



What about the community?

An investigation into how the housing needs of the Jewish community are incorporated into urban renewal



Anonymous
Code
Z0213123



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Abstract

Within New Labour Policy, faith community involvement within urban renewal has firmly been placed on the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's policy agenda. Nationally, faith community awareness is significantly increasing but what is a more important consideration is how this policy is developed to the micro-level. With specific interest in housing needs this policy arena has created the core context for this research. Primary methodologies have been adopted to investigate the specific housing needs of the ultra-orthodox Jewish community within their micro-enclave of Gateshead. A particular focus will be on those projects, which aim to reduce the specific overcrowding issue within this community, which at 40% is the highest Borough-wide. Sub-regional and private sector involvement has been key to the success of current renewal programmes alongside successful mechanisms of Jewish participation. Key issues arising are the lack of intra-agency knowledge flows, the lack of proposed further projects partnerships and the increasing 'parallel lives' syndrome. The research discusses recommendations for future policy adaptation including the appointment of a Gateshead Council Community Liaison Officer in conjunction with a Gateshead Council Jewish Community strategy would begin to alleviate participation and planning issues. In conjunction with this there is a significant need for Jewish-led renewal and this should be addressed by the establishment of a Jewish Housing Corporation.

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Chapter 1

1.1 Introduction

Urban renewal in Gateshead has gained national and international momentum within the last five years through large scale ‘cultural’ projects for example, the Gateshead Millennium Bridge, the Baltic, contemporary centre of Art and the Sage Music Centre. However, looking beyond large-scale, aesthetically attractive regeneration projects there are other renewal issues occurring at a local level and it is therefore quite ironic that I am writing the introduction to this research project on the day the last element of the Gateshead Quays development: The Sage Music Centre, officially opens.

Housing renewal, on a national and local scale, has become a prominent issue within New Labour urban policy. Social renewal strategies have become increasingly relevant within Gateshead as a proactive approach is adopted to reduce the number of council wards included within the ‘Top 10% of deprived wards in England’. Out of Gateshead’s 22 wards, 9 are classified under this heading (Gateshead Council, 2002:1). In particular, housing has been identified as a key issue by The Northern Housings Consortium.

Approximately 95,000 dwellings along the banks of the River Tyne are at high risk with a large concentration (approximately 20,000) of these in the five central wards of Gateshead (Leather et al, 2002:74).

Faith community involvement has too gained considerable recognition within national

frameworks and a consideration of this in conjunction with housing issues illustrates the specific needs of a specific group: the Jewish kehilla (community) of Gateshead. This distinctive community will form the focus of this unique and individual piece of research and through a variety of methodologies, research will try to establish where gaps or debates occur in the theory, policy and actions related to the key aim:

What about the community? an investigation into how the housing needs of the Jewish community are being incorporated into urban renewal programmes.

More specifically, research should aim to answer:

1. Are the specific housing needs of the Jewish community recognised and accommodated for by regeneration actors?
2. Are actors accepting and adapting to specific faith communities? Are the excluded included?
3. Are multi-agency approaches the future pathway for successful neighbourhood renewal?
4. Have the foundations of a sustainable community been established?

1.2 Contextual Background

To locate this study in national frameworks and to allow an insight into the individuality of this Jewish kehilla¹, a brief review of some of the relevant literature has been completed. Further literature reviews are presented at the beginning of each chapter to allow context for analysis. Policy literature analysis will be completed in chapter 2.1 in relation to its specific community interaction and critiques gained from regeneration industry literature will be analysis's throughout this discussion.

Post 1945, urban renewal has become the predominant issue within British Urban policy. Up until 1974, (Khakee et al 1999) Black and Minority ethnic and the consideration of race lacked formal recognition. From 1974 onwards, urban policy and the inclusion of Black and Minority Ethnic has always been effected by the wider politics of race (Thomas, H 1999:160). Urban Policy has been a key concern of the present Labour government and this itself is a useful literature source for the consideration of Black and Minority Ethnic inclusion in regeneration projects. The literature surrounding housing market renewal in the North East and Gateshead Council housing policy is principally important as specific issues and action points can be established and evaluated. As Leather et al (2002) suggest, consideration of housing renewal within Gateshead is particularly relevant as housing markets across the North East are undergoing major restructuring. Housing and neighbourhood decline is not uniform across Gateshead and particular neighbourhoods needs to adopt planned approaches to deal with the changing needs of the community. (Leather et al; 2002). Plans to diversify tenure and increase

¹ Alternative to community widely used by the Jewish community within Gateshead.

owner occupation are key and Gateshead in conjunction with national urban and social renewal policies has begun to restructure and review local housing policy.

Debate over changes to the 2001 census has led to many questions being considered concerning religion and ethnicity within the UK. The classification of the Jewish community has come to the forefront of this debate especially in relation to a question concerning religion. Differentiation between ethnicity and religion is therefore necessary before discussing the 2001 Census. Aspinall (2000) differentiates by suggesting belonging to a religious group means sharing a “*common set of beliefs*” (Aspinall 2000:587) whereas being a member of an ethnic group is “*shared characteristics of ancestry and culture*” (Aspinall, 2000:587). The Commission of Racial Equality support both a wider ethnicity question as well as a religion-based question as it would allow diversity within minorities to be highlighted and appreciated. However, due to the Human Rights Act 1998, answering the question must be voluntary as a person’s religion is considered personal information. Historical associations of discrimination associated with religious groupings, for examples, Nazi Germany or Israel exemplify this further. Up until 2001, the Jewish community were invisible in census data as they were not identifiable as a separate ethnic group, the need for identifying them through ethnic grouping or religious grouping has therefore become very apparent. The Jewish communities of Britain would benefit from a question based upon religion as Hilton (1996) suggests, it is “*inappropriate to consider ethnicity without religion*” (Aspinall, 2000: 589) and this is correct for the Jewish Black and Minority ethnic. It then however

raises the question are Jews Jewish because they speak Yiddish or because they practise the Jewish religion? Aspinall (2000) suggests that they consider themselves more of an ethnic and religious group than rather just one or the other. It can therefore be considered that, in Judaism, there is a continuum between ethnicity and religion as observing religious practises is more than religion but as a “*means of identifying with the Jewish community*” (Aspinall, P 2000:591).

Kosmin (1999) writing on behalf of the Institute of Jewish Policy Research (jpg) supports Aspinall’s view that a religious question should be included with the National Census. Kosmin considers including a religion based question as

“an important means of fostering a multicultural society and a participatory democracy.

Redesigning it for this purpose can have long-term social, political and economic benefits for British society”

(Kosmin, B 1999:1).

Kosmin highlights many benefits from a Jewish perspective of the inclusion of a religion based question however, similarly to Aspinall he highlights that it is difficult to differentiate between religion and ethnicity in practise especially as there is a lot more to Judaism than just religion or just ethnicity. Therefore, it can be concluded that the Jewish community is both Jewish through ethnicity and religion and that only recognising both can a whole picture of the Jewish Community in the UK be created.

The debate over whether communities should be ethnically or religiously categorised leads nicely to consider how and why certain communities become segregated from the

host society and in particular reference to Jewish communities. Classification by religion or ethnicity has much wider implications than just census data: it can be related to the classification of communities. Residential areas are not homogenous and the analogy to a mosaic is often considered. Classification of spatial expressions of segregation can be considered in three types of grouping: colonies, enclaves and ghettos depending on internal and external forces of exclusion from the charter society (Boal 1976). Ethnicity is often a main cause of residential segregation and this is evident from the literature, for Jewish societies both in the UK and America. Boal's (1976) classic work on urban segregation patterns suggests that there is a continuum between ghettos and enclaves. Ghettos occur where external forces dominant and enclaves occur where internal forces maintain exclusion. In reality, it is difficult to establish exclusion is forced or voluntary and identification is only possible by a consideration of the extent of assimilation (Herbert and Johnston 1990: 229). Waterman and Kosim (1988) suggest Jewish communities from enclaves as residential shifts caused through socio-economic ascent are mirrored by the voluntary shift of cultural and religious institutions (Knox et al 2000:238). Congregation not segregation is a much more accurate way of describing Jewish communities as internal cohesion is the dominant force preventing social assimilation.

The evidence from Boal (1976), Waterman and Kosmin (1988) and Herbert and Johnston suggests Jewish enclaves are present in the residential mosaic, However, there has been much debate concerning the actual existence of ethnic enclaves or ghettos in England (Johnston et al (2002), Peach, C (1996)). Peach (1996) creates a negative image through

defining of ghetto's. Johnston et al (2002) counteract this and suggest enclaves emerge where the host society is predominantly white and the enclave is not considered as a cultural or political threat. Concluding from the literature, enclaves are present in British cities however, it maybe too extreme to classify them as ghettos. This term is predominantly used in American society where "*hypersegregation*" (Johnston et al: 2002:610) is clearly witnessed.

Literature on the historical context of the Gateshead Jews, suggests that the community segregation can too be linked to enclaves mirroring patterns of other communities within the country (Olsover, L 1981). Jewish communities provide a classic example of where segregation is promoted "*to preserve and promote their own cultural heritage*" (Boal 1976:48 in Herbert and Johnston, 1976). Within Jewish enclaves, for example, Barnet, North London, the rules of the Sabbath, preparation of food, dietary requirements, synagogue attendance and community duties maintain the enclave segregation especially within ultra-Orthodox communities like Gateshead. The Jewish community of Gateshead had maintained segregation through being a geographically, close knit community which as developed it own cultural practises and distinctive way of life without any concern for the opinion of the general public who live around their created enclave.

The Jewish population of Britain is mainly concentrated in large cities for example, London, Manchester, Leeds due to the support and infrastructures there are available. However, smaller communities have developed especially in areas of industry and survive due to one special circumstance (Brook, S 1989). In Gateshead, the strict

orthodoxy of the community and the educational facilities including the Yeshiva, the Kolel, the Boarding School for boys, the Teacher Training College for Girls, the Primary School, the Jewish Girls High School and the Junior Yeshiva (Olsover, 1981) create the largest Jewish education complex in Europe and have secured the communities survival within this small city (Illustrated in Appendix A). There has been little social research completed into the Jewish Community of Gateshead and no published work of the community's interaction in urban renewal policy is recorded. The key text to consider is Olsover (1981) however; this itself is only a historic account of the community which finishes two decades ago.

1.3 Methodology

A combination of primary and secondary research methods were used to study the research questions.

Semi-structured interviews were adopted as the main method of primary data collection. An interview prompt sheet, similar to that in Appendix D was used to allow the interviews to “unfold in a conversational manner” (Clifford et al 2003:117) and to allow the interviewee to demonstrate detailed topic-related knowledge. Methods of interviewing as outlined in (Mason 2002) were adopted and use of semi-structured technique allows flexibility and modification to adapt interviews to the specialist knowledge of the interviewee as well as covering general themes.

To allow analysis, transcription occurred adopting the symbols outlined in Silverman (2002) (Appendix E) followed by a process of selective coding (Strauss 1987) in order to

analysis “conditions, interactions among the actors, strategies and tactics and consequences” (Clifford et al 2003:446). The selective codes used included: faith communities, Registered Social Landlords/Housing agencies, national strategy, pathfinder, partnership, inclusion and housing needs. Some open coding also emerged. It was not possible to transcribe all six interviews for differing reasons. Detailed notes were compiled for Interviews 2 and 5 but coding following the same process as above was completed. Examples of transcription and coding are included in Appendix F.

Many geographers for example Sayer and Morgan (1985) pursue more intensive methods of primary field work through participant observation (Clifford et al 2003:118).

Consultation with a housing agency allowed a limit amount of participation with prospective Jewish families however, this was very informal and many considered me just to be a member of the Home Housing Association team. As this research has dealt with a distinctive faith group of which I am not a member, integration into the community was not possible and therefore, ethnographical methods inappropriate. If time allowed, a rapport with the community could be established however, levels of trust need to be significantly high.

Although contact with the Jewish community was limited certain social practices had to be adhered to. This included no hand shaking with male members of the community, understanding limited eye contact and respecting Jewish clothing issues. Clothing is a specific point the Multi-faith centre tries to ensure researchers maintain (Weller, P 2001:74). Privacy also had to be maintained and Rabbi Andrew Oppenheimer was

cautious in naming residents or illustrating specific example. When organising meeting and interviews, respect for the Sabbath and festivals was essential creating limitations. These are issues which should be understood by any researcher interacting with ultra-orthodox Jewish communities.

A full list of those who I have communicated with in order to fully research this issue can be found in Appendix C including a summary of key information gathered from each source. It should be noted attempts were made to try to get the wider Jewish community to interact. However, due to the ultra-orthodoxy of the community, the British Board of Deputies of Jews were unable to help as the Gateshead kehilla do not recognise their authority (Alderman 2003). Contact with the Harav Lord Jakobovits Torah Institute of Contemporary Issues (JICI) in Israel was also obtained but they were unable to help as their research does not extend to the UK at the present.

Ethical concerns focus upon the delicate nature of dealing with sensitive issues surrounding a minority faith or ethnic group. This is for two reasons, firstly, to protect the community and secondly, to allow research to continue in the future (Clifford et al 2003:39). To maintain a good relationship with the community, the research completed will be presented to Rabbi Oppenheimer. Consideration, when interviewing council officers, to council-wide opinions and those of the individual is essential. Little controversial or negative material was highlighted due to my status as a non-council employee and the impact sensitive data may have on the Council's relationship with the

Jewish community, this interviewer/interviewee positionality has to be considered in analysis.

A number of secondary resources were also analysed including Gateshead council policies and strategies, planning applications, Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder documentation, Gateshead Council publications for the public, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and Home Office documentation and a variety of internet sources. A full list is displayed within the Reference list. Availability to information was significantly increased with the implementation of the Freedom of Information Act early this year.

From primary and secondary research material, three key issues of debate arise:

- Initiatives and policy
- Projects and partnership
- Recognition, consultation and integration

The fourth chapter will conclude the three key themes within the context of the actors involved in the process. Discussing these further will allow greater insight into policy, strategies and action within the Jewish housing market and will allow a discussion of the research questions presented in the introduction.

2 Analysis

2.1 Policy and Initiatives

National policy and regeneration agendas very much dictated local community planning and initiatives and within the remit of this study, the Sustainable Communities Plan and subsequent adaptations are critical. More importantly, is how these national interventions

are played out at the local level through regional and council agendas and affect the life discourses of Gateshead residents. The analysis will focus in particular on *Housing Strategy 2003-2008*, *Housing Strategy Action Plan 2003-2008* and the *Housing Needs Survey 2002* and the use of the NewcastleGateshead Pathfinder allocation of £69 million (Fair, J 2004:1). The close association to national policy will become tighter as New Labour continues to promote strategies such as *'Making It Happen: The Northern Way'* (February 2004b, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister) and allocate Housing Market Pathfinder money on a sub-regional basis. How these policies are adapted to meet the specific needs of specific communities, the Jewish community, will be analysed.

Gateshead's overall housing aim is to:

"provide local people with a choice of housing that they want, can afford and which is close to local services"

(Gateshead Council 2003b:3)

and this is being worked towards through a variety of targets and 'milestones' which are specific and can be monitored and reviewed. The Jewish community of approximately 1600 residents (Gateshead Council 2003a:11) has specific housing needs, the most critical being the overcrowding within homes. The Housing Strategy now prioritises this within the Central District Action Plan as it is estimated that 40% of Jewish households are overcrowded (Gateshead Council 2003a:60). The action plan recognises that more in-depth research into this enclave of Jewish residents is needed and the proposed appointment of a Community Liaison Officer is a positive action towards achieving this.

Secondly, the allocation of the 2004/5 Approved Development Programme budget to build 15, 5-bedroomed homes under a shared ownership agreement is a development towards tackling the specific issues of this community. However, both the Housing Strategy and Action Plan are sparse in attempting to address and take action in meeting the aim:

“To understand the specific housing needs of Black and Minority Ethnic and Jewish communities”

(Gateshead Council 2003b:9).

These policies overall have clear aims however, the realisation of religious differentiation in physical terms is minimal.

In relation to specific community housing needs the *Housing Needs Survey 2002* is important in recognising specific Jewish housing patterns. 66% of the Jewish community own their own property (David Couttie Associates 2002:38) and social renting is minimal whereas private rental is nearly four times the borough average, suggesting that this may be a key area for future development. More than 80% (David Couttie Associates 2002:38) of the population live in terraced housing but, on average household size is 6.4 people (David Couttie Associates 2002:49) signifying housing tenure does not match household size and it is therefore not surprising that the survey classifies 40% of properties in the sample as overcrowded (David Couttie Associates 2002:40).

Unexpectedly, over 80% of the sample replied yes to the question

“Is your current accommodation suitable for the needs of yourself and your family for the foreseeable future?”

(David Couttie Associates 2002:41).

Key findings were identified and recommended to the Council to act upon including: firstly, relieving overcrowding through a provision of larger units to meet increasing demand and secondly,

“community based maintenance schemes should be encouraged to help Jewish households improve the standards of repair”

(David Couttie Associates 2002:62)

was suggested as costs of repairs was identified as a key prevention to home improvement. Lastly, Gateshead Council should develop a range of low cost and shared ownership housing schemes. The realisation of differing needs is high throughout the survey and the recognition of this is visible through the methodologies implemented. Explicit and worthwhile conclusions have been drawn however, alarmingly three years later only one of these recommendations has been clearly adopted in to policy and practice.

In relation to the private sector, the Private Sector Renewal Policy managed by the Private Sector Housing Team (Anne Lewis and Doug Basen Interview 6, Appendix F) has had some Jewish community participation. However, the Council could not provide me with any specific numbers concerning successful renewal within this policy guideline. Similarly, the Private Market Landlords Initiative has led to the successful establishment of the Gateshead Private Landlords Association in which, there are several Jewish members however, once again specific numbers could not be provided. Analysing Gateshead Council’s social housing provision, the biggest issue arising is the lack of

suitable Council social housing within the area. The Gateshead Housing Company, who manage the day-to-day running of Council property, have no involvement in within this community: a situation which needs rectifying.

The lack of reference to the ODPM's publication: *Creating Sustainable Communities in the North East* (ODPM 2004a) raises concern especially as this proposes

“A new housing role for local authorities, based on investing in new social homes; managing housing better; taking a more strategic approach to planning for homes, growth and infrastructure; and providing land for low cost homes”

(ODPM 2004a:19)

which will seriously effect the positioning and involvement of Gateshead Council.

Similarly, this document also discusses the wide role local councillors can undertaken.

The lack of councillor interaction and knowledge, as illustrated by consultation with Councillor Ian Mearns (Interview 1, Appendix F), should raise concern as this would be a possible and mostly likely successful area for Council-Community partnership.

As already discussed, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's (ODPM) Sustainable

Communities Plan is dictating elements of Gateshead Council housing interventions.

Gateshead Council is not the only public sector agency acting within the Gateshead

housing realm. The NewcastleGateshead Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder; Bridging

Newcastle-Gateshead is a programme of community renewal, based upon housing,

funded by Westminster but managed at the sub-regional level. Recognising:

“high value developments mask localised pockets of low demand where house prices can be lower than £10,000”

(NewcastleGateshead Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder 2004:4)

the ODPM are providing tools and resources to implement housing renewal in the context of wider policy and this is recognised as:

“the first time we will decentralise housing policy and give the regions a real say in how we invest in our community”

(ODPM, 2004a:2)

and will allow sub-regions to decide how to *“Turn policies into action”* (ODPM, 2004a:2).

The core aim of the NewcastleGateshead Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder is to create *“excellent housing provision”* (NewcastleGateshead Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder 2004a) that exemplifies good partnership between local authorities, private and social landlords, regional agencies and National Government, and the vision is that by 2018, *“the housing market in Newcastle Gateshead will be revitalised, strong and stable, fully integrated with the renaissance of the region”*

(www.newcastlegatesheadpathfinder.co.uk)

and will be able to meet the changing needs of local people. The major challenge in Gateshead is to address the issues of low demand for the present tenure types and the secondary effect of abandonment. Across the pathfinder area, 6.5% of the housing stock is unfit including 51,000 homes in the private sector. £69 million has been allocated to ‘end the legacy of housing decline’ which includes the refurbishment or repair of 2000

homes, build 100 and clear 2000 by 2006 (Fair, J 2004:1). However, the programme is not limited to the next 18 months and plans are present which will evolve within the next 15 years. Critique, throughout chapter 2, of Bridging NewcastleGateshead intervention within the Whitehall Road project, will allow assessment of whether policy is actually being turned into action and if so, meeting the specialised needs of the community.

Within the ODPM the implementation of sub-regional housing boards and planning bodies is increasingly on the agenda and sub-regional policies and intervention will continue to increase. Multi-agency approaches to integrated policy making and local development frameworks will begin

“to change the landscape for strategic housing and planning functions”

(Macdonald et al 2004:18)

and this can only be viewed as a positive step as if well managed, housing market renewal will be able to address specific housing needs irrespective of local politics and local authority boundaries.

The Jewish community internally have little community-wide policy or provision for grassroots housing renewal. As chapter 2.3 illustrates, they are keen and active



participants in partnership with other agencies and as Appendix B highlights Jewish-led home improvement is beginning to occur. An emerging concern is the lack of internal Jewish policy as the community already has a well established social infrastructure and there is little reason to suggest why this has not been extended to housing, a natural policy progression. Housing has been established as a key issue however, it has not been placed at the top of the community's agenda. Large scale expenditure of a new synagogue which is surrounded by housing in an appalling state of disrepair appears as a physical oxymoron and figure 1 and figure 2 below illustrate this.

Chapter 2.4 illustrates ways in which a Jewish Housing Association should act as a mechanism of Jewish-led renewal increasing internal policy and cohesion. A similar concept to this, allowing multi-agency involvement, would be the establishment of a Jewish community micro-finance group which would enable individual or group based housing renewal. Through multi-actor action, these goals are achievable and could sustain an increasing population with better quality housing.

Policy intervention is a fundamental first step in recognising and addressing this specific housing need, however, what is crucial is the enactment of these policies within the community. A consideration of the implementation of these policies will now occur through a discussion of projects and partnerships.

2.2 Projects and Partnership

The Jewish kehilla, due to reasons stipulated by their faith, have specific housing issues as already discussed. Due to numerical expansion, community confidence and spatial expansion they are increasingly creating a wider project scope. However, lateral spread is

restricted by two main factors. Firstly, the housing tenure surrounding the synagogue is mainly Tyneside Flats or small terraced housing which is not suitable for large families. Secondly, the price of property in the area has increased from an average price of about £75,000 to £105,000 in the last two years (Andrew Oppenheimer, Interview 5 Appendix F) excluding many Jewish families. Many would suggest that the community should move further a field allowing a higher standard of living however, due to the ultra-orthodoxy of this community, the synagogue and being able to walk to it on the Sabbath is fundamental. Throughout the kehilla's history, anti-Semitism has also prevented lateral expansion. Nationally, anti-Semitic attacks have sharply increased for the second year in a row and are now at their highest rates on record (Greig-Smith 2004:7) and Andrew Oppenheimer supports this and highlights it as reason for the cocooning of the community. On a national basis, the Barrow Cadbury Trust suggest

“There's been a general understanding that the community cohesion strategy hasn't been as effective as had hoped”

(Stubbs, S 2003)

and this is evident in Gateshead and although assimilation is not desirable, greater community cohesion, as discussed in chapter 2.3, would be and acceptable to the Jewish community. Recognition of the limitations and respect of faith specific needs is fundamental to the success of Housing renewal. Partnership between Gateshead Council, the Jewish community and other agencies is fundamental if continuous, long-term sustainable growth is to be maintained. These partnerships, developed through materialistic projects, are not confined to formal networks of communication and they

cannot be easily defined however; they illustrate in-depth, knowledge transfers leading to successful partnerships.

Whilst the benefits of partnership are widely recognised by the Council it could be suggested that the Council are unequal partners as they are allowing other actors to lead on projects in which they could be actively participating. As sub-regional funding with wider and more complicated aims emerges, as the new decisive function in neighbourhood renewal, this will become increasingly evident. Weak internal partnerships within the Council raise concern. Although many of those interviewed represent different departments, they are all involved in similar projects, however, this is not readily recognised and awareness of other departmental involvement is low. As partnership regeneration is becoming an increasingly important mechanism of renewal intra-Council partnerships must become tighter and Gateshead Council now needs to establish mechanisms to allow the flows of tacit and codified knowledge amongst its employees. The implementation of a Community Liaison Officer as outlined in the *2002 Housing Needs Survey* would be a mechanism to achieve this. Establishing Gateshead Housing Company involvement should also be considered a crucial aim of Gateshead Council. Recognising that no new housing can be bought or built by the Company, adaptation of the present housing stock already within their remit to meet the needs of Jewish families is essential. The Company which received £63 million of the Government's Arms-Length Management funding in 2003 (Gateshead Council 2003c:4) already provide key housing services to their tenants, for example a 'handyman' service, which the Jewish kehilla would greatly appreciate. The Company's general aim is:

“Improving the choice and quality of the home you live in as well as transforming and developing strong communities lies at the heart of the Council’s vision for housing”

(Gateshead Council 2004c:13)

cannot be legitimately supported unless they adapt their policies for all residents including faith communities.

As chapter 2.1 discusses, through implementation of the Gateshead Housing Strategy and through partnerships with other agencies, projects have begun to reduce the 40% (Gateshead Council 2003a:60) overcrowding within Jewish homes. Previously, Ravenscourt Place was developed for single Jewish males and through SRB Funding the first steps for private renewal were established. Ravenscourt Place is an ideal facility for single-men who attend the tabbinical and rabbinical colleges, however, it fails to address the largest community need: appropriately sized family homes. Although Andrew Oppenheimer considers SRB funding to have done little more than “window dressing” it began the process of kehilla interaction and increased awareness that solutions were becoming more widely available in the mainstream.

Discussion with Council representatives illustrates the present predominant projects are in partnership with Home Housing agency at Hartington Street and the Newcastle Gateshead Housing Market renewal pathfinder in Whitehall Road. Within both, research suggests that the Council have taken a ‘back seat’ allowing the private landlord at Whitehall Road and Home Housing Association at Hartington Street to undertake the majority of the consultation, planning and practical work. Within the Hartington Street

specification, the association has completed all consultation and research, a condition specified by Gateshead Council. Involvement has been marginally higher within the pathfinder project especially in preparation of the proposal for inclusion. Discussion of these two projects will allow further scrutiny of multi-agency intervention in the housing renewal sector.

The Whitehall Road development: a partnership between a private Jewish Landlord, NewcastleGateshead Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder and Gateshead Council has developed from the precursor Capital Challenge 1997-2000 (Anne Lewis 2004: Interview 6 page 2 line 60). The project led by Mr X², a member of Gateshead Private Landlords Association, has seen a Whitehall Road previously considered an “eyesore” (John Robinson 2004: Interview 3 page 2 line 96) (see Figure 3 below) renewed into an area to become part of the new nuclei of the neighbourhood. The project entailed the conversion of Tyneside flats into 11 large family homes completed to a high modern standard as illustrated in figure 4. Basic conversion and refurbishment criterion were supported and funded by Bridging NewcastleGateshead however; the landlord has gone on to further fund the addition of succahs³.



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Figure 3: Whitehall Road prior to Pathfinder intervention

Figure 4: Refurbished property on Whitehall Road

The landlord very much led on this project from approaching Gateshead Council for financial assistance to managing and letting the properties. Overall, he illustrates a high degree of professionalism and his properties have been refurbished to a much higher standard than that which Pathfinder require (Andrew Marshall 2004 Interview 3). As Pathfinder concludes,

“This scheme demonstrated what could be achieved by the Council working together with a private sector landlord, with the leveraging of significant private sector investment”

(NewcastleGateshead Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder 2004a:6)

and has successfully provided 11 homes for large families to rent for the minimum of the next five years. The stipulation of a five year rental scheme and the movement of families to this area should prevent down-spiralling that has occurred previously. Alongside the Hartington Street development and further community investment, the community has the foundations to enable sustainable development.

At a wider sub-regional level devolving into the micro, the aims of the NewcastleGateshead Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder and specifically, the Whitehall Road project timely coincides with the Gateshead Council Housing Strategy relieving some of the financial restrictions the Council face (John Robinson 2004 Interview 4). However, further partnership with the private sector and public agencies should not be pursued due to the financial gains possible but because of the high-quality development that can occur, tackling challenging housing needs within Gateshead. The lack of further planned partnership is alarming and research was unable to calculate a proportion of the proposed 1500 new affordable homes and 6000 private sector properties which would be available to the Jewish community.

Jewish partnership has driven the Whitehall Road project. The development illustrates a Jewish-led initiative supported by public sector funding. Oppenheimer considers the landlord of these properties to be brave and forward thinking (Andrew Oppenheimer 2004: Interview 5 page 5 line 156). Jewish landlords generally, are progressive and due to the strong community undertones, present good quality, well maintained properties. There are presently 11 Jewish Landlords in the Gateshead Private Landlords Association (Kim Waugh 2005 email), however the association were unable to inform me of how many Jewish landlords there were overall or the number of non-Jewish landlords which had Jewish tenants. When consulting with Andrew Oppenheimer, the idea of interviewing Jewish landlords was proposed, it was clear however, that he was uncomfortable with this idea and created an excuse concerning the business of the landlords. Analysis highlights there is little cohesion within the private landlord sector

and this will become an increasingly important issue. Good practice is not uniform but with regulatory reforms and guidelines it may be attained. However, this does not mean we should ignore the work which is occurring within the private sector. As Whitehall Road illustrates if the necessary resources were available similar projects would be achievable. This partnership between community and agency has led to significant development: physically changing the area and beginning to revive the community.

Registered Social Landlord's or Housing Associations are another important agency within housing renewal allowing increasing community participation and involvement. The specific focus of the following project is the redevelopment of a CPO site⁴ on the periphery of the Jewish Community: Hartington Street. Managed by Les Hewitt of Home Housing, a desolate area is emerging as an upbeat, desirable street for this minority faith community. The working relationship and the emerging partnership between the association and the community must be accredited to the experience and hard work of Les Hewitt. Firstly, and formally, through consultation with the Jewish Community Council in which Rabbi Andrew Oppenheimer took a led role and secondly, through informal consultation with potential families based in the Jewish Community Centre adjacent to the synagogue. Rabbi Levi has been a formal liaison between community and agency as the project progressed. As a resident of this new element of the kehilla, his liaison has continued after completion and knowledge should now be shared with similar projects. This colloquial mechanism of knowledge transfer has provided the community with a basic knowledge and it is now essential it is continually implemented. Les Hewitt

⁴ A site purchased by a Compulsory Purchase Order, cleared and the resold for future development.

openly admits the Jewish community's trust was hard to establish and the process of gaining this respect has taken a period of months. However; the Rabbis now feel comfortable enough to allow Les Hewitt to address them using their first names which, outside of the community is a noticeable endorsement. High quality and optional ownership schemes dominate the reasons why Hartington Street has witnessed a high level of partnership and subsequently success. The community were particularly impressed with the inclusion of a children's play area. Similar spaces in the vicinity are limited and are often sites of anti-Semitic conflict, reflected in successful planning and partnership issues, much wider than housing can be addressed. The levels of adaptability and accommodation to specific needs of the kehilla too impressed the community and they would like to participate in continued partnership with Housing Associations such as Home Housing.

It is widely appreciated that Jewish-led renewal projects are restricted by a lack of public and private funding. Appendix B illustrates examples of Jewish home improvement already occurring, however, due to the academic nature of the community, renewal is limited to those who have sufficient personal funds. If housing renewal is expected to continue, monetary funding is essential and would allow sustainable development from the grassroots through localised action.

A concern stemming from primary and secondary research is the conflicting aims of conservation and housing density within the area in which the Jewish community reside. These in turn, limit and prevent home adaptation or impose strict planning regulations in

particular with reference to extensions to properties, loft conversions and the addition of extra windows. Therefore, the predominant method of home adaptation emerging is conversion of Tyneside flats into larger, more adequate family homes. This in its self is not an uncomplicated method of housing adaptation and therefore advanced and progressive methods of adaptation need to be sought. Although restrictions are in place, a number of planning applications have been granted within the Bensham and Saltwell wards (Appendix B). However, home improvements and housing renewal in this area will continue to be conflicting and difficult due to these two conflicting aims which emerge, alongside financial limitations, as the potential restrictions within all projects and partnership.

Partnerships like those established through Hartington Street and Whitehall Road should not be the beginning and the end of multi-agency interaction within this area of Gateshead. Les Hewitt (Home Housing) supports this view and feels there is substantial opportunity for similar projects even allowing for a consideration of limiting financial and conservation guidelines. A key project which arises from in particular the Hartington Street development is the concept of a Jewish Housing Corporation⁵ which could act as a ‘manager’ of multi-agency development and ensure specific Jewish Housing needs continue to be on the housing agenda. Inspiration should be taken from the Leeds Jewish Housing Association⁶ and encouragement of this would allow the community to extend

⁵ Further discussion in Chapter 2.4

⁶ Leeds Jewish Housing Association: operate in the Moortown area of Leeds. Manage approximately 440 homes which try to 2meet the needs of Jewish people living in poor housing conditions” (Housing Corporation 2004:3).

its social welfare provision and organise 'bottom-up' renewal which would be long-term, sustainable and continually adaptable to meet challenging housing needs and agendas.

2.3 Recognition, consultation and inclusion

Within the last decade it has been widely recognised by regeneration specialists that faith communities have a "*positive and significant contribution*" (JRF, April 2003) to make and are

"gateways to access the tremendous reserves of energy and commitment of their members"

(Faith Communities Unit 2004:7).

Their social infrastructures, buildings, networks and community resources make them invaluable. However, in terms of recognition and involvement this is a seriously neglected part of the community. Community involvement in reality is not occurring but in many of the

"most deprived areas, religion is a key element in self-identity of local residents"

(JRF 2003)

and this is very much the case in Gateshead. No agency would ever underestimate the value of engaging with Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups so it is therefore quite surprising why faith community involvement is not more widely recognised (Neighbourhood Renewal Unit, 2004).

On a national scale faith community recognition has begun to increase, the inclusion of a religion based question on Census 2001 was to establish official recognition for faith communities who have specific needs and further discussion of this is included within the

contextual background to this research in chapter 1.2. Scrutinizing Gateshead Council publications illustrates recognition of the unique, ultra-orthodox Jewish community and their substantially differing housing needs. More interesting and due to continuous interaction, is the recognition and awareness of individual officers within the Council hold. Overall, knowledge could be considered high and several Council employees suggest the census has little impact on the way the Council operates due to the fact that

“council has been very much aware of Jewish needs for a lot of years”

(Doug Basen 2004: Interview 6 page 8 line 417).

Anne Lewis suggests that the census may have had more impact on non-Council agencies at a regional level and this will have future benefits for faith community recognition.

A purpose of participating in consultation with Gateshead Council was to establish their mechanisms and frequency of consultation with the Jewish community, and whether they understood issues concerned with Jewish assimilation and Semitism. A point to illustrate is that a language barrier does not exist; both the community and the Council affirm that a high level of understanding English exists and there is not need for Yiddish or Hebrew translation. The Council officers interviewed affirmed the view that they do not experience any problems getting the Jewish Community to participate as long as certain rules are adhered to and

“arrangements are in place to effectively communicate with the Jewish community”

(John Robinson 2004: Interview 3 page 2 line 66).

In particular, this includes avoiding the Sabbath and days of important festivals for meetings as well as ethical practices of the use of women officers when dealing with

Jewish women and recognising certain social protocols for example, limited hand shaking and eye contact. Nitin Shukla (Interview 4), Council Diversity Officer, has also recently arranged an evening with Andrew Oppenheimer, the communities leading Rabbi, to which Council employees were invited, with the aim of increasing their levels of understanding of Jewish culture and traditions. As John Robinson expresses, the Council

“need to understand the cultural and religious differences”

(John Robinson 2004: Interview 3 page 2 line 54)

and he feels after working for the Council for over 20 years he has a “reasonable understanding” however, he does realise that he and the Council may not always get it necessarily right and should respond accordingly to community feedback. He also recognises the value of informal communication mechanisms in that they are fundamentally the mechanisms through which successful projects occur. Lack of Jewish participation on the Inter-faith forum supports this. It should not be denoted however, as an avoidance of consultation as it illustrates more the Jewish community’s reluctance to assimilate or be subjected to situations which may threaten their orthodoxy. As Shukla suggests, Jewish community wishes have to be respected and therefore, the Council should recognise other mechanisms of consultation; most importantly the valued links with the Jewish Community Council. However, an emerging concern is that communication is limited mainly to Andrew Oppenheimer and the Jewish Community Council. Whilst Shulka affirms the good internal communication structures and that information is channelled through the community, John Robinson’s apprehension in recognising the Council have no methods of establishing if information is channelled, has some weighting and must always be considered when issues are presented. He does not

doubt the Jewish communication network but he illustrates that the Council should not presume that the message always gets through and that the Council are receiving the appropriate views of the community

Integration into the wider community is more complex. The Council have an understanding that although the community is happy to communicate they do not wish to assimilate. It is generally understood that the Jewish community prevent integration as it would allow external influences to effect how members perceive life and may distract them from Judaism. However, the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit suggest inter-faith activity is essential

“in order to achieve neighbourhood renewal”

(Neighbourhood Renewal Unit 2005:4).

Local knowledge significantly highlights that sweeping generalisations do not work and consultation methods must be adapted at the local level to achieve maximum participation.

Having this large, ultra-orthodox community set within a context of low-economic status continues to pose a number of challenges for Gateshead Council and other public and private agencies interacting in this area. Stereotypes and assumptions have been formed due to the general population of central Gateshead’s limited understanding of the Jewish community and this too can be linked to anti-Semitic attacks. Whilst the situation in Gateshead does not reflect the ‘parallel lives’ theory which emerged from the Blackburn, Burnley and Oldham Riots of 2001, researchers should be aware of the lack of understanding and overall cohesion. The Council may understand issues concerned with

assimilation, however, community awareness should now appear on the Council agenda to prevent community links derogating further.

Home Housing agency as illustrated in chapter 2.2 have actively established a partnership with the Jewish community through extensive consultation networks. Property design is a key area where consultation acquired knowledge has been effectively transferred into material renewal. Home Housing have accommodated the specific needs of large families adequately: additional bedrooms and living space; installation of a specialist boiler systems allowing continuous hot water in a sustainable manner, as well as accommodating those needs specific to ultra-orthodox Jewish communities, for example, additional time switches and automatic emergency lighting for the Sabbath to prevent interaction with electricity and to allow the families to safely abide by the rules dictated by their religion. Kosher rules stipulate meat and dairy products should never inter-mix leading to intricate and complicated kitchen design. This is not within Home Housing's remit but illustrates their ability to respond and adapt standardised properties to meet the specific needs of the community. Similar to Whitehall Road, succahs have been an extra element of this development. This faith specific housing adaptation allows extra living space and illustrates the agencies adaptability and willingness to provide specific desires of the community which are stipulated by religious beliefs. Although funded by individual families and not the social housing grant, construction was arranged and managed by Les Hewitt. At several points within this project, he has completed work outside his remit illustrating dedication and skills of Housing Association workers.

Spatiality has been a critical issue in accessing the success of this project. Hartington Street is located on the east-side of Prince Consort Road: an area where Jewish families have not chosen to reside for a significant period. Although this development may have been suitable for Jewish family life, without community involvement, the project would have failed. Desirability of the property had to outweigh the negative issue of distance to the synagogue and the stigma which Hartington Street previously had acquired. Home Housing's partnership with the Jewish Community Council led to the success which can be witnessed. Other factors reinforce this: firstly alongside the adjacent development of Whitehall Road, a new nucleus for the area has been created, secondly, the inclusion of a children's play creates a community impetus and thirdly, using the Rabbis as a mechanism of communication has led to a successful development. Home Housing Association's ownership options also allow a variety of renting, shared ownership and buying which has not restricted low-income families from participation. Shared ownership, especially in conjunction with agencies like Home Housing is popular within the kehilla and allows a lower amount of external investment. This, as a housing renewal policy, should be pursued further.

Research highlights that the Jewish community are keen to participate and be active members in housing renewal partnerships. However, it must be noted that due to the communities hierarchical structure consultation will be limited to the Jewish Community Council. However, once projects are grounded participation will be more widespread. The implementation of a Council Liaison Officer could significantly improve many integration and consultation issues. Similarly, Andrew Oppenheimer's idea of a creating

housing corporation is one which the kehilla, Council and other actors should seriously consider and could be used as a forum for participation, consultation and inclusion and allow an increase of Jewish visibility at the sub-regional level which would further raise awareness.

2.4 Who are the ‘multi’ in a multi-agency approach?

A multi-faceted, multi-agency approach to housing renewal in Gateshead is evident from primary and secondary research. Four key agencies: Gateshead Council, NewcastleGateshead Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder, Home Housing Agency and the Jewish Kehilla, clearly emerge as those who are deeply integrated into the renewal process. Drawing together the issues already presented, the following analysis will assess the role each agency has within Jewish community regeneration.

Within the context of specific Jewish housing needs and community involvement, Gateshead Council is a predominant actor and agency of housing renewal. The Council’s involvement in housing and community issues occurs at differing levels from micro-community enclaves to wider sub-regional projects. The Council is taking several positive steps to begin to address the significant housing needs of the Jewish community particularly through Council-led research. A large amount of documentation to explain the needs and required solutions has been produced, however, action has been limited and slow. Even appreciating limited resources, few additional partnerships are being actively sought and no new projects are emerging. Much future work is now dependent on the

neighbourhood planning exercise being completed by GVA Grimley⁷ yet evidence suggests needs are already widely known through previous surveys and officers own portfolios. The action points suggested in the 2002 Housing Needs Survey have not yet been attained. Funding may be more appropriately deployed to achieve these already existing guidelines. There is much good work occurring across a variety of departments but, there is little intra-Council partnership something which should be actively encouraged. Mechanisms to establish knowledge flows formally and informally are vital if needs are continued to be met. Whilst knowledge of the community's traditions and cultures is relatively high, it is centred amongst key figures. Methods of infiltrating knowledge through bureaucratic layers is essential. Knowledge of the community outside the Council amongst other regeneration agencies and the general population of Gateshead is low. The Council needs to increase this in order to reduce anti-Semitism and allow greater participation. As proposed in the Central District Action Plan (Gateshead Council 2003a:60) a Community Liaison Officer would be ideal and something Gateshead Council should endeavour to implement in the immediate future.

Nationally, Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder's have received criticism mainly from within the regeneration industry. Specifically, within this research, the lack of continual planning and partnership, key aims of pathfinder, should raise concern. A continuously arising concern is that Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder schemes are "*over-ambitious*" (Gardiner, J 2004b:1) and the funding currently allocated by the ODPM will

⁷ Funded by Bridging NewcastleGateshead to attain the Neighbourhood Management and Planning mediates of funding.

not be sufficient to complete and maintain projects for the full 15 years proposed. This is supported by little evidence that pathfinder is different to the programmes developed in the 1980s and 1990s which were spatially limited and temporally short term (Willis, B 2004b:20 Regeneration and Renewal). Pathfinder is managed at the sub-regional implying a policy change has occurred, but projects are neighbourhood based and piecemeal, suggesting success varies across localities and legitimising Ben Willis's concerns. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation suggest a higher degree of community engagement needs to be developed and pathfinder policies more carefully linked to regional and local authority based policy and aims (Schopen, F January 2005:19).

Within the context of this negativity, we must not forget the success that pathfinder is beginning to encourage especially in tackling low housing demand and the associated secondary effects. However, success in the long-term should be measured by the catalyst effect pathfinder may have on other actors and agencies within the housing market. As Margaret Fay, Chairman One North East, suggests:

“the pathfinder project is hard evidence of the North east's ongoing commitment to tackle the issue of low-demand housing in some of our urban communities”

(Fair, J 2004:1)

and mechanisms to continue this and create sustainable communities must be planned fully and implemented regionally. As research suggests, partnership leading to high levels of planning and good quality physical change is what will create these sustainable communities. In Gateshead this is emerging, and in conjunction with social housing

sector involvement and long term planning, the conditions for large scale change will be present. The only persistent concern is funding schemes which, will always remain the decision of Westminster.

Housing Associations or Registered Social Landlords are an increasingly growing part of this sector and now manage over 30% (Greig-Smith, H 2004b) of affordable social housing stock making them a key player within neighbourhood regeneration. In conjunction with this market share, their long-term perspective and specialist knowledge should be more widely recognised in local urban renewal strategies. Housing Associations are regarded by the government and regeneration professionals as major actors in achieving the aims established by national government policy as they are considered to be delivering a

“quiet regeneration revolution, appear determined to widen their brief and revamp their image”

(Greig-Smith, H 2004b).

However, they are already established at the grassroots and are involved at several layers of neighbourhood renewal. Their skills as Charlie Hughes, Endeavour Housing Association identified are:

“not only the bricks and mortar skills, but we’ve got the community skills as well”

(Greig-Smith, H 2004b)

and this is why they are successful regeneration agents. Within the context of Gateshead, Home Housing Association, a division of the Home Group has been significantly active

within the Jewish Community. The Home Group is one of the seventy-one partners of the Housing Corporation with an allocated budget of £60, 292, 436 (Barker, C 2004:8).

Within the group it is understood that local strategies, neighbourhood approaches and grassroot initiatives create communities in which people want to live, and in this respect, the group has many similar aspirations to the NewcastleGateshead Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder.

Primary and secondary research conclude that Housing Association projects such as that of Hartington Street are successful in meeting localised housing needs due to their flexibility, local neighbourhood knowledge and their long-term history of communication networks. As Max Steinberg of Elevate East Lancashire notes:

“What’s been encouraging is the willingness of housing associations to work with all parts of the community whether it’s owner occupiers, tenants or other Housing Associations”

(Greig-Smith, H 2004b)

and this effectively summarises why Hartington Street has been a success and why further Registered Social Landlord involvement should be actively encouraged. A concern however, is that further Social Housing Grants will not be available to 2006 (Karen Anderson 2004: Interview 2 page 1 line 42). However, the Housing Bill 2004 may affect future good practice as private developers will be able to bid for Social Housing Grants (Gardiner, J 2004:11 provoking major reactions within the industry. The government widely denies it will disadvantage Housing Associations, but consideration

of the long term is essential. Private developers accountability to external auditors is lower than that of Registered Social Landlord's, property standards will inevitably reduce and sustainable aims will be substituted for higher profits. Theoretically, private developers will be able to sell these properties after social leases have ceased leaving the country once again without affordable or social housing reserves. As Lord Best suggests (Gardiner, 2004:11) a "*watchful eye*" is needed and quick fixes now should not compromise housing markets of the future.

The Gateshead Kehilla (Jewish Community) has grown from a small community established by a few far-sighted Rabbis, into one which has a 120 year historical legacy and international reputation. Nationally, provincial Jewish communities are declining but it is Gateshead's educational influence in the Jewish community that allows the kehilla to maintain its population and sustain expansion. Students travel from America, South Africa, France, Belgium, Switzerland, Australia and Israel to study here (Appendix A details learning institutions). As a ultra-orthodox community of the highest level, the kehilla grants the

"Bible and it's rabbinical interpretations full authority in determining law, life and religious practise,"

(Weller, P 2001:380)

and this not only excludes them from some elements of mainstream society but other Jewish communities. The community chose to ignore the status of the Chief Rabbi, Dr

Jonathan Sacks and the associated Board of Deputies of British Jews and therefore excluded themselves from the welfare services they provide.

The kehilla highly appreciate all housing interventions, however, it is realised by both Senior Rabbis and other actors that these projects only relieve a small percentage of the problem and aims should be for long term, community-led, sustainable development.

However, there are several restrictions on resources within the community and from other actors. As Oppenheimer discusses, however, the community have many ideas on how they would like to see housing issues tackled in the future and recognise a long term strategy which is formally planned, organised and managed is now necessary.

Oppenheimer considers the idea of establishing a Jewish community housing corporation.

The proposed idea would create a source of direct labour allowing a structured charging system and preventing the present situation of families being unable to afford renovation works. This body would also be able to implement

“A new code for Sustainable Buildings, to promote excellence in buildings for energy and water”

(ODPM 2004a:17)

something strongly recommended for all new developments by the ODPM. Regulation of landlords could also occur as well as the corporation being a bureau of advice. Formally, the corporation could act as a mechanism to manage partnerships, bidding for funding and other community projects. One of the community’s largest concerns is the increasing house prices within the area. The Senior Rabbis would like to see either the Council or another agency help them to establish long-term rental solutions but for suitable

properties similar to Whitehall Road. These could be managed through a housing corporation or if the Council were willing to adapt some of their smaller properties within the area it could be managed through the Gateshead Housing Group. The kehilla would also welcome financial-aid through grants or subsidised loans to allow private home improvements, extensions or conversion of pairs of Tyneside flats. Similarly like many of their ideas, this could be managed and organised through a housing corporation and would allow a formal mechanism of managing housing renewal within the area.

Chapter 4

Conclusions and Recommendations

Relating back to the research questions presented within Chapter 1, analysis of primary and secondary research allows the following conclusions. In relation to question 1, the specific needs of the Jewish community are widely recognised within policies, strategies and action plans. However, evidence of further physical renewal and future planning was sparse. Projects such as Hartington Street and Whitehall Road should be used as good practice examples from which frameworks of successful renewal can be identified and modified for other projects.

Secondly, faith community recognition differs spatially. At the national and local levels recognition is increasing, however, research suggests sub-regional recognition is still low. Similarly, within organisations such as Gateshead Council, Home Housing and Bridging NewcastleGateshead, the knowledge base is concentrated within the minority of employees. Intra-agency knowledge flows concerning faith communities need to be significantly increased. Mechanisms of consultation highlight that a community once

considered to be excluded: the Jewish community of Gateshead, is now participating with local neighbourhood renewal. Gateshead-wide community cohesion is still low and increased knowledge transfers between the non-Jewish and Jewish communities are fundamental to allow community-based housing renewal to occur.

Question 3, concerned with multi-agency, can be positively concluded. Evidence from national policy and micro-level research, suggests a multi-agency approach should be widely adopted with particular emphasis on public-private partnership.

In relation to question 4, a simple conclusion is not attainable. The underlying structures for a sustainable community are beginning to emerge, however, unless projects and partnerships are continually sought, this will not be achievable. Sustainable communities will not occur with just a few short-term micro-enclave projects; long-term, well planned and managed strategies are needed. Research from Gateshead suggests positive renewal based around community participation can occur, however it is difficult to ground these conclusions within national contexts as research and theoretical literature surrounding faith communities is just emerging and literature concerning Jewish communities is scarce.

As this research is set within the arena of policy frameworks, recommendations to allow further cohesion, partnership and an addressing of specific Jewish housing needs will be suggested. Firstly, a Gateshead Council Jewish community strategy, which collaborates all agency surveys, policies and strategies, is essential to illustrate that housing is just one

issue effecting this community. A cohesive framework for partnership, participation and action is imperative to allow further successful renewal. This should also be extended to include the Gateshead Housing Company whose services should be extended to allow Jewish community participation initially by adapting housing tenure. Secondly, a Gateshead Council Community Liaison Officer, as recommended in the Housing Needs Survey 2002 would enforce this. This officer could co-ordinate all personnel in the Council who currently interact with the community increasing intra-Council partnership and providing a formal mechanism for knowledge sharing and transfer. This officer could seek new partnership and funding opportunities and ensure long-term, multi-agency sustainable housing renewal remains firmly on Gateshead Council's agenda. Thirdly, as Andrew Oppenheimer suggests a Jewish Housing Corporation would be a suitable agency to increase and manage Jewish-led renewal. In partnership with the Jewish Community Council, a community housing strategy should be established to allow all ideas previously discussed to be effectively implemented. Allowing these three reforms to occur would create the opportunities to increase knowledge transfers and allow multi-agency renewal to become dominant within the aim of creating a sustainable community.

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www.picturesofgateshead.co.uk/jewish_community/

Appendix

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Appendix A: An illustration of Jewish learning institutions



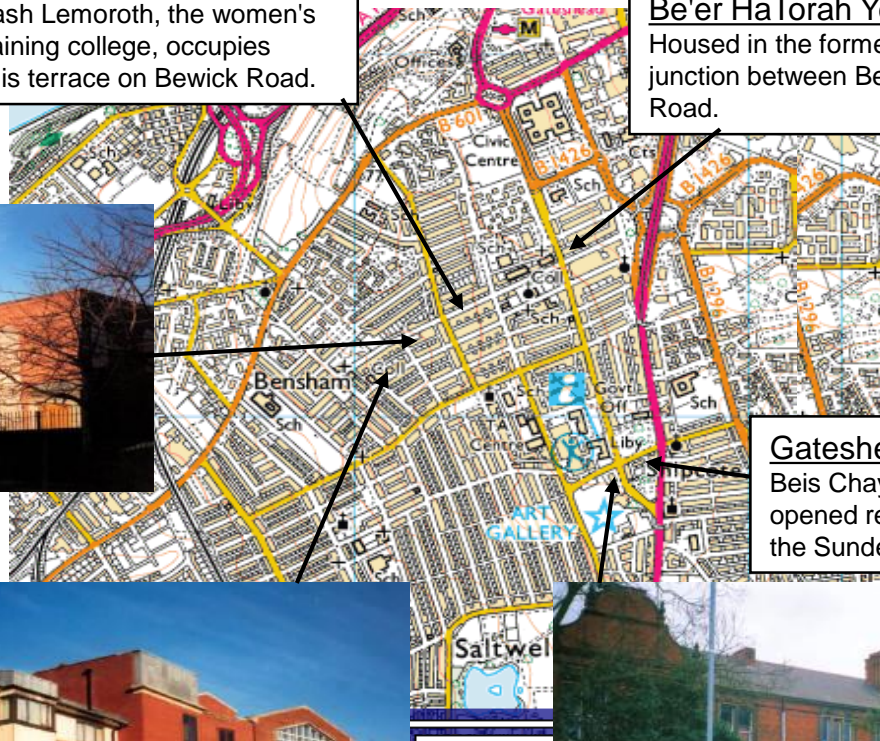
There are other institutions which are not included on here such as the some of the more advanced Rabbinical colleges and primary and nursery provision. The aim of this map is to give an idea of the density of learning institutions with one square mile.

Gateshead Seminary

Beth Midrash Lemoroth, the women's teacher training college, occupies much of this terrace on Bewick Road.

Be'er HaTorah Yeshiva

Housed in the former YWCA building on the junction between Bewick Road and Prince Consort Road.



Gateshead Synagogue, Bewick Road.

The Synagogue was opened in 1938, and replaced an earlier synagogue in Corbitt Street



Gateshead Jewish Academy for Girls

Beis Chaya Rochel, a new women's seminary opened recently on Shipcote Lane, close to the Sunderland Talmudical College.



Gateshead Talmudical College

Windermere Street.

Though Gateshead is little known in most parts of the world, amongst Orthodox Jews its Yeshiva is considered one of the most important training institutions in Europe.



Sunderland Talmudical College

Prince Consort Road.

This Yeshiva was originally sited (as its name suggests) in Sunderland, but with the decline of the Jewish Community there, moved to Gateshead some years ago.

Appendix B: An illustration of Jewish-led renewal

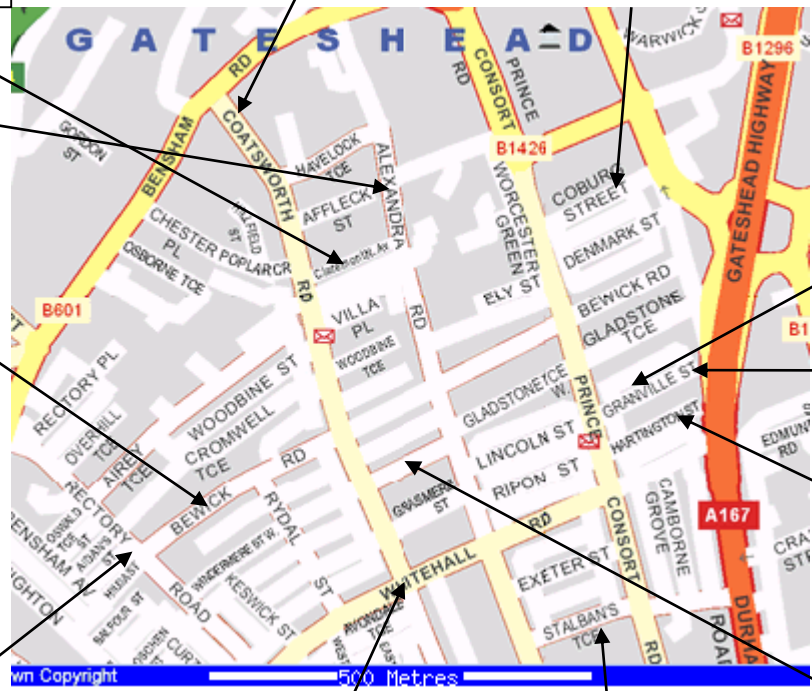
35 Claremont North Avenue: single storey extension to provide additional living accommodation

120 Coatsworth Road: first floor extension to provide bathroom

19 Cobury Street: single storey extension to provide new enlarged kitchen, lobby and w.c.

25 Windermere Street: Installation of Dormer windows: provide 3 additional bedrooms and a w.c.
 36 Windermere Street West: installation of dormer window to provide 2 bedrooms and a bathroom
 72 Windermere Street: single story enlarged succah

251 Alexandra Road: extension at rear to provide family room with succah and bedroom above.



76 Berwick Street: First floor extension to allow additional bedroom
 59 Berwick Road: Single storey extension providing granny flat and succah
 135-137 Berwick Road: formation of basement in rear yard to provide storage accommodation
 94 Berwick Road: Installation of 1 dormer window and 2 velux windows in front and 1 dormer and 3 velux in rear to provide 3 bedrooms and 1 bathroom.

31 Granville Street: Mr Katz First Floor extension to provide new bathroom

Hartington Street: erection of single storey succahs at rear of properties already under construction.

124/126 Rectory Road: single-story extension at rear to provide morning room

1-5 Whitehall Road: Conversion of 2 retail, 1 maisonette and 1 town house into 5 flats.
 52 Whitehall Road: erection of ground floor extension to provide kitchen, external refurbishment to other flats.
 52-54 Whitehall Road: Single story extension to provide kitchen and succah
 72 Whitehall Road: Single storey extension providing kitchen/morning room and succah
 85-87 Whitehall Road: erection of single storey succah including the conversion of two flats.
 92 Whitehall Road: single story dwelling house to provide study
 251 Whitehall Road: single story extension for lobby, bathroom and store

20 Cambridge Street: erection of single storey extension to provide succah
 32 Cambridge Terrace: erection of single storey extension to provide succah and study

8/10 St. Albans Terrace: Installation of 2 dormer windows, heightening storey rear extension and erection of single storey extension.
 30 St. Albans Terrace: Single storey succah

Appendix C: A summary of email and letter contacts

Listed in alphabetical order with summary of information gained

Anderson, Karen: Gateshead Council Strategy Development Manager, Housing Services
Letter posted 13th August 2004
Email Address: karenanderson@gateshead.gov.uk
Telephone Number: 01914332632
Interview and copies of the Housing Needs Survey 2002

Basen, Doug:
Email Address: dougbasen@gateshead.gov.uk
Telephone Number: 01914333900
Interview

Bladon, Peter
Contacted me after I contacted Laurence Levine
Email Address: spbladon@lineone.net
Explanation that he is a Messianic Jew (Believer in the New Testament) not part of ultra-orthodox community.

Board of Deputies of British Jews
Email Address: info@bod.org.uk

Bollands, Councillor David
Letter posted 13th July 2004

Cohen, Frances: Research Officer, Community Issues Division Board of Deputies of British Jews
Email Address: frances.cohen@bod.org.uk
Telephone Number: 02075435400

Denderowicz, Simcha
Recommended as a contact by Laurence Levine
Letter posted 16th August 2004
No reply

Deans, Julia: Chief Executives Department, Gateshead Council
Email Address: juliadeans@gateshead.gov.uk
Preliminary copy of the Community Strategy 2004-2007, contact: Karen Anderson.

Doyle, Michael: Housing Strategy and Standards Manager Gateshead Council
Letter received on the 9th August 2004 after Councillor David Bollands passed on my letter.

Flynn, Joanne: Communications Officer, Newcastle Gateshead Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder

Email address: Joanne.flynn@newcastle.gov.uk

Telephone number: 01912772665

Goodfellow, Sue: Secretary to John Robinson, Gateshead Council

Email Address: suegoodfellow@gateshead.gov.uk

Telephone Number: 01914333882

Links to other Gateshead Council Officers

Hewitt, Les: Home Housing Association Project Manager

Email Address: les.hewitt@homegroup.org.uk

Telephone number: 01913324966

Visit to Hartington Street Site

Levron, Nissan: Harav Lord Jakobovits Torah Institute of Contemporary Issues (JICI)

Email Address: jakinst@zahav.net.il

Reply to say work into individual communities does not occur outside of Israel

Lewis, Anne: Senior Environmental Health Officer, Gateshead Council

Email Address: annelewis@gateshead.gov.uk

Telephone Number: 01914333964

Interview and copies of Whitehall Road Photographs

Mearns, Councillor Ian: Gateshead Council

Letter posted 13th July 2004

Email Address: cllr.imearns@gateshead.gov.uk

Interview

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister

Email Address: press.office@odpm.gsi.gov.uk

No reply

Oppenheimer, Rabbi Andrew

Email Address 1: info@jccg.org.uk

Email Address 2: yocheved@jccg.org.uk

Email Address 3: a.g.oppenheimer@durham.ac.uk

Interview and answering of questions via email

Orshansky, Joshuua

Email address: nejoshie@msn.com

Shukla, Nitin: Diversity Officer Gateshead Council

Email Address: nitinshukla@gateshead.gov.uk

Telephone number: 01914332069

Waugh, Kim: Development Officer Gateshead Private Landlords Association
Email address: kimwaugh@gateshead.gov.uk

Wilson, Graeme:
Email Address: graemewilson@gateshead.gov.uk
Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy

Appendix D: An example prompt sheet

Interview with Councillor Ian Mearns, local councillor for Saltwell.

Theme 1: Councillor and Ward

- Major issues surrounding Jewish Housing needs
- Housing strategy quote
“local people who live in good quality affordable homes, which meet their needs and are located within pleasant, safe and sustainable communities”
Council meeting this?
- % Jewish homes included in 1323 unfit properties
- 40% overcrowding attempts to reduce
- Home Housing Association: Hartington Street
- Private Sector Renewal Policy and Social Housing Grant
- Community participation: council adaptation
- Fitting into Towards 2010

Theme 2: Councillor, policy and action

- Scrutinizing policy
- Gateshead Housing Partnership: works? Jewish representation?
- Nation Census 2001, involve faith communities
- NRU advantages of involving faith communities, in relation to Jewish Community?
- Jewish participation
- Encouraging cultural interactions
- Renaissance: yes/no?

- Appendix E: Symbols used in the transcription of Interview Data

Symbols used in transcription of Interview data

<i>Simplified transcription symbols</i>		
[C2: quite a while Ma: [yes	Left brackets indicate the point at which a current speaker's talk is overlapped by another's talk.
=	W: that I'm aware of = C: = Yes. Would you confirm that?	Equal signs, one at the end of a line and one at the beginning, indicate no gap between the two lines
(0.4)	Yes (0.2) yeah	Numbers in parentheses indicate elapsed time in silence in tenths of a second
[.]	to get [.] treatment	A dot in parentheses indicates a tiny gap, probably no more than one-tenth of a second
—	What's <u>up</u> ?	Underlining indicates some form of stress, via pitch and/or amplitude
::	O: <u>key</u> ?	Colons indicate prolongation of the immediately prior sound. The length of the row of colons indicates the length of the prolongation
WORD	I've got ENOUGH TO WORRY ABOUT	Capitals except at the beginnings of lines, indicate especially loud sounds relative to the surrounding talk
.hhh	I felt that (0.2) .hhh	A row of h's prefixed by a dot indicates an inbreath, without a dot, an outbreath. The length of the row of h's indicates the length of the inbreath or outbreath
[]	future risks and [] and life []	Empty parentheses indicate the transcriber's inability to hear what was said
(word)	Would you see (here) anything positive	Parenthesized words are possible hearings
(())	confirm that ((continues))	Double parentheses contain author's descriptions rather than transcriptions
.	That's that	Indicates a stopping fall in tone
..	one, two,	Indicates a continuing intonation
><	>so that's it<	Shows talk that is noticeably faster than surrounding talk
?	What do you think?	Indicates a rising intonation

Silverman 2001:303

Appendix F: Transcriptions of Interviews

- Interview 1: Councillor Ian Mearns, local Councillor for Saltwell Ward, Gateshead Council
- Interview 2: Karen Anderson, Housing Strategy Manager, Gateshead Council
- Interview 3: John Robinson, Director of Development and Enterprise, Gateshead Council
Andrew Marshall, Pathfinder Development Officer, Gateshead Council
- Interview 4: Nitin Shulka, Diversity Officer, Gateshead Council
- Interview 5: Rabbi Andrew Oppenheimer, Gateshead Jewish Kehilla
- Interview 6: Doug Basen Housing Renewal and Building Control Manager, Regulatory Services, Gateshead Council
Anne Lewis, Senior Environmental Health Officer, Housing Renewal and Building Control, Regulatory Services, Gateshead Council
- Interview 7: Notes from day spent at Hartington Street

Transcription: Interview 1

Interviewer: Rebecca Willis

Interviewee: Councillor Ian Mearns

Place:

Date and Time:

RW: Role of councillor address needs of the Jewish community, what do you feel their major issues are especially in the ward where you work? Especially housing and other surrounding community issues as well

IM: Well, I think there is no doubt about it that housing is a significant issue for the orthodox Jewish community and you know the orthodox Jewish community in Gateshead have expanded into the (unaudible) numbers but an awful lot of em the Jewish community are people who come here to go to the various learning institutions and then move on but the indigenous population is also growing as well (...) and there is certainly em demand for large family houses and we've done a number of things to try and accommodate that

RW: Em Do you know out of the 1323 unfit dwellings in the central district do you know the percentage of them that belong to Jewish families?

IM: Well, see the Jewish community have a sort of complex relationship with the rest of the population obviously many of them live there but also many Jewish families or Jewish individuals are landlords (.) em now in terms of properties which are unfit I was wondering when did you get that statistic from

RW: Em it's from the Action Plan, the 2002 Action Plan because that's I've got the 2003-2008 Strategy but the number is not dated in that

IM: Ah ah to be honest I don't think we would have categorised the number em the number of unfit properties by ownership by ethnic type (..) to be honest

RW: Em a key part of the housing strategy is to offer affordable housing which meets the actual specific needs of the community em in relation to the Jewish community overcrowding is one of the biggest issues at 40%

IM: Hmm

RW: What attempts have been made to reduce this

IM: Well there is one development which is taking place at the moment in Hartington Street where we have done a deal with em a housing association called Home Housing (.) em and Home housing there are developing I think 15 homes which are for occupancy by families of 10 or more em that's one specific development now it has to be said in terms of council housing the Jewish community virtually on block have not bought into living in council rented housing at all I think

they're more comfortable with having rented accommodation in the sort of voluntary sector with the housing association em in terms of overcrowding in properties which the Jewish community themselves own or rent from each other there have been quite a lot done (..) in terms of converting houses into bigger houses doing loft conversions em and er where appropriate also converting pairs of Tyneside flats into single family houses because that they then provide sometimes 5 and 6 bedroom family houses em so there has been an awful lot done thought that through single regeneration budgets em and through the new housing market renewal pathfinder we're trying to find ways of accommodating that as well what (.) what what one of the traditional em issues with the Jewish community is is that because of their absolute orthodoxy they need to be living within walking distance of the em of the synagogue or worship particularly on the Sabbath but also on Holy days and high days and other parts of the year (...) and that's very very important to them because they have this absolute strict (.) strict adherence to not being sort of involved in technology or working in implements including motor vehicles when it comes to that to that Sabbath and holy days.

RW: The new 5-bedroomed accommodation is it been is it all filled now

IM: I think I think its still actually under construction

RW: I didn't know if it had been finished or not

IM: Em, mm its literally about 400 yards from the Civic Centre just up the road there yeah and you can see how that's getting on by just having a walk around there Rebecca

RW: Do you think more will be needed once that's finished?

IM: I think I think there's always going to be a need because there is not doubt about it the Jewish community in central Gateshead has expanded and is continuing to expand over the last several years anyway

RW: Do you think the Private Sector Renewal Policy, do you think has had any impact on them themselves being able to (..) sort of improve the standards of their housing?

IM: Ah there's no doubt about that and it in fact relationships between the council and the orthodox Jewish community are at an all time high I think they way in which they have involved themselves probably for the first time in some of the partnership arrangements that we have had going particularly through things like single regeneration budget the Bensham-Saltwell area SRB project they have been very very active in the community and at least twice a year now the councillors for the Bensham and Saltwell area have meetings with sort of representatives of the Jewish community council and we have a very very good and positive working relationship with them and they've benefited greatly with SRB

RW: So in your work with them have you had to make any special considerations for their cultural practises

IM: Ah I think I think that goes goes with out saying I think there is no doubt about that em you know its interesting the inter personal dynamics at meetings you know we meet representatives of the Jewish community council and they are without exception men probably middle aged or more elderly than that em you know it its you just got to have an sort of an understanding that there are things that will and will not happen with the Jewish community from their cultural and religious stand point

RW: So do you think their specific housing issues link into wider issues of education unemployment

IM: Well a ah y y every every area that you look at in terms of the way in which social policy interacts with the Jewish community one of the major issues is always overcrowding whether it be housing whether it be in terms of the sort of social provision that they try to establish for themselves but with assistance from us and in particular in education all of their education establishments are massively overcrowded by our standards but al all are fiercely guarded in terms of their educational independence because of th the importance to them of their own culture and religious significance

RW: Ok em so we'll change a little bit to look at your role as an actual councillor in scrutinizing council policy and how it meets the needs of your actual ward member's em how well

IM: Its s but difficult for me because I'm deputy leader and therefore my role isn't really scrutiny my role is more policy but at the sane time I have the role of a a local ward councillor in this particular area as I represent Saltwell

RW: And do you think what the council are putting into place is actually beginning to meet the needs that, of the community

IM: I I think there is no doubt about it we've got a long way to go but I think the Jewish community themselves if you can talk to representatives of the Jewish community they would tell you that the way in which the council helps to cater for them through partnership arrangements and working with other agencies is well thousands if times better than it was 10 15 years ago

RW: Em do the Gateshead Housing Partnership forum is there any Jewish representation on that?

IM: I must admit off the top of my head I don't know

RW: That's alright

RW: This is more on a national scale since the 2001 census there has been a question concerning religion instead of ethnicity em this has led to faith communities being quite widely recognised especially by the neighbourhood renewal unit

IM: Yeah

RW: Em do you think Gateshead council since then have had to make more of an effort to involve faith communities in their policies

IM: Well, we've always had a pretty good track record working with a whole range of different minority ethnic groups we've got a few good relationships with eh the you know em the em the Gateshead ethnic minority support group which has mostly representatives from the em Asian communities but also with the Jewish community themselves but the interaction between the different ethnic groups is not that great always

RW: That's just like everywhere else

IM: Yeah just like everywhere else so we've got to work very very hard at that can you go back and just remind me what the question was again

RW: Yeah its em how well do you think the council are doing to involve faith communities in their actual policies

IM: Well well I think we are trying very very hard be certainly through things like the establishment of the local strategic partnership faith groups are well established there and are well represented don't always turn up but they are well represented em when they need to be I think it's a question from their perspective of when they feel the need to do something they they know they can engage and the councils has been very very open with the vast majority of ethnic and religious groups

RW: There are lots of advantages in involving faith communities through cause they have their own networks and things

IM: Yeah

RW: and they have their own sort of people they can use to put things into practise

IM: hmm

RW: em can you think of any specific advantages in involving the local Jewish community of

(long pause)

IM: well I think the specific advantage is that you're looking at a population that is very tightly knit and of 4000 people and they cannot just be ignored I think obviously we would going back to a previous question about the census and I think one of the problems that we had with the census was I gather that many of the orthodox Jewish community didn't want to answer that question about religion

RW: because its only on the census data for Gateshead there's only 15 thousand and something actually counted but obviously there's an awful lot more than that

IM: absolutely and I think one of the difficulties is with the the orthodox Jewish communities I think they actually see themselves as a racial group rather than just a religious group em but in home office figures they're white Europeans the vast majority of them and but but they are quite distinctively different and I just think that's something that we've got to come to terms with with national government and the way in which they see communities of that nature

RW: em going on to the Home Office they call religious diversity dynamic and should be celebrated em are Gateshead Council doing anything to recognise and engage different diversities in the council

IM: well for instance em you know em before every council meeting we have an address by either a em you know a local vicar or priest but also Jewish rabbis and em religious leaders from the Muslim community and so w we that that is actually bringing into the heart of the council and and it has to be said you know maybe ok they would say that on the day that they are addressing the whole council but they always seem to be glowing with praise in what they say with regards to the council and we have very very good working relationships im honestly not being complacent there but we have a very good and friendly relationship with the different faith and ethnic minority communities

RW: em finally the council has this big quote that the borough is entering a time of renaissance do you think this is actually happening for actual normal people if you can call people normal in the council

IM: yeah well renaissance is like a sort of renewal or rebirth you know and I thinks its its not really sure of its an appropriated em appropriate description because it kind of kind of gives you the impression that we were born in the first place and I I actually think Gateshead as an entity is being reborn for the first time I just think its always been there but has never been anything in particular and king of just been there and I think now Gateshead is well and truly on the map and I think things like the first ever top of the pops outside of the studios in London on the Baltic quay in Gateshead and the fact that Gateshead was mentioned in that programme about 50 times from my perspective that was wow you know and em I think there's no doubt about it Gateshead is a fundamentally different place from what it was 20 year ago

RW: that's lovely can you give me any specific people I could contact that would help me out

IM: within the Jewish community

RW: yeah

IM: well I think em the officer in our development and enterprise department call John Robinson now John used to be head of our environmental health service but john lead on to lots of other people

RW: thank you

Interview Notes: Interview 2

Answers to questions from my own notes.
Karen Anderson then read notes and edited.
Both interpretations shown below.

Interviewer: Rebecca Willis (RW)

Interviewee: Karen Anderson

Place: Gateshead Council Community based services, Civic Centre

Date and Time: Friday 3rd September 2004, 4.30pm

The housing strategy 2003-2008 highlights quote:

“local people who live in good quality affordable homes, which meet their needs and are located within pleasant, safe and sustainable communities”

To what extent, in relation to the Jewish community, do you think the council are beginning to achieve this?

RW's notes: Creation of 27 new developments, 15 new builds by Home Housing agency on Hartington Street and 11 homes from the conversion of Tyneside flat. The latter project is being undertaken by the Newcastle Gateshead Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder. However, cannot stipulate that all these properties are for Jewish families but criteria include the condition that the families must have four or more children. A characteristic very typical of Jewish families. Also, the need of the Jewish community not just covered by specific points made by the Housing Action Plan and Strategy but also by other wider issues such as the Old people, Special Needs and Young People agendas.

KA: The new build scheme was intended to provide large family accommodation to help tackle overcrowding in some communities in Gateshead.

Overcrowding, at 40% of Jewish dwellings is a specific issue. Apart from the 15, 5-bedroomed houses being developed on Hartington Street, what other plans or actions are being taken to reduce this?

RW's notes: At the present, there is nothing else specific planned. The council however, are happy to support any Social Housing Grant Applications and the work under Pathfinder is still continuing. There is always continuing assessment of the needs of the residents through the Housing Strategy.

KA: There is no social housing grant available till after 2006.

Has the private sector renewal policy and Housing associations social housing grant had much implication on raising the standard of the present housing stock?

RW's note: The Private Sector Renewal has had an impact as the Jewish community prefer private ownership or renting privately. The social housing available in this area is mostly flats and is not suitable for the large Jewish families. Similarly, the social housing stock is mostly too far away a distance from the synagogue which has implications for the following of the strict

Sabbath rules. The social Housing Grant is encouraged and supported by the council in this area. For example, the project with Home Housing. As it is a shared ownership programme, then capital needed was much less. [Shared ownership also means that the owners have some control over who the next owners are and this can keep properties within the Jewish community.] (Karen Anderson doesn't agree that she said this.)

Therefore, what role do you see for Housing associations?

RW's notes: Housing associations are a way of interacting with the community. In the Hartington Street development, they completed the research including consultation with the community. Also, promote shared ownership something that the Jewish community prefer.

KA: The council can't build new homes for rent but can support Housing Associations to do so. The council requires that they have carried out consultation with the BME/Jewish communities before asking it to support bids. Have to be very careful with equal opportunity issues and the houses can't be marketed just for Jewish community but for anyone requiring a large house. As this scheme was shared ownership it was something the Jewish community prefer.

Are the Gateshead Housing Company involved in any way?

RW's notes: Not particularly as the Social Housing in the area is not really appropriate to the needs of the Jewish Community i.e. Tyneside flats

KA: But they are looking at how they can better promote what they have to offer to BME and Jewish Communities.

The housing strategy places and emphasis on community participation and communities influencing the future of their neighbourhoods a theme common in most regeneration practises. Has this been particularly difficult in relation to the Jewish community and have any practises been adopted to accommodate for cultural diversity? E.g. Sabbath

RW's notes: The diversity department would know more. The Jewish community are represented on the Diversity Board and the Housing needs study was taken to them for comment and they accepted the findings.

Can you explain to me how the Gateshead Housing Partnership Forum works? Are the Jewish community represented on this in any way?

KA: Word forum not included. The Housing Partnership feeds into the community strategy (one of the 10 themed areas); the Diversity Forum ensures that minority communities can feed into the community strategy and they consider any key issues from any of the other partnerships.

Theme 2: Strategy fitting into wider policies.

Can you explain how the Housing Strategy interacts with Newcastle Gateshead Pathfinder?

RW's notes: The pathfinder fits into the Housing Strategy as the aspirations and goals are similar. The two policies work side by side. The pathfinder provides extra funding and means that other funding is not taken away from addressing housing issues. The pathfinder is not that widely mentioned in the 2003-2008 Housing strategy as the bid for pathfinder status was still in process.

KA: The strategy had identified many of the early interventions for the pathfinder but there was never enough funding to do everything needed in the pathfinder area. Having the extra money and the partnership approach to tackling some of the issues in the area will be great. It is not just about housing.

What national government policies govern what your department and strategy has to achieve? Do these often create conflicting demands and outcomes?

RW's notes: The pathfinder has helped as the sustainable communities policy has been made specific for this area. The Making It happen the Northern Way illustrates the acceptance that the issues in the North are different to those of the south and that specific projects are needed/required. However, there are still many inadequacies and more is needed to be done.

KA: The key issue is that there will never be enough money to tackle everything that needs to be done in the North East – funding allocations are moving towards sub-regional rather than local authority levels and therefore we will have to show how investment in Gateshead helps meet regional and sub-regional aims and not just those for Gateshead.

Theme 3: national level

Since 2001, the national census has included a question concerning religion/ This has led to faith communities been recognised more and their potential contribution to neighbourhood renewal recognised.

How well do you think Gateshead Council are doing to involve faith communities, something the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit firmly recommend?

RW's notes: Consider the diversity and partnership boards. There are 10 sections to the partnership one of which is housing and the Jewish Community are represented on this board.

Is it difficult to get the Jewish community to participate?

RW's notes: It is difficult especially being able to interact with the women of the community. The Rabbi network is the best method of consultation. Similarly, it might be difficult for me as a female independent researcher.

KA: Nitin will say if we have made progress here – we would always go through his team to consult minority communities or you could end up with a few people being consulted to death.

Finally, The council quote, the “borough is entering a time of renaissance” do you think this is for all?

KA: The changes the council and its partners have made are 'inclusive'. E.g. Everyone can access the Baltic, The sage when it opens and advice can be produced in other languages if requires. Having a Diversity Team in Chief Execs also mean that officers like myself can seek advice from people who have a level of expertise in, for example, knowing the best way to find out the views of particular communities. There is still room for improvement but the Council is going for CRE status – I think we have level 1 and are going for level 2.

A point to note that Karen Anderson has now left Gateshead Council and now works for pathfinder. Will this have any impact on her comments and interests?

Transcription: Interview 3

Interviewer: Rebecca Willis (RW)

Interviewee: John Robinson Director of Development and Enterprise
Gateshead Council (JR)

Andrew Marshall Pathfinder Development Officer Gateshead Council
(AM)

Place:

Date and Time:

RW: Could you explain the links that the housing renewal pathfinders had with the Gateshead council housing strategy in the last few years

JR: Well the links are em well sort of em truly integrated the Gateshead housing strategy em which has em emerged over a number of years has dealt with em all tenure of housing em and identified within that low demand across all tenures particularly in the central area of Gateshead so low demand and the problems surrounding low demand and abandonment were understood and were being em dealt with through the housing strategy em as far as we could but we didn't actually have the finance to em take radical action and we were actually very much em dealing with em the worst first when pathfinder came along when we were invited to be a part of that in April 2002 em we then were in a position together with Newcastle having to em assess the housing needs housing trends housing stock across the whole of the pathfinder area and aligning the em strategies of the two councils to fit what became the pathfinder submission to ODPM and what that did was to em clearly state the case for why we needed resources to deal with the problem place that in regional em policy setting and set our clearly em the interventions that were necessary em to correct that market imbalance starting in detail in the first three years but looking forward to the 15 year programme

RW: Consultation is a major part of any sort of renewal process do what consultation has been completed in the central district of Gateshead surrounding housing and if there was any Jewish representation on this?

JR: There's em consultation broadly about pathfinder we em have set up public meeting right across the pathfinder area including Bensham where the Jewish community reside we have also sent out a series of pathfinder newsletters with em response sheets that have gone into every household in the pathfinder area em including of course the Jewish community and we also engage with communities on specific projects in rather more detail now as far as the looking particularly at the Jewish community we've met with representatives of the Jewish community on several occasions to em set out em the general strategy of pathfinder and also to begin to examine those particular measures that would be of benefit to their community

RW: Ok have you found it in your experience difficult to get the Jewish community to participate and have you and to take any actions to em deal with special provisions to accommodate their cultural and religious differences

JR: We need to understand the cultural and religious differences em and I feel that having personally worked for the authority for some 20 plus years em and Andrew for most of that time, all that time I think actually yes

Andrew: Pretty much yes

JR: All that time I'd like to think that we do understand the Jewish community and we understand how to em relate to them I don't know whether we always get it right but we have a reasonable understanding and first and foremost you've got to recognise that the Jewish community do not want to integrate with the rest of the community and that big mistake people make they always think we need to get a lot of integration going but what we do need to do is to make sure that arrangements are in place to effectively communicate with the Jewish community and they have become better at that they have em some particular personalities who are outward looking em and who talk to us who we know very well and one of the first names that comes to mind is Andrew Oppenheimer em who em I've known for several years and em who on my part believe we have a good relationship so that em we can understand one another em and he and others as its not just him em can relay messages and receive the em Jewish communities viewpoint so that is the main way that its done em its done through some of the council structures as well where the Jewish community are part em of em the em ethnic communities liaison group and I haven't got the name of that right but its em what's it called Gateshead Visible Ethnic Minorities Group and also there is a council group established forgive me I haven't got the name of that right so there are those formal mechanisms there are the informal personal ones which of course really get the business done and them em a lot of em colleagues working with em Andrew in em environmental health em have contacts with the community in a range of ways em em but particularly through em housing em and of course some members of the Jewish community are em significant landlords in the area and we we work them in providing home improvement grants for their property some of which is occupied by the Jewish community but some of its occupied by others because they run that as a business

RW: I'm going to talk to you now about the Whitehall Road converted conversion flats em how did this project come about after the properties had been empty for two years? And were they actually looking for someone to develop them or did it come about that you were looking for property and then realised they were empty?

JR: Em right em well of course em we knew well that those properties were em unoccupied and an eyesore causing nuisance in the area em we're also aware that they'd been bought by one of the Jewish landlords who we em regularly do business with (pause) and em I don't can't recall whether he approached us or we approached him probably he us em and from that em a scheme was developed that em fitted the needs of the Jewish community but were particularly aligned to the councils housing strategy for the allocation of grants em and also the needs of pathfinder so that that was one of the em sort of em quick wins em but nit suggest quick (?) but one of the sort of em medium sized to small projects em that was useful to get em off the stocks em (laugh) the benefit of that scheme is that that's bringing back into use houses that are in a prominent road through the Bensham area it provides large houses that the large jewfish communities em need em and had together r with the other development at the back of Whitehall road the Hartington street development em provided a eh a kind on impetus for that area em its given that area a lift em so its most important to us

RW: Are all these properties occupied by Jewish families and how did you get round because in advertising your not allowed there for the Jewish families because it was a private land lord could you get round it that way because you cant specially say that these are for Jewish people

JR: Em they were in the ownership of em a Jewish em landlord and we were content with the way he operates his business and em we have conditions that apply to the grant that we give which em control the manner in which he em lets or disposes of that property em I think that we understood that he was primarily making the accommodation available to the Jewish community although not necessarily exclusively and em really that's up to him how he runs his business em but em for the non-Jewish population em similar grants are available in the area and there's no shortage of accommodation so we're not saying that this funding has been given to the Jewish community and the houses are not accessible by anybody else what we're saying is that em what I said right at the start these polices are applicable to em everybody within the community we wouldn't want to differentiate on grounds of em cultural or religion or ethnicity

RW: The annual report that was published this year states that the families that have moved into those properties are very happy how was this conclusion drawn and has there been any further follow up or community work done since the completion of these houses?

Andrew: the satisfaction with the accommodation is em has been established by the connections we have with the owner em and the feedback he's given us from the families who have been accommodated there em almost as soon as they were completed there was families occupied within that development we know the individual owner em does improve the properties to a very high standard significantly higher than the expected grant standard em so we're quite satisfied that em a numbers of families are quite content there in terms of any em follow on community work there are none planned particularly focused on that terrace

RW: Are there any more plans for any more private sector partnerships through in that area through the pathfinder

JR: There are none that I know of specific em plans at the moment

Andrew: no none that I'm aware of

JR: Em but the general principle is that em we would be actively seeking other schemes that we could em em assist with in order to em improve the housing stock generally em within the Bensham area em and particularly to suit the needs of particular sections of the community em the Jewish community is an expanding population in Bensham the general population is a declining one therefore we'd want to work with that community to make sure to balance those em to factors and one way of doing that is reducing the density em and em perhaps some of the overcrowding that the Jewish community face within the housing they currently occupy

RW: Do you see any role for housing associations such as the Home Housing Group in the pathfinder work that is being completed in Bensham

JR: No, no em yeah there is a very big em role for them and em you see it working em at its most obvious right next to Whitehall road in the Hartington street development where em home housing have em got funds from the housing corporation to em build some housing there which is em particularly aimed at the Jewish community 5-bedroomed and larger houses there those houses have been built on land that became free when we knocked down two terraces of unfit houses em so that's in a sense we knocked down houses that weren't wanted by people that were in a dreadful condition and have know managed to facilitate through home housing em new large houses that are very much in demand em and there are be examples with Home housing and with

other em housing associations across the Bensham area where we could em look to em similar schemes or we could to other schemes so they'll be playing a big part

RW: The executive summary states that in Gateshead within the next 15 years there's going to 1500 new affordable homes and that 6000 private sector properties which will be improved can you tell what percentage of these will be in the Jewish community or for just the community in Bensham

JR: I couldn't give you a percentage of the top of my head em no I'm afraid I couldn't em but em as I've said because of the rising Jewish population and the fact that we need population living in the centre of Gateshead em that it will be em we will enable whatever we can em and that I would think would be quite significant but I couldn't put a percentage in it

RW: Ok the summary also states that (?) housing needs are going to be met em through the provision remodelling of older properties like what's happened in Whitehall road em because the Jewish community as we have already established have specific needs em will this become more relevant do you think

JR: Well its easy to say that we will do that I think it's a bit more difficult to make it happen with the existing stock em we obviously take every opportunity to make sure that em where houses are being improved or converted that em what we are left with is something which is going to best suit their needs now we know the Jewish community have particular needs over sizes of properties but we also know that they have particular needs em in kitchens with em sinks for various activities em we know that they have a particular need for socuers(not spelt right!) the em space that they live in during a certain time of the em the year where they wish to em eat and sleep under the stars em and some properties actually allow for that and the new ones in em Hartington Street allow for that em life time homes and you know again we can accommodate that within new buildings but older houses that becomes very difficult because of the stairs cases because of the current (?) but we do all that we can to facilitate those things

RW: Are there any plans for neighbourhood planning in this area of Gateshead and does this incorporate the differences in culture and religion of the Jewish community

JR: There are very large areas of pathfinder area oh about seven eighths of it that's going to be subject to neighbourhood planning exercise exercises at the heart of that em those exercises em is community consultation and in engagement and em we're not going to em satisfy em that unless we em communicate and engage the Jewish community as a significant community within one of the very areas that well be looking at so yes we will but we recognise that and I think perhaps in relation to the question we recognise the special arrangements that we would need to put in place to truly engage with that community and em its always difficult to know whether we're talking to a few people who are actually representative of the community or whether we are are getting through to the community em and special arrangements be put in place to do that

RW: On a more national scale can you explain to me how the structure of the pathfinder relates to the em sustainable communities initiative outlined by the ODPM

JR: Em the sustainable communities plan is in itself very very broad and em sets out the context in which communities em should be developed and supported and changed em in urban and rural settings em and just homing in towards pathfinder it sets out very em or it sets out em some actions em for the southeast and very high demand the opposite to the problem that we face and then it sets out in a part of the report how we're going to deal with em with low demand areas which em the pathfinders are grappling with and em and then how that's translates onto the ground is to make sure that em communities that em have changed markedly as a cause of economic restructuring and em significant population loss to makes sure that those communities are em reinvented and em are em likely to thrive in the future and the only way that these communities can thrive in the future is by making sure that you've got the right ingredients so that em people can and want to live in these inner areas and as a part of that we're gonna be sure that we're pitching that at the right kind of em level you know do we understand what the population is going to be and em do we get the house building and renovation right to fit that bearing in mind house type and tenure and all the rest of it

RW: The pathfinder highlights that high value quayside developments masks localised problems and also that transforming the urban environment is crucial to the renaissance of the region do you think local projects are now being perused because people can see that there is a difference between the high value projects and the local projects do you think they would have come about if as much money hadn't been spent on the quayside area of Newcastle and Gateshead or not

JR: I think we're very fortunate here in Newcastle Gateshead to em have had such em magnificent regeneration and em em building of confidence in the kind of reinvention em the place to be em that's very helpful em following in the back of the tem are signs of em significant economic improvement em speaking as I know it better on the Gateshead side the Baltic business quarter will be developed at the em back of the em Baltic because it em now a place that people want to be now without this kind of development on the em quayside there wouldn't have been the confidence to come into be part of the market there wouldn't have been the confidence for all the new building that we've got em within Gateshead and so those projects have increased that confidence they have actually placed in stark contacts the kind of housing that you get along the quayside and the sort of values of that housing with housing half a mile away where its lucky if it's em a tenth of the value probably a twentieth of the value in some cases we have no idea how we are going to solve these problems but pathfinder coming as it does now with the resources available means that we've got funding through that route to sort out some of these problems against em a very much improving background of em the economy picking up but we've still got some very low wages so it time things are set in the right direction

Transcription: Interview 4

Interviewer: Rebecca Willis (RW)

Interviewee: Nitin Shukla

Place: Cafeteria, Gateshead Civic Centre

Date and Time: 2.00 14th October 2004

RW: Can you explain a little about your role as diversity officer for Gateshead Council?

NS: em right ok my role is to em work with the councils work on equalities obviously we have lots of er policies on equalities er as far as race gender disabilities concerned but I've got to ensure that em what we actually say in our policies we actually implement on a day to day basis so its basically putting er policies into action em and I over see the councils work on equal opportunities on a day to day basis

RW: in a few of my other interviews and in some of my reading em I've come across the Gateshead Interfaith Forum and Partnership and Diversity Boards can you explain how these might (.) can you explain what they are first and how they effect the Jewish community in Gateshead

NS: em we we do have em (.) the interfaith forum (.) in Gateshead which is open to any faith communities that wi wish to participate (..) er on the forum now em unfortunately th the Jewish community does not participate (.) on the interfaith forum because (.) at times whilst (.) people will discuss em (..) issues which are pertinent to their own faith (.) it could also mean that em on occasions there may be (.) joint activities where you have for sort of example er prayers for peace or what have you where different faiths will come together (.) and em this is something the Jewish community feel as though they respect what the interfaith forum is doing they feel as though it is not something that they wish to participate in

RW: why do you think the Jewish community choose not to integrate or assimilate with other parts of society?

NS: em I think the way that the Jewish community em (..) live b ba based th th that their lives based on on the old testament and I think its (.) whether they feel (.) that by integrating er (...) that you know it means that there are other external influences (.) which would er have a bearing on the way people in the community perceive life you know if it meant for example joint activity (..) er with young people pf different faiths then because a lot of the time the Jewish community when they have got activities for their young people it tends to be separate for boys and for girls (.) they don't have sort of for example we would we would see it sort of the norm to have a youth club for example where they would have a youth club but they would have a youth club for boys and a youth club for boy for girls (..) because in the Jewish community they do not have em instances where by em (..) young people or people generally if they are unrelated males and females do not come into contact with one another (..) in that type of situation so schools are separate (.) youth clubs are separate (.) and I think they feel that you know em (..) that they wish for that to continue (..)er in the way they they live their lives and its em difficult for them to then (.) whilst we looking at ways in which (.) you know communities can come together an an maybe

have an understanding of one another and work together (.) em its something they just they do not wish to to participate in

RW: Having such a large ultra-orthodox community in a town the size of Gateshead is quite unique and do you think this has had any influences on integration or segregation?

NS: (sighs) I think its posed posed er a number of challenges to the council because it is a large em (..) community em em and a community which basically lives in in two wards in Gateshead which is Bensham and Saltwell (.) so (.) em (..) and because the the community is I wouldn't sort of say insulate but because they're not readily (..) errr not integrating but they ways in which other communities might or take the opportunity to then (..) in a sense the implications of that is that there is is very little very little understanding of the Jewish community em in the sort of the wider community and in in the borough of Gateshead people do just not understand and so then a lot of assumptions are made and stereotypes and so forth and so I think (.) whilst the council has a good working relationship with the Jewish community through the Jewish Community council er I th which has been built up over the past I would say six to seven years (..) but the general (.) I would say the community in Gateshead have very little understanding of the orth orthodox Jewish community and that has posed problems (...)

RW: The 2003-2008 Housing strategy places a great emphasis on community participation and communities influencing their own futures em has it been difficult to involve the Jewish community

NS: (interrupts over the top of RW) no no it hasn't because it hasn't meant that we we are saying to the Jewish community er in order for you to participate you got to have to change the way you do do whatever I th think th important thing is that we respect the wishes of that particular community (.) em when we do consult with communities generally we ensure (.) that em we will also consult obviously with the Jewish community and through the Jewish community council (.) and this is where as I said earlier that we have a very good working relationship with the Jewish community em we do em we do ensure that that we we consult and engage with the community so it doesn't there isn't a problem (.) as such really

RW: Ok Have any methods of consultation and participation have to have been adapted to meet their cultural and religious needs like for example em the Sabbath or to accommodate for religious festivals?

NS: yeah I been what we would tend to do is em in lots of ways iis if we we invite the Jewish community to the civic centre for meetings or for consultation then we provide refreshments (.) to people participating in the meeting em then we will ensure that em the refreshments we provide the Jewish community that the food is kosher (..) er we will avoid erm the Sabbath (.)erm if we are looking at dates when we would consult er or if we organise events then you know it is very much (.) per sa avoiding Friday evenings and Saturdays because you know it is is the Jewish Sabbath at the same time it maybe that erm(.) if (.) we were seeking views of women in the community (.) Jewish community then I think where ever possible we would endeavour to have female officers (..) erm undertaking you know that bit of the consultation so there wasn't any sort of uneasiness about (...) er about male officers doing that

RW: I see

NS: I think that also understanding some of the protocols and one of the things we are doing er Rebecca you know over the next couple of weeks is that someone from the Jewish community councils actually coming into the council this has happened before erm but there has been a gap between having come to the council earlier and coming again in a couple of weeks time this is to do a presentation on the Jewish community (.) which is open to officers (..) well to staff across the council er where they would explain er (..) the traditions and the culture of the Jewish community and in a sense how it impacts the way the council the council works with the community because I think also protocols in just given things like shaking hands

RW: yeah cause women aren't allowed to shake hands with men

NS: yeah exactly and sometimes we have officers who don't realise (.) em and em (..) so I think there are there are it is important that you know staff understand some of the do's and don'ts of the protocols

RW: Do you produce things in alternative languages for example Yiddish so they can

NS: no because (.) wi with the Jewish community erm (.) we have been informed there isn't a problem as far the English language is concerned so there isn't a need for us to erm provide information in any of the other (..) any other language

RW: ok Going back to the issue of women em participation is predominantly particularly low among Jewish women em have you done anything in particular to encourage this

NS: No because erm (..) we would we would er address needs of the community erm (..) as expressed by that community we wouldn't want to go into the community and sort of say right I think your the women need to be going A B C D and E if it's a need that is expressed (.) comes from the Jewish community as in (..) and it does happen you know erm so that the Jewish community will identify (..) er whatever need it is within the community then the council will do all it can to erm to support that but we would not go into the communities and say well you know Jewish women aren't participating in (..) whatever it is you know I think its not right for us to do that I think it is important for the communities to have a say (...) you know these are the needs of women in the community or the needs of young people in the community yeah and the question if it was based on young er on on women then I think it is important fro the community to say (...) of for the women themselves to say er and that's erm channelled by the Jewish community council

RW: would you agree that you only sort of meet with a few of the Jewish community and that they are always the ones that are involved in consultation and does that mean you get a limited view of what is going on or does you think they well represent the community as a whole

NS: erm I think it is right to say that we do meet with erm limited number of people within the within the (..) Jewish community because they are (.) they have (.) good structures within the community erm information is channelled (...) er (..) via for example the Jewish community council an and that's the body that that th the the Gateshead council works closely with so I think

th that the Jewish community council are pretty well (Mumble) what the issues are for their communities now (..) but at the same time for example if there were issues that women might raise re community safety (.) and say we're getting harassed on a day to day basis and we need to sit down or we need to meet with (.) the police or the neighbourhood wardens then meetings have been set up specially (..) you know er but I wouldn't say that every time (.) we we wish to consult that they'll be a you know fifty sixty eight people sitting there you know that'll we'll consult with we will do it through the Jewish community council because they have a fairly good (...) you know handle on what's happening within the community

RW: the Gateshead Unitary Development Plan that was released last year affects Jewish homes and community services in the area were the Jewish community consulted in any preparation of this document

NS: yeah I think we all (..) erm (..) policies erm and plans that the council produces where it had obviously impact on the community then erm the (...) the community is consulted (..) we can do consultation specifically with the Jewish community or we can do it through a group which is called the diversity forum and the diversity forum is made up of representatives of the Black and Ethnic minority communities (.) it has the Jewish community on it refugees and asylum seekers and that is another way (.) of ways in which the council actually consults with gets views off erm the Jewish community so we can do it through that or we can if its felt important (.) for example or the next few weeks we've got to best value review on community safety and erm (..) we'll have colleagues going into the erm Jewish commun meeting with members of the Jewish community to find out what are the issues for for that particular community in terms of community safety so (..) sometimes we'll do specific (..) bits of consultation sometimes we'll actually do it via the diversity forum

RW: on a national scale since the 2001 census there has been a question concerning religion em can you give any reason why there is still officially a very low number of Jews in Gateshead when really we know there is an awful lot more living here

NS: yeah I think I think its the way that the census has been carried out (.) erm we do know that we have a significant number of (..) students wh who aren't in a sense erm residents of Gateshead as such you know they come to study an then might return to their home countries there is a significant number of of those that might be not be picked up by the census and I think also (.) you know the way the census carried out an and er if people don't have (.) and understanding of exactly (..) why questions being asked then and so they maybe reluctant to actually provide information so (.) w we we recognise that erm the information that's been erm (...) highlighted in the census as far as the numbers of the Jewish community compared to (.) how many people that we think are in community is quite a disparity

RW: this question has also led to faith communities being more widely recognised and their potential in neighbourhood renewal widely accepted how well do you think Gateshead council are doing now to involve faith communities particularly (too much background noise)

NS: yeah we have erm (..) we have a fairly good I mean this evening for example at 6 o'clock we have a meeting of the interfaith forum er where the council is actually represented on this particular forum (.) and the council recognises erm (.) the contributions that faith communities can actually make to to the borough of Gateshead you know in in terms of cohesion in terms of

there being understanding of the different communities and erm breaking down some of the barrier and stereotypes and so forth (.) so that's something that's erm the council recognises and and fully support the work of the Gateshead interfaith forum and does actually have participants active on the forum itself

RW: in particular (.) can you think of benefits of em using the Jewish networks that are already established for regeneration and renewal

NS: its its difficult in a sense that in I think it sort of links with erm this this notion of community cohesion erm after the disturbances of in 2002 where there was a push really you know that the reports erm after the disturbances in the northern cities Bradford Burnley whatever said people were living parallel lives and you know and this was referring particularly to to the black and ethnic minority communities and and to to the white communities (.) and it need needed to be a lot more interaction (.) and erm and I think I if were looking at taking that scenario into re regeneration and the Jewish community then its it's a difficult one because (..) as I said (.) as I explained earlier that the Jewish community will not readily participate (...) in the sorts of activities where there's going to be interaction between different communities erm an and w we we we've got to erm (..) we recognise that erm and its something we (.) have to erm what the word we'r looking for we have to respect (.) and at the same time looking at how how you know we we involve the community in (..) in the life of the of of Gateshead because (.) you know it's not easy to just for us for us officers to day right (mumble) we've got to have these activities which will in involve interaction between different communities and the Jewish community (background noise) participate you know (..) at the same time you know if we erm in re regeneration erm we've got to make sure th that dialogue is taking place you know between the council and the communities and making sure (.) that there is support for the community in terms of economics on terms of regeneration of houses and so forth so that dialogue needs to take place (.) but its not something that (.) you know there is an easy answer that you know it just says (mumble) work with other communities is the same way we would work with the Jewish community

RW: Karen Anderson suggested that there is you have a policy in the council for working with Jewish people could d I possibly have a copy of that or could you tell me a little bit about it

NS: sorry there being a policy

RW: she said there was like a framework of how you incorporate the Jewish community

NS: that's a good one (.) I'll have to find out and I'll have to get back to you

RW: ok that's fine

NS: ok

RW: that's everything thank you

NS: it that ok

RW: yep that's great.

Notes from meeting with Andrew Oppenheimer

Interviewer: Rebecca Willis
Interviewee: Rabbi Andrew Oppenheimer
Date: 10th November 2004

General Comments

Eye contact

Physical contact

Introduction Chat

120 years tiny community, Nazi Holocaust catalyst

small number of far sighted Rabbis saw chance to regenerate Jewish community long before popular term or regional city scale.

Events 1940s a catalyst

Not many provincial Jewish communities exist, 12 in North east now 2 and Newcastle is a dying community with much of younger generation moving away to Manchester or London where much larger community or moving to university. Leeds not growing but not declining as fast as Newcastle. Also has a vibrant Jewish community to carry it.

Gateshead's academic institutions numbers of students and departments steadily increasing. Two main learning institutional are the Tabbanach and Rabbinical Colleges.

T: does not train to be Rabbis, basic foundations and preparation for business and work place.

Majority of students go on to professional employment or further or higher education to provide training for employment.

Parallel to this has been the growth of the Girls educational institutes since the 1940s.

The three institutions internationally renowned all over the world and attract students from America, South African, France Belgium, Switzerland, Australia and even Israel which actually has own learning institutions.

Boys boarding School was opened after war primarily for Holocaust survivors. In Gateshead however not boarding school for girls (Sweden)

Teacher Training Seminary

Institutions have grown and now have over 300 girls and 300 boys studying. Produced sister institutions such as a seminary which just specialises in vocational training, GNVQs etc. Now between 4/5 Tabbinacal college in Gateshead. Also, graduate institutions in Tabbinacal and Rabbinical studies. Academic community brings with it families.

Community size

approximately 400 families plus the young people who are studying in the institutions. Approx 1500 students in higher education. Overall between 4-5,000 people.

School systems: 1000-1200 children under age 16. Two thirds of the population are under the age of 25.

Housing Needs

20-25 years ago community more spread out low fell, Saltwell park area however since then community has contracted. Reasons: not safe, anti-Semitism on increase. Stones thrown, hats removed, headscarf and wig removal. Some incidents still happened recently police caught suspects.

Practical reasons too: nearer easier walk to synagogue on Sabbath, further away walk not necessarily pleasant.

Asks question is violence anti-Semitism or economic? Although Jewish community has some families who are poor not to same extent as parts of Bensham and Saltwell. Some of families are on income support as work part-time or are students. However, all lead fruitful and happy lives. Simple target as will not fight back.

Small concentrated area, few streets square in the last ten years. Confidence and size now on increase, beginning to expand: positive

Senior partners in the regeneration process, housing issues adopted by the council in the Housing Strategy

Hartington Street

not exclusively for Jewish families but for BME however, not many BME families who have the need for family sized homes of that size. Natural progression that Jewish families got involved. 15 homes created. Exciting project, genuine partnership with Housing Corporation, Home Housing Agency and the Council. Community amazed at how accommodating Home Housing have been: cooking facilities, sinks, 5/6 bedrooms, own playground. Much needed and welcomed resource as not many in area.

Private Project: Whitehall Road

Quite substantial block, moving streets something not tried before-moved direction. Previously street had been bad area, problematic address issue

Bringing area up

On own: buying/renting properties in streets where Jewish families haven't lived for many years eg the Avenues, areas around Saltwell Park, Hartington Street and the adjoining streets

HS: previously pocket of bad, inner-city decline. Vandalised, derelict

Cold faced regeneration, however, PO and shops closed, PO closure cant be reversed but as wider community comes back the services can grow again.

Purpose of pathfinder generally: stabilise Housing Market in Bensham and Saltwell
20 years ago solution was considered to be move community out and demolish properties however Jewish community didn't want to move, didn't want ghetto. Led to some home improvements by Housing Grants.

Overall quality of housing excellent, in vicinity poor levels

Now expanding and funding needs to be made available to help Jewish Housing needs

Explosion not steady

Moving around area however some issues which restrict movement e.g. nature of accommodation flats or small houses whereas demand is for larger housing units

Meeting with council soon: help acquire blocks of flats. Create homes in a imaginative way.

Problem is the ridiculous increase in Housing process in the area recently. Getting to Manchester levels and this is pricing some out of the market. Until about two years house prices quite low: up to £75,000 now £105,000 plus. Difficult as many students. Some longer term, specialist rental solutions now being accepted.

15-20 years ago Ravenscourt Place built near synagogue purely rental and not suitable for larger families.

Asked but council why families don't sign up for council properties: mainly as not many suitable properties available. If there were appropriate developments then happy to rent of the council.

Housing Renewal 2 years ago: compulsory purchase, selective renewal 6/8 houses converted from about 15 flats per street. Council helped in conversion process.

At the start of a long process, up until now feel like not being completely consulted. Asking now about grants available however, a lot is private sector.

HS and WR good but a limit to what can expect two schemes to have.

Mentioned Doug Basen as a good contact

Certainly consulted, happy that views taken seriously.

Own home, low incomes need help to build extensions which community consider to be a legitimate use of funding. However, overall aim in area is to reduce housing density and this would actually increase it. What next then?

Like to see cheap loans made available as community very keen. Idea of a housing corporation as builders prices have gone up dramatically. Employing direct labour would be more cost effective. Doesn't understand as wages haven't gone up. Price of a loft conversion had increased from about £10,000-£15,000 up to about £30,000.

Overcrowding

Have thought issue through properly: they don't want to move. Children aren't suffering but need more space. Especially now as 3 years ago was more feasible to buy property now due house prices very difficult. Rented accommodation such as WR is examples of housing renewal within the community.

Needs

Improving all the time, big effort and much more being done.

SRB: mostly window dressing not much actual housing only about 6 loft conversions when about 60 needed. However very grateful.

Positive, beginning of process.

Consultation

yes

Whitehall Road

Pathfinder and Partnership: not yet full partners but opportunities materialising

Consultation didn't really happen

One brave landlord, correctly judged on own, much risk taken

Many others that could take risk but have to be brave

Previously property bad condition, anti-social, success of HS would have been doubtful if WR stayed in poor condition.

Jewish Landlord: 5 years rental period set out by pathfinder, some families would be happy to buy the properties after 5 years.

Asked if interview: nervous, not outward thinking, have helped a lot of people.

Hartington Street

Contacted council, acquire site to develop however couldn't get figures to work

Then contacted HA who could complete as a social housing project.

Worked together, sub-committee of Jewish Council

HH: meets needs size design etc

Council land low cost project therefore viable.

Got in time just before house prices rose dramatically.

Transcription: Interview 6

Interviewer: Rebecca Willis

Interviewee: Doug Basen (DB)
Anne Lewis (AL)

Place: Gateshead Civic Centre, Diversity and Enterprise Department

Date and Time: 15th November 2004, 2pm.

RW: I've got some questions (.) do you mind if I ask them

DB: No

AL: fire away

RW: em (longish pause, paper ruffle) Ok, em, Doug in the pathfinder 2003 annual, annual review em your mentioned as the Gateshead Council contact could you explain how you got involved and what involvement you've had in this project

DB: Yeah its er the team that I led Private Sector Housing team has for a number of years worked on things to do with the refurbishment and er housing conditions in the private sector and (.) dealing with things s (mumbling) grants (mumbling) private dwelling and old age problems lots and lots of things to do generally with with the private sector housing market and er I think just the wealth of knowledge the team has built up made than an obvious choice to look to (.) looking at some depth in what needed to be done in certain areas of the private sector regards to house conditions and (mumble) what regeneration and sustainability I think alot of it (mumble) what else do you think (..) Anne would lead us to being in a qualifying

AL: I thinks all the points that you've said because (.) we we deal with the private housing sector and and the majority of em poor housing in the borough is in fact private sector housing (...)

DB: we were informed from the House Conditions Survey in 2002

AL: Yes

DB: which (..) gave us a lot of information em helped us to focus in on specific areas that we felt needed some sort of radical intervention (mumble) in that part of the market was gonna be sustainable.

RW: my understanding of how the project started was that is was one landlord who felt quite brave and decided to try something new em do you think there are other landlords who would given the opportunity and funding would be eager to get involved with similar projects

DB: you think specifically of Whitehall road now

RW: yeah

DB: that's over to you Anne

AL: right em well it's a bit more complicated than that in (.) em between 1997 and 2000 we actually had em pre-cursor to pathfinder called capital challenge which which specifically targeted Bensham and Saltwell (..) and this particular landlord (mumble) was on the one for the people from the private sector who was on the board for the capital challenge (...) em and the board consisted of councillors officers and then a number of em private sector stakeholders including em landlords local business people em and housing associations (..) and as I say this particular landlord was involved with with that em he was also a main player in in the setting up of the Gateshead Private Landlords Association (..) em and he worked with us on several other smaller projects (mumble) pause so when he came up with the ideas for this one we were already quite receptive to to em working with him

DB: were all the houses in his ownership at that time or did he have to buy (mumble) make up the terrace

AL: em no all all the houses had been in one previous ownership apart from the owner occupier on the end em and he bought them as a job lot (..) em (..) and I think he's intention originally had been (...) em (...) to sell them to the council to demolish them because the street behind them Hartington Street was demolished (.) em (.) but he was quite reluctant to do that because there there was a need within the area for larger family housing and he came up with this idea of converting em (..) pairs of flats into houses em em and (..) we looked at it he drew up a business plan that set out (...) how he would do it and how he would fund it we looked at it and said which bits we were prepared to em assist (pause) em and at that time they had just started looking at pathfinder and we thought well this would be an extremely good project (...) so a submission was put to pathfinder to see if em we could gain assistance through pathfinder to to em go through with this

RW: Can you tell me a little bit about the Private Market Landlord Initiatives? And if any of the Jewish Landlords are involved in this

AL: em well (.) one of the main ones for the private rented sector is is the landlords association and we do have quite a few em members that are from the Jewish community in in the the landlords association em there have been various schemes as I say a lot of it started with capital challenge (..) em I mean and (..) some of the ideas that are behind pathfinder have sort of been born from capital challenge em (...)

DB: (..) quantify how many people (.) er shall we say are Jewish landlords obviously by nature we got people names we don't ask them what religion er ethnic origins are whatever you know

AL: yeah, em Doug national em thee em housing conditions survey same year 202 there was also a housing needs survey now (..) normally em (...) members of the Jewish community aren't regarded as an ethnic minority (.) but because er the Jewish community within Gateshead is quite unique in as much as its its em an orthodox community and its based around em a number of Tabbunical colleges (..) in effect its like the oxford and Cambridge of the Jewish world em it was was decided that because there a a distinct community within Gateshead that em any housing needs assessment and housing conditions survey that was carried out we would regard them (..) as an ethnic community for our purposes

RW: when you were redesigning the properties for the conversion was it just all done by the Jewish landlords or were you involved in that as well because you have got the introduction of the succahs and things which are obviously from the Jewish perspective was there anything from the pathfinder that that said certain things had to be included as well

AL: well (.) what we were interested in was that em (..) that that the houses would be fit for habitation at the end of the day em they'd stood empty for a number of years (...) and (.) they were unfit to (?) degree mainly due to vandalism (..) they had been refurbished (..) in about 19(...)96 something like that but they they'd never been properly filled they'd always (.) been a lot of them empty at one particular time em and we said we'll grant assist making the properties fit (..) and he funded the likes of the succas and that himself em and there was several other em (...) specification that were em (..) done that that we're connected with religious requirements

DB: and are obviously beyond the remit of what we can offer in grants

RW: yeah its like with the in the Home Housing Project they're like extra things that they have to come on top of the standard

DB: alright yeah yeah

RW: em apart from the 2002 Housing Needs survey em was there any other consultation with Jewish families completed

AL: yes em we actually it it wasn't specifically Jewish families but when we were preparing our em private sector em (...) housing policy (..) we had a consultation with a number of stakeholders (..) em (..) and they came from all different walks and em there was em a member of the Jewish community that came along to represent the Jewish community there it was actually em Andrew Oppenheimer

DB: alright

AL: em and and we had like a whole day running consultation workshops em (..) with people from all all walks right through from developers em housing associations to what is now Gateshead Housing Company right through to tenants landlords em and then we had em representatives from the Jewish community black ethnic minority groups we had em black ethnic minority group that meet regularly in Gateshead em so we had people from from the whole range and em (...) as I say we had Andrew Oppenheimer there he put forward the views from them

RW: do you would you consider it difficult to get the Jewish community to interact (Mumble) generally when it comes to consultation

AL: em generally speaking the they they are very forth coming em we have been doing (.) em another project along Sunderland road em and certainly there's been several of the Jewish landlords that have come to thee (..) presentations and workshop evenings that we have done for those em and I've never never personally in all the years I've worked had much problem with interaction with the Jewish community I mean mean th there are certain rules that you've got to observe but beyond that em (...) I don't think there's a problem

RW: em under the pathfinders objectives it is obvious that Whitehall Road fits into the category strengthen and stabilise the housing market em do you feel it also has outcomes under the diversifying and (mumble)

AL: Yes I think is probably covers more that just those two objectives as well (..) we did (mumble) analysis of it somewhere I'll dig it out actually (mumble)

RW: em the Whitehall Road and the Hartington Street development in an area where Jewish families haven't lived for quite a long time do you think this movement to the other side of Prince Consort Road will have any impact on the community

AL: em I think if anything it's stabilised that particular area (...) the fact that there's now families that are living there rather than (..) em short term tenants em a lot of them I know are students at the Tabbunical colleges em who are either already Rabbis or they're doing advanced training (..) or are training to be Rabbis they have their families there so its had a stabilising effect (...) em one question I was asked recently em when they were up from the other pathfinders

DB: yeah

AL: show them round has it had an impact on things like the local school with it with being members of the Jewish community it doesn't have a major impact on on em the schools run by the council (..) it does have impact in the private schools the community run em but but they seem (...) like they expand as the Tabbunical colleges expand (.)

RW: these two projects have begun to regenerate the area and do you think this will impact further on the other housing (mumble) other private landlords or Jewish families themselves will see how well these have worked and want to gentrify their own houses

AL: well were trying in fact to build build upon it ourselves we're we're using that particular area as as a nucleus for other potential schemes em (...) certainly the Jewish community are very keen to em take part I think the non-Jewish community a bit more reserved about it

DB: we also we've got to be a little bit careful cause we've just appointed some consultants to undertake a big neighbourhood planning exercise in Bensham and Saltwell and their looking at the whole wider area there which (.) ok you might say (mumble) but we will will be some what reluctant to (mumble) too much in the way of intervening in that are until we get the result of this planning exercise which were expecting early mid next year and I think that will guide us in shape of the overall area and perhaps where various communities are going particularly the Jewish community cause that will be apart of the role of these consultants to actually engage with the local community to s see what their needs and aspirations are

RW: em (mumble) post office just closed not very much selection (mumble) community becomes more developed the services might also become sort of reopen again (SORT OUT!)

DB: We're that's another thing were were actually looking at is s the whole approach to how shopping and commercial development is along down in that part of the world retail analysis to

see what is needed down there (..) em is it the right mix (..) are they in the right place shops and so forth (..) could do cause there is a thriving sector right down coatsworth road isn't there that th there that is a thriving shopping centre used predominately I would guess by the Jewish community

AL: em an then running parallel to that there's (...) shopping centre along Saltwell road as well (..) em which I think is is not as thriving as Coatsworth Road

RW: The pathfinder is a 15 year project what private sector renewal (mumble) would any of these include the Jewish community or have they got what they are going to get

DB: we we don't now the short answer is because (..) so much is going to hinge on this this planning exercise that that we have just appointed consultants a couple of weeks ago em and we are going to be very much guided by what they recommended to us we know we have got a massive predominance of Tyneside flats with very little em relief from the (mumble) so forth so we know that there's a high density housing issue there lots of one type of unit (mumble) that I think if we (mumble) say well we can (mumble) so we expect something radical will happen in some parts of the borough

RW: What roles do you see for RSL's and do you think after the success of Hartington Street any more partnerships or projects may come about in the next few years

AL: I think depending on the outcomes of the local planning exercises I think (..) a lot of the things will be towards looking at will be to look towards partnership working whether it is will RSLs or private landlords em and and certainly em I can see a lot of err instances where well be working with owner occupiers as well

DB: I think the the big issue is going to be affordable housing er I think there's much probably a big part for RSLs working with us (..) if we are looking to providing (..) new housing anywhere in that locality (..) we will need to look at affordability and whether its through RSLs or (..) private developers I don't know that's possibly

RW: The Jewish community themselves would like to see a sort of builders consortium set up or somewhere that they could access builders that wouldn't rip them off or overcharge (pause) do you think this would ever happen or do you think its just something realist and not very practical

AL: [I'll give you two answers

DB: [well yeah (AL laughs) I think they are very astute and wouldn't get that ripped off but there you go em one of the things er I think the government is trying to do is (..) its been running for a lot of years now is thee (..) anti-cowboy builders campaign and (..) and I know the government has been trying to establish a register (..) of builders (..) who meet er certain standards er type work they do financial stability er reputation those sorts of things very slow going very sl its not really not really taken off but I don't think government (..) the government launched this twice now so they have tried very hard and I think that is a way but won't just be the Jewish community but the whole community I think to say just fro the Jewish community I think is is wrong it is an issue that everyone it is an issue as we know its an issue of black economies we are all facing that

problem so (..) er I can see us most probably having a register (..) that that the local authority to recommend I think would be putting us down a very dangerous route so we would nearly get to the stage of recommending particular builders but we would most probably say we look (..) here is a list of builders (..) (mumble) who have performed adequately in the past we we would give list out to those to people and say well look pick from this list we haven't had particular issue and they have done a good job in the past but were not recommending (..) but that's how we deal with it at the moment (..)

RW: House prices have become a significant factor in preventing Jewish families from buying property em do you think there will be in the next few years means for providing financial assistance or being able to give them loans?

DB: I think we we are looking very much now at in our Housing project housing policy at alternative ways rather than traditional grants and a lot will be looking at things that how can we offer assistance in in those finding financial loans or whatever it might be (..) it think the place for the council over time (..) in actually handing out (..) vast swaths of money I I think is probably diminishing we we are finding a lot more pressure from the government now to give out the money we have to allocate em (telephone rang) but the government will be looking towards (pause while telephone rings some more) councils coming up with innovative ways of working with partners such as private landlords banks lending institutions em and finding new ways of shared equity em partnership er all those sorts of things anything Anne on that one it's a big subject that one

AL: em yes it is (....) I do know that there are a couple of housing associations that that em do h housing for the Jewish community there's em development down on em Airey Terrace which is for that's that's that not the name of the development that's the street itself (....) em and er that is dominantly for the Jewish community and I can see that it maybe that certainly for the likes of the (..) students at the Tabbunical college that something like that maybe an alternative option for them rather than (..) renting from the private sector or buying their own properties and (mumble) affordable housing (..) so tha that side of it might grow into something (mumble)

RW: many Jewish families would like to extend their homes to em build suchas on the back or to just generally enlarge living space however (pause) this raises housing density and one of the key things in the area is to reduce housing density em do you think there is (mumble) conflicting aims to be met

DB: I think we've got a problem because I think some of the area is actually in a conservation area where the Jewish community lives (..) and I know there's some quite strong planning guidelines about density issues particularly things like rooms and roof spaces I think in the past they have been allowed but there's a very strong (..) er will for that not to continue (..) (mumble) its too dense

AL: one of the things we have introduced as a result of the housing needs survey and the house conditions survey (..) em is that em we are now offering assistance for conversions of pairs of flats to houses em and that has (mumble) and we have got people talking that up there's got to be a proven housing need but with a Jewish family (..) where you have got 6 7 and I've even come across one family which had 20 children em but er one of things were are offering now is conversions of Tyneside flats because if they're nicely converted they do make very spacious houses (..) ere m and we have even had ones where we've converted (..) em 2 adjoining houses

into one house that we've grant assisted where it's been two two bed roomed house turned into one and that that was a Jewish family as well

DB: we'd be very interested in (mumble) the scheme on Whitehall road on a larger scale if that if someone came forward we would definitely seriously depending where it was

AL: but we would offer the same grant to anyone where there's a proven housing g need em (..) er so if there's a large family em from a non-Jewish (..) family then we would offer them assistance as well

RW: on a more regional scale em how do you feel small local scale project fit into urban regional renewal in general from grassroots upwards

DB: yeah I think that is where they unitary development plan comes together sub-regional spatial policy its more of a planning issue this but er I know we are looking very much at the larger scale where where we are developing er to be looked to be developed looking round for areas so that we are not developing green space issue

AL: I think the thing larger plans like that though that the can be a role for smaller (..) em projects I just think of (mumble) terrace area em (...) because there is such a diversity of of er Tyneside flats some are better built and better looking than others and em you may find that in certain areas some are more worthy of being kept and some (...) more readily em for redevelopment em and I think it's a case of next thing we do to create the em diversity of choice (..) that pathfinder is aiming for em (..) there there's always the risk of of wholesale demolition I think and an replacing it with lots and lots of little boxes

DB: we're trying we are looking very much one of the things things that pathfinder is actually looking at is quality urban design that's one of the objectives

RW: How (mumble) projects like pathfinder and other smaller projects fit into national agendas such as Sustainable Communities panl and the ????? look at sheet

DB: I think er that the first document you said I think there's an absolute link with there we've got a lot of out justification for what we are doing is based on those sorts of documents and the (mumble) sustainable communities plan is

AL: I th think

DB: there's

AL: were actually outing that into action

DB: yeah yeah

RW: generally how well do you think the projects em such as pathfinder and organisations like the council are doing to accommodate em minority communities especially the Jewish community

DB: I think certainly (mumble) we definitely recognise the importance of em minority ethnic groups th that's always considered in any any scheme we look at or any proposals ther there's an important place for those to be built in and I think over time (.) that will be shown but again its very early days of pathfinder

RW: One of the big things since the 2001 census is that religious communities become more recognisable through data do you thins has had an impact on the work you have to do or because Gateshead Council were already involved it didn't really cause that much of a

DB: I think the council has been very aware of Jewish needs for a lot of years

AL: I think em the council hasn't become more aware but I think em em (..) sort of wider authorities have become more aware em on a regional basis

Notes from day spent at Hartington Street.

Date:

I spent the day with Les Hewitt, the Project manager from Home Housing. Home Housing is a Social Registered Landlord. Most of the notes from the day are from memory. This is mainly due to the fact that I was on a partial building site and that it rained for the majority of the day so writing became quite impossible.

Les Hewitt had a good working relationship with the Jewish community. He explained he had built this up over many months even years. Initially he had met with Rabbi Oppenheimer and the Jewish Council and then as the project progressed he liaised mostly with Rabbi Levi. Les, by instruction of the Rabbi's addressed them on a first name basis. However, he was the only one on site to do so, the rest of the team all addressed them as Rabbi.

Les explained about the vast consultation process that occurred before and during the building. The Jewish families although very academic lack many basic understandings of 'keeping home'. For example, one of the families did not know what a Rotary washing line was and another could not understand why you would want a grassy back garden or would wish to plant trees, shrubs etc. They depend on Les to answer their questions and affirm their doubts.

Due to the outcomes of the consultation, the homes include many special features specific to the needs of Jewish families. The heating has a different time clock for the Sabbath which means that the families do not have to intervene with it all on the Sabbath. Similarly, as Jewish law states the turning on and off of electricity on the Sabbath is forbidden and therefore the electricity has a time clock especially for the Sabbath so only emergency lights in the hallways and kitchen operate. Within the kitchen itself, there are many adaptations to suit the needs of Jewish life. There are two hobs, two ovens, two sinks and two spaces for fridges so milk and meat produce can be kept and cooked separately. Even those who are having dishwashers will have two. There is also an extract fan fitted so the steam/fumes off the different foods products can too be kept separate. The downstairs toilet has the sink outside which is something that seemingly abides with Jewish law. Similarly, as the Jewish community do not watch television, the television points/sockets in the living room and been covered with a plastic panel. In one of the homes, the lady whom I talked to said that the living room would only be used on the Sabbath and they would live in the dining room and kitchen for the rest of the week. The boilers fitted within these

properties although not specific to the Jewish community, they are special boilers which are a combination of a combi boiler and a tank which are suitable for homes which need a constant supply of hot water.

The addition of the Succahs at the rear of the properties are an additional feature which the families themselves have paid extra for. Not only do they meet religious needs but also provide an extra living space however, they reduce the size of the garden dramatically. The succah is used for 'sleeping under the stars' and resembles the time in the wilderness. (A point to make here is that many other Jewish families are now applying to build succahs on their properties and these were included in the redevelopment of Whitehall Road.)

As part of the development, a public play area has been included. This is at the cost of Home Housing but stipulated by Gateshead Council that it must include. At £500 a bench they are quite pricey additions to the development.

Throughout the day, I met with several of the new tenants all Rabbis and their families. Informally, I was able to chat to them and ask them questions. One of the key issues I grasped was that many of them were very unsure when the project consultation began as for a long time no Jewish families have lived on this side of Prince Consort Road. Another to make here is that Hartington Street is just within walking distance of the synagogues. Many of the families were moving here because the houses were much bigger than in the ones they lived now. Many of the families were currently renting and the majority were buying the new properties outright. A few were taking advantage of the shared ownership option. For those who currently own their property, they were either selling it to other Jewish families or preparing it to rent. Many of the Rabbi's felt that if they did not show the example and move to this 'new' part of the area then how could they expect other members of the community to do so.

The builders and site assistants were quite interested in the work I was completing. However, they lacked any understanding of the Jewish community at all. The council prepare their staff who come into contact with the Jewish community and I think the builders would have appreciated this same training. For example, the day previous to my visit, one of the decorators had offered Rabbi Oppenheimer a sweet and he had to refuse because they were not kosher. The

decorator said this made him feel embarrassed as he did not realise that all food had to be kosher and felt guilty for placing the Rabbi in a compromising position.