homes and Community Agency consultants, ensuring we got everything right from the outset. This whole process from conception to actual submission probably took a year if not 18 months, that was 12 to 18 months before they put the application in”.*

Interviews with the local councillor also provided an important insight to the work undertaken prior to the development being approved;

*“All the prelim work we did helped towards the negotiations with the Homes and Community Agency and the developers Barratt, the premise for the development was to be one of the ‘greenest’ housing site in the country which we were keen on achieving.”*

The Councillor also commented on the work undertaken to ensure existing residents were involved in the plans for West Green;

“*There were a number of community resident meetings we held involving the architects, local authority officers as well as the developers…we wanted to be as open and transparent as we could to alay any fears existing residents may have had about the development…this was all new, to us and to them.”*

For organisations such as the Homes and Community Agency, their focus was very much on understanding the holistic benefit to people’s lives;

*“We wanted to make the theoretical understanding of zero carbon into reality … I believe for us this project was the whole package and not just focussed on the physical aspect of it. We wanted to create a development which supported sustainability both in what materials were used to build the homes as well as the way we encouraged residents to take responsibility of their actions and behaviour, whilst living in their home…we wanted the development to incorporate the wider social wellbeing aspect, such as the cycle paths, allotments, orchards etc to encourage their use… we were keen to ensure that we created a community where sustainability was key within the development.”*

Interestingly, the interviews in respective offices with the above interviewees tended to be quite formal as each interviewee was keen to elaborate on their role in the development. The interviews with the builders on site, however, were more informal where they not only answered the questions I posed but also took the time to go through plans of the development and its evolutionary process.

There was also an opportunity to go out and walk the development to highlight certain aspects of West Green;

*“If you look around as we walk, you can see the progress we have made here, the houses are beginning to come together and the external environment such as the allotments and greenhouses are really taking shape…I think for us as a private developer, understanding how the whole development will connect people to the environment and their home is something we are really interested in”.*

This interview proved extremely valuable to me as it highlighted aspects of the development which they wanted to bring particular attention to as well as being open about sharing the progress being made on-site and some of the challenges they were facing. It helped me to understand how walking interviews would be valuable for use with residents and it was interesting to note that they focused on many of the same features of West Green and explained the significance of these to their experience of living there.

The builder continued;

*“The hardest part for us has been the unknown! This isn’t your normal housing development, so the technical input from the architects and the specialist builders has all needed to be factored in…this is the biggest challenge for us which then has an impact on when the houses are completed for them to be finally sold or handed over to the housing association.”*

When it came to interviewing the residents, most were quite relaxed about sharing their personal journeys as to how they came to either purchase or become a social housing tenant at West Green. I was conscious that the details they were sharing remained confidential especially when it came to health concerns. At this stage, I was particularly conscious of the need to reflect on my position as an insider researcher, as stressed by Given (2008) to ensure the validity of my research. In particular, there were two households who provided quite detailed explanations as to how their health was a cause for concern for them and the impact it had on their family and their children.

At times this was quite hard to hear as I was not necessarily able to ease their concerns but they did comment that having someone to listen to them was of help.

What was interesting about all the residents’ interviews was that there was a sense of excitement as well as determination amongst them all, regardless of their circumstances or tenure, to make West Green a place for them to settle and to begin a new chapter in their lives.

## 3.3 Conducting the research

### 3.3.1 Residents’ interviews

The main technique I used for the purpose of my research was face to face interviews. As Opdenakker (2006) advocates, this interview technique has been the most dominant associated in the field of qualitative research and can take advantages of details such as social cues;

*“Social cues, such as voice, intonation, body language etc. of the interviewee can give the interviewer a lot of extra information that can be added to the verbal answer of the interviewee on a question” (p.82).*

In order for me to attain and recognise such intricacies, I primarily interviewed the residents in their own environment, i.e. in their own homes or walking around the development. The participants were clearly relaxed being in these settings and this was reflected in how confident they were in expressing themselves.

Walking interviews were particularly relevant here as they gave participants the chance to explore their views and experiences of the housing development in situ. Researchers O’Neill and Roberts (2019) recognise the value of walking as an ordinary practice that can be transformed into a valuable research tool. In particular, they note its value in gathering biographical data from research participants as the rhythm of walking “generates a kind of rhythm of thinking” (Solnit: 2001: p.4).

However, there may also be drawbacks to this method. For example, the participant will be given the freedom to follow their own train of thought and so, while this may uncover valuable insights, it may also lead to a large volume of unusable or irrelevant data. Despite, this drawback, it was recognised that it may uncover insights that might not be revealed using any other method.

The questions designed for each of the resident interviewees were of a semi-structured nature. However, each questionnaire differed according to the tenure type of the person I was interviewing. For example, when I interviewed social housing residents, I asked slightly different questions to those who were in private housing. The reason for this was that some of the information I required was not relevant. For example, i.e. asking how long someone had been on the local authority housing waiting list may well have been relevant for social housing residents but not the private residents. However, a majority of the questions were similar as this enabled me to attain a true reflection and comparison of their actions and their purpose for engagement, whilst discussing environmental social spaces within the development.

Parts of my interviews were also conducted whilst walking around the development with the participants. It is argued that walking interviews generate richer data because interviewees are prompted by meanings and connections to their surroundings and are therefore less likely to try and give the ‘right’ answer when answering questions (Evans and Jones: 2008). The method can also afford participants a greater degree of control over the research process and add details which cannot be recreated in a controlled interview setting. As Clark and Emmel (2009) explain, the advantages of taking such an approach is useful for a number of different reasons; “placing events, stories and experiences in their spatial context can help participants to articulate their thoughts…the method can also be adapted to fit in with a participants’ everyday life, while also revealing some of their practices making way for opportunities to demonstrate how local spaces implicate real life networking practices. Thus, the participants’ narratives told in their lived environment can add detail to the researcher’s understanding and insight” (Clark and Emmel: 2009: p.2).

I wanted to take advantage of this approach to help me access people’s attitudes and knowledge about their surrounding environment. By applying this technique, it was helpful to see how the respondent was able to verbalise their feelings more readily ‘when on location’, producing more contextual data (Hitchins and Jones: 2004). Walking around the development also offered an intimate way of engaging with the landscape with the participant and provided insight into both the place and their self (Solnit: 2001).

By employing this method, however, the time undertaken to conduct the interviews did take longer. There was also a tendency for the participants to deviate onto other topics which in itself did provide more rich data but the conversations were perhaps not as focussed at times. Also transcribing the interviews took longer as the answers to the questions where embedded in the additional narrative the participants were providing whilst conducting the walking interview. As Evans and Jones (2011), explain, “walking interviews tend to be longer and more spatially focussed, engaging to a greater extent with features in the area than with the autobiographical narrative of interviewees ... a variety of different questions are asked and phrased in a variety of different ways to different respondents, which can cause additional layering” (p.163).

As my research was primarily looking at how social space is used as a catalyst for integration and building new communities, it was essential then when walking through/near specific areas e.g., the allotments, cycle paths, orchards, etc that I captured how the locations impacted on the residents.

Interestingly social cues such as voice, intonation, body language etc. of the interviewees also provided an extra layer of information that added to their verbal answers. Many interviewees pointed to certain areas around the development which they frequented and associated it with personal reasoning and emotions, allowing them to be more animated in their response. Pullen (2010) reiterates such a point when he states, “social cues are a useful component when wanting to understand the nuances of a conversation or the environment you are situated in…this leads to a more holistic conversation and draws the interviewee into a comfortable place” (p.65).

Both the scheduled questions and the walking interviews naturally stimulated comments and observations that were unexpected and, on occasion, resulted in deviating from the set schedule of questions. I ensured that all were answered fully and in a timely manner.

### 3.3.2 Social housing staff and external agencies interviews

For social housing staff and external agencies, again different questionnaires were produced, some varied more than others dependent on the roles each individual played within their sector. In total, 15 different questionnaires were designed.

Most of the external interviews did not take place in the same location as the development and so travelling time had to be considered when planning the interviews. At times, this did prove difficult due to me being a part-time student and some of the challenges I faced, such as remaining focused on the tasks and breaking them up into smaller chunks so they became manageable. Many of the external agencies were based as far away as London and the West of England, so I needed to make sure I was able to juggle personal responsibility with that of the research and the travel associated with it. Also, to help me prepare in advance of my meetings, I asked the external interviewees whether they could provide any additional information relating to the development, such as brochures or other literature to help contextualise my research. Most obliged, which helped me to prepare in advance.

For housing association staff interviews, I structured the questions to follow a timely chronological order of their involvement within the development but at the same time allowed each interview to flow naturally in the direction the participant led. This frequently meant deviating from the planned structure but having the structure in place meant I could return to it to ensure all areas were covered. This strategy was valuable as it meant that I collected insightful information through letting the participant follow their stream of consciousness.

Also, as highlighted previously, interviewing housing staff felt more relaxed as I had a prior relationship with them whilst interviewing colleagues who I was not as familiar with, and who worked in different offices meant I did not see them as often to build up the same rapport.

This may have posed a challenge as I may have gathered more information from the colleagues I knew best, thereby influencing my findings. However, once the interviews commenced, there was a natural flow to them and I soon built a rapport, often forged on our shared positions as housing professionals and mutual interest in the subject. On reflection, the greatest difficulty I encountered was booking and undertaking the interviews over a period of a few months. As a part-time student, finding time to interview staff was not too much of an issue as I could arrange this around my own work schedule and undertake interviews during lunchtime periods or even before or after work (four members of staff agreed to this, two prior to starting work and two after working hours). As some of the staff were in different offices, I also made a conscious decision to travel and speak to them face to face rather than undertake telephone interviews, as I wanted to see their reaction and body language when answering the questions. I did not want to miss any nuances or expressions, which could help me attain a greater understanding of their responses for my research.

Again, when it came to interviewing residents, there was a large number of residents to interview and many worked or had busy personal lives so many of the interviews were carried out after work. This meant staying away from home for a number of nights but it did allow me to notice the difference in how West Green’s social spaces were being used as the environmental dynamic changed when there were more people about. When I walked the development during the day, it was much quieter as many people were at work and children were at school. As construction was still taking place, most of the people on the development during the day were workmen so the relationship they had with the site was very different from someone residing there. Undertaking the interviews during early summer months, in particular, allowed the walking interviews to be quite a pleasant experience and, on some occasions, children joined us too.

When it came to interviewing the external organisations, this proved to be the most difficult as many had busy work schedules. In one instance, I had booked a meeting with the architect who was based in London. I had pre-booked the train tickets in advance and on the day of the meeting it was cancelled. An alternative date was set quickly, however, as a consequence, not only did I lose out on the cost of the train ticket, I had also taken a day’s annual leave for the interview, which was frustrating.

## 3.4 Recording, transcribing and analysing the data

The interviews undertaken were all recorded with the use of a digital voice recorder. Recording interviews rather than taking notes ensures that important details were not missed and it captured the way people spoke and the phrases they used and allowed for repeated examinations of the data (Kvale: 2007; Bryman: 2008).

The interviews were transcribed verbatim by myself and the thematic analyses of the interviews were carried out undertaking the following stages;

1. Familiarisation

2. Coding of data

3. Interpretation

This three-part process mirrors the core activities recognised within the qualitative analysis. Various authors have given different labels to these activities which point to a similar source: understanding, conceptual ordering and theorising (Strauss and Corbin: 1998); data reduction, data display, deducing and verification (Miles and Huberman: 1994). Each of these processes will be described in turn below;

### 3.4.1 Familiarisation

To familiarise myself with the data, I decided to use manual methods to gain an intuitive sense of the data (Webb, 1998). As part of the manual process, I used flip chart paper, coloured sticky notes and coloured pens to help me visualise the data and enable me to distinguish the different groups forming within West Green. I found this approach to familiarisation useful as it allowed me to think and look ‘wider’ rather than confining me to a computer screen. As Tecker (2007) states, “visually looking at your data can bring another dimension and richness to your findings” (p.76). Taking a manual approach to the familiarisation stage of data analysis also proved useful in helping to generate a list of initial theme ideas as well as to gain a better understanding of my data. The qualitative software NVIVO 10 was used to organise the data for the subsequent stages of analysis.

### 3.4.2 Coding of data

NVIVO 10 is an organisational tool that helped me index and retrieve my interviews, which a number of authors recommend (Coffey and Atkinson: 1996; Strauss and Corbin: 1998; Mason, 2002; Richards: 2005). The second stage of coding included data coding for the content of the interviews (what sorts of things are people talking about?), analytical coding for interpretation of interviewee perspectives (what is the significance of what people are talking about?) and coding for the language used by interviewees (how do people talk?). Being informed by the concepts within the CoP framework and its ‘aliveness’ principles (see chapter 1 for an introduction), the resulting codes were;

* Activities undertaken
  + *What activities*
  + *How often*
* Types of engagement and participation
  + *Gardening*
  + *Cycling*
  + *Engagement*
  + *Walking*
  + *Sports*
  + *Play areas*
* Encouraging others to engage and participate
  + *Social networking*
  + *School*
  + *Community centre*
* Supporting networks
  + *Facebook group*
  + *Community development worker*
* Environmental actions
  + *Allotments*
  + *Meadows*

### 3.4.3 Interpretations

Through the thematic analysis, informed by CoP, a deeper understanding of the people residing at West Green was achieved. This included their motivation for moving to the new housing development as well as understanding any previous experiences they may have had with ‘green’ living. The analysis resulted in three- identified types;

* Transformer
* Lifestyle supporter
* Individualist

The following section will explain in more detail the importance of ‘type identification’ and how they were constructed and named for the purpose of my research.

**3.4.4 Identified types**

The "ideal type" is a subjective element in social theory and research and is formed from characteristics and elements of a given phenomenon, which does not necessarily correspond to all characteristics of any one particular case. More importantly, Weber uses the word ‘ideal’ to refer to the world of ideas (*gedankenbilder*, ‘mental images’) and not to perfection. These ‘ideal types’ are idea-constructs that help put the seeming chaos of social reality in order (Scarison: 2010). Weber further notes, "an ideal type is formed by the one-sided accentuation of one or more points of view and by the synthesis of a great many diffuse, discrete, more or less present and occasionally absent concrete individual phenomena…to try to understand a particular phenomenon, one must not only describe the actions of its participants but ‘interpret’ them as well" (Shils and Finch: 1997: p.129). The identification of types, therefore, is particularly crucial in this study as it provides a framework through which the characteristics of West Green’s residents can be formed for the purpose of positioning them in relation to theoretical constructs, and contrasting them with other categories.

The process of establishing ‘ideal types’, therefore, began by clarifying their meaning which, in the case of this research, entailed identifying why residents moved to West Green. During the process of interviewing residents, it became apparent that a wide range of underlying motivations played a role in informing the decision of the respective residents to rent or purchase a home at West Green. It is for this reason that a three-part ‘types’ were constructed. The three-part ‘types’ was not only reflective of the differential motivations for renting/purchasing a home in West Green but also represented differentiations in green behaviours.

Despite the wide range of motivations that emerged through the interviews, the most common themes included a combination of requiring social housing (which the resident accepted any offer of suitable accommodation within West Green and generally did not have any particular input into the selection of accommodation within this development), a personal choice to purchase a home complementing their current lifestyle, for convenience, for affordability or to enhance ‘green’ behaviour engagement. Once the spectrum of motivation and green behaviours was established, it became easier to ‘establish an informative connection’ between ‘types’ and the terms that I would designate to them (i.e. Transformer, Lifestyle Supporter, Individualist). The choice of the designated terms was a function of ‘the constellation of related concepts’ (Collier et al.: 2012) that underpinned them. Thus, for instance, I chose the designation ‘Transformer’ because it provided an apt designation for situating this group of residents in a particular semantic field. Since those in this category wholeheartedly embrace the green lifestyle at West Green and changed their lives and practices in response to their aspirations of the development, the semantic field ‘Transformer’ was particularly suitable. For the ‘Lifestyle Supporters’, the idea of continuing their green practices and embracing the lifestyle they adopted prior to residing at West Green suitably denoted this type of resident. It is important to note that a majority of the residents interviewed fell into these two categories, whilst the ‘Individualist’ type was made up of only 2 residents. The ‘Individualist’, as the name suggests, were very much of the ilk to remain quite separate from engagement opportunities or participating in ‘green’ activities but nevertheless formed part of West Greens make up.

It is important to highlight that this process of ‘ideal type’ formation was not a linear one but, rather, iterative. Residents were not assigned to pre-classified groups rather it was important for the data to ‘speak for itself’ to avoid forcing residents into pre-constructed categories that only vaguely represented their characteristics. Thus, the ‘ideal types’ were established around the categories of persons identified based on the data set.

Though Weber’s concept of “ideal type” has been well appreciated by scholars it has not been free from criticisms. Some of the criticisms levelled against the concept highlight that the ‘ideal type’ can confuse itself with ‘actual reality’ as well as being dysfunctional in terms of development and inhibiting innovation and creativity. Despite this limitation, the approach was useful for conceptual formation and for drawing together various lines of investigation for analysis in helping to garner and identify my resulting types.

A detailed explanation of the typologies is presented in the table below;

**Table 5: Identified types**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Identified type | Characteristics | Who made up this ideal type? |
| Transformer | This ‘type’ of people wholeheartedly embraced the ‘green’ lifestyle. The environment at West Green allowed them to change their lives and practices to marry up with their aspirations of the development. This group also encouraged and supported others (regardless of tenure type) to get involved and initiated in community activities, which were both environmentally encouraging as well as engagement orientated. | This ‘type’ of people mainly consisted of social housing residents with a few private tenant households also involved (six in total within this identified type). |
| Lifestyle Supporter | This ‘type’ of people already appreciated the ‘green’ living lifestyle and, therefore, this formed part of their everyday life. For the people within this group, moving into West Green only enhanced their experience within this environment. This group tended to engage in ‘green’ community activities but did not necessarily instigate activities. | This ‘type’ predominantly consisted of private tenure households. However, social housing resident households were also included (six in total within this identified group). |
| Individualist | This ‘type’ of people tended to keep to themselves and had limited engagement in any community activities or community events. They considered their personal space as a priority to them and remained isolated on purpose or due to other commitments such as work or preferring  solitude | This ‘type’ consisted of two shared ownership households. |

The ‘ideal type’ reflect the different characterisations each hold, highlighting how their experience, their willingness to share their ‘green’ credentials and their networking ability have been utilised to support each other within the development.

A further breakdown of the household and tenure classifications making up each type is illustrated in Appendix F. This breakdown provides an illustration of the household configuration and their reason for moving to West Green. This analysis also allows for a deeper understanding of the connectivity between the individual residents living in West Green and the typologies allocated to them.

The following section will go on to highlight my role as a researcher and the attention considered whilst undertaking the research.

### 3.4.5 My role as a researcher

Being a housing professional for many years, I was mindful, that whilst undertaking the interviews, my housing experience did not in any way cloud what the interviewees were saying. I had to try and remain unbiased and, at the same time, be reflective in the way I conducted myself. I took on the role of an insider/ outsider researcher and this experience led me to reflect on some of the research in this field explored in the literature review of this thesis. Early in the process, I recognised that my feelings contradicted the views of Simmel (1950) as I believe that, although I was objective, I was also an insider. Instead, I followed Merton’s (1972) view that the position of being an insider is valuable as you will be able to have a richer understanding of context.

With regards to interviewing the residents specifically, if they spoke in relation to any of the agencies involved in the development, such as the housing association or the developers, I had to remain professional in my role even though I may have had knowledge or information which could alleviate the issues they were expressing. One such example was when a private resident was complaining about the lack of attention being paid (by the managing agent employed by the developer) to one of the water supply pipes near the allotments. I had previously been informed that the managing agent was in discussion with the water supplier about this but that the outcome may well have a bearing on residents’ service charges. Therefore, I was not at liberty to discuss this matter further with the resident.

I could see how this issue affected the resident physically but the only thing I could do in this instance was to pass their concerns to the managing agent, asking them to get back to the resident to provide an update, which they did. At this stage in the interview process, I felt the tension between the insider/ outsider positions. I was conscious of Simmel’s (1950) belief that an insider could reveal confidential or sensitive information, which would be harmful to the research, and so I made sure that I did not.

Another example can be illustrated through discussions with one resident who expressed frustration at the delay in the community centre in West Green being completed on time. For her and a few other residents, the community centre was a means to ease their childcare issues as registered childminders would be utilising space in the centre to support local families in the area. I was aware that the delay was partly due to the centre’s lease having to be ratified by the managing agent and the developers, as well as the local authority as to its usage and liability, which ultimately had cost implications for those residing in West Green. Again, being aware of this information and not able to share this with the resident I could only reiterate to her that I would pass their concerns to the managing agent and hope that an update could be provided as soon as reasonably possible.

Interviewing my colleagues who I worked with on a daily basis was also a thought-provoking experience. For me, this was probably the most difficult aspect of the interviews for two reasons. Firstly, knowing your interviewees on a personal level brings with it conscious or subconscious prior knowledge and history of your experience of working with them and them with you. Therefore, I had to be mindful not to steer or navigate the answers to my expectations, which could have reduced the quality of the research in terms of credibility and validity. I was aware of both Merton’s (1972) and Bonner and Tolhurst’s (2002) views that an insider researcher has the benefit of understanding the context of the research but I had to make sure that my knowledge of this did not negatively influence my findings. Secondly, when I was undertaking the interviews, I had to acknowledge my colleagues’ responses as though I was unaware of the development itself, something which was not easy as I had visited and worked on the site prior to undertaking the research.

On the other hand, when interviewing the various external agencies, I found this easier as I had not encountered most of them before or their specific involvement within the development. Reflecting upon the whole process, the need for me to utilise my skills as a researcher, as well as someone who had prior knowledge of the development, was a hard balance to attain. Again, I felt the tension between being an insider researcher and conscious that my position did not distort the data I gathered, as Simmel (1950) cautioned against. I became very aware with every interview I carried out that remaining professional and asking questions only related to the subject area was essential in order to gain the most from the discussions, as further opportunities to access these busy participants would be difficult to come by. In addition, and especially within the construction industry, personnel changes tended to be quite frequent. Therefore, staff who were involved in the development from the outset may not be present for the duration of the entire build. Thus, the need to ensure I had access to the right staff who were able to share their knowledge was also a consideration I needed to be aware of when undertaking the interviews and the timescale for the schedule.

Finally, it is important to emphasise that, as a housing professional, I do not want to paint a picture that this development is a utopia. As with anything where people are involved, and especially with regards to something as emotive as housing, there will always be challenges to overcome. In the context of West Green, there have been issues which one might expect in any development. For example, these issues included the ever-controversial matter of parking, as well as problems which are more specific to the nature of that development, such as the reluctance from some residents to engage in community activities. Even acknowledging this, however, I must say that there is a different ‘feel’ at West Green when you visit and spend time there in comparison with traditional developments. The attention to detail as to marrying what nature and the environment can support with housing need provides a whole new perspective to what sustainability can actually be and achieve. When I have attended the residents’ meetings or spoken to people on the development, I get a real sense that people are proud to be associated with West Green. They believe it is their home and not just bricks and mortar they’ve moved in to.

### 3.4.6 Limitations of the methodology

The methodology is limited by the fact that it will study West Green in isolation, rather than by comparison with other developments, which do not have the same green or community features. This is not a fundamental flaw because, as explained regarding the case study approach, the qualitative nature of the data collected will, nevertheless, give an indication of the relationship between these features and any changes in social cohesion and/or green lifestyle choices. However, it will prevent solid comparisons from being drawn as to the extent of this behaviour relative to the ‘base level’. It will be suggested that comparative research of this type might be an interesting avenue to be pursued in further work and it is hoped that this work will raise interesting research questions and evidence which might form the basis of any such study.

## 3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has summarised the methodology, research approach undertaken and ethical considerations used as well as providing a personal researcher’s view point to explore the questions posed by this thesis. The following analysis chapter is informed by the theoretical framework and addresses each element of the research question in turn. Firstly, building on my interviews with external stakeholders, this chapter deals with the policy and political context in which the development of West Green took place, drawing on the interviews with the Homes and Community Agency, the architect, local councillors etc and highlighting the objectives and motivations for the project. Secondly, it goes on to deal with the impact of the development on the green behaviour of its residents. Thirdly, again drawing together data from the interviews with residents, it addresses the extent to which social mixing is taking place. Finally, it draws an overall conclusion as to whether a cohesive society has developed in West Green. Each of these discussions can then be drawn together to offer final conclusions on the research section of the final chapter.

# Chapter 4: Context: the case of West Green

This chapter will seek to put West Green into context from an external perspective, drawing on data from interviews with internal and external parties. This encompasses a matrix of political and social policy motivations for the development and goes on to examine the beneficial nature of the scheme and, finally, utilises the data from interviews with the external agencies as to whether the principal idea of the development has been achieved or is in the process of being achieved.

## 4.1 Political and social policy reasons for building West Green

The motivation for West Green is the product of a complex matrix of political and social policy factors. This chapter will consider these in detail, as well as the competing policies with which they come into conflict. Importantly, the balance of these considerations has not remained constant throughout the lifetime of the West Green project. Thus, this chapter will also chart the fluctuations in political priorities, which have impacted the development of the project from the initial bid to completion.

The shortage of housing across the UK, and the general government policy to increase the rate of construction in this area, may not be specific to West Green but is, nevertheless, an important context. Affordability of housing, particularly for first-time buyers, is an important element of this problem. An analysis by the Centre for Economic Performance (2018) reports that UK house prices per square metre are the second highest in the world (coming in behind Monaco). However, with an ongoing shortage of supply, policies to address affordability (such as shared ownership and Help to Buy) have served only to increase house prices to match increased demand.

Construction is, therefore, a key policy but has been hampered by the planning process which is criticised for encouraging an attitude of ‘not in my backyard’ (often known as ‘NIMBYism’) from existing residents and lack of co-operation and engagement between various different stakeholders leading to development stalling.

The impetus for the development of West Green was primarily driven by political and social policy motivations. In broad terms, the need for ‘green’ infrastructure and housing, which facilitates greater social mobility, are ever-present themes in British politics and policymaking. These overarching concerns provided the context for the publication of the 2007 Energy White Paper, ‘Meeting the Energy Challenge’,which published on 23 May 2007. The White Paper outlined the Government’s international and domestic strategy for responding to two main challenges;

* cutting [carbon emissions](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carbon_emissions) to tackle [global warming](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Global_warming);
* ensuring secure, clean and affordable energy as imports.

The Paper also set out more specific objectives in relation to housing, highlighting the need to achieve the following targets;

* a requirement for all new homes to be [zero-carbon buildings](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zero-carbon_building) as soon as practically possible and preferably by 2016;
* improving the energy efficiency of existing homes;
* increasing the [Carbon Emission Reduction Target](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carbon_Emission_Reduction_Target) for the electricity and gas industries for 2008-2011.

These goals may appear arbitrary when viewed in isolation but, in fact, they complemented other existing governmental energy initiatives, such as the Code for Sustainable Homes, which was an [environmental assessment](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Environmental_assessment) method for rating and certifying the performance of new homes in [England](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/England), [Wales](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wales) and [Northern Ireland](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Northern_Ireland). First introduced in 2006, it was a national standard used in design and construction, which had had some success in increasing awareness of the environmental impact of new projects but only modest tangible impacts on outcomes, primarily because environmental concerns tended to give way to other pressures (in particular economic concerns and political pressure to increase the number of ‘affordable homes’). Another specifically housing orientated initiative, which formed part of the political and policy background to the West Green development, was the government’s national Carbon Challenge initiative (2007) (delivered by Connecting Partnerships on behalf of the Department of Communities and Local Government).

Its objective was to help the housebuilding industry fast track developments that significantly reduced the impact on the environment and encouraged people to live sustainable lifestyles and which incorporated design, placemaking, construction efficiency, community engagement and public spaces as well as a wide range of housing solutions. The purpose of the Challenge was also to, firstly, build on lessons learnt from previous environmental programmes such as Design for Manufacture Competition and the Millennium Communities, which achieved efficiencies in construction costs and minimised waste generated during the building process; and secondly to support the government’s narrative to respond effectively to climate change through the implementation of zero-carbon homes.

The criteria for the Challenge standard was very detailed in its requirements; wanting partnership level agreements to be agreed prior to any bid being considered. The focus was for differing agencies, such as private developers, local authorities, Regional Development Agencies, other public sector landowners and private sector developers, to work together and agree on how they could contribute to the initiative. It also aimed to illustrate the importance of private and public partnership work, supporting innovative designs with that of transforming people’s lives through their homes. Strong emphasis was placed on the design to allow for behavioural changes to easily be embraced for a low carbon lifestyle.

## 4.2 The development of West Green

It was in this context that the initial bid for West Green was submitted to Connecting Partnerships in 2008. This proved to be unfortunate timing since 2008 marked the beginning of the worst economic downturn for a generation, in which the housing market was particularly affected (Storey: 2012). The economic pressures and emphasis on affordability became eventually more profound. There was little appetite amongst potential buyers to pay for non-essential features, such as enhanced environmental credentials, particularly at the end of the market at which West Green was aimed. For this reason, construction on the project did not commence for a further three years, until 2011, when the early signs of economic recovery began to restore a degree of cautious confidence in investors. The scheme was not finally completed until 2015 but my data collection was completed by June 2014.

### 4.2.1 Which green features does West Green have?

West Green is one of the earliest and most ambitious projects designed with the priority of minimising environmental impact (Homes and Community Agency, 2012). West Green’s environmental features are driven by the standards set out above. In particular, it sought to lead the way in meeting the standard of carbon neutrality.

This was achieved in a number of ways. The structure of the buildings and the materials selected were designed to minimise heat loss, the shape of the roofs and other surfaces enables rainwater to be harvested for use in toilets and washing machines, the homes are fitted with mechanical ventilation with heat recovery systems, photovoltaics and solar shading systems. The development also incorporated a wide range of green infrastructure, with over a third of the site being dedicated to green space. This included allotments and orchards, a new park which leads to greenhouses, an apiary, a children’s play area and meadow grass. Existing trees and hedgerows were retained and improved and new native species were planted. This contributes to carbon neutrality as well as offering incidental benefits, such as improving air quality and enhancing the wellbeing of residents.

Given the ambition and novelty of the project, an important part of the design process was engagement with interested parties. To this end, an engagement programme was run with multiple stakeholders including the Parish Council, the Homes and Communities Agency, English Heritage, the local authority council, Green Belt Society, local residents and the supply chain. Two public consultation events were held for the wider community. It was important that people did not feel that the developers were self-righteously ‘forcing’ their environmentalism upon the local community, many of whom may have felt that they did not have the luxury of prioritising or investing in a ‘green’ lifestyle when they were dealing with other more pressing challenges in their lives. The development also has an innovative community management structure, whereby it would be run by its residents who would have a share in a Community Interest Company set up to manage and maintain the buildings and grounds.

Together, initiatives such as these helped the developers to realise their desire to provide a holistic approach to design in understanding that people want to be empowered rather than forced to live sustainably. It was also important to avoid creating a sense of ‘us’ and ‘them’ to develop the relationship between residents of the new development and those in the existing community. In the course of the interviews which I conducted with residents specifically, several external stakeholders, as well as residents, commented that the willingness of the architects to engage with the local community and to be responsive to their concerns was one of the features which set this development apart. Good relationships between the local authority council, the developer, the lead housing association, and other partners have been crucial to the success of the development and the maintenance of a positive outlook around the project. This enables issues to be addressed as and when they have (inevitably) arisen. An example is the ability of the housing association and the developer to work with the local council to resolve complaints about mess made by the lorries driving to and from the site during construction or the noise levels from the construction having an impact on existing residents within the vicinity.

The architects also played a crucial role in ensuring the design of the site blended with the existing surroundings as well as lending itself to future sustainable living. The aesthetic appeal of the home needed to meet the brief of the Challenge and zero-carbon criteria, meaning tightly controlled construction, which could be replicated. In addition, maximising the environmental envelope of the ‘green’ space surrounding the development was also paramount. As the architect noted;

*“It was important to make sure every view from a house was over a green space so the residents got a feel for living in such a spacious well thought through development … obviously, some of the landscape will still take time to develop and mature but that is part of its character, we also ensured we left some original features such as the hedgerows so they became a natural part of the development.”*

It is evident here that consideration was paid to the benefits of green space for residents, acknowledging that this was a crucial aspect of the development. This was also acknowledged by residents in several interviews as a feature of West Green that they most value.

### 4.2.2 Key features of the development

Below is a map of the development and key environmental features promoting social ‘green’ spaces;

**Figure1: Map of West Green**



The West Green development is a carbon-neutral housing estate based in the South West region of England. The site itself is spread over 7 hectares, of which 12 acres are landscaped grounds consisting of features such as allotments, greenhouses, cycle paths, play areas and meadows. The scheme houses a combination of 5, 4, 3 and 2 bedroom houses and 2 and 1 bedroom flats, totalling 185 properties on the complete site.

The properties are of a mixed tenure nature consisting of one third affordable social housing (8 of which are wheelchair accessible), and two thirds private homes for sale and shared ownership (part rent and part buy). For the purpose of my research, I am primarily concentrating on the ‘green’ spaces within this development and their role in bringing people closer together. However, as the development is supporting a holistic approach to sustainable living, the development also boasts a number of energy-conserving features specifically relating to the construction of the houses themselves, including;

* energy efficient materials including UV solar panels;
* a recycling heating system within the home;
* rainwater harvesting facilities;
* external sliding shutters to help prevent the houses from overheating in the summer and to retain the heat in the winter.

### 4.2.3 The external environment to the development

West Green is an open planned construction development allowing it to accommodate both the ‘green’ open spaces as well the variety of housing stock within the vicinity. It is surrounded by a green belt and conservation area and has strong road transport connections with easy access to the main motorways and the ring road. There is also a good cycle network with dedicated cycle paths in the surrounding areas, encouraging cyclists and pedestrians alike to use the lanes to appreciate the orchards and hedgerows around the development. Other transport amenities include a good bus service providing links to the local high street as well as to the main centre of the city. There is also a train station about 3.5 kilometres to the south of the development, with easy connections to a number of large cities.

There is a range of communal facilities including a local library and a youth and community centre nearby. A good selection of schools are close by including a local primary school to the north side of the site making this an attractive option for families living on the development. The local GP surgery is also close by and the local hospital is only 3 kilometres away.

### 4.2.4 The internal landscape features of the development

Having outlined the importance of the external landscape to this development, I must also note that the mechanism and relationship between the homes and the landscape are finely balanced too. The landscape strategy for this development can be defined by two key principles;

* green networks: encompassing the different character areas and providing a structure for the community to operate within the wider ecological context and not only within the physical dimension of the home;
* links: providing connections between disjointed habitat areas and connecting new communities to the wider context.

It is within this context that I’ve identified the following as key areas of social space engagement or ‘green’ connectivity areas within the development;

* **Allotments**- The allotments are situated to the northern part of the development and have been designed to make it possible for residents to grow their own food. The direct involvement in food production is aimed at encouraging residents, including children, to have an understanding of the seasons and what foods are appropriate at different times of the year. Allotment plots have to be rented individually, with social housing residents given a subsidy. The costs for the allotments are renewed every year and are responsible for its upkeep.

**Figure 2: Allotments at West Green**



**Figure 3: Allotments at West Green**



* **Seating areas –** benches have been erected throughout the development for people to sit and converse with each other, as well as to appreciate the surroundings of West Green. There are many opportunities for people to stop and just chat whilst they are walking around the development.

**Figure 4: Seating area at West Green**



**Figure 5: Seating area at West Green**



* **Greenhouses**- the greenhouses have been erected to allow the growing of fruits and vegetables within a confined area and are situated to the north of the development. The greenhouses demonstrate another avenue by which local residents can grow their own produce in a relaxed and social environment. Again, greenhouse space is rented on an annual basis.

**Figure 6: Greenhouses at West Green**



* **Cycle paths**- the primary cycle path flows from the west to the east of the development, leading towards the green belt just to the outskirts of it. The overall patterns of the cycle paths have been designed to reduce the visibility and dominance of the car, reinforcing the safety and comfort of pedestrians and cyclists as a priority.
* **Play areas**- much of the public domain within the development could be considered as ‘play space’ as it is separated from traffic paths and is overlooked. Secure play areas have been located to meet the requirement of ‘social play network’ criteria on the development. The green areas are also well supervised by houses with kitchens and living spaces overlooking the external areas immediately to the front of the properties.

**Figure 7: Play area at West Green**



**Figure 8: Play area at West Green**



* **Meadows**- the meadows form the basis of the green network within West Green, providing the visual aspect for the overall development becoming the gateway to the surrounding countryside.
* **Orchards-** The orchards support the natural growing ethos within the development and also shelters a series of sculpted seating areas, allowing for quieter moments. Also as part of the orchard, the retained and listed wall creates remnants of the history and life of the site. Maintenance of the orchard area is covered through costs within the service charge to the development.
* **Recycling storage**- there are recycling storage areas distributed throughout the development, allowing for and, encouraging, residents to adopt a more sustainable approach to recycling.
* **Community hall**- the development houses a refurbished community hall. The hall is recognised as a focal point for West Green, providing a variety of uses including local residents’ group meetings, a children’s crèche and adult education classes, amongst others.

**Figure 9: Community Hall at West Green**



As discussed in Chapter 2, there is the suggestion in the literature that communities with green spaces, such as those delineated above, encourage community collaboration and hence social cohesion when compared to those that do not (Tang and Bharmra: 2009; Stevenson et al.: 2016).

Further, a CoP framework, as per the stipulations of Wenger (2011), suggests that, within such an environmental development, there is scope for creating social cohesion (whereby West Green is conceptualised as a CoP) through its focus on ‘green’ behaviour and environmental initiatives. This research suggests that there is the potential for an empirical manifestation of Wenger’s (2011) propositions since the community has deployed a mixed tenure and does not emphasise socio-economic status, rather prioritising personal values and beliefs. I have hypothesised that, since residents of this community share a common purpose, being part of the CoP will encourage them to share their ideas and promote community engagement.

## 4.3 West Green- how to measure success?

My interviews revealed that there were a number of objectives for the West Green project. Their relative weight and significance varied from the standpoint of different stakeholders, as revealed in my interviews when I asked participants what they regarded as the measure of success for the development. For example, the local Councillor suggested three measures of success; the extent to which local people made good use of the facilities around them, the integration of the existing community with the new community in the local area and the promotion of eco-friendly lifestyles. By contrast, the representatives for the local authority, including officers and planners, suggested that success might be measured by reference to the length of time people envisaged remaining at West Green, the extent to which local facilities were put to good use and the harmoniousness of the community. Although there is clearly an overlap between these different objectives, it is important to bear in mind that the emphasis and prioritisation of these is often a matter of perspective. Nevertheless, a number of concrete objectives can be distilled from these conversations taken together with the broad policy and political context of the development. These are explored in turn below.

The primary objective of the development was to meet the need for housing. Current estimates are that the area requires at least 98,000 new homes over the next 15 years in order to meet rising demand (Local Authority Housing Review paper, 2015). West Green is one of a number of developments planned with a view to meeting this target. More specifically, a consistent feature of the ‘measures of success’ proposed by different stakeholders was that people should enjoy living in the properties at West Green and see themselves there for the long term.

Affordability is also a key target for any housing development. According to government policy, a minimum of 14 homes or one-third of the development (whichever is the greater) must be ‘affordable’. Although a mixed tenure development, West Green sought to go further than this. The role of the Regional Housing Director appears to have been particularly important in pushing for an increase in the proportion of affordable homes and social homes, as the initial proposals were more strongly biased towards private and shared owners.

One of the measures of success is also the extent to which residents are able to save money as a by-product of the green features of the development, reflecting the desire for affordability not only in up-front costs of the units but also sustainable affordability in the long term. A specific objective was to offer ‘pepper potted’ tenures to encourage social mixing. One of the key reasons underpinning this was to instigate behavioural changes to enable tenants to use their homes as efficiently and effectively as possible. Encouraging people to use public transport has raised issues in relation to parking. There is a fine line between ‘encouragement’ of this practice whilst still providing sufficient infrastructure for the use of private vehicles (most notably parking space) so that the choice continues to lie with the individual. The fact that parking has become such a contentious issue on the site is testament to how difficult this balance can be to get right. Finally, it was important for West Green to achieve ‘zero carbon’ status as well as to promote environmentally friendly lifestyles more generally.

### 4.3.1 Potential impacts/benefits of the development

West Green itself promotes a holistic lifestyle approach to living there and, with that, comes the anticipated impact and benefits for the people who live there as well as for the environment.

The table below highlights these potentials;

**Table 6: Potential impacts/benefits of West Green**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Potential impacts/benefits of West Green** | | | | |
| **Challenges addressed** | **Enhancing sustainable urbanisation** | **Restoring ecosystems and their functions** | **Developing climate change mitigation** | **Developing climate change adaptation** |
| Water Management | Reduce costs for water treatment | Increase the quantity and quality of blue-green infrastructures |  | Increase infiltration  Reduce runoff |
| Climate resilience |  |  | More energy-efficient buildings |  |
| Public Health and Wellbeing | Increase social interaction  Increase communities’ sense of ownership | Increased cultural richness and biodiversity |  |  |
| Green space management (including enhancing urban biodiversity) | Increase the amount of green open spaces for residents  Changing the image of the urban environment | Greater ecological connectivity across urban regenerated sites |  | Reducing temperature at meso or micro scale |
| Participatory planning and governance | Social inclusion |  |  |  |

## 

## 4.4 The significance of West Green

West Green is of particular significance because it provides empirical evidence in support of a new approach to housing development by offering an alternative vision for the future. There is an argument that building housing shouldn’t solely be based on formulaic methodologies but a desire to create an environment where people want to live and call their home.

At the policy level, the overlapping of social and environmental variables, particularly in the context of new housing developments, has gained traction through the idea of mixed communities. This is evident in the rise of purpose-build co-housing developments, such as Lilac in Leeds. Although this study does not specifically address co-housing structures, they are of relevance in informing its context. As I have argued in Chapter 2, there is a notable lack of research that critically assesses how the purported interactions between social cohesion and green behaviours are functioning in practice. Scholars such as Stern (2006), Ball (2002) and Scott et al. (2016) have focused on the links between housing, social diversity and environmental sustainability. The ideas that govern Scott et al’s (2016) research, whereby there is the argument that communities which are socially cohesive owing to their strong sense of place and social identity, are more likely to engage in environmentally sustainable and green attitudes and behaviours are observable within government policy. However, there is a lack of research addressing the possible tensions between the green agenda and government pressures to maximise space within housing developments. Existing research (Berube: 2005) shows that the amount of space in new developments allocated to social housing is limited but little shows what this looks like in practice. It can be assumed that social cohesion and sustainability are impacted by inequalities in housing tenure, for example as it leads to a high turnover of residents and a lack of security. Such inequalities are addressed, in part, by purpose-built co-housing developments, where issues of community cohesion and sustainability are addressed as an integral part of the community.

Successive governments have tried to test these relations in the context of new builds with the primary focus being on construction and sustainability codes.

Through West Green, I, however, believe that social connectivity utilising ‘green’ spaces can be the missing ingredient to bring about successful tenure mix developments. West Green represents one of the best illustrations of this in practice. It remains one of the ‘greenest’ developments in the country and it is also innovative in its use of community initiatives, such as the employment of a neighbourhood co-ordinator to support the community. I hope that my own study of the benefits of West Green will bring this to the attention of future policymakers and support the case for increased funding for developments of this kind. Evidence of the benefits is essential to overcome opposition, in particular on the basis of costs. Clear justification must be given for the increased costs associated with initiatives with West Green in comparison with ‘budget’ housing developments.

I suggest that the concept of CoP is an important one when seeking to understand how mixed communities engender green behaviour and social cohesion through complex relationships. Through what Wenger (1998) conceptualises as aliveness, it becomes possible to understand the tools and processes that mixed communities must implement to shape desired outcomes in terms of green behaviour. This is particularly the case as aliveness is not an automatic corollary of communities. Wenger et al. (2002) have recognised that some communities do not thrive as a result of the lack of energy to sustain themselves at the root of every community is the imperative of social interaction in order to keep it alive and this must be encouraged through community design. This is evident in co-housing developments where plans for social interaction are integrated into the housing development. In the context of mixed developments, the provision of varied green spaces for neighbourhood activities, alongside a well-designed community of practice, facilitates social interactions and, thus, may even evoke aliveness. Policymakers need to be more aware of such principles as part of their goals of community design. In the ensuing chapters, I provide a detailed analysis of the functioning of West Green as a CoP.

# Chapter 5: Has West Green made people greener?

This analysis chapter will look to answer the first research question posed by this thesis; ‘Has West Green made people greener?’. In order to study this question, I begin by briefly reviewing the context in which the communities at West Green began to develop. I then go on to highlight the three different types which have emerged within West Green, which I outlined in the methodology section (Transformer, Lifestyle Supporter and Individualist) and examine the approach to ‘green’ interaction taken by each of these types in turn. Finally, I will analyse the extent to which each type has pursued the ‘green’ lifestyle approach and how it has been used within the development.

My overarching argument is that West Green is a CoP within which three delineated sub-community type function, each with varying green experiences. My premise is that housing sector policymakers need a better understanding of how communities operate in order to recognise that people at different stages possess a different life course stage within the community of practice. This chapter attempts to provide a nuanced understanding of how the community works in West Green and how this, in turn, has influenced green behaviour.

## 5.1 Emerging ‘ideal types’ at West Green

From my research, I identified various reasons why residents moved to West Green prior to purchasing or renting their homes. A wide range of motives were identified in the research, evident in the walking interviews. However, the most common themes included a combination of requiring social housing (in which case the resident was compelled to accept any offer of suitable accommodation within West Green and generally did not have any particular input into the selection of accommodation within this development); personal choice to purchase a home complementing their current lifestyle; for convenience; for affordability and to enhance ‘green’ behaviour engagement. Nevertheless, the overall data I collected from all the residents did allow them to explain their personal motives for their move in more detail as well as the extent to which their ‘green’ credentials had improved since living there.

For example, through an interview with Patrick and Jackie, I found that they moved because their previous living conditions were too small for their family. For Chu Hau, it was the spacious environment that convinced her to move and for Kevin it was the location of the housing development. It was evident, through the interviews, that not all of the residents considered the draw of the promotion of ‘greener’ lifestyle. For several, their move was led by practical concerns whereas for others the emphasis was on embracing a more sustainable lifestyle.

The assumption from policymakers for West Green was it was creating a development where people held similar values and approaches to living a ‘green’ or ‘greener’ lifestyle. As outlined in my methodology chapter, my analysis showed that there were three distinct resident types clearly formed (refer to ‘ideal types’ in section 3.4.4). Within each of these types, the extent to which they utilised ‘green’ behaviours varied.

Below is a brief synopsis of each type;

**Transformer:** although not previously living a particularly ‘green’ lifestyle, this type of resident wholeheartedly embraced it. The environment at West Green allowed them to change their lives and practices to marry up with their aspirations of the development. They also encouraged and supported others (regardless of tenure type) to get involved and initiated community activities that were both environmentally encouraging and engagement orientated. This type mainly consisted of social housing residents and also involved a few private tenant households.

**Lifestyle supporter**: this type of resident already appreciated the ‘green’ living lifestyle and it, therefore, formed part of their everyday life. Moving into West Green only enhanced their experience within this environment. They tended to engage in ‘green’ community activities but not necessarily instigate them. People in this group predominantly consisted of private tenure households. However, social housing resident households were also included.

**Individualist**: this type tended to keep themselves to themselves and had limited engagement in any community activities or engagement in ‘green’ living. Their reasons for this decision varied but were generally founded upon issues in their own personal lives, which demanded their time and attention and left them with little of this available for engagement with the community or ‘green living’. This small type consisted of shared ownership households which, by definition, mean they have bought a proportion of their property and pay the remainder of the rent to the housing association.

Below I have illustrated the breakdown of numbers, which I acknowledge is small but useful in richness in terms of the data collected and each type and tenure they represent;

**Figure 10: Tenure and types at West Green**

Having briefly outlined the characteristics of each group, I will now go on to look at the extent to which each group has engaged in ‘green’ activities and whether living within West Green has enhanced their ‘green’ credentials, despite their initial motivations for moving to the housing development.

As part of this, it is important to understand the influence of different tenure groups in West Green on the ways in residents engage with ‘green’ behaviours. In particular, it must be considered how the experiences of different groups will be influenced by the inequalities of their tenure. For example, the private homeowners are able to choose when to move from the development whereas social housing tenants may not have the same freedom. Although studies by Beck (1992) and Inglehart (1995) argue that the common variable of social background is not a determinant of green behaviour, it is evident that unequal tenure type may be. For example, those with different tenure types will experience varying levels of commitment to the housing development, and its activities to promote green behaviour.

## 5.2 Transformer type

## 5.2.1 Why moved to West Green?

The majority of the ‘transformer type’ consisted of people living in social housing households (five households) with one only being a private tenure household. For this type there were a variety of reasons why they moved to West Green but, for the social housing residents it was predominantly due to their inadequate housing circumstances and being on the local authority housing waiting list. For the private households, it was mainly due to moving for work purposes and to be closer to family. The entire group, however, expressed their desire to embrace the eco-friendly lifestyle being offered at West Green.

For the social housing residents to qualify for housing within West Green they had to be on the local authority housing waiting list and/or in housing need. The circumstances surrounding these needs were varied, ranging from overcrowding to requiring special needs housing for health reasons, also a majority of these residents had young families.

As Patrick and Jackie outlined;

*“We have three boys and we were living in a two-bedroom flat. We were desperate to move to somewhere bigger and to be closer to our families. We had been offered other places but they just weren’t practical for us. We needed help with the kids and family support was so important to us. We knew this place was coming up so we wanted to hold on as long as we could.*

*We didn’t want to keep moving for the sake of the kids and just wanted to settle down properly, so when the housing officer came to talk to us about moving to West Green, we were over the moon - we were so pleased we held on”.*

Patrick and Jackie now have a three-bedroom house.

Similarly, Sarah spoke about how her housing situation didn’t suit her and her sons’ needs before moving to West Green;

*“I was living in one room at my mum’s with my son, it was just so tough. I’m registered disabled too as I have chronic fatigue syndrome, so I need space to rest…my mum’s been great though, allowing us to live with her but I so wanted my own place, which I could make it my own. I’m so grateful to my mum for helping us, as I’m not sure what would have happened to us if we weren’t with her.”*

Sarah now lives in a two-bedroom house in West Green.

When I went to interview Tony he was baking cakes with his youngest daughter as he had a day off work. Tony spoke about how he and his family had been living in local authority housing but it was becoming too small as the children were getting older;

*“We were in a two-bedroom house not too far from here and needed at least a three-bedroom now. It’s been difficult having all the kids in one room as they were constantly fighting and just wanted their own space really.*

*Both my partner and I have family nearby and have been on the housing waiting list for a while now as we wanted to remain in this area. When this property came up we just couldn’t believe our luck. Ideally, we’d like to have a four-bedroom house so each of the kids could have their own room but we understand we can’t because of the ages of the children and their sexes. Having said all that, we are so happy to be here and we can live with what we have. It really feels like a new start for us and both Somera and I are keen to make sure we settle the kids down into a routine and that they are happy in their new home.”*

For the private household in the ‘transformer’ group their reasoning behind why they moved to West Green was very different. Chu Hau, who was currently on maternity leave when I went to see her, described how her husband saw the promotional material for the development as he drove past it on his way to work and liked what the development was offering;

*“We really didn’t have any intention of moving from where we were but when my husband talked to me about it he was just so excited, I think partly because of what the development offered but also the potential for us wanting to grow our family in safe and spacious environment. So, we decided to go and have a look around the show home. Anyway, we made an appointment to look around and we instantly fell in love with it and everything about the development … we don’t need a four-bedroom house, as you can see as there are only the three of us (one child) but as I’ve mentioned previously we hope to have more children and think we can settle down here for the long term and happily extend our family … I really don’t mind living here. I’ve got used to it now... we also have family nearby so that always helps when it comes to baby-sitting.”*

When I went to see Chu Hau she was preparing to go out for a walk with her little child;

*“You can see how lovely and spacious this space is, can’t you? It’s so nice just to be able to go out every day to walk and sit near the meadow or allotment on the benches. It feels as though you are in the countryside and there’s tranquillity and quietness which I really appreciate it.”*

Such walking interviews were particularly valuable to this research. They gave participants the opportunity to explore their views of West Green through a physical reflection on environmental aspects. For example, as Chu Hau did, they were able to point out significant features of the landscape, including facilities that West Green offered to residents. This is valuable in a study of this type, which is concerned with the way in which a development influences ‘green’ behaviours. The walking interviews became a demonstration of the successes or limitations of West Green.

Such positive experiences of walking interviews in the data collection stage of this study substantiate the views of O’Neill and Roberts (2019) who recognise the value of how an ordinary practice such as walking can be transformed into a valuable research tool. For example, they recognise that the rhythm of walking “generates a kind of rhythm of thinking” (Solnit: 2001: p.4). I found this description to be accurate when interviewing Chu Hau who appeared to feel more comfortable the more we walked and I could see that the process helped her to recall her experiences and articulate her views.

Kevin, who had recently moved down from the Midlands to live with his partner Sarah, was also enthusiastic about living in West Green;

*“I suppose it’s slightly different for me. I met my partner Sarah over a year ago now but we lived so far apart. So, when Sarah got her place in West Green I thought it was about time I made the commitment to move down to be with her…I asked for a transfer from work and luckily I got one and so I moved down. I’ve only been here a few months but it’s great. There is so much space and the house we have is really nice too. We both feel lucky that we got this opportunity to live here.”*

Kevin and Sarah now live in a two-bedroom house in West Green.

For the majority of this type, who were social housing residents, their personal circumstances dictated what type of property they were offered in West Green. For Patrick and Jackie, and Tony and Somera, the need for larger accommodation and ongoing family support for their growing family were their main reasons for wanting to move to the development. For Sarah, her disability requirement enabled her to be offered a house for her and her son, whilst for Kevin the opportunity to relocate to live with his girlfriend was the main reason. For Chu Hau, as a private resident, there seemed to be more choice as to why she and her husband and small baby moved to West Green. Their long-term goal to establish some roots was an incentive they both felt was right for them at present and they appreciated the space both in the home as well as within West Green. So, for them, purchasing a larger home to allow for their family to grow illustrated their commitment to the ethos West Green was offering as well as the type of property they wanted to live in.

It is also worth noting that, for the social housing residents to be offered a property in West Green, they had to go through a vetting process. This not only looked into their housing need but also whether they were willing to embrace the ‘green’ living ethos West Green was advocating. However, this poses an interesting narrative as to whether the ‘make up’ of West Green was orchestrated rather than people moving in only due to their status on the housing waiting list.

Despite the wide range of motivations that emerged through the interviews, the most common themes included a combination of requiring social housing (in which the resident accepted any offer of suitable accommodation within West Green and generally did not have any particular input into the selection of accommodation within this development). One could also argue that due to people’s circumstances, having been on the waiting list for a while, their willingness to agree to West Green’s ‘green’ living criteria may not have been completely wholehearted. Nevertheless, all who were offered a social housing property stated that they were willing to embrace this approach and, for this group, it did appear that they did manage to put this into practice. This contrasts with the experience of buyers of private homes. There was not a vetting process for buyers although marketing materials focused on West Green as a ‘green’ housing development promoting ‘green’ behaviours.

This brings into question the idea of the sustainability goals of the development. If residents are not able to embrace the prescribed lifestyle in the long term, will this have an impact on how long residents decide to stay in West Green? Evidence from the literature review gives an indication that residents may be motivated to embrace ‘green’ initiatives in the long term through the establishment of a community. Research by Ozaki (2011) recognises that image plays a significant part in adopting ‘green’ practices and argues that social environments are crucial in forming the values that people create and can change the values that exist within a community. In his research, Ozaki (2011) recognises that peer pressure can convince individuals to adopt green initiatives if they see it as a common social norm for their area. West Green has been purposefully developed to champion and promote ‘green’ behaviours and can be assumed, through an engagement with secondary research, that such behaviours will endure.

### 5.2.2 Taking up the ‘green’ challenge

The ‘transformer’ type represented households who were willing to take up and embrace what West Green was offering in light of promoting and supporting ‘green’ living. When I undertook the interviews with this group of people, there was genuine enthusiasm amongst them as to how and why such a lifestyle would benefit them and their families, as well as the development as a whole.

When I interviewed Sarah, she openly talked about what more she could do to encourage changing her behaviour to utilise what the development was offering her;

*“I didn’t do a lot of ‘green’ stuff before I came here as it wasn’t that easy but I always knew I should do more… I mainly recycle rubbish and food waste, that’s easy as the recycling bins aren’t too far from me so I make a point of walking there nearly every day which helps me with my exercise regime! There’s a recycling bin for clothes too and I use that quite a bit too. I very rarely throw anything away now, there’s just no point - someone else can make use of it or do something with it.”*

For Kate, coming to West Green has really made her think about how she uses resources she has around her but also how she can make best use of them too;

*“I work part-time in a hairdressers so if I’m not running around after the children I’m running after clients at work. At times, it’s difficult to balance the two but I wanted us, as a family, to make a new start living here and part of that was about changing the way we do things and by being more appreciative of what we have around us. For me, the fact that we have so much open space is great, especially for the kids as taking them out to places is just so expensive. I like the fact that I can let them play and not worry where they are as I can see them from my kitchen window. I also like the fact that I don’t have to use my car as often as the retail park isn’t too far so I try and walk there with my little one in the pram.”*

Kate has moved into a three-bedroom house in West Green.

Somera also spoke about how the development allows people to take ownership of what they are doing;

*“…so if you want to become healthier, there are cycle paths or nearby wooded areas where you can go for a run or if you want to grow your own food on the allotments or in the greenhouses (when built) West Green will allow you to do this but the onus is on you to make it happen.*

*No one else will do it for you. I appreciate you can be encouraged but if you don’t get up and go out for that walk or run then no one will force you.”*

Interestingly, Kevin shared his past experience of where he used to live, which supported a similar ethos to that of West Green;

*“Where I was living before, I mainly recycled rubbish and food waste but here you can do more… I was also talking to one of the neighbours recently and I suggested starting an adult’s and children’s football team here. There’s the space so there shouldn’t be a problem for us to practice. I’m going to bring this up at the next residents meeting.”*

For Chu Hau, sitting in her garden with her little one on her knee, she explained to me;

*“I have never grown anything in my life but I have made a point of purchasing an allotment plot because I want to do something out of my comfort zone. I know nothing about growing food nor does my husband but we both want to learn and want our little boy to understand the importance of where food comes from and to take up this opportunity on our doorstep...I want us living here to change the way we do things, so both my husband and I have decided that we are going to be buying bikes, so we can exercise and appreciate where we live and what is around us.”*

As the day was quite pleasant, Somera asked if we could go for a walk outside. She was keen to show me around the development herself and talk about her wanting to start up a walking group;

*“I really enjoy going for walks around here- you can see how peaceful it is… I was quite poorly last year and my doctor recommended that I do some gentle exercise, that’s why I go for walks every day and keen to start a walking group here ... So I’ve put a poster on the notice board asking others if they would be interested in joining me for weekly walks around the development…there’s so much beautiful scenery around so there’s an opportunity to appreciate the environment too. So far, three other residents have replied to me, so, hopefully, we’ll be starting next week!”*

Through this walking interview, I saw how Somera was able to draw connections between places and experiences through the act of walking. This reinforces the views of Evans and Jones (2008) who recognise that this research method reassures participants that they do not have to give the ‘right’ answer. Instead, the informality of the interview meant that Somera appeared to speak freely about her experiences.

It also seemed as though she was able to recall more details by being able to place details in their spatial context, which follows findings by Clark and Emmel (2009).

This transformer type have shown, through their various examples, their eagerness to embrace the ‘green’ lifestyle in West Green. Definite changes in their practices have had an impact on how they have encouraged and supported each other in their new lives in the development. They are not only embracing these lifestyle habits in their own lives but also actively want to enable their neighbours to do so, both individually and as part of a community. Somera’s instigation of the walking group and of membership of the allotment group are prime illustrations of this and of the distinction between the lifestyle supporter type and the transformer type.

This approach also supports the ‘aliveness’ principle within the CoP. In particular, the need to ‘develop both public and private community spaces’, thus the utilisation of the open spaces helps to create that togetherness and shared experience. The long-term outlook of this type is shared with the lifestyle supporters (in contrast with the individualist group) but the transformers take a more proactive approach and appear to attach a higher priority to building a permanent home and community for their families in West Green.

The findings explored above demonstrate how learning occurred in the CoP. Specifically, residents gained skills and knowledge for green behaviours and sustainable consumption by virtue of the cultural environment and belonging in one’s learning ecology (Licen et al.: 2017). There is, thus, the suggestion that social models pertaining to transformative learning are derived from one’s learning ecology.

The experiences of the residents outlined above, enables us to observe people interacting with the environment in which they live, “thus forming meanings and practises, and where they see opportunities and obstacles for quality of life” (Licen et al.: 2017: p. 26). One may go on to suggest that, when people identify themselves with a group, thus experiencing a sense of belonging, behavioural changes are likely to occur. Indeed, the CoP model places an emphasis on the linkages between group identity and sense of belonging, and how this engenders common practice through in situ learning, non-hierarchal relationships and dialogue (Lave: 1991; Barab and Duffy: 2001; Wenger: 2010).

The emphasis on walking interviews displays a degree of how the residents felt relaxed in themselves and their environment. Research shows that “wanting to share your physical environmental experience allows for detailed exchanges to be noted and made real in expressional terms” (Toby: 2015: p.45). I also argue that the development of sustainable behaviour necessitates community learning, which, in turn, creates a different set of practices that cannot be achieved at the level of the individual. According to the CoP model, education is predicated on learning through the creation of connections and meanings that contribute to active citizenship (Lave: 1991). As the responses of some of the residents suggest, learning is concomitant with the search for new possibilities and entails being subversive to dominating norms and practices.

## 5.3 Lifestyle Supporter

### 5.3.1 Why move to West Green?

The ‘lifestyle supporter’ type consisted of a majority of private tenure households (four households) with some social housing residents (two households). For this type, their reasons to move to West Green in the main were to complement their existing ‘green’ lifestyle and, where possible, to embrace it further.

For James, who lived in a four-bedroom house, is a self-employed businessman and has lived within the surrounding area of West Green for a number of years, his motivation to purchase a property in the development was quite simple;

*“As a family, we are quite ‘green’ anyway so this development just enhances the way we live… I wanted to make sure that my children experienced and appreciated what was around them and at West Green this was possible.”*

James also went on to tell me how the build of the property was also appealing to him and his wife when considering purchasing in West Green;

*“This development isn’t like other developments we had seen- we really liked the fact that it was spacious both inside as well as outside…internally there were financial saving opportunities too through the rain harvesting features and internal insulation keeping the house warmer, this also had an impact on our decision to live here.”*

Doreen a part-time charity worker in her early sixties, who also purchased her two-bedroom home, expressed similar views to that of James;

*“I’ve always liked the idea of living somewhere which is both an eco-development as well as a home to suit my way of life – being environmentally friendly, so for me, West Green fits the bill!”*

For Simon and his partner, who were first time buyers and purchased a two-bedroom house, they felt that West Green helped them in two ways. Firstly, it was an opportunity for them to get their foot on the property ladder and, secondly, it enabled them to live in a way which was conducive to their ‘green’ lifestyle;

*“My partner and I wanted to live somewhere which complemented our lifestyle…where we were before we just didn’t have space or the inclination to invest in something which we rented or could call our own…so when we saw the development sign for West Green and what it was promoting, we jumped at the chance to move here… we love the idea that this place is more than just a house but provides us with the environment and the means where we can grow our own food and share ideas with other like-minded people.”*

For Paul and Valerie, who lived in a three-bedroom house, their motivation to come and live in West Green was slightly different;

*“As a retired couple we wanted to be closer to our family and having the opportunity and finance to do this at our time of life, we decided to come down south and make the change now… we are quite environmentally friendly anyway so we thought moving here would not be too much of a change in how we live our life.”*

Jane, a social housing resident who lived in a two-bedroom house, is a single mum living with a disability and bringing up her two girls. For Jane, moving to West Green was ideal;

*“For me living in West Green is the best place ever. The house is especially adapted so it can meet my needs now and in the future as it’s a life time home…I love the fact that I’m surrounded by allotments, open green space and play areas which are safe for my children to play in. I’ve always wanted to live in an area where I can express the way I want to live and show my children how important it is. I’ve always done my bit for the environment and am a keen gardener. I’d like to grow my own food here so that I cook what I grow and save the pennies…I’m really happy here.”*

For Diego and Carolina and their three young boys, being offered a social housing place in West Green was timely. They had been on the housing waiting list for the local authority for over three years and their current private rented flat was getting too small for them. Both Diego and Carolina came to the UK over ten years ago from South America, both had jobs in the environmental field but had struggled to find work associated with this area since moving here. Carolina explained;

*“My background is in environmental sciences. I used to work for a large company back home where I would work on projects related to land management and agriculture…I really missed working in this area but because my qualifications aren’t recognised here, I’ve struggled to find work.”*

Diego went on to explain;

*“We both have tried to find work in our areas of expertise but with little success. I now work in a local school as a caretaker - it’s the best I can do for now as I need to make sure I can provide for my family.”*

What both Diego and Carolina did express was their passion for promoting and supporting a ‘green’ way of life;

*“Even where we lived previously we made sure we recycled our rubbish, our food waste and got rid of the car, so we walked where we could or got the bus…I want my kids to appreciate what they have around them and how they can contribute to helping the environment, it’s a passion we both have.”*

Diego went on to say;

*“When we were offered this place at West Green, we just couldn’t believe this could happen to us. It’s been a tough few years for us and when we came to view this place we fell in love with it straight away.”*

Their family home consisted of a three-bedroom house with a garden area to the front and the back of the house. Whilst I was interviewing Diego and Carolina, they insisted on showing me around their house. It was evident that they appreciated the opportunity they had been given and were immensely proud of where they lived.

Carolina explained her passion for growing her own vegetables;

*“Here (in the back garden area), I have started to grow my own tomatoes and peas! I used to have a large garden back home and loved to grow lots of things. We know we can have an allotment here but because of my shift work and Diego’s working hours we’ve decided it’s not the right time for us…Diego does go and help our neighbours when they are down at their allotment though and the kids help out too.”*

The passion and vibrancy in both Diego and Carolina to embrace this lifestyle was clearly evident and they themselves described how they have become ‘alive’ again coming to live in West Green. For them, they felt “they were getting back to their roots” and were happy that they could share their passion with their children too.

In contrast to the ‘individualist’ type, the main motivation for all the ‘lifestyle supporter’ type has been the desire to enhance and supplement their lives at the development. This has clearly been illustrated through their interviews. They seemed positive about their future here and wanted this lifestyle to be embraced by their family and children. Their appreciation of their environmental surroundings was evident in how they spoke about their lives in West Green and their acknowledgement that they could replicate their previous lifestyle and behaviours whilst living in the development. This reflects the view Inglehart (1995) presents in the literature review, whereby he explains ‘post-materialistic’ values emphasise autonomy and self-expression, which this group is doing as well as enhancing it.

Similarly, some of the findings from Power and Elster’s (2005) research mirrors that which is being presented by this group, most notably how individual environmental action can often be dependent on a supportive context for ease of execution. For example, the right ‘climate’ or environmental surroundings, which West Green is purposefully built to accommodate, as well as people understanding and relating to global problems and their everyday lives. Research by Sumner (2014) also states that, “affinity with a cause can become easier with the right environmental nuance of delivery” (p.146), allowing for the environmental footprint to be aligned to the development’s ethos.

### 5.3.2 Enhancing green practices

The area surrounding West Green provides many ‘green’ open spaces as well as an allotment area, recycling facilities, orchards, meadows and cycle paths. These various ‘green’ options are available for all to utilise within the development but for the ‘lifestyle supporter’ group how and to what extent they were utilised to enhance their commitment to this area was an aspect I explored further through the interviews I carried out.

When I spoke to Jane about how she enhanced her ‘green’ credentials, she explained how her home and surrounding area allowed her to be ‘free’ to express the life she wanted to live. For Jane, her allotment was her most treasured place where she felt most relaxed and happy. When I spoke to her, she asked me to come and conduct her interview on her allotment so she could explain and describe what it meant to her;

*“I absolutely love having my allotment opposite to where I live. I can see how the time and effort I put into the allotment is paying off as I’ve been able to grow so much of my own fruit and vegetables. This is what I’ve always wanted to do. Where I lived before I did have an allotment but it wasn’t that close and because of my disability I found it difficult to get there very often, but here I can be on my allotment as and when I want as it’s there in front of me… I also like the fact that I can sit and talk to people when I’m in my allotment. People come up to me and ask me questions and want advice, which I’m happy to give- it’s so peaceful here too.”*

When I met James, he spoke of how he wanted both himself and his family to utilise the facilities, especially the outside areas;

*“As a family, we have always been keen on outside activities, especially with two growing children! So the fact that there are cycle paths, play areas as well as open green spaces this development is great for us…as I’ve said before I have family nearby and when my nieces and nephews come over to hang out with my two kids. They love playing outside.”*

James also spoke about himself on a personal level;

*“I’m not getting any younger, so any excuse I have to not exercise I would come up with, now I can’t. My wife and I have brought bikes and we now make it a daily routine to go for a cycle ride or even a walk. I work from home so I can easily get lazy and sit behind my desk all day. So, I need to keep moving!”*

For people like Doreen, West Green has enhanced her enthusiasm for gardening;

*“I’ve always loved gardening and growing my own food so when I heard about this development I was ecstatic! I needed to downsize anyway as my children had left home, so moving here seemed like a really good opportunity for me.”*

Doreen also spoke about how she is cycling more since moving to the development too;

*“I have a pushbike, so I walk to the bus stop, which is only up the road, and then when I get off the bus I cycle to work. It’s not far but it’s up a steep hill so that gets my heart pumping. I do the same coming back home. I’m not getting any younger but I know I have to continue to keep moving, otherwise I won’t be able to keep going.”*

Other ‘lifestyle supporters’, such as Simon, also commented on how the outside nature of the development really appealed to him and his partner before purchasing here;

*“Both of us love having our own garden and allotment. Where we were living before (a shared house) there wasn’t a garden so we had window boxes and an allotment, which was quite far from our house. Here we have an allotment and my garden is totally transformed into our own food factory! Some weeks we don’t even go to the supermarket to get fresh veg or fruit as we don’t need it. We can live on what we grow.”*

In keeping with their lifestyle, they have also taken steps to utilise the different mode of transport options at West Green. Simon and I walked nearby his house when he commented;

*“My partner and I have bikes so we use the cycle paths nearby. We’ve noticed a number of our neighbours do the same. I think living somewhere like this makes you want to do more as you’re so close to everything and you really can’t make any excuses either ... we’ve also sold one of our cars and are using more public transport to get to and from places - it’s all an adventure for us!”*

For Paul and Valerie, the main pleasure they took from the development was the vast open space surrounding them. Whilst carrying out the interview both Paul and Valerie asked me to come out to the front of their property with them so they could illustrate more clearly the areas they were highlighting;

*“Both of us like going for long walks around the orchard area, especially with our dog Barney - that’s one of the main reasons we came here, we like the openness and tranquillity … we knew the development was to be built some time ago so when we decided to move. We brought off plan and made sure we had a corner plot. We wanted the peace and quiet but also the opportunity to literally walk out of our front door to the open space of the meadows.”*

For Diego and Carolina, their enthusiasm about living in West Green was evident;

*“For us, as a family, we want to use the facilities around us as much as we can as we are so appreciative of getting this place…for the kids they have started to make friends with the neighbours’ children and have joined the West Green football team. For us, we try and go for walks when we can. I go to the community hall if there is something of interest on but I still don’t know all my neighbours yet.”*

Overall, most of this type have embraced and supported the facilities around the site. As discussions in their interviews illustrate, great enthusiasm was shown by the individuals concerning how and why they wanted to make the most of the ‘green’ options on the site and how it complemented activities they were doing where they previously lived. Interestingly, though they were exploiting the facilities around them, they were very much concentrated on themselves rather than sharing or undertaking many joint activities with other residents. This might reflect, to some extent, the same factors highlighted by the individualist group, namely competing demands on time and energy.

Life course theory reminds us that individuals allocate their lifetime for economic and family roles (Sørensen: 1990; Johnson: 2001) with varying implications for environmentally ‘green’ choices in the household. This is supported by the fact that this group is significantly made up of young families and couples starting out in their lives together and in their careers. Their contribution is limited by a lack of available energy to invest. This is further supported by the fact that they do not appear to be averse to participating when opportunities to do so arise (for example, Diego and Carolina are positive about their children’s involvement in the football team).

Thus, within a single development the different tenure types and the life experiences brought by residents who move to live in close proximity can, and will, influence the success of the development, both in terms of engagement and cohesion.

Concurrently, however, Wenger et al. (2002) remind us that in all communities there are varying degrees of participation, each of which are valuable. This point is reinforced by Couros (2003) who states that “in any community, there exist different levels of participation. While those on the peripheral may not participate in the same ways as those in the core, the peripheral members will still gain insights and knowledge through this type of participation. All members, regardless of participation levels, should be valued” (p.5).

## 5.4 Individualist type

## 5.4.1 Why move to West Green?

My research revealed that the formation of the individualistic type consisted of an older couple and a single man. Both were shared owners on the development. Prime reasons given for moving to West Green were to be closer to their families and to save money. Their moves were not necessarily environmentally motivated from the outset nor was it related to a desire to develop a sense of community.

Donald and Biyu had moved into their one-bedroom flat in West Green two and half months previously. When I went to interview the couple in their newly furnished flat, they made it very clear as to the reasons for their move;

*“Our main motivation was to be nearer family…I recently retired and wanted to be closer to my daughters and their families as all of Biyu’s family live abroad… we also had to consider saving money too especially at our time of life. We knew this was an eco-development as we researched the place before we put an offer on the place…it’s just so much more expensive down south than when we were living in Yorkshire. It’s quite an eye-opener for us but we recently had our gas and electricity bill through and though we haven’t been living here that long it was still reasonable. So there are some advantages to living here!”*

The couple’s reasoning was quite evident as they spoke about their specific personal interests. They were clear as to what was important to them in their time of life and why this superseded anything else for them at present.

For Peter, who also purchased a one bedroom flat, his reason to purchase in West Green was quite different. He had recently been through a divorce and for him securing a place for his children to visit him close by was important;

*“The location of the property was my primary reason to move here. I need to see my kids but also my finances aren’t so great at the moment as I’m on my own. I need to save money so needed to buy something smaller but still being local to my kids is why I moved here.”*

Even though West Green was promoted primarily on its eco features, for this group this feature was not their main incentive. For the older residents within this group, being closer to family was more of a draw. For Peter, saving money to be able to support himself and his young family within his current means was the main incentive to live in West Green.

As highlighted in the literature review, life course theory resonates and reiterates how circumstances dictate and influence the choices we make, “ageing and developmental change, are continuous processes that are experienced throughout life. As such, life course reflects the intersection of social and historical factors with personal biography and development within which the study of family life and social change can ensue" (Elder, 1985; Hareven, 1996).

It is clearly evident that people’s life circumstances heavily influence the decisions they make. Both families were clear in their purpose and, at present, this prescribes their course in life.

### 5.4.2 Taking up the ‘green’ challenge

West Green is regarded as a development that boasts many environmental features, both internally to the homes as well as externally. However, for this group of people, there was little recognition that the external environment posed a source of interest to engage with other residents on the development.

During the interview with Donald and Biyu, we sat at their little kitchen table and they spoke quite openly about the lack of ‘green’ engagement they’ve undertaken on the development;

*“We don’t have time to get involved with what is going on here. We know our neighbours and they seem nice enough but we don’t want to be in each other’s pockets”.*

Donald went on to explain;

*“As you can see I’m a bit older than my wife so I don’t work anymore but Biyu does shift work…my health isn’t great so I usually stay in or one of my daughters comes over and takes me out with the grandchildren. That’s what I prefer.”*

Interestingly, Donald and Biyu they did comment on how the physical environment of West Green was a plus point for the development*;*

*“It’s good that the development is looking so nice. We know there are allotments and greenhouses here but neither of us are keen gardeners, so never use them - but I know others here want to use these facilities.”*

For Peter, the emphasis on staying quite isolated was purposeful for him at present;

*“I’m not in a great place at the moment so not seeing people is good for me to be honest. I want a quiet life and as long as I can see my kids and ride my motorbike I’m good…I do appreciate that for some people moving here has been about the environmental stuff which is around here but that’s not for me.”*

Reflecting on the literature review, arguments presented by Uusitalo (1990) and Moisander (1995) expressed that ‘barriers’ preventing people from being ‘green’ could be associated with their lack of understanding related to institutional, financial or informational considerations or perhaps there is also an assumption that this group are simply not interested in wanting to understand the impact of their behaviour on the environment, even though they reside in a development promoting and encouraging this.

It is important to distinguish between the fact that these individualistic households did not have ‘environmental’ motivations for their initial decision to move to West Green and the fact that their motivations and concerns consumed much of their time and energy and dictated many aspects of their lifestyles on their arrival. It appears to be the latter, which is the key feature of the individualist group from the perspective of adoption of a ‘green’ lifestyle. In other words, had they had time and energy to invest in taking advantage of the opportunity to explore an environmental lifestyle after moving to West Green, the fact that this was not one of the initial attractions would not have prevented them from doing so. For this group, the desire to keep isolated was concomitant with their chosen location away from the main hub of the development and towards the periphery. Thus, the development did not encourage them to engage in more green behaviours. In fact, it was not a consideration for them at all. Their residency in West Green, thus, did not change this, or have a negligible positive impact on their lifestyle habits.

## 5.5 Summary

A key finding of my research is the difference in the application of whether West Green has made people more ‘green’. This needs to be broken down further to consider each of the three distinct types identified in this study, as the impact of the development falls at different points on a spectrum for each resident.

The appreciation of the development and the physical surroundings for the ‘transformer’ type, for example, has proved a real incentive for them to encourage, inspire and even take up new practices, which had not been available previously due to their circumstances or the location they were residing in. This type has tended to explore as much as they can for themselves and their families, embracing the ‘green’ ideology presented at West Green.

The majority of this type were made up of social housing residents and, as explained, many had been involved in ‘community engagement’ activities previously. This suggests that members of this group were aided by their previous experience, which they were able to draw on in promoting and encouraging others to support these practices because they had an understanding in doing so.

This challenges some of the literature previously highlighted in the literature review that indicates that lower-income groups do not necessarily engage in ‘green’ practices or behaviours due to their social or economic background (see for example, Liere and Dunlap, 1980; Samdahl and Robinson, 1989; Jones and Dunlap, 1992; Stern et al., 1993; Schultz et al., 2005; Attfield: 2011) or as Swanson (2012) comments, people tend to reciprocate behaviours which appeal to them and which provide personal satisfaction. For the ‘transformer’ type, this was what they wanted to emulate among other residents in the development.

This study’s hypothesis suggests a promising trajectory for West Green as it indicates that households may shift from a ‘supporting lifestyle’ approach to a ‘transformer’ approach over time as they gain experience and confidence in navigating these types of community initiatives. Through a detailed examination of CoP theory (Wenger, 2011), we can understand how individuals learn through social relations, which may lead to a fluidity between these typologies as they influence one another. This holds benefits not only for West Green but also for other communities which residents and their children may move on to in the future. This also relies on an understanding of both the significance of life course of individuals (Elder: 1998; Elder et al.: 2003) and the influence of wider social and economic issues.

This ‘transformer’ type, though mainly consisting of social housing residents, have either engaged in, or wanted to, and supported the environmental premise of West Green in their actions. This supports research conducted by Power and Elster (2005) in which they indicate that even (indeed, especially) people from low-income households are aware of wider as well as local environmental problems and possible solutions. This finding illustrates how the change in people’s attitude and aptitude to ‘green’ issues is altering, resulting in more people recognising the impact and ramifications on all and not just particular groups in society.

This is, again, a reflection on Inglehart (1995) and Beck’s (1992) arguments. However, belonging to this group may be influenced by challenges to individual financial circumstances, which may lead to a reduction in the time an individual can devote to the development. This may, specifically, lead to a member of this group moving to become an ‘individualist’.

For the ‘lifestyle supporters’, their continuing appreciation of their ‘green’ way of life has continued whilst living in West Green but, through my interviews, it was evident that this type of resident remained supportive of the eco-development and was enthusiastic. These residents appeared to want to live among people with similar aspirations connects to the creation of a CoP and reflected aspects of Wenger’s ‘aliveness’ principles. The group was, however, much more inhibited when it came to sharing their prior experiences within the development. As explained earlier, the fact that most of this group were made up of private residents had a bearing on why this was the case. This restrained manner did not necessarily result in not engaging with other residents within the development but in more of a reluctance to share their ideas and this may change over time as they settle into their new environment.

Although there was evidence that they were committed to the long-term vision of West Green, there might be scope for how readily this group demonstrates their commitment changing over time. It might also be necessary to look at broadening the nature and scope of the activities and engagement within the community to identify alternatives which might hold greater appeal for residents in this group. As highlighted previously by Syms (2010), engagement propagates an attachment, which can heighten interaction amongst people. This could be the case in this instance. Nevertheless, it can be said that, overall, West Green has had a positive impact on the green habits of the lifestylers, albeit not as profound as for the transformer type, as it has facilitated and encouraged them to expand existing practices. However, this group may demonstrate its fixity and fluidity as it evolves through its engagement with the housing development and an increase or decrease in its commitment to collective values and aspirations.

For the ‘individualist’ type, there was limited engagement in ‘green’ activities. Their purpose for residing in West Green was very much based on individual and social circumstances, which didn’t relate to the environmental aspect of the development, apart from helping them to make financial savings. For this type, the desire to keep themselves quite isolated also served their purpose as there was a wish to keep away from the main hub of the development and stay towards the periphery. Therefore, for this type, the development did not make them more ‘green’. In actual fact, it was not a consideration for them at all. The move to West Green was either neutral or had a negligibly positive impact on their lifestyle habits. However, it can be noted that members of this type did appreciate what the development was trying to achieve and this could indicate a level of fluidity in the longer term if factors currently influencing an individual’s life course changed. As Shove (2004) recognises, individuals are motivated by factors influencing their own life and, so, changes in the lives of the individualists could lead them to become more closely aligned to one of the other typologies.

It is noteworthy, however, that this appears to have been the smallest of the three types and also the least invested in remaining at West Green in the long term (raising the possibility that other residents with a stronger interest in the green lifestyle encouraged by the development might in time take up these tenancies). This type should accordingly be afforded the lowest weight in assessing the research question.

In summary, the research findings presented in this chapter suggest that responses to West Green are not homogenous in nature, rather, they are three-fold, which was evident in the categories of residents that I presented. Invariably, the categories of residents I identified are differentiated on the basis of tenure. However, their motivations in moving to West Green and their green behaviour credentials were also considered. The small size of the research sample does not enable firm conclusions to be established but it does point out areas for future research, including whether the longevity of residing at West Green impacts overall sustainability.

Ultimately, through a CoP framework, I have underscored that it is imperative to recognise the different needs and lifestyles of people within communities and ultimately how this shapes expectations and green behaviour when designing communities. Through the lens of life course theory, it is apparent that there are certain social structures that offer residents opportunities to investigate green initiatives from various perspectives, including occupational and domestic opportunities. I argue that the inclusion of this type of study into the wider community of knowledge is beneficial for policymakers as it offers insight into the ways that mixed communities can use certain social norms to change the entire community for the better.

There is also scope for this study to better understand the long term implications of the sustainability goals, especially in light of the mixed tenure and the relative fixity and fluidity of the groups emerging within the development and the impact on Wenger’s (2011) ‘aliveness’ principles.

According to Wenger (2011), the requirements to plan, initiate, include and evolve enable a community to become more coherent, cohesive and stronger and, ultimately, sustainable. However, this study recognises that that tenure type influences this type of sustainability. Although recent British housing policy has identified that mixed tenure communities are an essential component of new housing developments (CLG, 2006a), this study has also identified that such mixed tenure communities can influence sustainability, which can be defined as “the ability to keep something going, be that for societal practice or practice that a business, industry, or community does” (Pecker, 2007, p.82). This is based on the assumption that there is an ideal composition of social and income groups which, when achieved, produces optimum individual and community wellbeing” (Lees, 2008, p.450).

However, this study has found that participation in a CoP requires dedication and motivation towards achieving a particular outcome. In the case of West Green this includes adopting ‘green’ behaviours. This study has found that the behaviour of the tenant groups concerning environmental behaviours, and their engagement with one another, was influenced by the inequality of their tenure. It is evident that those residents with different tenure types will experience varying levels of commitment to the housing development as it influences their life course.

For example, social housing tenants appeared to more fully embrace the benefits of West Green and experience a higher incentive to enjoy the benefits more fully as their residency was less secure, which contrasted the behaviour of members of privately owned households.

In the following chapter, I will look to answer the second research question I have posed; ‘Does West Green promote social mixing?’

# Chapter 6: Does West Green promote social mixing?

This analysis chapter will answer the second research question I have posed; ‘Does West Green promote social mixing?’. In order to do this, I will utilise the three groupings constructed from my findings, namely the ‘transformer’, ‘lifestyle supporter’ and ‘individualist’ type, to illustrate how these types have socially mixed and whether social mixing is sustainable within West Green. I will then go on to analyse to what extent the social mixing has had an impact on the development overall.

It will be concluded that, although there are variations in the level of engagement shown in each of the three types, overall there are strong positive indications that social mixing is taking place at West Green, primarily through initiatives brought forward by residents to encourage communal activities.

## 6.1 Transformers

## 6.1.1 Social mixing- is it happening?

My research demonstrates that this type has tended to be the conduit in bringing the community together, through instigating and encouraging new community-led activities or events. Their drive and passion to make this community a success equates to encouraging everyone (wherever possible) to participate. As Sarah highlights;

## 

*“I was part of a small group of residents who wanted to put on an Easter event for the community. With the help of the community development co-ordinator from the housing association, we were able to put on quite a big event as they were able to fund the event … this was the first time we all got together and met our neighbours and the kids loved it…I want this place to be my home for the long term so I’m willing to put the time and effort in to make it happen.”*

Tony shared how he wanted to learn more about growing vegetables at his allotment so just went and asked;

*“Even though I have an allotment, I’m not great at growing things. So, when I was there last week I went up to a few others and started to talk to them about possibly having some kind of gardening group to share ideas and tips on growing. All of them thought it was a great idea... I’ve asked my partner to promote it on West Green’s Facebook page too. So far, we have about 8 people interested so I’m looking to book one of the community rooms at the Hall.”*

Another area where this type has instigated and encouraged social mixing has been with regards to the formation of the residents' group. Virtually everyone in the ‘transformer type’ is a member of the residents’ group, with two also being nominated officers. Somera, who is the Chair, explained;

*“I’ve never done anything like this before and yes I am nervous, but I want this place to be the best it can for me, my family and everyone living here, so that’s why I’m challenging myself in this role. I’ve got lots of ideas and want all of us to work together to make it happen here…the community development worker has been brilliant too- he’s given me the confidence to do this.”*

Kate, another member of the resident group, has also reinforced this sense of creating a new supportive and welcoming environment;

*“I feel very privileged to be here as I live in a beautiful home in lovely surroundings … there is so much potential to do things together and I want to play a part in making this happen… I’d like to get some keep fit sessions started in the Hall and possibly an arts club for the kids.”*

Similarly, Kevin spoke about his ideas for West Green;

*“I’ve always been sporty and really enjoy football … something like this gives a chance for both the parents and children to do something together and its fun. There is enough space right here.”*

Sarah has come up with her own idea for community engagement;

## *“Due to my illness, I can’t do much which requires a lot of exertion so I don’t get out very often, so I thought it’ll be nice if I could still see people but in a relaxed atmosphere. So, I thought why not set up some kind of coffee morning? I originally put posters up on the notice board around the area and in the first week there were about three of us - so I invited them to my house. Now, as the word has got around there’s about six of us regulars who meet up so we go to each other’s houses and generally have a natter and have a coffee. It’s really lovely getting to know the people here. I’ve made loads of friends - more than any time in my life.”*

The passion and camaraderie in creating connections through the development seems to complement the way the ‘transformer’ type works. Their commitment and willingness to engage and make links between activities and opportunities to support the development comes through as they have worked with others across the site. Interestingly, this type is also younger in age with many families having small children. Thus, the children have also formed part of this network and been a conduit through their friendships with other children, which has also helped galvanise this group more closely. As Life Course Theory suggests, there are linkages between the lives of individuals and the sociological context within which they exist, and via which their life events unfold (Elder, 1998; Elder et al., 2003).

What this group also tended to do was to encourage and make others aware of the ‘green’ opportunities around the development. As Sarah commented;

*“When I’m doing the school run in the morning, I often talk to other parents about the allotment group I’m involved in**… I think it’ll be great if we can get more people to come to this group as it can benefit everyone****.”***

Tony also stated;

*“Often when I’m off to the allotment****,*** *I’ll knock on a few people’s doors on my way down to see if anyone else might want to come down too. It’s just another way of getting to know your neighbours!”*

It is clear from this type that engagement with the environment has been concomitant with social engagement. Kevin, for example, told me;

*“Coming from quite a busy area, where it felt the housing was on top of each other, moving here has made me feel really quite chilled…mentally, moving here I know has helped me… when I’ve spoken to others they have said similar things.”*

The developing nature of people’s relationships with one another has very much been linked to, and shows signs of connectivity with, associated spaces within the development. For Tony, moving to West Green has given him the opportunity to try different activities, such as gardening, and this has been invariably linked with a degree of socialisation;

*“I really enjoy working at the allotment. I meet so many people from across the development and as the development is growing you see new faces all the time. I take the kids down with me as well, so they become familiar with the allotment and growing things. To be honest it’s a bit of a social thing too as once you’re down there. You get talking to different people and you pick up the odd gardening tip too as I don’t have the greenest of fingers!*

**6.1.2 Is there a future for social mixing?**

For the ‘transformer’ type, there is a desire for this development to be both a success as well as continue to transcend its longevity in creating a vibrant new community. Residents who I spoke to within this type expressed their intention to reside in West Green for the long term. As Kevin stated;

*“I suppose this development is built on the idea that you look at this as an investment for the long term for you and your family and I can see why. What else would you want around to bring your family up here?”*

Tony and Somera both expressed their desire to stay living in the development for the foreseeable future;

## *“For us this is ideal. Both of our parents are nearby, the kids are at school not far from here too. We like the fact that everyone is getting on and is friendly…I’ve never lived in such a place like this before. Previously, where we were we didn’t know the names of our neighbours and we’d been there nearly 5 years. We both want this to work and the palaver involved in moving is just not worth it! ... people seem to be getting on regardless of if you’re a social housing resident or private - who cares anyway, we’ll talk to anyone and get on with everyone.”*

## Kate talked about how proud she was of living at West Green;

## *“When I first moved in, I had a housewarming. I felt as though I was showing off a bit because I feel just so lucky to have such a lovely home in a lovely area with great neighbours…I have no intention of moving from here for quite a while - I love it and the kids love living here.”*

## Whilst talking to Kate, she also mentioned how living at West Green had enabled her to challenge herself more and be more attentive towards her neighbours;

## *“Having always lived in an area where I really didn’t speak to my neighbours, this whole community engagement thing and talking to each other has been the biggest adjustment for me I would say…my husband and I are just not used to it so to some extent it’s been a bit of a culture shock but I have to say a pleasant one which I want to embrace.”*

It needs to be noted, however, that when the social housing residents were offered a place on the development not all of them indicated that they could embrace both the eco-lifestyle and the social engagement aspect, which was envisaged for the site- hence some declined the offer to live at West Green. This has the benefit that those who did ultimately move to West Green have a positive approach to the environmental aspects of life there.

It does also suggest that more work remains to be done within society as a whole to ensure that social tenants feel able to access and participate in green lifestyle choices.

However, this is an issue to be explored in further work and is beyond the scope of this research. It is noted to make the relevant point that the social tenants who moved into West Green were, to some extent, a self-selecting group.

## The ‘transformer’ type, overall, have begun to unravel the difficulties in bringing the community together and have viewed their own presence as positive. The connectivity this group has brought has manifested itself in them becoming the instigators to activities which may not have necessarily been undertaken or implemented. This new environment seems to be one that is enabling them to take on board the ethos the development had originally envisaged.

## It is significant that the proportion of transformers at West Green is sufficient to provide cohesion and instigate interaction between the group as a whole. It is not necessary that the whole population should be transformers. Indeed, there is an argument that this would be contrary to the very object of social mixing but simply that there should be a sufficient number that their efforts bear some fruit.

As Wenger (2011) makes explicitly clear within the context of CoP theory, learning is at the core of CoPs and mutual engagement is not a prerequisite for the functioning of CoPs. Wenger (2011) allows for variations in CoPs and this research finding is reflective of his propositions. Since CoP theory suggests that people learn through social relations, which may inform shared repertoires of action, there is the suggestion here that the transformer group is spearheading the learning process, thereby leading the process of creating these shared repertoires of action that can, in the future, influence mutual engagement.

Additionally, Life Course theory (Elder, 1998) offers the insight that families or communities function as social groups within which interactions take place against the backdrop of ever changing social contexts over time. This supports the idea that, over time, the activities of transformers may provide cohesion and stimulate interaction between the group at the macro-level.

## 6.2 Lifestyle supporter

The second type identified in my study are the ‘lifestyle supporting’, whose attitude to green living has been to embrace the opportunity for themselves, without necessarily taking on a leadership role in encouraging or assisting others to join in this.

### 6.2.1 Social mixing- is it happening?

Although this type had already established their ‘green’ credentials, interaction with the other residents on the development seemed to be less forthcoming. There seemed to be a culture of holding back and not sharing many of their experiences with others or to instigate ‘green’ activities, which they had experience and knowledge of.

James states;

*“I don’t have an allotment here but I do have one nearby so I don’t necessarily have a need to go to the one here.”*

As an avid gardener, James could support the local residents at West Green and share his know-how on the subject, but chose not to.

Doreen also illustrated a reluctance to interact with others;

*“As I’ve said before I do like living here and enjoy meeting people but when I get home from work some days I just like to close the door and sit in my beautiful home quietly.”*

Simon remarks;

*“I’ve been so busy at work lately, so during the week I hardly see many of my neighbours. I suppose it’s only at the weekends when Molly and I have a bit of time that we talk to our neighbours.”*

When it comes to community activities, such as being part of the newly-formed residents’ group or supporting community events, most of the residents in the group have taken a keen interest in supporting or working alongside the other residents but not necessarily leading.

As James said;

*“I’ve helped with a few events on the developments- there’s been a couple of us residents (both private and social residents) who got together with the community development co-ordinator (from the housing association) to arrange them. We had about 90 people at the last Easter event. It was good to see so many children and adults from across the development enjoying time together.”*

Paul and Valerie Searley, also expressed their commitment to being part of the community by supporting the resident group;

*“Both of us attended the first residents’ meeting this week. We wanted to see how we could help build the community here on the development. We’d been involved in something similar group where we used to live…we know groups such as this can help bring the community closer together.”*

Although the ‘lifestyle supporters’ did not necessarily instigate the forming of these groups, they still took an interest in being part of them. Wenger’s (2011) concept of ‘mutual engagement’ and ‘joint enterprise’ are dimensions within CoP that highlight the notion that people engage in common actions or ideas to establish their own norms; ones which are conducive to themselves. There is scope for this relationship to change over time as relationships are constantly renegotiated by individual members. Therefore, as the resident group becomes more active and further activities are arranged, members of the ‘lifestyle supporter’ group may choose to become more active in this area.

For Jane, it was only with the support of another neighbour (a transformer member), that a West Green Facebook page was created;

*“I suppose when Somera approached me asking for help to set up the Facebook page I couldn’t say no really. I think we both felt that we wanted to help new residents when they moved in as we knew what it was like, having moved in ourselves only a few months ago…so we decided to creating a Facebook page with useful information and advice about the development- everything from what you can recycle to what you can grow! Feedback we’ve received so far has been really positive.”*

Interestingly, when I probed Jane further about the Facebook page she indicated that even though she knew how to use the basic functionalities of Facebook, Somera was far more proficient with it then she was and justified this by highlighting;

*“I think being slightly older than Somera, it takes me just that bit longer to get to grips with all the technological changes! Social media is moving so fast nowadays, it’s difficult to keep track, so I’m happy to take a bit of a back seat and let the youngsters take over now. Also my health isn’t as good as it used to be either so I need to rest more than I previously had to.”*

Jane’s acknowledgement that, through her life course journey, having once been quite active and prepared to take the lead on social media activities, she is now willing to pass on this responsibility to another person as well as recognising her own health limits. This also leads on to Jane’s comments about her joining the walking club;

*“I do love walking and it’s beautiful around here…the people in the group are really nice and we have a good chat on the way but sometimes I just can’t manage the distances due to my disability, so I don’t go as regularly as I should.”*

Although the ‘lifestyle supporters’ are fully aware of the environmental benefits of West Green, their reluctance to fully engage themselves could be due to reasons such as wanting to give others the opportunity to be more active as James explained;

*“For some living here - this is all so new and they are so excited. My family and I were similar where we lived before, prior to moving here…it’s good that others have taken on board what this new housing development needs…I’m always happy to help but someone else can take the mantle to begin with.”*

James also pointed out;

*“I’m at a different stage in my life now, so my priorities have changed somewhat. I don’t have the same amount of time as I did before so that is why I’m happy to help but just can’t give more.”*

Following on from James’s comment, the ‘lifestyle supporter’ members tended to be middle aged, married or separated couples with teenage or older children with the exception of Simon and his partner, who are a younger couple with no children.

Through Life Course theory, Elder (1985) talks about ‘generational time’ where he refers to the age groups or cohorts in which people are grouped, based upon their age and observing that time can be envisioned through a sequence of transitions within a trajectory. Elder (1985) goes on to explain;

*“Transitions are often accompanied by socially shared ceremonies and rituals, such as a graduation or wedding ceremony, whereas trajectories are long-term pathways, with age-graded patterns of development in major social institutions such as family and home life. In this way, the life course perspective emphasizes the ways in which transitions, pathways and trajectories are socially organised. Moreover, transitions typically result in a change in status, social identity, and role involvement. Trajectories, however, are long-term patterns of stability and change and can include multiple transitions” (p.311).*

Relating the concepts of transition and trajectory to the ‘supporting lifestyle’ type, it is evident that members have followed this pathway by transitioning their previous experiences of engagement to that of change in role, creating a new transition period for themselves.

Thus, the desire and commitment of the group to live in such a place still has credence for them and the innate support they offer to social mixing and adhering to the ethos of the development is still present. Nevertheless, applying the transition concept, this type has likely moved on to the next stage of their life course, which goes some way in explaining why they have acted in this manner.

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### 6.2.2 Is there a future for social mixing?

For the ‘lifestyle supporters’, there does seem to be a sense of wanting this development to be a success as they are familiar with the virtues of this lifestyle but not necessarily living on a mixed tenure housing site, as James highlights;

*“I think the private residents rather than the social residents would be more resistant of living in a mixed tenure development because they probably haven’t before…there is definitely a sense of community taking shape here at West Green. In fact, people who don’t want to embrace this kind of living I don’t particularly want to live with… I want to live with like-minded people.”*

James’s appreciation of wanting to live with people with similar aspirations and affinity links with West Green’s original concept of creating a single CoP, whereby a homogenous community of people live side by side and share the ethos of West Green.

Jane also highlighted that, for her, West Green feels as though it is a safe environment and, therefore, she is comfortable to give more freedom for her two young girls to go and play outside;

*“Really there isn’t anything I don’t like about living here. The standard of life here is just perfect. My children feel so much happier here, they are safe and enjoy the environment they live in. They can open the door and not be faced with a main road- which is so important to me…I can’t see myself moving from here at all, even if I won the lottery!”*

For Paul and Valerie, as an older retired couple in their 60s, living in West Green allowed them to support a similar lifestyle to what they were used to;

*“For us, the benefits of living here outstrips where we were previously. For us we feel that we’ve gained quite a lot financially but also from a community point of view - we’ve made many new friends and we want to develop these relationships … its taking time to do this as we are older now. We can’t get out and about as much but we know we’ve made the right decision to live here and we won’t be moving again.”*

As part of Paul and Valerie’s life course journey,their past is shaping their present and their future. According to Rand (1996), this can be envisioned as a *“domino or ripple effect”,* supporting ongoing familiar behaviour which they are comfortable with. Within West Green, a community building is also in the process of being renovated. Some in the group have acknowledged this building could be a crucial hub to help bring the community and the local area together, as Simon stated;

*“We hope that, once the Community Hall is finished, we can use the facilities to have our residents meeting in. There’s also the potential to have other local groups such as ‘mothers and toddlers group’ or coffee mornings or a gardening group…I also went to see the school last week too with another resident (from the transformer group) and talked to the deputy head about them possibly using the Hall for some of their activities too - they were definitely interested, I would say.”*

Jane also highlighted the potential of local produce being sold to the community;

*“It’ll be great if we could sell the food we produce here. This is all about supporting the local economy and not wasting food…I grow my own vegetables in my allotment now and sometimes have too much. If we could sell them, the money we make we could put back into the community.”*

Doreen also expressed a similar viewpoint when I went to see her;

*“We have such a great opportunity to sell the food which we grow. A lot of us here are keen gardeners and can’t see why we don’t sell our produce- I’m sure people in the local area would be interested.”*

The idea of the Hall being a hub for people to get together supports Wenger’s (2011) ‘aliveness’ principle of ‘developing community space’. Wenger expresses how buildings can be regarded as a conduit for community activity as well as a place where connections are made. The anticipation of the Hall being completed also allows for creativity to be shown in how the Hall could benefit not only people living in West Green, but also the wider local community. It was anticipated that local council meetings would be held at the Hall as well as other functions, partly to generate income but also to ensure it is regarded as a place where people would want to come and take part in activities.

Another of Wenger’s ‘aliveness’ principles highlights that of ‘combining familiarity with excitement’ so potentially for this group of avid gardeners producing home grown food to be sold locally would not only support the ‘green’ ethos of the development but, when it comes to social mixing, would undoubtedly create more opportunities for connectivity to be made within the development as well as with local residents in the vicinity.

Within this type, there is an appetite to ensure that the long term vision of the development is maintained as more people settle into living in West Green. The activities they are involved in illustrate that their experience is being utilised to promote the environmental aspects as well as to explore what potential funding streams are available to help maintain and sustain the ethos of the development. The age group of the ‘lifestyle supporters’ also illustrates how their knowledge and life experience has been interwoven within West Green and is making a difference in supporting its ethos.

Interestingly, this group also tended to be mainly private households. According to Didcot (2007), this could explain why there was this lack of engagement with others as “there is a tendency for private homeowners to not engage as fully in community activities compared to social housing residents - this could partly be due to local authorities and housing associations actively encouraging residents to participate, whilst for private residents this impetus just isn’t present” (p.175). It may also be that private homeowners have never experienced opportunities of this type before and have never lived in accommodation where the local authority provides this kind of support. Therefore, they may be accustomed to building relationships with their neighbours in a more organic way over a longer period of time. If this is the case, there might in the future be some scope for the local authority to take up a role in encouraging engagement amongst private homeowners.

One important factor looking to the future of social mixing for this group is simply the passage of time. Community can take years to truly establish itself and put down roots and there are positive indications of a willingness to engage and interact to suggest that greater social mixing might develop naturally amongst this group over time (Newman and Girvan, 2003; Greene et al., 2010; Ley, 2012). This point is supported by Life Course theory, which, as has been previously explained, suggests that community interactions change over time and in accordance with changing social contexts. Certainly, the preconditions required for this to take place are apparent from conversations with residents.

**6.3 Individualist type**

**6.3.1 Social mixing - is it happening?**

As outlined in the previous chapters, one of the primary motivations for the West Green project was to create a socially mixed tenure housing development. Though different stakeholders afforded a different level of prioritisation to the objective of social mixing depending from their particular perspective, it is clear that the idea of engaging with people from different social backgrounds within the parameters of an eco-development was a key objective for West Green from the outset.

Observable upon arrival at the premises is the vast open green space, which surrounds the unique modern designs of the homes. This is in stark contrast with the vast majority of other developments, from my personal experience. The look and feel of the environmental features stand out and shows how new housing developments need not be positioned in tightly compact high-density locations but can blend space with technology to create a healthier lifestyle for adults and children alike. This, ultimately, creates somewhere that some people might really want to be and are proud to live. But it is also important to recognise that not everyone wants the same and that people look to fulfil their personal choice in ways that suit them. On closer observation, further distinctions become apparent. When walking around the development and interacting with residents (all tenures), there were a number of different things I noticed on my various visits.

The open space areas definitely allowed for people to be outside of their homes more. Children mainly used the play area on the development but I noticed some of the younger children tended to play in their front garden area. In developments which boast less green space and common areas, this is a much rarer sight. This finding converges with the literature that suggests that green spaces in communities encourage community collaboration (Tang and Bharmra, 2009). Residents did comment that the level of noise on the development increased or fluctuated depending on the time of the day. For example, after school until early evening, and on weekends, it tended to be noisier whilst during school hours the development is much quieter.

This suggests that the noise they experienced was primarily the sounds of family life and children at play, which contrasts more urban developments where the principal source of noise is often rush hour traffic or nightlife.

The use of the green space made available in the development is perhaps most clear in the use of the allotments. On each of my visits this appeared to be the most popular area and was in constant use. Visually, the area looked very impressive and it was clear that the residents had taken pride in maximising the space. People were keen to show off their gardening skills as lots of fruit and vegetables were growing. Some of the greenhouses had not been completed, hence there were only a few which were being used, but due to the proximity of the two areas it was good to see how the areas were being utilised.

It was also clear that the allotments had become a focal point for interaction within the community, particularly between members of different age groups.

The interrelationship of community and green space is also apparent at a more structural level, in particular through the impact of the local residents’ group in instigating and encouraging a programme of social and interactive activities for residents that make use of the available space. These include cycling proficiency for young children, a local West Green football team, a gardening club and an arts club focusing on making sculptures for the development using recycled materials. A lot of these activities have come to life, I believe, through the ‘green’ nature of the development and help to knit the fabric of this new community together. It can also be noted that many of them (such as cycling and gardening) have significant educational value and instil environmental values and habits in children.

The members of the ‘individualist' type who I interviewed in this research were both shared owners on the development. However these members did not engage with the wider group of residents, socially or in support of the ethos of the development although they did appreciate what the development was trying to encourage. As Peter stated;

*“I know there are lots of people here from different backgrounds who live here. That doesn’t bother me at all, each to their own I say. I want to come home from work and close my front door… on the weekends I normally go out and either see my kids or see mates so I’m not around here much.”*

Peter did however comment that;

*“I see lots of children playing around, especially after school, which is nice as I think it does give a different feel to the area - so I suppose the children are mixing…when I get the opportunity for my kids to come and stay with me, I’d probably take them down to the play area here, I suppose.”*

For Donald, his experience with social mixing was explained somewhat differently;

*“As my wife doesn’t speak good English and she is pretty shy, she finds it difficult to interact … we have been here only a few months so we’re still working our way around the development. You never know we may get to mix with more people as we settle but at the moment I’m not in the greatest of health and my wife isn’t confident enough.”*

Overall, the ‘individualist’ type have tended to stay on the periphery of engagement when it comes to activities or joining community groups at West Green. However, they seem to be quite contented with their home environment. They have created attachments which are fitting to their own personal needs and not necessarily immersing themselves into the wider eco agenda or community engagement aspect of the development. This sense of distancing has neither caused nor evoked umbrage of any kind with any of the other residents. As I argued in Chapter 2, life course entails various developmental changes in one’s life that tend to affect certain decisions related to environmentally conscious decision making (Scharelach: 2009). As such, the life course reflects the intersection of social and historical factors with personal biography and development within which the study of family life and social change can ensue (Elder: 1985; Hareven: 1996).

It is worth bearing in mind that the level of engagement and sociability shown by the individualist group in West Green cannot be considered in isolation but only by reference to the patterns which might have been expected in another development.

There are objective reasons why individuals in this group might be less disposed to be sociable than others but might, nevertheless, adopt a range of levels of engagement depending on their environment. This work has previously highlighted people’s life journeys to explain how, when and to what extent they want to be involved.

In the case of Donald and Biyu, their health, age and wanting to focus on themselves as a couple and their immediate family seem more pressing in their current lives then adopting or actively engaging in the ethos of West Green.

For Peter, similarly, his personal stage of life dictates where his focus is based at present and, through the interview I carried out with him, he is not even certain that West Green is the right place for him in the long term;

*“I’m not sure how long I’ll be staying here to be honest. I want to get a bigger place I think so the kids can stay over. This flat is a bit small …I’ll see how things settle with my ex-partner and getting access to the kids, that’s my priority.”*

Interestingly, Somera, one of the residents from the ‘transformer’ type recognised herself that people have different motivations to get involved and appreciates that different life course journeys impact people in various ways;

*“People have different reasons for moving and, depending on which stage they are in their lives, it makes a big difference. All I can say is that when people are ready to join in they will and hopefully there’ll be enough going on here in West Green for them to get involved.”*

Perhaps this recognition from other residents is an indication that not everyone is ready to take on the challenges of new engagement opportunities but, if members of the ‘transformers’ type allow for the right environment to be created, then people may feel inclined to join in when they are ready.

Reflecting on the literature review, the fact that successive governments have endorsed the concept of mixed communities, be it through City Challenge initiatives or through ‘Sustainable Communities’ policies (Lafferty and Hovden: 2003; Lawless: 2004; Raco: 2007; 2005; Mazmanian and Kraft: 2009), does not necessarily reflect or appreciate households or families who want to remain within their own nucleus.

The literature mainly reflects and supports the notion that the only way to become a truly cohesive community is for everyone to engage with one another. But what about people like Peter and Donald and Biyu who do not want to engage but are perfectly affable and want to remain in their own environment?

This element reflects comments posed by Shove (2003), and included in the literature review, that it is the individual and his or her motivations that constitutes the primary unit of analysis and persuasion. Thus, for the ‘individualistic’ type, their personal reasoning surpasses that of the overall premise of living in a ‘green’ housing development and networking to get the best out of the location and the activities bringing people together. This reinforces the CoP perspective in terms of the notion. Since CoPs are voluntary, they can successfully promote group behaviour and learning through aliveness or the ability to engender enough relevance, value and excitement to concurrently attract and engage members.

**6.3.2 Is there a future for social mixing?**

The purpose of West Green is to create a housing development that provides longevity in community engagement and environmental sustainability, resulting in low turnover in household numbers. The thinking around people wanting to stay and build their lives within the development evoked various views within this group.

As Donald stated;

*“For us this is it, we won’t move again. We’ll be here until we leave in a box, … so for us, spending time together and with our family and grandchildren is precious but we appreciate that people have come to live here for different reasons and I’m sure raising your family here on this new development would be great as there is lots for them to do. But, for us, a bit of peace and quiet is what we need right now.”*

When I asked Peter about social mixing during his interview, he explained;

*“I get what this place is doing - wanting people to get on and do things together. That’s fine but you need to understand not everyone is the same. That’s not to say I won’t say ‘hi’ to my neighbours or blank people, I’m just not into all that stuff.”*

Even though this type’s idea of sustainability was somewhat different for Donald and Biyu their reason for staying at West Green was mainly due to their age and wanting a ‘quiet’ life. They regarded the development as a place where they could see themselves for the long term.

Thus, the idea of sustainability for them was identified on a much more personal level and not necessarily in the contexts of environmentalism or social mixing. For Peter, even though his present personal circumstances denote his reason for living in West Green, his future was focussed on leaving the development as he felt this was just a stepping stone to other goals in his life.

Again, referring to Life Course theory, as highlighted in my literature review, the narrative shared by Donald and Biyu and Peter clearly directs attention to the powerful connection between their individual lives and the sociological context in which particular events are unfolding for them. Bengston and Allen (1993) explain that, “through utilising the life course perspective the importance of time, context, process and meaning on human development and family life becomes clearer when put into context”. They go on to state that “the family is perceived as a micro-social group within a macro-social context as a collection of individuals with shared history who interact within ever-changing social contexts across ever-increasing time and space" (p.470). Ageing and developmental change, therefore, are continuous processes that are experienced throughout life and, as such, the life course reflects the intersection of social and historical factors with personal biography and development within which the study of family life and social change can ensue (Elder: 1985; Hareven: 1996).

What emerges from this is that developments, such as West Green, must not stray into compelling residents to engage with community activities. Indeed, there is a strong argument that, in order to encourage genuinely ‘mixed' communities, they must accommodate an element of individualistic households and families. These are not indicative of the ‘failure' of social mixing as an objective of the development but are part of the diversity of the fabric of the society that the designers sought to create. The important thing is that these households do not have social or community needs that are not fulfilled and also that they are not causing any discord or conflict amongst the society in West Green as a whole.

We must bear in mind that that this would not necessarily have been the case in another development or community structure. With less space or community spirit than is offered at West Green, the relative withdrawal of the individualist type might have led to conflict with their neighbours.

For these reasons, the accommodation of the individualist group within the community at West Green, albeit with a lower degree of engagement than might have been hoped for, is evidence of its success.

### 6.4 Social mixing- has it been a success at West Green?

The premise for West Green was undoubtedly an ambitious one. Not only did it want to create a new housing development that embraced the modern outlook in eco-design and spatial environment, it also wanted to create a development that was based within a mixed tenure scope to encourage an approach which would connect both the physicality and people living there. The discussion which follows should be caveated at the outset by stating that it is not possible to draw conclusive links between the features of West Green and the levels of social mixing observed without undertaking a further study to determine the baseline level of social mixing that might be expected in a ‘traditional' housing development for comparison. However, the conclusions which follow are based on the comments and views of residents as to the impact that the particular facilities available at West Green have had on their participation in the community.

This pilot scheme was designed to navigate the challenges facing the complexity of housing provision but also the desire to create places where people wanted to live for long periods of their lives. So, has the development proved a success in encouraging social mixing to take place within the scope of my research? On one level, yes. It has been a success due to the different tenure model used at West Green. The provision for being able to rent as well as purchase homes on the site itself allows for different groups of people to live there. Section 106 provision, an agreement made between the local planning authority and developers for a proportion of social housing provision to be made available if homes are over a certain threshold number, resulted in West Green being given this as an option too. Creating the three different tenure types, social housing, private housing and shared ownership housing was in itself a methodology for creating a mix in housing provision from the outset.

Allowing for this diversity in tenure type premised the notion of people from different backgrounds with different life experiences being brought together.

As previously discussed, social commentators have encouraged the notion that social mixing is worthwhile on numerous levels, be that to enable shared experiences or encourage new learning opportunities or knowledge sharing amongst each other. This approach provides a holistic application. When it comes to social mixing looking beyond just tenureship, my research has illustrated that it did not matter which social background (in terms of tenure) people were from. They were happy to engage with each other through activities undertaken, social events or even making connections through utilising the space and features within West Green. The distinctions between the three groups identified in my study were not drawn along socioeconomic lines, which was in itself a significant success for the development. They did reflect the stage of life at which various households found themselves but this is, perhaps, a consequence of inherent factors which a housing development cannot (and should not try to) overcome beyond seeking to ensure that no-one is unhappy or dissatisfied with their position in the community. These connections have allowed for distinctions within tenure type to be removed and be replaced by a level of wanting to achieve a common goal through exploiting the area and its facilities within West Green, in essence, to bring people together.

Within the CoP theory, Wenger (2011) is clear to show that it is through social relations that people learn and it is this learning which forms CoPs. Not all CoPs are part of a close-knit community involving mutual engagement, joint enterprise or shared repertoires of actions and they can vary enormously (Wenger, 1998). These differences simply define a different type of membership and a different type of community, which is evident at West Green. This lack of precision in definition in actual fact strengthens the CoP concept as it goes some way to provide answers as to why consecutive governments have failed to take into consideration the nuances in people’s lives, their life course journeys or even their desire to want to engage. ‘One size’ does not fit all, as my findings have shown. The overall premise of West Green may have to be contextualised within these sub CoPs which, over time, evolve to take their natural course of progression to ultimately create a singular CoP.

It was the interaction between people, and the level of interaction they developed that was the most interesting when it came to social mixing. The make-up of the three types identified illustrated a blend of different tenure types but it was the social housing residents who were the most engaged amongst the three. This research finding is in direct contrast to the literature, which establishes a social basis for environmentally conscious behaviour. There are several studies which suggest that wealthier individuals who are higher up the social class hierarchy have a higher propensity for engaging in green behaviours (Fransson and Garling: 1999; Walton & Austin: 2011; Laidley: 2013).

The ‘transformer type’ category, in which social housing residents were most prominent, openly encouraged others to part take in activities or utilise the facilities to support engagement from a grass-roots perspective. This is a valuable insight for future projects as it indicates one of the ways in which developers might seek to ensure a social mix which includes a sufficient proportion of transformers to instigate social interaction and stimulate the development of community.

Many within this type had not been involved with community engagement before but it was clearly evident that through working together the members seemed to have found support and aspiration from each other. Their commitment to wanting to learn and share experiences was apparent and this was something they wanted to harness and nurture. This perhaps also reflects the value of West Green for many of these tenants, who may have spent time in less desirable social housing.

Having a point of contrast with previous housing that lacked the facilities and community support of West Green heightened their appreciation of these features and improved people’s willingness to invest time and energy in taking advantage of them. This type also emphasised their desire to want to stay living within West Green for the long term and viewed it as a place to live for the foreseeable future. This group could also easily be recognised as powerful agents of social change, placing quite a responsibility on them for the development to be a success as well as regarded as a conduit for social change. Frenkin (2009) defines the term social change as, “changes that take place in human interactions and interrelations…whereby society can be acknowledged as a web of social relationships which can be understood in terms of social processes, social interactions and social organization” (p.23).

For the ‘transformer’ type, this interactive approach reflects the various levels of contact they have across the development illustrating the standing of their role. They may become seen within the community as a type of community leader, with more extensive knowledge of green behaviours, which could be used as a form of capital, and access to areas of the development, such as the allotment and community centre. A possible negative impact of this on social housing renters may be that the burden of community organising may fall on their shoulders. As a result, they may gain social standing within the community or may feel as though they are doing all the hard work while other residents are not willing to help. In addition, due to their commitment to West Green, their priorities, needs and ambitions for the community may become dominant and may overshadow those of other residents of different tenure types.

In addition, the support given to these members by the community development worker also remained quite focussed, recognising that people within this type needed support, training and on occasion ‘hand-holding’ when it came to organising or arranging meetings. Part of the remit for the community development worker was to do just this; recognising that once residents became more confident, they would begin to share their knowledge with others and become more self-sustaining as a group.

The ‘lifestyle supporters’ were similar in terms of numbers but different in tenure make up than the ‘transformer’ type. However, they too were willing to engage, support and on occasion share their experiences. Their tendency to remain a little more reserved when engaging in activities marked the distinction between the two groups but, nevertheless, they were definitely of the ilk of wanting to remain and stay as part of the development for the long term. The reasons for their relative withdrawal are not entirely clear but, as highlighted by Carroll and Meyer (1986) earlier through the lens of life course theory, patterns of engagement can vary across status groups but over time become more stable. It may also simply be a question of personality or lack of experience of community engagement. In either case, it may be that this group would naturally incline towards becoming ‘transformers’ in terms of social mixing over time; whether because of changes in their personal circumstances or because they gradually put down deeper roots and get to know their neighbours better.

Though the ‘individualist’ type remained isolated out of choice, not all saw West Green as an interim place to live. Some expressed their commitment to stay, which could lead to them mixing with others on the development as time elapses.

It is also significant that neither the members of this type nor their neighbours appeared in any way dissatisfied with their relatively low level of participation and engagement.

Overall, the premise of social mixing taking place within West Green and the way people want to engage and support the ethos of the development is evident in both the ‘transformers’ and ‘lifestyle supporter’ types. The manner in which these two types have orchestrated their behaviour and interactions has lent itself to create a place where people want to live and feel proud. However, all this depends on the individuals that make up these types remaining the same, or at least preserving a sufficient balance between the proportions of the populations of the three types to allow the trend of social mixing to continue. Whilst the fact that people move, circumstances change, people get older and families grow will certainly have an impact on the dynamics of any community and the manner in which they interact with each other, those involved in running the project can minimise the negative impact of these changes by ensuring that potential new tenants have a desire to put down roots in the community.

It is also crucial to understand the inequality of expectations relating to the establishment of different and unequal tenure groups in West Green, particularly the presence of any ‘tenure prejudice’ (Costa Santos et al., 2018), on the ways in which people engage with the development’s ethos. This study has found that the interactions between tenant groups impinged on environmental behaviours, partly due to the inequality of their tenure. Although studies by Beck (1992) and Inglehart (1995) have argued that the common variable of social background is not a determinant of green behaviour, it is evident that unequal tenure type may be. For example, those with different tenure types will experience varying levels of commitment to the housing development as it influences their life course. For example, social housing tenants appeared to more fully embrace the benefits of West Green and experience a higher incentive to enjoy the benefits more fully as their residency was less secure. In contrast, the private owners often appeared less committed as they had more freedom to move.

However, despite these inequalities in tenure, it is not negatively impacting on social mixing, which is taking place at West Green to an extent. If this drive and effort continue, then future households moving into the development will want to embrace this too. Communities are nebulous entities and working with people and communities can be unpredictable but for West Green at present this approach seems to be working.

**Chapter 7: Discussion and conclusion**

This chapter will synthesise and summarise the discussions found in the previous chapters to determine whether, and to what extent, the green features of the development and behavioural change in its residents have contributed to social cohesion at West Green. In this chapter, I will firstly summarise and interrogate the research findings of this study in light of the existing literature, after which I will present a critique of the value of my theoretical perspective. Thirdly, I shall explore the limitations of this research and the direction of future research. Fourthly, I will go on to outline the implications of this research for future policy and practice in housing and, finally, I will conclude by providing my own personal thoughts on being a housing professional.

**7.1 Research findings**

This study has made important contributions to the literature previously published on the subject. While many studies have separately examined both ‘mixed communities' and the increasing social norms of environmentally conscious decision making, there have not yet been studies that have successfully combined the two perspectives, especially in relation to the mixed tenure communities that currently exist within the UK. This is a crucial perspective as the green element of West Green appears to promote social mixing as an important focus of unity.

This research found that West Green is a CoP within which three sub-community types can be identified; Transformers, Lifestyle Supporters and Individualists. Each of these types operates differently and this study has found that their behaviour, and its sustainability, is related to their tenure type. The Transformers encapsulates residents who wholly embrace the green lifestyle and demonstrate behavioural changes in their lives to align with this way of life when they moved to West Green.

As the Transformers primarily consist of social housing residents, this types engagement in green behaviours diverges from the previous literature (Cotgrove and Duff: 1980; Dunlap: 1995; Rootes: 1995; Zhao et al.: 2014; Ritter et al.:2014; Liobikiene and Juknys: 2016), which suggests that individuals from higher social backgrounds who are both highly educated and economically secure are more likely to engage in green attitudes and behaviours. The research findings of this study, however, are consistent with the research of both Beck (1992) and Inglehart (1995), who have long argued that green behaviour is not contingent on social background.

Lifestyle Supporters refer to those residents who already appreciated the green living lifestyle before they moved to West Green but still incorporate it in their everyday lives at the new site. In the context of the Individualists, this study found that this category of residents is inclined to keep to themselves and, thus, exhibit minimal community engagement or interest in their green surroundings. The observed behaviours of the Individualists diverges from the literature that suggests that if green community programs exist the average resident is likely to be willing to participate (Tang and Bharmra: 2009). The argument put forward by Tang and Bharmra (2009) is, however, observable in the case of the Transformers and Lifestyle Supporters as both groups appeared to be inspired by the environment at West Green to engage in green behaviours.

The convergence of this study with the research conducted by Beck (1992) and Inglehart (1995) is also evident when the green behaviours of the Transformers and Individualists are compared. Both groups consist of social housing tenants and yet they display different green behaviours, suggesting that the common variable of social background is not a determinant of green behaviour as Beck (1992) and Inglehart (1995) have argued.

The differences in the green behaviours of the Transformers and Individualists, this thesis showed, is better explained by life course theory. Explicitly, this research found that Individualists have issues in their personal lives which demand their time and attention, thus leaving them with little time to engage with the community or ‘green living’.

Despite the distinct categories of residents that were established by this study in terms of the green behaviours and tenure groups, it was concurrently found that interactions exist between these groups and there is a general lack of anti-social behaviour within the community (at the time of the research being undertaken).

The evidence from this research suggests that the green features of the development and behavioural change in its residents have contributed to social cohesion and social mixing to an extent. However, it must also be recognised that the development is still in its early stages. The green spaces encourage the interrelationship of the community by providing a platform through which social and interactive activities for residents can be organised. This research finding converges with the studies of Pullman (2008), Tang and Bharma (2009), Straightener (2009), Peters et al. (2010), Seaman (2010), Rubuk (2010) as well as Eizenberg and Jabareen (2017), which show that green spaces within communities encourage green behaviours that form the basis of shared and negotiated experiences between residents.

As has also been similarly established by Tang and Bharma (2009), this research has established that a myriad of community activities stem from the ‘green' nature of the development, which plays a crucial role in knitting the fabric of the community together. For instance, the research findings suggest that the allotments became a focal point for interaction within the community, particularly between members of different age groups and the three sub-community groups identified in this study. These findings converge with the existing research that suggests that green spaces in communities encourage community collaboration (Tang and Bharma: 2009; Peters et al.: 2010; Seaman: 2010; Eizenberg and Jabareen: 2017).

This study also found that the interaction between tenants groups (as an indicator of different social background) impinged on environmental behaviour since it was established that social housing tenants were comparatively more appreciative of the benefits of West Green in comparison with non-green developments and had a higher incentive to embrace the benefits more fully.

Similarly, the opportunity to ‘put down roots’ within the development could be more enthusiastically received by social housing tenants. Interestingly, the winner of the recent RIBA Sterling prize this year, ‘Goldsmith Street’, a new development of around 100 homes, built by Norwich city council meeting the exacting Passivhaus standards, is based on a similar premise to West Green. Goldsmith Street’s environmental standards mean that energy costs are around 70% cheaper than average for residents. The houses are structured so that they are highly insulated with purposefully angled roofs to ensure that they do not block sunlight from the homes behind. The back gardens are dotted with communal tables and benches, looking on to a planted mature gardened alley way for children to explore, while parking has been pushed to the edge of the site, freeing up the streets for people, not cars. Therefore, there is traction in parts of the sector to continue to build homes that not only look at the physicality of the home but also the social engagement enhanced by ‘green’ spaces/infrastructure to bring communities and residents together.

Another key finding of this research concerns the question of whether West Green has made residents more ‘green’ across the various points of life course events for each sub-community group. The appreciation of the development and the physical surroundings for the Transformers, for example, coming as it did at a key point in their lives, served as a real incentive for them to encourage, inspire and even take up new practices. These practices had not been available previously due to their circumstances or the location in which they were residing. In the case of Individualists, issues in their personal lives that demand their time and attention served as a barrier to the adoption of green behaviours. The usefulness of life course theory in explaining the divergent green behaviours of the Transformers and Individualists is, thus, very much apparent here.

This study established two key findings concerning a divide between the Transformer type and the Lifestyle Supporter type. The first research finding pertains to personal factors, while the second finding concerns external features such as the local authority. The divide is a function of the fact these two types require more time to integrate as they do not have a priori social experiences of engaging with one another and might not have found themselves in such proximity outside of a community like West Green.

Further, these divisions are reflective of the limitations of the local authority in terms of formulating a programme of community engagement activities, which appeals to both these types. Significantly, the divide that was observed did not emanate from any social preferences on the part of the residents and categories of residents expressed positive opinions of their neighbours as well as their openness to potentially building a closer relationship over time. Consequently, the green features of West Green provide a common ground between these two groups who might otherwise struggle to find shared interests, which could form the basis of a relationship. This is particularly the case since both the Transformers (comprised primarily of social tenants) and the Lifestyle Supporters (comprised primarily of private tenants) have embraced the green features of West Green and are keen to make further lifestyle changes to embrace these in the future. This evidence suggests that social mixing might take place naturally over time. It is important to bear in mind when judging the success of the development that social cohesion is not an overnight process. However, it is important to highlight the benefits of a community that includes a mixture of people at different life stages and a social mix in terms of tenure. My research, when compared to prior knowledge, has brought to the fore a new focus to the body of literature between green spaces, green behaviour and social mixing.

**7.2 Theoretical Implications**

This study established support for CoP theory by demonstrating that the residents of the West Green community share a common purpose and their membership in the CoP serves to motivate all residents to share their ideas and engage with each other, despite their varying backgrounds via the ‘aliveness’ principles. Wenger’s (2011) CoP framework was fundamental to this research as it provided the basis for investigating how green behaviour can be an effective means for community cohesion within an area of mixed tenure. The CoP framework is, however, limited in explaining the lack of engagement from the ‘Individualists’ as it implicitly assumes that community engagement is a corollary of membership in the CoP. This finding was better explained by life course theory. In particular, it showed the importance of having a mix of residents at different ages and life stages and a mix of different tenure types.

Although within the CoP theory, Wenger (2011) states that it is through social relations that people learn and it is this learning that forms CoPs, not all CoPs are part of a close-knit community relating to mutual engagement, joint enterprise or shared repertoires of actions. CoPs can vary enormously (Wenger: 1998) and this is evident in the findings of this study. These differences simply define a different type of membership and a different type of community, which is evident at West Green. This lack of precision in definition strengthens the CoPs concept as it goes some way to provide answers as to why consecutive governments have failed to take into consideration the nuances in people’s lives, their life course journeys or even their desire to want to engage. ‘One size’ does not fit all as my findings have shown and the overall premise of West Green may have to be contextualised within these sub CoP’s which over time evolve to take their natural course of progression to ultimately create a singular CoP. This theoretical contribution, however, needs to be developed further. In particular, it needs to be tested against a larger sample size to ensure that the findings can be extrapolated. As CoPs can vary enormously (Wenger, 1998), I need more data to understand the specific workings of West Green. By increasing the sample size, and making comparisons with existing research, more robust findings will be made concerning the links between green spaces, green behaviour and social mixing.

**7.3 Policy Implications**

Although from a policy perspective, the government is pursuing an agenda to facilitate mixed communities especially in the area of new housing developments, there are still two overarching lessons that can be learned based on new practice and research that is informing the development of new mixed communities.

Whilst there was some positive evidence of the role of a green housing development for promoting community cohesion and solidarity, this remains an area that requires further investigation.

Firstly, particularly as England continues to encourage housing communities that contain mixed-tenure as part of its housing policy, I argue that there will always be certain groups that choose to live together because of certain communal characteristics. A corollary of this proposition is that local authorities, builders and planners need to be more mindful about how space is used not only within the home but outside of it.

Through the use of the life course theory, I have shown that certain social structures offer residents opportunities to investigate green initiatives from various perspectives, including occupational and domestic opportunities. In as much as current funding and housing policy constraints have made mixed tenure a fixture in public housing schemes across the UK, the policy focus is primarily on how mixed communities can foster social cohesion as part of a larger discourse on how this form of housing can bridge inequalities between social groups.

As part of new policy developments concerning mixed communities, for example, there are proposals that developers should not be allowed to construct segregated play areas on the basis of tenure. The current London Plan proposed by Mayor Sadiq Khan focuses on social cohesion and inclusivity, whereby mixed communities are being leveraged to complement structural economic and social policies to support the most vulnerable within communities.

Secondly, amidst this discourse, the language of sustainability has taken a back seat, evidenced by the revoking of the Code for Sustainable Homes in 2015. In light of the research findings of this study, there is clearly an impetus for a policy focus on how such communities can promote green behaviours through social norms.

The inclusion of my research findings into the wider community of knowledge would, thus, be beneficial for policymakers as it offers insight into ways that mixed communities can use certain social norms to change the entire community for the better. It also shows how the ‘green’ element of a housing development can promote social mixing. Policymakers should consider the various factors that initially attract different social groups to a green development, whether it is in the form of home energy cost savings or extensive green living options as this can serve as a basis for making green developments more attractive to a wider range of different groups. This is an important precursor that can support social mixing.

Social mixing based on these shared attractions can be subsequently enhanced via inbuilt green spaces and other features that promote community engagement and cohesion.

**7.4 Limitations**

This research generated a series of novel findings concerning the relationship between green spaces, green behaviours and social mixing in the context of West Green. Further research is, however, required to draw conclusive links between the features of West Green and the levels of social mixing observed.

Further research is especially required to determine the baseline level of green lifestyle choices and social mixing, which might be expected in a ‘traditional' housing development for comparison. Even where there are varying levels of engagement and participation in activities, those who are less inclined to join in appear content that others take the lead in doing so. Households can enjoy being surrounded by an active community even when they are reluctant to engage themselves or are prevented from participating fully by other demands on their time. The amount of green space available, and the fact that residents are encouraged to engage in green and community activities (and therefore directed away from any activities which might be considered anti-social or apt to cause discord between neighbours), is a contributing factor in this. The absence of conflict in the community must, however, be properly contextualised as there is the possibility that this may reflect the time constraints of this study as opposed to the realities of the community. A longitudinal study will be particularly useful for determining if this finding is reflective of the status quo within the community.

On the other hand, the fact that the distinction between the ‘Transformer' type and the Lifestyle Supporters' overlaps with the distinction between private and social tenants suggests that more needs to be done to achieve a genuinely cohesive society in the development.

The relatively small size of the sample also creates difficulties in the study drawing firm conclusions, especially in relation to the ‘Individualists’ type who were the smallest type represented by the study, with just two households. At the start of the study, I wrote to all households who had been living on the development for over three months, which totalled 52 households.

The response rate was low and, as a result, the sample included just six social housing residents, six owner-occupiers and two shared ownership households. In particular, the low number of ‘Individualists’ identified by the study was as a result of this limited number of shared owner households.

As a result, the findings of this study cannot be used to understand housing developments other than West Green although they can be used as an indication of trends to be further explored. To produce more representative findings, the overall sample size would need to have been larger, which may have been possible if the housing development had been fully occupied. This would have meant that a more robust and variant breath of households could have been interviewed as part of the research.

**7.5 Future Research**

As has been delineated above, further research is required to draw conclusive links between the features of West Green and the levels of social mixing observed. Future studies require some research that establishes a baseline of green behaviours and social mixing. Longitudinal studies that focus on communities such as West Green are further crucial for determining the extent of social mixing and social cohesion within such communities. Since social mixing and cohesion do not happen overnight, a longitudinal approach can effectively capture such processes. Additionally, as West Green is a new development, a longer study would enable the realities of the community to be unpacked for further analysis. Currently, there is a lack of such studies in the literature and future research can be directed towards this area and methodological approach.

Another prospective area for further research may be the impact of Britain's decision to leave the European Union. There is emerging research on the impact of Brexit on social cohesion within communities and this is an interesting line of enquiry to pursue in communities such as West Green that draw together people from diverse backgrounds. Furthermore, this line of enquiry is thought-provoking for determining whether green spaces are enough to facilitate community cohesion in the face of such changes within the social and political processes.

For now, however, the pursuit of the current Conservative government is very much based on simply increasing housing supply. The new Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, Robert Jenrick, indicated at the recent Conservative Party conference that, “I will focus relentlessly on boosting supply and home ownership to get more young people and families on to the housing ladder” (Guardian, August 2019). There was little or no commentary on how this approach will be linked to the wider narrative of community cohesion or ‘green’ living purporting to developments such as West Green or similar programs. The determination to only increase home ownership without taking into consideration the holistic approach, both in terms of tenure type and levels of engagement, will force developers to simply refocus on increasing house numbers due to incentivisation of grant levels from central government. This will undoubtedly result in tenure segregation and ‘tenure prejudice’ (Costa Santos et al., 2018); a far cry from what West Green is all about.

**7.6 Being a housing professional: my thoughts**

Having worked within the social housing sector for over 24 years, choosing a research topic related to my discipline of work may come as no surprise. Politically, the housing agenda has proved a subject area which has garnered a lot of focus but not necessarily for the right reasons or to the satisfaction of those within the sector.

For the most part, the role of housing associations has been to provide affordable housing for those in greatest need and who are vulnerable. The dichotomy between the original purpose of social housing and what the government is currently encouraging is somewhat vast in direction.

The government’s ambition to get more people on to the property ladder and into homeownership is an ambition for them. Schemes such as Help to Buy ISA, Starter Homes and shared ownership support this directive, lessening the need for social housing and, therefore, reducing the role for the sector and its purpose. A report written by the Policy Exchange think tank in 2015 highlighted the point that the UK had a higher proportion of social housing stock than the European average, creating more of a dependency on welfare and worklessness.

The author Alex Morton, a previous policy advisor for the Conservative government, stated that, “social housing should be prioritised for the severely sick and disabled and the rest of it should be allocated on the basis of local connection and residence qualifications – and seen as a stepping stone to ownership (Policy Exchange - Making Housing Affordable Report, 2015, p.17). This belief and desire for owning one’s own property has manifested itself into a logic, which ultimately many cannot afford. Government’s own figures illustrate there were 34,920 homes completed in the April-to-June quarter of 2017, only up 7% on the previous three months but down 2% on a year earlier. In the year to June, 139,030 homes were completed, an increase of 6% compared with last year (Inside Housing, June 2018).

So what does the future hold for social housing? For most landlords, the disillusionment with the Housing and Planning Bill, which attained royal assent in May 2016, marked the way for a much smaller role for social housing with David Cameron announcing the Bill to be one of “transforming generation rent into generation buy” (Guardian, September 2016). The government wanting to end the system of permanent council tenancies, which was the cornerstone of Margaret Thatcher’s policy in 1979 when the Conservatives came to power, and replacing it with arrangements that will be reviewed every two to five years means that for new tenants council housing will no longer represent anything secure or dependable. Similarly, for housing associations, new tenancies will also thwart the idea of stability with these being reviewed every 5 years, depending on eligibility.

The Bill also contains measures to extend the Right to Buy to housing association tenants, which will be paid for by forcing councils to sell off ‘high value’ vacant council homes. This will result in even fewer social rented homes and will have a negative impact on the workforce and housing supply. In my opinion, with a reduction in stock and reduced rental income, the situation will only worsen and lead to fewer homes and services for those in greatest housing need. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation has warned that the Bill will lead to 180,000 fewer affordable homes to rent or buy over the next five years (JRF, 2016).

In 2018 alone, there were three housing ministers and two secretaries of states in post, continuing to illustrate the lack of consistency in dealing with the ever-growing housing crisis.

The publishing of the Social Housing Green Paper in the summer of 2018 did, however, signal at long last a change of attitude from government, highlighting its commitment to tackling the stigma associated with social housing residents along with the promise to give the housing regulator sharper teeth to act on behalf of concerned residents. The tragic events of Grenfell in June 2017 also led to the Green Paper outlining a commitment to build and to re-clad high rise properties, ensuring that they are safe and secure following the tragedy.

The introduction of strategic partnerships between the government and housing associations in providing more financial leverage to build, as well as the scrapping of borrowing caps for local authorities, have all squarely been aimed at reversing the trend of decreasing housing numbers. Nevertheless, most people on average earnings who do not already own a property see no prospect of acquiring one. Many are forced to spend a large proportion of their income on rent and struggle to meet the cost of other essentials; food, clothing, and energy. The unavoidable remedy is to increase the supply of social housing by bolstering public provision so it functions more like a robust safety net requiring massive investment in buildings. However, for the present government, this would mean rewriting its doctrines on homeownership and market interventions.

Shelter’s most recent housing commission report published in January 2019 reiterates the argument for more homes to be built, calling for some 3.1 million social homes to be constructed over the next 20 years. The housing charity’s independent panel of commissioners, which included ex-Labour leader Ed Miliband and two former Conservative cabinet ministers, said; “this figure matches the number of households who will be failed by the housing market during this period of time” (Inside Housing: 2019). The commissioners also called for a new Ofsted-style consumer regulator working across social and private rented housing, as well as a new national tenants’ organisation or union, which would help monitor and ensure standards were being met. Furthermore, the freeze on working-age benefits, the biggest cut in a decade of welfare ‘reform’, continues as planned until 2020 after the chancellor prioritised tax cuts in his Autumn Budget of 2018.

The result so far, according to research by the Chartered Institute of Housing in August 2018, is that 90% of Local Housing Allowance rates fail to cover the rent on the cheapest 30% of private rented homes and this will only get worse (Inside Housing: November: 2018). In November (2018), the United Nations gave a withering verdict on the consequences of these reforms. Professor Philip Alston, a UN special rapporteur on extreme poverty, highlighted poverty levels in the UK as “not just a disgrace, but a social calamity and an economic disaster all rolled into one” (Inside Housing: November: 2018). The driving force had not been economic “but rather a commitment to radical social re-engineering” (ibid.); harsh condemnation of the current government policy.

From a personal perspective, all these changes have undoubtedly had an impact on the services I deliver as Head of Resident Engagement at the housing association I work for. Years of disjointed government housing policy have manifested themselves in a reduction of all tenure housing, causing an overall shortage across the country. Housing associations have to be more versatile than ever in their approach to sustaining their growth through commercial ventures, whilst still trying to remain core to their social purpose of building social housing homes; a hard balance to maintain, if at all possible. In a recent newspaper article, a resident was interviewed about her views regarding recent housing policy changes and said, “all I’d like to say is that this feels like a farewell to any sense of permanence or community, long-term engagement or planning for the future. Why commit to where you live, when you don’t know where you’ll be in a few years’ time? I’m just against the destruction of social housing … we are destroying a social contract that really works, which gives people homes that they can afford so they can live decent lives and really thrive” (Guardian: May: 2015). This instability within the sector transcends to unpicking decades of hard community engagement work amongst local authorities, housing associations and the voluntary and community sector.

There are a few projects, however, bucking this trend. The Co-housing projects I have referred to in both Leeds and Cambridge are two such projects where small housing developments focused on “characterising high tech 21st century homes with 1950’s community spirit” (Guardian: June 2017) are being developed.

According to Bill Phelps from the Co-housing scheme in Leeds, “if you look at what local authorities want, community cohesion, care of older people, wellbeing, sustainable transport, crime reduction - co-housing has got something to contribute to all those outcomes … ChapCo residents will have their own front door, but also, like other co-housing models access to a communal space and ready-made network of mutual support and shared decision making” (ibid). Phelps’ co-housing group is negotiating for a site for up to 30 homes. However, there is acknowledgement it has taken some time to get the scheme off the ground and is likely to take another 3 years to come to fruition. Jo Gooding, director of the Cohousing Network, the UK umbrella group for 19 established co-housing schemes, says, “there is a growing interest in the model but we still need to work harder to make it available to more people…it needs to be more mainstream” (ibid).

As a service lead, new developments such as West Green, where the focus is on community cohesion and behavioural change, can be seen as too costly and not a priority as per the requirements set out in the Housing and Planning Bill. In addition, sourcing the right land to build upon, constraints from partners involved in developing schemes, meeting local housing demand as well as the type of properties people can afford and want to buy all have an impact on the overall development and its success. West Green (which my current employer is the lead social housing provider for) is, therefore, vital in showing what the right partnership can achieve and deliver and, more importantly, why engagement and community connectedness can help a place to flourish in meeting its potential and unite people.

**APPENDIX D Interview Questions**

**Does taking a greener approach to new housing developments make mixed communities more cohesive?**

**Residents Interviews**

**Interview schedule – Occupants (social rented and shared ownership)**

1. How long have you lived in your new home?
2. How long had you been on the local authority waiting list to be housed?
3. When you were nominated for a home on this development, did the housing association carry out a pre-tenancy interview with yourself to explain what living in a zero-carbon development means?
4. If they did, did this help your understanding of your new home and the possible ‘lifestyle’ changes you may need to undertake to adapt to them?
5. Did the housing association do any other work with you before moving into the development?
6. What do you like best about living in your eco-home?
7. What don’t you like about living in your eco-home?
8. Have you had to adjust your lifestyle to adapt to your home?
9. If so, has this been mainly due to the design of the home or has it been due you having to change your behaviour to make the most of the energy efficiency of your home?
10. Do you think you will/have saved money whilst living in this home?
11. If so, how much and how have you made these changes to save money?
12. Are you finding living in this home very different to your previous home because it’s an eco-home?
13. This is a ‘socially mixed’ tenure development- has that caused any issue at all?
14. If it has, why, if not, why not?
15. Do you find there is a sense of ‘community’ amongst the people who live here in the development?
16. If so, what gives you this sense of ‘community’? How would you describe it? Or if there isn’t a sense of ‘community’, why not?
17. Have you set up any groups or belong to any groups specifically for residents in the developments?
18. If so, what are they? And why have you joined them?
19. What’s your experience been so far about these group(s)
20. I understand that there will be a Community Interest Company formed as part of the development’s future management, which residents would have an opportunity to be involved. Do you know anything about this? If not would you be interested in getting involved?
21. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience of living within your home?

**Interview Schedule – Occupants (private)**

1. How long have you lived in your current home?
2. What was your main motivation for moving into this zero-carbon development?
3. What do you like best about living in your eco-home?
4. What don’t you like about living in your eco-home?
5. Have you had to adjust your lifestyle to adapt to your home?
6. If so, has this been mainly due to the design of the home or has it been due to you having to change your behaviour to make the most of the energy efficiency in the home?
7. If so, how much and how have you made these changes?
8. Do you think you will/have saved money whilst living in this home?
9. Are you finding living in this home very different to your previous home because it’s an eco-home?
10. This is a ‘socially mixed’ tenure development- has that caused any issue at all?
11. If it has, why, if not, why not?
12. Do you find there is a sense of ‘community’ amongst the people who live here in the development?
13. If so, what gives you this sense of ‘community’? How would you describe it? Or if there isn’t a sense of ‘community’, why not?
14. Have you set up any groups or belong to any groups specifically for residents in the developments?
15. If so, what are they? And why have you joined them?
16. What’s your experience been so far about these group(s)
17. I understand that there will be a Community Interest Company formed as part of the development’s future management, which residents would have an opportunity to be involved. Do you know anything about this? If not would you be interested in getting involved?
18. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience of living within your home?

**Appendix E Pen Portraits**

**Pen Portraits of the residents at West Green housing development**

**Social Housing Residents**

**Name:** Sarah Nutbeem

**Type of property:** Two bedroom house

**Family make up:** One adult and one child

**Reasons for living at West Green**:

Sarah had been on the housing waiting list with the local authority for four and half years. Prior to this, she had been living with her mother and her six-year-old child and they were over crowded. Charlotte is also registered disabled.

Primarily, Sarah accepted the offer of the social housing property in West Green as it was close to her family and friends and due to her disability (chronic fatigue syndrome) she felt this continuing support was important to her. She also felt that as her son was getting older he needed his own space.

Prior to moving into her property, Sarah was keen on recycling and would often recycle clothes, furniture and food packaging. She has been keen to utilise the other features in the development and has joined the residents’ group. She would like to have an allotment but due to her illness feels that she would not be able to maintain it. She does like gardening and has a small herb garden in her own back garden.

She feels safe in the development and is happy for her son to go and play outside without being worried about him as the play area is close to where she is.

Since living at West Green, Sarah has made many new friends and her neighbours have been very supportive especially helping her out when she isn’t feeling well. A few of her neighbours nearby have also started up a coffee morning, which Sarah attends regularly.

**Name:** Diego and Carolina Moreno

**Type of property:** Two bedroom house

**Family make up:** Two adults and two children

**Reasons for living at West Green**:

Diego and Carolina had been on the housing waiting list with the local authority for just over a year. Prior to this, the family were living in private accommodation in a one-bedroom flat. They were very crowded and especially with their two boys.

For the family moving into West Green absolutely fits in with their ethos and lifestyle. Carolina was an environmental science teacher in her home country of Colombia and Diego also worked within the natural science field for a local company.

Both Carolina and Diego are keen to exploit the outdoor living aspect of the development as this is the type of environment they are used to in Colombia. They have an allotment and go and use it on a regular basis. They always take the opportunity to talk to people when they are out at their allotment and find that it is a good way to get to know their neighbours. As a family, they use the cycle paths on a regular basis and encourage their children to make the most of the environment around them. They would rather their children be outside than indoors playing on computers or watching television. Both of them are also teaching their children about conserving energy in their home, by making sure they switch off the lights and recycle rubbish and food.

Both of them feel that their children are safe when they go out to play in the play area within the development. Since moving into West Green, Diego and Carolina feel their children have made lots of new friends and are more social and confident.

**Name:** Kate Snubbs

**Type of property:** Three bedroom house

**Family make up:** One adult and three children

**Reasons for living at West Green**:

Kate had been on the housing waiting list with the local authority for two and half years. Prior to, this she had been living in private accommodation with her children and then partner (but has subsequently split up).

Kate and her family have been in the property in West Green for over a year now and all enjoy living in the house.

Kate has seen a significant reduction in bills since moving into the house due to the energy efficiency of the house and through changing the behaviour of her and her young family e.g. turning off switches in the home, not boiling too much water in the kettle and taking showers rather than baths. As a family, they are also recycling more, both food as well as rubbish; which they never did before.

As Kate works part time, she doesn’t have an allotment but does spend a lot of time with other families utilising the play areas in the development. Since moving to the development, Kate has also been able to widen her circle of friends through meeting her neighbours; something she never did when she lived in the private sector. With her neighbours, she often utilises the communal seating area near the orchard area when the weather is good to catch up. She and a few of her neighbours have also got together and started a Weight Watchers club in the local community hall.

**Name:** Tony and Somera Cartwright

**Type of property:** Three bedroom house

**Family make up:** Two adults and two children

**Reasons for living at West Green**:

Tony and Somera have been on the housing waiting list with the local authority for seven years, prior to this they were living in private accommodation with their two children. Tony works full time and Somera works part time.

When the couple were offered a place at West Green, they were excited and happy as they were keen to live somewhere which promoted ‘green’ living and it being close to where their family and friends live.

Somera is the vice chair of the residents’ groups and has helped organised a number of community events across the development e.g. art clubs for children, Easter social event as well as summer BBQ.

Both Tony and Somera are keen to use the facilities in the development e.g. the cycle paths, they often go walking near the meadows with their children and they also have an allotment. Tony especially enjoys working on the allotment and growing vegetables.

**Name:** Jane Atwell

**Type of property:** Two bedroom house

**Family make up:** One adult and two children

**Reasons for living at West Green**:

Jane lived in a local authority property for nine years but due to her disability and not being able to manage the stairs to her accommodation she was offered a place at West Green. Jane has two children who live with her. Her property is a disabled adapted property due to Jane’s deteriorating health conditions.

Jane is an avid environmentalist and feels that she has truly come home living in West Green. She would not want to live anywhere else. Jane has an allotment and grows most of her own fruit and vegetables to feed her family. She is an active member of the residents’ group and has helped arrange a number of community events. She also helps to manage the West Green web page and blog.

Jane feels very safe living in West Green and is happy for her children to play in the designated play areas. She has made lots of friends on the development and feels that there is a real sense of community feel developing in West Green.

Jane is financially better off living in her home and utilises the facilities around the home to the maximum.

**Private Residents**

**Name:** Doreen Simpleton

**Type of property:** Two bedroom house

**Family make up:** One adult

**Reasons for living at West Green**:

Doreen wanted to down-size from where she was living previously as her son had moved out. She chose West Green as she was interested in living in an eco-development and liked the fact that the houses were of a good size as well as the development being quite spacious. Doreen brought her house off plan as she was keen to purchase a plot near the allotment area.

Doreen is a keen cyclist and uses the cycle paths to get to and from work. She has an allotment plot and is a keen gardener. She also uses her own garden to plant flowers and has a small herb garden too.

Doreen is an active member of the residents’ groups and supports the local events which have recently been arranged. She has also started up a local gardening club which a number of local residents attend and shares her knowledge around gardening.

Doreen has a dog and often takes him for walks near the meadows and across the fields nearby. This was another incentive for her to move to West Green.

**Name:** Simon Warde

**Type of property:** Two bedroom house

**Family make up:** Two adults

**Reasons for living at West Green**:

Simon and his partner Natasha decided to move to West Green for a number of reasons. They were renting and wanted to buy their first home together. They wanted to live in an eco-development and the location was convenient for both to get to work.

Simon and his partner have always adopted a ‘green’ lifestyle therefore this development complimented their way of living. They have an allotment and greenhouse plot and they grow all their own vegetables and fruit for their weekly provision. They would like to explore the option of selling the local produce more widely within the West Green area in the future. They are also both keen walkers and cyclists, so use the site widely on a regular basis. Since moving to the house, they have also financially benefited from a reduction in their water, gas and electric costs.

Simon is the secretary of the residents’ groups and is also a keen artist so often helps out at the art club.

**Name:** Patrick and Jacqueline Armsden

**Type of property:** Three bedroom house

**Family make up:** Two adult

**Reasons for living at West Green**:

Patrick and Jacqueline wanted to down size from their four bedroom house from up north to be near their son and his family. They previously lived in an eco-development so were keen to live in one again. Both Patrick and Jacqueline are retired.

The main features which attracted them to West Green were the open spaces, the allotments and transport networks. Both Patrick and Jacqueline are keen gardeners and, therefore, use their allotment plot on a regular basis. They also find it is a good opportunity to meet people on the development. They are also keen walkers and would like to start up a walking club.

Patrick is also an active member of the residents’ group and has been active in supporting local community events.

**Name:** James Edwards

**Type of property:** Four bedroom house

**Family make up:** Two adults and two children

**Reasons for living at West Green**:

The design and the architecture of the house was the biggest driver for James and his family to move to West Green not so much the eco element. Location was also important as most of their friends and family live close by.

James works from home so having a large house where he is able to accommodate his work requirements with what his family wanted was important.

James has two dogs therefore the open green spaces and the meadows are ideal to walk them on a regular basis.

James is the Chair of the residents’ group and is keen to ensure the development has a strong connected community

**Name:** Paul and Valerie Searley

**Type of property:** Three bedroom house

**Family make up:** Two adults

**Reasons for living at West Green**:

Paul and Valerie wanted to down size from their current property and the West Green development was only a mile away from where they lived. Paul had been following the development’s progress and decided to buy off plan as they wanted to secure a corner plot, near the meadows so they could walk their dog and could go for long walks themselves. Both Paul and Valerie are retired.

They haven’t purchased an allotment plot but do work on their own garden and grow vegetables. Both are also keen on recycling and help the residents group with activities as and when they can.

As both are retired another motivation to move to West Green was to save on household costs.

**Name:** Kevin Dunford

**Type of property:** Two bedroom flat

**Family make up:** Two adults

**Reasons for living at West Green**:

Kevin moved to West Green from London for work purposes. He had found out about the development through the developer’s website. The fact that West Green is an eco-development was not the main reason for purchasing the property; it was primarily convenient for work.

Kevin and his partner have made the most of the development now they have moved in. Both are keen walkers and often take advantage of the location and the green landscape.

Kevin is active in the residents’ group and has started to recruit for a football team for adults. He also coaches a children’s football team.

Kevin and his partner are keen recyclers and think the communal recycling system is good.

**Name:** Chu hua Lennon

**Type of property:** Four bedroom house

**Family make up:** Two adults and one child

**Reasons for living at West Green**:

Chu hua and her husband wanted to move to a bigger house and the eco development aspect of West Green very much appealed to them.

Both were keen to see their son brought up in an area where there was lots of space around him and as a family utilise the key aspects of the development such as the allotments, orchards etc.

Chu hua works from home while her husband works locally. The space in the house allows her to have the room to accommodate their needs as well as a growing family.

They are both keen cyclists and use the cycle paths regularly and also like to go running. Chu hua is also looking into starting aerobic classes in the local community hall.

**Shared Owners Residents**

**Name:** Peter Foster

**Type of property:** One bedroom flat

**Family make up:** One adult

**Reasons for living at West Green**:

Peter moved to West Green after a marital break up. The primary reason for Peter to purchase a flat on this site was affordability but also he liked the fact that there were lots of green spaces nearby and easy access onto the motorway. Peter is a keen motorbike enthusiast and, therefore, this development suits his needs.

Peter is quite a private individual therefore hasn’t engaged in many community activities but has attended a couple of community BBQ events. He would be interested in being part of the West Green football team

**Name:** Donald and Biyu Streeter

**Type of property:** One bedroom flat

**Family make up:** Two adults

**Reasons for living at West Green**:

Primary reason for Donald and Biyu to move to West Green was the location as they have family nearby and are semi-retired. They haven’t been at the development very long so they are slowly getting to know their neighbours.

They are keen walkers so tend to take lots of long walks but as Biyu works long hours this is not always possible. Both may get involved with the residents’ groups at some point. Both also attended the Easter community event.

**Appendix F Tenure Type and Typologies**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Pseudonym** | **Tenure Type** | **Typology** |
| Tony and Somera Cartwright | Social Housing | Transformer |
| Sarah Nutbeem | Social Housing | Transformer |
| Kevin Dunford | Social Housing | Transformer |
| Patrick and Jacqueline Armsden | Social Housing | Transformer |
| Kate Snubbs | Social Housing | Transformer |
| Chu hua Lennon | Private | Transformer |
| Jane Atwell | Social Housing | Lifestyle Supporter |
| Dieago and Carolina Moreno | Social Housing | Lifestyle Supporter |
| Doreen Simpleton | Private | Lifestyle Supporter |
| Simon Warde | Private | Lifestyle Supporter |
| James Edwards | Private | Lifestyle Supporter |
| Paul and Valerie Searley | Private | Lifestyle Supporter |
| Peter Foster | Shared Ownership | Individualistic |
| Donald and Biyu Streeter | Shared Ownership | Individualistic |

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1. As a caveat, and for the purpose of this thesis, social mixing will be conceptualised in keeping with this definition, originally coined by the Labour government as part of their overarching sustainable communities agenda [↑](#footnote-ref-2)