Council Estate Discourses:

a critical discourse analysis of media and residents.

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ABSTRACT

The history of council estates, in England, to date spans 100 years. Over this period the societal attitude relating to housing tenure has changed to one which regards home ownership as the norm. Council housing, or social housing as it is now known, once seen as for the respectable working class, has become the place where people with the most social need are housed. This in turn has altered opinions about the residents living on the estates. This thesis, using Critical Discourse Analysis as a methodology, traces the history of working class housing and the political policies that have informed the way it has developed. In addition, collection of discourses, through research and through interviews with people who now live on council estates, has enabled a representation of how people living on the council estates are viewed. Cheltenham in Gloucestershire has been used as a case study area for the purposes of the research and has been compared with the national situation. The harsh reality of the housing crisis existing at the time of completion of this thesis (2018) and the views of current politicians, both local and national, along with the results of this research has informed a summary of the future of how working class housing might progress.

DECLARATION

I Bernice Thomson hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This thesis is based on the discourses surrounding council estates and how these are both influenced by and influence attitudes towards those people who are residents on such estates. The most important element of the research is ordinary people; particularly the poorest members of society who, because of their situation, are most dependent on housing provided by the state and are more likely to have complex needs.

My choice of subject for the research was informed, in the main, by my lifelong interest in the working-classes in the United Kingdom. This interest has been, from the beginning, concerned with the power that the state, the ruling and moneyed classes, exerts over poorer people who rely on others to provide for their basic needs such as shelter or financial support, whether this be through providing employment or through welfare benefits. The lack of power that poorer people experience often results in discrimination and this discrimination is often perpetuated by the causes and effects of political policies, legislation and attitudes expressed by individuals and popular media.

Housing was chosen as the main focus of the research because the type of housing lived in has always provided an indication of financial means. The size of house, the number of rooms, the amount of land surrounding it as well as who owns the property are all things that indicate the affluence and position in society of the people who live there. In other words, property, or lack of it, says a lot about people's financial situation. An attitude that home ownership is the preferred option has been emphasized in the United Kingdom since the *1980 Housing Act* which promoted the concept of home ownership as the standard tenure thus weakening the status of other tenures. What this research highlights is that housing of people who cannot afford their own homes is a significant issue existing in the second decade of the 21st century. The history of council housing provided in Chapter 3 and Chapter 5 illustrates how council housing, originally envisaged as the

answer to housing the working classes, has declined significantly since the 1980s.

The subject of the programme of research arose from an interest in how people who live in housing provided by local authorities are viewed by others and how this can affect their lives through how they are judged and how they may judge themselves. I lived on the Hesters Way council estate, in Cheltenham, for over 20 years and raised my children there. Consequently, I witnessed, first hand, the negative opinions that could persist from people living both inside and outside the estate. I saw how this negativity could affect the confidence and self-esteem of individuals and how this in turn resulted in them limiting their life choices. I heard comments from outsiders making judgmental statements about the estate that assumed that everyone living there was the same. I also had to deal with the way in which these comments affected my own daughters.

I have also worked in community development for over thirty years and it was living in Hesters Way that provided the catalyst for a change in career that finally resulted in me working for Hesters Way Neighbourhood Project between 1997 and 2005. During this period working with residents gave me an insight into the real lives of council estate residents and an understanding of the multiplicity of the issues that residents face either through poverty or through dealing with life issues such as mental ill health, unemployment, drug and alcohol dependency and domestic violence.

Although the issues are not directly addressed in the research it is these that help shape the negativity of people expressing opinions about council estate residents. Indeed, some of those interviewed identified that they had experienced some of these issues. It was this opportunity to understand the problems that negative opinions can have from insiders that decided the subject of the research.

This thesis, however, is not about my personal experiences. My time on the Hesters Way estate was a snapshot within 100 years of council estate history and as such could only ever provide a minor perspective. It did though prompt a starting point and some necessary background knowledge.

None of my own experiences, or those of my family, are included in the research. It has, though, given me an advantage in talking to residents who are aware of my history and have invested trust in my integrity to deal with their stories honestly - and without judgement. The residents' discourses, dealt with in the most part in Chapter 6, demonstrate this trust as many of those interviewed have been very open about their lives and the issues and problems that have brought them to living on council estates. The level of openness displayed by participating residents has given the discourses more depth than originally anticipated. The Ethics Committee process was helpful in ensuring that there was no conflict of interest between my personal perspective and the need to ensure that the research came from a neutral viewpoint.

The research brings together various elements that relate to working people and the role that their housing has played over time. Although council housing is the tenure that determined the title of the thesis it cannot be viewed in isolation as its introduction and subsequent decline has been influenced by the history of working people; the needs of employers and local authorities; significant events such as the world wars; and political theory, ideology and policy. All of these elements along with the discourses that surround them have been taken into account to provide an overall interpretation of the story of council estates.

After World War One local authorities began to provide rented housing as 'homes fit for heroes to live in'. This created a significant increase in the provision of council housing as previous provision had been minimal. Housing as a public service continued to grow until 1980 when the tenants' 'right to buy' scheme was promoted. Although 'right to buy' had been available since council housing was first introduced it was not actively promoted until after the *1980 Housing Act*. Since then the nature of council housing has changed and is now seen as part of the welfare state rather than housing for working people. This is significant as it means that those housed in council or social housing are those most likely to be dependent on the welfare benefit system, for example, as unemployed, low income, lone parents, incapacitated.

Over recent years Britain has experienced the most comprehensive revision of public services and welfare benefits since the introduction of the welfare state in 1945 due to budget cuts at central and local government levels. At the same time policy relating to the provision of council housing is now also changing. It is for this reason that the subject for this research has been chosen as the newspaper discourses of council estate residents and consequent perceptions of the residents themselves have changed over time.

During the period of preparation of this thesis there have been a number of changes to the way in which state housing is provided and to some extent this has shaped the final thesis as it has been impossible to ignore these changes. Housing has been largely ignored by successive governments since the 1980s and has now entered a period of crisis affecting both renters and buyers. With the promotion of 'right to buy' in 1980, by the first Thatcher government, this necessarily changed the way housing has been viewed politically. This has subsequently resulted in the current housing crisis now being seen as a priority by all political parties. This will be discussed in more depth in Chapter 8.

One cause of the housing crisis is that not enough new dwellings are being built and those developments that are proceeding have not included an affordable housing constituent and particularly not social housing. This coupled with houses sold under 'right to buy' has resulted in a reduction in available council housing and subsequent movement from early council provided working class housing which was open to everyone, to social and affordable housing in the 21st century becoming increasingly part of the welfare state. This has culminated in a change in the way in which people outside the council estates view those within them as it becomes increasingly evident that new tenants are those who tend to suffer with the greatest problems. Additionally, this has been perpetuated by media discourses through newspapers and television programmes which have manipulated opinions relating to council estate residents to a negative position. These changes in opinions are central to this research.

The way society in general has formed opinions about council estates and the people who live there has changed as unemployment has risen and with the introduction of the 'right to buy' scheme, which allows council tenants to buy their homes at discounted prices. The resultant effect has been pressures placed on state provided housing. This has increased reliance, by people needing to rent, on private rented housing; it has created a 'buy to rent' environment with housing being used as an investment with housing market prices rising accordingly. The importance that private rented housing now plays in providing homes across a broad range of needs has, unavoidably, been included in the research. This was not anticipated at the start of the research programme, but as will be seen in Chapter 7, the private rented sector is playing an increasing role in providing homes for people who ask local authorities to house them.

House prices, for both rent and sale have risen considerably in recent years. This has subsequently put pressure on all housing provision. This has created what is generally recognised as a housing crisis with not enough houses being built and those that are built being expensive. A result has been an ultimate effect on council tenants and those aspiring to become council tenants as there are fewer and fewer affordable rented and social houses available. Residents participating in this research have identified that their opinions have been affected by these issues. One effect is that they feel they are being viewed as fortunate to have access to affordable housing, in a town where rents are high. Equally though, a second effect is that they are seen as part of a problem that society generally perceives existing on council estates which exist only as housing for people with problems.

One element that this research shows is that the life of council housing has lasted for only 100 years to date and that council housing as we know it is ceasing to exist. It also shows that houses built 'fit for heroes to live in' and those built after World War Two have become capital assets. 'Right to buy' provides the epitome of this, with many properties bought originally by tenants playing a part in the 'buy to rent' market. Statistics included in

Chapter 7 will show how this has decimated the availability of council housing in Cheltenham.

The research also shows that market forces have played a major part in determining not only housing prices but the way in which communities have developed. This can be seen particularly within Cheltenham where wealth and poverty are so polarised; more than in most other towns and cities of a similar size in the United Kingdom. The fact that the average house prices are high and average wages are low adds to this as more and more people are reliant on renting whether as social tenants or private tenants. This element of the research is explored in more depth in Chapter 7.

Council estates, and attitudes towards their residents, have already been the subject of a number of studies. For example, a Joseph Rowntree Foundation study carried out in Stirling, Scotland, in three different types of neighbourhood found that residents were clear about their identity. The study found that negative perceptions about residents were stronger from people living outside the estate to the extent that their perceptions were 'more of a caricature than those held by those who lived there' (Robertson, 2008, p ix). This suggests that perceptions are complex and multi-layered and the basis of discourses may be equally complex and multi layered.

A further study carried out in the London Borough of Camden in 2006 by Paul Watt supports this view and cites a history of distinction between 'roughness' and 'respectability' even within those neighbourhoods equally in decline (Watt, 2006). In a later study Watt uses Critical Discourse Analysis to examine discourses of public housing tenants and examines the hegemonic discourse regarding tenants as the underclass (Watt, 2008). It is this hegemonic discourse that is of particular interest within this study.

Other studies have also compared the different opinions presented by those who live in social housing and those who do not. A study in the Gospel Oak area, in the London Borough of Camden, in 2005, also suggests that it is the authorities providing services within these estates that are most guilty of perpetuating negative images of tenants (Whitley & Prince, 2005). Other studies have found that perceptions of estates from outside are worse than

those from within and that tenants suffer discrimination because of it. (Dean & Hastings 2000; Page, 2000)

These studies, all of which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3, imply that the complexity of how council estate tenants are perceived could be something that is capable of being manipulated in order to create hegemonic thinking. It is likely that perceptions change over time dependent on the dominant group and discourse of the time. For this reason, comparisons between the discourses articulated by residents and those articulated by the newspapers could be of value in establishing if or how people are being disadvantaged by these negative perceptions, especially when mapped on a timeline with policy and practice.

The issues raised in these studies were instrumental in the decision on the subject of this research creating an aim to provide a different perspective on the subject by using Cheltenham for a case study rather than a larger urban conurbation.

1.2 Aims of the research

The first aim of this research was to carry out a study of discourses relating to council estates, particularly those discourses expressed by newspapers and the residents of the estates. The second aim was to assess the relationship between the different discourses including how the residents are affected or disadvantaged by what newspapers are saying. Thirdly, the aim was to identify the implications this may have on residents' lives in relation to current and future social and welfare policy.

The research takes into account the voices of council estate residents as well as the voices of those who have opinions about them. Consequently, interviews and focus groups have been central to the research along with the views expressed in newspapers, other news media, television documentaries and by politicians.

The first objective therefore was to identify discourses articulated by the residents and newspapers using particular council estates in Cheltenham as

a foundation for a case study. These discourses were then compared locally and nationally to establish how Cheltenham compares with national attitudes. It is in Chapter 7 and Chapter 8 that the results of this analysis can be found.

This comparison between local and national developments has also been followed through in relation to historic and current discourses and social policy and practice. This has been carried out with an emphasis on how hegemony and power have influenced both the developments surrounding housing of the working classes and how attitudes towards them have been shaped. Power in its different forms has been identified as a strong influence in determining who can benefit from state housing and where they can be housed. Changes in political policies have influenced attitudes as tenure support has shifted from renting to ownership, although as property prices have risen actual tenure has shifted towards the rented sector as people are unable to afford to buy their own property.

The final objective was to investigate the implications for the future of council housing estate residents in relation to social and housing policy and practice. During the life of this research project there have been a number of changes in policy, which has created challenges whilst also adding an additional element of interest to the research. It has been possible to take account of legislation introduced up until 2016 and additionally recognise new legislation being brought forward during the life of the current government.

1.3 Structure of the thesis

The methodology is described in detail in Chapter 2. The methodology chosen for this research has dictated the way in which the research and the thesis have developed. Using critical discourse analysis as a methodology not only assists in providing the broadest view of council housing (because it relies on a number of different areas of research) it also dictates that the writing should be accessible so that participants in the research are able to understand the results, if they choose to do so. Thus, an effort has been made in this thesis to both meet the stringent academic requirements and

also complete a piece of writing that is at least mostly understandable to non-academics.

Chapters 3 covers the literature review which provides an important contribution to those areas of research, described in chapter 2, which relate to housing and social welfare history as well as the socio-political elements directly associated with the research aims. The literature review is divided into sections which deal with the different needs of the research. Section 3.2 contains the historiographical literature which includes insights into how housing and social welfare have evolved over time. Section 3.3 reviews the sociological literature concentrating particularly on research projects that have dealt with related issues to this research, but also includes comment from recognised housing academic expertise. The chapter also includes recent publications by academics and housing professionals who are striving to provide solutions to the current housing crisis.

The second part of the literature review that concentrates on books which relate more closely to discourses is provided in Chapter 4.

Whilst Chapter 3 outlines a broader national account of housing and social developments, Chapter 5 concentrates on providing a history and background of Cheltenham which was selected as the case study geographic area for my research. This has allowed an insight into the general social history of working and poor people in Cheltenham which is missing in the majority of publications relating to the history of the town.

Chapter 6 concentrates on the discourses collected as data from residents in semi-structured interviews as well as from the local media. This tells the story of how Cheltenham council estate residents view their own situation, are viewed by others and how this affects their lives.

The next, Chapter 7, provides an analysis of the four areas of research, binging together the different aspects of the research to provide a comprehensive evaluation of housing past and present and how this affects the working-classes. This is followed by Chapter 8 which includes an analysis of recent national and local policies, practices and political opinions

that result in an up to date account of the housing situation in England at the time of completion of the research and analysis (August 2018). The chapter includes an interview with the Cheltenham Borough Council Cabinet Member for Housing and also the results of a focus group convened to respond to comments made by said cabinet member. This chapter also provides my view, based on this research, of how the future of housing is likely to progress in, particularly, Cheltenham.

1.4 Conclusion

This chapter has provided the context for the research which in turn delivers a unique contribution to a historical and current exploration of working-class housing in England. By using both local and national material the thesis consequently contributes to knowledge within the national frame of reference.

Additionally, the evaluation of Cheltenham's similarities with other areas of the United Kingdom together with an examination of the town's unique identity has enabled the provision of a local case study, which both differs significantly from previous studies on the subject and places this research within a national context.

The unique way in which Cheltenham has developed over the past 300 years will be explored in depth in Chapter 5. This provides a multi-faceted illustration of council housing and how Cheltenham's response to housing working class people compares with the national response.

The following chapter addresses the methodology used for the research. The unorthodox placing of the methodology before the literature review is to enable setting the context for the choice of the four areas of research employed in the study.

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

2.1 Introduction

This chapter sets out the methodology used for the research and includes the rationale for the choice of the specific type of methodology within the wider Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) family of methodologies. The chapter explains how it is the multi-disciplinary aspect of CDA that determined the choice of this methodology. It was also important to the research that one aim of the chosen form of CDA has an expectation that the research be accessible to the people participating in the research.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) has been used as a methodology for this research because it explores the relationship between discursive practices and wider societal practices. That is to say the relationship between what is being done, such as the introduction of government policies, and what is being said about it. In effect the methodology has allowed for the research to look at what happened, how it happened, why it happened and what people said about it.

The Critical Discourse Analysis approach is based on the concept of power and in relation to this research the way in which the views of those in power are articulated via newspapers and consequently create opinions that become accepted as 'common knowledge' quite often negatively affecting those in society least able to resist. This is because in any society there is a dominant discourse which defines the 'norm'. (Foucault, 2000) This taken in context with the Dialectical-Relational Approach to Critical Discourse Analysis used in this research leads to the Gramscian theories on hegemony and the idea that power can be maintained by creating a dominant belief, but that this can be undermined by other groups through discourse and ideology. (Fairclough, 2010)

Critical Discourse Analysis is a multidisciplinary approach that is used in the social sciences. In critical discourse analysis terms discourse is not simply written or spoken data, it is the act of communication involving both the production of and understanding of spoken and written texts. There are a number of different proponents of critical discourse analysis and for the

purposes of this research it is Norman Fairclough's Dialectical-Relational Approach that has been used as it explores the relationship between discursive practices and wider societal practices (Fairclough, 2010).

The Dialectical-Relational Approach draws on the theories of Karl Marx, Michael Halliday and Michel Foucault, particularly where these relate to power. Power is central to this methodology and has been explored in the context of this research in how power influences and has influenced over time where and how the working classes have been housed.

Using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as the analysis tool for this research has determined the data required. This is because the Cheltenham Case Study, a central aspect of the research, is required to reflect not only what has happened historically to contribute to Cheltenham's response to housing the poor but also to explain why this happened and the effects that wider policies and power structures have had on how Cheltenham has housed its poor and working classes. This then provides a perspective on what might be the future of social housing. This decision also established the range of data to be used for the research.

The research has been developed around this decision to use Critical Discourse Analysis as a methodology. As outlined below this has resulted in four separate areas of research being brought together to contribute to this thesis. This has then been analysed to address the research questions. What the research aims to highlight is the complete picture of state provided housing. The research has provided an overall view of what happened, why it happened, how it happened and what has been said about it. . Analysis is provided in Chapter 7 and Chapter 8 summarises the analysis and sets out the implications on the future for social housing and the residents.

2.2 Critical Discourse Analysis

The decision to use Critical Discourse Analysis is because the research aims make an assumption that the discourses being studied do not exist independently of the wider societal structures that surround them. These

societal structures are the political, economic and social events and institutions that shape society. Of interest to the research is where these societal structures relate to changes to social policy that affect people's lives and particularly where these result from the power of one group over another.

Critical Discourse Analysis is the right methodology for this research because it explores the relationship between discursive practices and wider societal practices. That is to say, the relationship between what is being done, such as the introduction of government policies, and what is being said about it, such as by politicians or in the media and also how this may affect what happens in the future (Titscher, 2000).

In terms of this research the thesis is about the relationship between the development and progression of council estates and the residents and what is said about them over time, both by popular media and by politicians and the residents themselves. It is also about the ideologies and policies that have informed these developments.

One of my research objectives is to investigate the extent to which local and broader findings have been influenced by hegemonic discourses and how local discourses, of media and of residents, compare with the broader situation. Critical Discourse Analysis allows the exploration of whether such media discourses both create and perpetuate negative images and can therefore be used to assess how residents' views may be shaped by what the media is saying about them, which is explored in this research through both semi-structured interviews and focus groups.

The term discourse has a number of different meanings and it is important to understand the meaning of discourse in relation to critical discourse analysis. In its original meaning discourse is simply a verbal interchange of ideas. Discourse analysis itself is directed towards the micro level considering such things as the text's structure and syntax. Critical Discourse Analysis, whilst covering some micro level analysis also has meanings at a more macro level. Macro analysis concerns itself with how the text can be read to understand broad societal practices and values. That is to say, it

considers the ways in which discourse can bring about different power structures and ideologies. Macro discourse analysis goes beyond the words to the 'hidden' meaning.

Critical Discourse Analysis can be described using a proliferation of terms and methods and is therefore generally accepted by its proponents as a methodology rather than a method. (Wodak and Meyer, 2009) It is a methodology with a number of different approaches and it is primarily based on theory. I use the term methodology both because it describes the critical attitude used throughout the study and because Critical Discourse Analysis requires a collection of research methods or tools in order to use it effectively. This will be described more fully later in this chapter and demonstrated in Chapter 7 which contains analysis of the four research areas.

As said earlier, Critical Discourse Analysis is a multidisciplinary approach that is used in social sciences. It is not in itself a method of discourse analysis. It combines discourse studies, the humanities and social sciences to produce insights into the way discourse reproduces or resists social and political inequality, power abuse or domination of one group over another. In this case this relates to whether council estate residents or those who aspire to become residents are influenced by or affected by both political discourses and what is said elsewhere about them, in newspapers or other news media, or by other ordinary people.

Critical Discourse Analysis is the most suitable methodology for the purpose of this research as the research will examine how the discourses of council estates, as articulated by residents and popular media, may be assisting in the (re)production or resistance of political or social inequalities or abuses of power. Critical Discourse Analysis is concerned with the way in which discourses can create and perpetuate inequalities and injustice especially as those in power can use such discourses against the weaker or more disadvantaged sections of society. In the case of this research, that is those people who rely on the state to provide housing for them, who are amongst the most vulnerable members of society.

It is for this reason, and for the purposes of this research, that it is not enough to understand the development of housing and social policy. It is also necessary to understand the power relationships between those providing housing and those benefitting from it. Understanding the motivation of governments when providing benefits for poorer members of society is equally important. For example, providing more services and benefits at times when the working classes are stronger and providing less when the working classes are weaker and therefore do not offer a threat to the status quo. The relationship between the history of housing the poor and working classes and political and economic influences contributes to understanding the power relationships between those who provide housing and those who housing is provided for.

In Critical Discourse Analysis terms discourse is not simply written or spoken data it is the whole act of communication involving both the production of and comprehension of spoken and written texts. It is the element of comprehension that mostly concerns discourse analysis which says that the process of creating meaning is a two-way process with the messages of the spoken or written text trying to shape the reader's understanding, the encoding, while the values and beliefs of the reader interprets the text in ways that fit with those values and beliefs, the decoding. In other words, the meaning intended by the message's author may be different to the meaning as interpreted by the reader. This can also result in, for example, a newspaper shaping the message to suit the target audience (See Fig.2.1).

Critical Discourse Analysis takes this one step further by exploring the relationship between these discursive practices and wider societal practices and how these may have a two-way relationship. An example could be: the media sends out a message reporting something that the government plans to do; the reader decodes the message in line with their own beliefs and values and this does not agree with the government's intentions; the media adjusts the message to be more palatable to the readers; because readers are voters the Government responds to voters' opinions; the message or the policy changes.
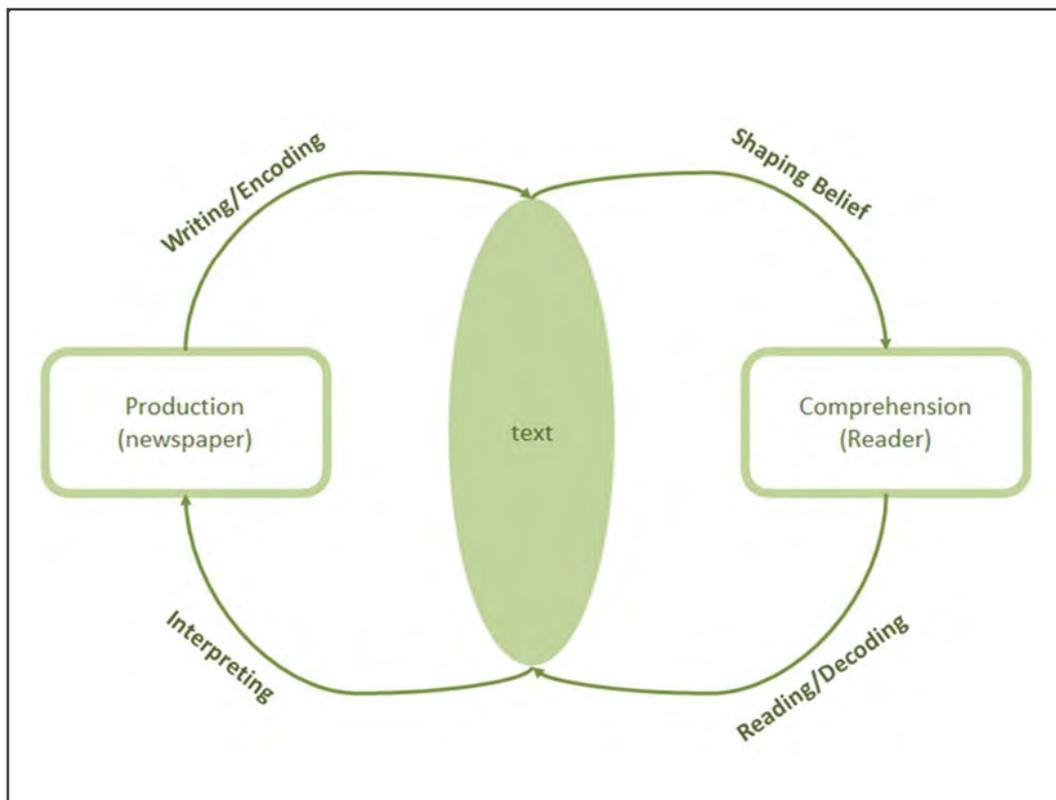
Fig. 2.1 the two way process of discourse analysis

Adapted from Wodak and Meyer (2009)

Critical Discourse Analysis is a methodology with a number of different approaches and it is primarily based on theory. These Critical Discourse Analysis approaches, based on different theories, cover a variety of theoretical concepts and research strategies. Wodak and Meyer (2009) provide an explanation of the way in which this variety of theories and research strategies interact. They explain the different research strategies and the main theories that relate to them. Their diagrammatic explanation is reproduced as Fig. 2.2. The illustration demonstrates how different approaches are informed by different theories and how there is cross over between some of the approaches, with, for example, Foucault's theories informing both Dispositive Analysis and the Dialectical-Relational Approach. Because the research requires a more deductive, general approach, rather than an inductive detailed approach it was the sociocognitive approach and

the dialectical-relational approach that were considered for use for this research.
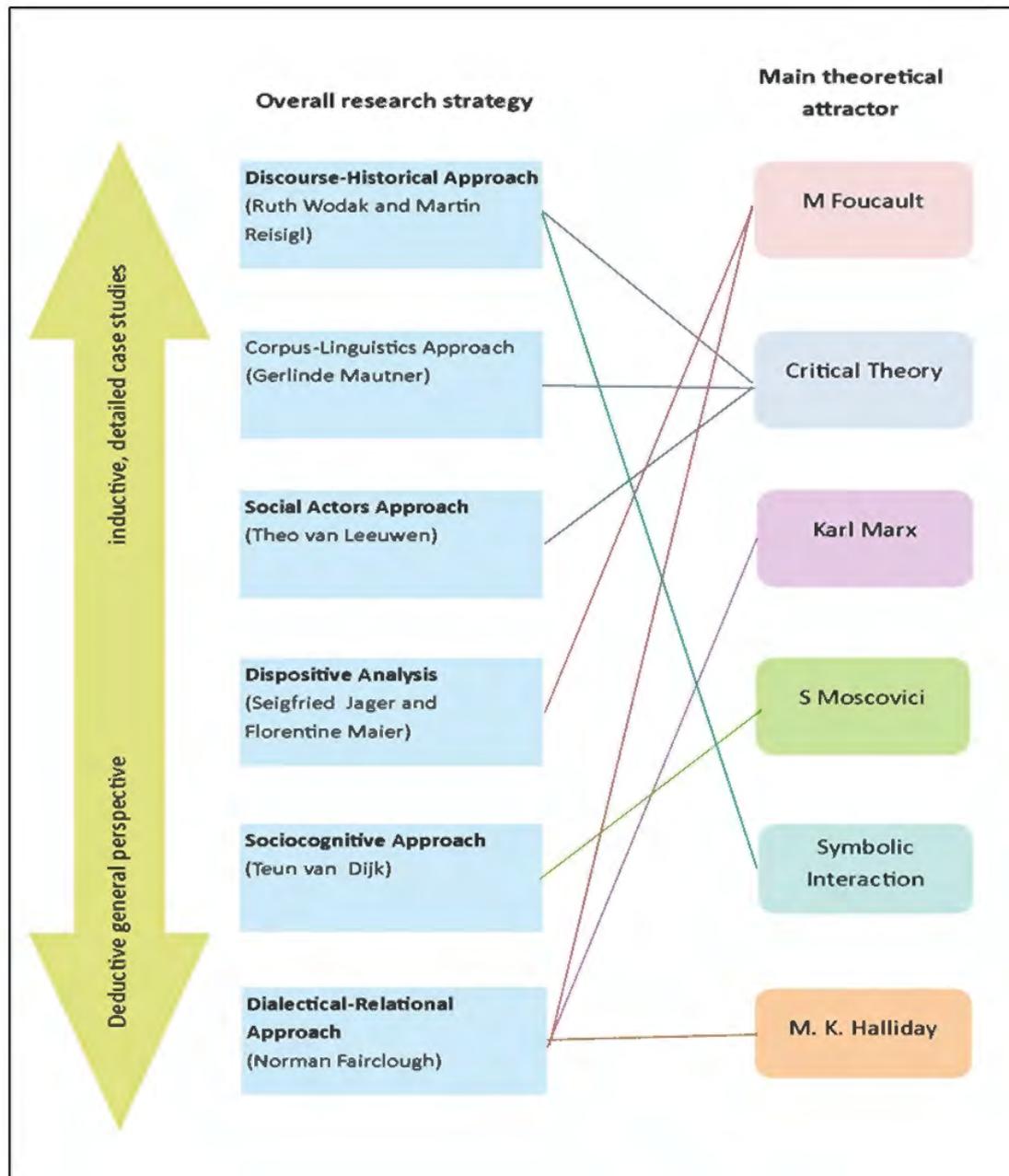
Fig 2.2. Research Strategies and Theoretical Backgrounds

From Wodak and Meyer (2009)

2.2.1 The Sociocognitive Approach

Teun van Dijk's sociocognitive approach says that discourses 'take place within society, and can only be understood in the interplay of social situation, action, actor and societal structure' (Wodak and Meyer, 2009, p26). This approach draws on the theories of Serge Moscovici whose social representation theory (Moscovici, 1994) suggests that people do not only rely on their own strategies and experiences they also rely on a collective, shared perception or social representation. These shared perceptions provide a link between a broader social system and an individual's cognitive system.

Van Dijk (2009) prefers to use the term Critical Discourse Studies (CDS) rather than Critical Discourse Analysis as he feels that the use of the word analysis implies that a critical approach is a method of discourse analysis whereas the term discourse studies implies, in his opinion, a multidisciplinary field of activities that have a number of different methods and types of analysis. He goes on to say that 'Critical Discourse Studies characterises scholars rather than their methods: Critical Discourse Studies scholars are socio-politically committed to social equality and justice' (van Dijk, 2009, p63). Critical Discourse Studies to van Dijk is not simply any political or social research because it is based on the argument that some forms of text may be unjust. He says that Critical Discourse Studies 'should formulate the norms that define such discursive injustice and expose and help to combat injustice' (p63). It is certainly this interpretation that has informed my research.

For van Dijk Critical Discourse Studies has three properties: Firstly, that they aim to analyse and therefore contribute to understanding social problems which are usually exacerbated by public discourses leading to social abuse of power and resulting social inequalities; secondly, that the analysis should be conducted within societal norms defined by international human rights in order to allow critical assessment of abusive practices which in turn could provide guidelines for practical interventions to counter illegal domination;

thirdly, that the analysis should take into account the interests and potential input of the victims of injustice and its consequences.

Although van Dijk labels his approach sociocognitive he is clear that this should not mean that all Critical Discourse Studies /Critical Discourse Analysis should be limited purely to social or cognitive dimensions only that at this point in time these are the aspects that are of particular interest to him in that he provides a 'fascinating sociocognitive interface of discourse, that is, the relations between mind, discursive interaction and society' (p65). An example of this is in some of his work on racism. For example, in *Racism and the Press* van Dijk explores the interdisciplinary study of ethnicity and press coverage, looking at ways in which ethnic minorities are portrayed in the press and how this shapes the view of the white consensus concerning non-white ethnic groups (van Dijk,1991). In some of his work on racism he has demonstrated that racism is both a mental and social phenomenon although he acknowledges that such problems also need, for example, historical, socio-economic and philosophical approaches as well (van Dijk ,2009). This idea is replicated in my work on the relationship between newspaper discourses and the opinions they produce that affect the lives of council estate residents.

Van Dijk outlines the Sociocognitive approach to Critical Discourse Studies /Critical Discourse Analysis as the discourse – cognition – society triangle. Within this triangle: discourse is a communicative event, for example oral, texts, non-verbal, etc.; cognition is about personal beliefs, goals, values, emotion, etc.; and society encompasses micro (local) structures and macro (universal) structures.

In van Dijk (2008) he explains that the role of the context model is to mediate between discourse structures and social structures because the only way in which society and discourse can relate is through personal and social cognition. The context models exist and stay in people's long-term memory or that part of their mind where they save their knowledge and views about the events they experience. Discourses can only be put in context when social situations and individual views, beliefs and values come together. So,

in terms of council estates this applies when housing needs are compared with housing availability and when the state through political and media discourses shape the view that that this is not something caused by government. When this idea is accepted it becomes the norm within the wider society.

In terms of this research it is possible to use the sociocognitive approach to research the social structures and situations that have developed since the building of council estates, alongside the beliefs and views of the residents, in order to make sense of the discourses that exist around them. It is certainly the case that Van Dijk's use of the term critical discourse studies rather than critical discourse analysis better fits this research.

2.2.2 The Dialectical-Relational Approach

In contrast to van Dijk's approach, the Dialectical-Relational Approach is the methodology developed by Norman Fairclough. Fairclough generally on Critical Discourse Analysis says:

It is not just analysis of discourse; it is part of some form of transdisciplinary analysis of relations between discourse and other elements of the social process.

> It is not just general commentary or discourse; it includes some form of systematic analysis of texts.
> It is not just descriptive; it is also normative. It addresses social wrongs in their discursive aspects and possible ways of righting or mitigating them. (Fairclough, 2010, p11)

He writes that he wants Critical Discourse Analysis to be 'loose enough to encompass and allow for many different existing and new versions' (p11). As such Critical Discourse Analysis provides a flexible methodology that allows different disciplines to contribute to an overall representation of the subject of the research.

Fairclough's Dialectical-Relational Approach makes the assumption that every social practice has a semiotic element. Fairclough (2010) states that it

is important to understand this semiotic element as it is this which creates the difference between mere words and discourse. Semiotics is the study of cultural sign processes. Its relationship to linguistics is where linguistics studies the meaning and structure of language in terms of its metaphor, signification, analogy and communication. Or, in other words, language's role in the process of producing cultural signs and symbols. Fairclough's understanding of CDA is as an analysis of the dialectical relations between semiosis (texts) and other social practices.

The Dialectical-Relational Approach draws on the specific linguistic theory of Systemic Functional Linguistics explained by Suzanne Eggins (2004) as an approach which analyses language as shaped by the social functions. It was initially developed in the 1960s by Michael Halliday. Halliday claims that languages have three functions, which he terms meta-functions which leads to a definition of Systemic Functional Linguistics presenting three main theoretical claims about language: firstly that language is functional and that its function has meaning, it interprets experience; secondly that these meanings are influenced by the cultural and social context in which they are exchanged and relate to social or interpersonal relations; and thirdly that the process of using language is a semiotic process which brings together the first two to create text. (Halliday, 2004). Eggins (2004) summarises this by saying that, because language use is functional, semantic, contextual and semiotic, it can be 'summarised by describing the systemic approach as a functional semantic approach to language' (p3).

Halliday suggests that the grammar of language is a system of options and people select their options dependent on their social circumstance. That is to say, 'By their everyday acts of meaning, people act out the social structure affirming their own statuses and roles, and establishing and transmitting the shared systems of values and knowledge' (Halliday, 1978: 2). Fairclough (2010) suggest that, if this is the case, it follows that the study of verbal interactions must be carried out in relation to social structures. His use of the term critical relates to being able to use the critique to show the interconnectedness of the cause and effect on social structures and also to his commitment to dialectical methods and theories which rely on the use of

reasoned arguments within the discourse in order to establish the truth. This means that nothing is accepted without questioning and all aspects of the results must be examined. From this perspective the truth is more than that which may appear on the surface. If this is the case it follows that the experiences of people living in Cheltenham will be different to the experience of people living elsewhere.

Other theoretical influences on Fairclough's Dialectical-Relational Approach to Critical Discourse Analysis are those of Marxism and Foucault. In the case of Foucault it is both his early work on discourses (Foucault, 1972) and his later work, where he proposes that discourse is secondary to power, (Foucault, 1979) that have influenced Fairclough's approach. Also relevant to Fairclough's approach is Foucault's post-structuralist approach to documentary evidence. Post structuralism situates the reader rather than the author as the primary subject of inquiry and this allows for the examination of sources of meaning other than that of the author, such as cultural norms, the reader's own beliefs or other literature (Foucault, 1979).

Marxism influences Fairclough's third dimension in his three-dimensional framework, that of discourse as social practice (explained in 2.2.3). He draws on the twentieth century Marxism of Antonio Gramsci and Louis Althusser to discuss discourse and its relationship to power and ideology, particularly where discourse contributes to power as hegemony.

Fairclough (2010) highlights the need to bring ideology back into consideration when carrying out research. He claims that over the past 25 years ideology has been largely ignored by social researchers. He also states that there is a correlation between this decline and the reduction in social class being used as a theme for research. His belief is that a capitalist society is by its very nature a class society. Fairclough's view is that even though class relations and structures have changed there should still be recognition given to Britain being a class-based society. He also says that this means that ideologies are equally important because they provide the processes and representations through which power relations are established, enacted, changed and maintained. This, he says, is important

but must also be used in context with other power relations such as those that exist between other groupings like men/women; different ethnic groups; different ages, etc. He suggests that ideologies or beliefs, attitudes, perspectives, etc. should not be judged in isolation or without reference to the power relationships that exist between different groups and that the analysis of texts cannot be carried out effectively except in parallel with social analysis. In other words, texts do not exist in isolation from the external forces that may have influenced them, whether this is from the media or the individual. This element of Fairclough's approach helped inform the way that my own research was carried out.

In line with the Dialectical-Relational Approach of Fairclough the research is based on a supposition that power plays the major part in the provision of both welfare and housing in the United Kingdom, and particularly on the attitudes towards social housing tenants and the discourses that surround them. Gramsci's theories on cultural hegemony are probably the most relevant. Gramsci (1992) advocates that it is possible for the ruling class to manipulate the values, principles and standards of a society to the extent that their view becomes the norm. He also proposes that this results in a circumstance of the ruling class controlling its subjects by exercising power through consent because they, the subjects, will feel they have some control over their lives even when they do not. This suggests that common discourses, such as those in newspapers and television, which consistently put forward a particular point of view, can be accepted as the norm. In terms of this research discourses which portray social housing tenants as feckless, work-shy or benefit-dependent could consequently influence the views of tenants and the wider population. This presents a situation where council estate residents start to accept what others say about them and this could contribute to the way they start to feel about themselves. This fits with the view of Althusser when he writes that values and preferences are instilled in us by ideological practice and that social practices can determine the characteristics of an individual giving them a sense of their own limitations or their 'place' in society. In advancing the argument Althusser (2014) claims that a person's capacity for the way they develop their perception of

themselves, who and what they are, is acquired within the structure of social practices that surround them and that this imposes the role of 'subject' upon them. In other words, their beliefs and thoughts are shaped by social structures. In this Althusser disagrees with the generally held view that within a capitalist society an individual is responsible for their own actions which are shaped by their own beliefs and thoughts. Althusser labels these social structures as 'Ideological State Apparatuses' (Althusser, 2014)

This concept of state power and the influence it can have on people's lives is supported by Pierre Bourdieu's theory that social agents are able to legitimise aspects of domination in order to perpetuate social hierarchies (Bourdieu, 2000). His definition of domination includes prejudices. His theories of power could be used to underpin the concept that the perpetuation of negative perceptions about people living on council estates can be legitimised by society in order to reproduce and consequently continue social structures of domination. In other words, those in power would not allow true social mobility because it is not in their interest to do so, as it would upset the social hierarchies that already exist. Bourdieu's theories provide a means to interpret how neighbourhood identity and attitudes to different sections of society can be based on a combination of Karl Marx's concept s of economic, social and cultural capital because Bourdieu suggests class structures are multi-dimensional and are not simply defined by the categories of working, middle and upper classes.

Foucault (2000) also puts forward the theory that beliefs or understandings can gain momentum to the extent that they become accepted as societal norm. He particularly stresses the 'gaze' of the powerful onto the powerless, which was his way of defining the means by which those in power exert social control over the powerless, which in turn perpetuates hegemony.

It is this element of the dialectical-relational approach, in particular, that fits with the aims and objectives of this research as the relationship, or the cause and effect, between the situation of council housing estates and the discourses surrounding them are central to this research.

Fairclough (2010b) claims that any given discourse can be considered as active in relation to reality and he goes on to identify three characteristics of a discourse to describe how it operates within social life as part of action. The three characteristics are: genres, or ways of acting, with examples such as political speeches, church sermons, television interviews or newspaper reports; discourses, or ways of representing; and styles, or ways of being. Genres are important because they provide a framework for an audience to understand the discourse. They can also be seen to manipulate an audience whose expectations are already shaped by the genre type. For example, the choice of regular readership of a particular daily newspaper might indicate a particular political, cultural or social way of thinking. Consequently, discourse genres can provide a condition for resistance, domination or power dependent on what your position is within a discourse. Discourses apply to the way in which similar 'things' can take on different positions and perspectives dependent on the way in which they are represented. Again, different newspapers may report the same story in different ways and consequently produce different discourses. Styles relate to the way discourses can be made to create a sense of identity or how identification can be located by its manner and how it is implied (Fairclough, 2010b).

These characteristics can be related to this research because in order to investigate the levels at which the discourses of residents of council estates may be affected by media discourses it is important to ascertain which media genres are accessed by the individual residents. Additionally important is to identify the relationship between the different discourses of the various genres and how these compare with the discourses of the residents. For instance, which newspapers do they read and which television programmes do they watch? Or do they receive their information indirectly from other residents? Do the residents' discourses directly relate to how and where they access their news and information? Analysis of the perspectives and positions regarding council estate residents as represented by the different and varied media on the one hand and the residents themselves on the other hand is central to the research aims and objectives.

For Fairclough, discourse is a way of being/doing and also a way of understanding or interpreting. The dialectical-relational approach therefore demonstrates three analytical elements of study: production, form and reception. This refers to how the 'audience' accesses, comprehends and uses and/or resists information or discourses and how subsequently this has a social effect created by the discourse's influence on political and/or cultural concerns.

Fairclough identifies four steps to his methodology: firstly, to focus on social wrongs; secondly, to identify obstacles that may stop the wrong being addressed; thirdly, to consider whether the social wrong is important to the social order; and finally, to identify ways to overcome the obstacles.

The research mirrors Fairclough's approach. In this case, the 'audience' consists of the residents, while the study attempts to determine the societal impact of popular media discourses by analysing the kinds of discourses which are articulated by the residents themselves. The approach works equally well when mapping the correspondences between the historical social and housing policies with the social, economic and political situations at the time.

For these reasons it was decided to use the dialectical-relational approach for the research.

2.2.3 Application of Critical Discourse Analysis for this Research

Fairclough has developed a three-dimensional framework for studying discourse where the aim is to map three separate forms of analysis onto one another (Fairclough, 2010; Fairclough, 2001).

The first of these is analysis of spoken or written language texts using micro-level interpretation to study the text's syntax, metaphoric structure and rhetorical devices.

The second is the analysis of discursive practices, the processes of text production, distribution and interpretation using meso-level interpretation to

study the text's production and consumption, focusing on how power relationships are enacted.

The third and last of these is the analysis of discursive events as instances of sociocultural practice using macro level analysis to study inter-textual understanding, trying to understand the broad, societal currents that are affecting the text being studied (see Fig. 2.3, below).

Norman Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Framework			
Analysis of:	Interpretation Level	Studying	This Research
Spoken or written language <u>texts.</u>	Micro	Syntax, metaphoric structure and rhetorical devices of the text.	Reading Newspapers. Watching Television. Interviewing Residents. Analysis.
Discursive Practices: the process of text production, distribution and interpretation.	Meso	Production and consumption of the text, focusing on how power relations are enacted.	Studying how the discourses are created and what is shaping/ influencing them. The role that power plays.
Discursive events as instances of sociocultural practice.	Macro	Inter-textual understanding or how societal currents are affecting texts.	Study of Sociological influences and historical events that play a part in shaping the discourses.

Fig. 2.3 Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional framework with relationship to this research. Adapted from Fairclough, 2010

For the purposes of this research the methods used are: on the micro level the reading of newspapers, watching television and interviewing residents and then analysing and comparing what is being said; on the meso level a study of how the discourses are created and what may be influencing or shaping them; and on the macro level a study of the sociological influences and historical events that may play a part in shaping the discourses.

This research requires data collection across three disciplines: discourse studies; the humanities; and social sciences - with the three strands being brought together to analyse what has happened in the past on council estates, what is happening now and the implications of this for the future.

2.3 Four Data-Sets or Areas of Research

This need to collect data across different disciplines produces in Fairclough's language four different data-sets. These four data-sets relate to the cause and effect of housing policy: what happened to influence state intervention; why the intervention happened; how it happened; and what was said about it (See Fig 2.4). For the purpose of this research the term areas of research has been used as it more accurately describes the way in which the 'data-sets' have developed.
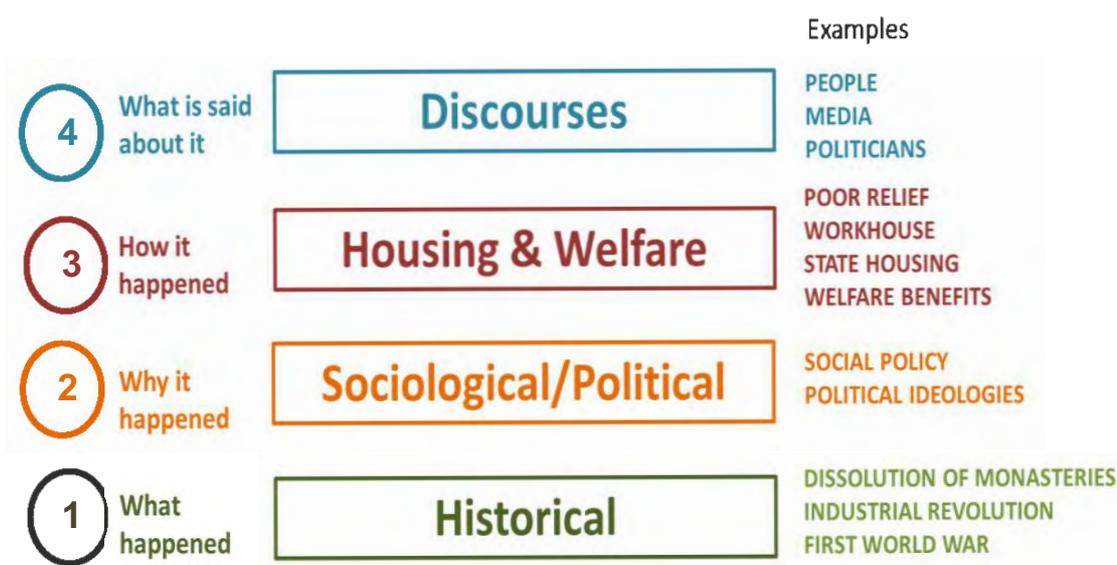
Fig. 2.4 The four data-sets/areas of research

The first of these is a study of historical data, the second requires analysis of sociological and political influences and ideologies, the third investigates housing and welfare policies and how these were influenced and the last uses discourse studies to analyse what was and is said about the policies and the people affected by them. Fig. 2.4 illustrates that these provide layers of understanding that combine to create the story of residents (represented by Cheltenham) and the way they feel about themselves.

2.3.1 Historiographical Research

Collection of this research set has required a study of the history of housing the poor and working classes and the relationship between this and the political, economic and social events and policies over time. As will be explained in the literature review this has mostly been achieved through analysis of the literature as well as a study of legislation and local records.

The aim has been to use historiographical data to understand those historical events that have influenced the introduction of social and housing policies. For the purpose of this research the first major event was the Dissolution of the Monasteries, 1536-41. Later examples of historical events include the Industrial Revolution across the 18th and 19th centuries and the two world wars of the 20th century. It also includes those events that led to the decline of United Kingdom manufacturing, during the last three decades of the twentieth century.

The data, in the main, has been provided by a review of the literature as presented in Section 3.2. This review included a review of retrospective history books, local and national newspapers and local council minutes. To provide a different historiographical perspective the second part of the literature review, contained in chapter 4, includes contemporaneous literature, some of it fiction, which contributes to the discourses.

A sample of local newspapers were viewed at the Local History Library in Cheltenham and some through the online British Newspaper Archive. The online archive also gave access to national newspapers. The British

Newspaper Archive provides access to a wide range of historical national and local newspapers, although currently it does not provide much of relevance to this research beyond the first quarter of the 20th Century. More recent historical newspaper texts were viewed through the online Lexis Library.

This area of research has assisted in understanding the political and social responses to historical events.

2.3.2 Sociological and Political Research

The study of sociological data has provided an understanding of why policies came about. This has been achieved by taking the historiographical data and putting it into the context of how governments, local and national, have responded in providing social and housing policies to deal with economic and historical events. This has required a study of social and housing policies over five centuries and a study of the political and economic ideologies predominant at the time.

To achieve this a systematic study of national legislation and local policies was carried out. These have been recorded in a timeline, using the online Tiki Toki tool, that has also been used to record historical events (see Appendix 7 for an example taken from the timeline).

A study of political and economic ideologies provides a clearer understanding of the links between the historical events, discussed in 3.3.1, and the introduction of social and housing policies related to the poor and working classes. These have also been mapped onto the timeline, an example of which is included as Appendix 7.

A study of Acts of Parliament and parliamentary debates was carried out online through government and national archive websites (www.legislation.gov.uk, 2016) and (www.parliament.uk, 2016) . Lists of the Acts of Parliament viewed with a short description of the policy introduced are in Tables 7.1 and 7.2 on pages 172 and 173.

2.3.3 Housing and Welfare Research

The study of housing and welfare has enabled an understanding of how policies were implemented and the effects these have had on people's lives.

This includes a study of how the state has provided dwellings for the poor and working classes. Although this has included recognition of the important role played by charitable and philanthropic provision it is the direct and indirect provision of housing by the state, subsidised through taxation, which has been the main focus of the research.

Timeline

The online tool Tiki Toki was used to manage a timeline of national and local policy. The policy references have been overlaid with two additional levels of information: firstly, I have recorded major national and international historical and political events to enable a study of how these events effect introduction of policy; secondly, I have noted Cheltenham's response to national policy and its own local events.

An example of this timeline is in Appendix 7 and provides a means to compare the different elements of the research and the four data sets. This is achieved by utilising the timeline to illustrate how policies relate to historical milestones. The fourth research area, which covers the discourses, can then be interpreted against specific policies and contributes to providing answers to the research questions.

2.3.4 Discourses

A final level of data analysis is that which is applied to the discourses. The important discourses are those of the residents and the media although the political discourses are also relevant. Mapping political discourses is difficult because history is usually written by those with power. Study of historical newspapers is therefore important to my research as this may be the only way to access what politicians have said.

2.3.4.1 Residents' Discourses

The methods used for collection of the data relating to residents' discourses are semi-structured interviews and focus groups. The importance of these two types of data collection is that they are both directly collecting the views of residents and are focused on their views.

Semi Structured Interviews

There are a number of positives and negatives to the use of semi structured interviews shown below in Table 2.1.

POSITIVES	NEGATIVES
- Using this type of interview is less intrusive than using surveys as it encourages a two-way communication. - Those being interviewed can ask questions of the interviewer. It then becomes a conversation on more equal terms. - The discussion provided by semi structured interviews can often provide not simply the answers but also the reasons for the answers. - Can confirm what is already known. - The one to one approach can mean that individuals interviewed can share more personal experiences than they might in a survey or more structured interview. - Using semi structured interviews alongside focus groups can optimise the use of both. - Additional information can emerge during the interviews that may not occur in a survey or a more formal interview. - The relationship developed can help the participant to accept the confidentiality of the interview.	- The interviewer needs to understand the difference between open ended questions and a focussed interview. - The interview has to provide the data required for the research. - The interviewer must not ask leading questions. - The interviewer must be prepared to ask probing questions. - Questions must be focussed on what the research requires. - Interviewers should avoid leading questions. - Interviewers need to be able to judge the answers in order to ask secondary questions.

Table 2.1 Positives and Negatives of using Semi-Structured Interviews

(author's own interpretation)

Preparing a question matrix to shape the interview was important. Thought was given to potential secondary questions as part of this matrix in order to ensure that participants could give a full answer.

This was important to the research that the residents were able to relate their experience in their own words as far as possible. The use of semi-structured interviews enabled this, but within a framework set by pre-established questions to ensure that the topics of importance to the research were covered. Pilot interviews were carried out with two acquaintances, using the schedule of questions. Both of these are people who have previously lived on council estates. The schedule of questions is contained in Appendix 1.

Different methods were used to recruit interview participants. Firstly, a leaflet containing information about the research, requesting participants, was placed in housing offices where tenants pay their rent and in community centres on council estates where a variety of tenants and residents regularly attend groups. See Appendix 2. Secondly, I visited groups within community centres to discuss my research and asked if people would be prepared to participate. This was the most successful method for recruitment and resulted in eighteen out of the twenty-one finally interviewed.

A summary of participants is included in Table 7.3 on page 175. Names have been anonymised and any other information which could lead to individuals being identified has been excluded or altered without allowing the changes to detract from the residents' 'stories'.

All interview participants were provided with and asked to sign an informed voluntary consent form. This form explained how their identity would remain confidential and any information provided would be used exclusively for this research project. This form can be seen at Appendix 3.

A total of 21 individuals were interviewed. These had a range of experiences of living on council estates: some were council tenants; some owned their own homes due to the 'right to buy' scheme; some had bought ex-council

properties privately. This provided a range of views about the estates and the people living on them.

Interviews were carried out between March 2014 and July 2016. Each interview averaged one hour. All interviews were recorded and then transcribed. An example of transcription can be seen at Appendix 4.

Focus Groups

Whilst the semi-structured interviews asked the participants for their personal experiences, the focus group discussions concentrated more on external influences; on attitudes such as how politicians, newspapers and television programmes portray council estate residents. Five of those individually interviewed agreed to take part in the focus groups (Stella, Gemma, Tracy, Kate and Sophie) with three that were not interviewed also taking part (Ilona, Will and Ellie). A breakdown of the focus group participants is shown in Table 7.4. on page 184.

Focus groups provide a different dimension to the qualitative interview process. Focus group research is about an organised discussion with a selected group of people. It is not a group interview in that it relies on group interaction which is based on a topic provided by the researcher. Kitzinger (1994) makes the argument that it is interaction that is a crucial feature of focus groups because it is that interaction that emphasises their view of the world. This includes how the participants vocalise their beliefs and values and the language they use. This is important because the aim of a focus group is to gain information about the experiences and views of the group on a specified topic. The discussion needs to be focused on that specific topic.

Interview participants were asked if they would be prepared to take part in focus groups to discuss specific issues relating to discourses. Five of the participants agreed to take part and they were joined by three who did not take part in the interviews. They participated in a series of three focus groups to discuss these three questions:

1. How accurate a portrayal do you feel that TV programmes such as *'Benefits Street'* give of people living in social housing? (involved firstly watching some clips of the programme on YouTube)
2. In your experience does the way newspapers report things that happen on the 'council estates' change the way people view those who live in social housing?
3. What is your opinion of David Cameron's views on social housing? (involved firstly reading a section of an article written by David Cameron in *The Sunday Times* 10th January 2016 (Cameron, 2016).

 The following extract from this article was the basis of the discussion for the focus group:

"*There's one issue that brings together many of these social problems – and for me, epitomises both the scale of the challenge we face and the nature of state failure over decades. It's our housing estates. Some of them, especially those built just after the war, are actually entrenching poverty in Britain – isolating and entrapping many of our families and communities. I remember campaigning in London as far back as the 1980s in bleak, high-rise buildings, where some voters lived behind padlocked and chained-up doors. In 2016, for too many places, not enough has changed.*

Of course, within these so-called sink estates, behind front doors, families build warm and welcoming homes. But step outside in the worst estates, and you're confronted by concrete slabs dropped from on high, brutal high-rise towers and dark alleyways that are a gift to criminals and drug dealers. The police often talk about the importance of designing out crime, but these estates actually designed it in. Decades of neglect have led to gangs, ghettos and anti-social behaviour. And poverty has become entrenched, because those who could afford to move have understandably done so.

One of the most concerning aspects of these estates is just how cut-off, self-governing and divorced from the mainstream these communities can become. In some places, there is severe social segregation, and it damages us all when communities simply don't come into contact with one another. And that allows social problems to fester and grow unseen. The riots of 2011

didn't emerge from within terraced streets or low-rise apartment buildings. As spatial analysis of the riots has shown, the rioters came overwhelmingly from these post-war estates. Almost three quarters of those convicted lived within them. That's not a coincidence."

Each focus group was timed to take one hour. Limiting the time for a focus group enables the discussion to be focused on the one subject. It does, however, require tight facilitation allowing the discussion to flow without interruption, but ready to bring the group back to the subject if the discussion drifts. The researcher should intervene only to keep the discussion on subject.

Each focus group discussion was recorded and then transcribed. A sample of transcription is in Appendix 5. Participants signed the informed voluntary consent form and agreed to confidentiality regarding sharing of opinions and personal experiences.

The first three focus groups took place in July 2016 with a further focus group taking place in July 2018 following an interview with the Cheltenham Borough Council Cabinet member for Housing. Each focus group discussion was limited to a maximum 30 minutes. Analysis of the first three focus groups is included in Chapter 7 with the final focus group analysed in Chapter 8.

2.3.4.2 Media Discourses

In this study I have used two methods for the collection of data relating to media discourses. Firstly, I have undertaken a systematic review of national and local newspapers, prioritising those dates on the timeline where major events and/or introduction of relevant legislation have occurred. Secondly, I have reviewed television programmes relating to perceptions of state housing and tenants 2010-2016.

Analysis of Local Newspapers

My research into local newspapers began initially through access to the local history library in Cheltenham. This concerned the reading of local newspapers on microfiche dating back to 1735. During this research, which was very time consuming, I became aware of the British Newspaper Archive and paid to access newspapers online through this service. Currently all newspapers and editions are not included in the online archive, but they are being added to regularly.

Access to historical newspapers has enabled an understanding of Cheltenham's response to early legislation relating to the provision of council housing. It has also provided an insight into the local negative media discourses that circulated particularly during the 1980s and 1990s.

Equally it has given links to other archives such as the importance of accessing Cheltenham Borough Council meeting information. Also access to newspaper archives, which due to their desire to put their information online, has enabled a window to information that might otherwise have been hidden.

Review of National Newspapers

Information from national newspapers was accessed on-line through the British Newspaper Archive and through online newspapers and via Lexis Library. This was not carried out in such a systematic way as the local newspapers. These were sampled based on how the newspapers reacted to major events. Results of the research are discussed further in Chapter 5.

Television

During the period of this research there have been a number of high-profile television reality programmes as a reaction to the changes in welfare benefits. Many of these have been aimed specifically at people in social housing. Benefits Street was an example of this. Such television programmes were sampled for their views and also used to motivate discussion within one of the focus groups.

2.3.4.3 Politicians' Discourses (interpreted from media discourses)

The political discourses were extracted from the newspaper discourses as this was the most accessible source and also from television news reports and current affairs programmes. These are discussed further in Chapter 7.

2.4 Case Study

Whereas survey methodology deals with a breadth of data, case studies are more concerned with depth. Robert Yin (2003) suggests that a researcher using case studies uses multiple sources of evidence and not a single source. This fits with the use of the Critical Discourse Analysis approach. By combining the Cheltenham history with local discourses and then comparing them with the national situation an in-depth case study has been possible, this has then been analysed using Critical Discourse Analysis to show the relationship between what has happened on and around the council estates of Cheltenham and the social structures (of power).

The four areas of research have contributed to a case study of Cheltenham's housing of the poor and working classes and attitudes to those housed by the state in Cheltenham. This has created the story of social housing in Cheltenham and as such has provided something that did not previously exist.

The history of Cheltenham is well documented, particularly post 1716 following the discovery of mineral wells. However, Cheltenham's published history is more about the middle/upper classes rather than that of the working classes.

What the case study, aims to produce is a wider picture – the story of housing the poor and working classes in Cheltenham. This has been made possible by bringing together: local reactions to national legislation; slum clearances; newspaper discourses; residents' discourses.

Cheltenham Local History Society has been particularly useful by providing chronologies on poverty and housing the poor and working classes. Study of

these has contributed to the timeline (Appendix 7). These chronologies have also provided markers towards the study of contemporary media and political discourses.

2.5 Ethical Considerations

There were a number of ethical considerations which had to be addressed at the beginning of the research process. Ethics approval was granted in 2012 by the University of Gloucestershire Ethics Committee.

2.5.1 Ethics relating to interview and focus group participants

All participants taking part in individual interviews or focus groups were made fully aware of the aims and objectives of the research and the reason for it being carried out. Each participant read and signed an informed voluntary consent statement (Appendix 3). The statement informed them that all of their personal details would be anonymised and that they would not be able to be identified by any information contained in the final thesis. Their personal data would be kept in a locked cabinet to which only I had access. I was the only person who was aware of the identity of participants although this information has been made available to the research supervisors if so required. All participants are aged over eighteen years.

When transcribing the interviews and when interview material was used in the thesis participants were given alternative names to their own. Additionally, some of their personal details were altered to avoid them being identified through their stories although these changes were not enough to significantly alter the story. Examples of transcribed interviews and focus groups can be found in Appendix 4 and 5.

2.5.2 Ethics relating to the researcher

One of the ethical considerations discussed with research supervisors and the Ethics Committee was the researcher's employment role as a well-known community development worker in Cheltenham. Also of relevance is that the researcher was a resident on the Hesters Way council estate for over 20 years. This was discussed with interview and focus group participants so that it was understood that the role of researcher and the role of community development worker were separate and that no information gained through interviews would be used for anything other than the research.

That the researcher has personal as well as professional knowledge of Cheltenham's council housing estates and the issue facing the residents did provide an advantage to the researcher as many of the participants were prepared to be very open about some of the issues that they had faced or are still facing.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has rationalised the choice of Critical Discourse Analysis which justifies the collection of the four data sets which have provided a result which contains both breadth and depth of the subject. The depth is represented by the detailed case study of Cheltenham's working class against a backdrop of Cheltenham's more recognised history of wealth and privilege. The breadth is provided by the context of a comparison between the local and national perspective across time and across changing ideologies and policies.

The following two chapters, which contain the literature review, as explained in Chapter 1, provide the structure in which the four areas of research sit. This has been divided into two chapters to separate the publications that contribute to the discourses from those that contribute to the areas of research relating to the historiographical, sociological and political.

Chapter 3   LITERATURE REVIEW part one – the historiographical, sociological and political.

3.1 Introduction

This chapter contributes to three of the areas of research namely: historical; sociological and political; housing and welfare. It focuses, particularly, on the relationship between social and housing policies and the impact of these policies on the provision of housing for the poor and working classes. The chapter starts by providing an overview which includes the literature relating to the development of social policy in Britain between the sixteenth century and the beginning of the twenty first century. For this purpose Karl Marx's definition of the working class has been used which includes those people who traditionally work for a wage and do not have much power or money. In Marxist theory (Marx, 1858/2008) the term working class is synonymous with the proletariat or those people who produce economic value and wealth for those who own the means of production. The working class also includes the unemployed because they have, by definition, had their means of earning a wage taken from them. Consequently, the working class includes the poorest people in society; those people who cannot afford to own their own home and therefore rely on the state to make provision for them.

Ralph Milliband, a Marxist intellectual of the 20th century, adds to this definition claiming that one of the main characteristics of members of the working class is that they 'are the people who, generally, get least of what there is to get' and who have to work hardest for it. He also says that the nature of the working class as the poorest in society results in this class including the unemployed, the destitute and the ageing poor. This means they are those people most likely to require support from the state, particularly in terms of housing (Milliband, 2009).

Although the history of housing from the 16th to the 21st Century is contained within this chapter there has been some concentration on housing post 1980 because the Thatcherite policies which promoted home ownership had an adverse and lasting effect on the way that state housing has since been provided. To complete this section it has been necessary to draw on

both academic and political sources as well as research and comment from organisations existing to promote housing equality.

The review also includes literature relating to broader social policy in order to provide a perception of the way in which housing the working classes can be linked to the provision of poor relief or welfare benefits. Identifying this is important for the research to assist in assessing whether past legislation can provide an insight into possible future legislation. This has become even more important as the relationship between welfare benefits and housing has had increasing prominence in legislation introduced since 2010. Additionally, pressure on housing supply into the 21st Century has relevance to the future of social housing. The most recent legislation of the 21st Century shows recognition of the importance that housing has acquired in the second decade of the 21st Century as there is increased recognition, by all political parties, that Britain has a housing crisis and that government action is required to address it. Equally, housing and social policy legislation has had a significant effect on people living or aspiring to live on council estates. The nature of the research has meant that awareness of the continued changes to government policies during the life of the research programme has had increasing importance and a continuous responsiveness to current literature has been necessary.

Also explored in this literature review is the relationship between social policy and the economy as it relates to housing in Britain. This is of importance to the research as the relationship between industrial developments and housing needs are discussed in Chapter 5. Additionally, of consequence, is how the history of housing policy and practice demonstrates links between the economy and housing with social policy often informed by economic need and by whether or not home ownership is the predominant trend.

The literature review explores the ideologies that inform both the implementation and interpretation of social policy. Finally, it assesses recent research relating to tenants and attitudes towards them in a current society where benefit dependency is seen as a negative. It does this by reviewing

some of the recent studies that relate to this research, with a particular emphasis on research carried out on council estates. This section also includes recent projects dealing with the current housing crisis and the future of providing affordable housing. Additionally, recent publications by academics who are striving to provide solutions to the current housing crisis are included. This section is brought up to date through recent publications concentrating on reactions to the current housing crisis.

For the purpose of the research the literature includes books, journal articles, research reports, legislation and council minutes both in print and online and television programmes.

3.2 Historiographical Literature

The amount of literature available that tracks the history of housing and social policy is far ranging and shows developments over six centuries and therefore provides a comprehensive insight into working class housing. This section includes contemporary literature bringing information up to and including the *2016 Housing and Planning Act*. It is important to the research that the background to state-provided housing is understood in order to provide a context for the research. Importantly this section of the literature review provides the majority of the research relating to the historiographical and social/housing policy.

3.2.1 Paradigm Shifts in Welfare

The literature covering 20th century history demonstrates that there have been two paradigm shifts in terms of welfare in Britain within the last century. The first of these followed the introduction of the *1942 Beveridge Report* which led to the implementation of the British Welfare State in 1948. Both Daunton (2007) and Marshall (2006) show that this was based on a social citizenship, collectivist, model where the overall responsibility for the welfare of citizens is with the state. Central to Beveridge's plan was the notion of a national insurance whereby workers contributed to a fund which would

provide, universally, for free health care, education, pensions and housing to those that needed them. Full employment was important to support this welfare state as it relied on a form of income taxation known as national insurance.   The necessary high levels of employment were enabled by governments' financial policies based on the economic model of John Maynard Keynes. In 1936 John Maynard Keynes wrote *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* where he put forward the idea that when times are bad, the government should put money into the economy by spending more and taxing less. This helps the economy grow and creates more jobs. When times are good the government should raise taxes and spend less. This helps prevent inflation and safeguard the status quo.

This economic model was not politically challenged until Margaret Thatcher became Prime Minister in 1979. Thatcherism promised low taxes, less state intervention and lower levels of public spending. This resulted in extensive cuts in welfare. Thus the three Thatcher governments between 1979 and 1990 became synonymous with the idea of 'rolling back the state'. Hills (1998) explains this as meaning that the state became less responsible for its citizens with a new emphasis on self-provision, which also followed the economic model of Milton Friedman and monetarism, outlined in his *Capitalism and Freedom* in 1962 Friedman (1962/2002). This has provided the second paradigm shift. As Lowe (2011) shows, subsequent governments have continued to move towards this notion of individual rights rather than continue with Beveridge's idea of social rights. This has eventually resulted in a change in the methods by which national insurance is used. Where workers contributions once provided insurance for workers when needed they are now increasingly used to provide for those with complex needs or those on low income.

The first of these economic models supported the provision of public housing, because house building provides employment, and also because it promoted the continuation of housing policies that provided decent homes for working people provided by the state (Lowe 2011). However, Thatcherism was quick to change this with the promotion of 'the right to buy' for council housing tenants as part of the *1980 Housing Act*. This is a system

which replaced the previous policy in operation which gave local authorities discretionary powers over the sale of properties. This new policy strengthened the rights of tenants to purchase their properties and it not only reduced the stock of public housing but also helped create a society where individual aspiration was encouraged (Murie, 2016).

This is borne out by Conway (2000) who clarifies the changes to ways government housing subsidies have changed. She says that early subsidies were to councils and other social housing providers to build houses. This changed during the 1980s and 1990s to governments subsidising the cost of using housing in the form of housing benefits. What this meant in effect was that there was a change from subsidising the building of new local authority homes to subsidising individuals to be able to live in existing housing. This contributed to social housing being viewed as part of the welfare benefits system, where previously it had been seen as a means to house working class people. How this change has affected the way in which council estates and their residents are perceived is explored in more depth in Chapter 6.

Although to date there have been no further paradigm shifts, current housing issues indicate the need for government to review ongoing policy relating to social housing. That this is becoming of increasing need is explored further in Chapter 8.

3.2.2 State provision of housing and poor relief

In this section I explore the relationship between housing and welfare in order to provide an understanding of how housing has been and still is an integral part of welfare provision. It is welfare provided through taxation rather than that provided by charities and religious bodies that is of specific interest to this research. This is because council and other social housing is currently provided, either directly or indirectly, by the state. This necessity to explore the links is borne out by the historiographical literature covering those periods prior to the introduction of council housing, with for example, Brundage (2002), Englander (1998) and Rushton and Sigle-Rushton (2009),

signifying that a study of the history of poor relief and welfare demonstrates links between housing and welfare.

Prior to the 20th century benefits were known as poor relief. The term poor relief refers to actions taken by governments, charities or religious bodies to relieve poverty. Modern welfare benefits can be classified as poor relief, with the 2012 *Welfare Reform Act* and the *2016 Welfare Reform and Work Act* being the latest legislation in five hundred years to address poverty issues in Britain. Rushton (2001) and Brundage (2002) show that legislated poor relief can be traced back to the sixteenth century although there are earlier examples of poor relief given by monasteries. Whilst charitable poor relief can be seen as having altruistic motivations, legislated poor relief cannot always demonstrate this. The chronology of historical events and state provided poor relief and housing supplied by Rushton (2001), Brundage (2002) Englander (1998), and Sigle-Rushton (2009) suggest that, although the poor may benefit from poor relief, the motivation for introducing it may be more about benefitting the ruling classes and capitalism.

The above argument is enhanced by Brundage (2002), Englander (1998) and Slack (1988) all of who provide an understanding of how the concept of providing welfare through taxation was first developed in the mid sixteenth century. The stimulus for this was the Dissolution of the Monasteries following the actions of King Henry VIII to remove England from the influence of the Roman Catholic Church. This created consequent issues when food and shelter were no longer provided by the church. They also provide a background of the economic, social and political situations that contributed to this. It was also from this period that the concept of limiting where poor people were permitted to live was introduced as a response to the perceived threat to the ruling classes of poor people wandering the countryside in search of work, food and shelter. This proposition provided by Rushton and Sigle-Rushton (2001) suggests that this perceived threat was the motivation for state intervention in the provision of poor relief. Consequently poor relief largely moved during this period from voluntary or charitable contributions to compulsory payments through taxation, collected through the rates.

Slack (1988), Englander (1998), Rushton and Sigle-Rushton (2001) and Brundage (2002) all outline how the Tudor laws introduced the concept of moving the poor back to where they originated. This particularly referred to the 'undeserving poor', such as vagabonds, beggars and the unemployed; in other words those who were able to work but did not. These laws allowed for punishment for those who did not conform, including the use of stocks, branding, and whipping and, in extreme or persistent cases, death by hanging. There are elements of this legislation that exists to this day where councils only have a statutory duty to house people with a recognised link to their council area.

In Tudor times England faced economic, religious, political and diplomatic problems with an increasing population and high levels of poverty and social disorder. As Brundage (2002) and Rushton (2001) demonstrate, the Tudor solution to these problems culminated in the *1601 Act for the Relief of the Poor.* This legislation is now referred to as the Old Poor Law and it set up the first mandatory system of publicly financed poor relief across England and Wales establishing a basic administrative framework that changed little over the next two centuries.

The Old Poor Law and related legislation created administrative responsibility for poor relief at parish level making parishes responsible for poor relief payments through raising money via the rates. They also made a distinction between 'deserving' and 'undeserving poor' through the way they were provided for and introduced the idea of houses of correction. This culminated in the introduction of the workhouse at the end of the seventeenth Century. The *1662 Act of Settlement* formalised previous laws which required that paupers be sent back to the parish of their origin as that was the parish with responsibility for them. This was because paupers tended to graduate towards parishes which were more generous. This law also introduced the parish register which required that all births, deaths and marriages be recorded. The settlement laws changed in 1795 so that people were not moved back to their parishes if they were not claiming poor relief (Slack, 1988, Englander, 1998, Brundage, 2002).

By 1776 there were 1,912 workhouses across England and Wales housing almost 100,000 people. There were expectations that parishes would earn money from the workhouses by putting the inmates to work, although this did not come to fruition as the majority of inmates were children, the elderly, or the sick and disabled. Workhouses were therefore seen as unprofitable although they provided for a number of social needs such as night shelters, geriatric care and orphanages (Brundage, 2002).

By the end of 18th century and into the 19th century issues of poverty were exacerbated by the Napoleonic Wars and the introduction of the *1815 Corn Laws* aimed at ensuring high prices for British grain producers, but making no concessions for those who could not pay the high prices. Brundage (2002) suggests that one motivation for subsequent legislation was because unemployment and hunger presented a threat of social unrest.

Practices under the Old Poor Law were seen to undermine the natural law of supply and demand because they were helping to hide the fact that a living wage was not being paid and allowing employers to force down wages, making poverty and reliance on poor relief inevitable. Englander (1998) and Boyer (2004) explain these practices as firstly the Roundsman System, where overseers rented out gangs of workers with the overseers taking a proportion of the money made, leaving the individual workers no choice but to have their wages topped up by poor relief. The second of these practices was the Speenhamland System which was a form of outdoor relief which provided a means tested scale of wage supplements in order to stop the worst poverty in rural areas. Both of these practices illustrate how employers were able to benefit from paying low wages with the knowledge that poor relief would provide the deficit. This system finds some resonance in our current system where high numbers of those claiming benefits are in work with their earned income topped up by Universal Credits.

Concerns resulting from such practices contributed to the setting up of a Royal Commission in 1832. The 1832 Commission proposed a few things that were never introduced or were watered down by the time the *Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834,* known as the New Poor Law, was introduced. For

example, the principle of 'less eligibility' which said that paupers should enter the workhouse only to experience worse conditions than those that a free labourer would experience. Also that relief should only be available in the workhouse and that the workhouses should be so uninviting that anyone capable of coping outside the workhouse would choose to do so (Brundage, 2002).

The *Poor Law Amendment Act 1834* was passed by the Liberal government under the leadership of Earl Grey. It replaced earlier legislation based on the 1601 Poor Law with the aim of fundamentally changing the poverty relief system in England and Wales. Laski, (1971) proposes that the New Poor Law was influenced by three different doctrines. The first of these was Malthusianism, informed by Thomas Malthus's *Essay on the Principles of Population*, written in 1798, which said that population growth, unless checked, increased faster than the ability of the country to feed its population. For Malthus this explained the existence of poverty. As a political moralist he opposed the Old Poor law as self-defeating because it removed the pressure of want from the poor while leaving them free to increase their families leading to an unsustainable increase in population (Malthus, 1798/2010). The second was the Iron Law of Wages whish was informed by political economist David Ricardo, a contemporary of Malthus. Ricardo held that aid given to poor workers under the Old Poor Law had the effect of undermining the wages of other workers so that the Roundsman System and the Speenhamland System led employers to reduce wages as they knew their workers' pay would be subsidised through poor relief. Thirdly was Utilitarianism a doctrine informed by Jeremy Bentham, in his *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* published in 1789 (Bentham, 1789/2009). In this he put forward the idea that the success of something could be measured by whether it secured the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people. Commission member Edwin Chadwick supported this doctrine and it was Utilitarianism that mostly underpinned the *1834 Poor Law Amendment Act*.

This was in most part because Chadwick promoted the idea that a central authority was needed to maintain standards and that the poor rate would find

its correct level once the workhouse was seen as a deterrent rather than a safety net, thus resulting in less people claiming poor relief. Bentham's argument that people would always choose the pleasantest option provided a rationale for making poor relief unpleasant so that people would not claim it.

It was the 1834 Act that started the process that resulted in a Welfare State for the United Kingdom. The Commission found that the Old Poor Law was subject to widespread abuse and promoted squalor, idleness and criminality in its recipients especially compared with those who instead received charitable relief. Because of this the 1834 Act tightened up the qualifications for receipt of poor relief forcing many to either turn to charitable relief or accept employment. This did not relieve poverty to the extent it intended. Research carried out by Seebohm Rowntree in the late Nineteenth Century, and published in his book *Poverty, a Study of Town Life* in 1901, indicated that in industrial centres in the north between a quarter and a third of the population were living below the poverty line (Rowntree, 1901/2001).

It is worth here mentioning the research of author and social commentator Michael Sheridan which gives an insight into the development of Rowton Houses. The book demonstrates how Montagu William Lowry-Corby, Lord Rowton, was influenced by those writing about the poverty and the conditions of lodging houses and hostels such as Charles Dickens and Henry Mayhew to the extent that he set up lodging houses for homeless people that provided accommodation of a higher quality than those which currently existed. Rowton houses, first set up in London existed between 1892 and 1954 and when they expanded nationally one was built in Grove Street, Cheltenham on a site where a homeless hostel still stands. Sheridan gives a history of Rowton houses with both the rationale that provided the impetus to set them up and a history of how they evolved to keep up with changing times (Sheridan, 1956).

Sheridan tells us that the *1851 Lodging House Act* introduced by Lord Ashley, who had himself made attempts to establish a better quality of lodging house, was the first legislation that placed a responsibility on local

authorities, apart from providing the workhouse. The Act placed the supervision of lodging houses on local authorities and gave them the powers to inspect them. This Act failed in its implementation because the local authorities and the general public did not care enough about the people who needed to use the lodging houses. This meant that the requirements of the Act, such as the number of people that could be accommodated or the standard of sanitary provision, were easy to avoid and sub-standard lodging houses continued to be a problem. Sheridan (1956) tells us that apart from Lord Rowton there were others that were concerned enough to look for ways of addressing the problems of housing for the poorest members of society. He cites Sir Edward Guinness who, in 1890, provided finance to form the Guinness Trust to provide the artisan classes with homes at lower rates. The Guinness Trust still exists today although it is now known as the Guinness Partnership. The Guinness Partnership has a number of social and affordable rented properties in Cheltenham. Sheridan tells us that Lord Rowton was influenced in his response to alleviate the causes and effects of poverty by writers such as Dickens, Mayhew and Charles Kingsley.

Although the 1834 Act started the process towards a Welfare State by the 1906 general election the new Labour Party, founded in 1900, also supported the process by promoting welfare reforms for working class people. The ruling Liberal Party's response to this resulted in liberal welfare reforms laying the foundations for the modern welfare state, which included a national insurance that provided health care, unemployment pay and housing. These reforms were greatly extended by both Liberal and Labour administrations over the next forty years. Additionally there were the working-class revolutions in Russia and elsewhere that made UK politicians keen to ensure that mass social unrest did not happen in Britain. Reforms were introduced to make sure that the risk of British workers following suit was reduced. In addition to this modern industrial practice required a healthy and educated workforce as compared with older style manufacturing (Webb Memorial Trust, 2012, Gregory, 2008).

All of this culminated in the *1942 Beveridge Report* which introduced the concept of the giant evils of society: squalor, ignorance, want, idleness and

disease. Pierson and Castle (2006), Fraser (2009) and Timmins (2001) provide explanations of how the *Beveridge Report* recommended a system that would eradicate these five evils and provide for the people of Britain from 'the cradle to the grave'. This resulted in a number of Acts introduced by the first Labour Government elected in 1945 which collectively introduced the British Welfare State, including a national insurance system, the National Health Service, Pensions, Child Benefits, changes to provision of education and help with housing. Whilst Timmins (2001) concentrates on the story of the Welfare State since its inception, Pierson and Castle (2006) and Fraser (2009) provide a history of how previous events and legislation contributed to the development of welfare.

Since its inception providers of poor relief have needed to determine firstly, who should be responsible for caring for people living in poverty and then secondly, set out guidelines on who should benefit from legislation aimed at alleviating poverty. Englander (1998) explains that there are basically three ways in which society has re-distributed wealth income from the rich to the poor. The first of these is the 'Residualist System' where the state intervenes only in extreme cases of need, offering means-tested benefits to those who cannot meet their own emergency needs and have no other source of income. The second is the 'Industrial Approach', where the state ties benefits to earnings and contributions using insurance systems to shield working individuals and their families from need. Finally there are 'Universal Benefits', where all citizens get payments as a matter of right.

Englander (1998) and Timmins (2001) show that the current British Welfare State is based on a combination of all three of these. Workers above a certain income contribute through national insurance and tax. Those who have not contributed receive benefits through a means tested process and some benefits, such as the state pension, are paid universally regardless of income. The principle that universal benefits should be paid to people on higher incomes has been questioned by successive governments and from 2017 Child Benefit ceased to be what had previously been a universal benefit. Claimants earning over £50,000 now need to pay back their child benefit as income tax on a sliding scale until earnings reach £60,000 when

100% of the child benefit is taken back in taxation. This in effect means that those on higher earnings no longer receive what was a universal benefit (Money Advice Service, 2017).

Housing has never been part of a universal benefit system as it has always been expected that those that can afford to provide for themselves should do so. Universal benefits are defined in the online app the Students Room (2017) as those given to anyone that fits a certain criteria such as age or disability, regardless of income. This is as opposed to means-tested benefits which are only available to people that fit within certain income brackets.

Although housing has not been classed as a universal benefit in the legal sense, housing is generally accepted as something that everyone should be entitled to regardless of their tenure or ability to pay for it. Hindess (1987) suggests that all social policy, including housing policy, should be analysed not only 'as an instrument in the hands of the capitalist ruling class' but also as 'a little island of socialism created by the working class in the sea of capitalist society' (pp100-1). This helps to underpin the assumption that actions by the working class, when it makes demands on the state, can supply the impetus for the state providing such as the welfare state. One interpretation of what Hindess says is that, although the motivation of the ruling class was to address public health issues and the motivation of the working class was a desire for decent housing, the outcome was the same and both sides benefitted eventually. What Hindess argues is that the creation of social policy should be about integration where all parties have a say and all needs are taken into account to achieve the right solution rather than the situation that now exists where different forces argue their case until a policy emerges that, although functional, may be a compromise and may not fully meet the original needs.

The literature available enables the tracking of housing policies that have led to the introduction of council housing in Britain. Much of the earlier housing policies were developing in parallel to those social policies that eventually led to the introduction of the British Welfare State. Malpass and Murie (1999) and Mullins and Murie (2006) provide tracking of these policies from 1851

when the first Act to permit local authorities to provide housing was introduced in the form of *The Labouring Classes' Lodging Houses Act*, 1851. Since 1851 there have been in excess of 75 separate pieces of housing policy legislation passed by parliament. This legislation has been mapped as part of the timeline prepared as part of this research.

Malpass and Murie (1999) and Lowe (2011) demonstrate that until the introduction of the *1875 Artisans and Labourers Dwelling Act* housing legislation had dealt with public health issues rather than the housing of the working classes. The housing of the poor was seen as a nuisance issue rather than a town planning issue. Even the names of legislation confirm this with the *1846 Nuisance Removal and Disease Prevention Act* passed in order to allow local authorities to deal with sanitation and health issues and the *1855 Nuisances Removals (England) Act* which introduced the term 'unfit for human habitation'. It is this terminology that is central to the slum clearances that followed later. Legislation passed in 1868 enabled local authorities to demolish unfit or unsanitary housing, but it was not until the 1875 Act that local authorities were permitted to build housing to replace that which had been cleared.

Malpass and Murie (1999) provide an important insight into housing issues and the policies allowing local authorities to develop, own and manage housing. It was the 1884-85 Royal Commission on Housing that provided landmark recognition of the duty of government to provide adequate housing. Following on from this Royal Commission local authorities were given permission through the *1890 Housing of the Working Classes Act* which in addition to consolidating earlier legislation gave local authorities powers to build housing for general need.

The *1909 Housing and Town Planning Act* recognised the need for local authorities to plan their housing needs and this Act provided the powers for them to develop planning schemes. The *1919 Housing and Town Planning Act,* known as the Addison Act, went further by providing subsidies from the exchequer and allowing local authorities to use revenue from the rates to assist with the financing of house building.

Malpass and Murie (1999) as well as Lowe (2004) and Lund (2006) all demonstrate that it is this 1919 Act that provided the most significant step in local authority provision when it followed the *Tudor Walters Report of 1918*. The Sir John Tudor Walters Committee, set up by the Local Government Board in England, was tasked with considering the political and social conditions following the First World War. This committee, whilst considering the then current shortage of housing, provided two viewpoints that would make their recommendations different to previous housing policies. Firstly, a recognition that it was not only the very poorest in society that required help with housing. Secondly, there was a recognition that not just the quantity, but also the quality of housing provided by the state needed to improve. Multiple occupancy of tenements would no longer be acceptable. Ravetz (2001) suggests that this consideration existed against the backdrop of Bolshevism and revolution in Russia and the fear that this could happen in Britain with the return of demobilised troops at the end of the First World War. Consequently the *Tudor Walters Report* recommended not only an increase in the quantity of state provided housing, but also in the quality. From this arose the catchphrase of then Prime Minister Lloyd George of 'homes fit for heroes' on the day following the armistice and a year later the *1919 Addison Housing and Town Planning Act* was born. From this time on housing issues became an important element in state provided services (Malpass, 2005).

For the majority of local authorities the period immediately following World War One was when the building of council housing began. The history of how this building continued over the following fifty years, through a Second World War and the introduction of the Welfare State in 1948 is elucidated by Burnett (1986). Council housing continued to be developed to house the working classes and consequently many of the housing estates were built close to places of work. The detail of this will be explored in Chapter 5 where it is possible to demonstrate these links in relation to Cheltenham.

This and other literature reviewed indicates that early creation of publicly owned housing was a means of benefiting the authorities rather than an

altruistic means to assist the poor working classes (Conway, 2003; Malpass & Murie, 1999).

3.2.3 Post 1980

As demonstrated by this literature review It is widely recognised by housing academics and professionals that the political attitudes of the 1980s provided a major change in ways of thinking about council estates and their residents by governments, by the general public and by the council estate residents themselves. Malpass and Murie (1999) show the effect on council housing of Conservative Government policies between 1979 and1997. These Conservative policies included the renewed endorsement and extension of the 'Right to Buy' (part of the *1980 Housing Act*) which allowed for the sale of council houses at discounted prices to tenants and which promoted the Conservative view that policies extending home ownership were more important than policies relating to the housing needs of poorer people.

Additional legislation in the form of the *1982 Social Security and Housing Benefits Act* and the *1986 Social Security Act* reinforced this promotion of home ownership as the government's preferred tenure by moving away from a rent rebate system to a new housing benefit system which set those in need of financial help apart from other council tenants. This also meant a shift from government 'bricks and mortar' subsidies to a system based on a means test.

One of the lasting effects of the sale of council-owned housing has been that the capital receipts from sales of properties were held for three decades by central government and not re-invested in the building of additional housing. Another effect has been to bring down the quality of council housing with the more desirable properties being sold off thus contributing to the current housing crisis (Conway, 2003).

Between 1979 and 1990 home ownership in the United Kingdom increased by more than three million houses, with over a third of these being 'Right to

Buyers'. In this period the availability of mortgages improved and this coupled with the slow pace of house building pushed house prices up. Malpass and Murie (1999) also suggest that the Conservative policies of the 1980s and subsequent sub-prime lending to many who took out mortgages in order to join this new class of home owners contributed to the recession of 1990. The subsequent result of this was re-possession of houses which had fallen into negative equity as the recession contributed to falling house prices (Malpass and Murie p84).

Mullins and Murie (2006) sustain this argument by providing an assessment of the effects of Conservative policies on housing post 1997 and an understanding of the links between housing and other legislation, such as social policies and planning. This implies that the Conservative policies and the change in thinking that followed meant that the ethos of housing provision changed significantly during the 20th Century from 'Homes Fit for Heroes' subsidised at the point of build through to a society where social housing tenants are reliant on an increasingly stigmatised welfare benefits system.

Both Conway (2003) and Reeves (2014) argue that the change in how subsidies are provided, coupled with the right to buy policy, have meant that over the past thirty years the number of available dwellings has decreased. At the same time, due to higher levels of unemployment, the number of people unable to afford their own home has increased. This has resulted in a rise in the number of people living in more expensive private rented accommodation. Mullins and Murie (2006) are able to demonstrate that in 1980 of all new properties built 45 percent were in the public and social housing sectors. By 1997 this percentage had dropped to sixteen percent. In turn this has contributed to social housing being only available to those with the most need.

The Labour Governments of 1997-2010 did not reverse the 'right to buy' policy or to increase new build of local authority housing. Mullins and Murie (2006) tell us that many of the actions on housing of the Labour Governments were about continuity of previous policies: right to buy;

promotion of home ownership; keenness for stock transfer. However, they also suggest that Labour introduced new initiatives that aimed at contributing to better lives for poorer people. For example, the living wage and working families tax credit. Equally, their policy rooted in the *Sustainable Communities Plan* 2003 which it was claimed would reverse the under-investment and neglect of council housing that existed under the previous Conservative Governments.

New Labour also supported the concept of 'rolling back the state', a feature of Thatcherite policy which had resulted in the de-nationalisation of state owned services and utilities such as British Gas, British Telecom and British Airways, putting them back into private ownership. One way in which Labour interpreted this concept was to introduce transfer of housing stock from council ownership to not for profit housing providers. Then Prime Minister Tony Blair freely admitted that he did not consider that local authorities should always deliver the services, saying:

> The days of the all purpose local` authority that planned and delivered everything has gone. They are finished. Local Authorities will still deliver some services but their distinctive leadership role will bed to weave and knit together the contribution of the various stakeholders (Blair, 1998).

Brian Lund (2016) says that hence, "housing associations were a ready replacement for local government and thus, in the housing association domain, power transfer from the Conservatives to New Labour was seamless".

Consequently, under New Labour very few council homes were built. This did not escape the attention of one time Prime Minister Theresa May who at Prime Minister's Question Time on 24/7/17 said that "under Conservatives we have seen more than twice as much council housing being built as under the last Labour Government". *Inside Housing* (2017)

suggests that May underestimated the figures as under Labour between 1997 and 2010 2,780 council homes were built whilst 10,310 had been built since the Conservatives had come to power in 2010.

However, *Inside Housing* suggest that this is a misleading comparison because council housing is only a part of the provision of affordable housing. Whilst the 1997-2010 Labour Governments built less council owned housing they did enable the building of affordable housing by housing associations, in effect moving the sole responsibility for the provision of affordable housing to a partnership between the public, private and not for profit sectors. In addition and as a way of delivering this new delivery method, New Labour went on to introduce a decent homes standard for all affordable housing and in 2002 set a policy for housing stock transfer from local authority ownership to housing association ownership.

Since this research project was started in 2010 there have been further changes to social policy that cannot be ignored within the context of the research. As will be revealed in Chapter 6, the introduction of the *2012 Welfare Reform Act* and the *2016 Housing and Planning Act* has had additional impact on the discourses surrounding people living in social housing because many of them are dependent on welfare benefits. Additionally, recent media discourses bear this out, as recent television coverage of these issues include programmes such as *The Estate (*2012), *Britain on the Fiddle* (2013), *On Benefits and Proud* (2013), *We All Pay Your Benefits* (2013) and *Benefits Street* (2014). For the purposes of this research this shift in negative discourses away from council tenants towards people on benefits needs to be considered. Chapter 6 will demonstrate that the residents who participated in this research believe that this is the case.

Economic and social changes have contributed to this shift in attitude. Lansley and Mack (2015) discuss this in relation to how the decline of British manufacturing and globalisation, with their subsequent effect on employment opportunities, has had a major impact on the decline of social housing. In outlining the changes in housing tenure they demonstrate that social housing

has changed from being decent housing for working class people to housing for the poorest and neediest in society.

Lansley and Mack (2015) argue that manufacturing decline, technological advances and globalisation have all contributed to what they term a 'poverty crisis'. They also express the view, which is shared by Lee and Murie (1999), that it has been the unskilled and semi-skilled who have been most affected by these changes, particularly as new technologies have a higher dependence on skilled workers. They argue that those most affected are also those most likely to be the low paid.

Giddens (2010) agrees that it is correct that economics is where globalisation has had the most impact. He maintains that it has had a lasting impact on working class communities in Britain and also on the social and political structures that have in turn influenced the introduction of legislation that has affected the lives of poorer people in British society.

Giddens further argues that whilst globalisation has positive aspects, such as being a means to connect people and businesses across the world, it also creates risks. There is evidence of this in the recent world economic crisis created by sub-prime lending in the USA creating a negative economic domino effect across the world, which Mullins and Murie (2006) argued was partly a consequence of 'right to buy'. To some extent welfare states have survived globalisation partly because the social citizenship model that underpins a welfare state is embedded in the idea of what a state is. Before 2010 no British government had done much to erode the welfare state. However, although the welfare state has survived globalisation and the economic crisis the amount of money invested in it has not done so and there has been a shift away from the Beveridge ideal towards a much more entrepreneurial welfare state. This has resulted in an increasing amount of welfare services being commissioned by the public sector to be delivered by the private sector rather than delivered directly by the state. Giddens (2010) also points out that Britain's new economy, with an increase in service industry jobs, is based in suburbs and small towns which has resulted in the highest unemployment being centred on the old manufacturing bases, many

of which were located in the industrial north. Cheltenham, used as a case study for this research, has also been affected as it too was once a manufacturing centre mostly supporting the aircraft industry.

The combination of globalisation, increased technology and the creation of a more entrepreneurial society has had an effect on employment opportunities for the unskilled and semi-skilled working classes, those most likely to be low paid, least likely to be home owners and most likely to be unemployed under Britain's new economy. This has created a society with two significant effects on housing for those on low income. The first of these, residualisation, is described in Lowe (2011), King (2006), Lee and Murie (1999) and Ravetz (2001) as the consequence of an increasing number of the poorest in society not able to afford to buy their own home and destined to continue in the social housing sector. This results in 'sink estates' where the majority of people living in them are those who cannot aspire to home ownership and are on low incomes and in receipt of some type of welfare benefit. Consequently those left living in council or other social housing are those with the most needs – home owners having, in effect, opted out of this public service. Because of these changes housing has become less of a universal service; it is a residual service that only benefits 'them' and not 'us'. It is a marginalised service and not, therefore, seen as a key pillar of the welfare state.

The second, and most recent, is the result of a more consumerist society that has not only seen a decline in the amount of social housing being built, but also in a reduction in housing benefits and attempts to move towards rents that are more in line with those in the private sector. This move has subsequently been reversed but is indicative of the 'sense' of current government thinking. The reduction in building of new social housing has also resulted in an ever increasing number of low income families resorting to living in the less well-regulated private rented sector. These changes are explored by Reeves (2014) and Bramley, Munro and Pawsley (2004) with both providing a critical appraisal of how policies introduced in the 21st century are affecting the housing of those on low incomes.

Many of these issues are contained in a special feature by Paul Watt and Anna Minton on London's housing 'crisis' in City (Journal) (Watt and Minton, 2016). In this article they provide a comprehensive overview of both the current housing situation and the historical and political factors that have contributed to it. Although about London many of the issues discussed could equally be applied to other cities and towns. By citing Thatcherite and New Labour policies the article supports the argument contained within this research that the promotion of home-ownership as the desired tenure has meant that market forces have both reduced state-owned housing stock and taken housing affordability out of the reach of many working people. One section of relevance to this research is their question of how much the current housing situation is a 'crisis' and how much might be considered 'business as usual'. Their suggestion is that there are similarities between Victorian working-class housing and some housing today:

> In 19th-century London, workers and their families squeezed themselves into slum rental housing, preferably with as many wages coming into the household as possible. They paid a heavy price in doing so in terms of exorbitant rents, damp, insanitary conditions and premature death. In 21st-century Victorian London redux, this is also the tactic of last resort that many households employ today seen as multi-occupancy (p206).

This leads to the relevance of the impact of the increase in low income families and individuals living in the private rented sector which is dealt with in *The Rent Trap* (Walker and Jeraf, 2016). This looks in depth at private renting and how changes should be made to the way in which private renting can have an adverse effect on those individuals caught in the trap of private renting. The 'trap' being that they are not in the position to access other types of tenure such as home ownership or social or affordable renting. This study provides a severe exposure of some of the more negative aspects of the private rented sector and the various negative affects this can have on the lives of people caught in this trap. It is relevant to the research in that more and more people are unable to access social or affordable housing. The conclusion of the authors is that the future needs of housing for poorer

people are tied up in the future of private rented housing particularly as the state is failing to provide the affordable housing necessary.

Reeves (2014) discusses the current use of the term 'social housing' rather than using other descriptions such as council or public housing. He expresses the view that in the earliest part of the twenty first century academics and practitioners accepted the term social housing as the norm and yet it was a term unknown thirty years previously. He indicates that although there is little doubt as to what the term means there is more than one interpretation of the meaning. One of these is the collective definition of housing rented out by local authorities and housing associations. The other implies that it is 'social welfare' accommodation. Shelter's definition, which is quoted in Reeves (2014), combines the two of these: 'housing that is let at low rents and on a secure basis to people in housing need, generally provided by councils and housing associations.' (p2) Whatever the definition, the most recent changes in housing and welfare policies do mean that social housing has become part of the social welfare system and now houses only those with the most severe need. This is borne out by Pawson and Mullins (2010) where they track changes in the provision and management of council housing stock and its transfer to housing associations and Arm's Length Management Organisations (ALMOs). They show that since the late 1990s there has been a movement of affordable housing away from being public housing in its truest sense. The new use of affordable housing definitions can be seen in Table 8.1 on page 195.

Pawson and Mullins (2014) document how the building of local authority housing slowed down rapidly following 1979 and the start of the first Thatcher government. This coupled with the increase in 'Right to Buy' resulted in a sharp decline in council housing. They also say that the quality of housing stock was severely affected by Right to Buy with the larger, better quality housing in more desirable areas being the most likely to be purchased. This results, they say, in the remaining stock becoming 'residual' with the 'whole sector subject to rapid residualisation' (p30). They also show that whilst the local authority share of housing tenure, across the United Kingdom, was 29 percent in 1981 this had reduced to 10 percent by 2006.

During the same period housing association tenure increased from 2 percent to 8 percent.

Changes to the way council owned housing is managed and financed have also been researched by Reeves (2014). Recent changes mean that some local authorities no longer own any housing, having transferred their housing stock to housing associations, whilst others have set up arm's length management companies to manage their property for them. This, coupled with the change in how the government subsidises housing, has resulted in a change in relationship between landlord and tenant with central government having more control over tenancies through the way in which housing benefits are assessed. The *2012 Welfare Reform Act* has contributed significantly to this. The introduction of the spare room subsidy, otherwise called the under occupancy charge and known commonly as the 'Bedroom Tax', has had a particular impact on housing benefit entitlement. This means that claimants will receive less in housing benefit if they live in a housing association or council property that is deemed to have one or more spare bedrooms (Welfare Reform Act, 2012).

Bramley, Munro and Pawson (2004) provide an overview of policy and practice within the social housing sector moving into the 21st Century, showing how housing and housing management have changed, with the majority of councils no longer owning and/or managing their own housing. They show how this, coupled with the increase in the private rented sector and a decrease in the number of low income people being able to afford to buy their own home, has contributed to the widening of the gap between rich and poor. They cite particularly the effects on the economy where working class people who are needed to provide necessary skills and services cannot afford to live close to their workplaces.

The most recent piece of legislation is the *2016 Housing and Planning Act* which came under some criticism when it went to the House of Lords on 1st March 2016 which resulted in demands for amendments. The Act legislates a number of things that will affect the future of social housing. These are discussed further in Chapter 8. There are a number of aspects of the Act

that have a bearing on the future of social housing. The first of these is 'pay to stay', which proposes that better off tenants should pay a market rent. The House of Lords successfully amended the original phrasing of this so that it is to be at the discretion of local councils rather than imposed. Another aspect is the tightening up of landlords' duties on checks that immigrants have the 'right to rent'. The 'right to rent' imposes stricter checks on eligibility to social housing, introduced as a way of having closer checks on illegal immigrants. The government have also proposed that starter homes could be called affordable in order to get over planning laws that say how many affordable homes should be built within developments. This results in less 'social' affordable homes being built. The House of Lords says that this should be at the discretion of local councils.

A further House of Lords amendment to the *2016 Housing and Planning Bill*, which is now the 2016 Act, is the end to lifetime tenancies for council tenants. The Bill proposed a five year maximum tenancy for those that could afford to move. The House of Lords insisted that this be raised to ten years. Another aspect which was not fully supported by the House of Lords is that councils should sell off their most valuable properties with the proceeds going to the Treasury in order to provide the subsidies for tenants to buy their properties. This was blocked with the insistence that it can only happen with parliamentary approval. This proposal would reduce the amount of social housing in the more expensive and desirable areas. Housing associations owning their own stock overturned the proposal that tenants in housing association properties should have the same 'right to buy' rights as council tenants. The housing associations said that the government had no right to force them to sell their assets. Before passing into law the Bill was amended to give the decision on this to individual housing associations. The Government will also consider a proposal to ensure a one-for-one replacement of council homes sold under the forced sale (Local Government Association Briefing, 25th April 2016).

Other aspects of the *2016 Housing and Planning Act* which will affect the future of social housing relate more to private rented tenure and planning laws. These will be discussed in more depth in Chapter 8.

3.3 Sociological Literature

A review of recent research carried out across the United Kingdom provides some understanding of the perceptions of council estates from both 'insiders' and 'outsiders'.

A Joseph Rowntree Foundation study carried out in 2008 on three housing estates in Stirling, found that the perceptions of people living outside the estates, compared with those living within them, were often stronger and 'more of a caricature than those held by those who lived there' (Robertson, 2008, p98). This study also concluded that the residents of these estates recognised internal social diversity rather than the homogeneity portrayed by 'outsiders' (Robertson, 2008).

A further study carried out in the London Borough of Camden in 2006 supports this view citing a history of distinction between 'roughness' and 'respectability' even within those neighbourhoods now equally in decline (Watt, 2006). In presenting the results of the study Watt introduced the issue of class, suggesting that the theories of Pierre Bourdieu can provide some understanding of how neighbourhood identity is a complex concept based not only on the Marxist concept of economic capital, but also cultural and social capital or a combination of all three. Bourdieu suggests that there are multi-dimensional relationships within class structures that go beyond the simple working/middle class concept (Bourdieu, 2000). The consequence of this is 'communities within communities' with very clear distinctions between what is 'rough' and what is 'respectable'.

The Watt (2006) study indicates that, although an opinion or stereotype of an area may be formed from the outside, it is likely that within that neighbourhood there will be further distinctions. He also concludes that the internal opinion potentially differs from the opinions of those outside. This means that there are two levels of perception. Outsiders are more likely to perceive and label an area in its entirety. Insiders will make distinctions between much smaller parts of the total area. The effect of this is that the

outsiders give everyone on the inside of the estates the same label regardless of their individual circumstances.

A study in the London of Borough of Camden by Whitley and Prince (2005), concentrating on the Gospel Oak area of the Borough, compared perceptions of residents with those of outsiders. This study found that not only did perceptions differ, but that the negative image and bad reputation surrounding the Gospel Oak estate were able to perpetuate and increase the stigma that many of this type of estate and their residents experience. They also concluded that agencies working within these areas perpetuate negative attitudes in order to support their need to be providing services.

To some extent, the Whitley and Prince findings on the perpetuation of negativity amongst agencies are borne out by a further study covering three estates in Birmingham, North Shields and Edinburgh to assess how effective regeneration is unless that regeneration also aims to improve an area's poor reputation (Dean and Hastings, 2000). They found that in all three areas a poor reputation was long standing and deep rooted and that residents experienced discrimination because of it. They also found that perceptions of the estates from outside were worse than those from within. This can be seen to support the Whitley and Prince findings as they also found that some of the most damaging negativity was from those providing services to the residents.

The Whitley and Prince findings resulted from extensive reviews of documentation relating to the Gospel Oak area of London. These were compared with qualitative research studies, in the form of interviews, carried out with residents. From the results of the research Whitley and Prince suggest that the way that urban areas are perceived, particularly from outsiders, may be part of a conspiracy to ensure that the area's reputation stays negative in order to, 'at best, attract necessary funding and, at worst, to perpetuate 'hegemony' and assist in the social control of the 'powerless'' (Whitley and Prince, 2005, p 47). To demonstrate this concept they cite Michel Foucault and in particular 'the gaze' of the powerful onto the powerless, which was Foucault's way of defining the means by which those

in power exert social control over the powerless, thus perpetuating hegemony. Whitley and Prince concluded that society accepts that the stigmatisation of council estate residents is reasonable because their way of life does not fit into the 'norm'.

The implication that can be taken from Whitley and Prince (2005) is that perceptions are not just about disadvantage but also about power, or lack of it. Some discourses take this further by suggesting that there are times when the poor are not only recognised as poor but also assumed to be responsible for their own poverty. Because society has provided them with the means and the ability to move themselves above their current situation there is a perception that if they have not done so it means that they are to blame for the situation they are now in. This is an opinion held by some and if widely accepted contributes to the hegemony and further disadvantages the socially excluded. A study by Richardson and Le Grand, (2000) takes this possibility into account and does capture residents' views on those things that are beyond the control of the individual and those which individuals do by choice. They found that it is the case that judgements and assumptions are made about the lives of others for a variety of reasons.

A publication by Dean and Hastings (2000) is the result of research that looked at Challenging Images, Housing Estates, Stigma and Regeneration. Their study, explained in this publication, found that an estate's poor reputation is usually based on beliefs that have existed over a period of time about the estate and the people living there. They summarise their findings as being that the stigma created by attitudes towards people living on council estates can be translated into a sense within residents and this affects many aspects of their lives.

The research, carried out in three different case study areas, is primarily interested in examining the importance of addressing the reputation of an area as part of the regeneration process. The three areas were, at the time of the study, undergoing regeneration processes. All three of the estates had negative reputations as well as similar problems, such as high crime, high unemployment and poverty. There was no clear evidence of negativity about

the estates from the residents themselves with views differing dependent on the individual current circumstances.

The greatest contribution of this research was to identify three processes which contribute to a definition of what an estate's image is. The research also found that the images were particularly defined by the public and private sectors rather than by the residents. The processes follow the pattern of: responding to an existing or perceived image and reacting either consciously or unconsciously to it; shaping or perpetuating an image by carrying out actions that sustain the image that may already exist; and challenging images by taking actions intended to influence and manage attitudes towards that estate. The report does conclude that the first two of these processes are most common and that images are not often challenged. They also conclude that the lack of challenge is caused by the nature of private and public organisations and the limitations that they have which do not provide a favourable context where changes might be possible.

The authors are very clear that recommendations arising from this research apply to estates that are in the process of change or regeneration, and that their suggested approaches may not successfully apply to areas without the impetus of change.

In a similar study Richardson and Le Grand (2002) compared academic and resident interpretations of definitions of social exclusions to assess how residents felt that they were directly affected by different aspects of social exclusion. This study also assessed how these issues affected the everyday lives of the residents on the estates used for the study. Residents' definitions of social exclusion differed very little to those of the academics although the ways they expressed them were different. The relevance to this research is that the residents identified stigmatisation as a particular problem with where they lived, in their opinion, being unfairly labelled. This, they admitted, had an adverse effect on their everyday lives.

In more recent years there has been a lack of research directly relating to social or council housing, although this is now changing as the housing 'crisis' gets worse. The likely cause of this lack is that there has been a shift

in tenure with the social rented sector on a decline and the private rented sector increasing. This change in how housing is provided for the poorer in society is quoted as being one of the reasons that in April 2017 the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF), the Economic and Social Research Council (ESCRC) and the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) launched the Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence (CaCHE). The lead for this five year research centre is Ken Gibb, Professor of Housing Economics at the University of Glasgow. He says that as a reaction to the current issues surrounding housing supply there is a need for us to understand the impact of housing on other public services and of the relationship between the economy and housing. He writes:

> We'll initially focus on six overlapping areas, including supply and demand, poverty, and neighbourhoods. We want to provide robust evidence to inform housing policy and practice across the UK and assist in tackling housing problems at a national, regional and local level. (The Guardian, 2017)

This links to the introduction in March 2017 of the *Housing White Paper* which aims to provide a plan for housing supply into the future. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2017) says that there is an increasing need for a focus on making the housing market fit for purpose for those on lower incomes. They say that the introduction of the Housing White Paper is evidence that after many years of the UK placing high value on home ownership, renting is now back on the agenda. However, the erosion of social housing stock due to the 'right to buy' and the failure of governments to adequately build new social housing has contributed to a sharp increase in the private rented sector with high rents and often inadequate facilities. JRF's response is that a range of housing options is required to enable everyone to be able to live in suitable housing at a cost that they can afford. They claim that over 2.2 million working households in the UK spend more than one third of their disposable income on housing. They say that while any affordable rents, whether in the social or private rented sectors, are linked to market rates they will never be truly affordable to those on low

incomes. Their response is that what is needed is rent linked to local income rates.

There are, however, recent publications by housing academics which are responding to the current housing crisis. Bowie (2017) provides a critical review of policy, not just under the current government but under successive governments that he suggests have contributed to the current crisis. By exploring the relationship between current housing, planning and land policies he offers a programme that he proposes would provide a solution to the current crisis. His starting point is the *2016 Housing and Planning Act* and he explains how the housing crisis began and how it can be addressed. He suggests that there should be a move towards a principle that home ownership is not necessarily the desired tenure, that people should be able to find a tenure that best suits their lifestyle. He also suggests that the balance between public and private sector housing is part of the problem and that there should be a move towards socialising the private sector. In other words providing increased regulation of private sector housing and provide longer term contracts which would result in a more stable environment for tenants.

Alan Murie (2016) looks more specifically at how 'right to buy' has impacted on the current housing crisis. This book contains a history of the 35 years from 1980 to 2015 of the flagship policies of then Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. Thatcher's 'right to buy' policy promoted home ownership as the desired tenure for United Kingdom residents, something that all should aspire to. Murie demonstrates the impact this has had on housing generally and how it has contributed to the current housing crisis. He concludes by suggesting, as does Bowie, that the social rented sector needs to operate more closely with the private rented sector and that local authorities will need to play a role in making this happen.

Walker and Jeraf (2016) in *The Rent Trap* look in depth at private renting and how changes could be made to lessen the adverse effects on individuals caught in the trap of private renting, who are unable to access other types of tenure such as home ownership or affordable renting. The

book offers a robust exposure of some of the more negative aspects of the private rented sector and how this affects the lives of people caught in this trap. Their conclusion is also that increased regulation is required to ensure that the private rented sector better meets the needs of tenants in terms of accommodation quality, tenancy duration and maintenance. Its relevance to the research is that more and more people are unable to access affordable housing and yet are not in the position to purchase their own home. The future needs of housing for poorer people are tied up in the future of private rented housing.

3.4 Conclusion

The range of literature reviewed in this chapter is an indication of the complexity of housing provision as part of the basic needs of people and families. The three areas of research contained within this chapter supply the means to understand how housing provision to address the needs of the poor has changed frequently throughout history. The early 21st century has been a period of significant change, unprecedented since the early 20th century. During the 20th century many changes occurred with both the introduction and decline of council housing; an introduction of a home owning culture; and a society of dependency, particularly amongst the poorer classes and those with specific social and health needs.

The review of late 20th and early 21st century publications shows that housing has been central to the provision, by the state, of welfare support for the poor and working class. The literature also shows that provision of housing has been a multifaceted and sometimes controversial issue which has resulted in different responses, by the state, over time.

There is also evidence contained within this chapter indicating that the state, in the persona of the government, has responded to crisis rather than the needs of individuals and shows that housing for poorer people has answered the need for supporting the ruling classes and capitalism. Early examples of provision answered the need to reduce vagrancy and freedom of movement such as: introducing the first Poor Law at the beginning of the 17th Century

in response to poor relief being reduced following the dissolution of the monasteries under King Henry VIII; the New Poor Law introduced as industrialisation contributed to overcrowding, slums and homelessness as there were not enough affordable dwellings to meet the needs of people moving from the countryside to industrial centres; the creation of 'homes fit for heroes' following the First World War with soldiers returning to unemployment and lack of homes against a backdrop of the Russian Revolution which was seen to provide a threat to all capitalist countries; the need to rebuild communities and house workers for specific employers after the bombings in the Second World War; and, most recently, the need to respond to a housing crisis created by market forces increasing house prices beyond the reach of many people. This will be demonstrated in the in Chapter 5 where Cheltenham's history is covered.

Although early council housing was intended for working people it has changed its role in the housing market as unemployment has increased. This makes it no longer a provision for anyone requesting to be housed by the council, which was the original principle that underpinned council housing. Consequently council housing has become social housing and is now viewed as part of the welfare state. This change from council housing to provide homes for the employed to the current situation of social housing to support people with particular needs is the most significant change to occur over the past 40 years.

Just as a local strategic housing market assessment, a government requirement for all councils to provide, highlights the need for different types of housing to meet current housing needs, previous needs were dictated by not only the need to house workers but also public health concerns. These public health concerns resulted in the slum clearances of the early 20th Century and led to local authorities being obliged through legislation to provide housing within their areas. The most recent introduction of the strategic housing market assessment relating to Cheltenham's housing needs is dealt with in Chapter 8.

This chapter of the thesis has shown that there is a complexity signifying multi-faceted factors that contribute to an understanding of the historical and socio-political need for the introduction of council housing. This provides a justification for the methodology of Critical Discourse Analysis employed in the preparation of this thesis, as it allows for more than one dimension of the subject to be researched.

What this chapter also provides is an indication of the way working-class housing has been viewed over time. As the research is concerned primarily with the discourses relating to perceptions of council estates and their residents the literature regarding this aspect of the research was considered to deserve its own chapter. Consequently, the following chapter will concentrate on the literature that has more consequence to the fourth area of research - the discourses. This provides an insight into what literature and media have said about the poor and their housing over time. These discourses include not only academic sources, but also personal and fictional representations of council estate life experienced by the authors.

Chapter 4   LITERATURE REVIEW part two – the discourses

4.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the literature which is of relevance to the area of research covering the discourses surrounding housing and welfare. Included is some of the contemporaneous literature, both fictional and biographical, from the 19th and early 20th centuries prior to the introduction of state or council housing. This provides a different perspective to retrospective literature as, in many of the books included, it was experienced by the authors directly. Equally important is some of the 20th century literature that encompasses the experiences of people who live on council estates or in other working-class housing. The nature of the contemporaneous literature means that it does also sometimes relate to the historiographical area of research, but in the main it is as discourses that this aspect of the literature was considered.

The choice of books included in this part of the literature review was made: firstly, as they cover different periods in the history of working class housing, including memoirs of early council housing; and secondly, because many of them tell the stories of individual working class people. They also demonstrate the difference between council estates when first built and council estates after the *1980 Housing Act.*

Some of the television programmes which were popular in the period following the introduction of the *2012 Welfare Reform Act* are also included in this chapter. Their relevance is that they contain direct comment from council estate tenants and welfare benefit recipients.

What is important in the inclusion of the following literature is that it encapsulates personal experiences that add an additional dimension to the thesis as it can be compared with the discourses of the Cheltenham residents who participated in interviews and focus groups.

4.2 Contemporaneous Literature

Those writing contemporary to the times in history described in previous sections offer a different insight into living and housing conditions of the poor

and working classes. This is because they have experienced the conditions rather than retrospectively assessing how they might have been. The books included here provide descriptions of life witnessed by the writers themselves, all of whom have gone to some lengths to gain an understanding of what life was actually like for those living in these conditions. Some of the books reviewed for this section were written as memoirs, capturing earlier experiences of the writers. Others are purely fictional with the writers drawing on their own experiences.

During the late 19th and first half of the 20th century the subject of the living conditions of poor working people became a popular subject for research and fiction. This may in part be explained by the introduction of the *1890 Housing of the Working Classes Act* which was proceeded by a Royal Commission set up to investigate these conditions. It might also be explained by the increase in socialist thinking, especially as some of this literature has become standard reading for those to the left of politics today.

One of the earliest of the 19th century writers concerned about the living conditions of working people was Frederick Engels who wrote *The Condition of Working Class in England in 1844* (Engels, 1845/1969). In this work he describes both working and living conditions across Britain. Of London slums he commented that 'there are hundreds and thousands of alleys and courts lined with houses too bad for anyone to live in' (p61). He claimed that these conditions had escalated due to industrialisation and the move of manufacturing away from the cottage workshop model to mass production carried out in factories in towns and cities.

Housing reformer Edward Bowmaker in 1895 in *The Housing of the Working Classes* suggests that at the end of the nineteenth century and following the *1890 Housing of the Working Classes Act* general attitudes towards housing had changed and had become of national concern, not just a problem to be dealt with by the philanthropists (Bowmaker, 1895/2016). He claims that the advancement of sanitary science and a more liberal and altruistic type of politics had made it possible for an acceptance that housing conditions for the poor needed to be addressed. His book collected together journal

articles and reports, all of which he references, turning them into a readable collection easily available for those with an interest in the subject. By looking back as well as forward he provides a picture of the then current housing conditions along with the contributory factors that had created them and then set out his ideas on how these could be changed for the better. In doing this he has provided a useful illustration of the thinking that existed then on how change could be made to working class housing. From this research's point of view it will enable a useful comparison with current thinking on how changes to housing provision are needed.

Bowmaker describes how slums evolved explaining that slum conditions that existed in the late 19th century were a step backwards in the evolution of housing in general as substantial improvements had been made to working class housing over the previous two centuries. Like Engels he saw the main reason for these poor housing conditions as the move of manufacturing from cottage to factory stating that steam power whilst positive in many ways had changed not only manufacturing systems but also the way housing was provided for working people. He explains how overcrowding was a symptom of the shortage in housing supply causing existing houses to be split into tenements so that more people could be housed meaning that more rents could be collected. Where new housing was created it used every piece of available land resulting in dwellings so close together that they lacked ventilation with the sewerage and drainage systems unable to cope with the additional needs. His description of the tenements illustrated this as houses intended for one family's sanitation needs were undermined by the same houses now being occupied with as many as 30-40 people inhabiting each house. Although there had been significant improvements to drainage and sewerage systems the large towns and cities were unable to cope due to this overcrowding.

Another nineteenth century text that provides eye witness accounts of working class Victorian life is Henry Mayhew's *London Labour and the London Poor* (Mayhew, 1861/2008). Christian Socialist Mayhew was a writer and social researcher as well as a reformer during the 19th century. As a social researcher he wrote an extensive number of articles which were

published in the *Morning Chronicle* newspaper and later published as a book, *London Labour and the London Poor*, in 1861 (Mayhew, 1861/2008). His articles were based on his observations and interviews with a wide range of working, and non-working, people. This has provided not only an extensive survey and early piece of research on London's poor but also a valuable insight into the lives of working class people in London in the mid-19th century. Apart from detailed descriptions of occupations, crime, culture, poverty and criminals Mayhew also included a chapter on the poor at home which included interviews with occupants of a common lodging house and also of individuals who lived in rented rooms. A measure of the poor conditions under which working people lived was a description of a cats' meat carrier, living, in Mayhew's words, 'more comfortably situated than any of the poorer classes that I have yet seen' (p519). This man, who Mayhew estimated to be earning £50 per year, was living in one room on the second floor of a house with his wife and children, a room where they lived, cooked, ate and slept.

Mayhew also described the research he carried out in one of London's cheap lodging houses.   The research consisted of collecting the stories of how the inhabitants had come to be relying on the lodging house for shelter. The lodging house itself contained 84 bunks rented at two pennies per night, with this payment allowing them to stay throughout the following day. Mayhew says that 'The sanitary state of these houses is very bad. Not only do the lodgers generally swarm with vermin, but there is little or no ventilation to the sleeping rooms, in which 60 persons, of the foulest habits, usually sleep every night' (p509). He quotes the *1839 Report of the Constabulary Force Commissioners* which identified 231 such lodging houses in London. The research took the form of a group interview with 55 lodgers aged 15-75. Their places of birth were all corners of England and all of them had come from respectable working families and although the majority of them had been brought up to a trade all of them were currently unemployed except in casual labouring, begging, pickpocketing or other crime. Of the 55 interviewed 44 of them could read and write, which indicated that their situation was not the result of ignorance.

Mayhew was an influential person of his time; he was a co-founder of the magazine *Punch* and recognised as an influence on writers such as Charles Kingsley and Charles Dickens. This influence can be seen in some of Dickens' novels such as *Oliver Twist* and *Hard Times* where poverty and living conditions for the poor are described in detail (Dickens, 1840/2000 and 1854/2015). A good example of how Charles Dickens understood the housing conditions of the poor in the mid-19th century is his description in *Bleak House* of Tom-all-Alone's lodging house which he described as being under the walls of Westminster Abbey. He described it as 'ruinous place' set within a run-down street of tenement buildings which seemed to be in the last stages of decay:

> A crowd of foul existence that crawls in and out of gaps in walls and boards and coils itself to sleep in maggot numbers, fetching and carrying fever and sowing more evil in its every footprint than all the fine gentlemen in office shall set right in 500 years. (Dickens 1852/2016)

Claire Tomalin (2011) describes how Dickens started his literary career as a journalist, writing, as did Mayhew, for the *Morning Chronicle*, amongst other contemporary periodical publications. He used his position as a journalist to campaign on specific issues such as sanitation and the workhouse and this journalism along with his fiction was accepted as an influence on public opinion in regard to inequalities of the classes.

Another influential 19th century writer is architect and journalist George Godwin. He edited *The Builder*, a magazine about different aspects of architecture. His own contributions to the magazine, many of which are included in *London Shadows* reflected his interest and concern relating to the living conditions of the poorest people in large cities; particularly London (Godwin, 1854/2018).

Chapter 3 of Godwin describes how he, along with other concerned citizens, went out at night to visit common lodging houses. Common lodging houses are those houses originally intended for one family where the owners rent out the rooms individually. The closest modern equivalent would be houses in multiple occupancy (HMOs). Their aim was to assess the conditions of

these houses. One place visited, Plumtree Court, had all of the houses rented out by room. They went out in the middle of the night as this would be the time when most people would be in bed and it would be easier to assess overcrowding. One of the houses visited was described thus:

> Pulling the latch of the outer door of one of the houses here, and then entering the room on the left, with the assent of the occupants, we found an atmosphere so stifling that we were forced for a moment to retreat. There were two beds in the room; in one which seemed to have heads all round it were no fewer than nine women and children. In the other bed were a man and a lad, and in a small room, or closet leading from this room, three other persons were sleeping (p19).

That night the group visited a number of houses in Plumtree Court; all of them were described as dirty with poor ventilation. Writing about the court as a whole Godwin said:

> The population of this small court is immense. If we take an average of fifteen persons in each floor of the houses visited, and this is greatly below the number, we find sixty persons are occupying one house, and nine hundred are in the court (p24).

Another chapter deals with the conditions experienced by weavers in the Spitalfields area of London in the mid-1850s. Godwin visited weavers who lived in different circumstances: some weavers had looms in their own home and relied on orders from the larger companies; some were directly employed by the companies in the mills; some of them did both.

Godwin asked for comment from the weavers about their circumstances; these, included in the book, are not attributed to any named person, but they do provide primary source comment from that time. One said:

> In the name of the Spitalfield weavers, I humbly beg to offer you our sincere and heartfelt thanks for your exposition of our miserable condition. The zeal with which you advocate the interests of the working classes, and the improvement of their dwelling, is duly appreciated, and your services are gratefully acknowledged by them (p46).

Another anonymous weaver provided a poem of 112 lines. The following is an extract:

From early morn till late at eve

And oft till midnight hour

Within his loom exhausted, weave

Till nature checked the power.

And when his trying task is done,

In fear he wends his way,

Lest in his wrath the heartless one

Should stop his scanty pay.

His home alas; scarce worth the name

A room some few feet square,

With bed and loom crammed in one room

And children huddled there.

With such a scene before one's eyes

To be condemned to toil,

Half clothed, half fed, much better dead

Beneath the peaceful soil (p48).

Godwin's book is very relevant to this research because he has provided a voice for the people affected by the housing and living conditions of the mid-1850s. These are early discourses, which are rare; that Godwin asked the opinion of the people whose lives he was commenting on shows his commitment to the people as well as the subject.

Although the influence of such writers as Mayhew and Dickens contributed to the Royal Commission and subsequent *1890 Housing of the Working Classes Act* the living conditions of poorer working class people was still a matter of social commentary well into the 20th century. Two writers stand out for their social commentary, both of them going undercover to experience the circumstances of the poorest people in London, often showing that little had changed since Mayhew's research in a London lodging house in the mid-19th century. These two are Jack London, an American writer who describes his experiences in *The People of the Abyss* (London, 1903/2013) and George Orwell, an English novelist and journalist who wrote *Down and Out in Paris and London*, based on time he spent undercover amongst the poor and destitute (Orwell, 1933/2001).

London did not immerse himself in his role as a destitute man, he lived in respectable lodgings during his time in London and took on the destitute persona to enable him to get close to the genuinely destitute to learn their stories. This did mean that at times he stayed in common lodging houses or workhouses and slept in the street and his descriptions of the hardship of life for the homeless provides an understanding of how difficult it was for the homeless to be anything but also unemployed. He describes the length of time required to queue for one of the limited places in a lodging house where it takes most of day one to ensure a place and then most of day two carrying out menial tasks within the workhouse to pay for the previous night's lodging. The worst description is that of those who cannot find or afford a night's lodging and where the London authorities had decreed that no one should sleep on the streets. As London himself put it:

> Now, said I, at one o'clock, to myself; consider that you are a poor young man, penniless in London Town, and that tomorrow you must look for work. It is necessary, therefore, that you get some sleep in order that you may have the strength to look for work and to do work in case you find it. (London, 1903/2013 p62)

But this was not to be:

> All night long they make the homeless ones walk up and down. They drive them out of doors and passages, and lock them out of the parks. The evident intention of this is to deprive them of sleep……because, why under the sun do they open the gates of the parks at five o'clock in the morning and let the homeless ones go inside and sleep? (p64)

Twenty years later and Orwell's experience is not dissimilar to London's. Certainly Orwell's description of the lodging houses or 'spikes' attached to the workhouses mirrors London's experience of spending a day queuing and the following day carrying out tasks as pay back for the night's sleep. Orwell published *Down and Out in Paris and London* in 1933 at a time of economic Depression (Orwell, 1933/2001). The theme of the book is how Orwell experienced living in poverty in the two cities of Paris and London. The second part of the book, which describes Orwell's experiences living as a tramp in and around London is more relevant to the research although the first part where he lives as a poorly paid casual restaurant kitchen worker in

Paris does provide a means of comparing conditions across the two cities. This book provides a first-hand account of lodging houses, tramps hostels and shelters available to vagrants and people unable to earn enough for permanent lodgings. He notes that the lodging houses are of variable quality; some with dormitories; some with 'rooms' for one or two people; some with beds; some without. The main downside of the 'spikes' was that even if you had the money to pay 'no individual could enter any one 'spike' or any two London 'spikes' more than once in a month on pain of being confined for a week' (p153). Many of the people described in the book are living the life of tramps because of this rule. Many poor people had no choice but to keep on the move.

This system created the 'tramp', people who had little choice but to constantly move from one place to another in order to find shelter and some subsistence. Sometimes this would mean employment to provide the necessary money to pay for a bed in a lodging house. Jack London describes how these tramps moved from area to area, widening their wandering during the summer months which allowed for access to seasonal work. In winter months they restricted their movements to the towns and cities where warmth and shelter were more readily available (London, 1903).

Both London and Orwell spent time with itinerants with the deliberate intention of experiencing the precarious life of a reliance on the charitable and state provided lodging houses and the casual work that enabled people to afford the costs involved. Both of them did so with the intention of publishing their findings.

Orwell offers detailed descriptions of the accommodation on offer. The cheapest of these is sleeping on the Thames embankment as it is free, but which he claims has many disadvantages. Not only is it open to the elements, and therefore very cold in winter, it is necessary to find a bench by eight o'clock in the evening before they are all taken and each individual could be moved on by the police at four in the morning. The cheapest paid for accommodation was the 'two penny hangover' where the lodgers sat in rows on benches with a rope stretched along the row. The lodgers slept with

their arms over the rope to stop them falling off the benches. The rope was cut at five in the morning. For a charge of four pence accommodation known as 'the coffin' was available, which as the name implies was a wooden box with a canvas cover, complete with bugs. The best of the accommodation on offer was the common lodging houses with varying charges between seven pence and one and a penny per night.

One observation Orwell (1933/2001) makes is that it is impossible for single men to form relationships because they have no space of their own in which to meet other people. Men and women who did not have permanent accommodation were kept apart, even if married.

Orwell's other book reviewed for this research, *The Road to Wigan Pier* (Orwell, 1937/2001a), follows a sociological investigation of the living conditions of working people in industrial Yorkshire and Lancashire at the time of high unemployment due to economic depression. Consequently this book offers a different perspective on housing to *Down and Out in Paris and London*.

Again as in the work of Orwell (1933/2001) and London (1903/2013) the precariousness of the poor or working people is central to the text. The ability of working people to maintain suitable shelter is illustrated as a capacity to maintain the employment that provides the money to pay the rent. Chapter Four of the book provides an in depth view of housing conditions across the industrial north, many of which are of a very poor standard. He describes in detail a number of dwellings in Wigan, Barnsley and Sheffield.

Researched at the request of publisher Victor Gollancz and published in 1937, just prior to the start of World War Two, Orwell describes how at that time there was a serious housing shortage which meant that people were prepared to accept substandard housing rather than be made homeless. As Orwell describes, it is not housing that is in short supply but affordable housing. He comments that although legislation has been passed that condemns housing unfit for human habitation:

> They cannot order it to be pulled down till the tenant has another house to go to; and so the condemned houses remain standing and are all the worse for being condemned, because naturally the landlord will not spend more than he can help on a house which is going to be demolished sooner or later' (p47).

He does acknowledge that there was the start of 'corporation' house building citing an example of one thousand three hundred and ninety eight houses under construction in Sheffield in 1936. However, he states, that in order to replace Sheffield's slums at that time one hundred thousand houses were needed. Orwell provides a vivid account of the reasons that council housing was needed and also evidence of housing standards and shortages in the 1930s. This view can be seen in Chapter 5 of this thesis where development of the slums was restricted by the ability to build new houses to replace the slums.

In 1984 journalist Beatrix Campbell published *Wigan Pier Re-visited* (Campbell, 1984). She followed the original Orwell journey of *The Road to Wigan Pier* and like him stayed in the houses of ordinary people and talked to them about their lives. She described how her 'compulsion' for the journey was that she felt the 'depression' of the 1980s, was not dissimilar to the 'depression' of the 1930s, when Orwell wrote the original *Wigan Pier*, even though the causes may have differed. Campbell says of the difference between herself and Orwell:

> Though nearly 50 years later I have followed a similar route to Orwell's, his book is all we share. He was an upper-class old Etonian, a southern ex-colonial. I'm from the north, from the working-class. Like him, I'm white, I'm a jobbing journalist; unlike him, I'm a feminist. I grew up among the kind of communists and socialists who guided him into the working-class communities and who staff some of their struggles. Politics is to me what privilege was to him. (p5)

Campbell recognised that Orwell's journey was described from a male perspective and was consequently mostly about how poverty affected men. She was equally interested in the effects of poverty on women. While Orwell's journey starts with a description of life in a lodging house for male itinerants hers starts in a refuge for battered women. She likened the women's refuge to the men's hostel highlighting the similarity of being cut off

from the life previously experienced and sinking into a life of poverty, both financial and social. Campbell, although clear about her interest in the lives of women did not restrict her journey to observing just women. During her journey she stayed in the homes of all types of working class families: men and women; black and white; old and young. What Campbell does provide is a first-hand critique of the type of housing which grew from the slum clearances and consequent re-housing of people in the 1950s and 1960s. She is able to give perspectives of life in the crowded council estates and tower blocks from the experiences of people who live in them. These descriptions, although set in a different housing type to those of Orwell's *Road to Wigan Pier*, are not so different in that both books are set to a backdrop of high unemployment and economic changes affecting the industries that the people of the towns visited (Coventry, Sunderland, Wigan and Bradford) were reliant on.

The starkness of the council estates is summed up by Campbell as 'blind alleys' because in her view they cannot be described as streets. Her reasoning is that streets have shops and pubs with places for people to gather. The council estates of her experience lacked the facilities needed to support a community.

The subject of 'right to buy' was fresh in the minds of people in the early 1980s. Campbell says that the people she talked to did not want to own their own home; they just wanted decent housing that they could feel they had some control over.

Part of Campbell's description of women's lives illustrates the way in which women, isolated in their roles as mothers and house-keepers started a movement of self-help to enable them to participate in life outside the home. In the early 1980s there were few facilities that allowed working-class mothers to work. These self-help groups included setting up food co-ops, play groups and tenants groups. This has resonance for me as my first experience of involvement in community development was as a member of a women's self-support project in Hesters Way. In this group we shared childcare, organised education and training and fun activities and social

occasions for both children and adults. This group was organised by women, for women much as Campbell describes in *Wigan Pier Revisited*. The group I helped organise sowed the seed for later community development and tenants groups in the Hesters Way area and quite a few of the women involved went on to find employment in community organisations.

Another three books, although not written contemporaneously, do provide personal insights into living on newly built council estates. The first of these is a memoir by Ruby Dunn who describes her life growing up and then going on to work as a teacher on the Moulsecoomb estate to the north-east of Brighton between 1922 and 1947. Her experience enables a comprehensive account of the early days of this estate and how it developed (Dunn, 1990).

Ruby Dunn's family was moved to the estate when Ruby was 18 months old. Her parents had told her that they were unhappy in the overcrowded tenement in Brighton town centre and her mother had persuaded her father that they should try to get one of the new council houses:

> Dad thought it would be worth investigating and Mum liked what she saw. The semi-detached houses were set in a valley, looking more like country cottages. Mum was a country woman at heart, having spent her childhood in a village. Dad thought the rent was very high, but there were three nice bedrooms, and a big garden, and lighting and cooking was by electricity, which was the very latest fashion. So Mum tried a little persuasion, offering to help with expenses by earning money at home, if he would agree to take them away from the terrible family upstairs. Their name was added to the waiting list and they moved into 8 The avenue in the summer of 1922 (p5).

Ruby Dunn's father was a printer which meant that whilst her family was not the poorest on the estate they were also not considered well off. Her description of her early life includes not eating on a Saturday until her father arrived with his wages which enabled the family to go to the shops to buy the week's groceries:

> On Fridays we children went a bit short of food so that Dad could have a good meal in front of him. This meant that we had a bowl of bread soaked in Oxo gravy, or just one egg… Dad had to work on Saturday morning till one o'clock before

he got his pay. Before one o'clock we were all waiting for him
with empty shopping baskets on the door of the print shop.
When Dad appeared with his pay packet it did not stay in his
pocket very long (p19).

Dunn tells how the Moulsecoomb estate was situated between Brighton and open countryside. Being so close to the countryside was, in Dunn's opinion, a bonus but the estate lacked community facilities for many years after the houses were completed and occupied. There were no social facilities until the local church addressed this problem by providing a hall that could be used for social functions as well as groups such as scouts, the Women's Institute and a Sunday school. In this way the people housed there were initially isolated; living next to people they had not previously known without the means to get to know each other easily. The housing itself, however, was superior to the tenements that had previously housed the families moved onto the estate.

Ruby describes how the children, even the very young, had to walk long distances to school. The estate is two miles from Brighton centre and the children had to attend the schools, in Brighton, that they had attended prior to their move to the estate. When Ruby was seven a temporary primary school was built on the estate and a permanent school provided when she was ten. Ruby, after passing her eleven plus exams, went as a scholarship girl to Grammar School and then to teacher training college from where she graduated as a qualified teacher in 1941, with her first teaching post in Brighton town centre. After the Second World War she returned to Moulsecoomb Primary School where she taught until 1947, when she left teaching to raise her children.

The Moulsecoomb estate still exists today although Dunn says that since her parents no longer live there, she has never been back to visit it. At the time of the 2001 census the Moulsecoomb estate showed as being within the worst five percent most socially deprived in England (Census Data,2011).

The second memoir reviewed is that of Iain Waites in *Middlefield: a postwar council estate in time* (Waites, 2017). The book is designed to capture a portrayal of the Middlefield estate in Gainsborough, Lincolnshire. This book

traces the experience of the author from 1964 when his family moved onto the estate. His is mostly a photographic history, but with a narrative from Waites to accompany the photographs.

Waites was born in 1961 and in his earliest life lived in a Victorian terrace which he describes as a slum. He remembers the first viewing of the council house where his family was re-housed in 1964. He says that he recognised the newness of the houses through the smell of fresh putty and wood. He describes how features such as an indoor toilet, a bathroom and hot and cold running water were a great novelty to his family. It is possible that as at the time he was only three years old some of these earliest memories were provided by his parents.

Gainsborough is a port town and although having only 17,000 inhabitants it suffered significant destruction during World War Two. The building of the Middlefield estate was part of the town council's response to provide decent housing for those people displaced by the bombings.

Waites explains how the estate was built, like many others at the time, on farmland bought by the council under compulsory purchase. The estate, like the Moulsecoomb estate described above, was therefore next to open countryside. The estate followed the design typical of the 1960s, then considered modern and acceptable. Many of them were maisonettes, all were indistinguishable from each other. There were, he says, cut-throughs or ways through the estate that were narrow channels edged by fencing, walls or hedging that only residents knew the way through to find their way around the estate.

Middlefield is described, by Waites, in the 1960s, as a friendly community. There were parks and play areas and, as they were so close to the countryside, places where children would meet and make 'dens'. Waites describes how the residents kept their doors open:

> When the sun shone down on Middlefield, the front doors would be thrown open to let some warmth and air into the homes. The sun would stream in through the door so bright it made the carpet patterns quiver under its force. People sat out

in the sun on their doorsteps while kids bombed up and down
the footpaths on their bikes. (p64)

Facilities were good, even including a communal television aerial installed in the centre of the estate in 1965. He says that when the families first moved into the estate there were few complaints except that there was no bus service into town. This complaint was quickly addressed.

Waites re-visited the estate as part of his research for the book and says that it has changed little, except it is less clean and seems less friendly.

Lynsey Hanley's *Estates: An Intimate History* (1988/2007) combines an insight into her own experience of living on council estates as well as a social history of the evolution of council estates generally. Hanley grew up on the Wood estate on the edge of Birmingham. The building of the estate was completed in 1969 and Hanley's family moved onto the estate in the mid-1970s. Hanley herself lived on the Wood estate for 17 years and she now lives on an inner city estate in the east end of London.

Her knowledge of both past and present social housing demonstrates how her own lived experience has aided her understanding of the subject. This provides the reader with a clearer idea of the reality of life on a council estate. Also evident is her empathy with the many people who live in these situations and how little their voices or feelings are taken into account when these places are designed and built. Equally, the people who live on council estates are those who have the least choice in relation to their housing. She says:

> The point is that most people now have a surfeit of choice in
> their lives at the same time as a large minority of people have
> none. That large minority tend to live on council estates,
> whether in cities or outside of them. The fifty percent of poor
> people who are home owners also tend to live on council
> estates, as beneficiaries of the 'right to buy' policy. Proof, if
> any were needed, that a property-owning democracy doesn't
> necessarily mean an equal one. (p4)

In her early life, Hanley says, she was unaware of a lot of the problems that surrounded her. The Wood estate was simply the place where she lived. It was not until she left Birmingham and experienced other places and other

ways of living that her understanding and interest in council estate living developed.

Like many estates built during the 1950s and 1960s the Wood when first occupied had few community facilities. There was a school, a library and a shopping area and although the estate, with 60,000 people living there, was as large as many towns there was nowhere in the original design for people to meet socially. It took two years of pressure from the residents for a pub to be built on the estate.

When built the Wood was so large that it was able to accommodate everyone on Birmingham's housing waiting list. The size of the estate can be imagined as Hanley recounts the memories of some of the oldest residents telling her how people got lost looking for their own homes. This she says was not simply because of the extreme size of the estate but also because of its uniformity. The older residents also remember how difficult it was to create a community on the estate. This was partly due to the fact that new tenants were from so many parts of Birmingham; everyone was a stranger to each other, but also because the council was not concerned about community believing that people would eventually do that for themselves. Hanley describes how it seemed as though community was sacrificed for improved housing. Consequently it took a long time for people to be truly comfortable living there.

This need for housing to be an integral and equal part of a community is a theme which continues through the book; she is concerned that even where social housing is of a decent standard to live in one still labels people as less than those who can afford their own home elsewhere. She says:

> My vision – my hope – for the future of social housing is simple. I want it to come to be regarded as an integral part of the national housing stock, and not something that is seen as shameful. I want the desirability of home ownership not to come at the cost of denigrating council housing at every turn (p230).

During the 20th century working-class housing has provided a backdrop for a number of fictional works. Some of these, like the memoirs mentioned

above, draw on the authors' own experiences. The home can be central to a life story and certainly during the 20th century the central protagonists are just as likely to be working-class as middle or upper class. The representation of housing is important in fiction because it reflects social change and says a lot about people's lives. As an example four 20th century novels about working class life have been reviewed. These are set at different times along the working-class housing continuum and they highlight that although housing has changed, the lives of people living in that housing has changed less. These books were chosen as a sample because they tell stories of working class housing that spans most of the 20th century.

Just as the Victorian poverty and slums resulted in fiction portraying the poor housing and living conditions of the working class at the time of industrialisation the depression of the 1930s and the de-industrialisation of the 1980s also resulted in social commentary in fiction. One of the earlier examples of this is Walter Greenwood's *Love on the Dole* published in 1933 (Greenwood, 1933/2014).

The literature written that comments on housing condition has a political perspective and often follows significant changes that affect the working-classes. It is no accident that books such as *Love on the Dole* were written during one of the worst economic depressions in living memory. The 1930s presented a harsh time for those working-class people who were not privileged enough to acquire the 'homes fit for heroes' built after World War One.

Love on the Dole follows the lives of residents of an area known as Hanky Park, in Salford, during the 1920s and 1930s. There are many descriptions of the poor quality of the housing, including the overcrowding resulting in teenage brothers and sisters sharing beds and families with more than ten children all sharing one bedroom. One reason for the overcrowding is the need for families to rent out rooms in their homes in order to be able to afford the rent.

At the start of the book although poverty is prevalent amongst the book's characters most of them are in work. The employment is mostly in mining or

factories. As the book progresses more and more of them lose their employment as the economic depression gets worse. Apart from providing a harsh portrayal of working class housing at that period the book also describes how the unemployed initially were given a fixed amount of 'dole' per person. As unemployment became much higher many of the characters lost their 'dole' payments because of the introduction of the 'Means Test'. The 'Means Test', instead of making individual payments to the unemployed assessed the income of the total household and paid accordingly. Stephanie Ward in *Unemployment and the State in Britain: The Means Test and Protest in 1930s South Wales and North-East England* says that the Means Test which was part of the Government's economy programme, was a hated piece of legislation which affected those areas of Britain which had the highest levels of long-term unemployment. This included areas such as Salford in the north of England (Ward, 2015).

By 1955, when Robert Tressell's *Ragged Trousered Philanthropists* was first published the welfare state had been introduced. Tressell wrote a fictionalised study of the realities of life as a tradesman (Tressell, 1955). The book does show the precarious nature of employment in the painting/decorating trade and how maintaining rented property was dependent on continual employment. An example in Chapter 12 of the book describes how families are often forced into renting out rooms within their already small accommodation in order to afford the rent and how this provides a problem when the tenant moves out suddenly or doesn't pay the rent. The book reflects the constant worry of workers to earn enough to pay rent. This aspect of renting out rooms to afford rent, even when it meant creating overcrowding situations, is a theme that plays an integral role in Greenwood's Love on the Dole as is highlighted above.

The 1980s saw a new type of women's writing, part of the second-wave feminist movement, which made a claim to be literature by, about and for women. This included working-class women's fiction writings and of necessity, as they were about women, encompassed sometimes harsh depictions of home life and poverty. This concentration on home and poverty

was of particular relevance as it followed the *1980 Housing Act* and covered the economic depression of the 1980s.

One of these women writers was Pat Barker. Barker's first novel, *Union Street*, published in 1982 is set in the early 1970s in a mining town in north eastern England when the start of de-industrialisation was creating a new type of poverty (Barker, 1982/2014). The housing backdrop is a street made up of Victorian terraces; many of the surrounding streets are full of boarded up houses waiting for demolition; the previous tenants having been moved onto new council housing estates. The residents of Union Street are those who have not been fortunate enough to be housed by the council. The book covers the stories of seven women's lives and is harsh in its realistic depiction of poverty. Set in 1973, at the time of a miners' strike, what it also shows is that Union Street is a precarious community and the novel is explicitly violent in parts, with poverty and worklessness as one of the main focusses. Although housing is not the central aspect of the book, there are enough descriptions included, of living conditions, to provide a picture of the deprivation experienced living in sub-standard housing that had been identified for demolition as part of a slum clearance programme.

Another example of women writers is Livi Michael whose *Under a Thin Moon* is also set in the north of England on a Manchester council estate (Michael, 1994). This novel, set on a large council estate is primarily about underprivileged working class women. Some of the descriptions of the housing and the communal areas are evocative of the estates described by Hanley in *Estates; an Intimate History* and of Campbell's description in *Wigan Pier Revisited* of women being marooned on the estate, surrounded by people but isolated nevertheless. The estate in Michael's novel is mostly made up of high rise flats and there are descriptions of the reality of living in mass housing where many of the residents do not care about their surroundings; where the lifts often do not work and the stairwells are full of litter and smell of urine. There are also descriptions of the gangs of young people always present near the shared entrance to the 'block' intimidating residents for their own amusement. The main protagonists are four women whose stories have poverty, hatred of their housing and isolation in common.

These women are seen coping with these issues which gives them a similarity of identity even though their circumstances and life histories are different.

In writing *Under a Thin Moon* Michael has drawn on her own personal experience of living in a high rise block of flats and also of being the daughter of a single parent and being an unemployed single parent herself. Her knowledge of the lives of women living in poverty is helped by her involvement in community and women's organisations (Michael, 2016).

4.3 Television Programmes

In the early part of the second decade of the 21st century a number of television documentaries were produced across the BBC, Channel 4 and Channel 5 advertised as offering an insight into the lives of individuals and families who were claiming welfare benefits. These programmes were broadcast whilst the *2012 Welfare Reform Act* was being finalised and just after its introduction. This Act made major changes to the welfare benefits system including introducing Universal Credits and capping the amount of money that people could claim in housing benefits.

One of these programmes, *We all Pay Your Benefits (2013)*, introduced by Nick Hewer and Margaret Mountford and produced by the BBC in November 2013, brought welfare benefit claimants together with people who had never claimed any benefits. The aim of the programme was for the non-claimants to assess whether the people they met were 'deserving' or 'undeserving'. This produced a mixed response as it was clear that the range of people in receipt of welfare benefits is more wide ranging than the 'skivers' and 'scroungers' often portrayed by the popular newspapers. This meant that some of the non-claimants, those whose taxes are in effect paying for the benefits, were able to change their pre-conceptions about benefit claimants. It was certainly the case that by the end of the series there were more people assessed as 'deserving' than as 'undeserving'.

Trouble on the Estate (2012) was a BBC Panorama broadcast aired on September 11th 2012. It was introduced by Richard Bilton who asks the question whether this programme, filmed on the Shadsworth Estate on the edge of Blackburn, is a typical illustration of 'Broken Britain', a term used frequently by Conservative politicians when introducing the 2012 Act. The Panorama team filmed part of the programme undercover and showed drug dealing, joblessness, anti-social behaviour and family break-ups. The programme caused a reaction, particularly from people living in Shadsworth. For example, *The Guardian* (2012) newspaper reported on 2nd October 2012 with quotes from residents who say that although they admit to drug problems and other anti-social activities there is a more positive side to the estate. Shadsworth, they say, is a suburb like any other in any other town; it has good facilities and a lot of community activity. *The Guardian* says that the biggest difference is that it is a council estate with 39% of children living in poverty and 42% of adults lacking formal qualifications. Via the Guardian article the residents say that they 'felt a sense of betrayal, outrage and disappointment towards *Trouble on the Estate* which they consider to be blatantly prejudiced'

A Channel 5 series, which included *Shoplifters and Proud* and *Pickpockets and Proud*, gave us *On Benefits and Proud (2012)*. At the start of the programme they ask the question: 'Britain's jobless get £100 million in benefits every day – so are benefits right or are they wrong?'. This question implied a debate or at least a discussion on the subject, but this did not happen. The programme claimed that individuals and families included in the broadcast are representative of benefit claimants, but this was not the case. For example, one participant, Heather, has 11 children and requires a new home big enough for her large family. Heather says 'anyone is going to be happy when they get a brand new home, aren't they?', but despite this the programme's voiceover says that Heather was unimpressed with her new home. Also by stating that Heather, with 11 children, is representative of welfare benefit claimants is very misleading as statistics show that less than 2% of the 1.3 million families on benefits in the United Kingdom have five or more children. Another person included in the programme, Julie, was

described as a 'work-shy lay about' even though she is on long term sick and previous to this always had full employment.

What this programme did in effect was mislead the viewing public into believing that the people portrayed are typical benefit claimants. As Nick Stephenson, a writer with the online blog *UnemployedNet*, said, in *Huffpost* on 16th October:

> This programme is complicit in the same misleading idea that welfare and unemployment are at the root of the country's banking-caused financial problems. Cracking down on tax avoidance and evasion could bring in £120 billion each year according to Tax Research LLP. That figure would plug the entire UK deficit. So why aren't Channel 5 making programmes about this? (Huffington Post (2012).

A longer running series again produced by the BBC was *Saints and Scroungers (2015)*. The first series of this programme started in August 2009 and the seventh series finished in October 2015. A total of 145 episodes were shown on daytime television. The series is about welfare benefits and it focuses on two distinct groups of people: the 'saints' those people who help the vulnerable who need and deserve assistance and the benefit's they receive; and the 'scroungers' who they show as claimants who are fraudulent. Consequently the programme whilst distinguishing between the 'deserving' and the 'undeserving' completely ignores the majority of welfare benefit claimants who do not fit into their definitions of either saints or scroungers, but are ordinary people living on a low income.

Perhaps the best known and talked about television programme on this subject is *Benefits Street* (2014) – a Channel 4 'fly on the wall' documentary which showed nine episodes over two series between January 2014 and June 2015. Filmed in James Turner Street in Winson Green, Birmingham, the programme was made in response to The Guardian and The Daily Mail reporting that 90% of the residents on that street were claiming welfare benefits.

The series followed a year in the life of some of the residents of James Turner Street. It suggests that this street is the most benefit dependent street in Britain and that people living there lack any motivation to change in order to find employment. Some episodes show residents committing crimes, such as shoplifting. The programme claims to be showing community spirit that exists in these circumstances and makes a celebrity of White Dee a resident seen as the street's matriarch. White Dee, real name Deirdre Kelly, appeared on a number of chat shows following the series and was included as a resident in the Big Brother house in 2014. White Dee, on 30th March 2015, made it clear in *The Guardian* newspaper that although the programme had provided her with celebrity status it was not overall a positive experience for James Turner Street saying: "This documentary turned our street into a tourist attraction". They turned us into figures of hate. We were liked by a lot of people, but we were also hated by a lot of people" (The Guardian, 2015).

The programme resulted in much debate including the then Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, Iain Duncan Smith, saying in the House of Commons on 13th January 2014 that the programme justified the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition Government's changes to welfare benefits being made by the *2012 Welfare Reform Act*. Two days later Conservative MP Simon Hart said in Parliament that 'a street of the type seen in *Benefits Street* existed in every constituency in the land'.

Benefits Street also resulted in a live debate on Channel 4 which claimed to have a panel which represented the political spectrum plus benefit claimants. Shown on 17 February 2014 the programme *Benefits Britain: The Debate* was preceded by a documentary *Benefits Britain: The Last Word.* The panel members for the debate were John Bird, Mehdi Hasan, Alison Penson from the *Huffington Post,* Chris Bryant from the Labour Party, Mike Pennington from the Department for Work and Pensions, and journalist Owen Jones. Owen Jones described the programme as 'a rowdy, chaotic show, based on the formula of 'who shouts loudest'' (Jones, 2014).

The *Birmingham Mail* (2014) reported that residents felt that they had been misled into taking part in the programme quoting one resident as saying:

> 'They told me it was about living as a community and how we all got along. But the actual programme doesn't show any of that. If they'd said it was about benefits and making the street look bad I would not have taken part. They tricked us'

A fly on the wall documentary with a similar theme was *The Estate (2012)*, produced by the BBC and aired on BBC1 between March and May 2012. The programme followed a year in the lives of families living on the Ballysally council estate in Coleraine, Northern Ireland. This estate is home to over 3000 people and has twice the national average of people living on welfare benefits. This programme appeared to be honest in its portrayal of the real people filmed for the series and it managed, unlike Benefits Street, to present a much more positive view of the families included. The overall topic for the series was how different families living there coped with the recession. It dealt with unemployment, poverty, substance abuse, young people and many other issues but also managed to show a community with spirit and hope for the future.

What these examples show is that programmes that claim to portray people on benefits are not necessarily presenting an honest illustration of the lives of real people on benefits and living on housing estates. Certainly comments made by residents included in the programmes indicate that important parts of their stories were edited out. This opinion is borne out by the Cheltenham residents' response when discussing this in a focus group.

The television programmes discussed in this section are collectively known as poverty porn or poverty propaganda. The term generally relates to any media, both print and film, that exploits the lives of poor people to increase sales or viewers.

Tracy Shildrick provides the following defintion:

> Poverty propaganda comprises a series of messages that work to stigmatise and negatively label people experiencing poverty or

other forms of disadvantage as undeserving or culpable for their own predicament (Shildrick, 2018).

Shildrick goes on to suggest that poverty propaganda takes different forms but that all of them reinforce societal ideas that there are groups which are lazy and workshy or deviating from the 'norm' in some other way; this to the extent where they do not deserve support.

Lisa McKenzie describes it as: "The prurient fascination of just how badly behaved the poor have become, with particular lens focused on those claiming benefits" (McKenzie, 2015). She says that there is a lack of proof that people on out of work benefits are, in general, 'work-shy' and that current work patterns that provide zero hours or short term contracts are in the main contributing to the need for people to be claiming benefits, quite often short-term. She also claims that the rhetoric provided through New Labor's message that people 'exclude' themselves through bad behavior or the Conservatives 'broken Britain' narrative have been the central contributor to the television viewer's hunger for programmes such as *Benefits Street* and *We all Pay Your Benefits.*

4.4 Conclusion

This second literature review chapter has provided a perspective of people who have had experience, either directly or indirectly of working-class homelessness and/or housing. This has been possible because the majority of publications included in this chapter have been written by those who either lived in working-class housing or spoke to, or studied, the people who did. This provides a valuable addition to the research as it allows a comparison between what people were saying about their housing then and what they are saying now. It also reinforces the views of Cheltenham's council estate residents gathered through the interviews and focus groups and provided in Chapter 6.

The following chapter is central to the thesis as it is very specifically about the case study area of Cheltenham; providing a history and background. This, Chapter 5, also sets the context for Chapter 6 which contains the discourses directly concerned with Cheltenham.

CHAPTER 5:   CHELTENHAM BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

5.1   Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of the Borough of Cheltenham and the rationale for the choice of the town as a case study area. The decision to use Cheltenham as a case study area was primarily determined by my professional interest in the poorer parts of the town and the people who live there. Secondly, and of equal importance, is that Cheltenham is quite unique in the way it has developed. It is virtually a new town in a historical context. The discovery of mineral spa waters, in 1716, escalated Cheltenham from a small market town to the sizeable town that exists now. The town has based much of its economy on wealth, or rather attracting people with money to the town, either as residents or visitors. Other English spa towns, such as Harrogate in Yorkshire and Lemington in Warwickshire, developed in much the same way, rising from obscurity to prominence due to the discovery of mineral springs. Even in this, though, Cheltenham proves unique as in parallel to the development of the spa town it became an important manufacturing centre. This is further discussed in Section 5.2.

This chapter will demonstrate the contrast between the widely accepted view of Cheltenham as a wealthy town and the reality of the poverty that exists within its boundaries. Also of interest to this case study is that whilst other research has concentrated on social housing estates within large urban cities, Cheltenham is a medium sized town surrounded by rural Gloucestershire. It is a place where the polarisation of wealth and poverty is palpable and a town which is relatively new. This provides a different context enabling the research to make a unique contribution to knowledge on the subject of working-class housing.

Cheltenham is a spa town and borough in Gloucestershire, located on the edge of the Cotswolds at the northern point of the South West region of England. At the time of the 2011 census it had a population of 115,700. Locally known as a 'town within a park' Cheltenham is celebrated for its literature, music, jazz and science festivals (Cheltenham Festivals, 2017) as

well as the National Hunt Festival held at Cheltenham Racecourse every March (The Jockey Club 2017). It is also popular for its retail offering and its vibrant night-time economy. This means that Cheltenham is viewed from the outside as a destination that is attractive to those with money.

In preparation for this chapter a number of books relating to Cheltenham's history were reviewed. Some of these are contemporaneous and some look retrospectively at the town's history. These publications provided the background required to understand the rapid way in which Cheltenham developed from an insignificant market town to a nationally, and even internationally, recognised resort for the wealthy after 1716.

Cheltenham came to prominence following the discovery of mineral springs in 1716 and developed initially as a health resort. Over the 300 years since the discovery of the mineral waters Cheltenham has gained a reputation as an affluent town that provides for the middle and upper classes in terms, not only of its spa waters, but also entertainment, shops, education and quality housing. Housing estates built in the past to provide for the housing needs of the wealthy wanting to live in Cheltenham include the Lansdown and Pittville estates. Other areas of Cheltenham developed following the discovery of the waters include the Promenade, Cheltenham's premier shopping street, and Montpellier, a specialist shopping, eating and residential area, aimed at those with money. (Jones, 2010)

Cheltenham is considered one of the richest towns in the United Kingdom; in 2011 it was rated fourth highest in a mapping of multi-millionaires per 100,000 people. The report showed that there were 41 multi-millionaires living within the borough (Burn-Murdoch, 2012). It is also considered one of the most desirable places to live and in 2006 The Independent newspaper reported that a house valuation survey carried out by the online company Property Price Advice (2017) ranked Cheltenham the number one place to live out of 1,833 locations in Britain (Thompson, 2006). Additionally, in August 2016 the *Telegraph* (2016) carried out a survey based on criteria such as schools, housing, leisure activities and housing and named Cheltenham the best place to bring up children in the UK.

There is, however, another side to Cheltenham. It is a town where wealth and poverty are visibly polarised. This creates additional difficulties for those living in deprivation as the outside world perceives Cheltenham to be a wealthy town. The world does not perceive Cheltenham to have high levels of deprivation and this has often made it difficult for agencies to make the case for funding and support to address issues caused by poverty.

Whilst the public face of Cheltenham reflects wealth the other side of Cheltenham has deprivation indicators demonstrating very high levels of poverty and a continuing widening of the gap between wealth and poverty. There is nothing unique about Cheltenham's decline and consequent increase in areas of multiple deprivation, which is when different types of deprivation, for example lack of education, poor health, high crime levels, high unemployment or poor housing are combined into one overall measure of deprivation. Cheltenham was once well known as a manufacturing town at the centre of the aircraft industry (Jones, 2010; Brooks, 2003). As discussed in Chapter 3, Britain's manufacturing needs have been transferred to other parts of the world where production is cheaper and Britain has turned away from its industrial/manufacturing base towards a knowledge economy based around services. A study of Cheltenham's census data and local unemployment figures provide an indication of the globalisation and resulting residualisation phenomenon discussed in Section 3.2.3, existing within Cheltenham's social housing estates. (Census data 1951 – 2011; Maiden data, Gloucestershire County Council, 2014)

A good illustration of the polarisation between wealth and poverty can be seen within child poverty data from the 2011 census. Child poverty levels in four of Cheltenham's wards are amongst the highest in the UK, falling within the worst 10%. The highest of these is St Pauls with child poverty levels of 34.61%. This compares with five of the wealthier wards where child poverty levels fall below the government target of 10% with the lowest being only 3.93% (End Child Poverty, 2017). Appendix 6, illustrates the deprivation geography of Cheltenham.

Another example of how Cheltenham is divided between wealth and poverty is that sections of the Lansdown estate, built to house the wealthy during the 19th Century (Jones, 2010) are now made up of social housing, since the Guinness Trust purchased parts of Lansdown Crescent in the late 1970s. Other sections are given over to private rented accommodation where some of the large houses have been converted into flats. Lansdown is the only Cheltenham ward where housing standards fall within the lowest quintile in England (Maiden data, Gloucestershire County Council, 2014).

Whilst other parts of the United Kingdom have used their poverty to gain funding to improve their areas Cheltenham had not up until the 1990s used issues relating to poverty to gain government support. It has been the will of the ordinary residents of the poorer parts of Cheltenham, the council estates, which have made the borough council take notice and do something about the issues affecting poorer people in the Borough. There were three community regeneration partnerships set up in Cheltenham's most deprived areas sitting within the third sector. One of these, in Oakley, ceased to exist in 2016 due to lack of funding, but the other two continue to provide community development within their areas. They operate by bringing together residents and businesses and relevant agencies to identify local issues on which they can base local solutions. The two remaining geographic partnerships are in Hesters Way, the largest of the town's council estates and Cheltenham West End based in Cheltenham's lower high street, the poorest part of the town centre. Equally important is Cheltenham Partnership which brings together third and public sector agencies to identify and provide for needs of people within the poorest communities within Cheltenham (Hesters Way Partnership, 2017; Cheltenham West End Partnership, 2017; Cheltenham Borough Council, 2017).

It has been with this polarisation in mind that the research has concentrated on Cheltenham as it contrasts with similar research carried out in urban conurbations, such as London boroughs, where poverty predominates and the comparisons between wealth and poverty are not so visible. This polarisation of wealth and poverty provides a unique opportunity to

understand a situation different to those made in major urban social housing where poverty predominates and is separate from wealthier areas which in turn means that the contrast between affluence and deprivation is not as evident. The studies reviewed have not raised this as an issue even though there are likely to be examples of such polarisation elsewhere in the United Kingdom.

Cheltenham's written history concentrates, in the main, on those elements that chronicle the town's rise to prominence since the discovery of the mineral wells in 1716 therefore supporting the view of Cheltenham as wealthy and middle class. Even into the 21st century, although housing and industrial developments are chronicled, there is very little mentioned about the social history of Cheltenham's poorer residents. However, Jones (2010) and Hart (1965) do provide us with an alternative view describing housing and industrial developments that recognise the other side of Cheltenham. Very little has been written about the working classes who would have been housed and living in Cheltenham since medieval times. Cheltenham has always been a town of two halves and it has always been the wealthier half that has predominated. This research provides an opportunity to bring together the information both historic and current to deliver a view of Cheltenham that contrasts with the popular one.

5.2 Cheltenham's History

5.2.1 Local History

In total 27 local history books were reviewed to provide a background to the history of the town and in the hope that some of these might give an insight into the lives of Cheltenham people. This was not the case unfortunately as the majority of the books are mostly concerned with buildings and famous people. However, the review has enabled an understanding of how Cheltenham grew, in a relatively short time, from a small market town in the early 18th century, when the mineral springs were discovered, to a town with more than 100,000 residents by the end of the 20th century. The town can

be seen to be built initially on its attraction as a health resort for the wealthy and then becoming a place of residence for less wealthy gentlefolk and retired military and civil servants from Britain's occupation of countries within the British Empire.

A few of the books reviewed mention housing issues and public health and these along with contemporaneous newspaper reports have provided a sense of the problems surrounding the poor quality of housing for the working classes, particularly through the 19th and into the 20th centuries. Some also record the council's purchase of farm land to the west and north of the town on which were built the majority of council houses.

Of the 27 total books reviewed four are contemporaneous, written during the 19th century. Three of these contain guides of Cheltenham and surrounding areas. The one book which is wholly a history of Cheltenham (Norman, 1868/2017) includes a very detailed chronology that goes to February 1868, the year of the book's publication.

Norman (1868/2017) provides some interesting facts about Cheltenham's past. For example, the area's main trade was the farm crop of tobacco and this crop provided the main income for the town from the Civil War of the 1640s until the *1652 Act of Parliament Prohibiting the Planting of Tobacco in England.* Cheltenham and the neighbouring town of Winchcombe held out against this piece of legislation as tobacco was so important to the economy of the area. This resulted in Parliament reacting strongly and although Cheltenham and its surrounds held out for a number of years after the 1652 Act government action was put in place. As Norman describes:

> The inhabitants, so loyal upon other occasions, did not tamely submit to be deprived of a trade that had proved so lucrative. The order for putting in force the enactment was entrusted to the authorities of Gloucester. A regiment of soldiers entered the town and commenced the work of destroying the plantations. The inhabitants defended themselves bravely and the soldiers, who were mounted on horses, were glad to beat a retreat. (p227)

Norman tells us that against the wishes of Parliament and the Crown who were keen to support the tobacco plantations in Virginia, America,

Cheltenham and Winchcombe continued to grow tobacco, in quantity, up until the end of the 17th century with some smaller growers continuing until much later. In providing this information Norman contributes greatly to the social history of the town and tells us what working people were employed doing.

Also contemporaneous were Frognall and Ruff (1803/2017) and Rowe (1845/1991) who both describe walks around the town providing a picture of Cheltenham at the height of its fame as a spa town. Also providing similar information is an anonymous publication, undated, but with information suggesting its publication as during the second half of the 19th century because of some of the dates mentioned. All three of these present a picture of Cheltenham as an attractive town for visitors. None of them mention the poorer part of the town or its industries or trades.

The most recent of the local history books reviewed (Jones, 2010), is also the one that provides the most inclusive history of the town. This is because it does include both employment and housing history in addition to those aspects of Cheltenham's history contained in the other books.

Jones provides information to show that by 1930 the council had built 972 houses in response in main to the *1919 Housing and Town Planning Act* which introduced subsidies for council housing to be built; the *1923 Housing Act* which introduced a subsidy to encourage private builders to provide working class homes; and the *1924 Housing (Financial Provisions) Act* which introduced subsidies that were dependent on contributions from the rates. She also makes the link between the need to provide decent housing and employment to support the growth in population.

She shows that there were, however, tensions between those who wished to see an increase in engineering works to build on what Cheltenham had for many years proved to be its expertise, and those who felt that Cheltenham's genteel image would be damaged by large factories. This did not stop Cheltenham actively advertising for new employers to come to the town with some success. Companies such as Walker Crossweller and Spirax Sarco moved to the town in the 1930s and the existing Cheltenham companies of

H H Martyn and the Gloster Aircraft Company diversified into various companies that eventually became Dowty Rotol which during the 1960s, 70s and 80s was one of the largest employers in Gloucestershire. These new employers were encouraged to build in those parts of the town where availability of land made it possible to also build council housing. The Whaddon estate was the first example of this in the 1930s with the Hesters Way estate following later in the 1950s.

Another company which developed in the town was Wynstruments, set up at Staverton Airport after World War Two by Donald Wyn. He used his war time experience as an engineer to buy old aircraft instruments and refurbish them before selling them worldwide. In 2000 Wynstruments published a book to celebrate its 50th year of incorporation. The book provides an overview and celebration of Cheltenham during the 1940s, 50s and 60s with photographs which, unusually for most of Cheltenham's history books, are mostly of people rather than places or buildings. The photographs are mostly also of ordinary people doing ordinary things. This provides a sense of the lives of ordinary Cheltenham people rather than the rich and famous contained in most of the books on Cheltenham. This Wynstruments publication also celebrates Cheltenham's employers both large and small that grew with the town and it consequently fills a gap missing form other books on Cheltenham (Wynstruments, 2000).

Some of the photographs in the Wynstruments publication are also included in Brooks (2012) which provides a photographic illustration of Cheltenham's transformation during the 20th century. Although of interest to those interested in Cheltenham's past and development it fails to provide any significant input to the social history of the town. This is one of a number of books which present a history in photographs. Another example is Whiting (1988) which is much more formal in its presentation of people than the Wynstruments publication.

A good example of those books which provide comprehensive histories of Cheltenham is Pakenham (1971). This book was produced as a companion volume to a MacMillan series on towns and cities across England. Although

mention in the book of employment and housing takes up only one percent of the whole volume it does provide a book that suggests an interest in ordinary people.

A different example is Hart (1963) whose history ceases in the late 19th century. She provides a comprehensive history of the town starting in medieval England which is useful chronologically and also at the end of the volume she gives over two chapters to the work of the 'commissioners' which she shows were responsible for various aspects of public health issues which helps with the back ground on public health issues during the 19th century.

A number of those writing Cheltenham's history reference evidence that there was a settlement in the vicinity occupied by aboriginal Britons. For example, in his *History of Cheltenham* Goding (1888) cites discovery of buried artefacts in July 1832 'which prove the existence of a British burial place in nearly the centre of the parish' (p10). He also tells of a collector of antiquities, W. H. Gomonde Esq., 'a local gentleman who has investigated the antiquities of the neighbourhood, and collected many valuable relics belonging to the town and environs, (and) enumerates from personal observation the remains of two British and one Saxon village, four ancient burial places – British, Roman and Saxon – ten Barrows, five encampments, and two Roman villas' (p10). Goding (1888) and Frognall and Ruff (1809) both agree that the geography of the Cheltenham area with its river and surrounding hills lends itself to a settlement that can provide good agriculture and be easily defended against enemies.

This evidence suggests that Cheltenham was at very least a small settlement which continued to develop and thrive over centuries and certainly by 1086 the Domesday Book provides evidence of this. The four listings in the Domesday Book show Cheltenham as: the manor of Cheltenham under the ownership of the King; the centre of a Domesday 'hundred', an administrative area beneath the level of a county; a township or 'vill', which was an Anglo-Saxon definition of a self-sufficient agricultural territory; and as a church parish. Cheltenham's growth continued over the

next 700 years as a market town, with King Henry III, in 1226, granting Cheltenham the right to hold a market every Thursday, but with many areas, now part of Cheltenham Borough, continuing independently as villages and parishes in their own right.

Cheltenham developed as an agricultural community and until the late 18th century it was little more than one street about one mile long running from what is now Gloucester Road in the west to the London Road in the east. John Leland, a 16th century antiquary, often described as the father of local history, travelled around England and Wales in the mid-16th century describing what he observed and he declared Cheltenham as 'A long town having a market'. His description is probably correct as until the development of Cheltenham following the discovery of the spa waters Cheltenham was little more than what is now the High Street, a mile long development of houses surrounded by fields and farms. This can be found online (Archive, 2016).

It came to its current prominence during the eighteenth century with the discovery of what were then considered health giving springs in 1716. Even so into the 19th century Cheltenham was little more than one street, with new developments underway, as Map 7.2 on page 169, which was published in 1809, illustrates.

The need to make Cheltenham fit for purpose as a spa resort started the development of Cheltenham necessary for the influx of visitors and new streets were added from the high street. The most noteworthy of these is the tree-lined Promenade, now a thriving shopping street, and Well Walk, which led from the original well in Bayshill to the parish church of St Mary, the oldest existing building in the town. The church existed at the time of the Domesday Book in 1086, but was almost completely rebuilt in the early 14th century and with a new spire, nave, aisle and windows little was left of its 11th century or earlier origins (Jones, 2010). The parish church is another proof of the long history of Cheltenham, but the town's major developments started after 1788 following King George III's five-week visit to the town.

King George III, Brook (2003) tells us, stayed during his visit in Fauconberg Lodge, close to the original well on the corner of what is now St George's Road and Bayshill Road. Fauconberg House which was later built on this site in 1847 was purchased by Cheltenham Ladies College in 1870. The King gave Cheltenham his endorsement and the original well became the Royal Well. The endorsement of the King led to major changes and regeneration of the town, leading to the reputation it now has.

Although the mineral spring was first discovered in 1716 major development of the town did not happen until after the visit of King George III in 1788. Little (1952) comments that 'Cheltenham is a town whose present state is so complete a break with its earlier history that no word but 'revolution' can fitly describe the process' (p19). This view, that Cheltenham reinvented itself following the discovery of the mineral springs, is supported by George Rowe in his *Illustrated Cheltenham Guide, 1845* (Rowe, 1845) which provides a contemporary description on how much Cheltenham had developed. Through a series of four walks around Cheltenham he describes the buildings, the streets and businesses and provides an insight into Cheltenham life in the mid-19th century. Much of what he describes relates to the hotels, shops and places of entertainment demonstrating the relationship between the popularity of Cheltenham as a resort for the wealthy and the developing architecture and streetscape.

In his introduction to the *1845 Guide* he describes how the town provides little evidence of its existence prior to its new-found celebrity and none whatsoever of its existence in the eleventh century, saying:

> Since the discovery of the Mineral Springs in 1716, Cheltenham has been gradually rising into importance; the visit of His Majesty King George the Third, with the Royal Family in 1788, gave it great celebrity; and from a mere village it has become one of the most extensive, and certainly, the most elegant town in the Kingdom. A visitor would imagine on reviewing the town that it had arisen in a single night from some fairy's magic influence (Rowe, 1845 /1981).

He also quotes Cheltenham as having a population of 31,411 at the time of the 1841 census, which is 27 % of that of the 2011 census.

Rowe does acknowledge, in one of his walks, the existence of the Cheltenham Union Workhouse, built, as he says, to house 250 inmates carrying out the instructions of the *1834 Poor Law Amendment Act* and of a second 'poor house' which accommodated 150 children. Although, in order to describe the places he includes in the Guide, he must have walked through the poorer side of Cheltenham along the town's Lower High Street he, unfortunately, does not provide us with a description (Rowe, 1845: p89).

The development of Cheltenham as a health and entertainment destination for the wealthy started to decline after the mid-19th century as the fashion for 'taking the waters' was superseded by the new fashion for visiting coastal resorts. Pakenham (1971) describes how the programme of building development changed as there was an increasing demand for smaller houses with lower rents to accommodate the less wealthy, or 'genteelly poor' as she put it.

A letter to the *Examiner* on 5th January 1887 claimed that the town's economy was increasingly reliant on retired military people, particularly those who had served in India, retired commercial people and families with fixed but moderate incomes who were attracted to the town because of the quality of education offered. The 1901 census shows that Cheltenham's population included 24% of retired people compared with the county average of 16%. This indicates a shift in the town's economic base from one that relied primarily on tourism to a place of settlement for the middle and less wealthy upper classes.

The decline of visitors to the town contributed to high unemployment. An *Examiner* report on 20th December 1884 referred to 'large bodies of men, as many as 200 at one time, perambulating the streets seeking relief'. At this time, Cheltenham was not following the trend of industrialisation. The 1901 census shows Cheltenham as largely not industrialised with only 2.9% of the working population employed in engineering and less than 1% in chemicals. 15.5% of the population were employed in building, which supports the point made by Pakenham (1971) on the need for housing for those coming to settle in Cheltenham (1901 census).

Jones (2010), Brooks (2003) and Pakenham (1971) tell us that Cheltenham was not fully industrialised until the 1920s although some light industry did operate in the town prior to that. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries the town was mostly known for decorative metalwork with clothing production, brewing and agriculture also popular occupations.

The best-known company in Cheltenham at that time was H H Martyn founded in 1888 by Herbert Henry Martyn, specialising in stone, marble and wood. By 1910 the company had diversified into decorative plaster, wrought iron work, castings in bronze and metal and stained glass. In 1908 the company received a commission to make the Royal Gates for London's Marble Arch. The company of H H Martyn had a particular reputation for fitting out ocean liners including the Queen Mary in 1935, the Queen Elizabeth in 1939 and the Titanic in 1912. The First World War provided H H Martyn with the opportunity to diversify further when in 1915 it started to build aircraft under sub-contract from Arco (the Aircraft Manufacturing Company). By 1917 H H Martyn and Arco had jointly set up Gloucestershire Aircraft Company (later renamed the Gloster Aircraft Company). By 1920 they were employing over 1,000 members of staff and continued to build aircraft in Cheltenham up until the 1930s. The Gloster Aircraft Company was also responsible for the manufacture of the first jet propelled aircraft, designed by Frank Whittle and built in Cheltenham (Brooks, 2003).

This success and recognition of local companies enabled Cheltenham Borough Council to attract other employers to the town and during the 1930s they proactively marketed industrial sites that they had made available in St Marks and Whaddon. This led to an additional need to provide housing for the workers in these new factories. Cheltenham became a successful manufacturing centre with much of its capacity derived from supplying the aircraft industry. Examples of the larger manufacturing companies in Cheltenham were: the Dowty Rotol Company, which started life as Aircraft Components Ltd and combined with Rotol Propellers in 1954; Walker Crossweller; Spirax Sarco; and Smiths Industries. Although some of these companies still operate within Cheltenham manufacturing has declined since the 1980s and Cheltenham is now recognised as a centre for service

industries with its largest employer being the Government Communication Headquarters (GCHQ).

Cheltenham's motto is Salubritas et Eruditio which translates as Health and Education. This is important to Cheltenham as much of the town's wealth has been built on both its reputation as a spa town and as a centre of education. Examples of Cheltenham's education provision offers an illustration of the town's reputation of wealth. The town is home to two of England's top private schools namely Cheltenham Ladies College (2017), a girls' school for eleven to eighteen year olds and Cheltenham College (2017), a co-educational school for three to 18 year olds). Both schools were founded in the mid-19th century and have fees of more than £11,000 per term. In addition Dean Close School (2017), named after Dean Francis Close, Rector of Cheltenham from 1826-1856, provides education for three to 18 year olds with fees of over £8,000 per term. An additional private school is located in Charlton Kings, an area on the East side of Cheltenham. This is St Edwards School (2017) which is a Catholic private school providing education for 4 to 18 year olds. Their website does not identify the cost of fees. Whilst St Edwards School is for day students only, the other schools provide for both boarders and day students.

Cheltenham is also home to Pates Grammar School (2017), a selective state school for eleven to eighteen year olds, established in 1574. The school has a history of providing an alternative to private schools, consistently appearing in the top three in national league tables for state schools and in 2012 was awarded 'State Secondary School of the Year' by the *Sunday Times*.

Also in Cheltenham are three of the four campuses of the University of Gloucestershire, plus a student accommodation village. The University gained university status in 2001and has a long history of providing higher education, with its origins in teacher training dating back to its inception in 1834 (University of Gloucestershire, 2018). The University is currently performing increasingly well in league tables for modern universities coming in at 88 out of 131 overall in 2018 (The Complete University Guide, 2018).

Cheltenham's history indicates that it is a town with significant achievements although only developing initially as a result of its ability to become a popular health resort in the Georgian era. It is also a town that has continued to develop and reinvent itself after health spas were no longer fashionable.

5.2.2 Housing the poor and working classes

The earliest evidence of charitable housing in Cheltenham is the date of 1507 carved above the door of a church almshouse in Chester Walk close to the entrance to the grounds of St Mary's Parish Church (now Cheltenham Minster). Waller (2009) lists the many charitable dwellings provided since then with Richard Pate, who also founded Pates Grammar School, one of the earliest providers of almshouses. Many of these are still used for their original purpose and provide an alternative to social housing.

Prior to the *1834 Poor Law Amendment Act*, and the building of the Cheltenham Union Workhouse, Cheltenham had a number of workhouses. One example of this mentioned by Osmond (2000) and Waller (2009) was that in 1769 part of the Royal Oak public house in the Lower High Street was used as a workhouse. Another workhouse was built where Knapp Lane is now and this became the 'poor house' for up to 150 children after 1834 and the transfer of adult inmates to the new Union Workhouse. A workhouse union associated with *1872 Relief of the Poor Act*, which allowed adjacent parishes to combine (with the consent of two-thirds of all rate-payers) into Unions to provide workhouses for the old, the sick, and the infirm. The idea of the union was to reduce costs of providing one workhouse for every parish.

Jones (2010) describes workhouses which existed in outlying parishes, including Prestbury, Charlton Kings, Leckhampton and Swindon Village. In total 12 parishes became part of the Cheltenham Poor Law Union and inmates were transferred into the Union workhouse. Cheltenham Union Workhouse was built on land off St Pauls Road and although it was renamed as a Public Assistance Institution in 1929, following the abolition of the Poor Law, it operated up until 1948 when the *National Insurance Act* was

introduced providing pensions, sick pay and unemployment benefits. Workhouse residents were at that time rehoused by Cheltenham Borough Council. And the workhouse itself was converted into a maternity hospital.

Waller (2009) provides early examples of housing for the homeless. One was in Grove Street, just off the lower high street where in 1910 a Rowton House was built. Sheridan (1956) provides a partly contemporary history of Rowton houses which were built across the country, originating in London when in 1892 Lord Rowton, a philanthropist and politician, set up the first Rowton House for homeless men. Rowton Houses were a chain of hostels built firstly in London and later across England to provide decent accommodation for working men in place of the poor quality lodging houses of the time. George Orwell in Down and Out in Paris and London, wrote about lodging houses:

> The best are the Rowton Houses, where the charge is a shilling, for which you get a cubicle to yourself, and the use of excellent bathrooms. You can also pay half a crown for a special, which is practically hotel accommodation. The Rowton Houses are splendid buildings, and the only objection to them is the strict discipline, with rules against cooking, card playing, etc. (Orwell, 1933/2001).

Cheltenham's Rowton House was still used as a hostel in 1969 when according to Osmond (2000), the Minister of State declared it and its close neighbour Shamrock House a 'hell hole'. Rowton House was eventually taken on by Stonham Housing Association which provides supported housing; it was refurbished in 1987 and renamed Grove House. It has since been rebuilt and renamed as Quilter House, with an additional annexe named St George House. It still houses men, and now women also, who would otherwise be homeless (Osmond 2000). The name Rowton House has since been revived by Stonham Housing Association who named one of their newer properties on Cheltenham High Street 'Rowton House' when it was built in 2010.

It was no accident that the workhouse, the children's poor house and homeless hostels were located off the Lower High Street. Prior to the provision of council housing the majority of housing for the poor and working

classes in Cheltenham were in streets leading from the Lower High Street and following down along the Tewkesbury Road. Since the mid-19th century, after the passing of the *1848 Public Health Act,* Cheltenham Council recognised that the town contained slum areas with the majority of the streets leading off the lower high street being declared as insanitary and unfit for habitation by 1917 although most were not demolished until later. In 1902 Josephine Butler, pioneering reformer and one-time resident of Cheltenham, wrote of the town 'There are low class brothels and slums which would be a disgrace to London or New York' (cited in Waller, 2009). From comments made by the *Cheltenham Looker On* newspaper in 1920 it seems that this situation changed little over the next two decades when in July that year it said:

> We call it the 'Garden Town' as it is in parts but I am thinking now of localities to which few of us have ever wandered. I could take you to streets here which are as bad as, or even worse than, anything I have ever seen in London. (Cheltenham Looker On 24/7/1920)

The requirements under the *1890 Housing of the Working Classes Act* to replace slum dwellings took some time in to be implemented in Cheltenham. An example of this is that properties between Knapp Street and New Street identified in 1897 as unfit for habitation were not demolished until 25 years later in 1922. It took a war and the government's desire to provide 'homes fit for heroes' alongside a need to house for workers in the new industries coming into the town in the 1920s and 1930s for Cheltenham council to address the issues of slums in Cheltenham. Only at this point did Cheltenham begin a sustained programme of slum clearance and council house building (Osmond, 2000).

5.2.2.1 Cheltenham Council and Other Social Housing

In 1924 the town council set up a Slum Clearance Committee. One of the first tasks of this committee was to clear the slums along Tewkesbury Road and build new housing in the area (Minutes of Cheltenham Town Council, January 1924). Using its powers under the *1890 Housing of the Working*

Classes Act, which required local authorities to survey housing needs and provide housing based on those surveys, this committee continued a schedule of slum clearances throughout the 1920s and 1930s. This was the start of the provision of council housing in Cheltenham.

Following the end of World War One Cheltenham Council concentrated its efforts on building homes for ex-service men and their families. However, they soon came under pressure from the town's employers to provide for their workers. By 1939 2,000 council houses had been built with Cheltenham Borough Council going on to provide a total of 7,000 dwellings before councils were stopped from building council houses under the *1980 Housing Act.*

The first move to provide council housing estates was in 1919 with the purchase of 115 acres of land from Herbert Unwin for £10,500 in St Marks to build Cheltenham's first garden suburb. The first houses built there were completed three years later. Roads within this new St Marks estate were named after English poets and the estate, now a conservation area, is still locally known as 'the poets'. (Jones, 2010; Waller, 2009) The majority of houses in this area have since been purchased under the 'right to buy' and are highly sought-after residences. An example of some of these earliest developments can be seen in Photo 5.1 below.

Photo 5.1 House in Byron road, St Marks photographed by Bernice Thomson, 3rd July 2018

The 1920s witnessed not only the completion of the St Marks 'poets estate', but also, starting in 1927, the building of Hudson and Manser streets and Crabtree Place in St Pauls. This, the St Pauls estate, became over the years one of the most notorious areas in Cheltenham eventually leading to a Cheltenham Borough Council agreement to improve the area. The plan to demolish 80 of the houses and improve others was announced in December 2007 (Gloucestershire Echo, 9th December, 2007)

The next significant development of council housing in Cheltenham happened in Whaddon beginning in October 1929 with an initial 92 homes, followed in 1937 with a second phase making the Whaddon estate then the largest council housing estate in Cheltenham (see example of the Whaddon estate in photo 5.2 below). Whaddon continued to be the largest estate and was further expanded following World War Two when the Lynworth Estate was built in close proximity. The building of the Lynworth estate was started immediately following the end of the war and another area close by known as the Priors estate had 173 pre-fabricated houses erected in 1946. These were replaced in the 1960s by more permanent housing. Following re-alignment of ward boundaries in 2013 the area previously known as Whaddon, Lynworth and Priors was subsumed into the new Oakley Ward.

Photo 5.2 Houses in Clyde Crescent, Whaddon.
Photographed by Bernice Thomson 3rd July 2018

In September 1942 plans were drawn up for a post-war housing scheme of 2,000 houses to be built on what was then Hesters Way Farm. Construction of the first of these houses began in December 1951 to create the largest estate in Cheltenham and in Gloucestershire. Of the houses to be built in Hesters Way and nearby Arle 512 were designated for foreign office staff working at the Government Communication Headquarters (GCHQ) which moved from Bletchley Park to Cheltenham after World War Two. By 1960 3,000 homes had been built on the Hesters Way estate, many of these being flats rather than houses with gardens. There were only two high rise blocks built and these, along with the majority of the maisonette blocks, have since been demolished and replaced by houses. An example of one of the larger blocks of flats still standing in Hester Way can be seen in photo 5.3 below.

Photo 5.3 Flats in Scott House, Princess Elizabeth Way. Photographed by Bernice Thomson 3rd July 2018

Smaller council estates were built across Cheltenham, these included the estates of St Pauls and The Moors which are amongst the most deprived in Cheltenham (an example from The Moors estate is in photo 5.4 below). There were also some smaller estates built in what are considered the wealthier areas such as Charlton Kings and Hatherley. Even so, the majority of council and social housing in Cheltenham now are in peripheral areas to

the west and north of the town which are the same as those shown as areas of multiple deprivation on the map in Appendix 6. Cheltenham Borough Council built no further houses between 1991 and 2015.

Jones (2010) explains that following the *1988 Housing Act* councils were required to give tenants the choice of having their homes transferred to a housing association or continuing as council tenants. Cheltenham tenants voted to remain as council tenants on two separate occasions. Hanley (2007) provides a good explanation of the government's rationale in requiring councils to give tenants the choice as a lack of funding for repairs and maintenance meant pressure on already cash poor local authorities. Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) had access to funding that local authorities did not.

Photo 5.4 Moors Avenue, The Moors. Photographed by Bernice Thomson 3ʳᵈ July 2018

Because Cheltenham was considered a high performing local authority, by inspectors, they were given a third choice which was to retain ownership of council housing, but transfer the management of the housing stock to an Arm's Length Management Organisation (ALMO). An ALMO allows the local authority to retain ownership of its housing stock whilst commissioning a

third-party organisation to manage it. This was the choice eventually made and in 2002 Cheltenham Borough Homes was set up, taking over the 5,025 homes still remaining in council ownership, half of which were flats and also the management of flats sold under leasehold. This figure highlights the high number of homes sold under 'right to buy' because as previously mentioned Cheltenham Borough Council built over 7,000 homes (Jones, 2010).

In 2016 Cheltenham Borough Homes was the largest social housing provider in Cheltenham. There are nine other housing associations providing homes, in Cheltenham, under the Gloucestershire Homeseekers scheme (Gloucestershire Homeseeker, 2018). This scheme was set up in 2008 to provide prospective tenants with some choice and to replace the old points system of the housing list. Under this scheme tenants have to bid for homes suitable to their needs.

As can be seen by the statistics Cheltenham council housing and housing provided by social landlords cannot meet the demand for rented accommodation. This problem is intensified by the high demand for student accommodation although these statistics do not include students. Census data from 2011 shows that whilst the percentage on tenure for both social rented and home ownership have reduced, the percentage for private rented has increased. Private rented accommodation increased from 15% in 2001 to 21.4% in 2011 which means that 10,893 of the total 50,929 households in Cheltenham were at that time in private rented accommodation. This compares with 6,216 households which are housed by the council and other social landlords (Maiden data, Gloucestershire County Council). These statistics show that Cheltenham, in terms of housing tenure, is following the national trend. An article in *Inside Housing* (August 2016) outlines the national trend showing that 37% of private rented housing stock across the United Kingdom is occupied by families who can no longer afford to buy and have been unsuccessful in securing housing in the social rented sector which can no longer meet needs.

The Fordham Gloucestershire housing needs assessment in 2009 suggested that 2,686 households (5.3%) in Cheltenham Borough are currently living in unsuitable housing. It was estimated that over 70% of the 2,686 could only find a solution to this unsuitability by moving home with 1,201 of these unable to afford a suitable solution without some type of subsidy. In total an estimated 47.6% of households in current need are found in the social rented sector and 41.2% in the private rented sector. These statistics were taken from a Cheltenham Partnerships report (2012) on the state of Cheltenham. This report was updated in 2015, although housing needs were not included in the later report (Cheltenham Partnership, 2015). Both of these reports illustrate the polarisation of wealth and poverty showing that Cheltenham includes wards in both the most 20% deprived and in the most 20% least deprived within the United Kingdom.

5.3 Conclusion

As can be seen from this background to Cheltenham, the town has developed differently to towns and cities of a similar size changing, in less than 300 years, from a small market town to a vibrant town in the 21st century. Cheltenham has grown very quickly and the housing needs of the working classes and their housing have been important for the town even though it has not always been seen as a priority.

Cheltenham has a well scripted history, certainly since 1716 when the spa waters were discovered in the town. What is missing from this history is a perspective on the working classes. In the majority of books written about Cheltenham the poorer people are invisible. This provided a reason to carry out this piece of research. Housing which is a physical and basic need for people was seen to be a good starting point, although it has resulted in a wider historical depiction of Cheltenham as the research has developed. Even so the main component has been working class housing and this has provided the main focus for the research.

The chapter also illustrates the contribution that working class people have made to the development of the town both in its buildings and in the

development of a manufacturing industry that has provided a legacy of innovation that contributes to Cheltenham's reputation.

Cheltenham is not unique in its current situation of high welfare benefit dependency, where the majority of people claiming benefits are in work. What makes Cheltenham different is the polarisation of wealth and poverty that exists within the town. This is another aspect of the town's demography that is recognised by the poorer residents and demonstrated by those who were interviewed for this research. The chapter also illustrates how this polarity of wealth and poverty is nothing new. Whilst Cheltenham continued to grow into a wealthy resort and retirement destination it was also being recognised as having slums that compared unfavourably with the slums in much larger urban centres such as London.

In 2018 Cheltenham is still growing. Plans such as the Cheltenham, Gloucester and Tewkesbury Joint Core Strategy, adopted in December 2017 and the more detailed Cheltenham Plan, adopted in March 2018, show that further growth will occur over the next twenty years. What is not so clear, and is discussed in more depth in Chapter 8, is whether Cheltenham's growth can respond satisfactorily to the needs of the poorer people and young people in providing appropriate and affordable housing.

The following chapter is the most important within the thesis as it provides the residents' stories, which include their memories and views on Cheltenham's council estates. These discourses were captured through interviews and focus groups with local residents and through the study of residents and politicians perspectives via research in local newspapers.

CHAPTER 6:   CHELTENHAM DISCOURSES

6.1 Introduction

Whilst the previous chapter concentrated on providing the history and background of Cheltenham and the way it has responded to the housing needs of working-class residents this chapter is distinctly about the discourses that place the subject into the context of how people relate to it.

As Chapter 5 outlined priorities for social and affordable housing in Cheltenham have gone through a number of iterations since the first council houses were built in the 1920s. From this perspective it seemed important to consider the views of the people most affected by these changes who are also those people most reliant on Cheltenham's housing policies.

Looking at Cheltenham in relation to the national picture was seen to be important in order to compare how Cheltenham's response has been to national policy. Certainly the history of housing in Cheltenham is relevant to the way in which, particularly for those who have lived on the estates for some time, perceive their experiences of the estates and the residents. For example, this chapter will show not only how residents perceive their own situation but also how they are perceived by outsiders and how they are able to distinguish between themselves and people on other estates. This resonates with the research of Watt (2006) discussed in the literature review in Section 3.3 where he highlights how perceptions vary dependent on the individual resident's circumstances.

The case study has included the detailed responses of those people prepared to be interviewed or participate in focus groups. Although their tenure may differ all of these residents live on what are recognised in Cheltenham as council estates.

From the point of view of those who have participated in this research project this chapter, which contains their stories, is also very significant because it provides a different perspective to the story of how Cheltenham has developed and how it has responded to the needs for housing within the working classes and more recently with those who are benefit dependent. It

also tells the story of the individuals involved in interviews and focus groups giving a voice to their concerns and perspectives.

6.2 The Residents' Stories

The story of Cheltenham's council estate residents begins in 1921 when the first houses on the first council estate, in St Marks, were occupied. There is a significant difference between 1921, when the tenants were handpicked and needed to comply with strict household management rules and the current situation where social housing is only available for the vulnerable and those with most needs. This is due to the current shortage of social and affordable housing and the system that allocates people a priority band based on their needs, such as homelessness or health issues.

Interviews with residents demonstrate that there are people living on council estates that were born on those or other estates with some of these dating back as far as the 1940s. In some cases this has resulted in families occupying the same house since it was originally built. It was loyalty that some interviewees demonstrated, during their interviews, to certain estates that contributed to the final decision on which estates should be used for the study.

6.2.1 Residents Perspectives on where they live

When planning the interviews the original intention was to concentrate on one estate - Whaddon on the north east edge of Cheltenham. Whaddon was the third estate to be developed as building started in 1929 with the first tenants moving in during 1936. The first estate was the St Marks estate with the first residents moving in during January 1921. The St Marks estate is now mostly privately owned, is in a conservation area as it contains unique architecture (see photo 5.1), and is considered to be one of the better, affordable places to live in Cheltenham. St Marks was therefore not typical enough as a council estate to be suitable for the study.

Although locals still refer to the area as Whaddon the local council renamed the area Oakley in 2004, creating a new electoral ward combining the Whaddon, Lynworth and Priors estates. The name of Oakley was taken from the now demolished GCHQ site. Those interviewed for this research all came from the original Whaddon area.

Once interviews in Whaddon started it became increasingly obvious that Whaddon would not provide the range of views required to make the research meaningful as the opinions of the residents differed very little in terms of how they felt about the estate. Whaddon differs from Cheltenham's other council estates in that people living there see it as a community in which families want to stay and it therefore houses generation after generation of the same family. John, interviewed in 2014, encapsulates this view when he says:

> *When I moved back to Cheltenham (following a period of time working elsewhere) there was no doubt that I would move back to Whaddon where I was born and brought up. Even though my parents are no longer with us it still feels like my community. I still know lots of people here; some I was at school with. Unfortunately there is now much more of a stigma attached to living on a council estate than there was when I was young but Whaddon still feels the same to me. The difference is that I'm not a council tenant anymore, but I still live in what was built as a council house.*

George, also interviewed in 2014 agrees with these sentiments:

> *Whaddon is a great community. That's why people tend to stay living here even when they could move away. Some even come back here after they've moved somewhere else.*

George (age 58) and John (age 71) were two of the oldest residents at the time of interviews. John was born in a Whaddon council house in 1943. His parents moved into the house in 1939 when it was newly built. He attended local schools and then went on to become an apprentice at Walker Crossweller - an engineering company making shower parts which moved to the Whaddon area of Cheltenham from London in 1937 following a campaign by Cheltenham Borough Council to bring more employment into the town (Jones, 2010). The company is still in Whaddon although it is now

known as Caradon Mira. He continued to work at Walker Crossweller until after his marriage in 1966 when he moved, with his wife, to another part of the United Kingdom and he continued his work as an engineer in a number of different companies. The couple have two children, a boy born in 1967 and a girl born in 1970. These children are both married and still living in other towns. John and his wife, however, moved back to Cheltenham in 1997 to be closer to his ageing and sick parents. They bought an ex-council house in Whaddon and John went back to work at Caradon Mira where he stayed until his retirement in 2008, He now lives alone as he was widowed in 2001. He has no mortgage and lives comfortably on what he considers to be a good pension.

George's story is different as he has never left Whaddon and now even lives in the same house that he was brought up in as his parents bought the house in 1982 under the 'right to buy' scheme. He inherited the property in 2012 after the death of his parents. George lives with his wife; his three children have all now left home. He was made redundant in 2009 from his job with a building company and has since found it difficult to find work because of his age. His wife works part time in a supermarket and he receives Job Seekers Allowance (now Universal Credit) as welfare benefits. His 58 years living on the Whaddon estate means that he knows it better than most people and he is very proud of the area. He does admit though that things have changed for him, for Whaddon and for the country as a whole:

> *It's sad really and not just for me. When I was growing up here everybody worked or at least every household had someone working. It was easy to find work when I left school in 1972 and I managed to get a real old fashioned apprenticeship, starting from scratch and knowing nothing. Learning on the job as they say. All my friends did this too. Now there's nothing for the young people if they haven't got good school grades and it's just as bad for us older people too. When you're made redundant at an age where it's difficult to learn a new job, they throw you on the scrapheap and then make you feel as if it's your own fault.*

Val has also lived in Whaddon for a long time, moving there with her husband in 1969 when she was 21 years old, newly married and about to give birth to her first child. The young couple were initially housed by the council in a two-bedroom property. They were moved to a three-bedroom house as their family grew to three children and it is this house that they still live in after purchasing it under 'right to buy' in 1985. The couple are now both retired, living on pensions and not claiming any welfare benefits. Val admitted that she has seen changes to the area during the time she has lived there.

> It's changed a lot since we first moved here in 1969. Everybody we knew had a job back then and it was a great place to bring up our children. We've seen Whaddon decline over the years but the central part, the original Whaddon is still a tight community because families tend to stay here. The wider area, what is now called Oakley, isn't as good a community as the original Whaddon and that can affect attitudes about the area. But it's still a good place to live.

Val also had something to say about how difficult it is for young people:

> I feel sorry for young people these days. It's much harder for them to get decent jobs with decent wages and they can't afford to move away from their parents. Rents for flats are very expensive in Cheltenham. Young people get stuck in a rut, it must be very frustrating for them. It's no wonder some of them get into trouble with the police and things like drugs.

She feels that her own children were fortunate to be born and growing up when there were still opportunities for young people. None of her children have stayed living in Whaddon. Val had this to say:

> When we go our children will inherit the house. I doubt whether any of them would want to move back here though. They're coping alright considering they were brought up on a council estate. It can't have been all that bad no matter what people say about it.

The views of Whaddon residents also indicate that they at least perceive that other estates, and especially Hesters Way, are both in reality and in the perception of local media, a lot worse than Whaddon as a place to live. For

example Dan, a 41 year old taxi driver, interviewed in 2015 and living in Whaddon with his wife and three children since 2007 says:

> *I get to drive all over town because of my job and I don't think that Whaddon is the worst place in Cheltenham, whatever they may say about it. I'd rather be living here than in Hesters Way or St Pauls. I suppose I'm lucky that they housed us here.*

George had something to say about this too and he makes his sentiments regarding the difference between Whaddon and Hesters Way clear by saying:

> *A few years back, mostly in the 1980s and 90s there was a lot of really negative stuff in the papers about Whaddon. They made out that it wasn't a nice place to be, but even so it was Hesters Way that got the worst of the negative reporting. Perhaps because Hesters Way isn't a community as much as Whaddon is. At least that's what I think. I said before some people move away from Whaddon and then come back. I can't imagine that happening in Hesters way unless they had no choice in the matter.*

Tom from Whaddon agrees with George and Dan that the newspaper reporting represents Hesters Way as a worse place to live than Whaddon. Tom lives in a two bedroom flat in Whaddon with his partner and two young children. He is currently out of work and his wife works full-time in a supermarket. They receive welfare benefits including some housing benefit. They have lived in Whaddon for five years since their first child was born. Both of them had previously lived with their respective parents. Tom mostly feels positive about living in Whaddon saying that it is a good community with good facilities. He said about living where he does:

> *I think Whaddon has a lot more going for it than Hesters Way It's a good community although there is quite a lot of police activity. There are a few bad people living here but more in Hesters Way I think. I like living in Whaddon. I'm glad they housed us here rather than Hesters Way. Not that Hesters Way is as bad as they make it out to be. I have friends over there and they're sound.*

It was these views from residents in Whaddon highlighting what they perceived as the differences between Whaddon and other council estates in the town that convinced me that the research might benefit by enabling views from residents across a variety of different Cheltenham estates.

Interestingly these loyalties exist across the various estates. As will be seen from the interviews, residents of The Moors are also prepared to defend their estate. The same applies to St Pauls and Hesters Way, but none are so pro their estate as those in Whaddon. Whaddon presents itself as a perfect community and it seems that this may well be the case. Whaddon is built around a crescent which means that there is a centre, a focal point for the estate. Within the design of the estate is a row of shops that contain the necessities; there is also an active church and a community resource centre, both of which provide community activities. The estate is on a main bus route with buses running every 10 minutes during the day and evening. There is a primary school which in March 2015 was measured as 'good' by OFSTED with leadership and management deemed outstanding (Oakwood School, 2015). There is also a Children's Centre servicing the estate with a secondary school nearby. There are no longer any pubs on the estate; those that were once there have now been replaced by accommodation. There is also no medical facility locally. However, Whaddon is close to the town centre, within walking distance. There are a number of green spaces and it houses the only council-run youth centre in Cheltenham.

John summed up what the residents had to say about where he lives:

> *I think if you are brought up somewhere you will always have fond feelings about that place. I feel like that about Whaddon even though I know that in recent years we have more problems like crime and drugs. You won't get me criticising Whaddon though. I don't care what the newspapers say, Whaddon is a great community. Every community has its problems. I wish they'd stop making out that Whaddon has more problems than anywhere else.*

There is also a sense in Whaddon that the residents perceive themselves as different to people living in the rest of Cheltenham. George, who has a strong view about the area he has always lived in says:

> *There's something about Whaddon people that makes them a bit different to other Cheltenham people. You can tell someone from Whaddon by the way they talk too. There's definitely a Whaddon accent.*

Sometimes the things that make an area unique are more negative than those expressed about Whaddon. Liz, for example, speaking about the Moors estate expressed her views:

> *The Moors is a close knit community and sometimes not very nice. I know there are a few criminals living here they don't bother me but the police are here a lot. The Moors is bit like an island. We're surrounded by roads with a park on one side. No wonder it feels like no one cares about us down here. We don't seem to get as much support as some areas and we don't have any facilities such as shops.*

Liz, who has lived in the Moors for ten years, is a single parent with three children. She has never been married and has never had a job. She is totally dependent on welfare benefits. She says that she is now used to the Moors area and it is good to have a house with a garden after previously living in a flat. Liz is honest about the problems that exist in the Moors, admitting that it seems that there are more drug problems there than anywhere else in Cheltenham:

> *Yes, we all know about the drugs. I try to ignore the dealing that goes on all the time, quite openly out in the street. I can't stop them doing it and if I say anything to them, I might be in danger. If I ignore it, they just seem to accept me. It's safer this way.*

The Moors is the smallest of the council estates and is situated beside one of the busiest routes into the town centre. It is bordered on the south by a pleasant park which the river Chelt runs through. The north side of the estate is bordered by the busy dual carriageway which is the Tewkesbury Road. To the east is private housing, mostly buy to let, and to the west is the busiest roundabout in Cheltenham providing an intersection between Tewkesbury Road and Princess Elizabeth Way, which is the main road into the Hesters

Way estate. The Moors estate has no facilities apart from one small children's play area. Although it is within walking distance of Cheltenham's retail parks it is necessary to cross major roads to access any facilities. It is an area that does feel cut off from its surrounding areas. It is a place that you would have no reason to go to or pass through unless you live there or are visiting a friend or family member.

Tracy is one of the three residents of the Moors interviewed and she was able to make comparisons as she had been born and brought up on the Hesters Way estate and had lived for 13 years in a private rented flat with her husband and children until housed by the council onto the Moors estate in 2015. Tracy is very pleased that she has at last been housed by the council and admits that this has made her more accepting of the problems that exist in the Moors. She says:

> *I am so grateful to get a three bedroom house with a garden that I'm prepared to put up with some of the problems on the estate. They're not really bad people, just people who bad things happened to. That's the problem with drugs and drugs seem to be a bit of a problem here. The police are always here including at my next door neighbour's house. I think he is a drug dealer, but there are plenty of those around here, the Moors is rife with drugs. There are so many people involved either dealing or taking them. I just keep my head down and hope they won't notice me.*

Another Moors resident, Janet, admitted that she had previously had significant drugs and alcohol dependency that had affected the lives of her and her daughter. She feels, therefore, that although she may have issues with some of her neighbours she is not in a position to complain too much. She says:

> *I'd like to move from The Moors. I like my flat very much but some of the neighbours are difficult to live with. It's funny though because I'm sure that neighbours I've had in the past would say the same about me. I certainly wasn't a perfect neighbour back in the day. One problem is that as an addict it's difficult to live next to druggies and alkies. It's still hard for me to avoid using drugs and alcohol if the opportunity is there. The council don't care; I've told them about my*

> *problems with addiction but they won't move me. The*
> *problem is that there aren't many one bedroom flats. I don't*
> *like living here but Hesters Way would be worse and that's*
> *where most of the one bedroom flats are.*

It does seem difficult for Janet, partly because of the attitudes that other residents have towards her. In her words:

> *People around here know that I used to be on heroin. The*
> *dealers hassle me a lot and are nasty when I say no to buying*
> *drugs from them. The drug takers can also be nasty because*
> *they say that I think I'm better than them because I no longer*
> *take drugs. Everybody else stays out of my way because they*
> *think I do still take drugs. I have no friends in the Moors, I just*
> *keep myself to myself.*

That Janet was able to be so open and honest about her addictions has helped me understand some of the issues that bring people to a place where their only option is to be housed by the council. As previously stated, it is the most vulnerable and those with the most needs that are now housed. Janet's life story also demonstrates that drug issues ignore class and background. She explains:

> *Sometimes I feel I have let people down. Here I am living in*
> *a council flat with no money. My family had money, they*
> *had good jobs and I had a good education, but here I am;*
> *one of the dregs of society just because I took drugs. Even*
> *so I think the council should take account of my need to*
> *move. I'm worried I might slip back into taking drugs*
> *because they are so easy to get round here. It's like they*
> *don't care whether or not I start taking drugs again.*

Janet, who is 58 and a mother of one daughter, also revealed that her determination to stay away from drugs and alcohol had intensified over the past few years as her daughter is now a mother herself, giving her grandchildren who she frequently looks after. The Moors is not the first council estate that Janet has lived on as she previously lived in Whaddon when her daughter was small and then voluntarily transferred to another Gloucestershire council area in an attempt to escape the influence of other drug users. This did not work out well and she was eventually evicted,

becoming homeless until re-housed by Cheltenham Borough Council on the Moors estate in 2010.

Sophie is the only person interviewed living in the St Pauls estate. She lives with her husband and three children in a new build Housing Association property on the border with Pittville. Sophie's partner is working full time and they do not claim any welfare benefits. They were housed in this new property after the private rented flat they were living in was considered unfit to live in by the council. This made them technically homeless and a priority for re-housing. Sophie loves her house although it is not on a bus route and she finds this difficult sometimes. It is also close to the part of the St Pauls council estate that has a bad reputation. Also 50% of the privately-owned part of St Pauls is houses in multiple occupancy providing student accommodation which makes the area noisy at times. Sophie has noticed that the local newspaper and residents outside the area are quite negative about St Pauls. She remembers that this has always been her opinion too before she moved there:

> *St Pauls has had a negative reputation for as long as I remember and I was a bit nervous about being housed here, but actually it's alright. It's made me realise that we shouldn't judge places before we know them. St Pauls is actually a mixture of different people from different backgrounds. The council estate part of it is quite small really. Quite small but with a big, bad reputation.*

Hesters Way is the largest council estate in Cheltenham and is considered to be the one with the worst reputation. This is demonstrated by comments made during interviews. Even so opinions of those who live there vary. Not all perceptions of Hesters Way are negative although this does tend to be based on which part of the estate people live. It also depends on the type of property they occupy and on the length of time they have lived there.

Nine out of the 21 people interviewed live in Hesters Way. This reflects the size of the estate as Hesters Way is one of the largest social housing estates in the south west. Two of the nine interviewed are home owners and it was interesting to explore their reasons for buying on the Hesters Way

estate. Both of them had previously lived in private rented accommodation and both admitted that it was house prices that ultimately determined where they bought property. House prices in Hesters Way compare very favourably with those in more desirable areas.

Kate has lived in Hesters Way for ten years; since her and her now ex-husband bought an ex-council three bed property on the estate. They had previously lived in a private rented flat in the town centre. Kate now lives in the property with her two teenage children following her divorce from her husband three years ago. Kate works part time to fit in with her children's' needs and does rely on some welfare benefits to augment her wages and the maintenance payments she receives from her ex-husband. Kate's view of where she lives is:

> *I sometimes wish we had bought a house somewhere else, but this area is cheap. On the other hand my close neighbours are OK. We get on alright so things could be worse. Overall the area isn't the best and surprisingly I'm told that my house was originally built to house workers at GCHQ. Things have certainly changed around here. Most people don't have jobs let alone work for the government.*

She also tells me that the area is noisy, especially at night because groups of young people hang about the area. Also there is a drug problem and a lot of crime and anti-social behaviour issues. The reputation of the area worries her because of how she may be judged for living there. She says she also worries about the future of her children being judged for living on this estate. She is concerned that people are judging the area which she feels is also a judgement of her. She blames the local newspaper for much of this negativity, but thinks the national press with its attitudes about benefit claimants does not help either:

> *I think my biggest issue is that I read stuff in the newspapers and it talks about my life, but it isn't my life – if you I know what I mean. These newspaper reporters haven't lived like us, that's obvious. They seem to think they're experts, but they aren't. I'm the expert but no one listens to me. When they do have bits about council estates on the TV or in the*

newspapers it's usually about something negative. This
doesn't help.

Stella, another home owner on the Hesters Way estate, was born in Spain and met her husband when he went to the University she worked at, in Spain, to study the Spanish language. They have been married for thirteen years and have three children all currently at primary school close to where they lived until 2014. They bought a house in Hesters Way because that was where they could afford to buy a house. Stella admitted to me that they did not do a lot of research before buying and price was the deciding factor. She now says that she was very shocked when they initially moved onto the Hesters Way estate as it was so different to the private estate where they lived previously. Also her friends were not supportive. She tells me that her friends said:

> *Why Hesters Way? This is considered the worst estate in*
> *Cheltenham. I hope you'll be OK; some of the people there*
> *aren't very nice.*

Stella tells me that she was therefore quite nervous about moving onto the estate but now admits that early reactions to living there have changed because of the way neighbours have reacted to them living there. She says:

> *My friends told me not to move to Hesters Way because it*
> *has a bad reputation. I believed them and was very nervous*
> *to move here because it seemed so different to where I was*
> *living before. I am still a bit wary but although I think my next*
> *door neighbour is involved in drugs I have not had any*
> *problems so far. They are very polite to me and my family.*

Stella now admits that she was possibly wrong to make judgements about Hesters Way people as she is now herself a Hesters Way person:

> *I suppose that I cannot talk about Hesters Way people any*
> *longer as if they are not like me because I live here now. I*
> *think that makes me a Hesters Way person too.*

She sees herself as a decent member of a hard working family and acknowledges that other Hesters Way families are likely to be the same. If people judge her wrongly because of where she lives they are likely to be

judging others wrongly too. This was a view from Stella that emerged during the interview, she said:

> If I am a Hesters Way person then people may be judging me in the same way. I know I am a good person and my family are good people too. Does that mean that many of my neighbours are good people too? I suppose it does.

It was like a light bulb moment for her, the interview and her responses made her think about her situation to the extent where she changed her view during the interview.

David also bought an ex-council house because of its affordability. His property is in Whaddon where he lives with his wife and one of his children. His older daughter has left home. David has a full time job as an office manager and his wife also works. He told me:

> If I had a choice I would not live on a council estate, but it's all I can afford. Saying that though I can't really complain about my neighbours and the place does have a good community feel to it. My eldest daughter had a lot of comments made to her when she started work because she lived in Whaddon. That's why she moved out. I think Whaddon does still have a reputation as a poor area.

Jimmy's story is slightly different because he did once live in a house which he owned and shared with his wife and three children. His marriage broke down ten years ago which meant that Jimmy had to move out of the family home and he became homeless as his wife and the children remained in their house. His homelessness meant that he was housed by the council in a one bedroom flat in Princess Elizabeth Way in the centre of Hesters Way. Jimmy, who is 45, has mental health issues which he explained to me:

> My mental health is why I'm here because it caused my divorce. I was difficult to live with and hiding behind alcohol and smoking the wacky baccy. This ended up being the cause of me losing my job and then my mental health got worse and my behaviour too. I don't blame my ex for kicking me out, I would have kicked me out. Now I'm a bit better not drinking too much and not doing the drugs anymore. I've also got medication for my mental health issues. I think everything

> *would be better if I could get back to work. It makes me feel useless. I'm still quite young but I think I'll be living here until I die.*

Jimmy says that the block of flats he lives in is possibly the worst place to live in Cheltenham because it is all one bed flats which are given to the people with very big issues such as drug addicts and alcoholics, ex-prisoners and care leavers. He says that nearly everyone on the block has a drug or alcohol problem to some degree and its hard living there and trying to stay clean. Even so he is generous when speaking more generally about Hesters Way:

> *Hesters Way is not really as bad as some people try to make it. There are a lot of decent people living here; even in the block where I live. People with problems are often victims of circumstances like me, but are decent underneath it all. Hesters Way got a bad reputation a few years ago because of certain people who lived here and the reputation has stuck. And we're stuck here with that reputation (laughs). One of the problems is that Cheltenham is seen as a posh place so the areas that don't fit into that picture get blamed for all the bad stuff that happens. It's not very fair but what power do we have to do anything about it?*

He does however, have some things to say about his neighbours:

> *Where I live pretty much everybody has issues. I try to ignore it but it's a bit impossible. Mental health is a big issue around here. Drink, drugs, depression, anxiety – they're all mental health in one form or another. If we didn't have our council flats we would be on the street. But we're all in here with different issues and not all getting support for our problems. People here don't have anyone else so they want all the time to talk to you about their problems. You have to listen because if you don't they might kick off and then cause you problems in the future. The alcoholics are the worst because they get aggressive.*

Angela, who is 46, lives in the same large block of flats as Jimmy. She is single, never married and has no children. She was re-housed from supported housing where she was for eighteen months after leaving residential psychiatric care. She admits to me that she is very grateful for the

flat provided by the council as she does not have to worry about any maintenance issues as Cheltenham Borough Homes, who manage the property, are very supportive and helpful. She says that where she lives is convenient for the buses and local shops and the flat size is good enough for her needs. The biggest problem she identified was the block's proximity to a busy road because of traffic noise. Also there are lots of young people hanging about at night which sometimes makes her feel unsafe. She also acknowledges that because the one bedroom flats tend to be let to single people with 'issues' there are quite a few drug addicts and alcoholics living there as well as people like herself with mental health issues living near to her. Generally, although she is grateful to be housed by the council, she is quite negative about Hesters Way:

> *Hesters Way is thought of as a bad area to live by the rest of Cheltenham people. You hear them commenting about it, making jokes about the people who live here. Even my friends who live elsewhere make negative comments and say they feel sorry for me even though they know that I have no choice. This makes me feel judged by people who do not live here. I don't feel judged by my neighbours because most of them have problems of their own and are in no position to judge me.*

She did however admit:

> *I might complain but it doesn't bother me too much living in Hesters Way. Most of the people are decent and don't cause me any grief. Perhaps because they have their own issues they don't make me feel odd and different about my mental health issues. I suppose I could live in worse places.*

She also says:

> *Some of the neighbours with drink and drug issues can be a bit of a problem. They don't seem to be on the same time clock as normal people. We're quite often woken up in the middle of the night with people banging doors and shouting. There's not much we can do about it. Cheltenham Borough Homes is our landlord and they are pretty good about dealing with the maintenance but sometimes not so good at dealing with neighbour issues.*

Although not living in the same block Jess is also living in a flat in Hesters Way. She is a lone parent of one primary school age child and she has lived

in Hesters Way for almost 10 years. Jess was brought up in care which made her a priority to be housed by the local authority when she became pregnant at age 16. She has a second floor two bedroom flat. About where she lives she says:

> I've been in care since I was five, mostly with foster carers but in a home after I was 12. Getting my own home is one of the best things that ever happened to me. I know I should be grateful and I am, but it would be nice to be in a house with a garden. I know that's not going to happen but it would be nice. Living in Hesters Way is alright. This block of flats is like a little community and most of the neighbours are OK. It could be a lot worse.

Jess says that because her upbringing was so bad she can be sympathetic with people with problems. She says that you never know what has happened in people's lives in the past and because of that it is unfair to judge them too quickly, regardless of what their current circumstances are. She says:

> I've never taken drugs but I can understand why some people do. Life can be s*** sometimes. I have a drink occasionally when things get me down. I would be scared to take drugs which is probably just as well or I might be an addict myself by now. I can understand why people do take drugs though.

Steph was also housed by the council after becoming pregnant although her situation is different to that of Jess. When Steph became pregnant four years ago at the age of 17 her parents asked her to leave their home because of overcrowding. They claimed that there was no room for a baby in the house as there were already the parents and three of Steph's siblings living in a three bedroom house. As this made Steph technically homeless and because she was pregnant she was housed by the council in a two bedroom Hesters Way flat where she still lives. She has recently split up with her partner who is the father of her now two children. She is completely dependent on welfare benefits. Steph hates living in Hesters Way although she does acknowledge that it is her own actions that have led to her living there. She feels that people judge her because she lives in Hesters Way, was pregnant very young and is living off benefits:

I was brought up in another part of Cheltenham which is a much better area. I suppose that's why I hate it here so much. I feel that I have come down in the world. I know I shouldn't complain. It's my own fault I got pregnant and I'm lucky to have somewhere for me and the kids to live, even if it is in Hesters Way. I'm not complaining about most of the people who live here. They're mostly OK. I can't judge other people because I know what it's like to be judged.

On her current life situation she comments:

If I hadn't got pregnant so young who knows what I might have done with my life? But I love my children, so is it right to think about what might have been? I see other people having children and having jobs at the same time. Perhaps they just did it in the right order. I didn't have a job before getting pregnant so I will now always struggle to get a job.

Cathy is also a young lone parent, living in Hesters way with her two primary school aged children. She has a two bedroom council flat. Up until her second child was born she lived with her parents and was then housed by the council due to overcrowding so her story is similar to that of Steph. Cathy however, unlike Steph, does not mind living in Hesters Way, she is pleased with her flat which is close to shops and buses. She believes that people outside the estate make judgements without knowing what it is really like:

Hesters Way isn't a bad place to live even though there are a few bad people living here. It doesn't deserve the reputation it has. Even my own parents think it's a horrible place. They don't visit me very much because they say it makes them nervous to come here. I think that's unfair; I don't feel unsafe here.

She also has a theory about why Hesters Way has the worst reputation of the town's council estates:

I think that people in Whaddon, for instance, believe they are better than us in Hesters Way. They aren't. They do though live in a much smaller area which makes them more of a community. Hesters Way is too big to be called one community. We are a lot of different communities joined together. The problem is that people on the outside see us as one place and judge us on the worst parts of it.

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Kate, from Hesters Way, also commented that her family are negative about her housing situation:

> *My family tries to make me feel guilty about ending up with a house on a council estate. They don't seem to understand that this was all we could afford when we bought it. I don't think it's actually so bad. My life isn't so much different to people living in the posher areas of Cheltenham. I have my home, I have my children, I have friends and I have a job. What more do I want really?*

In summary it is interesting to capture the feelings of residents about where they live and compare them to the experiences expressed in the literature described in Chapter 4. For example Lynsey Hanley's *Estates: an Intimate History* and Livi Michael's *Under a Thin Moon.* This is particularly the case for people living in blocks of flats with the sense of feeling sometimes unsafe and of being of less value than those living in houses.

6.2.2 Residents' perspectives on how they are portrayed by the media

The interviews had two main focusses. The first, as contained in Section 6.2.1 above, was to gain an insight into what residents of Cheltenham's council estates had to say about where they live. The second was to encourage the residents to talk about how council estate residents are portrayed in the media and how this made them feel about themselves and their lives.

None of those interviewed were able to be entirely positive about media coverage of council estates and residents. There was also a shared view across all of the residents from the four estates covered by the interviews. Additionally there is a general sense that the negative media focus had shifted over the past few years, particularly since 2010 and the change of government from New Labour to Conservative. This shift demonstrates a move from general negativity relating to council estate residents to a specific view about people reliant on welfare benefits. However, those interviewed also shared a view that the media, and consequently other people, felt that

perceptions of council estates and welfare benefits went together and were inseparable in the minds of those writing or filming about people on benefits.

This viewpoint reflects comment from the literature dealing with 'poverty porn/propaganda discussed in Section 4.3. The increase in this type of reporting and television programme production has placed more emphasis on the theme of benefit dependency rather than where people live.

John, from Whaddon, thinks that the local newspaper, the *Gloucestershire Echo,* can be very negative about areas such as Whaddon, St Pauls, the Moors and Hesters Way. He also said that:

> *The national press and the television programmes seem to be saying that everyone living on a council estate is on benefits because they are lazy and do not want to work. It is unfair to 'tar everyone with the same brush' as everyone on the estates is not the same. Also what work is there for people over 50 who have been made redundant if the companies that employed them have left Cheltenham?*

He admits that this negativity in the media does not have as much effect on him as it used to. At one time, when he first moved back to Whaddon it depressed him, he thought he might have made a mistake moving back, but now he has learnt to live with it. He does say though:

> *It's so unfair on our young people. They don't seem to have a chance because of where they live. It's no wonder some of them behave the way they do. It makes me quite worried for the future. I can't see it changing any time soon.*

George, who has lived in Whaddon all of his life, thinks the reporting has improved a bit because the focus is more about benefits than where you live. He does feel though that because he is on some benefits he is being judged. He thinks this is unfair because up until he was made redundant he had always worked.

David, from Whaddon, says he does not buy newspapers as they are so expensive but he does read them online. He thinks that although there is still some negativity that relates directly to the council estates this is tempered by the negativity being more broadly about people on welfare benefits. Because

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he works and his household do not receive any benefits he does not let the negativity bother him too much. His main concern is that negativity about the area could affect the value of his house, which he owns. He also acknowledges that his children sometimes get comments about living in Whaddon. His opinion about people on benefits is also quite negative:

> *I do know that most people on benefits can't help the situation they're in. I think though there are some that could make more effort. The government makes it too easy for them; they seem to get more on benefits than if they worked. That doesn't feel right to me who has always worked.*

Shirley from Whaddon, a 58 year old who lives in an ex-council house bought under 'right to buy', stopped buying the local newspaper 10 years ago because it became so negative about the council estates. She looks at the paper online sometimes just to see what is happening in Cheltenham. She thinks that it is the television that has now become more negative about 'lazy scroungers who live on council estates'. She told me that she finds this incredibly annoying, explaining:

> *I'm not prepared to judge people just because they're on benefits. It's hard these days, especially for young people. My eldest boy isn't working at the moment and they're living on benefits, they wouldn't survive without them. I don't want people judging him so who am I to judge other people.*

On how the negative media coverage affects her personally she says:

> *I got used to people making negative comments about Whaddon a long time ago. It's all water off a duck's back now. I'm too old to care much what people think about me just because I live where I do. I know that me and my husband have always worked, we've never claimed a penny in benefits all our lives so what do they know? I think one of the problems we have in Cheltenham is that there are a lot of rich people. Look at Pittville just down the road. They look down their noses at us estate people. If you say you're from Whaddon you can see them judging you before they know anything else about you.*

Helen, a 42 year old married mother of two, lives in a council house in the Whaddon area. The family has been living in Whaddon for three years

where they were housed by the council upon becoming homeless when their private landlord decided to sell the house they were renting. Helen has previously lived in Hesters Way so was in a position to make comparisons:

> *I've lived in Hesters Way previously before we moved to a Tewkesbury Borough area. There are some parts of Hesters Way and Whaddon that are pretty run down and where some of the people with the most problems live. Even so the areas don't deserve the negative reputations they have. I mostly blame the local newspaper for the reputation that Hesters Way and Whaddon have got. I think Hesters Way gets the worst of it because it is so big. Whaddon is a small place in comparison so doesn't get the same level of reporting.*

Helen also felt that Cheltenham as a wealthy town was part of the problem. Of the four members of her family three are working full time and one is still in school. She feels well able to cope financially but is very aware that compared with some people in Cheltenham she is considered poor and that the way the local newspaper reports different parts of the town differently does not help:

> *At the moment we're all working and for the first time in my marriage we are not claiming any benefits at all. That doesn't make us rich but we manage. We don't own our house and we live in Whaddon so we're seen to be at the poorer end of the scale. There are a lot of very rich people in Cheltenham, a lot of very snobbish people too who think they are better than us. This big gap between rich and poor makes the poor seem poorer than perhaps they do in places like Gloucester where there don't seem to be so many rich people. The Echo doesn't help; it's always full of how wonderful Regency Cheltenham is. The council estates are mostly in there because of negative stuff.*

Sophie, from St Pauls, also had an opinion about how the media portrays people on council estates. She said:

> *I think the local paper is being unfair and that Benefits Street on TV was awful. They made out that everybody in the street was the same because they were all on benefits. Most of the people I know are getting benefits of some sort or another and a lot of them are working. So they're giving the wrong picture.*

Also we're lucky; my partner had a job before we came here. I know some of my neighbours are struggling to get jobs and they think some of it is because of where they live. If that's true it really isn't right.

Opinions from Hesters Way residents are similar. Gemma is 29 and lives in a two bedroom flat in Hesters Way with her partner and their two young children. She says that the difficulty is that when you are housed by the council there is no choice about where you live. They say you have a choice but it is not really true because by the time you are allowed to bid for properties you are desperate and you will bid for anything just to get housed. Gemma does not buy newspapers but reads the news online and also watches television. Her view is that both newspapers and television programmes imply that people could improve their lives if they really tried. She says:

I wish the TV would stop showing programmes like that 'Benefits Street'. It made out that everybody in council housing was like that and this just isn't the case. Most of us are just doing what we can to make life OK for our kids and this type of reporting makes me feel trapped living where I am. The newspapers and TV don't understand how hard it is just to live day to day. They don't make any effort to understand. I don't want to feel judged because of where I live for the rest of my life or because I have to sometimes claim benefits. Where am I going to go? I can't get out of here. My partner works, but it's never going to be enough for us to buy a house.

Margaret, who is 51 and has lived in Hesters Way for the past 25 years, has experienced 15 years living in a two bedroom council flat and 10 years living in a three bedroom housing association house. She lives with her partner and two teenage children. Her eldest child has now left home. Her partner is a heroin addict and receives prescription methadone which mostly manages his addiction. They are totally dependent on benefits as no one in the household has worked for the past seven years. Because she has lived in Hesters Way for a long time she has seen changes in the way the estate has been reported in the local newspaper and says:

> *The local paper has always been negative about Hesters Way for as long as I can remember, quite unfairly most of the time. It's got worse because it's not just about the newspapers anymore. The TV programmes are the worst if you are on benefits and in social housing. They are so negative. Of course I do feel judged; these programmes make you feel bad about your situation. They use language like 'scroungers' and 'work shy' as if they understand us. I know to some extent we are to blame for our own situation but we're not criminals, we don't steal anything and we treat everybody respectfully. These people don't know us but are judging us.*

She also had something to say about the 'bedroom tax':

> *And don't get me started on the bedroom tax. They say we should only get housing benefit for a two bed because our eldest has left home and the other two are young enough to share. So we have to pay £14 a week for the third bedroom. But they can't re-house us into a two bed place because they haven't got any available. You don't hear about that on the TV. They are totally out of touch with real people's lives and we're the ones paying for it.*

Jess also had an opinion on how the media makes judgements about people. She said:

> *People think because I had a baby so young and I've never had a job that I'm one of these lazy scroungers you hear about in the newspapers. It's not like that though really for me. You'd have to know what it was like living in care. I was moved around so often and I left school with no GCSEs. People don't understand and yet they judge me and make me feel guilty. I know I need to get work and the social are telling me I have to but it isn't going to be easy.*

Tom thinks that the local newspaper is not too bad in its reporting of Whaddon. He believes that it is the national press with their message of 'work shy benefit scroungers' that cause the most problems for people like him. He says that people not on benefits do not understand how complicated it can make life:

> *If I could get a permanent job I would go to work tomorrow. Doing occasional work isn't worth it because of the benefit*

system. You have to keep on signing on and off benefits all
the time and you end up worse off. There is no way I am going
to be ashamed of not working while my partner is going out to
work every day. It was a lot easier for her to get a job than me.
I just feel so angry a lot of the time because of my situation
and being called a scrounger makes me even angrier.

Cathy feels that the newspapers contribute to how other people think about council estates and people living there:

I don't think these newspaper reporters who write bad things
about us know anything about council estates. It's mostly OK
and nearly all of my neighbours have someone in the home
going out to work. That's not how the newspapers make it
sound; if you listen to them we are all out of work and mostly
it's our own fault. OK I admit I'm not working. The social says I
will have to find a job soon and although I want to work I don't
think it will be that easy as I haven't worked since I was
nineteen. That's what I mean; we're judged by people who
don't know how hard it is.

Although the residents interviewed all have different life stories a shared view has emerged on how they think that the people living on council estates are wrongly judged in a negative way. They all, also, feel that newspapers and television contribute to these negative views.

6.3 Local media perspectives

The newspaper part of Cheltenham's story starts, for the purpose of this research, shortly after the end of World War One. Cheltenham, like many other towns across England, was reacting to the need for slum clearance as identified by the Housing of the *Working Classes Act of 1890* and the Government directive in 1919 for councils to build 'homes fit for heroes to live in' (*Housing & Town Planning Act (Addison Act) 1919*).

The *Cheltenham Looker On* weekly newspaper can be seen to provide support for the people living in the slums; managing to take this support to a level of campaigning for improved housing for the working classes. An article titled 'Astounding Housing Conditions in Cheltenham' was published over

two weeks in May 1919. This piece written by someone claiming to be a 'Looker On Special Commissioner on Housing' making a point about the slums said:

> If Cheltenham is a health resort then places which are a menace to the health not only of residents but of visitors ought not to exist. We want to see them removed not camouflaged or hidden away under the euphonious title of 'Garden Town'. There are towns that live up to the reputation. Let Cheltenham do so. We want the present state of affairs to give place to a better system – a system that, as the English Review contribution points out 'will not only be better for the poor, but also better for the rich' (Cheltenham Looker On 17/5/1919).

In the same issue, under the 'Views of a Looker On' column, the writer looks in more detail at what is described as Cheltenham's housing problem. The article claims that everyone is aware of this problem and that it is war that brought it to the forefront of people's consciousness, partly because the outcome of the war had to acknowledge the role of working people in fighting and dying for their country, resulting in a general opinion that working people had a right to decent housing. Highlighting the contrast between the attractiveness of Cheltenham's affluent parts and the slum areas the writer admits that the *Looker On* is taking a campaigning stance on this issue:

> The Looker On has taken what will perhaps be considered a daring step in unmasking some of these unlovely and unhealthy abodes for the purpose of getting the blots removed (Cheltenham looker On 17/5/1919).

The following week the *Looker On* continued its series on Cheltenham's Housing Condition describing slum dwellings as mean, miserable and squalid with overcrowding meaning that family members of all ages and both sexes needed to share beds, saying that:

> It is not surprising that morals and manners are often conspicuous by their absence. (And that) the soil for the seed of every kind of social discontent is here in abundance. Veritable hotbeds of viciousness are ready to hand. We neglect such at our own peril (Cheltenham Looker On 24/5/1919).

These *Looker On* articles were written at the time when Cheltenham Town Council was beginning the process of building the town's first council housing on land that would become the St Marks estate. Building of these first council houses began in April 1920 and the first houses were occupied in early 1921 (Waller et al, 2009).

The *Looker On,* in November 1919, just prior to a town council election asked candidates to write a short piece on their views of the housing question. All were agreed that the need for decent housing was urgent in the town. Support for the scheme to build housing in St Marks had a mixed response. Councillor Miss Geddes, a Conservative member, standing in South Ward said:

> Personally I look upon this problem of housing as the most urgent and vital one in our town and if after 1st December I am entrusted with representation of South Ward I shall continue to do my very best to push our municipal building plans and help the working people to have good houses at the earliest possible moment (Cheltenham Looker On 18/11/1919).

Councillor Stewart, conservative member for West Ward where the proposed St Marks estate would be located, agreed in principal with Miss Geddes. However, he was concerned that housing for what he described as those he described as 'the industrial classes' should not all be built to the west of Cheltenham but should be 'equally distributed East, West, North and South'.

Another Conservative member, Councillor Stanley of South Ward reflecting on current concerns about homelessness and the issues that triggered the 1919 Housing Act said that:

> The question strictly affects ex-service men, many of whom broke up their homes to answer their country's call and having returned from the war now find themselves homeless. If our housing scheme cannot be proceeded with at once I think the purchase of army huts and conversion of flats must be considered but only as a temporary measure (Cheltenham Looker On 18/11/1919).

One of the labour candidates Mr Margetson, standing for election in South Ward, was prepared to be more provocative in his response:

> I am of the opinion that the present scheme will not meet the demand of the very people who need better houses and surroundings most and will not do away with slums that exist in this town. I will admit that houses are needed for the so-called middle classes, but there is a greater need for those in more humble positions and these should be studied as much as the others or even more so, for I realise that before we can make England a home fit for heroes to live in we must first alter their surroundings. This is a huge problem but one that must be talked with a firm hand and by men who are not interested in these hovels (Cheltenham Looker On 18/11/1919).

These comments made by Mr Margetson suggest two things; firstly that the first council houses were not being built to house the slum dwellers, but rather people working in middle class occupations; and secondly an indication that some Councillors might have an 'interest' in the slums.

The *Looker On* continued to cover the issue of housing conditions and in February 1920 reported on a meeting of the Council of the Chamber of Commerce and Traders where the town's slums were discussed. Mr Welstead is reported as using strong terms saying that 'The slums of Cheltenham, "charming Cheltenham the Garden Town" were among the worst in the country' (Cheltenham Looker On 21/2/1920).

Although Cheltenham Council completed the St Marks estate and went on to start building projects in St Pauls and Whaddon housing remained an issue for the town throughout the 1920s and 1930s. A view of a resident, expressed in December 1928 through a Letter to the Editor at the *Gloucestershire Echo* newspaper, provided the same sentiments as those expressed by Mr Welstead at the Chamber of Commerce meeting seven years earlier. The Reverend J W Bishop wrote:

> When first visiting Cheltenham five years ago I was impressed with this 'Garden Town of England' so I decided to come and live here, for surely it was ideal. But what am I to think after reading the statement made by Dr Emlyn last Friday? Is it true

that the slums in north Ward are worse than you will find in London? Do such slums really exist in our midst? The housing conditions in this part of town are a disgrace to Cheltenham (Gloucestershire Echo 17/12/1928).

Early newspaper reports concentrate on the slum dwellings rather than the slum tenant, but by the end of the 1920s there is evidence that Cheltenham's opinion regarding poorer residents was intensified by the idea of them being accommodated in housing belonging to the Council. In April 1929 the *Gloucestershire Echo* published a piece titled The Slum Dweller, a piece that was generally supportive:

> It is sometimes said, mainly by those who have little direct experience, that the slum dweller makes the slum; that he idle, vicious and dirty; that he prefers to live in a slum; and that the provision of better houses would be a waste of time because he would at once turn them into new slums. This view is, we are convinced, much too sweeping. It may be true enough in individual cases, but the evidence goes to show that the majority of people who are condemned to live in these unsavoury streets and alleys have a good share of self-respect. The truth is that most slum dwellers live in the slums because they cannot get alternative accommodation (Gloucestershire Echo 26/4/1929).

This view was not shared by F Horton Partridge writer of a letter to the *Gloucestershire Echo* on 30th March 1935. He expressed a need for the Council to use its resources to get rid of the 'blot of the slum areas' but cautioned that 'discretion would be needed in accepting the right kind of tenants as some slum dwellers would soon turn any neighbourhood into a slum'.

Although progress in replacing the slums with council housing was slow the general slum clearance programme was completed just before the start of World War II except for some sub-standard housing not demolished and replaced until 1959 (Waller, 2009). During the 1950s, 1960s and well into the 1970s local newspaper reporting managed, in the main, to concentrate on reporting on house building developments and said very little about people living as tenants on the council estates. Information about the *1980 Housing*

Act advocated home ownership, including the promotion of the 'right to buy' for council tenants. As home ownership was promoted as the desired tenure reporting of housing issues became increasingly negative about those people still living in rented accommodation and particularly those in council housing.

Charles Irving, Member of Parliament for Cheltenham at the time of the *1980 Housing Act*, was reported on May 20th 1980 as speaking against his own party in a Commons debate on the Housing Bill because it contained proposals to reduce spending on housing. His concerns were not only for the lack of spending on council houses but also on the needs in Cheltenham for more hostels and lodging houses to accommodate single people with high support needs who would not be entitled to a council house. He is quoted as saying 'it is scandalous that the proliferation of fleapits in which people have to live still continues nationally' (Gloucestershire Echo 20/5/1980). He had a month earlier criticised Cheltenham Borough Council for its failure to take advantage of house building grants which could have been used by housing associations to develop hostels (Gloucestershire Echo 29/4/1980).

A letter from resident L F Gurney to the *Gloucestershire Echo* on April 14th 1980 also expressed concerns about the Housing Bill. Commenting on an article explaining the intentions of the Bill he can be seen, in retrospect, to be farsighted in his prediction as he said:

> The article only confirms what we have been saying for years that by selling council houses the position of housing stock would be so serious that in a short period of time those on the waiting list would have no chance at all of being allocated council accommodation. Furthermore it will be utter chaos for future generations (Gloucestershire Echo 14/4/1980).

There were also concerns expressed by the Cheltenham's Liberal councillors that they feared that central government would stop councils spending money on building new housing in order to divert spending to other needs such as schools and roads (Gloucestershire Echo 24/6/1980)

By the mid-1990s Cheltenham Borough Council admitted that there were problems on the council estates and funded the setting up of Hesters Way

Neighbourhood Project in 1996 and Whaddon, Lynworth and Priors Neighbourhood Project in 2000. Although the neighbourhood projects carried out positive work to change the lives of residents their existence also raised the profile of the areas and their problems. This became particularly apparent in April 1998 when Prince Charles included Hesters Way in a list he produced of the 40 most deprived and problematic estates in the United Kingdom. He did this in his role as President of Business in the Community, part of the Prince's Trust. He challenged businesses to help 'rescue' the 40 estates he identified as Business in the Community Regeneration Area Action Zones. Hesters Way was included in the list alongside areas such as Toxteth and Tower Hamlets (Gloucestershire Echo, 29/4/1998). This was a story that was covered both locally and nationally by the media. Although this led to very positive support for community regeneration work in the area from local businesses it sparked anger from local residents who rushed to defend the area. For example Di Jenkins in on May 3rd 1998, in a letter to the Gl*oucestershire Echo*, was outraged to read this story:

> You have got to be joking. Has he (Prince Charles) actually been here? How can he compare us in Hesters Way to the inner city estates in London and Manchester? What made him say this? It is not so bad here. I am outraged that he could say such a thing.

Along similar lines an anonymous letter to the same newspaper on 4th May 1998 said:

> I've always been a big supporter of the Royal Family but this might change my mind. If he had been here we would know about it so he must be making it up. Hesters Way is a great place to be living. We do have problems, what area doesn't, but it's still not as bad as this report makes out.

Another example of how residents react also provides a clear illustration of how local media uses individuals to slur an area and this is the David Young story, which became headline news in February 2002. David Young, a troubled young man living in Hesters Way, racially attacked a security guard in a local supermarket; this followed a long series of his anti-social behaviour. The local media reported extensively on this story and gave a

high level of coverage to the fact that he was from Hesters Way, always mentioning that this is a council estate. For the *Gloucestershire Echo* this was a major story especially as at the time he was the youngest person in the United Kingdom to receive an anti-social behaviour order and the story was consequently covered by the national newspapers as well as television, with a documentary being made of the case. This resulted in the council estate, Hesters Way, receiving national notoriety and the Hesters Way residents were not too pleased about this. Many letters to the *Gloucestershire Echo* followed. The majority of the correspondents accepted that the story deserved coverage but were strongly opposed to the need for the media, both locally and nationally to constantly name the estate and keep referring to it as a council estate. An example is Mrs Linton in a letter to the *Gloucestershire Echo* on March 14th 2002 who said:

> We know that there are some very difficult people living in Hesters Way, lots of them actually, but there are also a lot of decent people. Most of the people in Hesters Way are decent and it is not fair that the local and national press is saying things about our area because one young person has behaved so badly.

Whilst attitudes expressed in newspapers are generally expressing negative images of the council housing estates these examples provide evidence that residents on said estates fight back and use the letters pages to do so. Letters to the Editor of the *Gloucestershire Echo* provide an indication of the polarised opinions on the council estates and their residents. An example is a letter published on 3th January 2004 from 'name supplied' who was 'scandalised' that the Borough Council was about to spend £15m on improvements to its housing. The writer suggested that:

> We should knock down the council estates and give the land to private developers to build on. Those who can't afford to live here should go to Gloucester, the Forest of Dean or where there's housing they can afford. Why do they want to live in Cheltenham? They don't appreciate its grand Regency heritage or shopping in the promenade or Waitrose. The government is far too kind to the poor. If they are presented

with everything on a plate what incentive is there for them to
work like the rest of us.

This letter resulted in anger and upset from a number of people. Some of
their comments show that council tenants are prepared to defend
themselves against these opinions.

An example of a reply to this letter is from Miss Partridge (Gloucestershire
Echo, January 6, 2004). Miss Partridge points out that people living in poorer
parts of Cheltenham, that include the council estates, are Cheltenham
people as much as those living in the wealthier parts and they are no less
proud of the town. She attacked the notion that Cheltenham should be
concentrating on being a wealthy town and that council tenants should be
located elsewhere. She said:

> Why should we have to move from our home town just
> because this person doesn't like the estates being part of
> Cheltenham? Yes, the estate has been in the news a lot but
> does that mean we are all criminals? I can assure everyone
> we are not.

Mrs Hastings also replied to the same letter defending her position as a
Cheltenham resident born and bred. She also defended the right of council
tenants to live as equals in the town (Gloucestershire Echo January 12,
2004):

> I understand that the £15m is to be spent on providing
> decent bathrooms, kitchens and double-glazing. Is this
> person one of those who would be happy for council tenants
> to live in squalid conditions as in Victorian times? We pay
> £71.84 a week in rent and also pay full council tax.

Bev Birch, then chair of Hesters Way West Tenants Association, claimed
that diversity within a town is a healthy situation. She also argued that
everyone should be entitled to decent living conditions regardless of their
status in the community (Gloucestershire Echo, January 17, 2004):

> We all love living on one of the council estates this bigot wants
> to bulldoze. We all deserve a warm, comfortable home
> regardless of status. I invite this individual to come and meet
> some of us. If this person does not have the guts, then keep

your bigoted ideas to yourself. This is snobbery of the highest order.

A further letter on this subject said:

> This reinforces the image of Cheltenham as a town of old Tory colonels who want to hang and flog anyone who they believe belongs to the lower orders. The town isn't like this anymore. You would have thought that serious people would welcome the efforts to improve the areas in which they live. But no, there is just jealousy and resentment. Sheer class hatred (J Webster Gloucestershire Echo 4th January 2004).

In more recent years newspapers have changed their focus and the poor are the targets of negativity rather than council or other social housing tenants directly. It may be the case that many of the poor are also council tenants, but this is not what defines them in terms of negative reporting.

6.4 Conclusion

This chapter demonstrates that residents are fully aware of the problems that exist on Cheltenham's council estates and they are prepared to offer their views about them. The openness and honesty that residents have been prepared to express about their situations and experiences has contributed positively to the research. Their comments in interviews and of those reported in the local newspapers show that residents are defensive yet positive about where they live. This to the extent where they show high levels of resentment about how certain council estates are reported in the media, especially as it affects them personally.

Overall this chapter and Chapter 5 bring into focus the working people of Cheltenham and contribute to a previously ignored aspect of Cheltenham's history; namely that of its working-classes. The main aim of these chapters, however, was to provide an in depth understanding of how working-class housing has developed in Cheltenham over time, as well as the factors that have influenced these changes. Additionally, how residents perceive Cheltenham's response to housing needs and how it affects them personally.

The following chapter brings together and offers analysis of the four different areas of research: the historiographical; the sociological and political; the housing and welfare policy; and the discourses. This in turn will provide for a foundation for further study which will be outlined in Chapter 9.

Chapter 7   ANALYSING THE FOUR AREAS OF RESEARCH

7.1 Introduction

Previous chapters have provided the data and information collected through the research. In this chapter the research's four research areas will be brought together to provide an analysis that delivers a broad narrative of working-class housing, both nationally and locally. This will include the situation that exists now and also has existed over the period covered by the research. Although the research's main purpose relates to those living in council housing the context is not complete without viewing council housing alongside other sources of working-class housing. This is because the relationship between how the state has responded to housing needs and the way poorer people's housing needs are viewed by others are directly linked. That this relationship is also promoted, or at very least supported, by popular media adds weight to the method of critical discourse analysis used for this research. The timeline was produced to provide a tool to show the relationship between legislation and historical and sociological incidents. This has enabled a comparison between what has happening now and what has happened in the past. This in turn provides a link to the implications raised by this research.

As explained in Chapter 2, the research has used Critical Discourse Analysis, and in particular Norman Fairclough's Dialectical-Relational Approach, which relies on data sets within the three disciplines of social sciences, the humanities and discourse studies. This has resulted in four areas of research: the historiographical research which tells us what has happened; the sociological/political research which tells us why it happened; the housing and welfare policy research which tells us how it happened; and the discourses which tell us what has been said about those things that have happened.

Consequently, this research concerns itself with the relationship between social and housing policy and the views of society towards those people housed by the state. Theoretically this relationship is linked to the balance of power between the poorest in society and government which represents the

interests of the state. This, in the case of the United Kingdom, is a state with the majority of power vested in capitalism, a system where physical capital is privately owned and run for a profit whilst the majority of people work for a wage without owning the means of production or the products it produces. This balance of power is aggravated in cases where unemployment is high as more people become reliant on the state to support them. The relevance of this to the research is that poorer people, who cannot afford to own their own property, have always relied on either their employer or the state to provide housing for them. Whilst the four areas of research provide the layers that create the story of housing the poor in Cheltenham, the theories of power provide an understanding of the changes relating to housing which has been provided by the state over time.

In relation to this, the research concentrates on the extent to which power influences the way that social and housing policies 'control' the lives of poorer citizens, in, for example, where and how they are permitted to live. The implications of the research, presented in Chapter 8, are concerned with the effect of social and housing policies as a growing number of poor citizens become dependent on welfare benefits and social housing provision is consistently diminished over time. It is important to examine how these developments in turn might affect council and other tenants. By 2016 there was, and remains, a general recognition of a housing crisis in the United Kingdom, not only in terms of social housing, but also in the private-rented and home-ownership sectors. The world of rented housing in both the social and private sectors has changed significantly during the course of this research. This means that it has become relevant to consider the situation of those who do not qualify for social housing and therefore need to rely on the private rented sector which is expensive and often of poor quality (Walker S & Jeraj S, 2016) This will be discussed more fully in Chapter 8.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the overriding assumption made by Critical Discourse Analysis practitioners is that language and power are linked. Consequently, this research applies a critical approach to the discourses of residents and newspapers through their relationship with power. This applies to both policies and the politics that inform those policies and through the

use these make of popular media to promote their desired message. This will be achieved by firstly demonstrating the relationship between power and language and secondly by applying an analytic approach to the discourses collected as data for this research whilst also applying the knowledge gained from the study of historical and sociological influences.

As previously explained discourses are about language. Discourses can be anything that provide a message and can therefore be talk or text, including speeches, newspaper articles, films, online blogs or television programmes. Many discourses are innocuous and provide only the obvious message. However, many discourses take the meaning of the word discourse from a 'genre' to a 'style'. For example, the term 'newspaper discourses' provides the 'genre' whilst the message of the day, responding to contemporary political messages or rhetoric, provides the 'style'. The 'genre' stays the same, but the 'style' changes. This applies particularly to those discourses that relate to politics and policies or the support of the rhetoric of the day which contain notions such as racist or gendered expressions. Examples of what can be referred by as 'style' in relation to council housing, as a 'genre', would be a difference between the 'decent hard-working people' portrayed by the media when moving into early council housing and the 'feckless, work-shy scroungers' now portrayed. That the national media present the current view affects the perceptions of those both inside and outside the estates thus, even those who live on the estates believe the 'feckless, work-shy, scroungers' view and start to make judgements about themselves and their neighbours , whether this label is realistic or not.

Wodak and Meyer (2009) claim that discourses can produce major ideological effects in that they both produce and reproduce power relationships that are unequal between those with invested power and those whose relationship to that power is as 'other'. For example, men/women, ethnic majority/minority and different social classes. This is achieved by the way the discourses represent things and place people within the context represented. This is translated in housing terms to Britain being a society where home ownership has become the desirable tenure. This has resulted in more value placed on home owners with renters becoming 'other' and with

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this applying to both social and private renters. Even though this is the case, regardless of their circumstances, it is social renters that are considered of the lower status even when private renters may be experiencing higher levels of issues within their lives. This is because private tenants are less visible as they are not housed on a recognisable estate.

Chapter 5 provides some detail of the research as it relates to the story of Cheltenham and the literature review in Chapters 3 and 4 provide a comprehensive overview of the historiographical and sociological data collected through current, retrospective and contemporaneous literature. Consequently, these two chapters form part of the analysis.

7.2 Historiographical research – what happened?

The historiographical data is mostly contained in Chapter 3, with detail relating to Cheltenham set out in Chapter 5. These chapters outline the 'story' whilst the analysis of this research area provides us with the information that contributes to the overall research by explaining what happened in relation to council housing. The national historiographical position provides the necessary background that informed the way that Cheltenham developed its response to housing needs although it is the local data that is of most significance to this research.

Retrospective and contemporaneous literature, as well as reports and minutes of local council meetings and reference to census data, has provided the majority of the historiographical material. As discussed in Chapter 2, on the methodology, the data was managed through the production of an online timeline using Tiki Toki enabling local and national events and developments to be compared. This will in part be dealt with in section 7.4 as this section takes a more detailed view of the policies that were introduced.

What the historiographical data tells us about the local situation is that it is likely that without the discovery of the mineral springs Cheltenham would have continued to develop as a small market town, surrounded by farm land,

rather than the town now considered the most complete Regency town in the England. Early maps show Cheltenham as one long street with a small river running parallel to it. Map 7.1 illustrates this. This map was drawn retrospectively by Nancy Pringle for Pakenham (1972) with information taken from a survey carried out by John Norden in 1617 for a survey of Crown properties.
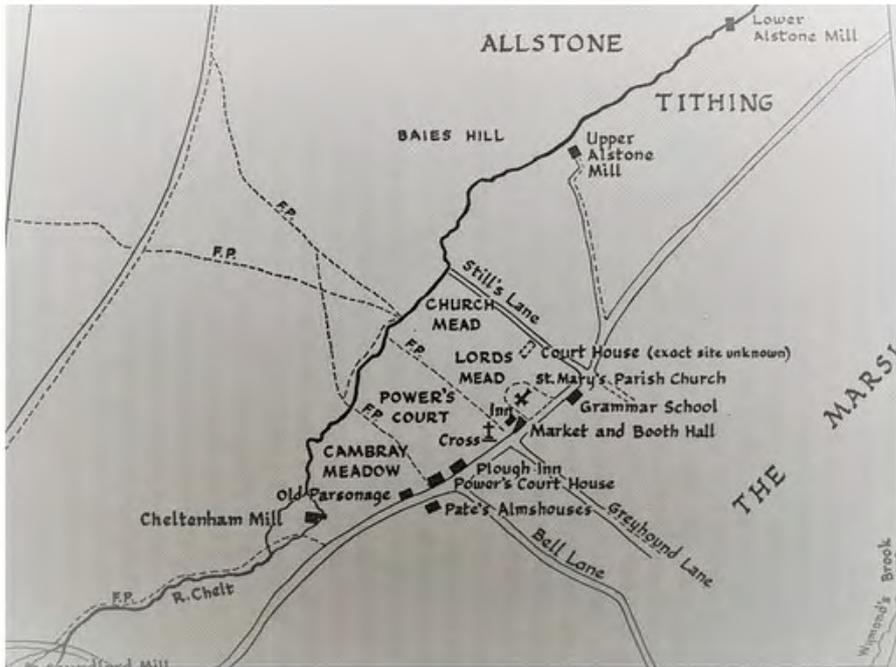
Map 7.1: The Cheltenham area c. 1617 (a detail from the map prepared by Nancy B Pringle from Norden's survey

Later maps illustrate the speed at which Cheltenham grew with Map 7.2, drawn only 21 years after the visit of King George III, displaying the early developments made to accommodate visitors to the spa. These include pump rooms in different areas of the town. Map 7.2 shows that by 1834 the town had developed to the north and south where the private estates were being built. By 1884 Cheltenham is heavily populated as can be seen in Map 7.3. Map 7.4 shows Cheltenham now with the red shaded area exhibiting the area included in the 1884 map and also the position of the four council estates included in this research.
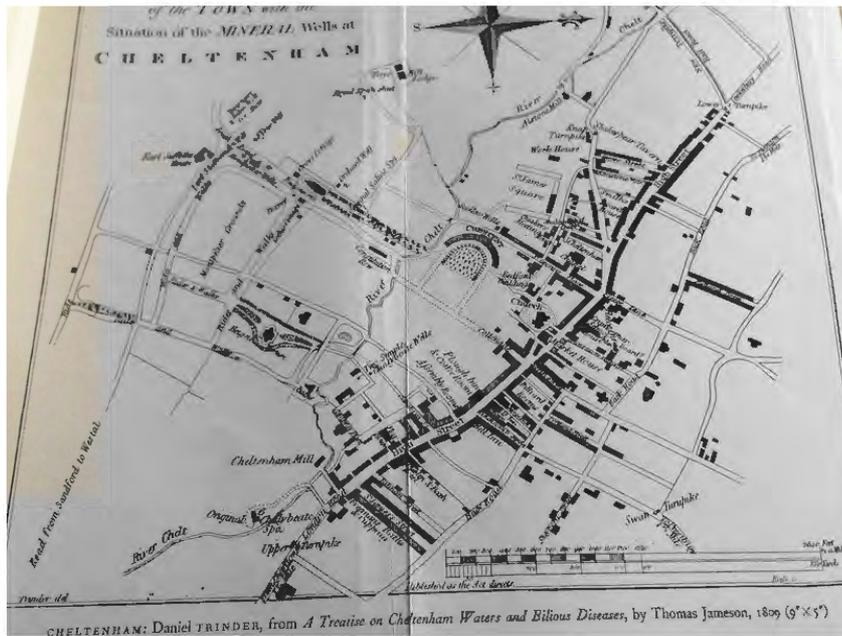
Map 7.2 Cheltenham in 1809

Map 7.3 Cheltenham in 1834

Map 7.4 Cheltenham in 1884
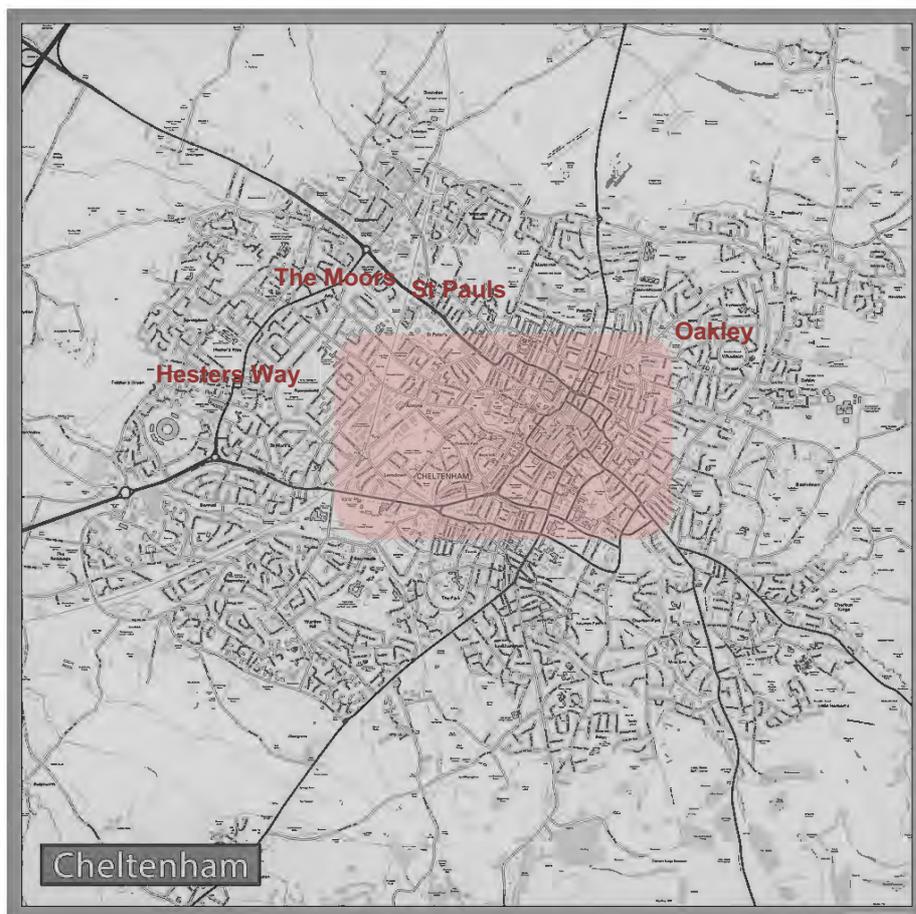
Map 7.5 Cheltenham Now

The historiographical data relating specifically to Cheltenham and contained in Chapter 4 outlines the history of the town, relating particularly to housing, in some detail. What this tells us is that although the history of Cheltenham is modestly chronicled prior to the discovery of the mineral springs in 1716 and the visit of King George III to the town in 1788 the data that does exist supports the premise that Cheltenham's own development of housing and support for the poorer residents followed the national position. This meant that the slum clearances and council house building was more initiated by the availability of government subsidies and directives rather than the needs of the poor. As with the national model the early council housing was allocated to those considered 'deserving' rather than to those with the most need. Consequently, slum clearances did not happen until the 1930s – 1950s. The data discloses that the majority of council housing development was also completed in the late 1950s although building continued at a slower pace into the 1970s.

By following the timeline into the 1970s, 80s and 90s it is possible to see that Cheltenham Borough Council became increasingly aware that some of the more intensive blocks of flats and maisonettes, built to accommodate post-war workers for the Ministry of Defence, in the guise of the Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ), and the aircraft industry, were not fit for purpose. This resulted during the 1990s and 2000s with Cheltenham Borough Council transferring the poorer housing stock to Housing Associations who then went on to develop new housing estates made up of houses with gardens. An example of the timeline is in Appendix 7.

Census data shows us that a combination of sales of council housing under 'right to buy', with no building to replace sold houses, and the replacement of intensive blocks of flats with houses has significantly reduced the council and other social housing stock to the extent that private renting has now overtaken social renting as a tenure in Cheltenham for the first time since the mid-19th century. This is a reflection of a national phenomenon with statistical evidence showing that the private rented sector will continue to increase as the need for housing outstrips the availability of state provided housing. (2011 Census data viewed online)

One of the most significant changes occurred in 2002 when councils were asked by central government to carry out referendums to establish whether council housing should be fully transferred to a housing association or whether the council should maintain ownership. Cheltenham council tenants voted for the housing to stay in the ownership of the Borough Council and management of the housing stock was outsourced, or commissioned, to a new Arm's Length Management Organisation (ALMO), Cheltenham Borough Homes.

Earlier data demonstrates that Cheltenham was typical in the way it dealt with the need to provide decent and affordable housing for the poor. Housing legislation is discussed in section 7.4. Cheltenham's responses to the various introductions of housing and social policy are explored further in Chapter 5 with future plans to address Cheltenham's own housing crisis discussed in Chapter 8.

7.3 Sociological and political research – why it happened

From the middle of the 19th century to date there were 22 different Acts of Parliament directly relating to the housing of poor people in Britain. Equally important to remember is that the New Poor Law, which provided the workhouses, was also part of relevant legislation between 1834 and 1948. This section, though, will look at the sociological and political influences that determined why successive governments have decided on these approaches.

Also, because of the importance of the relationship between power and discourses to the methodology used for this research an overview on power has been included.

7.3.1 Power

Media discourses often support current ideology through the reproduction of rhetoric and therefore assist in the production of hegemony. Consequently, media discourses can and often do reinforce the desired or dominant

political message. Rhetoric relating to council estates and their residents are no exception to this particularly in recent years in relation to benefit dependency and the fact that the majority of people now living in council and other social housing are benefit dependent. It is important, though, to note that the majority of benefit dependent households are also working households.

Simpson and Mayr (2010) say that power is derived from privilege and in turn privilege is acquired through access to social resources such as wealth, knowledge and education. The privilege that brings access to social resources converts to power, which provides status and authority which in turn converts to the ability to influence, control and coerce subordinate groups. In particular relevance to this research is the use of the media, a social resource, in reinforcing the desired message.

This can also lead to those subordinate groups becoming co-producers of the message so that it becomes the accepted view which then legitimises the dominance of the privileged few who have the power to manipulate social resources to create what Gramsci refers to as hegemony (Gramsci,1935/1992).

Max Weber (Weber, 1905/2010) argued that modern states use power as a dominance tool having the power to secure compliance in the face of resistance. This dominance goes beyond the state to include such things as businesses or the church. In a democracy this dominance and power needs to be legitimised in order to satisfy the electorate and this legitimisation is achieved through language and other communication systems.

One of Gramsci's concepts on power is about persuasion. Dominant groups persuade subordinate groups to accept moral, political and cultural values and institutions. Whereas with Weber's mainstream tradition of power coercion is needed to overcome any resistance Gramsci's hegemony is not coercion because the ideas are made to appear normal, natural and/or common sense and become accepted as the norm. The more legitimacy the dominant group has the less coercion is needed (Gramsci, 1935/1992).

Pierre Bourdieu takes this one step further claiming that social agents legitimise aspects of domination in order to perpetuate social hierarchies. His theories could underpin the concept that the perpetuation of negative perceptions of people living on council estates can be legitimised by society in order to reproduce and consequently continue social structures of dominance (Bourdieu, 2000)

All of these theories are based on an assumption that there is a societal reliance on language and communication to achieve the legitimisation and consequent reproduction and continuation of dominance whether this is through what is taught in school or what is read in newspapers. If the message can be perpetuated then the dominance is legitimised.

This research supports the argument that housing is and always was central to the power of the dominant classes and is used as a tool to control behaviour and keep those people with the most needs in a subservient situation. It further argues that the power is vested in property owners whether they are the state, social landlords or private landlords.

Critical Discourse Analysis works on the premise that discourses are both shaped by society and shape societal thinking. Thus it is possible to demonise groups through the demonisation of individuals. Examples are that newspapers mention council estates in relation to criminals an example could be 'John Smith from Hesters Way (known council estate)' or 'John Smith of Ryefield Road (a street not on a council estate)'. This theme is picked up in the analysis of the residents' discourses where some have identified their sense of how newspapers report differently dependent on where people live and how this makes them feel judged.

There are three main ways in which power relates to the housing of the poor and therefore this research. Firstly, through the power of government, through economic policies, to influence market forces (e.g. housing affordability, both purchasing and renting) and this will be discussed more fully in Chapter 8.

Secondly, by limiting the choices of poor people on where they can live. Whether that is through the early Poor Laws of the 16th century tying the poorest to their home parish or the *2012 Welfare Reform Act* which dictates where people have to live based on the number of bedrooms they are entitled to. What the earliest and this latest legislation have in common is that they both place limitations on poor people and suggest that the poor are responsible for their own situations.

And thirdly, and this is the strongest relationship of power to this research, that those with power determine how those without power are portrayed in popular media and how this perpetuates the stigmatisation of these people. In other words how discourses are used to wield power.

7.3.2 Sociological and political influences

Available data shows that those people who cannot afford to own their own home are dependent on others to provide accommodation for them. In pre-industrial times it was normal for employers such as farmers and large households to provide housing for their workers as part of their remuneration. For example, the provision of tied cottages for agricultural workers in some parts of the United Kingdom continues today.

 Industrialisation changed this. As people moved to towns and cities to find work within the new factories accommodation for the workers became an issue. New housing was not built quickly enough which resulted in existing housing being split into the smallest possible units to house as many people as possible. This in turn affected infrastructure such as sewerage systems designed for far fewer people and public health became an issue amongst the slums that were thus created. Malpass and Murie (1999) point out that it is more likely that poor sanitation which could affect all classes would be more of a driver to improve it than the needs of the people that had to live in the slums. Consequently, the second part of the 19th century saw no less than five pieces of legislation introduced with the aim of addressing this issue and even though it was well into the 20th century before this was

seriously addressed it was the start of state intervention in the provision of housing.

The end of World War One saw the next significant change as men returned from war prepared to demand better conditions. The British government, aware of revolution in Russia, knew that they must react and the *1919 Housing and Town Planning Act* increased subsidies to local authorities in an attempt to build 'homes fit for heroes' and specifically working-class heroes. It was not until the *1949 Housing Act*, following World War Two and a serious housing shortage, that access to council housing was broadened so that anyone who could not afford to own their own home could be housed by the council.

These examples show that the introduction and subsequent decline in social housing has never been entirely altruistic and that the government's resolve to provide council housing has been driven more by wider societal needs than the desire to support poorer working-class people.

From the end of World War Two until the late 1970s employment was high in the United Kingdom, people were paying taxes and council houses were being built to accommodate the workers. It was during this period that the larger council estates in Cheltenham were built. These included some of the most unsuitable housing being produced during this time as blocks of flats and maisonettes were built. That few of these blocks survive today is testament to their lack of suitability as family housing.

Chapter 3 provides some detail on how the conservative 'right to buy' encouraged those that could afford it to buy their properties and subsequently leave the council estates. This caused what is known as social residualisation. This relates to what happens to an area when people leave it because they believe it is no longer a desirable place to live. What is left behind is the social residue of less able people. Residualisation, coupled with a reduction in housing stock due to the right to buy means that the majority of people now living in council and social housing are those with the highest needs.

Many of the Cheltenham people that now live on the estates are the long-term victims of a decline in British manufacturing caused by globalisation, which has resulted not just in unemployment for the semi-skilled and unskilled workers no longer required in manufacturing, but also because the work that has replaced it is low paid and/or part time and less secure.

That period between the end of World War Two and the economic recessions of the 1970s and 1980s was the time when council estate residency was seen as a positive thing, the council estates housed working people who were paying taxes. It was not until the *1982 Housing Benefit and Social Security Act* that housing benefit was introduced which implies that up until that point in time it was not needed. This Act of Parliament also changed the way in which government was prepared to subsidise social housing, moving from paying grants to help build new housing to subsidising tenants through housing benefit payments. It was from this period that councils stopped building new homes as they were unable to use rental income which is classed as revenue to fund the building of new houses which is classed as a capital cost. Housing Associations were more fortunate as they were able to bid for grants which enabled them to continue to build.

Since the 1990s there has been a visible decline in social housing provision. The best of the houses in the more desirable parts of the council estates have been sold; neither councils nor housing associations have built enough housing to replace those sold under 'right to buy'; the majority (63%) of all social housing households are in receipt of benefits, including housing benefits, even those where someone in the household is working; additionally, many of the tenants have issues relating, for example, to drugs, alcohol or mental health.

The increase in the number of people claiming housing benefits was addressed under the *2012 Welfare Reform Act* which introduced a cap on housing benefits for those living in private rented properties and what is known as the' bedroom tax' for those in social housing. As a consequence, private rent tenants have less choice about where they live and

subsequently many live in inadequate accommodation. In the case of social rent tenants they have to pay a sum of money, which in Cheltenham is £14 per week, for every bedroom in their property that is not occupied or be re-housed to a smaller property. Unfortunately, there are not enough smaller properties available in Cheltenham so people are forced to pay the 'bedroom tax'.

One way for governments to justify reducing housing and other benefits is to create a belief that people living in poverty are to blame for their own situation. The demonisation of poor people has become an increasing problem for people living on council estates as is borne out by the Cheltenham residents who have participated in this research. Politicians have used words that are blatantly aimed at being divisive, such as work-shy and scroungers, and the news media and television documentaries, such as *Benefits Street* have perpetuated this.

What this section clarifies is that poor people, those who cannot afford to buy their own home, have little power or control over their housing and that they are pawns in the hands of subsequent governments.

7.4 Housing and welfare policy research – how it happened

Understanding the development of housing and social policy in the United Kingdom is necessary as it reflects the attitude of governments towards poor people and their needs. When examined in line with the sociological and political influences, discussed in the previous section, it is possible not only to see how housing and welfare policies were introduced, but also why they were introduced at the time they were.

The two most significant policies, in living memory, that relate to social welfare is firstly the *Beveridge Report of 1942* aimed at addressing the five giants of evil namely, squalor, ignorance, want, idleness, and disease. This report resulted in the British Welfare State and introduced state services in health, national assistance (social security), housing benefits, family allowance, state pensions and free secondary education for all. The *1948*

National *Assistance Act* introduced national insurance, the tax which employed people would pay as insurance for when they needed support.

The second significant piece of social welfare policy is the *2012 Welfare Reform Act* which has made changes to different types of welfare benefits including introducing universal credit and capping all benefits. It has also increased the state pension age, more significantly for women than for men; changed council tax benefits which is likely to mean a reduction for some people; and put caps on the amount of housing benefit that can be claimed.

Lists of legislation relating to the history of how council housing happened shows that from the middle of the 19th century governments were aware that the answer to housing and public health issues was for the local authorities to intervene in the provision of housing for working people. Unfortunately, as can be seen from the historiographical data and from Chapter 5, which provides details of Cheltenham's responses to housing needs, it took over 80 years and two world wars before any significant intervention was made. It then took only another 50 years before the importance of council and other social housing was in decline. Pre-World War Two legislation can be seen in Table 6.1 and post -war in Table 6.2 (Legislation.gov.uk, 2016).

These tables illustrate how up until 1980 there was a willingness by governments to increase the availability of rented housing for working people. Since that date legislation has been more about maintaining the status quo and more about the tenants' social needs rather than their housing needs. If added to this is the legislation relating to welfare changes it can be seen that the priority shifts from housing to welfare.

1851	*Labouring Classes' Lodging Houses Act* This was the first Act of Parliament to allow local authorities to provide housing. It was mostly ignored.
1866	*Labouring Classes' Dwelling Houses Act* Allowed local authorities to borrow from the Public Works Loans Commissioner at cheap rates in order to build housing for the working classes.
1868	*Artisans' and Labourers' Dwellings Act (Torrens Act)* Local authorities were able to demolish unfit houses. The Act did not provide compensation for owners. The Act also did not make provision for local authorities to rebuild.
1875	*Artisans' and Labourers' Dwellings Improvements Act (Cross Act)* Allowed local authorities to compulsory purchase and then clear areas of unfit housing. If local authorities did build on these cleared sites they had to sell the housing on after ten years.
1890	*Housing of the Working Classes Act* This Act consolidated previous legislation dealing with both individual properties and areas of unfit houses as well as the local authority powers to deal with these issues.
1909	*Housing and Town Planning Act* Put an end to the need for local authorities to sell properties they had built after ten years. Also gave local authorities the power to prepare town plans on housing.
1919	*Housing and Town Planning Act (Addison Act)* Introduced subsidies from the exchequer for local authority housing to be built. This involved a local liability of 1p on the rates. The exchequer then met any deficit.
1923	*Housing Act (Chamberlain Act)* Introduced a different subsidy aimed at encouraging private builders to build housing for the working classes.
1924	*Housing (Financial Provisions) Act (Wheatley Act)* This Act introduced a new subsidy which was dependent on a mandatory rates contribution to costs. Withdrawn later in 1933.
1930	*Housing Act ((Greenwood Act)* Allowed local authorities to introduce rent rebates on their properties. Also introduced a new subsidy which was based the number of people rehoused after slum clearances.
1933	*Housing (Financial Provisions) Act* Stopped subsidies for new housing apart from that which replaced slum clearance. The Act also required that all local authorities produce a five-year slum clearance plan
1935	*Housing Act* Introduced subsidies to help relieve overcrowding. It also required local authorities to have one Housing Revenue Account where they were allowed to pool subsidies and rent.
1938	*Housing Act* Introduced a single subsidy to local authorities. This was £5 10 s for both slum clearance and overcrowding.

Table 7.1 Housing Legislation pre-World War Two

1946	*Housing (Financial and Miscellaneous Provision) Act* Raised the level of subsidies but also raised the level that local authorities were expected to raise through the rates.
1949	*Housing Act* Changed the restriction that had previously meant that only 'the working classes' could access council housing. This permitted anyone requesting to be housed by their local council to be considered for housing. Also introduced grants to improve council housing.
1972	*Housing Finance Act* Fair rents for council tenants was introduced. Also housing revenue accounts were now allowed to generate a surplus.
1980	*Housing Act* Promoted 'Right to Buy' for council tenants to buy the property they lived in.
1982	*Social Security and Housing Benefits Act* Established housing benefits system which changed the way the state subsidised local authority housing for grants for building new homes to subsidising individual tenants.
1988	*Housing Act* Introduced more powers to private landlords in areas of rent regulation, security of tenure and succession.
1996	*Housing Act* Consolidated the duties that local authorities have to homeless people.
2004	*Housing Act* Extended the regulation of housing in multiple occupation through licensing and introduced a tenancy deposit scheme which is designed to protect the deposits given to landlords by tenants on occupation.
2016	*Housing and Planning Act* Allows sale by local authorities of any high value properties once they become vacant. Also extends the Right to Buy to include Housing Associations. The aim is also that there will be an end to secure or assured tenancies within the social rented sector and that people on higher incomes wishing to stay in social housing should be expected to pay higher rents, known as 'pay to stay'.

Table 7.2 Housing Legislation post-World War Two

7.5 The discourses– what has been said about those things that have happened

The discourses used for the research fall into two main categories; those collected from residents and those collected from newspapers and other news media. These also fall into sub sections dependent on how the data was collected.

7.5.1 The Residents discourses

Semi-structured interviews

Twenty one residents were interviewed using a semi-structured interview format. These interviews were aimed at assessing the attitudes of individual council estate residents towards their own personal situations, other residents and the areas in general. They were also asked questions relating to how the media portray council estates and the people who live in them. The semi-structured interview questions are in Appendix 1. The interviews were followed up by three focus groups in which five of those interviewed agreed to participate. Three additional people were also recruited for the focus group discussions.   The questions posed to the focus groups concentrated on issues relating to media discourses. The focus group questions are in Chapter 2, page 34.

Taking into account characteristics such as age, gender, family circumstances, economic situation and tenure the 21 people interviewed provide a sample across a variety of demographics (Table 7.3 shows a breakdown). All 21 live on one of four of the most deprived council estates in Cheltenham, these being Hesters Way, Oakley/Whaddon, St Pauls and The Moors. Only four of the participants lived in council housing as children with a further four living the majority of their adult life on one of the estates. One of the participants, George aged 58, has lived in the same property since he was born and which his parents bought under the 'Right to Buy' scheme in 1982. Fig 7.1 shows a breakdown of tenure past and present and indicates that there is an even split between people who consider themselves council estate people, because they have lived a significant part of their lives on a council estate, and those who have come into the estates from elsewhere. These are definitions which the participants have themselves identified.

name	estate	house or flat	tenure	M/F	Age	working	Benefits	time living there	feels judged	critical of other residents	Positive or negative about where living	feels negative about self	brought up on a council estate	not previously lived on council estate	previously homeless	because of having children
Jimmy	Hesters Way	Flat	Tenant	M	45	NO	YES	10	YES	NO	positive	YES		yes	yes	
Gemma	Hesters Way	Flat	Tenant	F	29	YES	YES	5	YES	NO	negative	YES		yes	yes	yes
Jess	Hesters Way	Flat	Tenant	F	26	NO	YES	10	YES	NO	positive	YES		yes		
Margaret	Hesters Way	House	Tenant	F	61	NO	YES	10	YES	NO	positive	YES	yes			
Tom	Whaddon	Flat	Tenant	M	28	YES	YES	5		NO	positive	NO		yes		yes
Janet	The Moors	Flat	Tenant	F	58	NO	YES	6	NO	NO	negative			yes		
Steph	Hesters Way	Flat	Tenant	F	22	NO	YES	4	YES	NO				yes	yes	yes
Cathy	Hesters Way	Flat	Tenant	F	25	NO	YES	4	YES	NO	positive		yes		yes	yes
Helen	Whaddon	House	Tenant	F	42	YES	NO	3	YES	NO	positive	NO		yes	yes	
Sophie	St Pauls	House	Tenant	F	34	YES	NO	2		NO	positive	NO		yes	yes	
Tracy	The Moors	House	Tenant	F	35	YES	YES	1	YES	NO	positive			yes		
Stella	Hesters Way	House	Owner	F	39	YES	NO	2	YES		negative	NO		yes		
John	Whaddon	House	Owner	M	71	NO	NO	19	NO	NO	positive	NO	yes			
Angela	Hesters Way	Flat	Tenant	F	46	NO	YES	8	YES	YES	positive	NO		yes		
George	Whaddon	House	Owner	M	58	YES	YES	58	YES	NO	positive	NO	yes			
David	Whaddon	House	Owner	M	46	YES	NO	15	YES	YES	negative	NO		yes		
Val	Whaddon	House	Owner	F	45	NO	NO	45		YES				yes		yes
Shirley	Whaddon	House	Owner	F	58	NO	NO	35	NO	NO		NO		yes		yes
Kate	Hesters Way	House	Owner	F	46	YES	YES	10	YES	NO	negative	NO		yes		
Liz	The Moors	Flat	Tenant	F	38	NO	YES	10	YES	YES	negative	YES		yes		yes
Dan	Whaddon	House	Tenant	M	41	YES	YES	8	YES	NO		NO		yes		

Table 7.3 Breakdown of semi-structured interview participants

Particpants by tenure past and present

19%

34%

14%

33%

■ Always lived in council
housing as adults

■ now live in council
housing but previously
lived elsewhere

■ live in houses they bought
under right to buy

■ Live in houses bought
from right to buyers
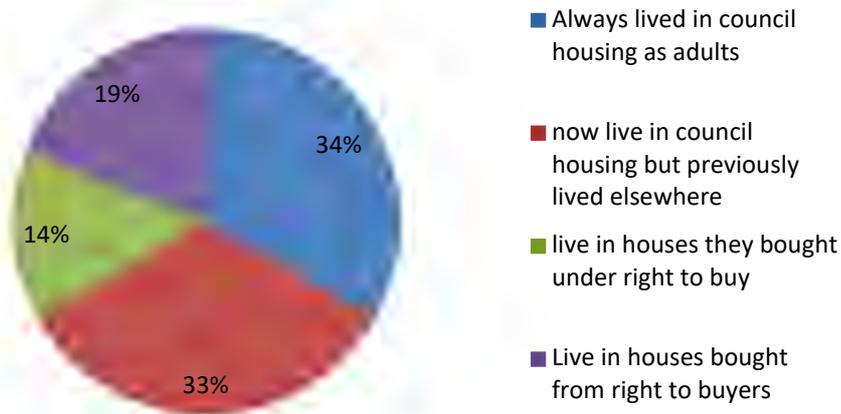
FIG 7.1 Interview Participants by tenure

15 women and six men were interviewed and these covered a range of
ages. Fig 7.2 illustrates a breakdown of this range. The youngest participant
is aged 22 and the oldest 71.

12

10

10

8

6

6

5

4

2

0

Under 30   30-50   over 50
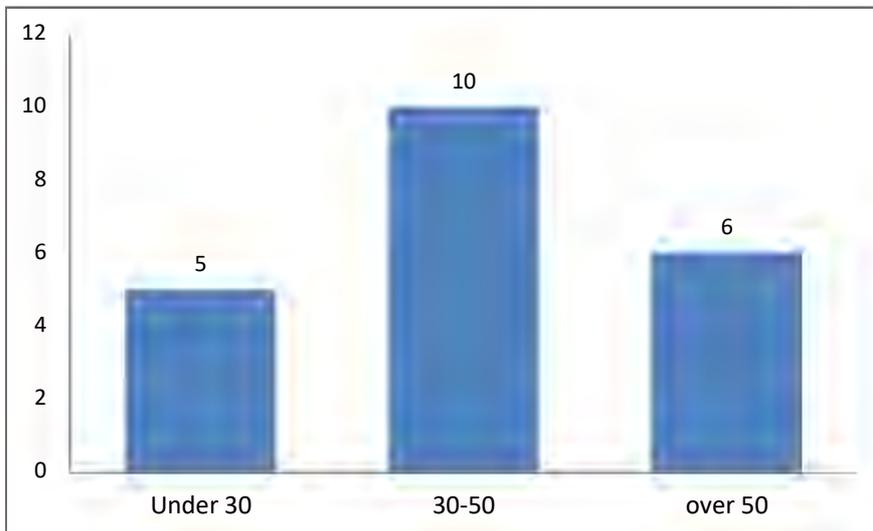
FIG 7.2 Age range of interview participants

The participants' explanations of why they live where they do are varied. Of the seven who own their ex-council houses three were bought directly under the 'Right to Buy' scheme, with the other four buying ex-council properties on the estates because they are more affordable than housing elsewhere in Cheltenham. Of the tenants, eight were housed due to overcrowding. Of these: six were housed during pregnancy or just after giving birth and two were housed from the council 'waiting list' through Gloucestershire Homeseeker Plus. Dan had waited 10 years and Tracy 13 years to be housed. Overcrowding caused by adult children having their own babies is classed as homelessness but homelessness is a wide classification and has a number of different causes. A definition of the different classifications of homelessness is provided by Homeseeker Plus (2018) on their website. Another four participants were also classed as homeless with the reasons being: leaving care at age 17 and pregnant (Jess); living in private rented accommodation deemed unfit for human habitation (Sophie); living in private rented accommodation which the landlord wished to sell (Helen); and leaving the marital home following divorce (Jimmy). The remaining two were rehoused by the council, one upon leaving supported housing (Angela) and one from another local authority due to family reasons (Janet).

The economic situations of those interviewed show that three are retired and manage on their pensions without requiring any welfare benefits. A further eight are below retirement age and do not work. All of these eight are totally dependent on some type of out of work or disability welfare benefit, which includes housing benefits, i.e. their rent is paid by the council.   This shows that ten of the sample or 48% have someone in the household who is employed. Of these ten, six are receiving in-work welfare benefits which equates to 60% of our sample being employed and receiving benefits. This compares with a national take-up rate for the year 2015-16 for Working Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit of 63%. This means that those interviewed are representative of the national average (.gov.uk, 2016).

This statistic is particularly of interest to this research as 15 of those interviewed linked negative reporting in newspaper and on television of council estate residents with reporting of people on benefits. Eight of these

said that they feel that the negativity has shifted away from the council estates and the problems that previously existed to people on benefits, some of them commenting that this makes them feel doubly judged as they both live on a council estate and are in receipt of benefits. They also said that there seems to be an assumption across some of the media that everyone living on a council estate is on benefits and that these people are seen as 'work-shy scroungers'. In fact of the 21 interviewed 86% are in receipt of some sort of benefit although 60% of these are working and cannot therefore be classed as 'work-shy'.

An analysis of demographics shows that 66% of the participants have children living in the household with a further 29% having children who have either left home or are living with an ex-partner. Only one of the participants has never had children. This breakdown is indicative of the type of housing available on the council estates which is mostly designed for families, leaving only a few available for single people who are not seen as a priority unless they have high levels of need. Fig 7.3 shows the breakdown.

Participants by family type

- Have family living with them
- Have family that has left home
- Have no children
- have children living with ex partner

5% 5%
24%
66%
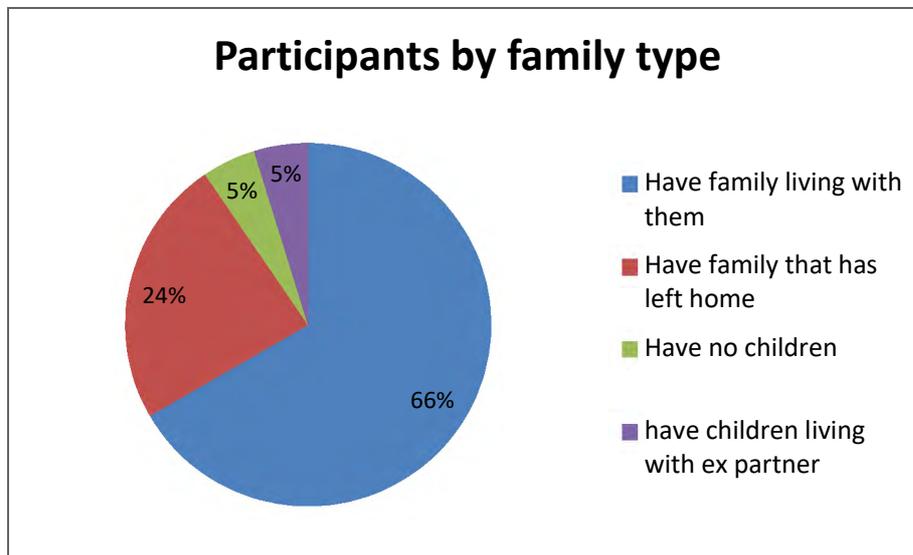
FIG 7.3 Participants by Family Type

All of the participants were asked to give their opinion about local and national media coverage of council estates both in newspaper reporting and in television documentaries. They were also asked to comment on how reporting has changed since they first moved onto the estate. Many of them

no longer buy newspapers as they consider them too expensive, but most have access to newspapers online. All of them said that they felt that newspaper coverage of the estates and the residents was negative. The older residents and those who had lived on the estates for longer were able to comment on how reporting has changed over the years saying that at one time there was no negative reporting and that it is in more recent times, particularly since the mid-1980s/1990s, that reporting has become more negative. All of them commented that they feel that newspapers and television give an impression that everyone living on a council estate is a criminal, a single parent and/or or a 'work-shy scrounger'. Over two thirds of them feel judged either because of where they live or because they are receiving welfare benefits or both. Of these three admitted that it had made them feel guilty about their circumstances and a further three said that it has affected their mental health, confidence and self-esteem. Five of them commented that it made them feel separate or different to people from other parts of Cheltenham and that, because of this, there were parts of Cheltenham that they did not feel comfortable visiting. As a follow-on question they were asked what they thought about where they lived, meaning their neighbourhood rather than Cheltenham as a whole, and their responses show that the majority of them do not let the opinions of the media make them feel negative about their homes as can be seen in Fig 7.4.

They were also positive about the facilities on or near the estates such as buses, shops and doctors' surgeries. They feel that the service they receive from the Borough Council and Cheltenham Borough Homes, who is their landlord (where they are tenants) is very good and that the areas and the dwellings are well maintained. This positivity is also reflected in how they feel about their neighbours. Many of them acknowledged that some of their neighbours have problems and some cause disturbances. They also acknowledge, though, that their neighbours have different troubles themselves and must feel as judged as they do. In the majority of cases they said that their neighbours treat them with respect. Fig 7.5 summarises this.

Participants attitude to where they live

- 19%
- 29%
- 52%

- ■ Negative about where they live
- ■ Positve about where they live
- ■ Neither positive or negative

FIG 7.4 Participants Attitude to Where They Live

Critical of other residents: 4	Not critical of other residents: 16
Did not say: 1	
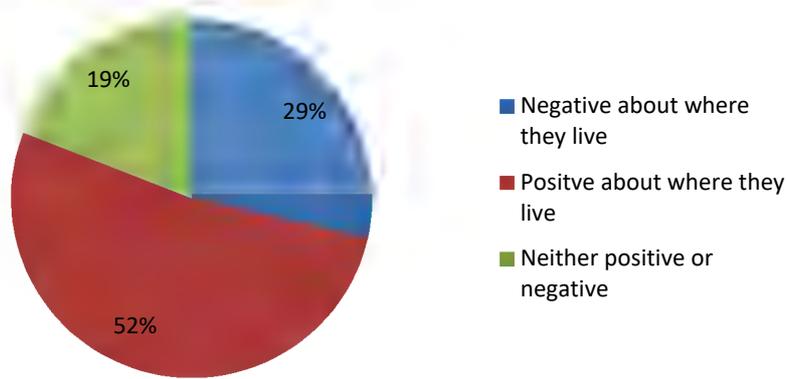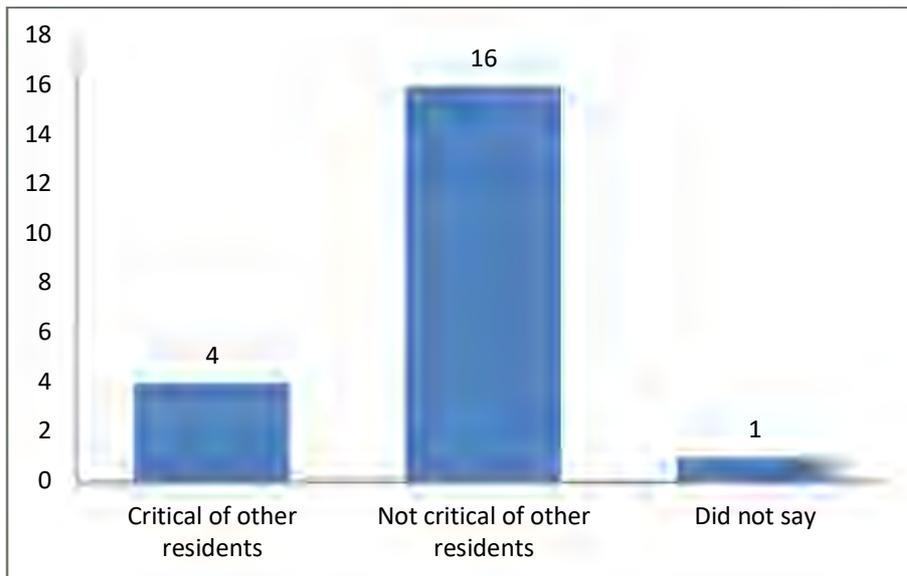
Fig 7.5 Participants Attitudes to their Neighbours

The detailed responses which tell the residents' stories are contained in Chapter 6.

Focus groups

The dynamics of the focus groups were positive with all of the members contributing to the discussion and expressing their willingness to do so. There was a positive mix of those who are aware of what is happening

politically and those who are less aware of how what newspapers, television and politicians say might influence how the general public thinks. This mix was by chance as this information was not asked for when recruiting focus group members. However, the mix made the discussion within the group more dynamic as they did not all agree with each other. The make-up and demographics of the focus groups can be seen in Table 7.4 below.

Name	Estate	M/F	Age	In work	On Benefits	interviewed	Focus groups		
							1	2	3
Stella	Hesters Way	F	39	YES	NO	YES	✓		
Gemma	Hesters Way	F	29	YES	YES	YES	✓	✓	✓
Tracy	The Moors	F	35	YES	YES	YES	✓	✓	✓
Kate	Hesters Way	F	46	YES	YES	YES	✓	✓	✓
Sophie	St Pauls	F	34	YES	NO	YES	✓	✓	✓
Ilona	St Pauls	F	36	YES	YES	NO	✓	✓	✓
Will	Lansdown	M	51	NO	YES	NO	✓		✓
Ellie	Hesters Way	F	42	NO	YES	NO	✓	✓	

Table 7.4 Focus Group participants

All eight participants took part in the first discussion which was on the subject of the 2014 Channel 4 documentary *Benefits Street*, which was set in James Turner Street on a council estate in Winson Green, Birmingham. This street was, at the time of the programme being aired, widely reported in the media as having 90% of its households in receipt of welfare benefits. The group initially watched extracts from the programme before discussing the question: 'How accurate a portrayal do you feel that TV programmes such as *Benefits Street* give of people living in social housing?'.

The discussion, a transcript of which is attached in Appendix 5, concluded very quickly that the filming and editing had been manipulated to create a negative impression of people living in social housing. They did not believe that the programme was a true representation of the people involved.

The group felt that they recognised some of the 'types' of people portrayed in the programme but they felt that editing made it look as though bad and criminal behaviour was happening constantly, that they were the norm, whereas they felt that they knew from experience that the estates mostly contain 'normal' behaviour with issues such as police activity happening sporadically, not every day.

Some of the group related to the main character in the programme, White Dee, as they recognised a street or estate matriarch with Tracy commenting:

> *I know people like her. There's one where I live. Says she*
> *represents the tenants, but I don't think it's true. I think she*
> *just likes to know people's business and feel important.*
> *White Dee is like that I think. I wouldn't tell her my problems.*

Equally though they were uncertain at how positive or negative such a character could be. Whilst she came across in the programme as a negative character she could also be seen to be performing a function by listening to some of the residents' problems. Their view was that White Dee did not necessarily know everyone in the street, but it was made to look as though she was the one that everyone went to with their problems.

The overall opinion was generally that whilst the problems shown did almost certainly really happen the programme was edited to make the street look worse than it actually was. As one participant, Ilona said: *'To me it seems like a soap – like EastEnders. So many things happening at the same time'*.

Six of the focus group participated in the second discussion which discussed the question ' In your experience does the way newspapers report things that happen on 'council estates' change the way people view those who live in social housing?'. All of the group were in the habit of reading the local *Gloucestershire Echo* newspaper although they all said that they would normally read it online. Some of the group also acknowledged that they read

national newspapers with the *Sun*, the *Mirror*, the *Mail* and the *Metro* specifically mentioned.

There was a general opinion that the local newspaper showed bias in the way it reports different parts of the town with a conclusion that it appeared that this bias is aimed to make the council estates and residents look bad.

The discussion also looked more generally at how newspapers can influence the way their readers think and how they also probably bias stories to appeal to their readership. Sophie put it quite strongly:

> *If you read in a newspaper that lots of people in council houses are on benefits you might believe it because why would you not believe if it's in the newspapers. So people read it and believe it and then they feel resentful that they're working hard and are still poor while others don't work and seem to have as much money as they do. But I think then that the newspapers keep giving the same benefit scrounger message because now they think their readers are resentful enough to want it to be true. So they keep on giving that message so that people will keep on reading their newspaper.*

Sophie's argument convinced the rest of the group and they concluded that newspapers can and do influence the beliefs of individuals. They agreed that this applied as much to the local newspaper as it did to the national media. As Gemma put it:

> *Yes I agree. I mean there's probably more people in the posh parts of Cheltenham reading the Echo than there is in Hesters Way or Whaddon so it must be easy to get the message across that the estates are full of criminals and benefit scroungers.*

The third and last focus group discussion also had six participants. This group was first asked to read extracts from an article written by David Cameron for the *Sunday Times* (Cameron, 2016). They were then asked to discuss the question 'what is your opinion of David Cameron's view on social housing?'. The extract of the article is printed in Chapter 2.

There was some discussion about whether it was fair to base an opinion on just an extract from the article because they did not know everything that David Cameron wrote. However, feelings about David Cameron were quite strong with some members of the group and they argued that it would be fair to base the discussion more generally on what they know of David Cameron as the extract did indicate his feelings. The group agreed with this approach. Early in the discussion it was pointed out that although the article seemed on the surface to be supportive of social housing residents it was questionable as to whether he was being sincere. They felt that the way in which David Cameron worded certain sentences could be understood in different ways depending on whether you were a resident or someone from outside. Tracy, Ilona and Gemma all argued that his words seemed sincere. Others, such as Kate, argued differently:

> *He says that he remembers in the 1980s campaigning in high rises where people lived in terrible conditions and that in 2016 nothing has changed. Well if my memory serves me correctly the Tories were in power in the 1980s selling off the best of the council houses.*

Will commenting on a specific point in the article said:

> *He (David Cameron) does acknowledge problems on council estates but if you read between the lines he's blaming the people living there as much as the estates themselves. I mean where did he get 'cut-off, self-governing and divorced from the mainstream' from? If they are whose fault is it? This government and past governments have sold off so many council houses that the only people who can get a council place have all sorts of problems in their lives – of course they're divorced from the mainstream.*

Will also commented that he felt that politicians, such as David Cameron did see social housing as a problem that needs fixing, but this came from fear rather than a desire to make life better for social tenants. He maintained that the 2011 riots frightened them into some kind of action. Will told the group that he had been brought up on a housing estate in London and could understand how people living there would feel strongly about the gap between rich and poor.

At the end of the discussion four out of the six participants stated that it was their belief David Cameron does not care about social housing, that he is saying what people want him to say and that he may be nervous about any consequences of unrest on the estates, bearing in mind the riots of 2011. The other two participants did not agree 100% with this argument maintaining that he does care about social housing.

A further focus group was convened at the end of the data gathering process to question comments made by the Cheltenham Borough Council cabinet member for housing who was interviewed about his perceptions of the future of social housing in Cheltenham. Both the interview and subsequent focus group are discussed in Chapter 8.

7.5.2 The newspaper and other news media discourses

After King George III's visit Cheltenham became a popular and fashionable health resort for wealthier visitors as well as with those moving their permanent residence to the town. As the town expanded there was more interest in the recording of life in Cheltenham. Two newspapers emerged during the 18th Century, the *Cheltenham Looker On*, originating in 1833 and continuing until 1920, and the *Gloucestershire Echo* starting life in 1873 and still in existence today, although changing in 2017 from a daily to a weekly newspaper with more of its current reporting carried out on its online Gloucestershire Live (2017) pages. Both of these newspapers provide reports of local life including those of council meetings and decisions. The *Looker On* was also prepared to raise controversial issues, such as housing conditions caused by the slums. These newspapers have consequently been helpful in providing historiographical data as well as the discourses central to this research.

In total 43 different newspapers and other publications were viewed. Table 7.5 shows a list of these. From these 219 individual articles were read, these were then analysed into eight categories which are shown in Table 7.6.

To source online newspaper articles a number of different search criteria were used. Table 7.7 shows the search words and phrases used. Paper copies read were also analysed and added to the online sources. The table also demonstrates how many of the stories were positive and how many negative which results in an indication that council and social housing related stories are mostly reported negatively. This negativity has increased over recent years as the articles relating to welfare benefit claimants have increased. Newspapers rightly indicate that the majority of council estate residents are in receipt of benefits as national statistics show 63% of all council/social tenants are receiving some type of benefit whether they be in work or out of work.

The research found that the majority of positive reporting was either about early development of state provided housing, particularly post World War Two, or about regeneration of poor or inadequate housing during the 1990s and 2000s. The reporting of people and on behaviour, however, can be seen as consistently negative.

Some of the negative local stories are discussed in Section 6.3 which provides a media perspective on Cheltenham discourses. For example the saga of David Young, the then youngest recipient of an ant-social behavior order and the report that Prince Charles had named Hesters Way as one of the 50 worst in Britain. In that section though it is also shown that some of the most positive content in the local media comes from local residents as a response to the negativity in defence of where they live.

Another negative local example is the story from December 2000 where a worker from a Hesters Way children's nursery, whilst in the town centre asking shops for prizes for a Christmas raffle was told by one shopkeeper "No. I'm not helping. I don't like the kids from Hesters Way. They're all horrible". Whilst this incident might seem minor it contributes to the insidious nature of how attitudes can affect people living on council estates. The nursery worker who lives in Hesters Way said "I was very offended and hurt by these remarks. I live and work in Hesters Way and I have four children myself" (Gloucestershire Echo 5/12/2000).

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The Gloucester Citizen in February 2000 with the headline 'We don't want council estate on our doorstep' reported the residents near a derelict site near the village of Hempstead near Gloucester. Plans to build 85 new homes, including some social housing resulted in negative responses from residents with one saying "I don't feel safe in my own village, without a whole new lot of yobs being added to my area". The story went on to say that the main objections to the plans were about increased traffic and lack of school places, but it was the council estate objections which made the headline (Gloucester Citizen 1/2/2000).

This use of headlines to highlight the most controversial issues can also be seen in a Mail Online report from January 2015 following the erection of bollards at the entrance to the village of Asthall in the Cotswolds. One village resident said "it looks ghastly and it is the sort of thing you see on a council estate rather than in the countryside". Closer study of the report show that the main problem for the residents was that the bollards made access more difficult. This did not, however, stop the Mial Online from using the headline 'Ugly bollards installed at entrance to historic Cotswold village spark anger as residents say "they'd look better on a council estate"' (Mail Online, 24/2/2015).

In March 1998 the Gloucestershire Echo reported on an incident that left tenants in one of the larger blocks of flats in Hesters Way very upset. The headline 'No Repairs After Dark – residents hit by old reputation' told of the breakdown of a lift which meant that some tenants were unable to access their homes. The maintenance company refused to attend to carry out repairs as they considered the area an unsafe place go be after dark. A spokesperson for the local neighbourhood project said "It's unjustified that some people from outside the area assume visiting after dark is any worse than going anywhere else. People in Hesters Way are suffering because of the area's reputation' (Gloucestershire Echo 12/3/1998).

Positive stories are more likely to be about building developments or positive stories about tackling deprivation. For instance, in April 2006 the Gloucestershire Echo reported on the setting up of the Cheltenham

Regeneration Partnership aimed at improving various negative aspects of life for poorer parts of town, which were mostly the council estate areas (5/4/2006). Anther example in April 2000 reported on the demolition of poor quality council blocks of flats go be replaced by houses and bungalows 916/4/2000). In April 1999 the local newspaper's nostalgia section, which would normally outline the history of the wealthier parts of town, provided a positive potted history which illustrated the positive beginnings of the estate.

National Newspapers	Local to other UK areas
The Independent	The Glasgow Herald
The **i**	London Evening Standard
The Guardian	Manchester Evening News
Telegraph	Bath Chronicle
The Observer	Birmingham Post
The Sun	Herald Express (Torquay)
The Mirror	The Newcastle Journal
Mail	Eastern Daily Press
Mail on Sunday	The Western Mail
The Times	Western Morning News (Plymouth)
The Sunday Times	Leicester Mercury
Morning Star	Lancashire Telegraph
The Express	The Bristol Post
The Daily Star	
Metro	
Publications	**Local to Cheltenham**
Inside Housing	Cheltenham Looker On
Red Pepper	Gloucestershire Echo
Radio Times	Gloucester Citizen
	Western Daily Press

Table 7.5 Newspapers Used

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Category	Number of Articles
Changes to housing policy	15
Attitudes towards people living on council estates.	93
Poverty, unemployment and welfare benefits	31
Sales of council housing under 'Right to Buy' and the new powers from the 2016 Housing Act for housing associations to sell their most expensive properties.	38
Articles relating to private renting	10
Articles relating to neighbourhood improvements	6
Reporting on politicians views on social housing	8
Cheltenham nostalgia and contemporaneous reports	18

Table 7.6 Categories of Articles viewed

An interesting result of this analysis is the difference between negativity levels between search terms 'council housing' and 'social housing'. This indicates a change in perception when the term 'social housing' was introduced to describe housing provided by local authorities.

Search word or phrase	No of articles	Positive reporting %	Negative reporting %
Council Housing	37	60	40
Social Housing	14	30	70
Council Tenants	18	5	95
Council Estate Residents	12	15	85
Cheltenham Housing	17	52	48
Cheltenham Council Estates	15	18	82
Hesters Way	56	6	94
Oakley	26	14	86
St Pauls	14	8	92
The Moors	10	0	100
TOTAL	219	21	79

Table 7.7 Search words and phrases used

In summary, this data set shows that there are two main newspaper discourse genres important to the research. Firstly, there are the national stories that promote different attitudes towards people who live in social housing, but also those stories about welfare benefit claimants as the majority of social housing tenants are claiming benefits. Secondly, there are the local newspaper reports that local residents can more closely relate to. Both of these can have a negative effect on the lives of Cheltenham's council estate residents as they react personally to what the newspapers are saying either generally or specifically about them.

The negative reporting of individual estates is perhaps the most influential as it has the biggest effect on tenants and residents. Residents of the four most reported on estates, Hesters Way, St Pauls, Oakley, and The Moors said during interviews that part of how they feel judged is because of where they live. They believe that newspaper reporting contributes to the way people in Cheltenham generally view the council estates. They all felt that the local newspaper was part of the problem of how other areas in the town viewed where they live. The majority of them also said that this opinion of outsiders was unfair as their experience of living on the estates does not live up to the view expressed through newspapers.

The residents felt that the national newspapers contributed to how they feel about benefit dependency whilst the local newspapers contributed to how they feel about where they live. This gives them a double reason for feeling judged or feeling bad about their lives.

7.6 Conclusion

It would not have been possible to secure a complete understanding of the national situation and more specifically of Cheltenham's council estates through a study of just one single aspect of what is a complex story. Consequently, using the four areas of research has enabled a broader view of the continuum of working class housing both nationally and locally. Bringing together these four areas has resulted in a demonstration of the what, how and why of the development of state housing underpinned by the discourses of residents and media which tell us what has and is said about the subject.

From the historiographical aspect it is clear that the introduction of Cheltenham's council owned housing followed the national model. Cheltenham responded to legislation that provided subsidies to support the building of the council estates. At no point can it be seen that Cheltenham acted independently of central government directives rather that the stimulus for Cheltenham's council house building programmes has always been funding. In the next chapter I will discuss how Cheltenham is currently

responding to housing needs and whether they continue to be reactive rather than proactive in their approach.

The research also demonstrates that by measuring the introduction of social policy against events happening at the time, housing and social policy is reactive to how the working-classes might respond. A desire by the government to keep the working-classes content during times when they might rebel is evident in the timing of the introduction of both social and housing policies.

This suggests that housing and other state provided benefits have been used to further the interests of the state rather than the people it housed. It is also the case that housing has been used as a tool to support political ideologies. The way in which government subsidies have been used to manipulate societal thinking away from supporting council housing for respectable workers to social housing for the poor and needy is an example of this. The literature, both fictional and non-fictional, depicting people's own experiences of living on council estates provides a witness to this change.

The discourses add an additional and important element to this research: firstly, by highlighting the way in which state provided housing has changed over time; and secondly, by providing evidence that the residents' views of life on council estates differ significantly from the views expressed by the media.

Collectively these four areas of research provide a comprehensive narrative of both a local and national account of what has happened in council housing development; why and how it happened; and how residents, the media and politicians have reacted. The discourses concentrate to a large extent on Cheltenham and these provide a clear basis for the following chapter which provides an overview of how Cheltenham plans to address their own shortage of affordable and decent housing for those in housing need.

CHAPTER 8: THE FUTURE OF HOUSING IN CHELTENHAM

8.1 Introduction

Whilst previous chapters have concentrated on the past and current situation this chapter looks forward and particularly at how Cheltenham is able to respond to national policy to meet the needs of Cheltenham residents. The results of this research provide an insight into the housing of the working classes in England, the poorer people within our society. The research has examined the discourses that surround this subject and has therefore placed an emphasis on the discourses of the people who live on council estates, but also on what popular media discourses have over the years said about them. It is what the residents say that is central to this research.

Also important is the political response to what is considered a housing crisis and it has been important to look at how national and local policy could impact on the future of affordable housing in Cheltenham. There is evidence, some of which is presented in Chapter 5, that points to a general acknowledgement by all political parties, housing providers and related charities and support organisations that there is a housing crisis in the United Kingdom. It has been suggested by politicians and academics that what is happening goes beyond a crisis and that immediate action is required to address this problem.

There has been little investment in social housing since the *1980 Housing Act.* Currently local authority housing is not addressing the needs of the most vulnerable let alone others in housing need. Equally it is the case that the current housing crisis exists across all tenure types.

This housing crisis exists across all tenure types although in Cheltenham, as in many other urban centres, the high cost of housing means that it is those with the lowest incomes that are the most affected. Homes for sale in Cheltenham, according to the National Housing Federation 'Home Truths' report for 2016/17, average at £274,000; with wages averaging only £27,628. It is timely that Cheltenham Borough Council at the time of completion of this thesis has presented its draft housing and homelessness strategy for public consultation and has committed to invest in the private

rented sector. In her speech to the September 2017 Conservative Party Conference Prime Minister Theresa May, on the subject of housing affordability, said that the average house costs eight times an annual salary. In Cheltenham it equates to ten times the average salary. The same report shows the average rent in Cheltenham in the private sector to be £780 per month, which equates to over one third of an average net monthly salary. Home Truths (2017) which provides an online guide to the housing market in different regions.

Lack of investment in the social rented sector over the past 30 years is a strong contributory factor to the shortage of housing, but equally to blame is the way that market forces dictate the cost of housing both for sale and for rent which has put home ownership out of reach for many people. One concern for the future is whether the resources or the political commitment exist to divert this crisis. Currently housing has risen on the political agenda and all political parties have a view on how the crisis can be solved. The different political party policies are discussed further in section 8.3. This chapter will endeavour to articulate how these differing views on solutions might affect people currently living on council estates as well as those who require help from local authorities to access suitable housing. It will concentrate particularly on the future of housing in Cheltenham and the effect this may have on residents. It will also explore how Cheltenham's response to the current housing crisis might compare with national plans.

Chapter 5 concluded that Cheltenham's current situation follows the national housing crisis and that the development of council, social and affordable rented housing in Cheltenham follows a pattern not dissimilar to the national model. To test this assumption an interview with the Cabinet Member for Housing at Cheltenham Borough Council, Councillor Peter Jeffries, was carried out and the results of this interview are reviewed within this chapter. An additional focus group was also convened to get a residents' perspective on the future of social housing in Cheltenham, this also forms part of this chapter. This was arranged to test some of the claims made by the cabinet member.

Failures in delivering enough homes in the social and affordable rented sector has resulted in the private rented sector becoming of increasing importance in providing solutions for the future. The private rented sector is increasingly the only alternative for those who cannot access affordable or social rented housing and for those who cannot afford to buy a property, or those people who have specific housing issues and/or life situations that affect their housing needs.   This chapter needs, therefore, to review the future of the private rented sector as housing needs dictate that the affordable and social rented sector cannot to date keep up with demand. As this thesis is about attitudes towards those people who live on council estates it is this housing which is of prime concern. However, the relevance of looking at the current situation regarding all tenure types is to assess how changes in tenure type might affect attitudes within and outside the affordable rented and social housing sector.

8.2 The current situation in Cheltenham

Over the years the terms council, social and affordable have all been used to describe housing that is available through the local authority for people who cannot afford to own their own home or rent from a private landlord. Initially all such housing was provided by councils, but by the end of the 20th century the majority of new build housing within the sector was provided by housing associations, previously known as Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) and now grouped together with local authorities as Registered Providers. In 2002 councils were given the choice of retaining their housing stock and passing the management to Arm's Length Management Organisations (ALMOs) or transferring/selling the stock to new or existing Housing Associations. Cheltenham tenants, when asked, said that they wanted the housing to stay in the ownership of the local council.

Cheltenham Borough Council is one of the only two of the six districts in Gloucestershire to retain ownership of its housing stock after 2002. The second is Stroud District Council with Gloucester City Council, Tewkesbury

Borough Council, Forest of Dean District Council and Cotswold District Council all transferring their housing to independent registered providers.

Cheltenham Borough Homes was established as the ALMO for Cheltenham and will continue to manage housing on behalf of Cheltenham Borough Council. They currently also manage the housing options team on behalf of Cheltenham Borough Council as their response to the local authority statutory duty to house those in need. This is administered through Gloucestershire Homeseeker Plus. The Cheltenham Borough Homes annual report for year ending 31st March 2017 shows that they currently manage 5,081 homes made up of 4,507 owned by the council, 473 which are leaseholds and 101 owned directly by Cheltenham Borough Homes. The leaseholds relate to properties acquired through 'Right to Buy' which are flats or maisonettes with the council retaining the freehold. These statistics illustrate how 'Right to Buy' has decimated the social housing stock in Cheltenham. From when the first council houses were built in St Marks in 1920 the Cheltenham Borough Council has built over 7,000 in the intervening 100 years. Including the leasehold properties this means that 2,493 properties have been sold under 'Right to Buy', which equates to 35.6% of those built. This annual report also shows that 28 council homes were sold under 'Right to Buy' during the year 2016-2017 with 24 new affordable rented properties built during this period. This information was accessed by viewing the Cheltenham Borough Homes annual report via Companies House (2017).

On 27 March 2012 the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government published the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). This sets out policies for England, including the requirement for housing developments to include affordable housing. However, the latest definition of affordable housing does not only include properties to rent. Annexe two of the NPPF provides three main classifications of affordable housing. Table 8.1 below defines these bands (.gov.uk, 2012).

Social Rented Housing	Owned by local authorities and private registered providers (housing associations) with rents decided by the national rent regime.
Affordable Rented Housing	Let to those who are eligible for social rented housing by local authorities and private registered providers. Rent is controlled and cannot be charged at more than 80% of the local market rent.
Intermediate Housing	Housing which is for sale or rent at a cost above social rent but below market levels. Can include shared equity and other low-cost housing for sale or rent. Not provided by local authorities and private registered providers.

Table 8.1 Definitions of Affordable Housing

Councils hold a statutory duty to house people in need although that housing does not need to be provided by the council itself. Currently, all social housing providers are known as Registered Providers and allocation of housing is carried out through choice- based letting schemes, which allow applicants to bid for properties within bands appropriate to their needs. In Cheltenham the scheme used is Homeseeker Plus, a partnership of councils and housing providers working together to provide homes across Gloucestershire & West Oxfordshire. This scheme is administered by the Housing Options team, managed by Cheltenham Borough Homes, which helps applicants to apply and then bid for suitable housing. Anyone is entitled to request to be housed by the council and applicants are placed into one of four categories or bands: red/emergency; gold/urgent need; silver/significant need; or bronze/ low need. Applicants can only bid on properties within the band allocated to them or a lower band. Bands are assessed on need: to move to a different sized property; homelessness; property condition where currently living; and medical or welfare needs (Homeseeker Plus Policy Document (Homeseeker Plus, 2018)

 The Homeseeker Plus website also reveals that at June 2017 there were 2,571 people actively looking to be housed in Cheltenham, this included 104

with emergency or urgent need for housing and 512 with significant need. At the same time, for the six months between September 2016 and March 2017 show that only 172 homes were let in Cheltenham, including 102 applicants judged to have emergency or urgent need and 52 to those with significant need, which includes some that were housed in the private rented sector. These figures demonstrate how difficult it now is to be housed in social or affordable rented housing in Cheltenham. In order to maintain sustainable and balanced communities, housing authorities are able to decide the proportions of properties that can be allocated under the different bands, which is more difficult when there are not enough houses. The situation results in the Housing Options team in Cheltenham working with applicants to support and help them in finding suitable private rented properties.

What this means is that more and more people are being housed in private sector housing. Whilst individuals can rely on the council through the Housing Options team to support them to find a suitable property, and in some cases even get financial help to pay the necessary deposit, they get no further support once they are housed. This situation is significantly different to the support that those housed in social housing receive. For example, tenants housed by Cheltenham Borough Homes are helped by workers on issues such as job search and benefits advice and are also able to access local activities provided by Cheltenham Borough Homes to engage tenants and their children. A recent interview, by the author of this thesis, with the Cheltenham Borough Council Cabinet member for Housing, Peter Jeffries, was able to address this issue. Full transcript of the interview can be seen in Appendix 8. On this subject he said:

> We don't provide long term support to those people we help
> into private rented housing. They get equal support to find a
> property but once they are housed we don't give any more
> support. It may sound unfair but it's difficult because of the
> market. I don't like the term 'beggars can't be choosers' but if
> you're desperate for somewhere to live what choice do you
> have if there are no suitable social or affordable properties
> available? I know that people going into the private sector
> have less security of tenure and I think this is a huge issue,

but the market wants short tenancies. What can we do? We
house people so that they're no longer homeless.

Private rented properties in Cheltenham are currently only regulated under statutory requirements which are for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) of three or more stories. What this means in effect is that neither Cheltenham Borough Council nor the Housing Options team have any influence over the majority of private landlords. This creates issues for those tenants housed through housing options regarding: the length of tenancy; insecurity and uncertainty; higher rents because there is no regulation of rent within the private sector as the market decides levels; non-regulation regarding quality or safety; condition not as good as social housing; the need to pay a deposit and at least one month rent in advance.

The National Policy Planning Framework states that local authorities should have a policy within their own planning framework, known as a strategic housing assessment. This assessment focusses on the mix of housing required and the percentage of housing which will be built as affordable housing. Consequently, the Gloucester, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Joint Core Strategy (JCS) states that within strategic allocation sites, which are those larger planned developments on the edges of towns, 35% of affordable housing will be sought. In non-strategic allocation sites in Cheltenham 40% of affordable housing will be sought where the development is of 11 dwellings or more. The non-strategic sites are normally brown field sites or demolish and reconstruction sites where current structures are unsafe or unsuitable. In his interview Councillor Peter Jeffries was asked whether he was confident that these percentages could be delivered:

> We do have a strategic housing market assessment which is
> the evidence base for the need for different tenures. The tricky
> thing is that even though we can ask the market to deliver that
> it doesn't mean they will or even have to. It's about the amount
> of money they can derive from the development site.
> Developers will use government policy to overthrow what
> councils are saying are needed locally so they can make the
> most amount of money.

Asked how that works he said:

They use the viability test. A developer can put a viability case together to say that they can't afford to give the 40% affordable housing required because cost to deliver the site wouldn't be financially viable. They put together a case that they won't be able to make their guaranteed 20% profit if they build affordable housing. Or if they can't do this they say they can only provide what is known as intermediate housing such as shared ownership. So we don't get the housing we need to provide affordable rented housing to the people who need it.

The current situation in Cheltenham is therefore inadequate in meeting the needs for housing. It is clear that that something needs to be done to divert problems in the future. The problem is exacerbated by the new definitions of affordable housing outlined above in Table 8.1 as these allow housing developers to provide shared ownership or rent to buy housing at a larger profit to themselves rather than affordable or social rented housing.

8.3 Current political policies nationally

Conservative Party policy which has influenced the most current legislation affecting housing is that included in the *2016 Housing and Planning Act*. This Act extends 'Right to Buy', which was up until this point only available to tenants in local authority housing, so that Housing Associations can on a voluntary basis offer this opportunity to their tenants. The Act also requires local authorities to sell vacant higher value local authority homes and to use the capital receipts to fund the extension of right to buy. Local authorities are also expected to replace these higher priced properties with new affordable homes on a one to one basis. These affordable homes are not required to be social or affordable rented homes but could equally be shared ownership, buy to rent or starter homes. The extension of 'Right to Buy' and the sale of higher valued properties, if not replaced by social housing, could result in a further depletion of affordable rented housing stock. (Housing and Planning Act, 2016)

This Act also introduced a new type of affordable home, saying that starter homes would be introduced to be sold at 20% below market value to first time buyers aged between 23 and 40. All local authorities will be required to

promote a supply of these starter homes within new developments. The government initially expected that all developments would include a percentage of starter homes but they have since diluted this requirement to 10% of homes on new sites to be affordable as rent to buy, shared ownership, or starter homes, which are the categories within the definition of intermediate housing in the National Planning Policy Framework. These starter homes will form part of the required percentages of affordable homes for development sites discussed in Section 8.2.

One of the mechanisms that the *2016 Housing and Planning Act* introduced, which has a direct impact on social housing tenants, is that councils can introduce fixed term tenancies for new local authority tenancies of between two and 10 years. Longer tenancies will be allowed in households where there are children under the age of nine at the end of the tenancy with new tenancy agreements offered after the fixed term dependent on the needs of the household and the needs of the children.

An update on Conservative Party policy was provided by Prime Minister Theresa May at the October 2017 party conference, where she pledged to fund local authorities and housing associations to the amount of £2 billion to build 25,000 new homes for social rent by 2021. This was part of her pledge to fix the United Kingdom's 'broken housing market' when she said that regardless of tenure type 'help is on its way'. Apart from the pledge to build new social rented homes she also said that 'help to buy' would be revived with £10 billion to help 135,000 first time buyers become home owners. An additional Conservative Party pledge is to halve rough sleeping by 2021 and eradicate it completely by 2027. From the home ownership perspective the pledge is to bring up to date the home-buying process to make it cheaper and more efficient as well as tightening up on practices in leasehold which are unfair, such as escalating ground rents.

In September 2017 the government also confirmed that it will bring forward a Green Paper on social housing in England. Then Communities Secretary, Sajid Javid, who introduced the intention in a speech at the National Housing Federation Conference, outlined the aims of the Green Paper:

Today I can announce that we will be bringing forward a
green paper on social housing in England. A wide-ranging,
top-to-bottom review of the issues facing the sector, the
green paper will be the most substantial report of its kind for a
generation. It will kick off a nationwide conversation on social
housing. What works and what doesn't work. What has gone
right and what has gone wrong, why things have gone wrong
and – most importantly – how to fix them. And I want to make
sure that we hear from everyone not just the usual suspects-
those working in the sector or the think tanks and lobbyists.
But the people who matter most, the people living in or
clamouring for social housing (Javid, 2017)

The Local Government Association response to this announcement was to
welcome the opportunity to work with the government to ensure that the end
result would be more homes that people can afford. However, they urged
government to give more power to local authorities to achieve this. A
spokesperson for the Local Government Association, Martin Tett, said:

With huge pressure on existing housing stock caused by the
lack of building enough homes over the past few decades,
and with families having to spend more on rent or mortgages
every month, we are keen to work with government to ensure
that the Green paper accelerates the actual building of new
home communities can afford. The last time the country built
enough homes councils built 40% of them. Our offer is pretty
clear, give councils the power to lead a renaissance in council
house building by letting us keep 100% of the sales receipts
and give us the freedom to borrow to invest and set rents
(Local Government Association, 2017).

Additional related legislation came in the form of the *2017 Homelessness
Reduction Act* which went live in April 2018. This Act increases the statutory
duty on councils to relieve and prevent homelessness. The emphasis is on
them to provide advice and take any necessary actions to prevent people
becoming homeless.

Comments from housing charity Shelter are critical of the current
government plans to solve the housing crisis. In their online blog Shelter
(2018), they responded to Homelessness Minister Heather Wheeler's
comments that she does not know why rough sleeping is rising. According to

Shelter, all types of homelessness have risen since 2010 with rough sleeping doubling in that time to over 4,000. Additionally, they claim that the number of homeless families living in temporary accommodation has risen to more than 79,000, an increase of 65%. The charity states that one of the leading causes of this rise in homelessness is the number of tenants who have been evicted from private-rented property – with such ex-tenants representing 25% of all new homeless households. Their statistics show there are 1.2 million households on council waiting lists hoping for social housing, which they claim means that 300,000 new homes per year are required to be built across the United Kingdom with 50% of these being affordable homes, whether for rent or purchase. However, they also show statistics that illustrate a decrease in the building of social housing from 39,560 in 2010/11 to as few as 5,380 in 2016/17. Shelter says that the funding promised by the government to build 5,000 houses per year for five years will not in any way make up for the reduction in-house build since 2010 which has happened because of the cuts in subsidies for new build social housing.

So, in terms of current policy, the situation does not seem to offer the required levels of social housing needed to address the shortfall, but it also does little to offer an alternative in terms of decent and affordable housing in the private sector. By the time of the next general election, scheduled for 2022 this shortfall could be significantly worse. The importance of meeting the aims in the *Social Housing Green Paper* is clear. The uncertainty is in how long the process of finding the right solutions may take.

The other two main political parties, not being in government, provide less detailed policies. For example, the Labour Party whose economic policies promote spending rather than austerity offer alternative policies if they were in power now or in the future. From the Labour Party manifesto for the 2017 general election, as part of their 'secure homes for all' policy, they say that they would build over 100,000 council and housing association homes each year for sale or rent at genuinely affordable prices. They would also pledge to guarantee a continuation of 'help to buy' funding until 2027. They also promote the concept that local people should have the first opportunity to

buy properties that have been built in their local area. In addition they claim that they would build 4,000 homes for 'rough sleepers'. As a way of supporting people in private rented accommodation they say that they would cap rent increases to inflation and make changes to the current position so that private rented tenants would be able to secure three year tenancies (Labour Party Manifesto, 2017).

Liberal Democrat policy at the time of the 2017 general election was to 'build more and better homes' by doubling current housebuilding efforts to 300,000 homes per year by 2022. One way they would aim to achieve this would be to create 10 new, zero carbon, garden cities in England. They also pledged to improve rental conditions in the private sector by banning letting fees for tenants and capping the amount of deposits paid by tenants upfront. Equally important, they say, is to improve standards in rented homes. (Liberal Democrat Party Manifesto, 2017)

Although it is unlikely that the Liberal Democrats will be in a position to form a government at the next election their policies are very relevant to Cheltenham where the Borough Council is Liberal Democrat controlled. Also of relevance though is that on Gloucestershire County Council the Conservatives have the majority of seats and the Cheltenham Member of Parliament is a Conservative.

8.4 Residents perspective on Cheltenham's social/affordable housing future

Residents who have previously participated in interviews and focus groups have said that they feel lucky to have social housing even though this sometimes means that they are living in an area they would not have chosen for themselves. They have also said that although they would mostly not judge their neighbours they themselves feel judged as they believe that outsiders perceive everyone living on a council estate as being out of work and living on benefits. They think this unfair because although the majority of them are in receipt of some type of welfare benefit the majority are also living in working households. They say that if they need housing benefits to

help pay their rent either the wages are too low or the rents are too high or both.

Following an analysis of the data and an interview with the Cheltenham Borough Council cabinet member for housing a further focus group was asked to a discussion on specific issues relating to the future. This focus group, made up of five participants from previous focus groups, Will, Gemma, Tracy, Sophie and Ellie, were asked to respond to the following question:

The Cheltenham Borough Council cabinet member for housing told me recently that the majority of people housed by the council do not get a council or housing association property. Because there is never enough suitable properties available the housing options team instead helps people, including those on the emergency and urgent/red bands, to find suitable private rented properties:

a)   Were you aware that this happened?

b)   How do you think this affects people if they go to housing options and they are put into private rented accommodation?

c)   How do you see the future of social housing in Cheltenham?

The results of this focus group, a full transcript of which is contained in Appendix 9, indicate that people generally are not aware that the majority of people housed by the council are placed in private rented accommodation simply because there are not enough social or affordable rented properties of the right type available. They feel that this is unfair to the people who are housed in the private sector as they end up paying more rent without getting the support available to council or housing association tenants. They could not understand why more housing is not built if there is such a high need for it. They also acknowledged that this had shaken their belief in the system. As Will put it:

> *I live in a housing association flat and my rent is higher than someone in a council flat. That doesn't seem fair either. How does that work? Seems to be a bit like a lottery to me. You go to the council because you need somewhere to live. You get put in private rented but the next person through the door gets a council house or housing association. Everyone is housed*

> *so the council can tick their box but everyone is paying*
> *different rent and has different rights as a tenant.*

The residents discussed the Homeseeker Plus system and expressed frustration about it. Going into the process, they said, it all seems very positive, but it is sometimes difficult to understand why if they are considered to be in urgent need of housing they get turned down for properties. The focus group participants felt that they did not always get the level of support that they needed, particularly when they were in danger of homelessness which is a very stressful situation to be in. There was general agreement that there was a lack of transparency about what the council can and cannot provide. This point about transparency is important to them. They feel that it is important that people entering the system should have reasonable expectations and that the Housing Options team should make sure that they are told what their realistic expectations should be.

There was also concern expressed that the future does not feel positive. Whilst they know that there are plans to build new affordable homes on sites such as the North West Development along the Tewkesbury Road, they do not see how this is going to improve the situation on the existing estates that already have a bad reputation. They think that the 'higher end' applicants, those with jobs for example, will be put in the new houses and the drug addicts and prison leavers and other people with problems will be housed in places like Hesters Way and The Moors. Gemma said:

> *We'll still have Scott and Edward Wilson houses in Hesters*
> *Way. They're not going to be changed. Hesters Way will still*
> *have a bad reputation. And we won't be able to go for the new*
> *housing because we are already housed so we won't be a*
> *priority. Housing options suggests that you have an option*
> *because you can bid for houses, but actually it doesn't work*
> *like that. Most people don't get the property they want. The*
> *system is just pretending that we have a choice. We don't*
> *really, not if we're desperate or if we have been waiting a long*
> *time.*

Sophie questioned why there were not enough houses and flats available:

Everywhere you look in Cheltenham they are building houses. Why don't they build more social housing? I thought they had to build some. And what about Cheltenham Borough Homes, why don't they build some? They must have money from selling off council houses.

The focus group was also asked their opinion on how they think the current housing situation might affect the future of social housing in Cheltenham. Collectively they agreed that the future does not look positive. Summing up their views Tracy said:

I don't think it's looking good. If people now can't get social housing and are being put in private rented houses and they're not building more council places it isn't going to get better. They're going to have to build a lot of houses just for those who are already on the waiting list.

Sophie added to this comment:

It will get worse because people can't afford to buy houses in Cheltenham. Everything is so expensive. More and more people will be looking to rent. Rents are high too though. It doesn't seem good. We should be grateful that we've been housed.

The situation also made them think about their own futures. They were in agreement that they were grateful that they were being housed, but concern was expressed by those in work that if the situation got worse they may be made to give up their homes to those who do not work. Aware that there is a move by the government to encourage those on higher salaries to either pay higher rents or leave their properties, they feel this might change in the future so that only the most vulnerable are housed. There was agreement that in their opinion it is now only people with the greatest needs that are housed by the council, quite different to how it was in the past.

The focus group was also made aware that affordable housing no longer means affordable to rent and that many of the houses on the proposed new development sites would be shared ownership or rent to buy properties rather than social housing. Their opinion on this was that whilst there were homeless people and people struggling to survive there should be a figure

placed on how many of the new homes would be available for rent. They shared the opinion that it should not be left to the market and profits to determine what should be built.

8.5 Cheltenham's response and plans

The interview with Peter Jeffries put a more positive perspective on the future. He does acknowledge that the current housing situation in Cheltenham reflects the national picture and that Cheltenham does have a housing crisis. However, he feels that Cheltenham is better placed than many other local authority areas to address this situation. He believes this is because Cheltenham is an affluent town where people want to live. Asked specifically about the future of affordable housing he admits that there is no guarantee that any affordable housing allocations in new developments will be social or affordable rented properties. He also acknowledged though that affordable to buy, particularly for young people, is as important to the town as affordable rent properties if we are to retain young people to live and work in the town. As he pointed out, there are a number of very high end retirement complexes being built in the town and this could result in a town with a disparity between young and old which, in his opinion, is not a healthy situation.

Since the interview with Peter Jeffries and the focus group, Cheltenham Borough Council has released its draft *Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2018 – 2023* for public consultation. This consultation takes place over a period between April 5th and May 11th 2018. The document is positive about the future but is also realistic in recognising the constraints that could impact on full delivery of its plans particularly in terms of affordable housing. The biggest concern is that developers can use site viability as a reason not to include social or affordable housing in developments that are subject to Section 106 agreements. This refers to Section 106 of the *1990 Town and Country Planning Act*, which is an agreement between a developer and a local planning authority about measures that the developer must take to reduce impact on the community. This may include payments towards

infrastructure such as new roads or schools and also includes, in larger developments, the provision of a percentage of affordable housing.

The strategy says that 10,917 new homes across all tenure types are required for Cheltenham over the period 2011-2031. There is an admission that to date delivery has failed to meet the average target of 546 per year. In the period 2011-2017 only 63.9% of the target was met. Cheltenham's latest *Strategic Housing Market Assessment* published in 2015 states that, of the 546 total new homes per year requirement 231 should be affordable, across the three definitions of social rented, affordable rented and intermediate. This totals 3,696 homes required for the 16 year period remaining within the Joint Core Strategy time frame from 2015. That Cheltenham is failing in this delivery can be seen in the strategy which quotes affordable homes, across all three types, built: 2014/15, 24 homes; 2015/16, 34 homes and 2016/17, 52 homes.

What should also be considered is that Cheltenham is located in a mostly rural county which means that the context of housing need and housing supply across the whole county is important. Gkarkios and Shucksworth (2015) explain that the English planning system, whilst attempting to preserve the English rural landscape, has put more pressure on urban centres to provide necessary housing. They also suggest that this results in only those with money being able to live in rural areas, something they refer to as 'spatial apartheid'.

In contrast one of the difficulties for Cheltenham is that it is almost entirely urban with little land available for new build housing. The same applies to the city of Gloucester. The partnership between these two urban centres and rural Tewkesbury to produce the Joint Core Strategy has therefore been necessary if these districts are to meet their housing requirements. Plans within the Joint Core Strategy show that the largest developments planned, although mostly situated in the Tewkesbury Borough Council area, are adjacent to Gloucester and Cheltenham and to a lesser extent to the town of Tewkesbury.

The *Housing and Homelessness Draft Strategy* provides an explanation on why the council has failed to provide the required number of homes as it states:

Whilst councils are able to retain an element of their capital receipts on homes sold, there are restrictions over how these receipts can be used, and this has the effect of limiting our options to increase supply (CBC Housing and Homelessness strategy 2018-23, p2).

It also explains how the *2016 Housing and Planning Act* changed the criteria for 'Right to Buy' by giving bigger discounts to tenants and shortening the period of eligibility down from five years to three years. This has resulted in more tenants taking up the right to buy opportunity which has consequently contributed to a reduction in the supply of affordable homes.

The strategy also provides an admission that much of Cheltenham's recent targets for building social and affordable rented homes have been reliant on the delivery by developers through Section 106. That this is failing is evident from the building statistics. There are concerns shown in the strategy that the failure in meeting affordable homes targets is compounded by high house prices which limits the ability of people wanting to buy their own property. This consequently increases the number of people wanting to rent privately as a solution to their housing needs. This is a cause for concern because this has resulted in prices within the private rented market being pushed up. It goes on to say that a further issue is that the Government's freeze on welfare benefits, such as the Local Housing Allowance, means that benefits have not kept pace with the rent increases which have forced people out of the private rented sector with nowhere to go. This bears out the Shelter comments mentioned in Section 8.3 that 25% of homelessness is caused by evictions from the private sector.

The unease expressed by Peter Jeffries in his interview and by the strategy regarding site viability is of real concern. There are, however, other concerns which the strategy identifies might have an impact on delivering the required home build targets. For example, delays in identified development sites being brought forward for planning consent or for site owners being slow in

implementing agreed developments. To mitigate these risks Cheltenham Borough Council plans to take a proactive stance to encourage land owners and developers to move more quickly through the system whilst also providing as much support to applicants as possible.

Another risk is that sites which have been identified to date will not become available as expected. Consequently additional potential sites will be sought including empty properties of different types where owners should be encouraged to bring them up to occupancy standard. Alternatively Cheltenham Borough Council is prepared to purchase empty properties under compulsory purchase and convert them for rent.

Apart from ensuring delivery of all required tenure types Cheltenham Borough Council has a particular concern to deliver social and affordable rented housing and to ensure that it meets its own statutory duty to provide affordable housing where needed whether in the affordable or private rented sectors. To this end apart from delivering the required amount of affordable housing Cheltenham Borough Council intends to become a private rent landlord in its own right, investing in properties and renting them out at market rents. They plan to use commuted Section 106 funding and borrow to purchase and improve these properties. To this end in June 2018 Cheltenham Borough Council announced its intention to invest £100 million into homes for rent for families and young people.   The aim is to purchase existing properties that can be converted or improved and then rented out as private rented homes. Although Cheltenham Borough Council admits that it has yet to identify suitable sites it is committed to using its ability to borrow money and invest it in housing that could help to retain young people and families who are currently leaving Cheltenham, to find more affordable housing.

The Housing and Homelessness Strategy includes the following paragraph which addresses this matter:

> The provision of more affordable housing is our main priority; however, by providing additional homes as private rented accommodation we will also be able to ensure there is a

greater choice of longer term housing for residents across a wider range of budgets and needs. We anticipate that this in turn will help to attract and support the retention of young people and families in Cheltenham, thereby supporting the growth of our town. (CBC Draft Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2018-23, p9)

Cheltenham Borough Council has stated that as private landlords they will be able to offer better security of tenure and housing quality. The profits made through this approach will be used to support the building of affordable homes and provide rent subsidies where necessary. The problem with this approach is, of course, that where the market determines rent levels these homes will not be affordable which may in turn perpetuate the issue that potential first time buyers will not be able to afford to save for deposits on their own homes because rent levels are high.

As quoted earlier in this chapter, house prices in Cheltenham are amongst the highest in the South West with the average cost of a property being £274,356 according to the National Housing Federation 'Home Truths' report for 2016/17. The report also shows that mean annual earnings for the same period was £27, 628. The 20% deposit required for a £274,356 house would be two years earnings. The same report identifies that the average rent stands at £780 per month which is almost exactly one third of the average monthly income. The percentage of households in employment claiming housing benefits is shown as 33%

Also within the private rented sector the council intends to work with private landlords to introduce a Landlords Accreditation Scheme for landlords that meet certain standards to enable the council to generate a recommended list. This is a welcome addition to the Cheltenham housing offer and although it will be a voluntary rather than compulsory scheme it will offer some support to people seeking decent rented accommodation who cannot access social or affordable rented housing.

Another positive response in relation to the private rented sector is that, according to the Cabinet Member for Housing, Cheltenham welcomes government intentions to increase licensing and regulating of the private

rented sector through widening the definition of a licensed House in Multiple Occupation. This will mean mandatory licensing of all shared housing of any size. This is welcomed by Cheltenham Borough Council because it is something they have been unable to do to date due to government policies currently limiting them. Peter Jeffries summed this up during his interview:

> For some time we have wanted to increase the number of properties, particularly Homes in Multiple Occupation, that are licensed but the rules from government seemed to be there to ensure that this was impossible. With the cuts the pressure on the council just to deliver what it has to deliver has been difficult, to then add to our workload in order to prove we needed further licensing has been unfeasible. Now we're hopeful that we will be able to get on with it because we won't have to prove the need.

An appendix to the draft document is the *Tenancy Strategy 2018-23* which is a requirement for councils to have under the *2011 Localism Act.* Types of tenancy on offer include: temporary tenancies for those people who would not normally be considered for affordable housing but are currently homeless; and a new type of tenancy which offers introductory tenancies to all new applicants who are housed through Homeseeker Plus. An introductory tenancy will be converted to a secure tenancy after 12 months unless there are concerns relating to the conduct of the tenant; A secure or tenancy for life which enables a tenant to occupy their property for their lifetime as long as there are no breaches to their tenancy agreement. Although the *2016 Housing and Planning Act* allows for councils to introduce fixed term tenancies Cheltenham Borough Council, and their managing agents Cheltenham Borough Homes, have stated that they will not be doing so at this time. Other Registered Providers in Cheltenham already provide fixed-term tenancies and will continue to do so.

8.6 Conclusion

This chapter has provided an important element within the thesis by recognising that the issue of working-class housing has become a concern across different tenure types. Residents and others still use the expression 'council estates' though new terminology refers to social or affordable rented

housing. Over the period of the preparation and data collection for the thesis there have been many changes in the way that this type of housing has been delivered and in how access to this housing has changed significantly in recent years. Although it is important to remember that the aim of this thesis is to consider the discourses that surround council estates and the people that live within them it is also important to recognise that many people are disadvantaged by not being able to access social or affordable rented housing. This may become the biggest issue that local authorities need to address in the future.

Councils have a statutory duty to do what they can to house people in need of housing. Information contained in this chapter shows that the majority of people using Cheltenham's housing options offer, Homeseeker Plus, are housed in private rented accommodation. If this situation continues it follows that from the perspective of people looking to be housed by the council their options have changed. There are a number of ways in which this could affect council estates and council estate residents in the future.

Firstly, the council estates could become ghettos for those people with the most problems as those will be the applicants with the highest priorities and they will be the first to be housed when there is a shortage. This is certainly a view shared by residents that have participated in focus groups. Secondly, there is concern that issues affecting private rented sector tenants could overtake the needs of people in social housing. This is unlikely unless there is a big change in the way that support is offered. Currently support is funded by the housing revenue account, or the profits made from rents by the council and housing associations, and this is only mostly used to support people paying rent in the social and affordable rented sectors. It is unlikely that private landlords would contribute to support their tenants' needs. This means that people's needs within the private rented sector will go unaddressed with problems then likely to increase.

The final potential impact is more positive and that is that the private rented sector will up its game both through increased regulation and voluntary

schemes to improve quality for tenants. This potential is supported by the draft *Cheltenham Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2018-23.*

On the future of housing being available for people in Cheltenham it is unclear whether planned developments will deliver the number of social and affordable rented properties required to meet the needs of Cheltenham people. The lack of confidence expressed by both the Housing Cabinet member and the Housing and Homelessness Strategy in their ability to deliver the requirements does not inspire confidence.

One positive though is that Cheltenham will not currently be introducing fixed term tenancies which means that people housed in Cheltenham Borough Homes properties can be confident that as long as they conduct themselves adequately as tenants their tenancies will be secure.

Residents themselves, as expressed in the focus group, are not confident about the future which indicates that more transparency may be required by Cheltenham Borough Council and Housing Options so that applicants are much clearer about what their alternatives are.

An impression gained from the cabinet member and the draft strategy is that there is willingness in Cheltenham and nationally to find solutions to the housing crisis but that Cheltenham Borough Council is limited in the way it can respond to national policies. Nationally evidence suggests that politicians from all parties recognise that solutions to the housing crisis are urgently required. The social housing green paper provides an opportunity for all stakeholders to have a say on the future, if the promise that this will happen transpires.

Chapter 9: CONCLUSION

9.1 Introduction

As the thesis demonstrates the research has provided a number of findings that contribute to the knowledge about council housing estates and the people who live within those estates. This is of particular importance as Cheltenham, used as the case study area, is different demographically and geographically to the large urban centres which in the past have been used for this type of research.

The research has resulted in a 'journey' through the rise and decline of council housing in the United Kingdom using Cheltenham as an example of how local councils have reacted to government policy. The history of working class housing contained within this thesis provides the background to how and why state funded housing became necessary to support the state and the economy and how other policies and influences have since contributed to its decline.

The decision to focus the research on perceptions of and towards people living on council estates provided an opportunity to combine housing as an indicator of wealth and poverty with attitudes that tell us how poorer people are viewed by the rest of society. Also a simple study of how working class housing has evolved, although giving a good starting point, would provide only a historical study. This would have provided a perspective that is certainly missing in publications of Cheltenham's history where the working classes are almost invisible. However, the addition of a study of the discourses of residents and the media in parallel to the story of housing has enabled a more complete portrayal of how housing has affected the lives of working class people. In other words this thesis went beyond the bricks and mortar element of council housing to the lives of real people living in that housing.

9.2 Key themes of the Research

The study of housing policy and social policy carried out as part of the research programme highlights that housing has responded to the need of the state to maintain its power base or keeping those in power in power. This can be demonstrated by the history of housing in relationship to the development of social/housing policy through, for example, the Settlement Laws, the Poor Laws, the workhouse, the introduction of council housing, the 'Right to Buy' and the 'bedroom tax'. Many of these policies were introduced in response to historical events that might have threatened the balance of power. For example: the dissolution of the monasteries resulting in an increase of beggars and vagrants; the fear of a working class revolution in Britain following the end of World War One.

This notion reflects the evidence of the historiographical literature in Chapter 3 particularly that discussed in Section 3.2.2. For example, the concept put forward by Rushton and Sigle-Rushton (2001) where they suggest that a perceived threat of civil unrest following the Dissolution of the Monasteries motivated state intervention in providing poor relief. Or, as another example the evidence put forward by Malpass and Murie (1999) and Lowe (2004) that fear of a working-class uprising following World War One prompted the *1919 Addison Housing and Town Planning Act* which promoted 'homes fit for heroes'.

Power is a theme that runs through the methodology and results of this study identifying the relationship between wealth, represented by capitalism, and poverty, represented by the employed at times of growth and the unemployed, or benefit dependent, at times of austerity.

The decline of manufacturing in the UK has resulted in an increase in unemployment of the unskilled and semi-skilled working classes and a rise in welfare benefit dependency. Thatcherism and the' right to buy' policy have increased the aspirations of the better-off working classes to own their own homes. This in turn has resulted in council estates housing only the poorest people (residualisation). Cheltenham is proven to be no exception in that it developed an international manufacturing reputation which has now largely

been replaced in terms of local employment opportunities by service industries, hospitality and retail. All of these are mostly low paid which is reflected in the high percentage of people in work but claiming welfare benefits.

The recent global economic crisis means that the poor are no longer a threat to those in power because of their poverty coupled with policies that have made them reliant on the state to survive. This is reflected in the lack of investment in social housing which has occurred since 1980 when the 'right to buy' policies started the process of encouraging people to be home owners. With many of those buying their own council houses being in a lower income bracket this also contributed to the global financial crisis with sub-prime lending being recognised as a contributory factor. Although this has not been the only contributor to the financial crisis and consequent austerity measures it has had a significant effect.

This has resulted in opinions about people living on council estates changing. The 'respectable' working classes now own their own homes. However, the geography of council estates has changed because many of the better quality council houses are now owner occupied because of 'right to buy'.

Views of and about people living on council estates have changed and the evidence in this thesis demonstrates that negative views are now more likely to be aimed at welfare benefit claimants rather than people living on council estates. Although in most cases the two are interdependent.

At the same time there are not enough new social houses being built to accommodate all of those in need. This, as evidenced in the literature by Mullins and Murie (2006) and Lund (2016) is a result of both Thatcherite and New Labour policies between 1980 and 2010 and the concept of 'rolling back the state'. In addition, as shown by Conway (2000) and Reeves (2014) the way in which housing subsidies are provided means that state funding is invested in housing benefits rather than in building new properties.

Changes to welfare benefits have 'capped' the amount people can claim in housing benefit which means that those in poverty who cannot get into social housing can only afford lower quality or smaller private rented properties. There is a danger that new slums are being created because of this. It is currently the private landlord that holds the power in the relationship between landlord and tenant although evidence emerging from this thesis suggests that at both national and local levels government is planning to restrict the landlords' power in order to give tenants more rights.

There is now a move to require benefit claimants not only to prove that they are looking for work but also to carry out volunteering or community service in order to continue their receipt of benefits. This move suggests a 'virtual' workhouse where people in receipt of poor relief were required to carry out tasks in return for bed or food.

What clearly emerges from the research is that Cheltenham is following the national trend in terms of both house building and changing rules relating to private landlords. The research demonstrates that this has consistently been the case as the history of Cheltenham's slum clearances and council house building follows the national timeline quite closely. What is also clear is that local developments have similar consequences for lower income people as in London due to inflated house prices resulting in people not being able to afford to buy property. This culminates in Cheltenham's lower income residents being trapped in the private rented sector, not being able to buy their own home but equally unable to access affordable rented housing because there is a shortage.

A study of aspects of the lives of working class people, such as their housing, provides an indication of when they were valued and when they were not. This can be seen in the research where housing by the state has been provided or withdrawn showing how the ruling classes have felt either in control or threatened by the working classes. For example after World War One western European leaders were worried that the revolution in Russia could be replicated across Europe. It was important therefore for British politicians to keep the working classes content. The state up until this

time had been poor at providing decent housing. Post-World War One the state increased its investment in providing 'homes fit for heroes to live in' and the 1920s saw a substantial increase in the supply of council housing.

When I started this research I was convinced that the state of social housing in the United Kingdom would not change significantly during the life of the research. Not only has the research taken longer than originally anticipated the United Kingdom, over the past ten years, has experienced the biggest changes to housing and welfare policy since the introduction of the Welfare State in 1948. Although, to some extent, this has affected the outcomes of the research I believe that the original objectives have been met.

The first objective was to 'identify discourses articulated by council estate residents and newspapers in relation to a specific estate'. Certainly the research has identified discourses articulated by council estate residents. The interviews and focus groups attest to this. These have provided a range of opinions across a mixed sample of residents currently living on council estates: those who have always lived on council estates; those who have spent much of their lives on council estates; those who have ended up in council housing because of their complex needs; and those who have chosen to buy property on council estates because of its affordability. Although the original decision was to use only one council estate to gather data this became unworkable and as explained in Chapter 2 and Chapter 6 a decision was made to work across more than one of Cheltenham's council estates. Using the originally identified estate, or for that matter any individual estate in Cheltenham, would not have provided an accurate representation of council estates in Cheltenham and attitudes towards them. As shown in Chapter 6 and Chapter 7 attitudes of both insiders and outsiders differ across the different estates which consequently makes the decision to use more than one estate more meaningful.

Objective two was 'to critically compare the newspaper and residents' discourses with each other'. This was achieved through the focus groups which looked specifically at how newspapers and politicians discourses were articulating opinions relating to council estates and more importantly council

estate residents. The responses of residents to these newspaper and other media discourses show that there is a difference between how residents perceive their estates and how they are portrayed by the media. The residents made it clear that to them the portrayal of council estate residents in television programmes such as *Benefits Street* did not in their opinion represent real life on the estates. Their view of the council estates where they live differed significantly from the view portrayed by the television and subsequently the newspapers which perpetuated the view shown in these documentaries.

The interviews and focus groups carried out with Cheltenham residents provided data that shows that, whilst recognising the power of programmes such as *Benefits Street*, they are not convinced that these programmes are providing an accurate interpretation of life on council estates. The local residents also concluded that Cheltenham attitudes are typical of the national situation but would still question whether newspaper and other media interpretations of life on a council estate were correct.

The third objective asked for a comparison between 'local findings and how they compare with the current broader discursive frame'. It was important to the research to make a comparison between what was happening and had happened nationally with Cheltenham. Cheltenham is different to the areas of the United Kingdom popular with researchers for this type of research as it is a town within a rural county with high levels of both wealth and poverty experienced within the town. This provided a chance for a case study that was different to those carried out in similar research, previous research having concentrated on urban conurbations. This need to look at a local case study provided an opportunity to compare Cheltenham with the broader council housing discursive frame.

Objective four aimed 'to investigate through a study of historic newspaper discourses and social housing policy and practice the extent to which local and broader findings have been influenced by hegemonic discourses and whether local findings are typical of the broader situation'. The research does show that Cheltenham, as a local example, has followed the national

policy and practice with the newspapers reporting similarly both locally and nationally. Section 7.5 demonstrates this. To achieve this objective it was necessary to carry out a systematic investigation of newspapers both historic and current in order to assess how attitudes had changed over time. Also important to the research was an assumption that local and broader findings were influenced by hegemonic discourse. In other words, that opinions were shaped by what the politicians and national news media were saying about council estate residents.

The fifth and final objective was 'to investigate the implications of the research for the future of housing estate residents in relation to social and housing policy and practice'. Chapter 8 presents these findings, including the residents' perspective on the future of housing in Cheltenham.

The objectives have been met and Chapter 4 and Chapter 7, in particular, provide an overall perspective of the issues and discourses surrounding council housing estates, both historical and current. These chapters show recognition that Cheltenham has followed national trends in relation to housing, but has now recognised that it needs to find more innovative solutions in order to take forward the Cheltenham plans for housing within the borough.

The research included a significant amount of time spent on reviewing the history of social and housing policy both nationally and local to Cheltenham. This has sometimes led the research away from its main aims but has ultimately provided a much broader picture of the history of council housing. This is certainly the case in Cheltenham where the history of council housing has been an aside to the many local history publications reviewed for the research. There is a gap in the history of Cheltenham regarding working class housing, a gap that could be filled by this research.

Certainly Chapter 5 and Chapter 7 indicate that Cheltenham is both typical, in that its council housing offer follows national policies for implementation and delivery, but also atypical in that its demographics differ from other studies made on council estates. Even so the implications for the future of social housing, both nationally and locally, show a level of concern that

might only be addressed locally if local politicians are brave enough to address the issues proactively rather than waiting for national policy. These are discussed in Chapter 8 where there is some small evidence that Cheltenham is preparing to be more proactive in its approach.

9.3 Research Limitations

The main limitation experienced by the research was identifying residents to participate in the semi-structured interviews and the focus groups. The initial aim to concentrate the research on just one of Cheltenham's council estates proved to be difficult in that the views expressed by the residents of the Whaddon estate, the estate initially identified as the one to be used, were so positive about the estate that comparisons were unable to be drawn. This was unexpected and resulted in a decision to extend invitations to participate in the research to any Cheltenham council estate resident. This did enable an end result which provided a more rounded outcome.

The other limitation was the speed at which the political agenda changed in terms of housing and social policy during the lifetime of the research project. These were not minor changes, but changes that could be compared with the revolution in social policy that occurred in 1948 with the introduction of the *National Insurance Act*. Because these were major changes they could not be ignored, particularly as they were being referred to in both the residents' and media discourses being studied. This has resulted in the need to be consistently aware of changes in policies and legislation and how this affects the national and local situations. It also affected the ability to decide on a cut off point for the research, which has contributed to the length of time taken to complete this research programme.

9.4 Further Research

Apart from further research projects the results of this research suggest the possibility of a history of Cheltenham's working classes. The history of Cheltenham, generally, illustrates how Cheltenham grew very quickly from a

small market town in the early 18th century, where the main industry was agriculture, to a town in the early 20th century that was significantly contributing to engineering developments including the fitting out of cruise ships and providing the facility and knowledge to manufacture the first ever jet aircraft. The 20th century saw a decline in engineering with an increase in service industries and cyber security. The lives of Cheltenham's working classes has been ever changing over the past 300 years and yet when reviewing local history publications for the purposes of this research out of the 27 books read only five gave mention of working class housing and six gave some background on the type of work available in the town.

There are also a number of potential research projects which could also contribute to a chapter in a history of Cheltenham's working classes:

- On the theme of attitudes towards poorer people it would be of interest to explore in more depth the role of the welfare benefits system and related media discourses in presenting a negative image of poorer people.
- A study of the effects of negative attitudes on the everyday and practical lives of individuals and families who are benefit dependent and living on council estates would provide the next step on from this research programme.
- With the increase in poorer people needing to live in private rented rather than social rented properties it would be of interest to compare attitudes towards the two different sets of people.

9.5 Conclusion

In conclusion it is reasonable to state that what the research has found is firstly that although there is uniqueness to Cheltenham in terms of its development there is little difference in relation to how Cheltenham has responded to the housing of its working classes. Although Cheltenham, as a town, grew very quickly, following the discovery of the mineral springs, its response to the building of suitable housing up to and including council

housing was slow and limited in the same way it was in most other parts of the United Kingdom.

The research has provided an opportunity to assess the opinions of residents living on Cheltenham's council estates. The level of detail and honesty expressed by residents interviewed or participating in focus groups has provided a depth to the resultant discourses that was not originally anticipated. The changes to social and housing policies and the political messages surrounding them also resulted in a number of mostly negative television programmes about council estates and benefit dependency. These can be seen in the interviews and particularly the focus groups to have affected the residents.

Overall the research has successfully met its objectives and has also raised some questions that could provide future research projects.

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APPENDIX 1   INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

CODE:

Name

Street/postcode

Is your home:

Owned by you   council housing

housing association   private rented

Email (if given):

Address (if given)

Phone number (if given)

Best way to contact:

Phone   email   address

Number of People in household:

Adults   Children

Their Relationship to you:

How long have you lived in the area where you are living now?

If all your life – length of time family have lived here

Why did your family move here?

If not lifetime – when did you move here?

Where did you live before moving here?

Why did you move here?

What do you/did you do? Role in life – employment status.

ROLE IN LIFE DOES NOT HAVE TO BE ABOUT WORK. SOMETIMES OUR ROLE IS ABOUT WHAT WE DO IN OUR FAMILY OR THE COMMUNITY.

You

Your partner

Your Children

Your Parents

Has the area stayed the same or changed in the time you have been living here? If yes in what way?

What do you like about living here?

What don't you like about living in here?

Do you/would you do anything to make it different?

Do you read newspapers? If yes – which ones?

Do you watch TV documentaries? If yes which ones?

How do you think council estates and people living on them are represented in newspapers and on television?

What is your reaction to this?

Do you think the way they are reported has changed?

If yes – how?

How do you think people on welfare benefits are represented in newspapers and on television?

What is your reaction to this?

Do you think the way they are reported has changed?

If yes – how?

Does what you read in newspapers or watch on television have any effect on how you feel about living where you do? Or your life?

If yes – how?

I would like to explore this aspect (how council estates and residents and people on benefits are portrayed in newspapers) further. Would you be prepared to take part in a focus group with other local residents to discuss this further?

I am a research student at the University of Gloucestershire and I am carrying out research about council estates in Cheltenham

WOULD YOU LIKE TO TAKE PART IN RESEARCH ABOUT COUNCIL ESTATES IN CHELTENHAM?

I want to find out how people feel about living on the estates.

I would like this research to cover as wide a group as possible so if you are over eighteen you could help me.

Please read the information on the reverse of this leaflet.

If you want to take part or you want more information you can contact me on [redacted]   or by email: [redacted] or by returning this leaflet to reception at:

- Cheltenham Borough Homes Reception in Oakley Community Resource Centre or Hesters Way Community Resource Centre.

I will then contact you to arrange an interview.

Please complete this section:

I am interested in taking part in this research study.

Name:

Telephone number:

And/or email:

Best time to contact:

WOULD YOU LIKE TO TAKE PART IN RESEARCH ABOUT THE WHADDON ESTATE?

Hi,

I am a research student at the University of Gloucestershire and I am carrying out research about the council states in Cheltenham and how people feel about living there. I'm also interested in finding out how people feel about the way in which people living on 'council' estates are reported in local and national newspapers. I would like this research to cover as wide a group as possible so you are probably an ideal person to help me.

How much of your time would I expect?
First of all I would like to carry out interviews with each person on their own. This would take about 1 hour for each interview.
Secondly I would like to get people together in groups to discuss the way that the estates and residents are reported in the newspapers. These would take about 1 – 2 hours each. I need people to do either or both of these.

Where would these interviews and groups take place?
I would use a community building such as one of the community resource centres or children's centres.

How anonymous would these interviews be?
I would make sure that no one that you didn't want to know would find out about what you had said. Your answers would be used as part of the research, but no one would be able to trace your answers back to you.
If you were taking part in a group discussion the other people in the group would know who you are, but I would ask everyone to keep the discussion confidential. All people taking part in group discussions will be asked not to name other people living on the estate. Also at any point, in either the individual interviews or group discussions, you would have the right to refuse to answer any of the questions asked. You only have to give me as much information as you would feel comfortable with.

Would I be able to know what happens after my interview?
I will write a summary of the findings from the interviews and let anyone see these if that is what they want. No names will be given in this summary as I will give everyone taking part a code number that no one else will know. Also I will invite you to an event after all of the information has been gathered. This event will be used to tell you the results of the research.

How can you trust me not to give away personal details?
Before we start I will give you a form to sign that gives me permission to interview you. I will also sign this form to say that I will not share your personal details with anyone else. I will also sign to say that my report will not be able to make links between individuals and the answers they have given me to any of the questions.

You can remain anonymous throughout this process.

APPENDIX 3   INFORMED VOLUNTARY CONSENT

INFORMATION

You are being asked to take part in a research study. The title of the research is: **Council Estate Discourses: a critical discourse analysis of media and residents.**

This study is being carried out by Bernice Thomson, a postgraduate research student at the University of Gloucestershire.

The aim is to look at council estates in Cheltenham and to find out how people feel about living there. Also to find out how people feel about the way in which people living on council estates and/or claiming benefits are reported in newspapers.

You will be asked to do one or both of the following things.

1. Take part in an interview where answers to a number of questions will be requested. This would take about 1 hour for each interview.

2. Take part in a group with other people to discuss the way that council estates and and residents are reported in newspapers. These would take about 1 – 2 hours each.

Both interviews and focus groups will be recorded to help the researcher write down what has been said correctly.

How anonymous would these interviews be?

In the case of the individual interviews no one that you didn't want to know would find out about what you had said. Your answers would be used as part of the research, but no one would be able to trace your answers back to you.

If you were taking part in a group discussion the other people in the group would know who you are, but I would ask everyone to keep the discussion confidential. All people taking part in group discussions will be asked not to name other people living on the estate who are not part of the group.

Also at any point, in either the individual interviews or group discussions, you would have the right to refuse to answer any of the questions asked. You only have to give me as much information as you would feel comfortable with.

After your interview you will be given the chance to look at the word processed version of your interview. The researcher will contact you and ask you to arrange to do this within one month. You may choose not to do

this. You will be able to change or withdraw any of your responses at this time.

Written and recorded information will be safely and securely stored. Only the researcher, her supervisors and examiners will have access to this information. Once all of the interviews and focus groups are completed the information will be analysed. The results of this analysis will not identify individuals as a coding system will be used to make it anonymous. These results will form part of a thesis.

Your identity will be anonymous. This will be done by giving you a coded identification number before the interview. The list connecting your name to this number will be kept in a locked file. Your name will not be linked to any information you give.

You do not have to answer questions that you do not wish to answer. During the interview you will be told the questions. If any questions are not clear you can ask for it to be explained. You will have the right to withdraw from the interview or focus group at any time.

If you withdraw from the interview the taped information you have given up until that time will be deleted. This means that it will not be used for the research. If you withdraw from a focus group anything you have said before you leave will stay on the tape and may be used for the research. This is because the tape will also include information given by other people in the group.

All information gained from interviews and focus groups will only be used for research carried out by Bernice Thomson. This may include future research as well as this study.   Once the information has been used for these research purposes it will be securely destroyed.

The researcher will invite you to an event after all of the information has been gathered. This event will be used to tell you the results of the research.

If you have any concerns about this study you should contact the researcher's supervisor,

Pauline Dooley, at the University of Gloucestershire on [phone number redacted]

INFORMED VOLUNTARY CONSENT

CONSENT FORM

My participation in this research study is completely voluntary.	☐
I have been informed that my identity will not be directly linked to the results of this research as a code will be assigned to my recorded interview	☐
I have been informed that the interview will be recorded for the sake of accuracy.	☐
I have been informed that this consent form will be kept in a secure file separate from the transcribed interview.	☐
I have been informed that my transcribed interview will be used as part of a research study the results of which will be used as part of the researcher's thesis.	☐
I have been informed about the purpose of this research and I have been given an opportunity to question the researcher about it.	☐
I have been informed that I do not have to answer any questions that I do not wish to answer.	☐
I have been informed that only the researcher, her supervisors and examiners will have access to my transcribed interview.	☐
I have been informed that I can have access to the results of the research if I so wish.	☐

By my signature below I give my voluntary informed consent to participate in this research study as it has been explained to me. I acknowledge that I am over 18 years of age and am able to give consent to participate in this study. I acknowledge that I have been provided with a copy of this consent form signed by the researcher.

Volunteer signature   Print Name   Date

……………………..   ……………   ………………..

Researcher signature   Print Name   Date

……………………..   ……………   ………………..

APPENDIX 4 EXAMPLE TRANSCRIPT OF SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

W001 interview transcription

BT	How long have you lived on the Whaddon estate?
W001	I have been living on the estate now for approx. three years, but I was actually born and bred in ~Whaddon which is 55 years ago.
BT	So you were born here and raised here but then left. Do you still have family in the area.
W001	I do have family in the area but I rarely see them.
BT	You moved here 3 years ago.
W001	Yes.
BT	What prompted you to move here?
W001	More of a business transaction. The house that I was living in. I bought three houses and this was the last one. Unfortunately I was taken ill and wasn't able to complete what I wanted to do. But I am happy where I am anyway.
BT	Would you be prepared to tell me because I'm quite interested in the history of the estate. Were your family here for a long time
W001	My mother…. No my grandmother moved from Scotland to Cheltenham when Whaddon was first built so she was one of the first to live here.
BT	So the 1930s then?
W001	No 1935 – 1939.
BT	Yes because the estate was built about 1936.
W001	She moved down from Scotland when my grandfather worked for GPO and was putting the lines in from Scotland to Newport Gwent and moved to Cheltenham. Unfortunately grandfather died and mother was left alone to bring up the children in Whaddon. It was new house at the time.
BT	And the family continued to live here?
W001	Yes the family has been here ever since.
BT	Ok that's interesting. Where did you live before you moved to

	Whaddon
W001	I lived in Hesters Way. It was in another apartment that I had done up. It was on the edge of Hesters Way…. Monkscroft which is in St Marks.
BT	I live in St Marks… so yes I know St marks.
W001	Most people would say it is Hesters Way, but actually the postcode is St Marks. I didn't realise but it is on boundary of St Marks. I loved living up there. I was living there for nine years. A great area to live. Has its problems but every area does.
BT	That's interesting because it means that you have more of an insight into the estates. Living here only three years, doesn't really give you an insight.
W001	I know the area anyway.
BT	You must have gone to school here.
W001	I went to Oakley secondary school, Whaddon primary then Oakley secondary.
BT	Oakley secondary? Where was that?
W001	It's at the top of Whaddon Road where the adult learning centre for people with difficulties go.
BT	Oh the AOC.
W001	Yes that's right. Where the houses are now that was the school it went right round the front. It was a great school.
BT	So you went there? That's where Whaddon primary was until recently?
W001	Yes Whaddon infants and the stage up until they go to secondary school and then I went to Oakley secondary. It was a great school – absolutely.
BT	It's been there a long time then. Shame it's not there anymore
W001	It all gone unfortunately Yes but they didn't spend any money on it. If they'd spent more money on it would have been one of the best schools in the area, but I feel that because it was Whaddon they didn't want to spend anything, other schools in the area had money spend on them but not this one. It's a shame but there it is. And it's the same today – the area doesn't have money spent on it.

BT	That's about you living in the area. If you remember anything else we can come back to it.
W001	I have a pretty good memory about the area. I was living here until I was 16.
BT	Good. We can come back to that if you want to later. I can see that you're probably not working now.
W001	I had to give up work through my spine, my hips and my legs and my lings.
BT	So what did you do before?
W001	I was a carpet fitter. I picked up little bits and pieces along the way. I did some furniture reclaiming doing it up and selling it. A bit of antique dealing. And DIY – I always liked DIY.
BT	And property.
W001	Yes property.
BT	Have you been married? I don't want to be nosy, and you don't have to answer.
W001	Yes I've been married. I've got five children. My last wife died seven years ago.
BT	So you're a widower then?
W001	Yes I suppose so. Basically I married a Thai girl and when I got back to England I was told that she had been hit by a bus. She was on a motorbike taxi.
BT	Had you planned for her to come here?
W001	Possibly, but it was more me going over there. She thought it was too cold here.
BT	When I talk about people's roles I think about more than just the job. Do you see yourself as having any other roles. For instance you're a father.
W001	Yes I'm a father. I'm ma Christian as well. I've got six children the youngest is 23 and the eldest is 37. I'm fortunate that I have some nice children. I don't get to see them very often. They've all flown the coop. They live in Brighton, Bristol and Bournemouth
BT	Do you have grandchildren

W001	I have seven grandchildren. I'm very lucky but I don't get to see them very often. As much as I want to.
BT	That's the problem when they move away. Thank goodness for mobile phones.
W001	Yes I do get to speak to them. But I got two in Germany. I've got a German granddaughter as well. Next year I'm going to go and see them.
BT	Random question. If I asked you what social class you're part of what would you say?
W001	Working class. Um
BT	That's all I need to know. The reason I'm asking that question is because there's been other researchers asking that question and I thought it would be interesting to compare.
W001	I am working class because I've worked for everything I have. Not like some who've had it handed down. I started with nothing and although I haven't got a lot now it'll keep the children happy when I pass away.
BT	OK let's get back to Whaddon. Because you were brought up here you can obviously talk about what it used to be like as well as now. So has the area stayed the same or changed since you've known it?
W001	Totally changed. It's not the same area. People don't say good morning to each other. People don't knock your door to see if you're ok. They've become less caring. Their house is their castle they don't come out of it and they don't want people going into it so it's very rare for people to know their neighbours any more. But when I was younger nobody locked their door. You knocked and walked in. if there was no one there and you wanted a cup of sugar you took the sugar and later you gave it back. This is how it was then everybody knew each other and they looked after each other. The children used to play in the street there was very little traffic then. You'd guarantee that there was always one of the mothers There was always someone there – one of the neighbours keeping an eye open. Not necessarily to check up on us but just to make sure things were ok and we knew everyone and we used to go to other houses and have tea – just a bit of bread and marmite and a cup of tea and then my mother would feed other children too.
BT	You had a lot of teas then.
W001	Yes. Oh but not on the same night though

W001	Laughs…
	It was brilliant – we weren't afraid to go out of the area. We'd tell our parents. We used to go up Aggs hill. Walk up through the fields the hill together. About fifteen or sixteen kids. It was a sociable thing to do. Now if there's a gang of kids together the police want to know what you're up to but in them days that was our thing. We'd go out walking. Not saying we were good kids but we didn't get into bad mischief. And we knew the local bobby. He was a great guy. But I can't remember his name. for the life of me.. he had a moustache a famous actor with handlebars… he looked like him and if you did anything wrong you'd get a clip across the ear and you knew it – very sorry officer I won't do it again. And you'd go back and tell you parents I've just been hit by the copper. 'Oh what for?' I was caught nicking apples and I'd get another whack and I didn't need to do it cause we had an apple and pear tree in the garden.
BT	Ah but it wasn't so much fun was it?
W001	No it wasn't.
BT	What about crime in the area?
W001	I would say we never had it. Probably went on. I would say that as kids it wasn't something we got into.
BT	What about now?
W001	It's difficult to say – it obviously goes on but people don't report it. They're not going to catch any one. I had an incident a couple of months ago on the bank holiday for the queen's birthday – I went to Worthing to my daughter and when I got back someone had broken into my house. They watch you and if your car's not there for the weekend they know you're not there and they do it. Drug taking people, junkies.
BT	Is that an issue? Here on the estate.
W001	Not that I've noticed. Obviously there are one or two that are. I don't really know if there are a lot but saying that I go to the chemist a lot and I see them in the morning getting their methadone. So there's quite a few but they're in little clumps.
BT	Do you feel safe?
W001	Yes I do.
BT	Because you said that when you were growing up on the estate you felt safe to wander around.

W001	I would say that now I am very wary. If someone's on the road that I don't know I watch and if someone was doing something I thought was wrong I would call the police.
BT	How does that compare with Hesters Way or Monkscroft.
W001	Where I lived there was a bit of crime. But only about three people and they were drug addicts. And one of them got put away for seven years. And others got moved out if they were dealing drugs from their houses they got moved out. This cleaned up the area but then new people moved in and it started again. If people don't see it they don't care.
BT	This area does it still look the same.
W001	Yes it does. A little bit smarter here. The majority are now home owners and they look after their properties. You can walk up and down the road and see. Obviously the council doesn't have buckets of money for repairing houses they only do the necessary now and the tenants don't really care.
BT	And work – when you were young did people work?
W001	I can never remember dads not going to work in the mornings or parents. My mother worked all her life. My stepfather worked all his life.
BT	Where did they work?
W001	My mother worked in Woollies – Woolworths and my stepfather worked in Cavendish house as an electrical engineer and he used to look after all the lighting. And he left there – I can't remember which year and he went to work for himself.
BT	As an electrician?
W001	Yea.
BT	I find that quite interesting. I find it can say a lot about an area. What about now? Work wise?
W001	There are a lot of people on the estate not working – there seems to be a lot of single mums – a lot of young single mums. I think they think that if they have a baby they can get a council place. But fortunately it doesn't work like that now.
BT	Do you think that's why they do it?

W001	Yes I know it is. I've been told by a lot of young girls.
BT	More generally what do you like about living in Whaddon? And why?
W001	You do talk to people. You have to make the first move to say hello but.. I always tell people what's going on in the area. At the church and stuff.
BT	What else?
W001	I don't know.
BT	It's not something you think about on a day to day basis is it?
W001	No its not.. I suppose I just feel secure because I know the area.
BT	So what don't you like about it?
W001	I don't like that there's nothing for the kids to do. They tend to put themselves outside the church in the evening and leave a mess. We're working on that though – we're trying to get them a couple of evenings at Cornerstones but we have to work on that to see if it's feasible.
BT	Is there anything you'd do to make it different?
W001	Obviously the children – something for them to do. We'd like a skate park for them but that's going to be a long time. And a youth club – they closed the boys club. Absolutely horrendous. When I went there was something to do in every room now every room is an office. It's disgusting.
BT	They've shut all of the youth clubs. This is one of the only areas where its still open
W001	Children don't go there because it's all offices. There used to be table tennis, trampoline, basketball, five a side football, a little café. There's a lovely café there but kids don't want to sit in a café. They need activity.
BT	Anything else you'd do.
W001	I'd get all of the speed limits down to 20 miles per hour. I've asked the police to do a feasibility study on it. It's not the outside people doing it. It's the residents they use it as a race track.
BT	What newspapers do you read?

W001	I don't read any. I access my news on line about every three months.
BT	So I can't ask you about newspapers then.
	W001 lives alone in Thames Road. He is 55 years old. He was born and bred on the Whaddon estate, but moved away at the age of sixteen but has returned to live there three years ago. He is a widower. Some of his family still lives on the estate although his children and grandchildren are all living elsewhere.

FOCUS GROUP 1

The focus group members first watched two extracts from the Channel 4 television programme 'Benefits Street' a 'fly on the wall' documentary first aired on 6th January 2014. This programme followed some of the residents of James Turner Street in Winson Green, Birmingham over a one year period. This street had previously been reported in some newspapers such as The Guardian and The Daily Mail as having 90% of the residents in receipt of welfare benefits. (reference)

The focus group watched part of episode one which introduced some of the residents of the street. The episode showed crimes being committed, benefit fraud, cannabis cultivation and shoplifting. The episode introduced residents Fungi, Danny, Smoggy, Black Dee and White Dee who the programme claimed as the 'mother' of the street who other residents turn to for advice.

The second extract watched was from episode three which focussed on the younger residents showing children's misbehaviour as well as highlighting the life of Sa, a resident whose son has been taken away from her due to her heroin addiction.

Most of the focus group members had watched at least one episode of the series when it was first aired although some said they had watched it as entertainment rather than as a serious social comment programme.

The focus group was then asked to discuss the question:

How accurate a portrayal do you feel that TV programmes such as 'Benefits Street' give of people living in social housing?

Stella	Are you sure this is a documentary?
Gemma	That's what it says – why do you think it isn't
Stella	I have never seen people acing like that. They must be acting.
Tracy	I have but not so many things going on in the same street. Not even in the Moors and there's plenty of stuff going on there.
Ilona	In Poland it is different. We have criminals and we have problems but it seems not believable that there are so many

	people in this one street doing these things.
Kate	I think they have taken things that happened over a year and made it look like it is all happening at the same time. I mean do the children never go to school and when do the grown-ups do grown up things like cooking and cleaning. That White Dee seems to sit on her throne waiting to hear about other people's problems.
Tracy	I know people like her. There's one in the Moors. Says she represents the tenants to CBH but I don't think it's true. I think she just likes to know people's business and feel important. White Dee is like that I think. I wouldn't tell her my problems.
Gemma	I don't think I would either.
Will	It's not like that where I live. Yes we don't have drug problems but because it's an old building converted by Guinness it's not the same as a street. We don't have someone like White Dee. I'm glad to say. Or if we do thankfully I don't know them. Awful woman.
Ellie	No I don't know anyone like that but I know people like that exist.
Ilona	To me it seems like a soap – like EastEnders. So many things happening at the same time. It doesn't feel real to me. It is not like where I live.
Sophie	(who lives in the same street as Ilona) You're right Ilona but where we live is new build and they handpicked us so they wouldn't have picked people like those who might cause problems. Go up the road to Hudson and Manser streets and it was like that before they did that regeneration project. That's why they did it – the regeneration I mean. St Pauls had …… has a terrible reputation.
Kate	So are we saying that it does portray real life in social housing? Personally I think they have edited it to make it look really bad.
Gemma	Why would they do that?
Stella	I don't know why they would make it worse than it is.
Sophie	Because they want people to believe that council estates are

	full of benefit scrounging criminals.
Kate	Why do you say that? You sound so cynical.
Sophie	I was brought up in Northern Ireland – it makes you more political and it makes you cynical too. Perhaps I'm wrong.
Ellie	You may not be wrong. But if it was filmed then, unless it was actors, it must have happened. Mustn't it?
Sophie	Yes I suppose so but it may not have all happened at the same time.
Gemma	So what you said earlier Sophie about them trying to manipulate the way people think about council estates might be right.
Stella	When you say 'they' or 'them' who do you mean?
Ilona	Yes I too do not understand who they are. Who wants us to believe these things?
Tracy	Well it's beyond me – I'm not at all political so I can only judge on what I see.
Sophie	When I say 'them' or 'they' I mean the government. They want us to believe bad things about people who live on benefits on council estates.
Gemma	You mean people like us? Why would they want that?
Sophie	Because they want to cut benefits so they want us to think people on benefits don't deserve them.
Kate	But some of us are on benefits. I'm not anything like that. That's unfair if you're right. I live on a council estate – I claim benefits. So do some of my neighbours. We're not like that ducking and diving all day trying to make a bit extra. I don't think it's about a typical council street. Most of the people I know on benefits have jobs even if only part time. I bet lots of people in that street on Benefits Street, the ones we don't see, I bet they have jobs too. That doesn't show on this programme. Unless the local council for that street decided to put all of their problems in the same street it's a load of rubbish.
Ellie	Well it's a long street and we only see about a dozen or so

	people. What are all the other people in the street up to then?
Kate	Probably out at work earning the low wages that mean they have to claim benefits.
Sophie	Now who's being cynical?
ME	So- what is your decision? How accurate a portrayal does this programme give of people living in social housing?
Will	Not at all in my opinion, but I don't live in a street like that. It's certainly not portraying how things are where I live.
Gemma	I think it does a bit but very exaggerated.
Sophie	I think there are people like that but the programme has made it seem that these things are happening all of the time. I think the programme is either trying to manipulate people's opinions of us who live in social housing or Channel 4 is trying to get more viewers.
Kate	So cynical but I think you're right. What does everybody else think?
Ellie, Gemma, Will, Tracy	Yes we'll go along with that.
Ilona, Stella	I think yes but it so different to our culture.

FOCUS GROUP 2

The group was asked to discuss the question:

In your experience does the way newspapers report things that happen on 'council estates' change the way people view those who live in social housing?

Sophie	Who here reads newspapers?
Tracy	I do sometimes, but mostly online. They're so expensive. To be honest I get most of my news from Facebook. Someone puts up a link to a newspaper story and I then look at it. I suppose that means I mostly see the more controversial stuff but I do sometimes look at the Echo just to see what's

	happening in Cheltenham. It's a rubbish website though so I don't do it too often.
Gemma	My mum reads the Echo so I read it when I go to visit her. If I'm there on the weekend I also read the Sun or the Mirror because they buy those on the weekend.
Kate	Yeah my dad reads The Mail so I sometimes read that.
Ilona	I do not read national newspaper but we do look online at local paper.
Ellie	I can't afford to buy newspapers all of the time but I do like to read them. Thank goodness for the free Metro on the buses. I get a copy most days. I also look at the Echo online but I agree with Tracy, it's a crap website.
Sophie	So we do have a bit of experience reading newspapers then. I prefer my news on the telly but I do, like Ellie, read the Metro and I do try to keep up with the local papers. So what do we think of this question then?
Tracy	Not sure. I think from the first question we did about Benefits Street we agreed that we are manipulated by the media so I suppose it's likely that reporters can make people believe things. I mean they might exaggerate to make things seem worse.
Ellie	But I'm still not sure I agree on why they would do this. Is it about supporting the government? Surely not all newspapers support the government. Surely not.
Sophie	You'd be surprised, but I don't believe every newspaper supports the government, but some do.
Kate	So what do we believe and what do we not believe? It's quite confusing for some of us.
Sophie	I suppose you have to read it and see if it fits your belief of things. Like with the Benefits Street stuff we didn't believe it all happened at the same time but we did believe it happened. Newspapers change things around to suit their needs.
Ellie	So how does that fir with this question? Do newspapers change the way people think?

Tracy	What generally or about council tenants
Ellie	Well both I suppose. If they do it with one thing they can do it with another.
Tracy	Let's look at how the local paper looks at council tenants. We all admit to reading the Echo in one way or another.
Ellie	Good idea. I think it's changed since I started living in Hesters Way back in 1998. There used to be a lot of stuff about Hesters Way back then but it doesn't seem so ad these days.
Sophie	Do you think that's because the focus has been more on benefit claimants. Like Benefits Street?
Ellie	What do you mean?
Sophie	Well in 1998 it was a good thing for the government to be seen to be supporting poor people on the council estates. Now the government wants to cut benefits.
Ellie	You're quite political aren't you?
Sophie	As I said – I was brought up in Northern Ireland. Saw how governments and newspapers tried to make people see things in different ways.
Kate	So what you're saying
Sophie	Yeah?
Kate	What you're saying is that newspapers are trying to change the way we think. Really? Aren't they something we should trust?
Sophie	Up to you, but I don't. Newspapers tell a story which you have to decide whether it's the truth or not. Me, I always question but that's my experience. You can make your own decisions.
Tracy	Let's not get side tracked by the Irish issues. Let's decide whether newspapers now and in Cheltenham are making people believe bad things about people on council estates. That's what we're supposed to be doing.

Gemma	OK so who thinks the Echo does this?
Tracy	I think they are definitely against council tenants.
Gemma	Why do you think that?
Tracy	Because of the way they always let people know that problems are from Hesters Way.
Gemma	How do you mean?
Tracy	Well when they report some criminal from Hesters Way they always mention the area but if the criminal is from Charlton Kings or Hatherley they don't.
Gemma	Do you think they still do that?
Ellie	I think they do.
Gemma	But what does that mean? Why do they do that?
Ellie	To make Hesters Way, Whaddon or wherever look bad.
Gemma	Why?
Ellie	Because the national newspapers do it as well. So is it part of a big conspiracy?
Kate	Who owns the Echo? None of these local newspapers are independent any more.
Gemma	Let's google it.............Ha! it was part of the Mail group, now it's part of the Mirror group. Do you think that makes a difference.
Tracy	Not sure I understand what you're saying We're not experts. How would we know?
Ellie	The local papers will follow their parent papers so it will reflect what the national papers say. That might be why there has been a bit of a change in Echo reporting because the Mirror is more in support of poor people than the mail is.
Sophie	I know I am being cynical again but I would like to look at the question a bit differently. Bernice wants to know whether newspapers make us think in certain ways and I think that yes they do but I also think that

	newspapers say a lot of what they think their readers want them to say so that the readers keep on reading. It like goes back and forth.
Ellie	Can you explain so I understand? It sounds a bit complicated to me.
Sophie	Well give me a minute – I'll try to think of an example.
Tracy	Yes come on Sophie we don't know what you mean.
Sophie	Ok I'll try but I'm not an expert either. Take something like Benefit Street and those sort of things. If you read in a newspaper that lots of people in council houses are on benefits you might believe it because why would you not believe if it's in the newspapers.
Tray	I don't believe everything I read in newspapers.
Sophie	Neither do I but a lot of people do. So people read it and believe it and then they feel resentful that they're working hard and are still poor while these other people aren't working and seem to have as much money as they do.
Ellie	Yes so far I understand it. The newspapers have influenced how people think – so doesn't that answer the question then?
Sophie	Yes it does but I think it goes further than that because I think the newspapers then keep giving the same benefit scrounger message because they now think their readers are resentful enough to want it to be true. So they keep on giving that message so that people will keep on reading their newspaper.
Kate	So a bit chicken and egg then. The newspapers tell the readers stories they think the readers want to hear but it's a story that the newspapers made them believe in the first place.
Gemma	Isn't it also the case that some newspapers support the government so they say what messages the government want people to hear? I mean can we believe anything we read in newspapers.
Sophie	I'm not sure I do unless it's the football results

Tracy	Surely some of it must be true. They couldn't make it all up.
	Sorry that's me joking. I don't think the newspapers make everything up. I think they exaggerate and also look hard for stories that fit their message, rather than print stories that contradict their message.
Tracy	Ok to get back to the question – do the newspapers actually make us believe things?
Sophie	Of course they do.
Gemma	I think so too. I mean that whole benefit scrounger stuff. Everyone seems to believe it now yet no one was saying it a year ago. It didn't just come out of thin air.
Ilona	I think it is the same when they talk about migrants, especially us Eastern Europeans. They want us to come here to work and then suddenly everyone is blaming us for everything that is wrong. That must have come from somewhere, yes? Perhaps the newspaper is doing the governments work for them.
Ellie	I'm not 100% convinced because I can't believe that the newspapers would be so blatant about it. But I will go along with what you are saying.
Kate	I can believe it. My answer is yes.
Gemma	Yeah me too. I mean there's probably more people in the posh parts of Cheltenham reading the Echo than there is in Hesters Way or Whaddon so it must be easy to get the message across that the estates are full of criminals and benefit scroungers.
Tray	I agree too. It makes a lot of sense. We haven't just discussed social housing though but I suppose if newspapers can do it with one thing they can do it with council estates.
Sophie	So we're all pretty much agreed then. Is that it the?

FOCUS GROUP 3

The third focus group read an extract from an article written by David Cameron and printed in The Sunday Times on 10th January 2016.

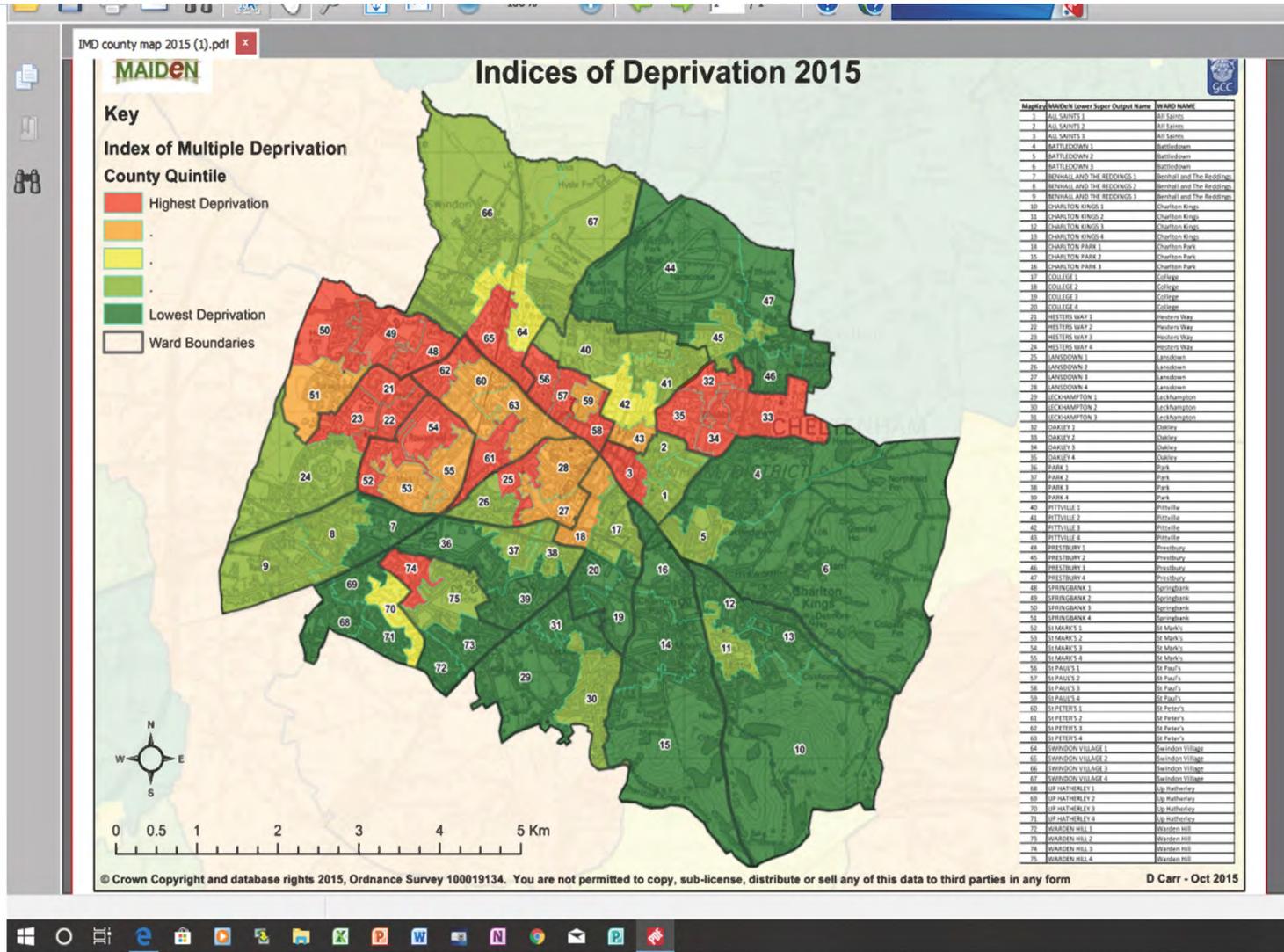The question the group was asked to discuss was:

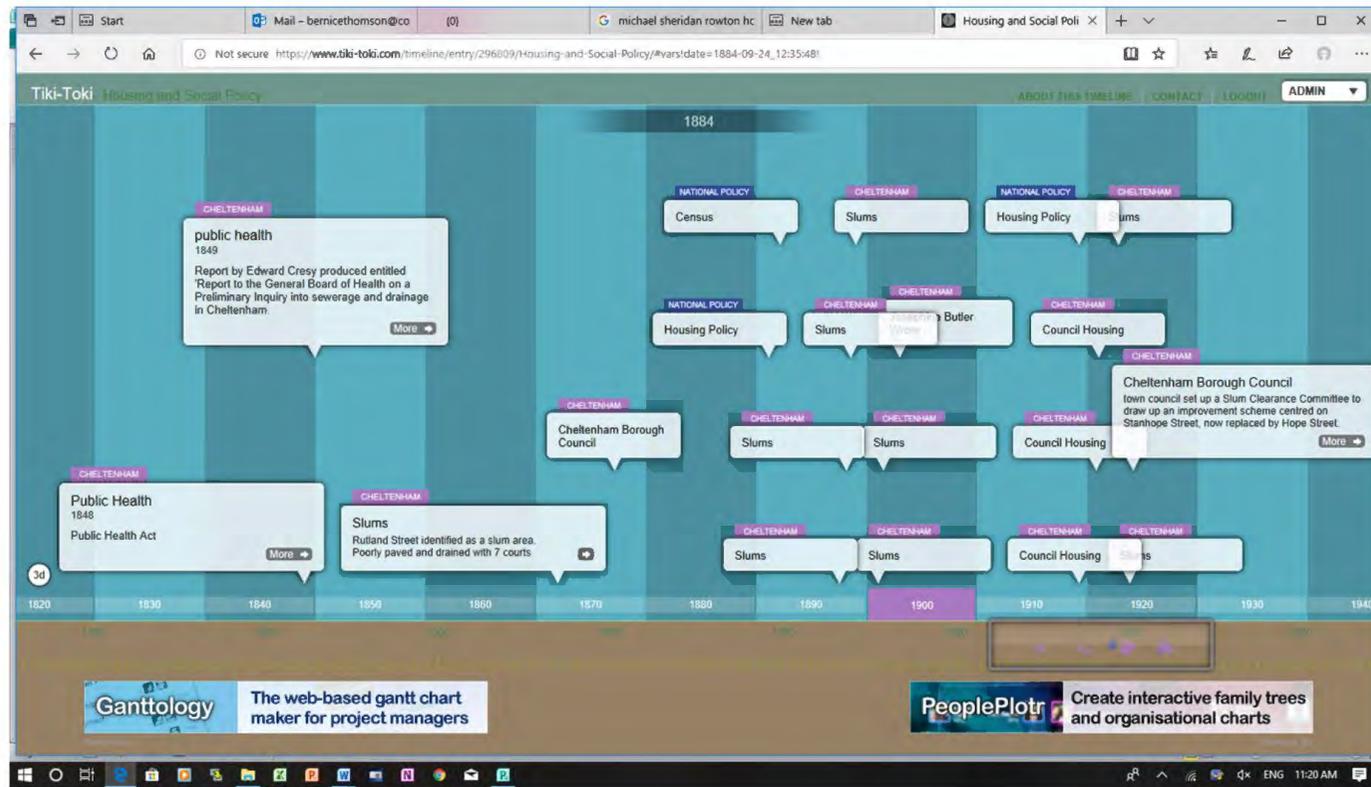*What is your opinion of David Cameron's view on social housing?*

Sophie	Sorry to be the mouthy one always getting my opinion in early. I personally would question whatever David Cameron says because I don't think he's very sincere.
Tracy	Yes but let's be fair and actually look at what he says here and work out whether we can tell what his opinion is from it.
Will	I'm with Sophie on this one. I don't think David Cameron is very sincere. Also reading this piece – if he's so concerned about social housing how is it that six years into a Tory government they've done nothing to improve social housing. In some ways they're making it worse because of things like the bedroom tax.
Kate	Yes, he says that he remembers in the 1980s campaigning in high rises where people lived in terrible conditions and that in 2016 nothing has changed. Well if my memory serves me correctly the Tories were in power in the 1980s selling off the best of the council houses.
Will	Yes and they're in power now too. Insincere or what?
Ilona	I have not lived in England long enough to know all of these things but when I read this piece he sounds as though he means it. Why do you think he is insincere?
Gemma	Yes I agree a bit with Ilona. In the last paragraph he seems to be saying that the worst social housing is to blame for the 2011 riots. Doesn't that mean that he cares?
Sophie	Just because he acknowledges that the problem exist doesn't mean he cares.
Gemma	Yes but he's also admitting that governments have failed over the years.
Sophie	Yes but he has been part of those governments that have failed hasn't he? What has he been doing to make it better?

Will	I think the tone of this article makes it sound as though he really does understand the problem and that he is sympathetic but we haven't got the whole of the article to read, we've only got part of it. I don't think we can reach a decision just based on this piece. We have to bring in everything we know or believe about David Cameron. After all the question doesn't say 'based on this article what do you think'.
Gemma	I suppose that's right. This extract from the article could be misleading us because we don't know what else he is saying.
Ilona	So we ignore the article?
Gemma	No but we add other things we know about David Cameron.
Sophie	Like he's a multi-millionaire who went to posh schools you mean?
Gemma	I suppose so, but I was thinking more about how this government is dealing with poor people. They (the government) seem to be out of touch with how real people live.
Will	Yes and going back to the article for a minute he does acknowledge problems on council estates but if you read between the lines he's blaming the people living there as much as the estates themselves. I mean where did he get 'cut-off, self-governing and divorced from the mainstream' from? If they are whose fault is this? This government and past governments have sold off so many council houses that the only people who can get a council house have all sorts of problems in their lives – of course they're divorced from the mainstream.
Kate	Aren't we getting a bit off the subject? Let's get back to David Cameron. I think the piece sounds patronising He sees the estate as a problem. It's like he's not talking about real people, he's talking about a problem that needs solving not because he cares about people like us.
Ilona	I'm not sure. Perhaps it's my poor English but I think he sounds like he means it. I know politicians do not always mean what they say because we have that in Poland too but here I am not so sure. I like David Cameron I think. He

	likes the Polish people to be working in England and he wants to stay in the European Union.
Sophie	He might like the Polish people coming here to work but I don't think he cares where they live. I find it difficult to think of David Cameron and caring about poor people in the same breath, but you know me and my cynicism.
Ilona	I think it is true that you know your politicians better than I but I still think he sounds genuine.
Sophie	I think we might have to agree to disagree on David Cameron's genuineness. I don't trust any politicians so I'm not going to be persuaded. He's a rich bastard who is totally out of touch with real people's lives.
Will	Like most of the rest of the Tory government. I don't think there have ever been so many multi-millionaires in the cabinet. How could they possibly understand our lives and the different problems we've got?
Sophie	Does that mean you don't think he's sincere? I certainly don't.
Will	Of course I don't think he's sincere. Somebody else probably wrote this article anyway. They probably had a tick box to through. 'Let's make it look like we care' TICK. 'Let's make sure everyone knows that it's New Labour that got us in this mess' TICK. Let's let people believe we'd really like to do something about the problem' TICK.
Sophie	So you're quite as political as me then. I thought I was the only one in the group.
Will	Oh yes. Much less so now since I left London, but yes and I don't trust any of them.
Sophie	So are they all the same. All insincere?
Will	Yes but some are more insincere than others and Cameron tops the list. Just look at him and this article is so patronising. He doesn't mean it.
Kate	Really? I think I agree with you but I'd like to think some of our politicians care about us.
Will	They don't even know that we exist – not as real people

	anyway. I think David Cameron sees social housing as a problem which needs fixing before it rises up and bites him on the bum. The 2011 riots frightened them.
Will	But me I just want to keep my head down. I don't want to get involved – got my own problems. My vote is that Cameron is an insincere, patronising p***k. sorry got a bit carried away there.
Tracy	Some of the politics goes over my head. I'm not doubting you Will but I still think this article sounds OK to me. How are we supposed to judge?
Sophie	We can only look at how he's behaved since he became Prime Minister. Do you trust your life in his hands?
Ilona	Well he is Prime minister. We must be able to trust him…Yes?
Sophie	Really? Not sure I do or many other politicians for that matter.
Kate	Ok so where does that leave us in relation to the question?
Sophie	Well I think he doesn't really care about social housing. He's saying what people want him to say.
Will	I agree with Sophie
Tracy	I still think he might be sincere but not 100% convinced.
Kate	I'm prepared to go along with Sophie and will. I think the article is patronising.
Ilona	Me – I agree with Tracy.
Gemma	I know I haven't said very much but on balance I agree with Will and Sophie.

Indices of Deprivation 2015

MAIDEN

Key

Index of Multiple Deprivation

County Quintile

Highest Deprivation

Lowest Deprivation

Ward Boundaries

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D Carr - Oct 2015

Screen print from the Tiki toki timeline. Detail does not show on the screen where there are more than two entries in each year.

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH CBC CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING

BT	My research has included a study of housing the poor in Cheltenham. What has happened how it happened why and what is said about it. What is your view of the overall housing situation in Cheltenham currently
PJ	Reflects the national housing crisis. Look at the rising prices to see how bad it is in Cheltenham. In crisis.
BT	How do you think in terms of crisis how does Cheltenham compare with rest of UK
PJ	I suppose similar but I think we may be in a better position to come out of it on the basis that Cheltenham is an affluent town and people want to live here. So we've got better chances of driving our way forward because people want to come and live here. Better placed than most towns
BT	What about the fact that there is such a gap between house prices and wages?
PJ	A question of delivery and accelerating affordable housing. We're obviously at the behest of central government on that but I think. With the two extensions of the town there is potential to get more sooner rather than the drip drip drip but as for the house prices it's getting out of control.
BT	How many affordable housing properties have been built in Cheltenham over past five years.
PJ	Not exactly but I do know that it is a minuscule amount compared with the need.
BT	What about in the last one year?
PJ	There's two strands – there's CBH affordable which is quite small and the overarching historically – about 26% of the need.

BT	Do you know CBH website does not provide info of anything except tenants. Can't see an annual report except that to tenants
PJ	Really – that's something to look at – perhaps the information should be on CBC and CBH website.
BT	
PJ	CBH owns about 100 in their own right. But with the council owned properties as well I think it is about 4,800 but my memory not brilliant. in context at start of thatcher's right to buy policy there were 11,500
BT	Yes – the figures are out there and the houses bought are also the most attractive
PJ	We had a spike in right to buy when they increased the discount levels under David Cameron. I am not against right to buy or home ownership but I do question the amount of discount that comes from taxpayers money. And it is not enough to replace the houses that are being sold off.
BT	
PJ	Where the funding goes and the discounts are the only things that need sorting out. If right to buy can encourage home ownership I'm Ok with that, but we need to be able to replace the houses that are sold off.
BT	And that councils couldn't use that money for so long
PJ	About 26 units per year are going from council to private sector
BT	Homeseeker plus found some information and charts – during 2017 ……take from questions is that a normal level?
PJ	Yes I think so it's difficult because the figures don't - not all of them will go into social
BT	So you're saying that all of those 172 weren't social?
PJ	No some of them may have gone into private. And it's not the ones in most urgent need that are getting the social housing because they are not the most suitable units for

	families. And this is what is driving the growth in the private sector. We haven't got enough properties ourself so we are increasingly relying on an uncontrolled, unregulated market.
BT	
PJ	Different types of affordable housing. 80% of the market in Cheltenham in Cheltenham is not affordable. Rents are so far out of the reach of lots of people.
BT	
PJ	Ideological approach to houses from political parties. Going back to figures -
BT	Helpful because we know its happening
PJ	People are on different bands like emergency gold red and so on. But even people in gold who have urgent need for housing can sometimes turn down a property that they're offered.
BT	Cheltenham's ability to provide affordable housing – you said we are well placed to overcome housing crisis
PJ	I've been on cabinet four years now but length of time it takes developers to actually get houses built – I think in coming couple of years there is going to be some interesting changes. I think there are better ways that as a council we can approach housing.
BT	Is 80% about the whole town or about the area.
PJ	It's the market value of housing in the area.
BT	This is where the system seems unfair because if you are in social housing the rent is set elsewhere and can be much cheaper than the affordable rents which are based on markets and therefore different depending on where you are housed.
PJ	I wouldn't want to speculate why we as councils are not allowed to build more social housing. When you look at

	the debt to equity ratio through the self financing the govt announced self financing – we have a 10%debt to equity ratio. If you were a private person getting a mortgage it would be the other way round you might have a 10% deposit (equity) and a 90% debt (mortgage). If we could borrow based on the amount of equity we have the capital we could raise would enable us to build more social housing. I think the government should allow councils to borrow in order to build more social housing. Successive governments/prime ministers over the past years have all said we need to tackle this housing crisis, but all they are doing is nibbling around the edges.

What they are doing in effect is allowing the private marketing to deliver housing needs and dictate the prices. Registered Providers limited |
BT	Are there any subsidies currently available
PJ	Homes England – various subsidies. Been lucky in Cheltenham to get different subsidies. Pots of cash from central government comes with strings and we're told what we can and can't do with the money and doesn't necessarily help with meeting the needs we have locally. If we can meet the criteria that's fine but they are driving a shared ownership agenda and that may not be what is necessary in Cheltenham. Not that I'm against shared ownership – it helps people get on the housing ladder but we need, in Cheltenham, to address the specific needs of Cheltenham not be driven by what central government says we have to do in order to get subsidies.
BT	Do you think that the council does enough to support people who should be able to access social/affordable housing but end up in private rented properties?
PJ	Yes we do – before during and after.
BT	What support do you give. I know through housing options – but what about after they're in private rented?

	Is there a difference between someone who has been housed in private rented through housing options and someone who finds their own private rented house?
PJ	Long term? No we don't. we help them get into housing equal support. But once you're in housing you don't get the same level of support. Up to when you're housed you get the same level of support but not afterwards.
BT	When you're finding them private rented would you help them would you help with getting a Contract on the length of tenancy.
PJ	It's difficult because of the market. I don't like the expression beggars can't be choosers but if you're desperate for somewhere to live what choice do you have? I think security of tenure is a huge issue but the market is wanting short tenancies
BT	What about deposits – what if they have no money
PJ	We have deposit schemes. Different methods. HRA ACT. We have a duty to house and sometimes the only way we can do that is to help with the deposit.
BT	Do you think more work could be done working with private landlords
PJ	I do think that you get a decent landlord through CBH and RPs and then you get the private sector. There should be a way of good landlords banding together to become registered private landlords a bit like the university scheme so there would be landlords we could recommend. Preferred list. There is a voluntary scheme but we need o make it firmer. My personal view is that all private landlords should be licensed. I don't see why you couldn't charge a licence fee and use that money to drive up standards for tenants.
PJ	An example is Article 4 directive in St Pauls – reducing the number of HMOs in the area. – Cheltenham Plan.
	Residents – How much do you think the average person in social housing has changed since it started? E.G. Needs OR income?

PJ	I haven't been living in Cheltenham long enough to make a complete judgement on that. I would think quite a lot but I can't say for definite.
BT	Difference between homes fit for heroes and the image that the council estates have now. Whether that is about the people who are housed.
PJ	I don't see the difference in people. I just see people as people. no you wouldn't have a hope in hell of getting a house if you are working and have savings. The criteria have changed. And some of the comments in newspapers and social media is disgusting.
BT	Cheltenham Plan NUMBERS………how realistic do you think these are
PJ	In policy terms yes – but in delivery terms it could be more difficult. I mean we're currently underperforming so we already have a shortfall. But you have to start somewhere.
BT	In JCS Cheltenham is omitted to affordable housing. How much of that 40% do you think Cheltenham can deliver as affordable rented or social rented properties. Because I know there is pressure on from central government to increase the number of affordable to buy properties like share ownership. Plans don't say which type n such as the NW development.
PJ	Big difference between should could and would. We have a strategic housing market assessment which is the evidence base for the need for different tenures – up for renewal at some point. The tricky thing is that even though we can ask the market to deliver that it doesn't mean they will or even have to. It's about the amount of money they can derive from the provider – developers will use government policy to over throw what councils are saying are needed locally so they can make the most amount of money.
BT	Recent significant developers that had no social housing – why?
PJ	Profit? Viability test – less so on green fill sites but a developer can put a viability case together to say that

	they can't afford to give the 40% affordable housing required because cost to deliver site – can put a financial case together. They put together a case that they won't be able to make their guaranteed 20% profit if they build affordable housing.
BT	I thought they had to – What about section 106 agreements?
PJ	Loopholes – if the government was serious about solving the housing crisis they would put the affordable housing needs first. If any prime Minister was to do that I'd switch parties. That's how much I am omitted to housing. But they won't
BT	Do you think the labour party would if they got elected?
PJ	I think the labour party have a different way of doing things. I have more faith in them giving a more balanced housing market than the Tories. Because they are more ideologically driven by the private sector.
BT	I don't have a problem with developers making a profit – they are playing the system – they're not breaking the law. But because the private sector is supported by the system they have first opportunity to develop available land which doesn't give us an opportunity to deliver.
PJ	Not a housing crisis – a housing failure
BT	How do you think these changes will impact on poorer people
PJ	Homelessness is going to go up – already a rise. As people get poorer and closer to that point of potential homelessness it affects everything else like health and wellbeing – increase in domestic violence and other issues downward spiral . Security of your home and where you live is changes so much people – 3 mortgage payments away from homelessness. Worrying in us as a society when capitalism drives so much – low paid workers in low paid jobs – how is the system going to work if you squeeze it so much that they can't afford housing? System will break at some point. System is broken – if people don't wake up and change it soon there are going to be some big consequences. A lot of

	Cheltenham workers come in form out of town. How is the system going to work if you have to travel further and further to work because you can't afford housing near your job? The divide between the lowest and highest paid is shocking. You can see it in Cheltenham. Massive difference. In some towns it isn't as obvious, its more blended but in Cheltenham there is quite a sharp divide. It grew up as a rich town in the last 200 years
BT	Anything else?
PJ	Does worry me that we came close with government policies that could destroy social housing all together. Some political parties were hell bent on destroying social housing disturbs me – I don't think they realise how much its needed or what the impact of their policies are doing to.

APPENDIX 9   TRANSCRIPT OF FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSING FUTURE OF HOUSING IN CHELTENHAM

Focus group
Taking part Gemma, Tracy, Will and Ellie.
All of these are tenants in social housing, three of them council and one housing association.

The question for the group was:
The Cheltenham Borough Council cabinet member for housing told me recently that the majority of people housed by the council do not get a council or housing association property. Because there is never enough of properties available the housing options team instead helps people, including those on the emergency and urgent/red bands, to find suitable private rented properties. How would you feel if this happened to you? Also how do you think this affects the future of social housing in Cheltenham?

Gemma	Seriously? That is a shock. That's shocking. Thank goodness it didn't happen to me and my family.
Will	Why didn't we know this? I thought you were either housed in social housing or put in bed and breakfast or something.
Tracy	As someone who was in private rented until a year or so ago I don't know how I would have felt if that happened to me. I suppose because I was already in private rented it would have been less of a shock but then I could have done that by myself I wouldn't need the housing options team to do it for me.
Ellie	couldn't anybody find their own private rented property then. Why does anyone need housing options if this is what they do to most people?
Tracy	I suppose some people are desperate. And rents are higher in private than they are in social. Also you have to pay a deposit in private. Some people may not have the money for that.
Ellie	do we know if the council helps people who need a deposit?
ME	in some cases yes, where there is a real need and they have the funding to do so.

Ellie	OK so that's not so bad then I suppose.
Gemma	Yes but it still seems wrong to me. Why aren't there enough houses for people? Especially the emergency and red band people.
Tracy	Is this what they mean when they say there is a housing crisis?
Will	I suppose it must be. But everywhere you look in Cheltenham they are building houses. Why don't they build more social housing? I thought they had to build some. And what about CBH why don't they build some. They must have some money from selling off council houses.
Ellie	It's a bit ironic but I bet that some of the people going into private rented are in what were council houses.
Tracy	If that had happened to me I would have been right p****d off. You'd be paying a lot more rent than someone living next door in a council property for exactly the same house. That just doesn't seem fair.
Will	well I live in a housing association flat and my rent is higher than someone in a council flat. That doesn't seem fair either. How does that work? Seems a bit like a lottery to me. You go to the council because you need somewhere to live. You get put in private rented but the next person through the door gets a council house or housing association. Everyone is housed so the council can tick their box but everyone is paying different rent and has different rights as a tenant.
Gemma	Will, you sound a bit angry about this.
Will	I am a bit because the system seems a bit unfair. I assume that everyone that goes to housing options or Homeseekers has a real need for somewhere to live. It seems unfair that there aren't enough houses for them.
Ellie	I agree with Will but I also have another issue with this system. I know I'm lucky that I'm in a CBH place and because I am 8 know that as long as I pay my rent I can stay there for as long as I like. But I have friends in private renting and the don't feel very secure because they know they could be asked to leave with two months notice or when their contract ends. And they have to pay deposits and they never get the full deposit back so they are constantly worrying about housing. Yet the council are putting people into this situation.

Gemma	Let's be fair though. We know from our other discussions that it's not necessarily the council's fault. It's government. All these cuts and rules.
Tracy	Yes I agree to some extent but why don't they tell us this is happening. I had no idea people were housed in private rented when they went to the council for help. Why the secrecy? I would have been really upset if it happened to me and my family.
Gemma	I suppose people who are housed like this are aware that it's happening. But I think we're all agreed that the system sucks and I don't think it is going to get any better.
Will	Yes me too. I think we are the lucky ones. We have some security. Some of the private rent flats in the town are not very nice. And I'm on my own it must be much worse if you have young children, moving all the time. Stressful or what.
Gemma	I think we might be quite in agreement that we are glad we weren't treated like this so let's look at the other part of the question. How do we think this affects the future of social housing in Cheltenham?
Ellie	That's a difficult one. Why would we know that?
Gemma	well I suppose Bernice wants our opinion. I don't think it's looking good. If people now can't get social housing and are being put in private rented housing and they're not building more council or housing association places it isn't going to get better. That's what 8 think
Will	It's quite depressing really. I know this might sound selfish(but thank goodness I got my flat when 8 did. If I was looking now I might not get housed. That's so scary. What must people be thinking when they go to the council for help and all they get is a private rented flat. .
Tracy	Do we think that this is going to get better or worse?
Gemma	Worse definitely. People can't afford their own houses so they have to rent. If there are no social houses they have to go private.
Ellie	I think that this is really depressing. I'm with Will. So glad I got social housing. I don't know what is going to happen in the future. The way things are I can't see it getting better.

Tracy	Me neither. I wish they would be more honest though. When I went on home seekers I really believed that I would get a social house and thank god I did. But I never thought that I might not. I'm still quite shocked about this. They should tell us this is happening.
Will	We can't do anything about it though can we? I think it's very scary. Where are people going to go when they have no money and need somewhere to live? I can't imagine what I would have done if I hadn't been housed. And what I said earlier about lots of houses being built in Cheltenham. Why can't the council make them build social housing?
Tracy	Do you think it might change our situations if they don't build more social housing? Do you think those of us who are working might be asked to leave our council houses and go back to private rented? That is a scary thought.
Gemma	I think there was something the government wanted to do about that but I think you had to be earning quite a lot before it happened.
Tracy	I hope you're right – I feel secure in my council house, even if it is in The Moors, and I'd hate to be made to leave it.