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AN EMERGENT METHODOLOGY FOR PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT IN THE RURAL LANDSCAPES OF HS2

JOANNE PHILLIPS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of
the requirements of the Manchester
Metropolitan University for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Manchester School of Architecture
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to Martin, my constant support and inspiration,

and to Mum and Dad,

with love

With many thanks to the residents of Ashley, Cheshire, who have been so very kind, welcoming and supportive throughout this research, to Dr Paul O'Hare for his invaluable advice,

and also to my supervisors;

Eamonn Canniffe,

Eddy Fox,

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Professor Tom Jefferies.

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“The more one learns of this intricate interplay of soil, altitude, weather and the living tissues of plant and insect…the more the mystery deepens. Knowledge does not dispel mystery…I find I have a naïve faith in my scientist friends – they are such jolly people, they wouldn’t fib to me unnecessarily, and their stories make the world so interesting.”

(N. Shepherd, 2011: 59, first published 1977)

Introduction

“Methodology: the strategy, plan of action, process or design lying behind the choice and use of particular methods and linking the choice and use of methods to the desired outcomes.”

(Crotty, 1998: 3)

Abstract

This thesis proposes the concept of *cascading public engagement* as a desirable condition in which public engagement with landscape expands and deepens in a self-sustaining way, through continually evolving interconnectedness of landscape processes. Emergence theory is applied and tested as the methodology for the research and also as the strategic foundation for the proposed approach to engaging people with landscape. I consider how small disturbances in landscape systems can have transformative effects and apply this thinking to how small disturbances might catalyse engagement.

The study is grounded in a view of landscape as a continually changing, emergent and complex entity, which is composed of open systems and requires suitably responsive engagement. This is especially pertinent to projects with long timescales, such as High Speed Two (HS2), the UK’s proposed high speed railway linking the north and the south of England. It examines HS2 Ltd’s engagement activities and the associated parliamentary procedures, in order to gain some insight in to the challenges for both the company and inhabitants of rural places.

The work is based on action research carried out in the rural parish of Ashley, adjacent to Manchester Airport and on the planned Phase 2b alignment of HS2. Evidence from Ashley is reviewed in order to explore how such a change in public involvement might be triggered and supported. The qualitative, lived and embodied landscape knowledge held by local people is central to this thesis. I discuss how to access this knowledge within an emergent framework, and why it should be valued.

Walking the landscape with inhabitants has been a significant method, proving valuable in developing final recommendations for achieving non-linear cascading engagement.

I report on a variety of other engagement methods, used to gather local knowledge in Ashley. This includes sustained involvement in neighbourhood planning.

The research seeks to instigate an empowering, creative and inclusive experience for local inhabitants, as they become pro-active in minimising detriment and maximising benefit to their own landscapes. The desired outcome for such flourishing engagement would be that it *makes* policy and *shapes* landscape.

Research question

Could emergence theory inform a methodology for public engagement with the rural landscapes of HS2? If so, what kind of engagement strategy might be drawn from this theoretical basis, and how could it be tested out?

Overview of theoretical argument

Chapter One. Understanding the Emergent Landscape

This chapter introduces different ideas about landscape and looks at how conceptualisation of the landscape has developed over time. It defines the term ‘landscape’ as used in this thesis. I argue that landscape is ontologically emergent (see Introduction ii, page 17) and that therefore the desirable theoretical basis both for researching it, and engaging the public with it, is an emergent methodology. It explains the importance of emergence and unpredictability in underpinning the methodology for this research. I argue that for a large-scale infrastructure project such as HS2, this approach is particularly necessary, due to the long timescales involved and to the extensive linear form of the site. This is because the concept of emergence informs an understanding of how the landscape changes and thus how the proposed line relates to the different local places across which it lies. It goes on to use the example of the civil Parish of Ashley, Cheshire, to demonstrate the application of emergence to a specific place and considers what an emergent landscape design project might be like. It explains the phenomenon of phase transition and applies this idea to possible cascading development in Ashley. It introduces a discussion of the role of local landscape knowledge in a large-scale infrastructure project, taking in to account possible definitions of ‘rural’. I argue that the consequence of inhabitants not being fully engaged with their landscape or with proposals for it, is to open up opportunities for vested interests to determine the future of rural places. In key places along the HS2 route, this could lead to what I have called the **cascading development** of land. Furthermore, I propose that this is not in the long-term interests of the landscape.

Chapter Two. Engagement with Landscape

This chapter considers what engagement with landscape might mean and what constitutes reasonable aspirations for such engagement. I argue that a strategy of primary, embodied engagement with landscape on the part of inhabitants and professionals is required by this methodology, because of the richly qualitative nature of the data yielded by such engagement. I discuss the status of both visitor to and inhabitant of a landscape. I also examine the use of walking, framed within an action research approach, as an effective method of not just finding and assimilating qualitative landscape knowledge, but also of instigating landscape change, all with reference to emergence theory.

Chapter Three. Ashley, its History and Landscape

This chapter gives a description of Ashley in order to familiarise the reader with the Parish. The landscape of Ashley is at the heart of this thesis, and the character of the place is important in demonstrating how the theoretical content can be applied to a real place on the HS2 route. It explains the landscape context, traces the emergence of the place and begins to look to the future. It also illustrates that change is an integral part of Ashley's rural identity, for better or worse, indicating how change has happened up until the present day.

Chapter Four. HS2 Limited and Public Engagement

This chapter sets out how HS2 Ltd's public engagement strategy has worked up until the spring of 2018, including its aims, the role of the Environmental Statement, associated Parliamentary procedures and experiences of residents in rural areas. I argue that HS2 Ltd's engagement of the public with proposals for the landscape has been neither emergent nor devised in order to gather local landscape knowledge. I propose that an examination of the limitations of their procedures can inform proposals for a revised, emergent strategy. This is supported by a case study from Phase 1 of HS2, in order to understand the experience of an affected parish in the later stages of engagement. It discusses strategies for public engagement in other contexts, but finds that, due to their linearity, on the whole they do not address the needs of a complex landscape that is in anticipation of infrastructure. I therefore propose the non-linear concept of **emergent engagement with landscape** and argue that it is useful to explore what this might be like, using a variety of strategies tested out in Ashley.

Chapter Five. Action Research in Ashley

This chapter describes the action research element of the thesis, as undertaken on the ground in Ashley, which explores the concept of emergent engagement with landscape through a number of methods of participation. I argue that two 'engagement gaps' exist at present, firstly the gap between the individual inhabitant and the landscape itself, and secondly between the inhabitant and the infrastructure proposal. It covers all the different methods used, including walking the landscape, networking, involvement in village occasions, and mapping with residents. It also proposes ten 'working' principles which could form a methodology for **emergent engagement with landscape**. The principles are used to test whether each engagement activity could be valid for use as part of a strategy informed by emergence theory. This 'on-the-ground' exploration of applicability of the methods then prompts reflection on the validity of the working principles themselves, which are later used to inform the final recommendations. In this way, the action research is used to inform an understanding of whether, and how, the proposed methodology could be useful when applied in a landscape. Lastly, I propose the concept of **landscape advocacy** as an essential tool in supporting emergent engagement with landscape.

Chapter Six. Neighbourhood Planning

This chapter explains how I became involved in Ashley's neighbourhood plan and sets the process in the national Planning context. It critiques neighbourhood planning and reflects on whether it represents an opportunity for supporting emergent engagement with landscape. I argue that, in the light of the complexity of both landscape and the possible outcomes of infrastructure proposals, only a process I call **cascading engagement** with landscape can source local knowledge to answer the needs of local landscapes. Based on an emergent methodology, cascading engagement could be harnessed to inform landscape design, with beneficial outcomes for both the project and the host landscape.

Chapter Seven. Conclusions, Recommendations and Cascading Engagement with Landscape

This chapter briefly summarises the key themes of the research, the nature of Ashley and the problems with existing processes of public engagement with landscape. As a response to those problems, it explains the new concept of **cascading engagement** with landscape and considers how this might be set in motion. It illustrates this with scenarios describing what the possible outcomes of such rapidly evolving public engagement might be and offers ten practical recommendations for public engagement both with landscape and with landscape proposals, which are drawn from experience in Ashley. Finally, it proposes themes for further research.

Basis for Theoretical Approach

i. Epistemology: constructivism

I am a landscape architect, and my research is grounded in a constructivist epistemology, in which humans build their realities through internal mental constructs. In constructivism, originating from the work of Jean Piaget in the 1950s, humans generate knowledge and meaning from an interaction between their experience of the world and their ideas (Gray, 2014). This epistemology rejects the idea that an objective truth is waiting to be 'found' by the researcher, and therefore does not allow for landscapes to be objectively 'valued'. It is also in contrast to subjectivism, in which "meaning does not come out of an interplay between subject and object but is imposed on the object by the subject" (Crotty, 1998: 8-9). Constructivism allows for acknowledgement of the agency of the landscape itself, because it admits "the possibility that people can derive meaning from objects in the environment as well as from social interactions" (Kim, 2010: 6). Walking in Ashley with different people frequently reminds me of this, as Kim explains:

> "If you bump into a tree, you can get meaning directly from the tree but that meaning is basically combined with social interpretations of the tree. The meaning you assign to the tree will still be a different meaning from what any other person will have for the tree."
>
> (Kim, 2010: 6)

This is demonstrated time and again in walking the landscape with a companion, when an oak in a field might be perceived as having primarily either an ecological, social, aesthetic, agricultural, political, historical or even religious significance, depending on the person viewing the tree and on their own cultural affiliations. The viewer may have no opinions about the tree, but they still perceive it and have some kind of concept of it. The tree itself, the field in which it grows, the weather on that day and the path conditions beneath the walkers' feet, all contribute to the interplay of factors which construct meaning. There is also a social context for this construction; that of the walk itself, within a social place called Ashley, in rural England, within global social networks. The fortunate researcher is in a position to witness all these different perspectives on the tree, to glean some understanding of how different people value their landscape, and, from there, to stand in that field and formulate their own interpretation of the tree, and of the landscape of which it is a part. This produces a view of the landscape which does not claim to be objective, but is rather an interplay of subjectivities, in which the landscape plays its part.

ii. Methodology: emergence

I have used a transdisciplinary methodology, based on the concept of emergence, which sits within the broader field of complexity theory. Emergence, which has its roots in Aristotelian thinking (Corning, 2002), is described more fully in Chapter One, with the purpose of clarifying how it is applied in this thesis to landscape, to research, and to public engagement. I have used this theory as it helps us to understand the nature of landscape and, crucially, how it changes. It is not an entirely unified school of thought, and according to Corning "it is still not clear what the term denotes" (Corning, 2002: 21), but central to understanding the theory is that it describes the property of an entity which evolves to exhibit characteristics which are not reducible to the sum of its component parts (J. Johnson, 2005). Theorists are generally in agreement on this core meaning. For some, this irreducibility is "a result of our limited abilities to predict, to calculate, to observe, and to explain" (Humphreys, 2006: 1). This view would suggest, for example, that although we cannot predict the exact form of a tree, river, or sand dune, over time we would be able to do so if only we had sufficient quantities of data and computer processing power. Thus, some research efforts are made towards the gathering of 'big data' in order to produce computer models of future scenarios. This interpretation of the concept is called 'weak' emergence. For others, myself included, it is in the very nature of emergence that the emerging properties of the entity cannot be predicted:

> "Wholes produce unique combined effects, but many of these effects may be codetermined by the context and the interactions between the whole and its environment(s). In fact, many of the "properties" of the whole may arise from such interactions. This is pre-eminently the case with living systems."
>
> (Corning, 2002: 24)

In the example of a sand dune, for example, I would argue that any amount of knowledge about the properties of sand and marram grass will not mean that it is possible to accurately predict the combined effects of global climate change, wind, waves, people and other creatures on the form of the dunes. Once the 'landscape timescale,' of several decades, centuries, and more, is taken in to account, it is not even possible to accurately predict the continued presence of those dunes in that location (albeit there might be sets of conditions which make their presence likely). In other words, "computationally irreducible systems cannot be modelled by solving equations" (J. Johnson, 2005: 224).

In accordance with this view, therefore, it will be argued in Chapter One that the landscape is comprised of dynamic systems, which are all open to each other, and this endlessly unfolding interaction of systems means that properties of a landscape cannot be accurately predicted. This school of thought is 'strong' emergence, and this is the theory which supports the work in my thesis.

Emergence theory has for some time been used ontologically by scientific disciplines such as computing, physics and biology. In these fields, emergent entities are "objective features of the world, their emergent status being independent of our own existence and knowledge" (Humphreys, 2006: 1). Increasingly, disciplines such as business and management use emergence to describe properties of desirable company structures, for example. In these cases, emergence is applied differently, as an epistemology which can help to inform the implementation of effective management systems. I apply both the ontological and epistemological views of emergence in this thesis, grounded as it is in my view of the 'real' emergent physical landscape, but with the aim of devising an emergent methodology for public engagement. I will argue that efforts towards increased and improved public engagement with landscape will be far more successful if the engagement itself is based on emergent principles and thus can be responsive to the changing place.

The study of landscape is a design-based discipline. It is concerned as much with qualities as with quantities, sociology as much as ecology. Research that is based in a constructivist epistemology can allow for the application of emergence theory both ontologically and epistemologically. They are not contradictory, because real emergent entities in the world (a tree, a fox, a landscape) are understood to interact with our subjective perceptions to form our mental constructs. It is worth noting that herein lies one of the challenges for transdisciplinary study, in that participants have widely differing views of how we know of the landscape. For example, to some people, a series of maps describing the changing course of Ashley's River Bollin over time transparently records an objective physical reality, not by any means a constructed representation. To others, a map is an interpretation of landscape, a construction, and not a factual depiction, as Mark Monmonier puts it, "a single map is but one of an indefinitely large number of maps that might be produced for the same situation or from the same data" (Monmonier, 1996: 2). My data sources are qualitative: participants' memories, interpretations, emotions and opinions, and my own experience of the landscape.

Transdisciplinarity is arguably inherent in the nature of the work of any landscape architect, whose professional role it is to synthesise information from a wide variety of sources (typically in the form of survey data) in order to progress design developments. A survey of a specific geographical location is likely to yield data provided by many different professions, perhaps including soil scientists, ecologists, hydrologists, geologists, sociologists, engineers, archaeologists, historians and representatives from various local and national government bodies. This study sets out specifically to explore the implications of sourcing just one of these elements; that of qualitative data from local collaborators, through public engagement with landscape.

This awareness of the challenge of understanding landscape is not new; in his 1955 book *The Making of the English Landscape*, W.G Hoskins wrote;

> "One needs to be a botanist, a physical geographer, and a naturalist as well as an historian, to be able to feel certain that one has all the facts right before allowing the imagination to play over the small details of a scene"
>
> (Hoskins, 1955: 3)

Hoskins is referring to the role of the landscape historian using information in imagining the past of a place, but his words equally apply to the work of a designer in imagining its future. He is also quite clear about the need to inhabit these roles, to 'be' these actors, rather than simply to consult them. Part of my strategy in exploring this transdisciplinary territory has been *not* to observe or work within traditional boundaries delineating either academic disciplines and professional fields. It is perhaps easier for a student to do this than it would be for an established academic or practising landscape architect, as I have not habitually worked within particular disciplinary constraints. It is, at the same time, a considerable challenge to operate within the territories of other specialists, having had no formal education as a social scientist, for example, or a Planner.

In the context of an interconnected emergent landscape, it is worth engaging with the idea that "Traditional norms of disciplinary expertise ...isolate [designers] from the consequences of their work" (Aeschbacher and Rios, 2008: 87). It is particularly important that designers working on projects with such vast landscape impacts as HS2 are not isolated from the consequences of their decisions.

iii. Research strategies; anthropology and action research

Within the transdisciplinary methodology provided by the concept of emergence, this work has been based on strategies from action research and anthropology. These types of approach are closely related, as summarised by Tim Ingold:

> “Experimentation in everyday life…is a matter of…enrolling practical activity in the very process of following a train of thought. It is to do our thinking in the open, out-of-doors. This, too, is what anthropology does.”
>
> (Ingold, 2011: 15)

The residents of Ashley have been vital in determining the direction of this research, which has to some extent been “designed, carried out, and integrated by the participants … [in] an iterative process in which researchers and practitioners act together in the context of an identified problem” (Lingard et al., 2008: 461). In this, the research has taken an anthropological approach, in which researcher and participant study with each other; “What truly distinguishes anthropology… is that it is not a study of at all, but a study with. Anthropologists work and study with people.” (Ingold, 2011: 238). Writing within the field of ethnographic spatial planning, Sandra Lee Pinel seeks to use local knowledge by researching “diverse local values and contested concepts of landscapes” (Lee Pinel, 2016: 177). She finds that “methods from anthropology and ethnography are essential additions to the social analysis methods used by planners to make plans more acceptable, feasible and beneficial.” (Lee Pinel, 2016: 178). This potential triple benefit has particularly underpinned the work on the neighbourhood plan in Ashley (see Chapter Six).

Anthropology, rather than ethnography, has been my approach, as ethnography is “the close observation of the people and events being studied and accounting for how the actual context affects those observations” (Lee Pinel, 2016: 171). In Ashley, I have very much worked with residents, rather than observing them. Pinel, writing in a spatial planning context, advocates ‘rapid ethnographic research’, and cites the benefits as “targeted, cost-effective and timely results that are reported in a form that can be used immediately in plan design” (Lee Pinel, 2016: 172). The time savings that Pinel suggests can be made are to be achieved through using a team of investigators who cross-check results. Rapid ethnographic research does not fit well with the findings of my work in Ashley. It may be an appealing idea for a large organisation that wishes to get an important project underway without delay. A government body such as HS2 could perhaps marshal the necessary staff and resources to deploy an ethnographic research team in a local area for, perhaps, a two-week period of intensive data-gathering and community deliberations. My findings, however, suggest that a much more extended period of interaction with residents, on the part of a single person, could be more appropriate.

Action research is a well-used research method in landscape architecture. In this context it is usually used to refer to ‘participatory’ or ‘engaged’ research, which fits well with an anthropological model, in that it "demonstrates a strategy that acknowledges all people (including clients and users) as researchers, as agents of change, and as co-constructors of landscape knowledge" (Deming and Swaffield, 2011: 202). Such research "can contribute to the wider knowledge base of the discipline" (Deming and Swaffield, 2011: 203), which is what I have aimed to achieve when working in Ashley, through facilitating the input of local people in a shared understanding of their landscapes.

Using the principles of action research, I have experimented with ideas about how emergent public engagement with landscape might work. I have actively tested out and evolved the research strategy and methods in the civil parish of Ashley over a three-year period (a timeline covering the first fifteen months of these engagements is found on page 177, and a chronological list covering the whole of the research period is in Appendix B). This work would sit comfortably in a body of knowledge known as Transdisciplinary Action Research (TDAR) (Stokols, 2006), which is based on collaboration between community members and various local and national agencies. TDAR has shared goals, with researchers working alongside and must establish "commitment to sustained and mutually respectful communications" (Stokols, 2006: 66).

Thering and Chanse note that "the terms participatory design, plural design and community design are often used interchangeably" (Thering and Chanse, 2011: 6) and argue that all of these terms are encompassed by the concept of TDAR. They support Stokols' (2006) definition of transdisciplinarity:

> "as the process of developing a shared conceptual framework that addresses a common research topic in a way that synthesises and expands upon the concepts, methods and approaches of these differing disciplines"
>
> (Thering and Chanse, 2011: 10)

This shared conceptual framework, informed by emergence, is what this thesis hopes to achieve. Although methods of engagement are tested and evaluated, it is the conceptual framework itself that is most important.

Thering and Chanse support the importance of "...appropriate responses to the confluence of history, culture, politics, geographical location and bioregional characteristics making each place unique..." in framing the "...long term goals of plural design" (Thering and Chanse, 2011: 8). Key to their study is the "challenge of recognizing and preserving the unique aspects of small-scale places embedded in large-scale projects" (Thering and Chanse, 2011: 8) and this recognition of the significance of scale is important to the present study of Ashley, with the aim of devising a conceptual framework which can be applicable to other comparable locations in anticipation of large scale infrastructure projects. Schroth et al argue that “the small number of evaluations among participatory projects, however, leave it unclear as to how, and under what circumstances, TDAR contributes to participation.” (Schroth et al., 2011: 54). An evaluation of the contribution of the proposed methodology is of key importance in this thesis (see Chapters Five and Six).

In conclusion, action research is required because any resultant public engagement methodology would, in essence, be something that is ultimately applied ‘on the ground’, with members of the public, and also because the use of iterative cycles of research activity allows the research to be emergent. This is important in enabling me to respond to unknown quantities/developments in Ashley itself, to fluctuations in the UK’s political climate, to the re-stated intentions of HS2 Ltd, and to the emerging conditions of any field which may impinge on the building of a railway line across this particular part of Cheshire. Alongside an awareness of transdisciplinarity and supported by emergence theory, it enables me to explore the tension between a set of unpredictable landscape conditions and the proposal for an engineered linear landscape which seeks to eliminate unpredictability.

iv. Note on emergent research

I propose that action research is well suited to a research strategy that depends upon an emergent methodology, because research activities take place out in the field and the exact results of these activities cannot be predicted. In my case they depend on interactions with a landscape which is always changing, and which, as a whole, is unknowable. I engage with people whose views, ideas and experiences are not initially known and can never be fully understood. The entirety of the research is set in a context of fluid national and local politics, particularly with regard to transport policy and planning policy. It is therefore fundamental to my research that I respond to developments as they emerge, within a methodology that is responsive and fluid. It is not enough to repeat cycles of action, with minor adjustments to the application of methods. Instead, it is necessary for the researcher to be open to abandoning some methods altogether, if they are not proving fit for purpose, and to be flexible in the direction that the research is taking (see Figure 1).

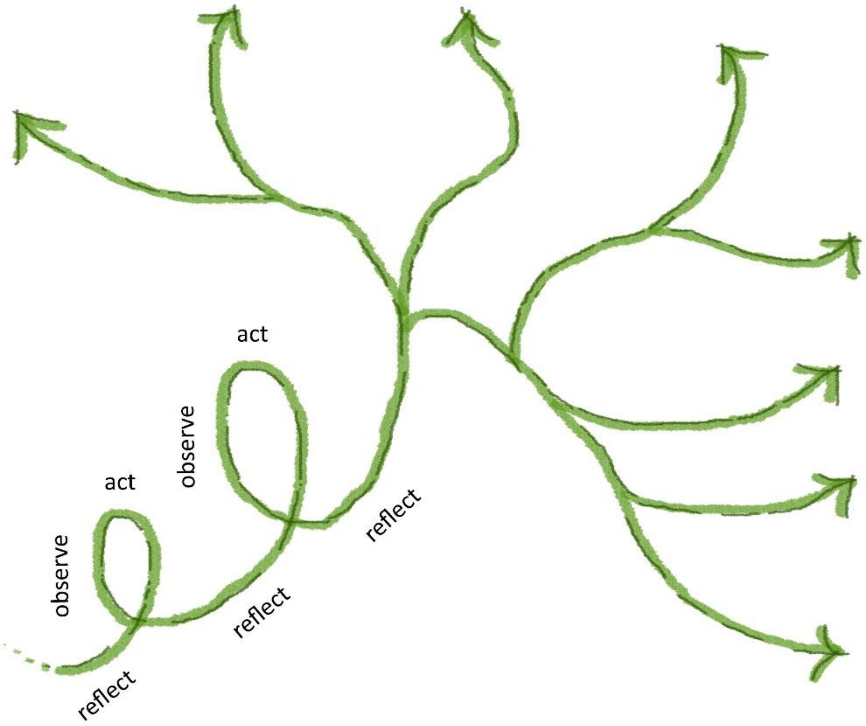


Figure 1. Action research cycles tend to be represented as tidy loops, as on the left of this diagram, but this research has allowed them to become emergent and take on unpredictable directions, as suggested on the right. This emergent approach has been applied in Ashley, as described in Chapter Five.

Emergent research methods have been discussed in a small body of literature, most notably in *The Handbook of Emergent Methods* (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2010) which recognises that, put simply, “the practice of a given method is not fixed over time but is subject to innovation”(Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2010, preface). It also makes explicit the need for innovative ‘hybrid methodologies’ in transdisciplinary research, in order to “access aspects of social reality that would otherwise be rendered invisible” (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2010, preface). An example of this could be studying the impacts of traffic flows on a community, because this topic might lie in a territory somewhere between, for instance, social science, health and wellbeing, transport planning, politics and landscape architecture. It is not necessarily apparent where the topic sits in relation to traditional disciplinary boundaries before the research has started.

The flexibility of research underpinned by an emergent methodology has meant that I have been able to respond to the lived expertise of local inhabitants and adjust my interactions with Ashley accordingly. In the beginning, I used Gibbs’ Reflective Cycle (Gibbs, 1988)(see Figure 2) to help me to appraise walks, presentations and other activities. As the research continued and I became more confident in developing a theoretical approach, I began to assess engagement activities on the basis of whether or not they fitted my evolving framework for ‘emergent engagement with landscape’, which is applied in Chapter Five.

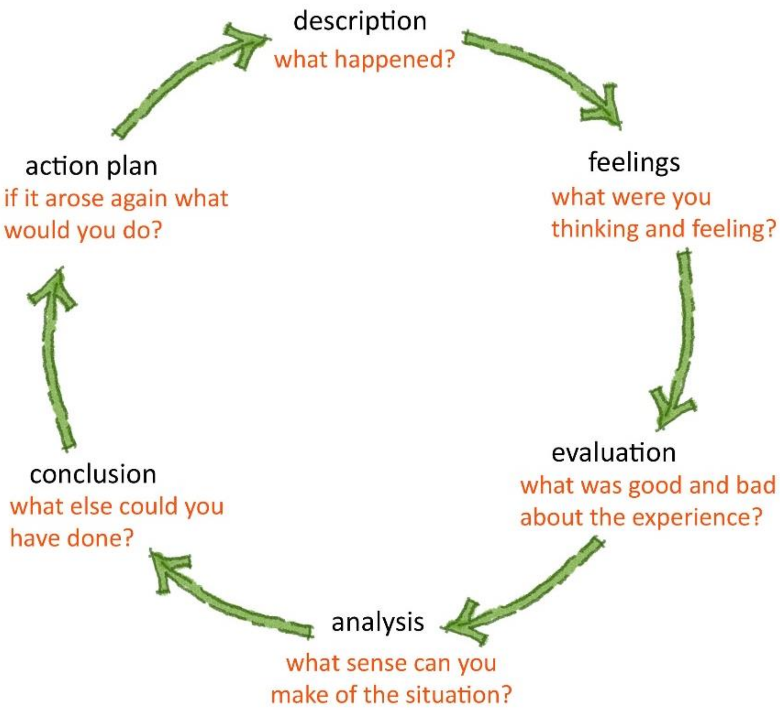

description
what happened?
feelings
what were you thinking and feeling?
evaluation
what was good and bad about the experience?
analysis
what sense can you make of the situation?
conclusion
what else could you have done?
action plan
if it arose again what would you do?

Figure 2. Gibbs’ Reflective Cycle (1988), used to formalise reflections on my initial research activities

The result of this is that when participants told me that maps were not sufficient as a visual means of connecting people to landscape, we reconsidered the methods. Where participants have been keen to be involved in the research but unable to leave their homes to walk with me, we have found other routes to enable us to engage with landscape. Where a conventional action research project might make small adjustments to methodology with each iterative cycle of research, an emergent action research project demands an acceptance that significant factors could emerge which demand a dramatic change in the research activity. One example would be the knowledge that I needed to gain about neighbourhood planning, when the opportunity arose to become involved with this (see Chapter Six). This does not necessarily involve changing the research aims, but that said, my research aims have been rewritten multiple times over the course of this project, to reflect what I found out as I went along. As anthropologist William Foote Whyte says;

> “We do not generally think problems through in a straight line. Often, we have the experience of being immersed in a mass of confusing data…until perhaps some chance occurrence casts a totally different light upon the data, and we begin to see

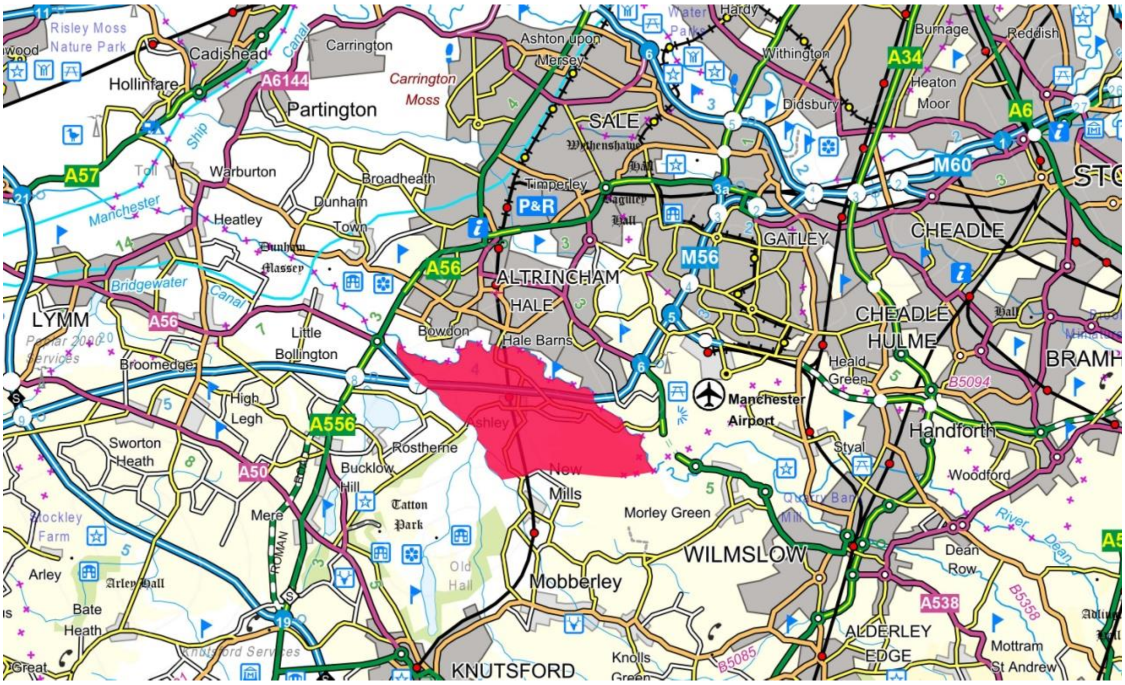
> a pattern, that we have not seen before…The ideas grow up in part out of our immersion in the data and out of the whole process of living”
>
> (Whyte, 1993)

Thus, emergence theory has provided me with not only a rationale for understanding how landscape operates, but also a conceptual framework that can inform public engagement strategies, and a way of understanding how my own research needed to evolve in response to what I discovered as I progressed.

Introduction to High Speed Two (HS2) and Ashley, Cheshire

> “Unlike much of Greater Manchester, the industrial revolution and all that followed it have had a comparatively minor effect on what is still very much a rural community.”
>
> (*Dairy House Farm, Ashley*, 1999)

The starting point for this study is local knowledge of the rural English landscape, and how it can be accessed in order to play its role in the UK’s largest ever infrastructure project, HS2. As a testing ground, I have chosen the civil parish of Ashley, which lies in the Cheshire green belt on the southern margins of Greater Manchester (see Figure 3, Ashley parish in red), and is on the route of Phase 2b of the proposed high-speed rail link from the north of England to London.


Risley Moss
Nature Park
Cadishead
Carrington
Hollinfare
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Carrington
Moss
Partington
Ashton upon
Mersey
SALE
Wythenshawe
Hall
Withington
Didsbury
A34
Burnage
Reddish
Heaton
Moor
A6
M60
STO
A57
Warburton
Broadheath
Timperley
P&R
Manchester
Ship
Heatley
Dunham
Town
Dunham
Massey
Bridgewater
Canal
A56
ALTRINCHAM
HALE
M56
GATLEY
CHEADLE
CHEADLE
HULME
BRAMH
Bowdon
Hale Barns
LYMM
A56
Little
Bollington
Broomedge
Heald
Green
B5094
High
Legh
A556
Ashley
Manchester
Airport
Styal
Handforth
Woodford
Swinton
Heath
A50
Rostherne
Bucklow
Hill
New
Mills
Morley Green
Quarry Bank
Mill
River
Dean
Dean
Row
Tatton
Park
Mere
ROMAN
Old
Hall
WILMSLOW
Mobberley
A538
B5358
Arley
Arley Hall
Bate
Heath
ALDERLEY
EDGE
Mottram
St Andrew
KNUTSFORD
Knolls
Green
B5085

Figure 3. the civil parish of Ashley (in red), lies at the southwestern point of the boundary with Greater Manchester (author’s image using base map from: EDINA Digimap Ordnance Survey Service, <http://edina.ac.uk/digimap>, created: October 2017, not to scale)

Ashley is already a site of significant transport infrastructures. The 1862 Mid-Cheshire Railway bisects the village, running north-south. The M56 divides the parish along a west-east alignment. Runway 2 of Manchester Airport is a significant presence in the landscape immediately to the southeast, and the proposed HS2 alignment isolates Ashley village between the new line and the M56. Despite this striking impact of high-speed rail proposals on the parish, Ashley has in part been chosen as a location for this research because it represents an ordinary rural place on the urban fringe, at once unique and typical. This thesis will therefore draw conclusions that are applicable to other rural places along the full length of the proposed route, particularly those adjacent to cities.

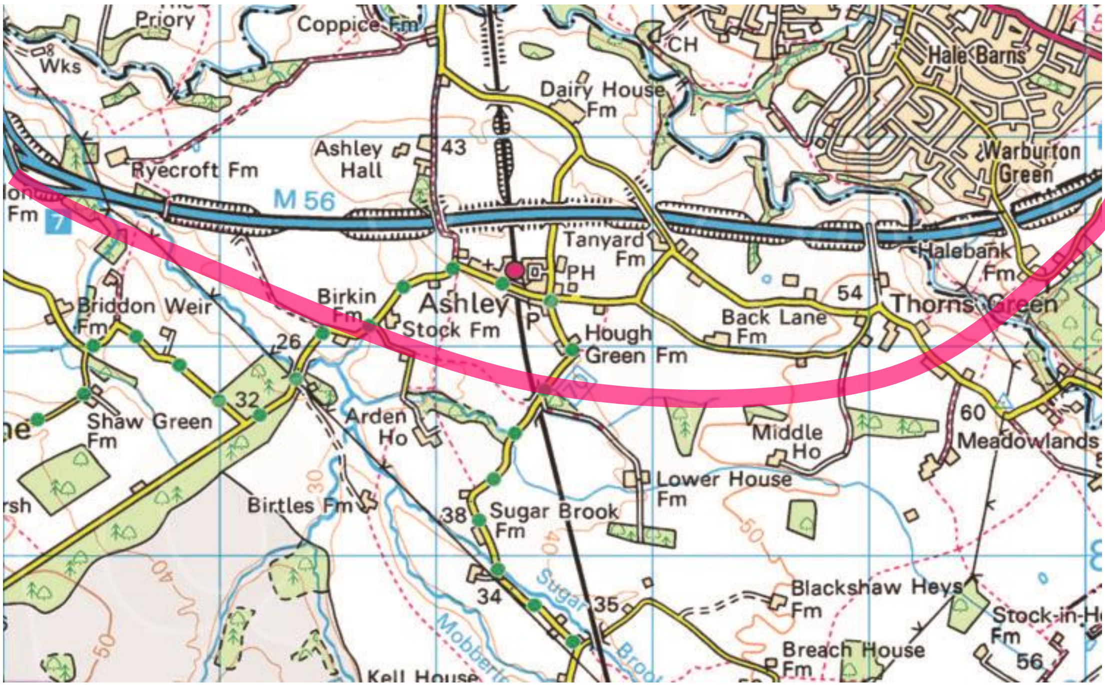

Priory
Coppice Fm
Wks
CH
Dairy House Fm
Hale Barns
Ashley Hall
43
Ryecroft Fm
Warburton Green
M 56
Fm
7
Tanyard Fm
PH
Halebank Fm
54
Birkin Fm
Ashley
Stock Fm
P
Thorns Green
Back Lane Fm
Hough Green Fm
Briddon Weir Fm
26
32
Shaw Green Fm
Arden Ho
60
Meadowlands
Middle Ho
Lower House Fm
Birtles Fm
38
Sugar Brook Fm
34
35
Blackshaw Heys Fm
Stock-in-H
Fm
Breach House Fm
56
Kell House
Sugar Brook

Figure 4. Ashley, present day, approximate proposed HS2 Phase 2b alignment in pink (author's image using base map from: EDINA Digimap Ordnance Survey Service, <http://edina.ac.uk/digimap>, created: November 2016, not to scale)

Figure 4 shows a small parish of approximately 8.5 square kilometres, with Ashley village at its centre (see also Figure 5) and the hamlet of Thorns Green lying to the east, surrounded by a predominantly agricultural landscape featuring scattered farmhouses and cottages. The river Bollin forms the border with Greater Manchester, to the north. There are approximately 325 residents, of whom 22% are under 16 and 16% are over 65 years of age (Cheshire Community Action, 2013). Historically, Ashley was dominated by dairy farming, but now only one herd remains and just 7% of working age adults are employed in agriculture (Cheshire Community Action, 2013). Only 54% of housing in the parish is owner-occupied, as compared to a national average of 64%. This reflects the fact that the Tatton Estate owns a large proportion of the residential properties here, as well as farm buildings and almost all of the land.

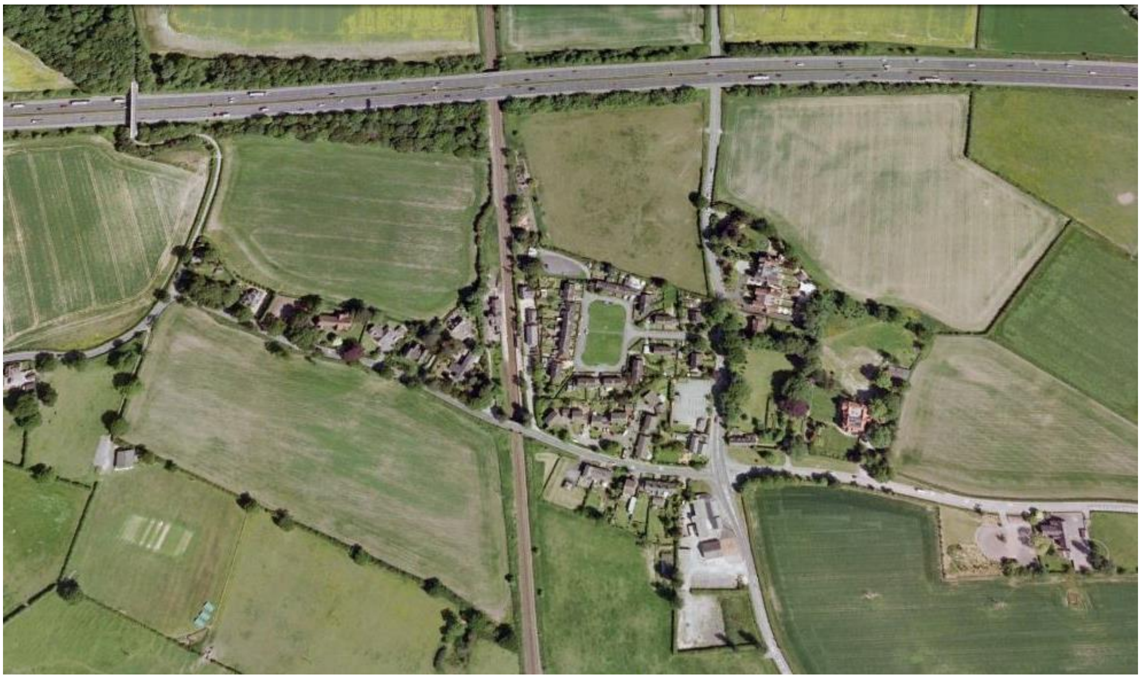


Figure 5. Ashley village and surrounding fields; this image strongly suggests a rural location (image Google Earth 2D V 9.1.45.7. 53° 21’ 17’N, 2° 20’ 16’W, 1.26 km. http://www.earth.google.com, 26.10.2017)

The parish contains a small number of listed buildings, including what remains of the original Ashley Hall, dating from 1492. It has a railway station, the Greyhound pub, St Elizabeth’s church (1880) and a cricket club (1888). There is no longer a village shop, post office, primary school or filling station. These facilities would once have contributed to a stronger sense of a public village life, but their continued operation has not been sustainable. Aside from the motorway, the road network is comprised entirely of unclassified roads. There are a number of public footpaths and the area is popular with leisure cyclists. There is one public green space in Ashley (see Figure 6), at the centre of the 1960s Hough Green social housing development. As is typical for developments of the period, this village green consists of a grassed area with a central path, and has no trees, benches, designated play space for children or social space for adults. Cars are parked at the margins.

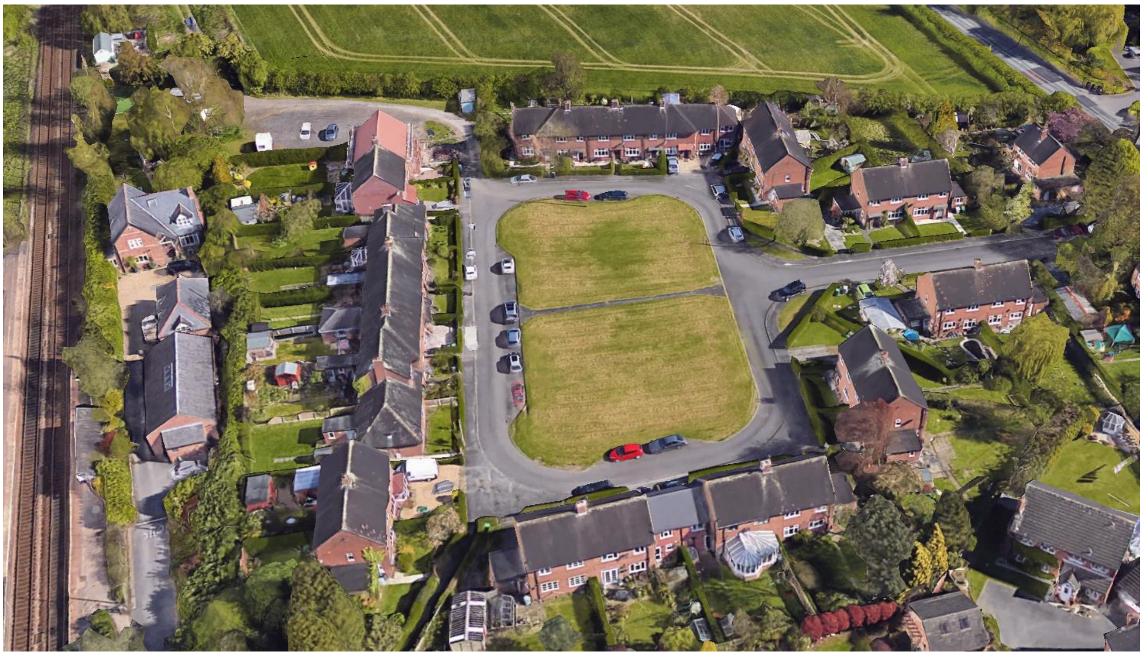


Figure 6. Hough Green, Ashley's public green space, which is known as 'the village green', although it is a relatively recent addition (image Google Earth 3D V 9.1.45.7. 53° 21' 15'N, 2° 20' 26'W, 142 m. http://www.earth.google.com, 2.11.2017)

As Figure 5 illustrates, the M56 motorway, just north of the village, is a significant presence in Ashley, through noise and air pollution from vehicles, visual impact of the structure and associated gantries, and traffic flow to and from junctions six and seven. In winter, motorway traffic is clearly visible and audible from the churchyard, for example, and other parts of the village. The Victorian railway line has less impact, both visually and in terms of noise.

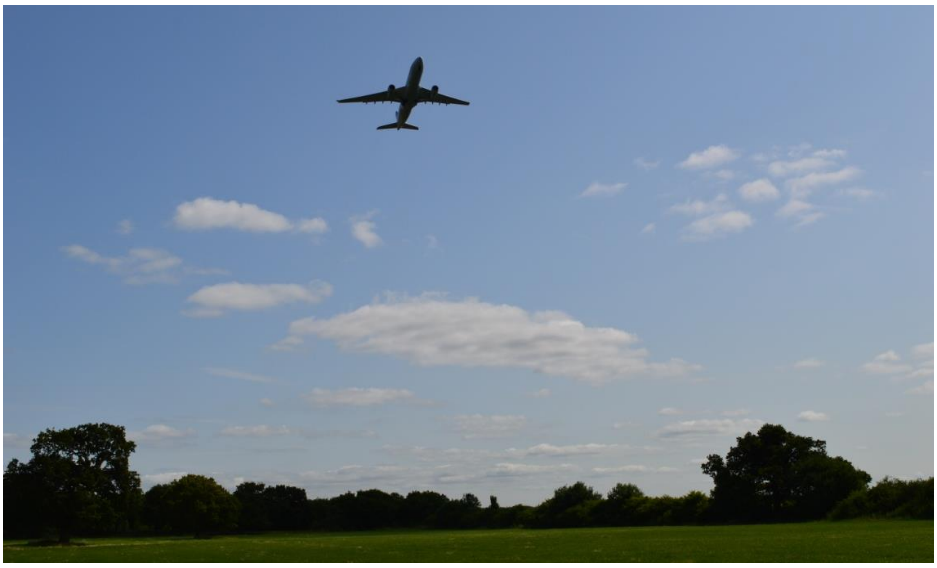


Figure 7. Aeroplane taking off over Ashley, near Blackshaw Heyes farm. A common sight. Author's photo, August 2016

Noise pollution and visual impact from the airport runway (see Figure 7) are significant parts of everyday life in Ashley, especially on the eastern side. As such, the parish is subject to the cumulative impact of transport infrastructures, which reduces tranquillity and represents an urbanising influence. Paradoxically, people here are at the centre of a national and global transport network, and are soon to become even more so, and yet they are also somewhat disconnected. There are no bus services or off-road cycle routes, and only one train per hour from the station. Average distances by road to a Post Office, GP and secondary school are all significantly higher than national averages (Cheshire Community Action, 2013) as is common in rural areas.

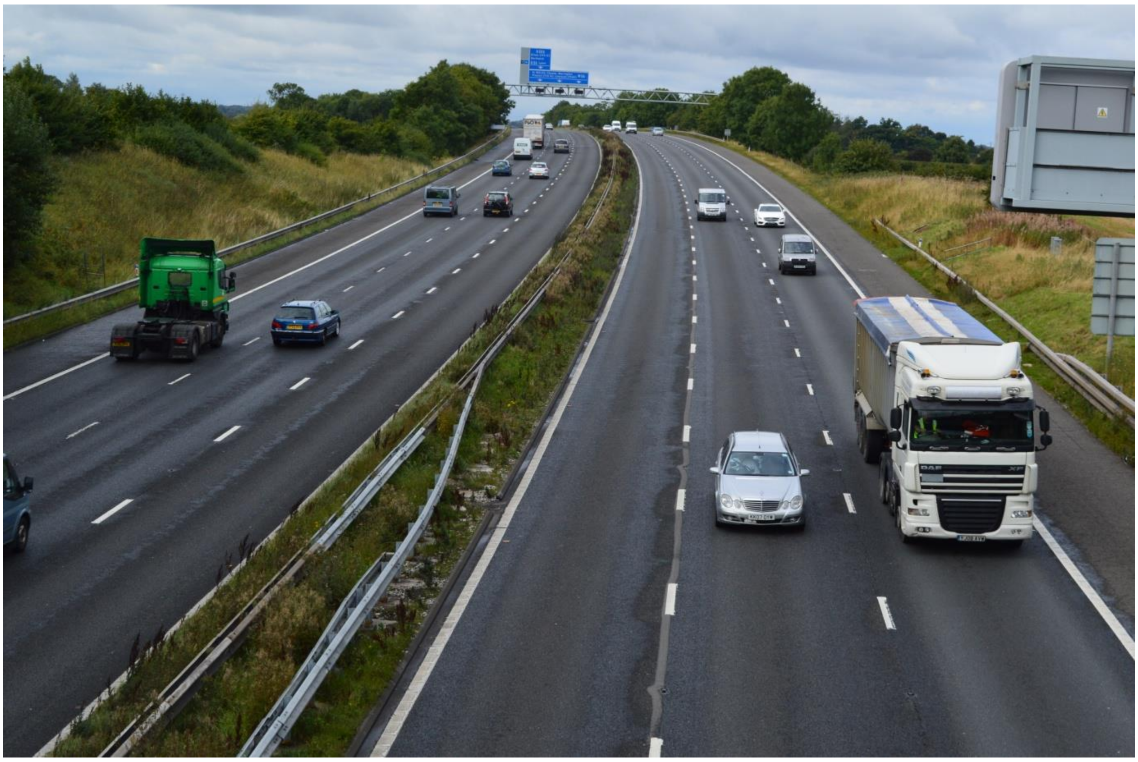


Figure 8. M56, Ashley, view from Ashley Hall Lane footbridge, authors photo, mid-morning, September 2015

The persisting rural character of the parish is, however, of central importance to understanding Ashley. Despite the potential for it to appear on maps as if it were an adjunct to Manchester, dominated by infrastructure (see Figure 8), it is perceived by inhabitants to be part of the Cheshire countryside (see Figure 9). This is valued by residents and they would seek to retain this identity (see Chapter Five). The images here presented illustrate that the visual character of the parish is a complex mesh of a wide variety of urban, suburban and rural typologies. Time spent in the place, however, does confirm that the rural typology is dominant.

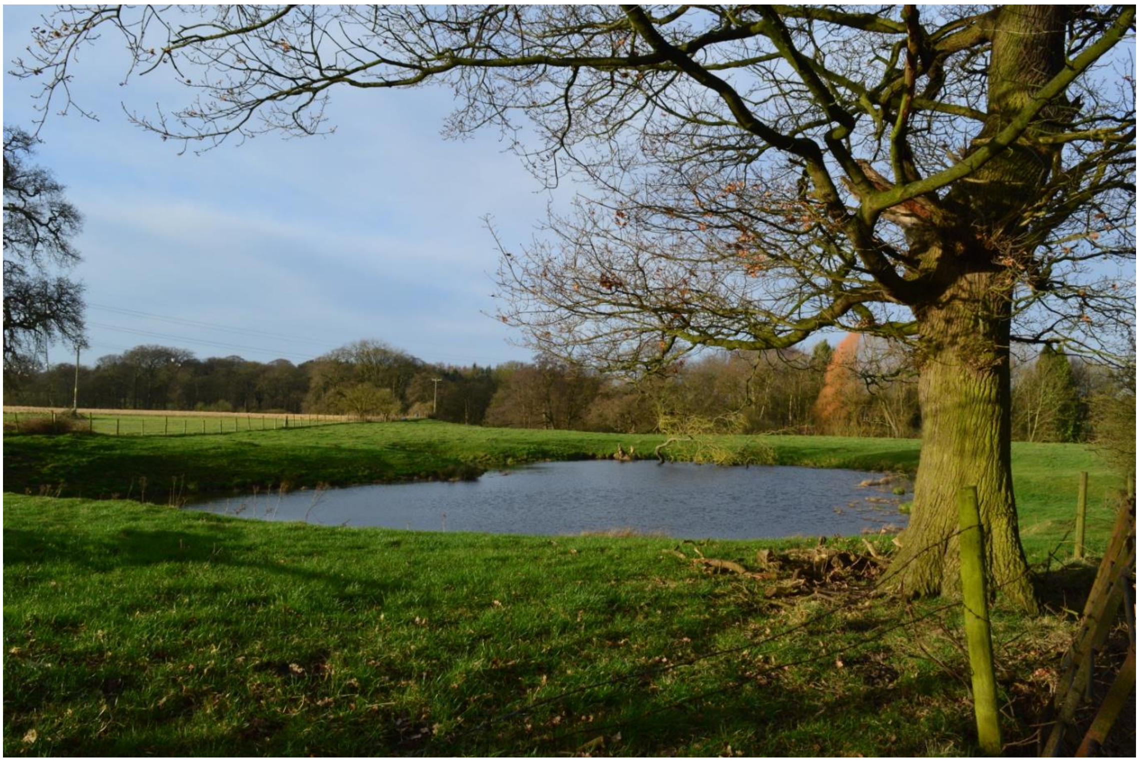


Figure 9. Field pond, viewed from Lamb Lane, Ashley. Evidence of a rural aesthetic, author's photo, November 2016. This pond lies on the HS2 route.

Summary of introduction

Ashley is an emergent rural landscape with a significant accumulation of transport infrastructure, which has an urbanising influence on the parish. It is sufficiently typical of places on the urban fringe to produce results applicable to other locations along the proposed HS2 route. Due to the constantly evolving nature of the emergent landscape, the complex impacts of HS2 on the place are unpredictable, and this presents a significant problem for any public engagement process which aims to inform the landscape designer as they look to the future. This situation benefits from an approach that is transdisciplinary, using action research with anthropological methods in order to better understand the place and how inhabitants might engage with it. The research itself is also emergent, the better to respond to changes in landscape and political conditions over the research period. This approach frankly reflects the growth and learning of the researcher as the process has unfolded.

In her 2013 review of the literature of landscape participation, Maggie Roe specifies three important considerations in the field of research about collaborative action and its benefits for landscape. They are;

> “[1] Landscape change scale (power over large landscape areas is often in the hands of more than one person) …[2] Expertise (an individual may not have the kind of understanding of landscape issues that a group can provide) …[3] Timeframes (landscape changes over many years)”
>
> (Roe, 2012: 343)

These three factors are particularly relevant to this study, in which the scale of change caused by HS2 is potentially vast, the need for expertise is demanding, and the time period over which the project has impact is so enduring. I will argue that emergence theory can provide a rationale which answers all three points.

Chapter One

Understanding the Emergent Landscape

"[landscape] is everything we see around us. It has three dimensions at any single instant in time, and time does not stand still."

(Eckbo, 2015: 20)(first published in *Landscape Architecture Magazine*, May 1983)

1.1 Abstract

This chapter introduces different ideas about landscape and looks at how conceptualisation of the landscape has developed over time. It defines the term 'landscape' as used in this thesis. It sets out the relevance of the concept of emergence to our idea of what landscape is. It explains the importance of emergence and unpredictability in underpinning the methodology for this research. It goes on to use the example of Ashley, Cheshire, to demonstrate the application of emergence to a specific place and considers what an emergent landscape design project might be like. It explains the phenomenon of phase transition and applies this idea to possible cascading development in Ashley. It introduces a discussion of the role of local landscape knowledge in a large-scale infrastructure project, taking in to account possible definitions of 'rural'.

1.2 What is landscape?

There are diverse interpretations of the word 'landscape', as is apparent, for example, in common misunderstandings over what it is that a landscape architect does. In the wake of the economic recession of 2008-9, the UK's Landscape Institute (LI) prioritised the demystification of the profession. It has since commissioned over 250 'landscape ambassadors' to publicly clarify what the profession does. The LI's stated aim to "conserve and enhance the natural and built environment for the public benefit" (Landscape Institute, 2018) suggests that the Institute sees landscape both as a resource for the greater good of the human population, and as an interplay between the 'natural' and the constructed. LI policy is, theoretically, underpinned by the European Landscape Convention (ELC), Article One of which defines a landscape as "an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors." (Council of Europe, 2000). This, however, is a somewhat differing notion of landscape. Although humans again have primacy, the ELC definition explicitly polarises the natural and the human. 'Character', presumably constituted through aesthetic judgements, takes precedence. These examples from two different organisations illustrate an underlying lack of agreement, even within the profession itself, about what landscape is. The definition is key, however, because "to define what landscape is, is also to define the means by which to transform it in practice"(Exo Adams, 2017: 8).

Discussions of the etymology of the word 'landscape' regularly appear in the literature. In the introduction to their recent collection of essays, *Is Landscape?*, Doherty and Waldheim emphasise that "before landscape was a liberal profession, academic discipline, or design medium, it was first a genre of painting" (Doherty and Waldheim, 2015: 1). This emphasis on the visual is endorsed in Vittoria di Palma's chapter of the same book. Here, despite finding that the suffix "'-scape' is not a variant of '-scope'…[it] has no etymological connotations of vision" (di Palma, 2015: 47) the writer concludes that "once we make the seemingly innocent choice to use the term 'landscape'…we are inevitably and inextricably talking about paintings." (di Palma, 2015: 48). These preferred meanings accord with the *Oxford English Dictionary* in settling on the explanation that 'landscape' derives from landskip, which entered English from Dutch in the 16th century, and refers to landscape painting (Oxford English Dictionary, 2018). Others prefer to interpret the word as deriving from the Dutch *lantscap*, *lant* meaning 'land' and *scap* meaning 'shape', suggesting that it originally referred to the materiality of the ground itself, as formed by human actions. One such is Kenneth Olwig, whose extensive, and surely definitive, work on the etymology (Olwig, 1996) informs the views of many, including Alison B. Hirsch (2016: 148), and Tim Ingold, the latter summarising persuasively:

> "it referred originally to an area of land bounded in to the everyday practices and customary usages of an agrarian community. However, its subsequent

> incorporation into the language of painterly depiction…has led generations of scholars to mistake the connotations of the suffix –scape for a particular scopic regime of detailed and disinterested observation…scape, quite to the contrary, comes from the Old English sceppan or skyppan meaning 'to shape'"
>
> (Ingold, 2011: 126)

Ingold values embodied presence in the landscape (see Chapter Two) very highly, and so diminishes the visual interpretation, in accordance with Olwig, who argues that landscape;

> "need not be understood as being either territory or scenery; it can also be conceived as a nexus of community, justice, nature, and environmental equity, a contested territory"
>
> (Olwig, 1996: 631)

This thesis is not concerned with understanding landscape in purely visual terms, and so concurs with Olwig that it is much more than a 'view', as it is also more than just a material geography. One commonly held idea of 'landscape' is as topography, a surface plane, which might be manipulated according to the intentions of a designer whose purpose it is simply to specify a different form for that plane. When coupled with the word 'English' the collocation might conjure images of rolling hills, hedgerows and river valleys, fields and mountains; it is perhaps seen as being synonymous with picturesque 'scenery'. Applied in relation to their profession, the superficiality of these perceptions is a source of frustration to landscape architects, who are sometimes assumed to undertake 'landscaping': the word evokes mini-diggers, block-paved driveways and ordered rows of municipal shrubs. This work in Ashley has demonstrated to me that, although rural people are sometimes assumed to prioritise the visual or 'picturesque' qualities of their place, this is not necessarily how they think about their landscape. Ashley residents, it seems to me, prioritise the safety and functionality of their road network above all other landscape issues, for example. Practical problems with surface water, footpath maintenance, litter and noise pollution would also number amongst their chief concerns (see Chapter Five).

The idea of what landscape is has evolved in recent years. Ten years ago, Frederick Steiner, landscape architect and current Dean of the University of Pennsylvania School of Design, offered this definition;

> "a combination of elements – fields, buildings, hills, forests, deserts, water bodies and settlements. The landscape encompasses the uses of land – housing,

> transportation, agriculture, recreation, and natural areas – and is a composite of these uses. A landscape is more than a picturesque view; it is the sum of the parts that can be seen, the layers and intersections of time and culture that comprise a place – a natural and cultural palimpsest."
>
> (Steiner, 2008: 4)

This description of the structural qualities of landscape acknowledges the interplay of layers of physical objects, human systems, natural processes and the passing of time, and is broadly true to the landscape architects' view of landscape that currently prevails. In his wide-ranging book about different ideologies and cultural evaluations of the English countryside, *Landscape and Englishness*, David Matless, recalling Olwig, identifies such multiple layers of meaning in landscape as being a basis for its significant cultural influence; "the power of landscape resides in it being simultaneously a site of economic, social, political and aesthetic value, with each aspect being of equal importance." (Matless, 1998: 12). The design and implementation of large-scale infrastructure unavoidably traverses all of these structural layers and territories of meaning. Herein lies the challenge for HS2 Ltd, for how can we expect a public engagement procedure to reconcile the demands and expectations of such different value systems, as manifest in the endlessly branching and varied things that are landscape, and the idea of landscape? Proposed high-speed rail infrastructure puts the four values that Matless identifies in competition with each other; the economic and the political landscapes versus the social and aesthetic landscapes. He does not explicitly attribute the power of landscape to any ecological value, but this is also undeniably an important dimension. He perhaps alludes to ecology when he makes explicit a significant problem with both the aesthetic and social definitions of landscape; "The question of what landscape 'is' or 'means' can always be subsumed in the question of how it works."(Matless, 1998: 12). This functional view has gained much ground in more recent years. It is highly relevant in public engagement with landscape, as people want to know how proposed developments will function in their effects on traffic, wildlife, flooding and many other local processes; not simply what they will look like.

The point of view of a landscape historian can bring us closer to an understanding of how landscape works. W.G Hoskins likens the landscape to a symphony with intricately woven themes, harmonies and "manifold subtle variations" (Hoskins, 1955: 4). He emphasises the need to conceive of landscape as "a series of compositions of varying magnitude, in order that we may understand the logic that lies behind the beautiful whole" (Hoskins, 1955: 4). This metaphor combines the idea of comprehending how a thing works with an appreciation of the beauty and perhaps ineffability of that thing; fascinating to behold in its intricacy, its beauty lying in the relationship between the parts and the whole.

In the mid-1990s two related schools of thought began to gain ground as theoretical approaches in landscape architecture; landscape urbanism and emergence theory. Both of these build on the ideas that Steiner expresses, but present challenges to the relatively simple idea of landscape as ‘a composite’ by repositioning an understanding of how landscape works as the priority of the landscape architect.

1.3 Landscape urbanism

Landscape urbanism is commonly cited as having its public advent in 1997, at the *Landscape Urbanism* symposium and exhibition in Chicago, which was conceived and organised by Charles Waldheim. In its nascent state, landscape urbanism characterised landscape as a text:

> “...that is open to interpretation and transformation. It is also a highly situated phenomenon in terms of space, time, and tradition and exists as both the ground and geography of our heritage and change … [it] is also a cultural schema, a conceptual filter through which our relationships to wilderness and nature can be understood”
>
> (Corner, 1991: 129)

This definition significantly develops our understanding of what landscape is. It casts landscape as a fluid entity which not only changes but might ‘transform’, implying radical revolution rather than gradual evolution. It asserts that a landscape can be ‘read’ as a text can, such that it might mean different things to different people, depending on the values that they bring to their reading. Acknowledging that it is ‘highly situated’ may be interpreted as a claim for the value of landscapes in their being local. Thus, they are not only open to interpretation but also highly specific. Whilst chiming with Steiner’s recognition of the cultural nature of landscape and his textual metaphor of landscape as palimpsest, Corner’s emphasis at this time was on the hermeneutics rather than the operations of landscape. It emphasised the role of the designer in making meaning in a sphere in which we humans are essentially alien, with a warning that “we should remember that nature herself always enters into the contract to eventually supersede the encodings of humankind” (Corner, 1991: 131). This image of ‘Nature’ as other to and competitor of humanity is in contrast to other perspectives, such as emergence, in which any human, and therefore the designer, is inseparably a part of the landscape; “the situation is now more than an externality. You are implicated in it. It is yours. Every situation belongs to, is part of, a human subject’s reality” (Barnett, 2013: 54). This latter view not only responds to the debate about the human relationship with nature but also implicitly removes any concept of a hierarchy in which the designer sits at the top and in control of a given situation, until the point at which nature inevitably wins it back.

In 1991 Corner, a chief proponent of landscape urbanism, suggested a definition of the profession’s purpose; “Landscape architecture might therefore be thought of as the practice of e-scaping and rescaping our relationship to nature and the "other" through the construction of built worlds” (Corner, 1991: 129). Here, the perceived dichotomy of human and nature is explicit, but by 2006, in the influential *Landscape Urbanism Reader*, Corner contributes a chapter entitled *Terra Fluxus*. In this essay, he emphasises the false dualism of nature and the urban and, as an example, describes the human desire to colonise the engineered structures of the Los Angeles River with plant and animal species as underscoring “the persistent opposition in people’s minds” (Corner, 2006: 25).

Landscape urbanism, therefore, is a developing and variable school of thought, without clear limits, and difficult to pin down. More recently, Charles Waldheim has acknowledged the role of ‘flows’ in landscape;

> “I think what we have now is emerging through the umbrella of ecological urbanism … an understanding of energy and ecological flows. A broad theoretical framework for thinking about the city as an ecological construct and concept”
>
> (interview, Studer, 2011)

This view is an acknowledgement of the importance of seeing landscape as being comprised of interrelated systems, and arguably indicates some convergence between landscape urbanism and emergence theory. These two approaches have developed in rather different ways; landscape urbanism through an understanding of landscape as text, emergence theory from philosophy via biology, ecology and computer science. Landscape urbanism’s focus on city landscapes is not highly applicable to this research in Ashley, which inhabitants have defined as being countryside, whereas the concept of emergence, I will argue, supports investigations in to any type of landscape, not just the rural.

1.4 Emergence theory and the unpredictable landscape

In his 1995 dissertation *Landscape Emergence*, landscape architect Blake Belanger writes:

> "Conventional landscape theory for the last two centuries has considered landscape as a peripheral scenic object, a spatial cultural construct or an ecological asset. These dualistic paradigms address landscape as image, space, and commodity, but fail to discuss its fundamental complexity."
>
> (Belanger, 1995: 2)

Emergence theory, Belanger argues, provides us with the basis for and description of this complexity. Inevitably, different writers define emergence in slightly different ways. Steven Johnson, in his popular science book *Emergence*, describes a number of different emergent systems in animals, humans and computing. He uses the example of studies of morphogenesis in slime mould (Dictyostelium discoideum) as a helpful introduction to emergence theory. He calls morphogenesis "the capacity of all life-forms to develop ever-more baroque bodies out of impossibly simple beginnings." (S. Johnson, 2002: 14). He describes the apparent simplicity of slime moulds, which, during the winter, are independent single-celled amoeba-like organisms. However, under the conditions of a temperate summer the individuals "coalesce in to a single, larger organism which begins its leisurely crawl across the garden floor, consuming rotting wood and leaves as it moves about" (S. Johnson, 2002: 13). For thirty years this phenomenon was not understood, and scientists believed the behaviour could only be instigated and controlled by 'pacemaker' cells, which took the role of 'managing' the organism, but such cells could not be found. Only in recent years has there been an agreement that "slime mould aggregation is now recognized as a classic study in bottom-up behaviour."(S. Johnson, 2002: 16). In other words, it is self-organizing, a complex adaptive system of continual interactions, which illustrates the nature of emergence: "the movement from low-level rules to higher-level sophistication is what we call emergence." (S. Johnson, 2002: 18).

Many thinkers from diverse fields contribute to our understanding of emergence theory. Systems theorist Jeffrey Goldstein places emergence in the context of broader complexity theory and reminds us that "The technical meaning of the term "emergence" as used by complexity theorists is not a new one. It was coined over 100 years ago by the English philosopher G.H. Lewes." (Goldstein, 1999: 53). Lewes himself wrote "The emergent is unlike its components insofar as these are incommensurable, and it cannot be reduced to their sum or their difference" (Lewes, 1879: 412). To take the example of the slime mould, its aggregated manifestation is far more than the sum of its individual cells and therefore its form and behaviour could not be predicted from knowledge of the initial circumstances, the constituent cells and the basic known laws, for example of physics and chemistry, that apply to them. In developing the concept, Goldstein defines emergence as:

> "the arising of novel and coherent structures, patterns, and properties during the process of self-organization in complex systems. Emergent phenomena are conceptualized as occurring on the macro level, in contrast to the micro-level components and processes out of which they arise."
>
> (Goldstein, 1999: 40)

It is not difficult to see how this idea applies to landscape. Consider, for example, the way in which the basic and known behaviours of water molecules in interaction with particles of silt and sand can continuously produce and re-produce the landscape of a river delta (as in Figure 10) in all its familiar and yet unpredictable patterns. The emergent riverscape is a system that is *making itself*, in a complex fashion, from the micro-level up to the macro. Any landscape could be said to emerge in a similar way, whether the processes which form them are because of hydrology, glaciations, wind erosion, vegetation growth, animal behaviours, or human colonisation. In fact, of course, most of these processes and many more will all act together to form almost all landscapes. Other examples are the micro actions of weathering, bacteria, fungi and insects which combine to produce soils; this activity is usually unseen by people and yet the results underpin all of our land-based ecosystems. More visible examples are the vast u-shaped valleys carved out by the infinitesimal progress of glaciation.

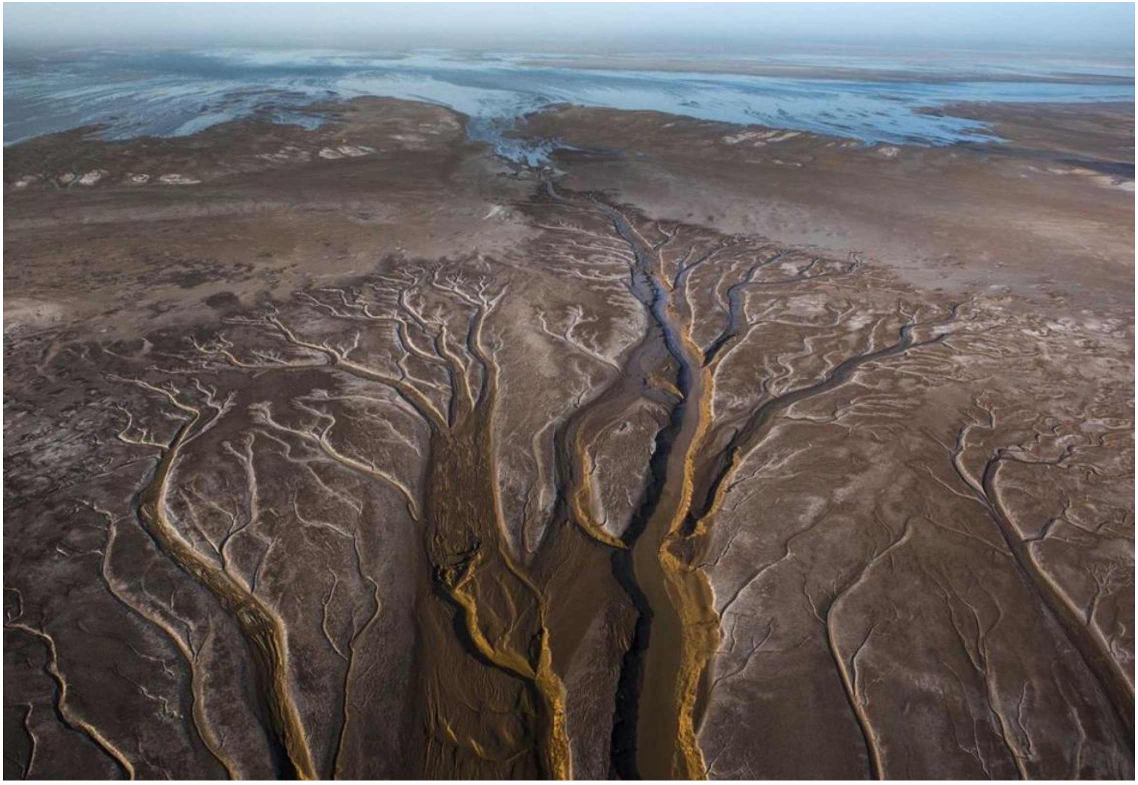


Figure 10. The Colorado River delta, showing the visible and dynamic patterns of deposition of sediment that make this landscape distinctive (photograph, McBride, 2014)

For Goldstein, then, emergent phenomena are ‘coherent’. He holds this view in common with British landscape architect and author Simon Bell. In his influential book *Landscape, Pattern, Perception and Process*, Bell says that “the changing world is neither chaotic nor unpredictable” (Bell, 1999: 5). He wishes to see “the fundamental natural order in the world” (Bell, 1999: 8) and claims that “irregular effects on process and pattern can be mistaken for randomness, but belie a deep order”(Bell, 1999: 35). His views could perhaps be described as best fitting the ‘weak emergence’ model, as he prefers to perceive the landscape as essentially predictable, despite many common examples which contradict this view; forest fires, mud slides, avalanches and flood events. Peggy Holman, researcher in applications of emergence including business management and journalism, lists traffic flows, ant hills and the form of a human baby as examples of weak emergence, as they represent “new properties arising in a system” which are “basically predictable in form” (Holman et al., 2010). It is debatable, however, whether these forms are really so very predictable; after all, each baby is a unique individual. Similarly, two cloned plants will have the same genetic code (genotype) but could be very different in appearance (phenotype) because external factors come in to play in determining that physical manifestation.

Landscape architecture has arguably begun to draw on emergence theory through its links with the field of ecology, which "began in earnest in the last three decades to include a complex systems perspective" (Lister, 2015: 118). Ecologist William Holland Drury Jr. wrote in 1998 of the problems associated with "clinging to romantic notions of nature's grand design" (Drury, 1998: 1-2) and the misguided rhetoric of "nature's balance" (Drury, 1998: 5). In contrast to Bell, he emphasises that the "first principle is that chance and change are the rule" (Drury, 1998: 6). Drury traces back some of the influences over our tendency to look for 'balance' and equilibrium in ecosystems to Linnaeus' famous essay of 1749, *The Economy of Nature*. Linnaeus' system of classifying living things and allocating to them a standard globally applicable scientific name using 'genus' and 'species' is commonly used today, and pertinent in this case as landscape architects will have gained their understanding of plant species from ecologists and horticulturalists who depend on the Linnaean taxonomy of Kingdom, Phylum, Class, Order, Family, Genus and Species. For Drury, "Linnaeus's system carries a profound subliminal message: that each species was created as it is." (Drury, 1998: 16). Drury's lifetime of experience and observation, however, suggest that living entities cannot be so easily fixed:

> "I remember my botany professor searching over a hillside covered with individual plants of a particular species until he found a "perfect" representative of the variety he had in mind. His comment when he finally found the right specimen was that this individual was 'typical'."
>
> (Drury, 1998: 17)

This anecdote reminds us that we cannot truly state the precise characteristics of any species and illustrates exactly the problem/opportunity of emergence. Constantly evolving and diverging, interacting with other individuals and with their environment, the notion of 'species' can only be an approximate guide for humans to categorise their perceptions of living things, never an accurate ontological description. This observation directly addresses a key proposition of emergence theory, summarised here by Rod Barnett:

> "the real processes, objects and relations that comprise the world and which landscape architecture undertakes to design, organize and manage, are continually unfolding, producing further relations and making new connections."
>
> (Barnett, 2013: 4-5)

Thus, as a species of wildflower evolves so do its pollinators, these changes in turn influence the wider ecological systems of insect predation, soil and vegetation patterns.

All of these systems are open to each other and ultimately to every other system in the landscape, be it climate, hydrology or human society.

The publication in 2013 of Rod Barnett's *Emergence in Landscape Architecture* marks a significant move by the academic establishment towards this qualitatively different understanding of landscape, which has real and potentially revolutionary implications for practice. He repeatedly reminds readers that landscape is comprised of a number of interacting open systems:

> "Open systems are complex…their components are connected by networks of feedback loops operating at different levels, different scales and different rhythms. Landscapes work like this."

(Barnett, 2013: 49-50)

For Barnett, the openness of systems means that any human, and therefore the designer, is inseparably a part of the landscape. Another consequence of open systems is that it is never possible, for example, to meaningfully separate the landscape systems of one country, state or parish from those of its neighbours. The 'parish' has been used in this research only as a conveniently sized landscape represented by one elected body, the Parish Council. Likewise, it would be unrealistic to arbitrarily divide the landscape of one HS2 Community Forum Area from the next (see Chapter Four). Barnett explains the necessary outcome of open systems on our thinking; "A landscape has no outside, for its connectivity to other multiplicities is always complete." (Barnett, 2013: 52). This is an important acknowledgement that site boundaries, such as those delineated by the HS2 Phase 1 Environmental Statement, absolutely cannot be considered to be the true 'edge' of a site; "A landscape is only and always an ecotone, an edge, a continuous immanent spatiality." (Barnett, 2013: 52). Arguably, this leads us to recognise that the 'landscape impacts' of any development cannot be neatly bounded by a line on a map (a map in any case being a subjective representation) and therefore that a top-down isolation of precise locations and people directly affected by proposals is theoretically not possible. This is a significant point, as one's right to petition a parliamentary select committee with objections to proposals is based on the committees' judgement as to whether or not you are a 'directly affected' person and therefore have *locus standi* (the right to appear). Eight Members of Parliament wishing to petition the HS2 committees on behalf of their constituents, for example, were, in July 2016, judged not to have *locus standi* and therefore could not petition the select committees (The Coleshill Post, July 2016).

The concept of an emergent landscape which is comprised of interacting physical and non-physical systems is pertinent to a philosophical problem identified by Henri Lefebvre in his influential work *The Production of Space*, first published in 1974. This work identifies space as both a product and a means of production, and questions the notion of space as something that is always visible and readable. It focuses on urban space, but the points made are applicable to any landscape; rural places, too, have populations, economies, and, undeniably, their own complex political terrain. He argues for "the necessity of reversing the dominant trend towards fragmentation, separation and disintegration" (Lefebvre, 1991: 9) of different types of space, and the creation of "an indefinite multitude of spaces…geographical, economic, demographic, sociological, ecological, political, commercial, national, continental, global." (Lefebvre, 1991: 8). Taking the emergent view means that all of these apparently conceptually separate spaces can be conceived of as interrelated open systems within one overarching 'space' which might simply be called landscape. Lefebvre's description of Venice and the connection of the city to its landscape evokes the idea of open systems:

> "The space of settlement on the lagoon, encompassing swamps, shallows and outlets to the open sea, cannot be separated from a vaster space, that of a system of commercial exchange"
>
> (Lefebvre, 1991: 76)

Here, he positions Venice as a specific physical space which is in relationship with a cultural space; the global system of trade. It is useless to conceptually separate Venice from the rest of the physical world to which it is linked by waterways. It is equally without merit to divide the material inhabited space of that city, from the idea of Venice as central node in a human system – the commercial network. This network, although physically manifest in shipping routes for trade around the world, is not in itself material, and yet is in relationship with the material Venice. Any landscape works in such a way: a new railway line has impacts beyond its physical presence, as it traverses the countryside between our major cities it will seed social, psychological and economic changes, and as the anticipation of its presence gradually becomes embedded in the national psyche so it will have material impacts on landscape. Emergence theory offers an understanding of how the material relates to the non-material, as manifested in landscape.

Lefebvre initially says of Venice that "the moment of creation is past; indeed, the city's disappearance is already imminent" (Lefebvre, 1991:74). An emergent view would not describe the creation of a city as originating in a single point in time and nor would it draw a line between the period of creation and the period of disappearance. The concept of emergence places change at the heart of what landscape is and clearly describes it as continuously evolving:

> "Emergence is becoming. It is process, change, evolution. Emergence theory attempts to describe how things and the interactive systems that comprise all things can change and develop."
>
> (Barnett, 2013: 11)

For Barnett, the relevance of emergence theory to designers of landscapes is clear; in a statement echoing Matless' view, he says it helps us "to avoid thinking of [landscapes] in terms of images of places and adds another dimension to our understanding of how they work, and how they work on us." (Barnett, 2013: 3). It may be that preoccupation with the visual impedes a participatory design process by reducing a complex place to a brief series of photomontage images that are simply snapshots from an imagined future (see section 4.2). Such public engagement is one-way, top-down, and misses out the crucial element of how the landscape works on the designers of landscapes.

In accordance with Barnett, this thesis argues that landscape is an emergent, non-linear and open system, comprising innumerable interrelated material and non-material systems. I propose that any public engagement strategy that fails to take the nature of the landscape in to account will be ultimately unsuccessful in terms of attending to the best possible future for the landscape itself, and as a result for its inhabitants. Overlooking the emergent properties of the landscape is likely to lead to outcomes which are demonstrably negative and which fail to realise potential opportunities for landscape mitigation in places which will inevitably suffer great losses from the very significant land-take of infrastructure projects. Furthermore, I will argue that the engagement strategy itself must be one of emergent citizen participation in landscape design. In order to illustrate this position, emergence theory is here applied to a brief description of the parish of Ashley. The parish is examined in further detail in Chapter Three.

1.5 Ashley; an emergent landscape

Central to conceiving of places that are in anticipation of large-scale infrastructure projects is a recognition that, like all landscapes, they are undergoing constant processes of change.

They will continue to emerge from the time of first announcement of the intention to build, through the years of design development, compulsory purchase and engagement processes, all the way through the construction period and beyond. In Ashley, there are obvious changes, visibly marked on the landscape and in subsequent years recorded by cartographers; the building of roads, the demolition of houses and enclosures of agricultural land, for example. Less visible but still identifiable are changes in occupation patterns by plant species, demographic changes and climatic shifts. Impossible to comprehensively observe and quantify, further changes continually occur; rhizomatic fungal growth in the topsoil at Stock Farm, fluvial deposition from the River Bollin, changes in the emotional states of drinkers at the bar of The Greyhound. Thus, the place has never 'become', it is simply always 'becoming'. It is also an illustration of 'strong' emergence, as its developing properties and form cannot be predicted from knowledge of its component systems. It stands in contrast to any misleading conventional perception of a static, unchanging rural landscape.

In the case of Ashley, this alerts us to the fact that conditions at any given moment were/are never fixed so must not be idealised; likewise, its future is not mappable in the sense of factual prediction, but only in the sense of an imaginative creation.

Essential to accepting that landscape is emergent is the notion that it is an open system. The loops and branches of its constituent processes are not separable and always open to being affected by other systems. Within the boundaries ('real' only to people) of the civil parish of Ashley it is possible to make measurements of air quality, but it is not meaningful to study this in isolation from the air quality of Manchester, or the northwest region. Similarly, one could study aquatic species in the Bollin, but never in isolation from the effects of conditions upstream, in the wider catchment and in the entirety of the hydrological cycle. The same point could be made of studying land values or employment statistics. In this case the parish boundary cannot be considered to be an absolute 'edge' of a site, but is helpful only in limiting research to a distinct area which does have an historical and social identity.

In Ashley, then, landscape architects (civil engineers, or Planners) may consider themselves to be external to the site or in control of its future, but I would argue that this notion is false. Each person is indivisible from the site; "I am inseparable from the hour, the season, the air, the street, the 'weeds' in the cracks of the paving. I am always in composition with the landscape I am connecting to." (Barnett, 2013: 52).

Such concepts of landscape are not new. In his poem of 1731, *Epistle IV, To Richard Boyle*, Alexander Pope gives his advice to a landscape designer about the role of the 'genius of place', which we would also call 'spirit of place' or *Genius Loci*;

> "Consult the Genius of the place in all;
>
> That tells the waters or to rise, or fall;
>
> Or helps th'ambitious hill the heav'ns to scale,
>
> Or scoops in circling theatres the vale...
>
> Now breaks, or now directs, th'intending lines;
>
> Paints as you plant, and, as you work, designs."

(Pope, 1731)

Here, echoing mystical pagan views, Pope clearly casts the 'Genius' as the power of the landscape itself, which, as I have also argued, exerts its agency through controlling rising and falling waters, and making mountains and valleys. In this verse, landscape very much has intentionality, as it directs visual elements or 'lines' in the landscape, and as you toil away in your humble role of 'planting', it paints the wider scene and designs the world around you. The verse plays with the roles of Genius and designer, planter and painter; the human designer is incidental to the wider network of the landscape, which, like the river delta, never ceases to design itself.

1.6 Emergent landscape, HS2 and phase transition

In setting the scene for an explanation of complexity theory (of which emergence is a key concept) at the start of his 1993 popular-science book *Complexity, Life at the Edge of Chaos*, Roger Lewin describes the landscape of Chaco Canyon in New Mexico. His narrative is of an embodied experience of the place, a treacherous climb to a high viewpoint, the textures of smooth sand and uneven rock. His choice of a landscape as an illustration of key ideas about emergence and complexity allows him to link together his thoughts about geology, architecture in the form of the physical structures built from the rock, the cultural development of the inhabitants and their spiritual beliefs (Lewin, 1993). The notion of landscape encompasses all of this. It would be quite possible to also include observations about the roles of weather, plant species and animal life in the explanation of this landscape as a complex adaptive system, as the photograph perhaps suggests (Figure 11).

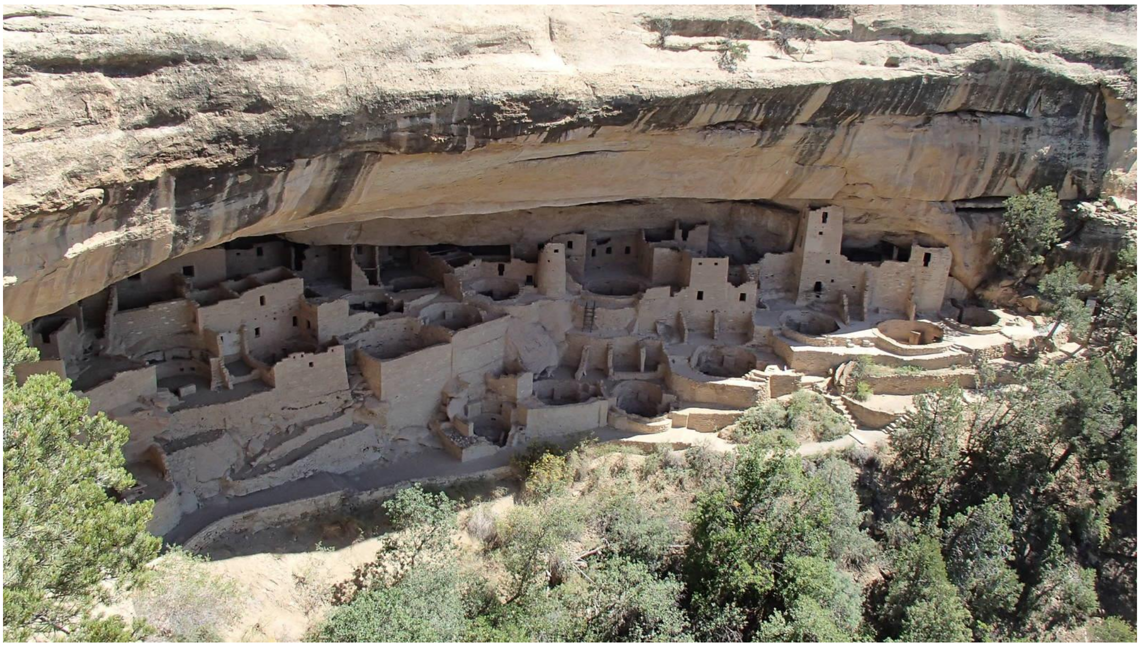


Figure 11. Chaco Canyon, New Mexico; an emergent landscape (image: US National Parks Conservation Association)

Lewin describes how, in such systems,

> "small inputs can lead to dramatically large consequences… this is often categorized as the so-called 'butterfly effect': a butterfly flaps its wings over the Amazon rain forest, and sets in motion events that lead to a storm over Chicago… very slight differences in initial conditions produce very different outcomes"
>
> (Lewin, 1993: 11)

As Lewin explains, understanding this concept, which is a key property of emergent systems, is very important. It explains how a system can suddenly experience such transformative change that it appears to have undergone a kind of revolution, rather than a progressive evolution. In common with some scientists, he calls such events 'phase transitions' because they precipitate a sudden move from one well-established state of affairs to another, completely different one. Ecologist and planner Nina-Marie Lister uses slightly different language to describe the same phenomenon "When an ecosystem suddenly shifts from one stable regime to another…via a flip between system states or what is called a 'regime shift'" (Lister, 2015: 125). In the case of Chaco Canyon, an undocumented phase transition occurred which caused the habitation of the place by a complex society to abruptly cease, circa 1250 AD. Lewin goes on to illustrate phase transition with the example of the point at which life on Earth changed from being contained entirely in single-celled organisms, to the advent of multi-cellular organisms. He says that for 3 billion years on this planet,

> "the highest form of life was the single cell…it was aeon upon aeon of mind-numbing sameness. Then suddenly, and with spectacular effect, the trick of cellular differentiation and aggregation in to multi-cellular organisms evolved. An explosion of new forms occurred"
>
> (Lewin, 1993: 17-18)

Other writers use different terminology to describe phase transition in a complex system. Per Bak, also writing in the 1990s, cites landscapes as exemplary complex systems (Bak, 1997) and describes how;

> "minor disturbances may lead to events called avalanches, of all sizes. Most of the changes take places through catastrophic events rather than by following a smooth gradual path."
>
> (Bak, 1997: 1)

Bak's use of 'catastrophic' here denotes a 'sudden turn' rather than a disaster, but it is worth recalling that such 'avalanche' phase transitions can indeed lead to landscape disasters, as for example in multiple flooding events across the world due to climate change. The specifics of each location will create very different landscape outcomes leading from apparently similar events, as "chaotic systems are very sensitive to initial conditions" (J. Johnson, 2005: 224).

Rod Barnett uses the term 'bifurcation' as closely allied to 'phase transition'. He points out that, in landscapes, they are not especially unusual, and that, in the normal course of events, "A bifurcation can lead a single system into a distribution that none could have foreseen." (Barnett, 2013: 45). It is this quality that gives landscape the capability "to generate new patterns of organisation" (Barnett, 2013: 28). A very localised example of this would be when a river, such as the Bollin, running through the sandy Cheshire soils, breaks through the banks of a deep meander and forms an ox-bow lake, with the river itself taking a new course, and forming a novel boundary between local authority areas, parishes and neighbouring farms. Over the border in to Derbyshire, in a limestone karst landscape, a river might suddenly disappear underground or emerge in a new location as the action of the water exploits gaps in the bedrock, changing the course of the flow. On a larger scale, whole new land masses can be created at sea by deposition of material during storms, or as a result of volcanic activity. These land forms can appear within a matter of hours. Whether the process and its results are perceived by humans to be destructive or constructive, the landscape has the capability to self-organise afresh, generating new ecosystems. Such phase transitions could be triggered by the interactions of any number of the many open systems which combine to make up the landscape, for example in the case of a forest fire, which could be triggered by the interaction of several factors such as a lengthy drought, long-term land management policies and the act of discarding a cigarette butt.

Landscape phase transitions can produce 'autocatalysis', meaning that the product of a system feeds back in to the same system, the process thereby accelerating itself (Ingegnoli, 2002). An ecological example of this is desertification, in which overgrazing of a grassland may result in conditions in the exposed soil which make it impossible for the original plant species to recolonise, as the soil type no longer suits the species. Another illustration of autocatalysis, from human geography, is perhaps particularly resonant for the periphery of Manchester;

> "A rich city… in a favourable landscape begins to build industries in its small peripheral towns…so these towns need more people who emigrate… The emigrants cannot be hosted in the small suburban towns, therefore they settle in the city…which begins to grow, absorbing its periphery. Then a new cycle starts."
>
> (Ingegnoli, 2002: 42)

Consider then, the emergent landscape of Ashley, Cheshire, on Manchester's periphery. Its many physical and social systems are also intimately connected to each other and influence each other in countless ways. It may seem to the present generation of Ashley residents that, despite the previous construction of transport infrastructures, the rural character of the place has not, in essence, changed for hundreds of years. This might make it difficult for residents to conceive that it could ever change in any very significant way, and hard to accept that a proposed transport megaproject will soon be built. Many of the ongoing changes to the place have emerged gradually over time and have been prompted by change agents perceived to be from within the parish itself. The Vicar leaves to take up a new post, a farm tenancy ends, a tree blows over in a gale. A potential revolution in the quality of everyday life, caused by political decisions made in Westminster, seems perhaps overly dramatic and unlikely. However, Ashley is a complex adaptive system like any landscape, and the possibility of a phase transition is inherent. The coming of the HS2 line seems, at the time of writing, to be fairly certain, albeit in highly changeable political times. As an event, it will be of a very different magnitude to the flapping of a butterfly's wing. It is quite possible that it will trigger autocatalytic, or cascading, landscape events.

1.7 HS2 and cascading development

The process of urbanisation is already understood to be unpredictable (Bolchover et al., 2016). This thesis proposes the term ‘cascading development’, to describe an emergent process of massive development of land in a local area where a landscape intervention, such as HS2, makes a change so disruptive to the direction of evolution of the place that a phase transition, and consequent cascading effect, is produced.

Such examples were common in Victorian England. In 1876, for example, a new railway station opened on a green field site outside Birmingham, to service a small village called Stirchley. This was to be the start of the Bournville development, which began just three years later when the Cadbury family built their chocolate factory there, next to the station (British History Online, 1964). On the 1880’s map the green field context can clearly be seen, and just fourteen semi-detached houses for employees have been built (Figure 12). By 1900 “the estate had grown to 330 acres containing 313 houses…[and] by 1939 stretched to over 1,000 acres… The result of building in Selly Oak and Bournville can be seen in the increase of the population of the whole parish from nearly 10,000 in 1891 to over 31,000 in 1911.” (British History Online, 1964). As Figure 13 indicates, this development was largely housing, with enlarged ‘works’ and diversifying industry, as at the nearby ammunition works, for example. Figure 14 shows the wider landscape context and the significant band of rural land between Bournville station (marked in red) and the urban edge of Birmingham (in blue) in the 1890s, before development had begun to cascade. Figure 15 shows the same area four decades later, and Bournville is fully part of the city.

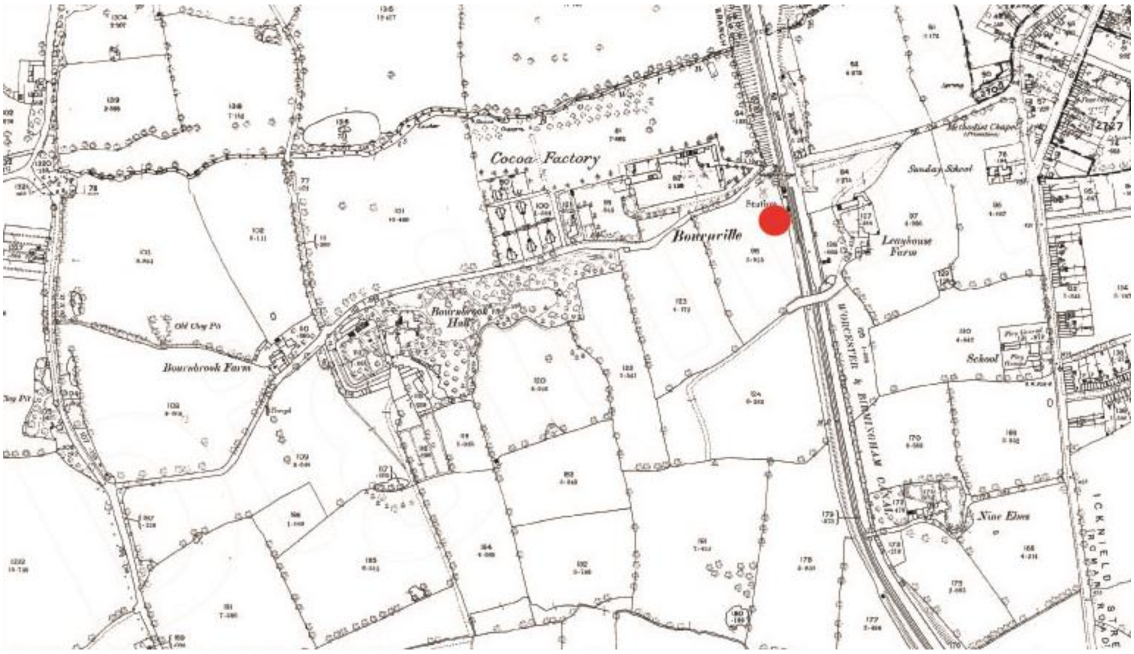

Cocoa Factory
Station
Bournville
Bournbrook Hall
Old Clay Pit
Bournbrook Farm
Methodist Chapel
Sunday School
School
Nine Elms
Worcester & Birmingham Canal

Figure 12. Bournville in the 1880s, still a green field site, showing the large factory building next to the station, marked in red (author’s image using base map from: EDINA Digimap Ancient Roam Service, <http://edina.ac.uk/digimap>, created: December 2017, not to scale)

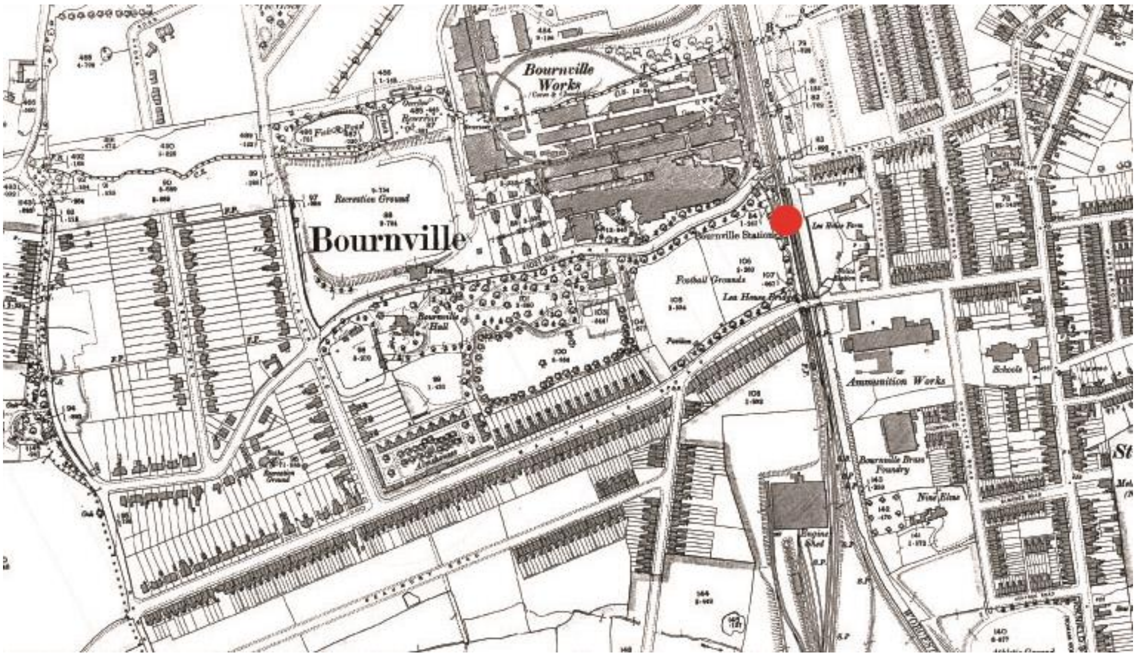

Bournville Works
Recreation Ground
Bournville
Bournville Station
Football Grounds
Bournville Hall
Ammunition Works
Schools
Bournville Brass Foundry
Nine Elms

Figure 13. Bournville in the first years of the twentieth century, showing vastly extended factory, and development of workers' housing, around the station (marked in red). The ammunition works lies just southeast of the station, and it was here that my great-grandfather and his father were killed in an explosion in 1916. (author’s image using base map from: EDINA Digimap Ancient Roam Service, <http://edina.ac.uk/digimap>, created: December 2017, not to scale)

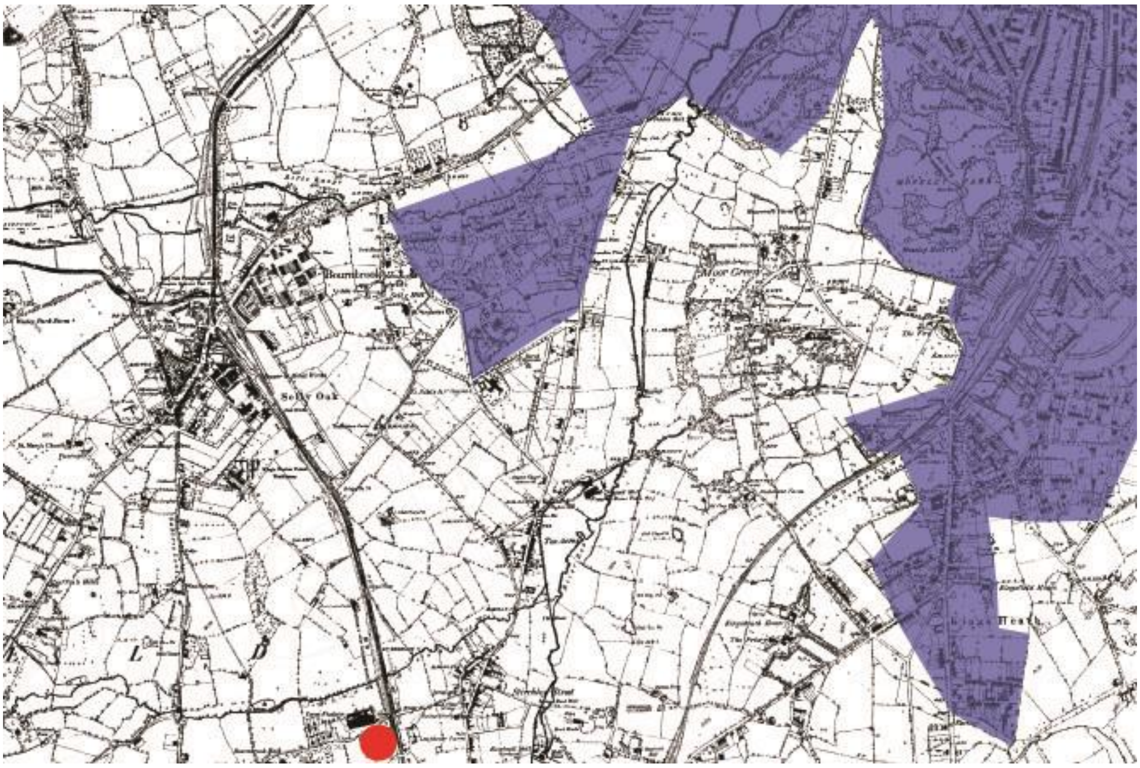


Figure 14. Map showing position of Bournville relative to the urban edge of Birmingham in the 1890s. (author's image using base map from: EDINA Digimap Ancient Roam Service, <http://edina.ac.uk/digimap>, created: December 2017, not to scale)

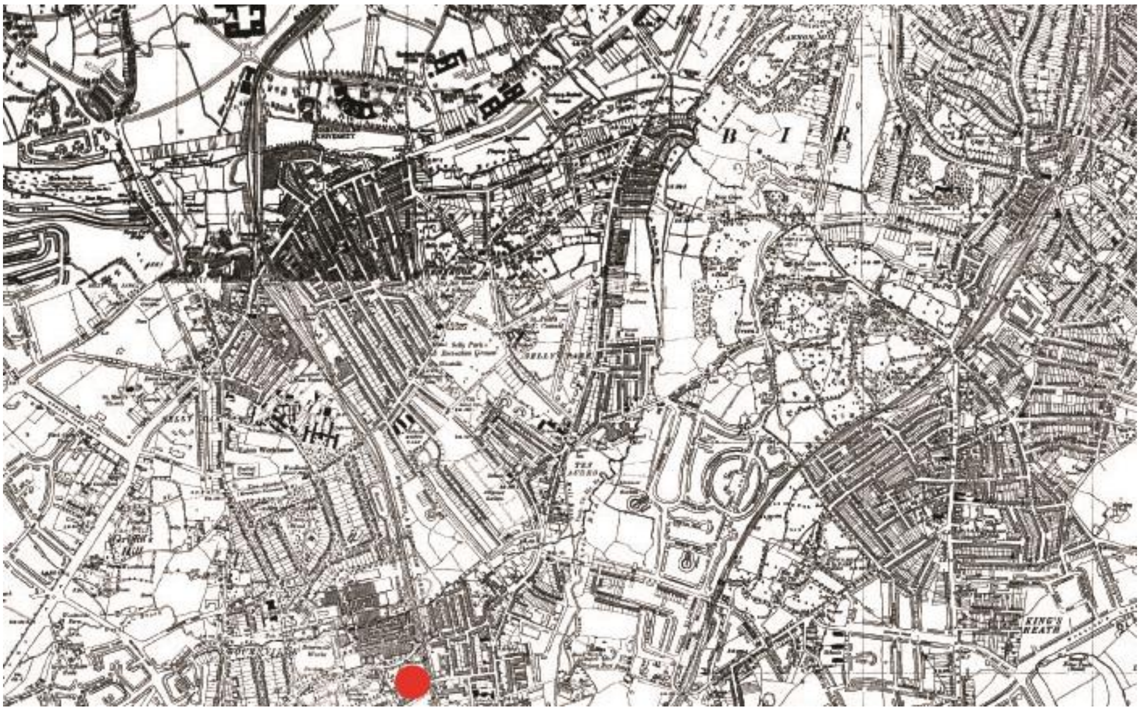


Figure 15. Exactly the same area of land as shown in Figure 14, but in the 1930s; Bournville is now part of Birmingham (author's image using base map from: EDINA Digimap Ancient Roam Service, <http://edina.ac.uk/digimap>, created: December 2017, not to scale)

From my own experience as an inhabitant, I know that residents of Bournville are educated through the schools, their families and wider culture, about the creation of Bournville around the Cadbury factory, where many are still employees. It is generally thought that the high quality of Bournville housing and the pleasant environment, with large gardens, is due to the philanthropic nature of the Quaker family who built it in order to improve the living standards of the workers who were moving out of the city centre slums. It is not widely acknowledged, however, that it was the presence of the railway station that catalysed the development of this place.

Crucially, it is not just the construction of the infrastructure that could contribute to such a phase transition, but a number of other, earlier, related events, for example the first announcement of the alignment of the route, or a visit by HS2 officials to a local area. Even a ten-minute talk given by an academic researcher one evening at St Elizabeth's Church, or an hour's walk through the countryside for research purposes, could tip the balance of the system in to a new phase, as in the butterfly effect described by Lewin (Lewin, 1993). This is because such events influence our mental constructs of the landscape, which may become perceived as blighted, or as a potential source of profit, for example.

Figure 16 and Figure 17 indicate two possible alternative scenarios for 'cascading development' due to HS2 and other factors, in Ashley and its immediate surroundings. There is no way of knowing for certain what the post-HS2 outcomes for the landscape will be, and there will also be no way of identifying with any certainty what will have triggered any phase transition that does occur. The ongoing economic growth of Greater Manchester, for example, could trigger a phase transition in adjacent landscapes, but it would probably not be possible to separate the effects of this growth from the effects of the commencement of operation of HS2 services, or from the construction of the line itself. These two figures are intended to illustrate what I mean by the term 'cascading development'. They are imagined futures which indicate two alternative possibilities over a thirty-year period from 2018 and are *not forecasts*.

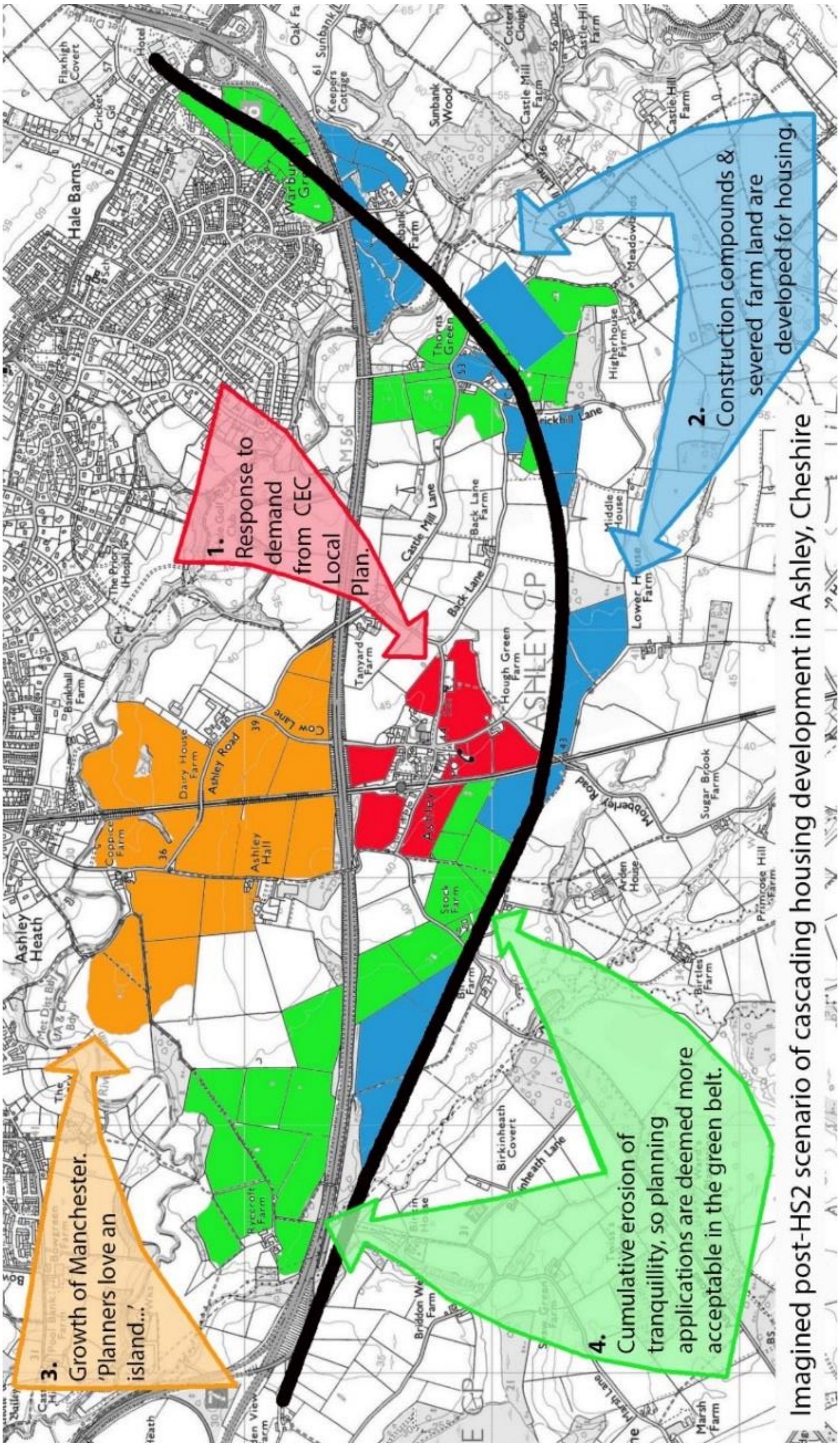

Imagined post-HS2 scenario of cascading housing development in Ashley, Cheshire
1. Response to demand from CEC Local Plan.
2. Construction compounds & severed farm land are developed for housing.
3. Growth of Manchester. 'Planners love an island...'
4. Cumulative erosion of tranquillity, so planning applications are deemed more acceptable in the green belt.
Hale Barns
Ashley Heath
ASHLEY CP
Ashley
Ashley Road
Ashley Hall
Cow Lane
Castle Mill Lane
Back Lane
Mobberley Road
Birkinheath Lane
M56

Figure 16. One possible future for Ashley, in which pressure for housing development results in removal of Ashley from the green belt. (author's image using base map from: EDINA Digimap Ordnance Survey Service, <http://edina.ac.uk/digimap>, created: February 2017, not to scale)

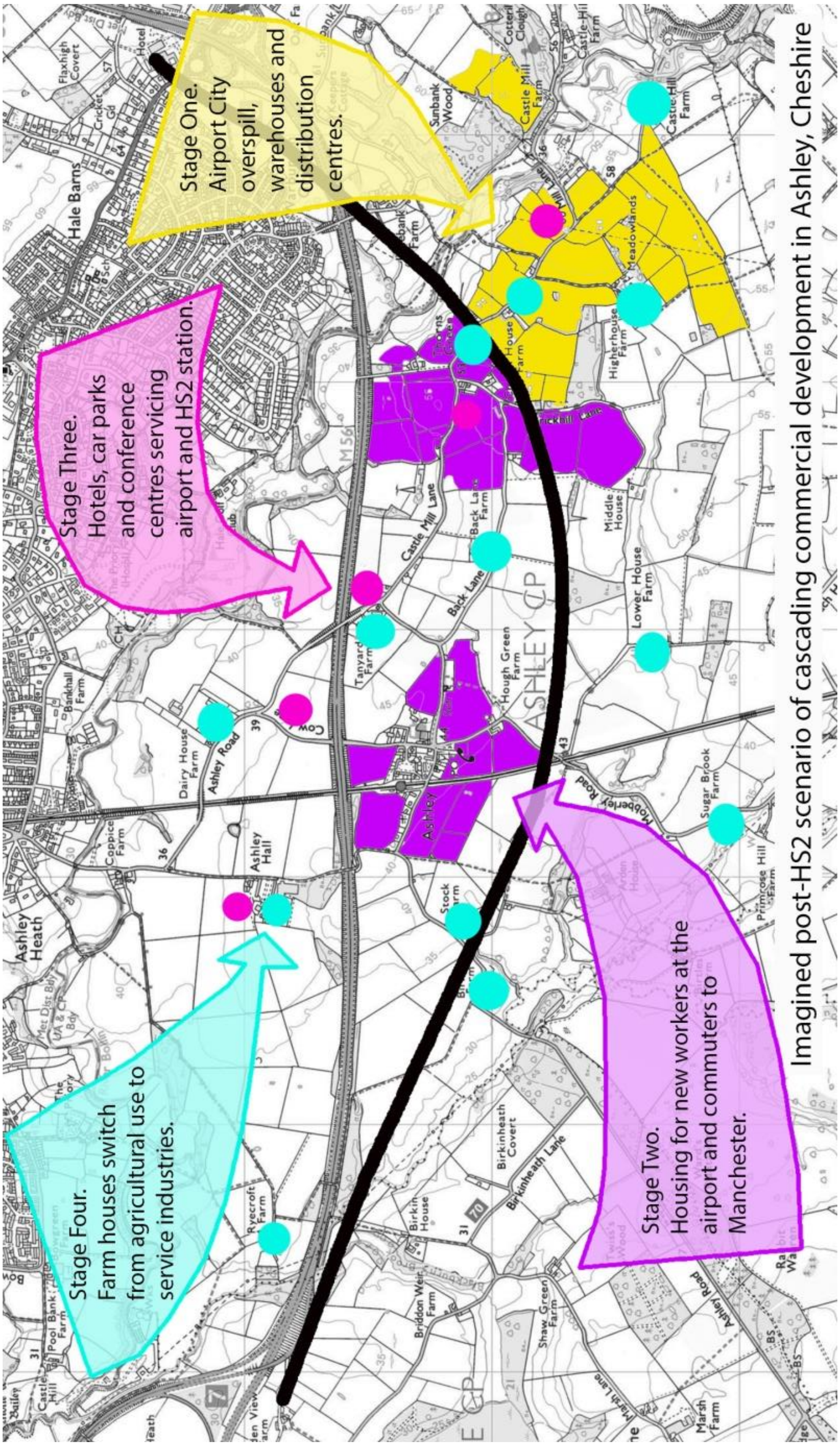

Imagined post-HS2 scenario of cascading commercial development in Ashley, Cheshire
Stage One. Airport City overspill, warehouses and distribution centres.
Stage Two. Housing for new workers at the airport and commuters to Manchester.
Stage Three. Hotels, car parks and conference centres servicing airport and HS2 station.
Stage Four. Farm houses switch from agricultural use to service industries.
ASHLEY CP
Ashley
Ashley Heath
Hale Barns
Ashley Hall
Ashley Road
Back Lane
Castle Mill Lane
Mobberley Road
Birkinheath Lane
Dairy House Farm
Coppice Farm
Tanyard Farm
Hough Green Farm
Lower House Farm
Middle House
Sugar Brook Farm
Primrose Hill Farm
Birkinheath Covert
Shaw Green Farm
Briddon Weir Farm
Ryecroft Farm
Pool Bank Farm
Higherhouse Farm
Meadowlands
Castle Mill Farm
Castle Hill Farm
Sunbank Wood
Flaxhigh Covert
M56

Figure 17. A future scenario for Ashley in which pressure for economic growth, stimulated by the airport and new HS2 station, causes cascading development of business premises (author's image using base map from: EDINA Digimap Ordnance Survey Service, <http://edina.ac.uk/digimap>, created: February 2017, not to scale)

These scenarios illustrate two different possible characters of phase transition. In Figure 16, demand for housing through the Local Plan combines with the accumulated erosion of rural quality by transport infrastructures. This allows the construction of HS2 to tip the balance and cause Ashley to be removed from the green belt. The growth of Manchester and presence of the airport HS2 station mean that Ashley is a highly favoured and profitable location for housing development. The local landowner is keen to develop and so the village, bounded now on all sides by motorway and railway, quickly trebles in size. Farm land severed by HS2, and land contaminated by use over four years as a construction compound, become available for development. Eventually, the island of farm land now trapped between Ashley village and Greater Manchester, succumbs to continued demand for new homes and opportunities for huge profits for developers and landowners.

In the alternative, Figure 17, housing demands from the Local Plan have largely been met in other parts of Cheshire. However, the growth of Manchester airport and airport city are such that, when the HS2 station opens at the airport, a phase transition to massive economic growth occurs, and Ashley becomes a hotspot for science parks, distribution centres and service industries such as hotels, conference centres and car parking, which service the demands of this growth. London is now only a one-hour train journey away, and Birmingham can be reached in just over 30 minutes, so commuting long distances is less of a barrier to growth. New housing is required locally to accommodate growth in the workforce. Planning permission for this will be easier to get as the rural character is lost to light-industrial development. Existing domestic and farm buildings in Ashley become divorced from the agricultural functions of the land as farm land is developed and remaining land is drawn back under the control of the landowner and farmed by contractors rather than tenant farmers. There is already some evidence of this phenomenon within the parish, in the conversion of Stock Farm and Birkin Farm, along with Arden Lodge, (all owned by the Tatton Estate) to use as ‘Airbnb’ properties.

In March 2018, plans were announced for a significant commercial enterprise in green belt land just over the parish boundary, to the west (see Figure 18). This land, previously Yarwood Heath Farm, is to be developed jointly by Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) and the Tatton Estate, who own it (The Business Desk.com, 2018). It will be a “£6m facility…to supplement MMU’s existing central Manchester PrintCity facilities, …manufacturing and logistics space” (North West Place, 2018). Henry Brooks, landowner, is quoted as saying;

> "It will help contribute to the global imperative for the UK and the North West to increase manufacturing, to create wealth, jobs and social cohesion…It will also become an integral part of Cheshire's international corridor of science"
>
> (North West Place, 2018)

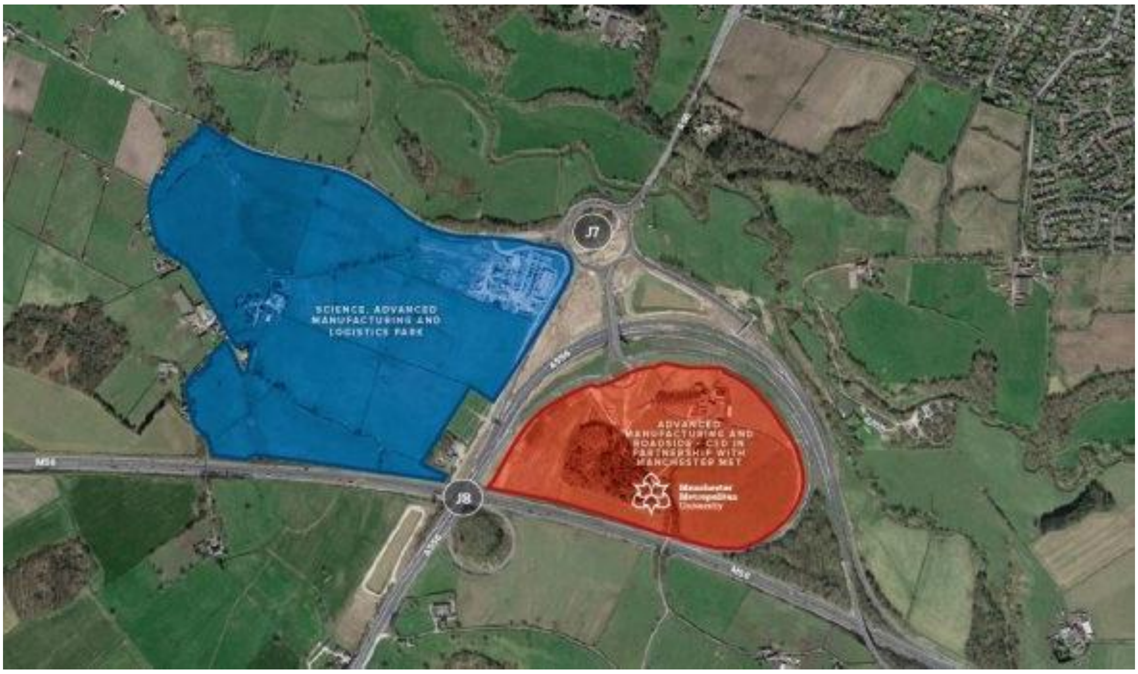

A556
J7
SCIENCE, ADVANCED MANUFACTURING AND LOGISTICS PARK
A556
ADVANCED MANUFACTURING AND ROADSIDE - CID IN PARTNERSHIP WITH MANCHESTER MET
Manchester Metropolitan University
M56
J8
A556
M56

Figure 18. Land allocated for commercial development at the north-western tip of Ashley's parish boundary (image, North West Place, 2018). Ryecroft Farm, Ashley, is the building at the bottom right hand corner of this image.

Use of the word 'corridor' here perhaps implies the prospect of adjacent similar development, as hypothesised in my cascading development scenarios. This proposal 'bookends' Ashley between two hotspots for commercial growth, the other being Airport City to the east. Growth, meaning profit, is the supporting ideology for this use of land; it is unclear how the development might contribute to social cohesion. Professor Craig Banks of MMU is quoted, in the University's internal publication *Met Magazine*, as saying that the facility "is near Manchester Airport and HS2…the hub can be as big as your imagination and will keep growing" (Manchester Metropolitan University, 2018: 34).

The scenarios I have illustrated may sound extreme, but illustrate exactly the kind of growth desired by the UK government when they published *Rebalancing Britain, from HS2 Towards a National Transport Strategy* (HS2 Ltd, 2014). This document suggests that the very first priority for the government is to reduce the pressure on Londoners of the capital city's high house prices, a congested public transport system and high costs of office space (£110 per square foot at the time of the publication). By contrast, it points out that "commercial property prices in the North are nearer £28 per square foot. And yet businesses are more reluctant to move there” (HS2 Ltd, 2014: 12). HS2’s promised short journey times, then, are presented as an opportunity to shift the pressure for development to the North and Midlands:

> “In London it will ease the pressure on commuters by adding 18 new train paths per hour into the capital. In the Midlands and the North it will make cities more competitive by connecting them better to the global market ...Put simply, cutting the journey time ... makes it more likely that more businesses will base themselves in the North and that existing firms will prosper...The effect should be transformational.”
>
> (HS2 Ltd, 2014: 13)

It seems reasonable to conclude, therefore, that phase transitions to cascading development of housing and business premises in the North and Midlands, far from being the unintended consequences of HS2, represent the aspirations that have driven the project from its early stages. Furthermore, rural locations such as Ashley, with existing transport infrastructure and in close proximity to both a growing city and a high-speed station, will be the landscapes most likely to experience such transitions.

Lewin expresses the opinion that “You can only understand complex systems using computers, because they are highly nonlinear, and are beyond standard mathematical analysis” (Lewin, 1993: 11). This thesis proposes that, on the contrary, computers can be of only limited use in mapping the innumerable interactions of the complex landscape, as the interfaces between all the open systems of the place are qualitatively infinite and constantly changing. As Lewin himself says, when discussing computer models of connectedness in ecosystems: “With high connectedness, any single change is likely to propagate hectically throughout the system, with many large avalanches. This is the chaotic state.” (Lewin, 1993: 62). Thus, even using unlimited computer power, possibilities become unpredictable. The analogue real-world landscape, unconstrained by the binary limits of representation in the silicon chip, is far more complex, such that, even were it possible to capture all relevant data, outcomes for place and people would not be predictable.

Therefore, rather than turning to quantitative approaches in the form of digital modelling, the operations of an emergent landscape can, at least in part, be understood through qualitative research and thinking. This may allow us, not to predict the future, but to improve our understanding of the problems of the present landscape, explore the difficulties and possibilities of engagement with it, and look ahead to possible risks and benefits. The aim of this research is absolutely not to prevent change (this would be impossible in an emergent landscape), but to explore ways in which landscape change might possibly be steered by inhabitants of a landscape, who, I would argue, collectively have a far greater stake in its future than do the landowners.

1.8 The role of the designer: disturbance and response

It may seem that subscribing to a theory of emergent landscape entails an abnegation of the designer's role. After all, in the field of landscape, which in the words of Anne Whiston Spirn is an "endless reciprocal drama" (in conversation, DeLue and Elkins, 2008: 148) how can an individual have any decisive impact upon material changes? It may be that in letting go of the desire for predictability of outcomes, the designer can take a rather different role.

In Christopher Alexander's 1979 book *A Timeless Way of Building*, he repeatedly returns to themes of emergence, particularly in Chapter 25 *The Slow Emergence of a Town*. He is at ease with the constant state of 'becoming' of a city, for example; "At any given moment, in a growing organism, there is no sense of the 'end' or of the final 'goal' of growth. There is, instead, a process of transformation." (Alexander, 1979: 500). Alexander's summary of the emergent town comes before Steven Johnson's writing about emergence in slime moulds and ant hills;

> "A town is made from millions upon millions of individual acts of building. How can we be sure that the town will be whole, and not a rambling, incoherent chaos, if it is built from millions upon millions of individual acts?"
>
> (Alexander, 1979: 496)

This question applies equally to any landscape, be it wild, rural or urban. Alexander does not perceive a threat of disorder in urban growth, and says of these many individual acts that "what they create is orderly, even though the product of confusion…because it is a process which draws order from its surroundings… And, finally, the whole emerges" (Alexander, 1979: 510). This, then, is an early example of recognition by a designer of unpredictable emergent order, although his use of the words 'whole' and 'finally' suggests that Alexander did not have quite the same view as Barnett's more recent concept of landscape as "a continuum of multiplicities continually self-differentiating." (Barnett, 2013:

44). Alexander is clear, though, that it is the influence of adjacent open systems, or ‘surroundings’, that produce something in the nature of ‘order’.

None of this means that the designer of landscape can shrug off responsibility for the ongoing outcomes of a place. On the contrary, landscape architects have always worked with natural processes as well as more bounded ‘acts of building’. Examples of emergence within plant life are quite straightforward, as plants are very obviously indivisible from their surroundings. The oak tree, for instance, is entirely an expression of the influence of its environment upon the genetic code contained within the plant’s system. The DNA within an acorn, even pre-germination, is acted upon by water and oxygen from outside the seed case. The emerging form of the tree will be determined by the continuous action of weather, air quality, climate, soil nutrients, soil organisms, ground water pollution, adjacent plants, land management, grazing animals, parasite species and so on. These will determine its survival, height, breadth, branching patterns above and below soil and eventual demise and return to the soil. Thus, a coherent but unpredictable form emerges from an intricate set of surrounding circumstances. An essential part of the art of designing with plants is a recognition that they are emergent entities, existing as vegetation communities, and that the only way to steer the design to success is to consider the dynamics of that community, including management over its lifespan.

A number of landscape architects now explicitly base their work on principles of emergence. Bélanger, writing in the nineties, refers to contemporary designs by Brown and Storey, James Corner and Stan Allen (Belanger, 1995). More recently, Roel van Gerwen, an advocate of ‘process design’ from Dutch landscape practice Vista, provides the following illustration of the designer’s role. He describes conventional landscape design as analogous to making a mound of sand on the beach using a bucket and spade, perhaps only to see it blown away by the wind. The alternative, however, is this:

> “to place a large stick in the ground where the wind will instantly form a pile, reshaping the pile every time the wind changes its direction. In this analogy placing the stick is less exhausting, gives a less predictable result and is highly dynamic. In process design, as we describe it, the main goal is to use the right ‘sticks’ in order to activate, unravel and manipulate the dormant landscape-forming processes.”
>
> (Van Gerwen, 2004: 1)

The idea of using dormant processes as design tools has striking possibilities; here, perhaps, is an approach that could tap in to various forms of the inherent power of the landscape. One might add that the pile of sand built by the wind is 'sustainable' in the sense that it requires no further human input in order to attain a form which will emerge with changing conditions. Van Gerwen does not mention the near-certainty that the whole pile will at some point be washed away by the incoming tide, as may the stick. This too, however, might perhaps be accepted as an outcome of emergent processes, and a decision may have to be taken to abandon the structure.

Bélanger addresses this issue by pointing out that the placement of such a stick can be a design intervention, suggesting "that the landscape has a problem, and someone must intervene to solve it" (Belanger, 1995: 4) but what is required in an emergent system is a design 'interaction', which "suggests mutual or reciprocal actions or influences, whereby the designer is more fully engaged with landscape" (Belanger, 1995: 4). Bélanger's approach, in other words, entails sustained involvement with the landscape over time.

Van Gerwen's and Bélanger's advocacy of process design suggests the approach to be taken in Ashley. Given the unpredictability of future landscape developments, I propose the task of the designer would be that of selecting the best sticks and placing them propitiously and opportunely in the sand, as the first move in a series of interactions. Given such an emergent design process, it follows that any public engagement with those 'design interactions' would need to follow the same principles, and itself be emergent, in order that the two elements might operate mutually. Huybrechts et al (2016) work with the distinction between 'expert design' and diffuse design', in which the latter "refers to design performed by people in their everyday life, in which the designer takes on a more marginal role" (Huybrechts et al., 2016: 102). The concept of diffuse design does not depend on an emergent approach but has in common the idea that the design of a thing need not necessarily be work which is in the control of one individual expert or design team, but may take the form of many small actions by any number of actors. I suggest that these actors could be human, animal, or, more broadly, 'landscape'.

One example of a hypothetical emergent landscape project is summarised here, to illustrate how these principles might be made to work, and what role public engagement could play.

In her 2009 MA dissertation, *Birdscapes*, Delwyn Shepherd (a student of Rod Barnett) proposes, almost literally, an enactment in practice of Van Gerwel's sand piles analogy. This work is an approach to reducing coastal erosion at Muriwai on New Zealand's North

Island, which has been a concern since at least the 1960s. Traditional human interventions involving concrete defences and creek culverts have not worked and indeed have observably been counter-productive. The fear of erosion, which is occurring at 1.5 metres per year (D. Shepherd, 2009) means that local people see their shifting coastline as a considerable threat rather than an ongoing natural phenomenon. Modern infrastructure is ready to fall to the waves. Aboriginal inhabitants, who inhabited the area prior to 1870 (D. Shepherd, 2009) had settled sufficiently far inland for coastal changes to be perceived as unthreatening, but European incomers deforested the land, built roads and eventually car parks and a golf course at the sea edge (D. Shepherd, 2009). In Shepherd's design proposal, the metaphorical 'sticks in the sand' are the indigenous pohutukawa trees, which grow well in the (real) sand of that coastline and create a mat of roots that accumulate leaf litter and prevent erosion, or at least manipulate it away from key locations. She takes an approach which works with the emergent properties of the landscape rather than trying to defeat them;

> "The proposition is that a network of pohutukawa trees (Metrosideros excelsa) distributed by natural processes can both regulate coastal erosion and encourage a more appropriate inhabitation of the coastal environment by humans. This network of trees is initiated by humans and continued by birds."
>
> (D. Shepherd, 2009: 6)

Shepherd proposes creating fertile initial conditions by planting pohutukawa trees and carefully managing their establishment. They would be set out in alignments which are calculated to support the feeding flights of a species of bird (the tui) which eats the pohutukawa fruits and so would act as a dispersal vector for the tree seed, thereby encouraging spread of the species along the coast. The three key agents of the proposed system are the trees, the birds and the human inhabitants. This is vital to Shepherd in a "proposal that reinterprets the whole situation as a holistic amalgam of interactive dynamic systems ...and works with these systems." (D. Shepherd, 2009: 10). She emphasises that in dealing with open landscape systems it is not possible or desirable to exclude the influence of the human element; "The success of this endeavour relies mostly on one critical factor: community acceptance." (D. Shepherd, 2009: 10). Given that the initial landscape 'problems' were created by human patterns of occupation, it is vital to Shepherd that the solution should sustain interaction with those human patterns in an attempt to reconfigure them. She does not set out, however, to persuade inhabitants of her point of view. Rather, she states that this:

> “would be to impose on the system from outside rather than have change emerge from within. If a community is a complex adaptive system, then emergent behaviour will occur in response to some kind of disturbance”
>
> (D. Shepherd, 2009: 11)

Shepherd’s study is important to this thesis because hers is, at present, the only published work in which emergence theory is explicitly applied to public engagement with a landscape design.

There are points to draw from this which are applicable in Ashley, where some of the residents are also ranged against a process (albeit one of construction rather than erosion) that they would wish to be stopped. Shepherd’s theory is that “surprising new information about erosion, natural systems and landscapes will perform the function of disturbance in the community system” (D. Shepherd, 2009: 11). I propose that an experiment with public engagement with the landscape, in the context of anticipation of proposed infrastructure, could constitute a ‘disturbance’ in Ashley, that would begin to bring about patterns of adaptive emergent behaviour. Disturbance is a key concept for Barnett. He argues that it is a vital stimulus for creation, through introducing an “element of disorder and surprise” (Barnett, 2013: 80). He gives the example of natural processes intruding in to the ‘homogeneity’ of the city to “disrupt its operations of control” (Barnett, 2013: 81). The important idea here is that disruption evokes response, and in that response lies a wealth of possibility. This concept is one that could prove relevant in Ashley in two distinct ways. Firstly, perhaps the disturbance that a researcher brings to a parish could stimulate a far greater degree of public engagement with landscape (see chapters five and six). In Ashley, my research activity is akin to placing sticks in the sand. These actions present a disturbance, the outcomes of which cannot be foreseen, but perhaps propitious and timely interaction could result in desirable outcomes for the landscape. Secondly, the proposed railway line itself constitutes a disturbance in landscape systems; an understanding of how this might work would be useful in appreciating the wider context for public engagement, providing an insight in to the relationship between the emergent whole and the tightly controlled linear infrastructure.

The focus of this research is on creating successful public engagement as the starting point for an emergent design process, in which the designer’s role is to intervene by responding to, disturbing and remodelling landscape processes, rather than by imposing fixed landscape ‘solutions’ which are implemented at one point in time with the intention of remaining unchanged for their lifespan. In the words of Maggie Roe, “concepts of participation in landscape need to develop in response to risk and uncertainty in both process and outcome" (Roe, 2012: 347).

1.9 Local knowledge in a large-scale project

Detailed knowledge of a locality usually informs a landscape architect's approach to a site. In most design projects, site surveys gather multiple layers of inter-related data which may include socio-historical, climatic, geological, hydrological, archaeological, topographical and ecological information. These layers are scrutinised and the exchanges between them analysed until a design solution which accommodates information from the different sources is reached. Christopher Alexander expressed the need for architects to understand local conditions thus; "if each act of construction is going to contribute to wholeness, then the main thing, above all others, is that this act must grow, naturally and directly, from what is there already."(Alexander, 1979: 58). His emphatic demand for constructions to be expressions of the conditions of a place includes not just physical or aesthetic properties but all of its systems; "a process through which the order of a building or a town grows directly from the inner nature of the people, and the animals, and plants, and matter which are in it." (Alexander, 1979: 7). These principles apply equally to populated rural places.

Knowledge of a locality, however, is not necessarily synonymous with 'local knowledge', or knowledge *in* a locality. The former could be gained at a distance, through books, maps and online content. The latter implies an understanding held by people who are of the landscape/situation itself, who live, study or work in the place. Current practice by landscape architects is often to seek knowledge and ideas from local non-expert parties, to provide important additional layers of knowledge of history, social processes and economic drivers. In recent years, this approach has been adopted by some, though not all, as the most desirable way to proceed:

> "There is a broad agreement in the literature that the knowledge and insights of 'local people' and 'local communities' potentially complement, correct and/or provide alternative perspectives to the mainstream 'scientific' or 'professional' expert knowledge ...because it tends to do a few things that the traditionally 'expert knowledge' of professional or scientific communities does not do well. First, 'local' or 'community' knowledge is situated or placed deeply in a particular landscape."
>
> (Eversole, 2012: 33)

Eversole's view echoes that of Lippard in *The Lure of the Local*, for whom "a sense of place is a virtual immersion that depends on lived experience and a topographical intimacy" (Lippard, 1997: 33). Sanoff agrees that "citizens are more aware of the realities of their own community than outside professionals. They have a sense of what will work and what will not work." (Sanoff, 2005: 62). This very particular and situated knowledge, then, cannot substitute for knowledge coming from outside the place, however expert that may be. A recent example of this can be found in press reports about subsidence along the planned HS2 route at Crofton, near Wakefield, Yorkshire. According to *The Guardian* newspaper (Perraudin, 2017) an extensive history of both open cast and deep mining of coal has resulted in a complex set of ground conditions. These have been created, both formally and informally, over a long period of time, and cannot possibly be fully recorded in any official source. A local health and safety consultant, living very close to the proposed route, observed the movement in the ground and alerted the central government Coal Authority. HS2 Ltd told the newspaper "We are confident that the historical mining features in Crofton pose no major risk to the construction programme" but, as the journalist points out;

> "Risk documents published by HS2 Ltd state that there is a 68% likelihood of the cost of the project increasing as a result of new information coming to light about mining in the area."
>
> (Perraudin, 2017)

Although HS2 have done studies of the history of coal mining in the area, there is no indication that they have yet engaged local inhabitants as a way of finding valuable knowledge in order to avoid incurring unexpected costs and delays arising from unknown ground conditions. It would seem reasonable to suggest that if they did so, all parties could have much to gain from the ensuing dialogue.

For Frederick Steiner, these considerations are a vital part of his 'ecological planning' approach, which he defines as "the use of biophysical and sociocultural information to suggest opportunities and constraints for decision making about the use of landscape" (Steiner, 2008: 9). He states that "locally generated goals are the ideal" (Steiner, 2008: 13), indicating that local participants should have full influence over the ultimate direction of a project, and not simply be seen as passive sources to be mined for information. There is, undeniably, a political dimension here, and an agenda for genuine empowerment of inhabitants, however, such powers of influence come with the potential for residents to take the greater part of the responsibility when things do not go well. This is an inherent tension in the localism agenda and is discussed further in Chapter Five.

Rod Barnett argues that “the designer’s ongoing performance is as an orchestrator of the conditions for democracy” (Barnett, 2013: 75). This metaphor, curiously enough, casts the landscape architect in a ‘leading’ role, but more importantly emphasises a need for the designer to invest themselves over the long term, as they perform the ongoing role of orchestrating an assemblage of open systems. In the word ‘democracy’, it also assigns a significant value to the voices of inhabitants and implies a right to be heard. For Barnett, this is one reason why emergence theory provides a sound basis for landscape architecture; it addresses “the problem of bringing together top-down design intentionality with bottom-up landscape conditions” (Barnett, 2013: 8). He would absolutely see these ‘conditions’ as indivisibly including people, though he does acknowledge the problematic nature of the concept of democratic representation, through the processes of which people “are encouraged to express their singularity at the same time as they forfeit this singularity” (Barnett, 2013: 213). Lucy Lippard notes that:

> “A peopled place is not always a community, but regardless of the bonds formed with it, or not, a common history is being lived out…Community doesn’t mean understanding everything about everybody and resolving all the differences; it means knowing how to work within differences as they change and evolve.”
>
> (Lippard, 1997: 24)

Her approach allows room for flexibility in response to inhabitants, without being hamstrung by a need for consensus. In Ashley, I cannot recall an occasion when a resident has used the word ‘community’ to describe the group of people who live locally. The phrase ‘from the village’ is most likely to be used to refer to a sense of someone’s belonging, rooting their identity in place, rather than in an abstract construct.

It is quite possible for a rural place on the edge of a large conurbation to function as a dormitory for commuters who work, socialise and shop in nearby towns, lacking in the feeling of social cohesion that the word community implies. Ashley, however, does have a latent sense of (what would commonly be described as) community. This is observable in volunteer efforts at litter picking, organising the fête, parish council activities, and contributions to Church activities. These activities, however, tend to be restricted to a very small group of the same people, without reaching out to the wider population, who may or may not wish to be included. One effect of this latency is that with no broader articulation of 'community' there can be no effective community spokesperson, or people, and so amalgamating and accessing local knowledge is not at all straightforward, as described in Chapter Five. It might be that there are some benefits to this, in that individuals could feel free to be more pro-active in the absence of a single co-ordinating 'community group'. Much work has been done about the motivations, legitimacy, inclusivity and psychological aspects of such groups, 'DIY Community Action' (Richardson and Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion, 2008) being an excellent example. This study takes community self-help as an end in itself. It addresses, among other things, the issue of volunteers being expected to fill gaps in under-funded service provision or fulfil professional roles.

Local knowledge, then, is valued by designers but may be difficult to access. An additional dimension of complexity lies in understanding how the inhabitants and the landscape architect should use that knowledge, when one considers the number of different localities that are strung together along the vast linear extent of a national railway. A landscape designer in this situation might consider such questions as what the relationship between these places is, whether there are any meaningful boundaries between them, where those might be and what they signify. These are not merely airy metaphysical questions: for the designers of HS2 they have to be resolved, in order to make very practical, material decisions. The local is the set of specificities in which landscape design must operate. The distinctiveness of each locality perhaps subsists mainly in its difference to its neighbours, as "All places exist somewhere between the inside and the outside of them, the ways in which they compare to, and contrast with, other places." (Lippard, 1997: 33). A new, extensive linear landscape may need to express these contrasts whilst at the same time asserting its own identity. Alternatively, and perhaps more adventurously, it could be planned such that its design language is entirely defined by local factors.

HS2 Ltd's *HS2 Design Vision* document of March 2015 describes their initial aspirations for the design of every aspect of the project, "from the pixel to the city" (HS2 Ltd, March 2015: 5). This publication claims three core principles of 'people, place and time', which in themselves strongly imply that local knowledge will be prized, for example it is explicitly stated that they plan to "engage with communities over the life of the project" (HS2 Ltd, March 2015: 9). The duration of 'the project' is perhaps open to interpretation in this document. HS2 Ltd also intend to "celebrate the local within a coherent national narrative" (HS2 Ltd, March 2015: 9), which seems to promise a great deal in terms of resolving the nature of the identity of a small local area within a long linear infrastructure project. The notion of 'celebration' however, is vague in a way that is perhaps useful to the authors. As the *Design Vision* progresses, it becomes clear that any expression of bottom-up conditions must be quite strictly controlled; “establishing uniformity where it is essential while encouraging one-off expression based on local context where appropriate” (HS2 Ltd, March 2015: 18). Here, uniformity is considered to be not just possible but essential (it is not clear whether this is in consideration of safety factors) and the expression of local context is only appropriate in some singular situations. Through this, HS2 Ltd hope eventually to see that “national pride in the system is matched by a sense of local ownership” (HS2 Ltd, March 2015: 11). This aspires only to people having the impression or feeling that a section of the line is ‘theirs’, without requiring any specific input from those people. This document does not answer questions of where local boundaries might lie, or what they might mean, rather it gives a general sense that they will not be a problem.

The puzzle of the part/whole relationship within a transport infrastructure is one which lends itself to study through a methodology based on emergence theory. In explaining my research to academics and landscape architects I have come across the assumption that I am treating Ashley as a microcosm, which would, in common parlance be understood as meaning that findings from this local place will be automatically substitutable for other local places, and applicable to the whole of the rural landscape of HS2. The concept of microcosm and macrocosm, literally ‘the little world’ and ‘the great world’, originates with Plato’s ideas about the relationship between the human soul and the universe; “Kosmos at this time meant "order" in a general sense and implied a harmonious, and therefore beautiful, arrangement of parts in any organic system” (Ziomkowski, 2005). Inherent in this conceit is the idea of ‘above and below’ (Ziomkowski, 2005), a clear distinction or boundary between lesser and greater parts, in which the distinct units ‘below’ tessellate together to produce a whole ‘above’. Also key to this idea, originating in Aristotle’s concept of microcosm/macrocosm, is “that the internal organisation of the parts mimics that of the whole, hence subsets of a large system should stand by themselves” (Drury, 1998: 20). This is a problematic notion, however, within the open systems of an emergent landscape. Drury offers the instance of a lake being given as an example of a microcosm and says that “From an understanding of the microcosm of the lake it is assumed we can derive understanding of the macrocosm of the wider world” (Drury, 1998: 20). As Drury explains, however, the lake is in no way a discrete unit; it can’t be divided from the hydrological systems of the landscape in which it is enmeshed. In a landscape, where all systems are open to each other, therefore, no one part can be isolated as microcosm; the idea is a fallacy. The idea of Ashley as a microcosm would therefore be misleading, as its relationships with the other parts of the whole are far more complex. Whilst there may prove to be elements of the internal processes of Ashley that could reasonably be generalised to elsewhere, it can't be said to be the same as other rural parishes; each is its own unique combination of landscape characteristics.

In summary, the relationship between these local places is that they are continually joined, re-joined, interacting and co-evolving. Although they are open systems, they are not essentially all the same place, but have distinct, though changeable, characteristics. Their boundaries can be identified on a case-by-case basis, by asking inhabitants where they perceive them to be. In rural places where local character may be subtle or eroded, this can be difficult for the outsider to discern: local people, however, will know.

Lippard maintains that "Local places remain stubbornly hidden from systems of control and ownership." (Lippard, 1997: 77), and it is for this reason that such a vast initiative by central government will meet resistance in local areas. This is also the reason why the best way to progress a national project is not from the top down, but from the local, up. Only in this way could HS2 Ltd hope to genuinely fulfil the spirit of their stated aim, to "include many local design stories within one compelling national narrative" (HS2 Ltd, March 2015: 17).

1.10 Defining the rural

Much of the academic literature cited in this research has been written with urban landscapes in mind. 81.5% of the population of England and Wales now live in cities (Office for National Statisitics, November 2013: 1) and this is the context for the current and growing focus on urban design in the fields of architecture and landscape architecture. There are many different classification systems for deciding what constitutes a rural or urban place, but it is worth noting that according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS) "whichever classification is used, for all four countries in the UK, less than one third of the land area is classified as urban" (Pateman, 2010/11: 3).

Rural areas, then, represent the most typical landscape type in the UK, and warrant far greater attention. This section will discuss the nature of the rural and the urban, question whether the distinction is always helpful, and ask whether the needs of the two categories of place are really so very different.

The ONS, using the system of 'Middle Layer Super Output Areas' (MSOAs), classifies Ashley as 'VHID – less sparse' (Village, Hamlet & Isolated Dwellings – Less

Sparse)(Pateman, 2010/11: 7). This is a classification which covers 47.7% of the total land area of England and is occupied by 8.8% of the population (2008 figures)(Pateman, 2010/11: 8). Households in these areas have an average total weekly household income that is 80% above the national average and yet 20% of the households are below the poverty threshold (2008 figures)(Pateman, 2010/11: 36). It is possible to source many such quantitative findings about a wide variety of aspects of UK life from the ONS data; from crime figures to Internet usage and people's satisfaction with the places in which they live. These figures, however, are averages dependant on classifying rurality depending on three things; population size, population concentration, and remoteness from denser populations. Similar definitions relating to population density are used in Australia, the USA, Canada and across the EU (Dijkstra and Poelman, 2014). The above statistics therefore illustrate definitions of 'rural' only through measures of human presence. Given the basis of this research in a concept of emergent landscape in which the many human and non-human elements are interdependent, such a focus on entirely anthropocentric data would be ill-suited. Furthermore, the use of national averages may lead researchers to make presuppositions about specific rural places which are not true of the localities in question. It is important to the aims of this research that individual places are treated as such and investigated through engagement with the particularities of each landscape. Ashley has its own set of constantly evolving conditions, as does each place along the planned HS2 alignment, and the proposed methodology aims to bring these unique attributes to the surface through qualitative data collection. The importance of recognising this is highlighted by the ONS *Rural and Urban Areas* report;

> "Seeing clear differences between broad groupings of areas may present opportunities for designing, implementing and monitoring policy; but it raises the question – are the differences positive or negative? What effects do they have on the people who live there? Qualitative research is better placed to answer that question"
>
> (Pateman, 2010/11: 3)

Given this statistician's expert view, it seems reasonable to argue that it would never be sufficiently rigorous to base public engagement policy on the ONS data. Pateman further notes that classifications of rural and urban places "may feel wrong for particular areas. None of the classifications used in this article take account of the look and feel of a particular place" (Pateman, 2010/11: 4). Defining the rural through 'look and feel', in other words by visiting the place, is perhaps more useful than population statistics in understanding its material qualities and processes.

The Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) are perhaps Britain's best-known pro-countryside lobby group. They do not attempt to categorically define what rural means, perhaps because this would not serve their purposes. Their written and visual materials, however, produce a strong sense of what it is that they wish to protect. In an early film entitled *Rural England*, made in 1938 to promote the cause of National Parks, the urban is described as "hemmed in by bricks and mortar…the shadow of confined space is always there…" (CPRE, 1938). This is explicitly contrasted to the rural:

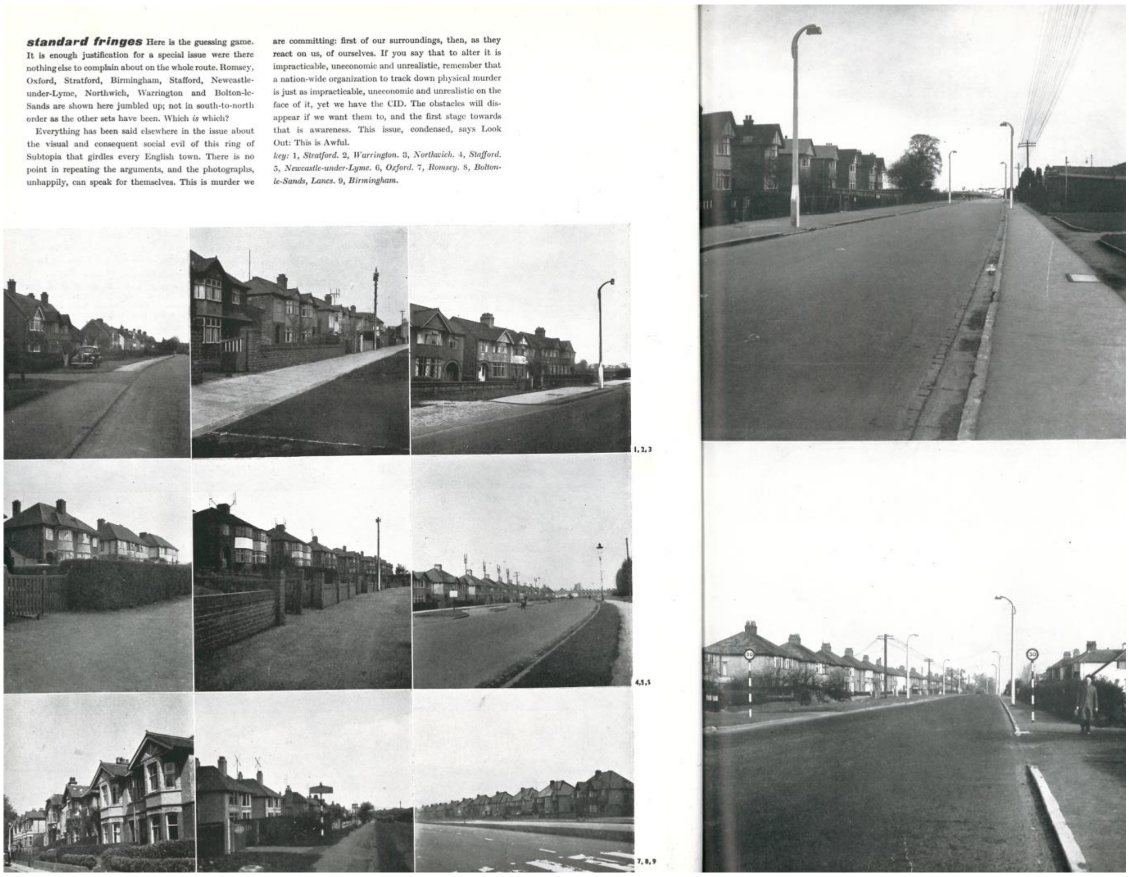
> "…how different to the grand open country with the fresh clean air coming across the hills and vales and the rivers and lakes with their quiet still waters…the fell land where men can hazard in glorious freedom"
>
> (CPRE, 1938)

Here, then, is a sense of the rural as an experience, to be not just looked at but breathed in, listened to and clambered over (at least, by men). In this film, the sense of openness of space and freedom of movement as the defining essence of the rural is very strong. This experiential concept is still present throughout the CPRE's output today, in which they state that they are concerned with both towns and cities, without explicitly defining the difference between the two. A report anticipating their centenary year, 2026, *A Vision for the Countryside* describes an ideal for the future of rural places. The dual emphasis is on "quality of life, embracing beauty, local character and the enjoyment of green, open spaces."(Campaign to Protect Rural England, 2009: 3) and on "successful urban regeneration, through developing brownfield land and a significant 'greening' of towns and cities" (Campaign to Protect Rural England, 2009: 6). The report has sections devoted to walking and cycling, food and farming, light pollution and renewable energy. Population density is not explicitly addressed, and it is very far from defining the rural purely in terms of an aesthetic. Functionality is prioritised "A healthy farming industry, a 'greener' green belt and planning decisions that take environmental, social and climate change considerations into account" (Bill Bryson, ex- CPRE president)(Campaign to Protect Rural England, 2009: 10). This idea of the rural, despite coming from an organisation often associated with conservative values, is a good fit with the emergent view of landscape held by this research.

Research and writing about cities can sometimes be applied to the rural condition. Rosemary Shirley reminds us that the countryside is, after all, a site of modernity and “an active, inhabited and practised realm” (Shirley, 2015: 150). Using the body of urban scholarship to help understand landscape in non-urban contexts may, indeed, illuminate the nature of some of the challenges facing modern rural areas. One reason for this is arguably the continued blurring of boundaries between rural and urban places, particularly on the fringes of large conurbations, at the edges of airports and along the lengths of linear transport infrastructure, for example. In these places, the concerns of rural and urban inhabitants have much in common. This is not a new phenomenon. In writer and broadcaster Ian Nairn’s polemic, *Outrage* (first published as the June 1955 issue of the *Architectural Review*) he coins the term ‘Subtopia’;

> “a mean and middle state, neither town nor country, an even spread of abandoned aerodromes and fake rusticity, wire fences, traffic roundabouts, gratuitous notice-boards, car parks and Things in Fields. It is a morbid condition which spreads both ways from suburbia, out in to the country, and back in to the devitalized heart of towns…Subtopia is the world of universal low-density mess.”
>
> (Nairn et al., 1955: 363)

Outrage is the product of Nairn’s car journey from Southampton to Carlisle and Gretna, along a line ruled across the map, his route between Birmingham and Manchester coincidentally resembling that proposed for HS2 phases 2a and 2b. His views echo those of Clough Williams-Ellis, who, 27 years earlier, in his 1928 book *England and the Octopus*, opined that “we plant trees in the town and bungalows in the country, thus averaging England out in to a dull uneventfulness whereby one place becomes much the same as any other” (Williams-Ellis, 1975, new edition: 21). Nairn’s book is illustrated with sketches by Gordon Cullen, and Nairn’s own photographs taken en-route, which frequently demonstrate the presence of urban and suburban characteristics in rural locations. He presents, for example, eleven pictures of streets on the fringes of eleven different towns and cities, and challenges the reader to identify which is from which place, commenting that “the photographs, unhappily, can speak for themselves” (see Figure 19).



standard fringes Here is the guessing game. It is enough justification for a special issue were there nothing else to complain about on the whole route. Romsey, Oxford, Stratford, Birmingham, Stafford, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Northwich, Warrington and Bolton-le-Sands are shown here jumbled up; not in south-to-north order as the other sets have been. Which *is* which?

Everything has been said elsewhere in the issue about the visual and consequent social evil of this ring of Subtopia that girdles every English town. There is no point in repeating the arguments, and the photographs, unhappily, can speak for themselves. This is murder we are committing: first of our surroundings, then, as they react on us, of ourselves. If you say that to alter it is impracticable, uneconomic and unrealistic, remember that a nation-wide organization to track down physical murder is just as impracticable, uneconomic and unrealistic on the face of it, yet we have the CID. The obstacles will disappear if we want them to, and the first stage towards that is awareness. This issue, condensed, says Look Out: This is Awful.

key: 1, *Stratford.* 2, *Warrington.* 3, *Northwich.* 4, *Stafford.* 5, *Newcastle-under-Lyme.* 6, *Oxford.* 7, *Romsey.* 8, *Bolton-le-Sands, Lancs.* 9, *Birmingham.*

Figure 19. Nairn's illustration of similarity on the urban peripheries of eleven different towns between Southampton and Carlisle; fuel for his ‘outrage’ about loss of individual place identity (Nairn et al., 1955).

His concern is the sameness that he encounters at different locations on the journey, a view shared by Lefebvre, writing nearly twenty years later;

> “There is no need to subject modern towns, their outskirts and new buildings, to careful scrutiny in order to reach the conclusion that everything here resembles everything else”
>
> (Lefebvre, 1991: 75)

For Nairn, the problem is not just lack of distinction between different suburbs, but between the town and the country itself. He sees it likely that by the end of the twentieth century “there will be no real distinction between town and country” (Nairn et al., 1955: 365). This homogeneity, for Nairn, lies very much with the visual identity of the places he visits. He objects to ‘Things in Fields’, for example, for their pointless disruption to places which are cluttered with ‘stuff’ that doesn’t aesthetically belong, and he finds fault with local government planning which is “perverted to make every square mile indistinguishable.” (Nairn et al., 1955: 367). Similarly, he sees the presence of various types of wire in rural places as a threat to their difference from towns; “How many types of wire are there in the Parish? Standing on the green, how many wires can you see clearly?" (Nairn et al., 1955: 454). The question of wire is a particularly telling one and Shirley takes it up in order to problematise his view that certain elements of the rural landscape do not belong in a rural place;

> "Nairn makes a clear distinction between wire and site, the wire is not part of the site or landscape…it is something which is disrupting long held ideas about what constitutes the countryside, and disrupting the clear division between town and country. The wire physically and symbolically connects the rural to the urban."
>
> (Shirley, 2015: 110)

To Nairn, this linear visual connection between what he sees as two distinct typologies of landscape is wholly undesirable, contributing to "the steamrollering of all individuality of place to one uniform and mediocre pattern" (Nairn et al., 1955: 371). A new railway line could be seen in much the same light. To Shirley, his view represents an unrealistic ideal of the countryside which would deny its modernity. She proposes to redefine the rural as;

> "a multiple terrain, a definition which rather than seeing motorways etc as urban incursions, acknowledges that they are a significant part of what constitutes an understanding of the modern rural."
>
> (Shirley, 2015: 150)

I do not find their views to be contradictory. Whilst it cannot be denied that infrastructural elements, for example, are very much a real presence in the countryside, I would support Nairn's argument that it is very important for rural places to retain some sense of their identity, both as 'countryside' and as individual places, distinct from each other. Nairn's eleven suburban streets are just as telling in the 21st century as they were in the middle of the 20th, and these vistas have probably changed little in the intervening years. Do people wish to feel that they are in the landscape of Carlisle rather than Southampton, and vice versa? I would argue that they do. This is a topic significant in the public consciousness due to the now well-established reign of global retail and coffee chains in town and city centres, producing uniformity of place and sameness in terms of the sights, sounds, smells and flavours of the urban.

Nairn states in his 'manifesto' at the end of *Outrage*;

> "Places are different: Subtopia is the annihilation of difference by attempting to make one type of scenery standard for town, suburb, countryside and wild. So what

> has to be done is to maintain and intensify the difference between places. This is the basic principle of visual planning.”
>
> (Nairn et al., 1955: 451)

His concern with the visual is only one aspect of distinctiveness, but from a functional perspective the point still stands. Were our whole countryside to be devoted entirely to the function of intensively producing one type of crop, for example, as in the prairie provinces of North America, the problems resulting from this homogeneity would be not only visual impacts but significant environmental ones, as in the Dust Bowl of the 1930s.

It is to be expected, then, that as rural places are increasingly connected to urban places they will share some characteristics. Ashley has a motorway, airport, river, railway line and power lines in common with Manchester and therefore clearly has some of the visual and functional properties of the city. Similarly, it is possible to identify many green spaces in south Manchester, particularly along the Mersey Valley, which have more in common with some Cheshire landscapes than with other urban places.

In their paper *The Urban-Rural Divide: Myth or Reality?,* Scott, Gilbert and Gelan (A. Scott et al., 2007) of the Macauley Land Use Research Institute, trace the urban/rural divide back to the UK’s post-war planning policy which separated ‘town and country’ planning from rural planning for forestry and agriculture; “In effect two planning systems were born, complete with different agencies, procedures and remits for the management of rural and urban space” (A. Scott et al., 2007: 5). This divide, they contend, is one created by policy rather than the policy responding to need. They perceive a landscape in which urban places merge with rural ones in barely perceptible ways, creating territories in-between which do not sit perfectly in either typology;

> “many social, cultural, economic and environmental issues are inadequately addressed by current policy approaches which separate ‘rural’ and ‘urban’ agendas and priorities. Instead we need to pay more subtle attention to issues intersecting along an ‘urban-rural continuum’.”
>
> (A. Scott et al., 2007: 3)

Such a continuum seems potentially to be a more useful way of conceiving of places like Ashley, located on the urban fringe. However, over a period of almost three years visiting the parish, it is apparent to me that to locate it on a point along a continuum would be an oversimplification. In fact, some very strongly rural characteristics exist here, overlaid by and adjacent to urban ones. If one were to consider Ashley on a time-continuum, or change curve, showing its movement between the rural and urban conditions, it would be moving towards greater urbanisation over time, though not in a gradual progression, but rather in a series of huge leaps, each with the arrival of a new transport infrastructure.

David Matless, in writing about the railway preservation movement of the 1950s, describes the condition of any local area within a wider network, thus;

> "Branch-line salvage, branch-line history, can find virtue in not connecting to a wider network, operating locally, back and forth and not beyond, rescuing and revering something passed by, bypassed by, the modern world."

(Matless, 1998: 276)

This suggests an aspect of human psychology which can derive pleasure from retreating in to a state of rural isolation. The possibility of the existence of this mindset is relevant to my research, in acknowledging that it may be the very promise of increased connectivity, arguably the government's key selling point for HS2, which is in fact a significant factor in causing resistance to the line by people living in rural localities. Indeed, it is not clear that a typical farmer or agricultural worker would have anything at all to gain from such connection to the wider network across the cities of Europe, and the trains and line itself will absolutely manifest 'the modern' in farmed landscapes, the essential functions of which have changed very little since the early Victorian tithe maps.

Research interest in the rural often focus on the concept of change in the form of land development. Bolchover et al, writing in *Architectural Design*, conceive of the rural as "the frontline of the urbanisation process" (Bolchover et al., 2016) rather than a territory in its own right, and find that "We need to start actively engaging, researching and designing the rural in order to shape our collective urban future." (Bolchover et al., 2016: 13). This justification of work in the countryside by claiming benefits for the city contributes to a professional mindset which is in danger of devaluing the needs of the rural landscape itself. In the same issue of the journal, Schumacher states that "we should never forget the relative communicative poverty and cultural retardation of rural in comparison to urban life" (Schumacher, 2016: 129). He forecasts that, in an urbanising world, the countryside will become "a vast engineered landscape of physical machine-based production processes" (Schumacher, 2016: 131) which does not merit the attention of architects. In contrast to this thesis, he believes that "markets confirm social merit via profitability" (Schumacher, 2016: 133) and that therefore the aim of increased prosperity is sufficient to ensure that the best land-use decisions are made. Such views ignore the simple fact that many people choose to make their lives and livelihoods in rural places, rather than urban ones, and that they have a right to do so.

My final point about the rural condition is the question of land ownership. According to a feature in *Country Life Magazine*, the UK government does not know who owns all of rural England, because (as at 2011) more than 25% of the land in the UK is not registered with the Land Registry. This is because such land has not changed hands since the end of the nineteenth century, when it became compulsory to register it on change of ownership (Country Life Magazine, November 2010). There is an unofficial and incomplete map of English land ownership available at map.whoownsengland.org, but this is not reliably updated and does not show the privately-owned Tatton Estate land in Ashley, or, for example, the large areas of urban land owned by Peel Holdings in nearby Trafford. Its data sets come from sources such as water companies, government, the National Trust, Royal Society for Protection of Birds, the Forestry Commission, the Ministry of Defence and so on. It is a public attempt to communicate what information is available, and to propose that this data should not be secret. Data about private ownership can be sought from the land registry, but at a cost of £9,000 for a single download, this is not accessible to the typical PhD researcher, or lay person. Details of land ownership along the HS2 route is available in the *Book of Reference* accompanying the High Speed Rail Bill, but again a (much smaller) fee is payable. *Country Life* claims that;

> "More than a third of land is still in the hands of aristocrats and traditional landed gentry. Indeed, the 36,000 members of the CLA [Country Landowners Association] own about 50% of the rural land in England and Wales"
>
> (Country Life Magazine, November 2010)

This estimate is supported by the CLA's own claims (Country Landowners Association, 2017). The issue of ownership is an important one when it comes to finding out how inhabitants can have real influence over the future of their landscapes, because only the legislative powers of the state can preserve inhabitants' rights in the face of private interests. This thread within my research has become more significant as work in Ashley has progressed, and land ownership issues have increasingly been raised by residents. This dimension is explored more fully in Chapter Five.

Defining the rural has been one of the unexpectedly difficult aspects of this research. I have met with academics in landscape-related fields who disagree with my views.

However, in line with my methodology and findings, I am content to conclude that if the materiality of the landscape at a 1:1 scale manifests with what are generally agreed to be significantly rural characteristics, and if the majority of the inhabitants of a place say that it is rural, then so it is.

1.11 Conclusions to this chapter

This chapter has sought to explain why my research concurs with the view of landscape as a strongly emergent entity, and why this is the essential concept underpinning the research. I argue that this is because, given the likelihood of phase transition and cascading development in Ashley, the only way in which public engagement can amass the power to have any positive impact on the future of the landscape is if the engagement itself can undergo a phase transition and begin to cascade.

It has also briefly introduced Ashley; this complex place will become much more familiar to the reader as the thesis progresses. It has used the metaphor of sticks in the sand to illustrate what emergent landscape design might mean, but more importantly, for my purposes, to begin to form an idea of what emergent *engagement* with landscape might be. In discussing the relevance of the local, it has problematised received notions about community and the rural condition. This further explains the complexity of the context in which the research has taken place and demonstrates my understanding of the resultant complexities of public engagement.

Chapter Two

Engagement with landscape

“I sat down one spring day to write about walking and stood up again, because a desk is no place to think on the large scale.”

(Solnit, 2014: 4)

2.1 Abstract

This chapter considers what engagement with landscape might mean and what constitutes reasonable aspirations for such engagement. It argues that, based on emergence theory, embodied and reciprocal engagement with landscape is a valuable condition, to be sought out by professional landscape designers and inhabitants alike, especially in the context of rural landscapes facing significant challenges. It discusses the status of both visitor to and inhabitant of a landscape, and examines the use of walking as a research method, all with reference to emergence.

2.2 Engagement or consultation?

A child picking up conkers beneath a horse chestnut tree is engaging with landscape, as is a runner on their daily route or a person walking to work. These people are all engaging to varying degrees and in their unique and qualitatively different ways. For the purposes of this research, it is important to clarify what is meant by engagement, and to explore whether emergence theory can support an understanding of how this engagement works.

Within the industries of the built environment, confusion can occur between the terms consultation on the one hand, and engagement on the other. They are not the same thing. 'To consult' denotes several related ideas, including to seek advice from, to refer to for information, to take in to consideration, and "to have especial respect or beneficial reference to (a person's good, interest, convenience, etc.) in forming plans" (Oxford English Dictionary, 2018). This usage implies the consulted party's high status as a source of valued knowledge. When an organisation making landscape proposals undertakes 'stakeholder consultation' it usually means that they are seeking information from other organisations, such as water and power companies, landowners, the Highways Agency and so on, which are powerful participants because without their cooperation the proposals would not progress. The OED also provides the more recent meaning of consultation: "to seek permission or approval from (a person) for a proposed action" (Oxford English Dictionary, 2018).This modern usage, particularly in the field of landscape planning, loses the explicit sense of the benefit of the person, and respect for the consulted person's knowledge and instead suggests that their power subsists only in giving or withholding permission. It reverses the power dynamic, in that the consultee who previously held valued knowledge is now repositioned as being reactive to knowledge coming from 'above', in the form of a proposal. This latter sense of the word 'consult' tends to be the one which is applied in the case of public consultation practices, in which the public are asked to accept a specific proposal, or one proposal from a choice of two or three. HS2 Ltd uses both the words 'consultation' and 'engagement' to describe its interactions with members of the public. They have, at times, been used synonymously, and this can obscure the true aims of engagement and consultation procedures.

I propose that engagement is, in fact, very different from consultation, which can only be a top-down process. The OED lists 19 different senses of the verb 'to engage'. These meanings are weighted with obligation, for example; to bind or secure by a pledge, contract or formal promise; to enter into a covenant or undertaking; to be 'committed' to (Oxford English Dictionary, 2018). These definitions capture a sense of dedicated reciprocity which is absent from 'consultation'. In an emergent landscape, as has been discussed above, open systems are absolutely reciprocal, and such a feeling of commitment to and mutuality with landscape would, I argue, produce immensely richer, more genuine, enduring and valuable engagement. In the face of the very extended timescales of a large infrastructure project, it may be the only way to proceed in order that the engagement process can genuinely keep pace with ongoing emergence of both the landscape and the proposals.

Interestingly, further definitions of engagement have a marked physicality and allude to landscape: "to entangle, e.g. in a snare or net, in a bog; to cause to be held fast; to enter into a country, etc. (obs.); to involve oneself in (an intricate path, etc.)" (Oxford English Dictionary, 2018).

My research aims not to devise a consultation methodology, but rather is based on this embodied and reciprocal idea of engagement; that it is a committed involvement. The terms recall Bélanger's idea that the designer's actions should be an interaction. The further definitions of 'engaged', "to have promised one's presence; to enter into an agreement for service" (Oxford English Dictionary, 2018) are also resonant as I propose that the process should be in the interests of, or in service of, the landscape itself, in which the researcher or engagement professional invests themselves in the interaction for the duration of the process. It is significant that my aims here are not, primarily, to investigate engagement with the people of a landscape, who will always be in some sense transient, but to explore engagement with the landscape itself, as the enduring ground for all human activity. In the case of significant infrastructure projects spanning long periods of time, people move away. HS2 Ltd refer only to engagement with 'communities', for example as in; "we are facing the largest community engagement challenge currently in the UK." (HS2 Ltd, September 2017: 3). This statement comes from their new (at the time of writing) *Community Engagement Strategy*, which has emerged in the wake of some very serious criticisms over the past two years (see Chapter Four) and defines the purpose of their community engagement for the first time:

> "Community engagement is about creating a long-term and trusted two-way conversation with the communities in which the railway will be built and operated. But it is not only about talking and listening. It is also about demonstrating how the views of local people are being taken into consideration in the design, construction and operation of the new railway."
>
> (HS2 Ltd, September 2017: 8)

Here, then, is an acknowledgement of the need for commitment and longevity of engagement and a desire to show that local views have been taken in to account. The underlying idea, however, is that local people will already have sufficient primary engagement with their landscapes in order to then bring their views and experience to the table for discussion. This is problematic assumption.

2.3 Embodied and reciprocal engagement

It is relevant, therefore, to consider what an individual's full engagement with their landscape might be like. A significant writer and academic in this field is Robert Macfarlane, whose habitual engagement with landscape is through walking, sleeping out, cycling and writing about it. In his 2013 book *The Old Ways* he describes walking the Broomway in Essex, the UK's only offshore public right of way and a highly dangerous path, which disappears from view as the tides come in. Removing his boots for the walk, his bare feet become imprinted with the landscape; "miniature sandscapes of ridge and valley pressed into the soles of my feet, and for days after the walk I would feel a memory of that pressure and pattern." Here, then, is an embodied engagement with landscape as well as a psychological one:

> "My brain was beginning to move unusually, worked upon and changed by the mind-altering substances of this offshore world, and by the elation that arose from the counter-intuition of walking securely on water ...when I think back to the outer miles of that walk...I recall thought becoming sensational; the substance of landscape so influencing mind that mind's own substance was altered"
>
> (Macfarlane, 2013a: 74-75)

Echoing Rod Barnett's statement of his own inseparability from landscape (see section 1.4), Macfarlane's writing here overcomes any sense of distance or separation from this ethereal place. He revels in the submersion of self in an emergent engagement with landscape, here to the point of acknowledging that the place 'alters' him in a way far beyond the physical, simply through the act of walking. This theme is significant throughout his writing, and particularly in *Holloway*, published the same year and illustrated by Stanley Donwood (see Figure 20). A holloway is a centuries-old sunken path, originally dug by landowners as a boundary ditch (Hoskins, 1955) and then worn deep in to the bedrock. Donwood's illustrations depict a place which seems outside-but-inside, reinforce the sense of the reader having been captured by the landscape, and recollect the interior of a human limb or organ, with the trees resembling a vascular system. This short book is an account of two explorations of the same holloway in the Chideock Valley, Dorset. The first trip is made by Macfarlane and his friend and collaborator, landscape writer Roger Deakin. This book is also a deeply personal tribute to Roger, who died two years after the trip, and is dedicated to his memory. The second foray is undertaken seven years after the first, with Donwood and Dan Richards as Macfarlane's companions.

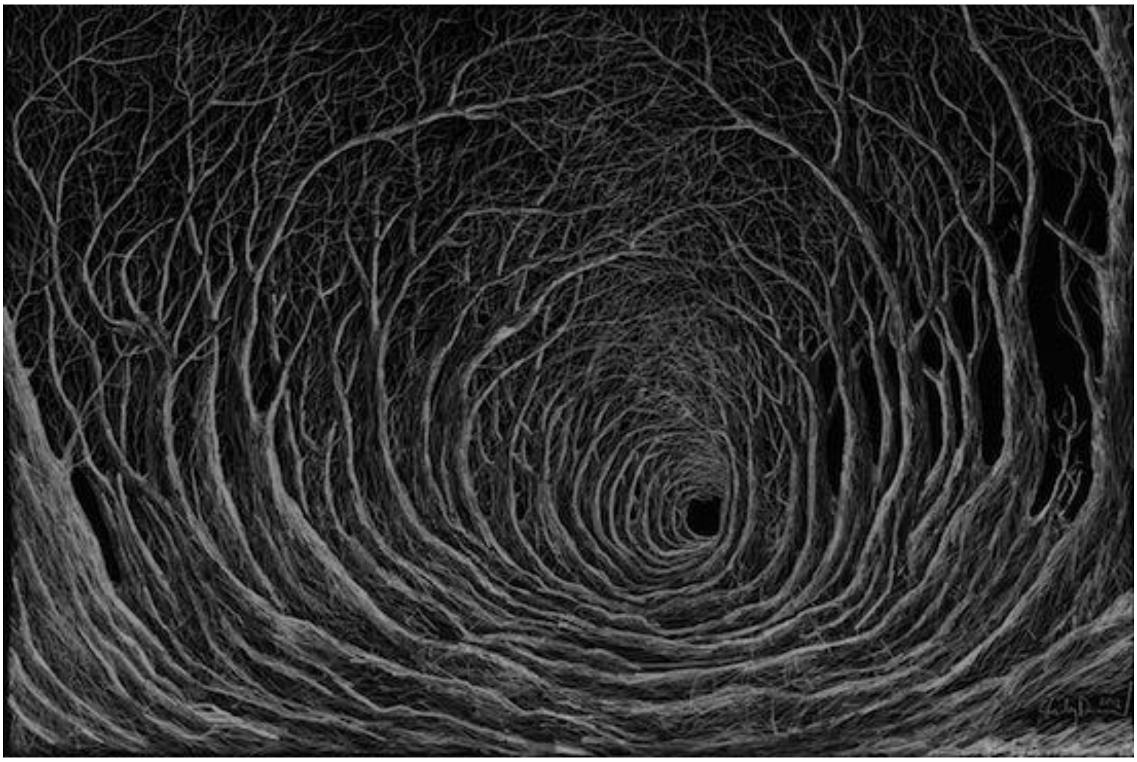


Figure 20. Illustration from Holloway, by Stanley Donwood (Macfarlane et al., 2013). The perspective of the interior of the holloway supports the text's depiction of the enfolding of the companions in a fully embodied, intimate relationship with the landscape.

Of both excursions, we are told what they pack in their rucksacks, where they walk, what they eat and drink, but mainly how it feels to be in the place. The prose is suffused with grief and loss; Deakin's absence is a constant. The descent in to the holloway is an entry in to depths of darkness, populated by ghosts, phantoms and shade/s, and the path itself is a route back in to the more distant past; "Down in the dusk of the holloway, the landscape's pasts felt excitingly alive & coexistant, as if history had pleated back on itself" (Macfarlane et al., 2013: 13). Thus, immersing themselves and making camp in the holloway's folds of bedrock, they penetrate layers of landscape and history at once, as here there is no meaningful distinction to be made between temporal and spatial dimensions. This is a phenomenon revisited in *The Old Ways*, where Macfarlane describes a walk along the sands at Formby, on the Lancashire coast, following the line of human footprints preserved in mud from the Mesolithic era;

> "To track these tracks, to leave your own prints beside them, is to sense nothing so simple as time travel... the uncanniness of the experience involves a feeling of co-presence; the prehistoric and the present matching up"

(Macfarlane, 2013a: 362-3)

Ancient though they are, Macfarlane does not cast the Mesolithic footprints as an unchanging element of the landscape, rather he draws attention to the way that new sets of prints continue to emerge with tidal erosion and are quickly washed away again. Twice, upon my own visits to the beach at Formby, I have placed my own feet in the hollow prints and felt that same sense of connection to place and people. Reading about these traces had interested me but fitting my own body to the prints and realising that my stride length was the same as this Mesolithic person's, was an immersed and emotional engagement.

Macfarlane's directions for finding the holloway are taken from a novel carried by the explorers; *Rogue Male* (Household, 1939), tells the tale of a fugitive who hides out in the depths. These textual clues are not entirely reliable but work well enough in illustrating the nature of the landscape for the hidden path to be found. Macfarlane warns readers that his book "is about a holloway & its shades, & a clear map of the holloway's finding is not contained within it." (Macfarlane et al., 2013: 5). The territory, however, is mapped with words, giving ephemeral clues to seek "the pollinous air of the flower meadow…by the side of a high old ash tree" (Macfarlane et al., 2013: 12). The writers' determination to act as gatekeepers and conceal as much as they reveal with this 'mapping' reminds us of the highly personal value that the place has for them, such that readers may be permitted to no more than glimpse the holloway, and not to visit it in person.

Holloway is a study of how landscape shapes us whilst we shape it, or how "people and landscape…are 'mutually constituted'." (Ingold, 2011: 129). The reciprocal nature of the human relationship with landscape is poignantly exemplified by this buried pathway, leading Macfarlane to conclude that "stretches of a path might carry memories of a person just as a person might of a path" (Macfarlane et al., 2013: 20). This writing about how landscape bears witness to human experience can evoke and provoke in ways beyond simple viewing and aesthetic appreciation. It is punctuated by illustrations of the holloway which all show the same thing, not a panorama - but a void, an absence, something, someone missing:

> "I had not gone in search of Roger's shade, but I found him there nonetheless, glimpsed startlingly clearly at the turn of a corner or the edge of a tree line. Actual memory traces existed in the stumps of the holly saplings we had cut as staffs, our blade-marks still visible in the wood."
>
> (Macfarlane et al., 2013: 20)

This example of embodied human connection to landscape is far from being a unique perception; it is in fact an attachment that underpins our everyday existence and which all our ancestors will have experienced as they worked with and in the land, building, sowing, harvesting, exploring and travelling. Until very recent times, active participation in landscape has been the everyday stuff of life itself, but now "We are literally losing touch, becoming disembodied, more than in any previous historical period" (Macfarlane, 2011: xxxi, from his introduction to the new edition of *The Living Mountain*)(N. Shepherd, 2011). Macfarlane has been hugely influenced by *The Living Mountain*, an account of Shepherd's lifelong relationship with the Cairngorm mountains. The writing is a heartfelt exploration of what engagement with landscape means at its most intimately embodied. She relates human impacts on the landscape, but her attention is more often on what it means for her own bodily knowledge of the place. In describing what it is to fall asleep on the open mountain, Shepherd writes "I am emptied of preoccupation, there is nothing between me and the earth and sky." (N. Shepherd, 2011: 90). Whilst asleep, she becomes more yet more part of the ground, and on waking;

> "ceasing to be a stone, to be the soil of the earth, opening eyes that have human cognisance behind them upon what one has been so profoundly a part of. That is all. One has been in."
>
> (N. Shepherd, 2011: 92)

This connection to the world is a rich and spiritually nourishing experience for Shepherd, but it is more than that, it is the absolute essence of being a person. Her journey in to the mountain "is a journey into Being; for as I penetrate more deeply into the mountain's life, I penetrate also into my own…I am not out of myself, but in myself. I am." (N. Shepherd, 2011: 108). It is this primary engagement with landscape that brings with it human joy, but also respect for our surroundings, which comes from the greater knowledge that is accumulated. Shepherd does not claim to know everything about the mountain, indeed she is very humble about the scope of mere human knowledge compared to the scale of the complexity of the mountain itself. She does, however, prize the opportunity that the landscape gives her, to live through her senses:

> "Here then may be lived a life of the sense so pure, so untouched by any mode of apprehension but their own, that the body may be said to think…If I had other senses there are other things I should know…Yet, with what we have, what wealth!"
>
> (N. Shepherd, 2011: 105-6)

This relationship between walker and landscape is arguably a modern manifestation of embodied engagement; a privileged leisure activity that replaces earlier forms of exposure to the outdoors, such as described, here, by Ingold:

> "in medieval times the land was scaped by the people who, with foot, axe and plough… in an immediate, muscular and visceral engagement with wood, grass and soil – the very opposite of the distanced, contemplative and panoramic optic that the word 'landscape' conjures up in many minds today"
>
> (Ingold, 2011: 126-127)

Of course, such primary engagement can mean exposure, danger and discomfort. Nan Shepherd recounts tales of the grim deaths of walkers on the Cairngorms and reports that the mountain dwellers have "only condemnation for winter climbing" (N. Shepherd, 2011: 84). The potential brutality of the landscape is sometimes recalled in ceremony, such as in the ancient practice of 'beating the bounds', led by the parish priest of St Michael's church, Oxford, each Ascension Day (Shirley, 2015; Olwig, 2008). This tradition comprises a day-long walk around the parish, using canes to beat the twenty-two stones which mark the boundary. Historically;

> "the practice of beating the bounds did not only refer to the beating of boundary stones but also of boys. The idea being that having one's head hit against a stone… would instil a memory of its location and ensure the knowledge of the parish boundaries was passed on to future generations"
>
> (Shirley, 2015: 2)

This physical experience of a parish boundary emphasises the great significance of the territory to the inhabitants, with a longevity of knowledge through physical connection. The brutal nature of the tradition illustrates a relationship with landscape very different from the gentle, reverential experience of *Holloway*, but demonstrates the same point; the vital nature of the physical human relationship with landscape. This is closely related to the idea of 'mētis', used for example by James C. Scott, who states that he is

> "…making a case against an imperial or hegemonic planning mentality that excludes the necessary role of local knowledge and know-how…to conceptualize the nature of practical knowledge and to contrast it with more formal, deductive, epistemic knowledge. The term mētis…the knowledge that can come only from practical experience" (J. C. Scott, 1998: 6)

The personal, psychological and emotional human connection with landscape is not separate from the socio-political connection. In applying the Norwegian concept of *dugnad* to engagement with community landscape initiatives, Marte Lange Vik gives a "Nordic perspective on landscape…focusing both on how people and landscape are mutually constitutive" (Vik, 2017: 401). She describes *dugnad* activities as traditionally relating to communal outdoor work on the maintenance of the landscape, working through established social networks. She finds that this shared embodied experience can increase participation in landscape matters to the extent of empowering communities to become more involved in development processes, and that further studies are required to "extend our understanding and discussion of the conditions for landscape democracy": (Vik, 2017: 409).

This thesis argues that knowledge gained from the primary source of embodied experience of landscape is such a rich and essential form of knowledge that gaining it should be considered an essential part of any professional responsibility to that landscape. This means both spending time in the landscape, and also accessing the knowledge of inhabitants who have accrued significant first-hand experience of the place. This recognises the indivisibility of the human from the landscape within emergence theory, as discussed in section 1.5.

Macfarlane and Shepherd are perhaps extreme examples of devotion to landscape, who demonstrate what is possible rather than what is likely in the everyday. Rural places on the urban periphery, such as Ashley, are at significant risk of the alienation of people from landscape, because the place may be functioning largely as a 'dormitory' for the city; sparsely populated for much of the working week and only sporadically visited by incomers at weekends. Such locations do not necessarily have the attractions of a National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, neither do they offer the modern leisure facilities of the nearby city. Their roads are largely without footpaths or cycle ways and very difficult to walk safely, so almost all movement of inhabitants through the landscape, to work or to school, is estranged from it, in a car. Indeed, the landscape can come to be viewed by some as simply a functional network of transport links, in which places become 'interchanges'. Compare this to the life of the typical city dweller, who can so easily walk to school, restaurants, bars, libraries and parks. In Ashley, most of the land is privately owned and inaccessible, so basic leisure activities in woodlands or fields are very restricted. In these circumstances, unless they work directly with the land, each individual's engagement with their landscape can become a difficult thing; constrained, or even nullified. In such places, the need for substantially improved public engagement with landscape is the most pressing.

2.4 The visitor

When, in 2014, I first saw HS2 Ltd's proposals for the alignment of Phase 2 (as it was then), Ashley stood out very clearly. The map showing the village isolated between the M56 and the proposed line seemed to indicate that here was a place in need of some attention. It was hard to believe at first that somewhere so close to my own home (around 20 minutes' drive away) was going to be so utterly changed. I wanted to find out what might happen to such a place, and if at all possible, influence that outcome in favour of the landscape itself. I knew very little about Ashley. I knew nobody who lived there. It soon became apparent that working there would involve reflecting upon my position as an outsider, a visitor to the parish. A significant aspect of this is that, as a city dweller all my life, I do not have a lived understanding of the countryside as a resident, and so risked misunderstanding all kinds of things.

In her book *Rural Modernity, Everyday Life and Visual Culture* (2015), Rosemary Shirley declares her "project of disrupting the worn alignment of the rural with the past" (Shirley, 2015:12) in order to recast the rural as a site of modernity. Her emphasis contrasts with Macfarlane's conceptualisation of landscape evoking a coexistant past. This tension is an illustration of the difference in focus between the two writers; Shirley attending to the cultural practices of communities, and Macfarlane to the 'ground' on which they have occurred over many generations. There is, however, common ground between the two.

Shirley explores "the 'countryside' as a populated place with lived rhythms and routines, rather than a 'landscape' which is primarily to be looked at or visited." (Shirley, 2015:3). This observation demonstrates the common misconception of landscape, but nevertheless makes a pertinent point about many rural places along the proposed alignment of HS2, such as Ashley with its agricultural land and small business activity, film set location at the Hall, church, pub, pre-school and cricket club. It is not a scenic destination for tourists or day-trippers from any significant distance away; it is not a relic, but a lived place. In the case of my research, I contend that it is in fact very useful that my status is as a visitor rather than inhabitant. I propose that 'visitor status':

- is necessary in testing a methodology that is repeatable in different locations;
- brings a useful impartiality from the day to day affairs of parish life;
- and means that I am genuinely less well informed about the landscape than interviewees who inhabit it.

This last is arguably vital to the success of the research, as it is in this shared and reciprocal process of the acquisition of knowledge that a trust-based working relationship might develop, via an emergent and anthropological approach. In the appendix to later editions of William Foote Whyte's classic account, *Street Corner Society, the Social Structure of an Italian Slum* (first edition 1955), he discusses the methodology for his research in 'Cornerville', an Italian ghetto district of Boston, which had taken place during the late 1930s, noting that "the researcher, like his informants, is a social animal" (Whyte, 1993: 279). The study is of the lives and social structures of the street gangs and 'corner boys' of the district, to whom the book is dedicated. As a visitor to the ghetto, "a stranger in a world completely unknown to me" (Whyte, 1993: 289), Foot Whyte decides that his first research approach will be to "drop in on some drinking place in the area and strike up an acquaintance with a girl, buy her a drink" (Whyte, 1993: 289). The naivety of his plan results in threats of violence from men in the bar. In retrospect, from the perspective of later adulthood, Whyte is very aware of the influence that his presence had on events in Cornerville and therefore the findings of his research, and considers factors about himself that influenced how he was perceived at the time. He notes, for example, that he was 23 years old, standing six feet three inches tall. He is aware that his physical presence will have had some bearing on inhabitants' initial judgements of him, and that his youth was probably eventually to his advantage as he became accepted by a mother-figure in whose house he boarded. He remarks particularly on his social class and upbringing as the child of a college professor as giving him a very different set of life experiences to that of the people of Cornerville.

In a similar way, my identity as a city person has undoubtedly had an influence in Ashley. The majority of people with whom I have had contact in the Parish are farmers, from farming families, or belong to related spheres of work such as the local vet and milkman. They are absolutely aware of my stance as an outsider. This has had some benefits. It is very easy, for example, for a farmer to talk to me as someone who has an academic interest in landscape but very little knowledge of farming in general or of that particular farm. This dynamic positions the inhabitant as authoritative source of local knowledge, consistent with my aims to reverse the flow of information through public engagement. This would not be by any means so straightforward if, locally, the perception grew that I was there to impart my expertise. Similarly, arriving in the parish as a student at the very start of my PhD meant that I did not start out claiming any particular knowledge about HS2, railways in general, or public engagement. As I have learnt about these things, I have regularly reported back my findings to the parish via parish council meetings and to individuals through walking, such that residents are aware that this is a learning process for me, and know that sharing my discoveries with them is part of the plan. There has been one exception to this principle of openness; I have not spoken explicitly to anyone in Ashley about my view of the landscape and the research as emergent. I would have liked to do this, but did not feel that there would be any appetite for listening to academic theory, and decided that it might make people less likely to be open to walking with me. The primary reason for my presence, after all, was for me to learn from them, and not the other way around.

Whyte's key to success in Cornerville comes when he is introduced to Doc, a young man well-known in the neighbourhood and part of street corner gang society. Their first meeting is arranged by a social worker at a Catholic settlement house to whom Foot Whyte has been chatting about his research. Doc is very happy to induct Whyte, whom he calls Bill, in to the scene; "You come in as my friend. When you come in like that, at first everybody will treat you with respect...when they get to know you they will treat you like anybody else." (Whyte, 1993: 292). Doc goes on to become essential in the study. He asks if 'Bill' wants to change things in Cornerville, where conditions are overcrowded and impoverished. The answer is yes, and Doc says "I think you can change things that way...by writing about them." (Whyte, 1993: 293). Thus the success of the study is set up through an emergent process of networking, and the aim and outcomes of the study are defined between researcher and participant:

> "At first he was simply a key informant... As we spent more time together, I ceased to treat him as a passive informant...Much of our time was spent in this discussion of ideas and observations, so that Doc became, in a very real sense, a collaborator in this research."
>
> (Whyte, 1993: 301)

The nature of the relationship between them is very much that Bill needs Doc, and not the other way around; Doc holds the essential knowledge that the researcher desires in order to find a foothold and learn about the place. Acceptance by Doc also seems to change Bills' attitude to the ghetto. From that point on he eats in local restaurants, meaning that useful connections can be made as he bumps in to one or another member of the community. He soon moves in as a lodger to the house of a family who run a restaurant. The Italian couple whose home it is speak no English, and Bill no Italian, though he then starts to learn and this is also a key factor in his acceptance by locals (Whyte, 1993).

Whyte's methods include walking the neighbourhood of Cornerville with local people. Much of the life of the gangs is lived outside and it benefits Bill's status to be regularly seen out in the company of accepted gang members. This was also an element in becoming accepted by some residents of Ashley. Being seen out walking with the Vicar, or a well-known farmer, or a parish councillor, has no doubt helped me, but my lack of allegiance to any local organisations or persons is crucial, as interviews with inhabitants suggest that there are some causes of conflict between different parties who live/work here; a circumstance which may prove to be not untypical of rural parishes.

Previous to this research, Ashley was a place I knew only from maps, and, like many others, from regularly passing through in my car at 70 mph on the M56. This affords a very particular and isolated experience of the landscape, such as may be repeated on many long stretches of the motorway network, due to the uniformity of landform and vegetation. It is perhaps the very experience of passing, sealed in comfortable vehicles, along roads through rural places which leads us to fail to distinguish the value of places such as Ashley:

> "The mentality of the non-place is a product of the tyranny of the navigational road-sign. Space becomes a coded text which creates the illusion that between the place names, glowing white on blue, there is nothing but a nameless space without history or meaning."
>
> (Shirley, 2015: 34-35)

The speed of travel and isolation in a vehicle is as relevant as the visual repetition of the roadside signage, landform, planting and bridges. Driving through Ashley may be a valid and even a pleasurable experience, but the faster one moves, the less likely one is to make embodied observations of those material qualities of a landscape which make it unique. The researcher can, in this case, have a very different quality of experience and arguably learn a great deal more on foot than in a car, as Lippard says;

> "Even if one's history there is short, a place can still be felt as an extension of the body, especially the walking body, passing through and becoming part of the landscape." (Lippard, 1997: 34)

2.5 Drifting, walking, and emergence

The use of walking to study psychological interaction with urban environments is well established. Psychogeography, defined in 1955 as "the study of the precise laws and the specific effects of the geographical environment, whether consciously organised or not, on the emotions and behaviour of individuals" (Debord, 2008: 23, translation by Ken Knabb) is a practise of thought and writing which is closely identified with walking as methodology (Andreotti et al., 1996). Typically, the psychogeographer observes urban and peri-urban environments and, historically, the development of the movement was most strongly associated with Paris; from the flâneurs of late 19th century, the Dada in the 1920s, followed by the Surrealists, then the Lettrists, Situationists and psychogeographers of the 1950s (Careri, 2002). This development of the method saw a move away from the undirected wanderings of the flâneurs towards a "psychological investigation of one's relationship with urban reality" (Careri, 2002: 87). In 1955 the term 'dérive', literally meaning 'drift' was coined by Guy Debord in his *Introduction a une Critique de la Geographie Urbaine*, to describe an act of walking which was "an alternative way of inhabiting the city…against the rules of bourgeois society…with the aim of transforming it into an objective method of exploration" (Careri, 2002: 90). In this, it may have something in common with my method for Ashley, but the similarity is superficial, because the participants in psychogeography have typically been philosophers, writers and artists, rather than non-specialist inhabitants of a place.

In recent decades writing about rural /urban 'edgelands' has come to the fore, from writers such as Richard Mabey, in *The Unofficial Countryside* (Mabey, 2010, first edition 1973), Iain Sinclair with *London Orbital* (Sinclair, 2002) and Paul Farley and Michael Simmons-Roberts with *Edgelands* (Farley and Roberts, 2011). Of greater relevance to this thesis is work by writers such as Robert McFarlane, as above, and Roger Deakin in *Waterlog* (Deakin, 2014, first edition 2000) for example, who have arguably applied psychogeography to rural contexts. The findings of psychogeography do not necessarily have to be expressed through writing. Artist Christian Nold produces 'emotion maps' which apply psychogeographical principles to urban contexts (see Figure 21). Whilst acknowledging the loose relationship that this thesis has with the practice and writing of psychogeography, it is not the intention that this research contributes to that particular body of knowledge.

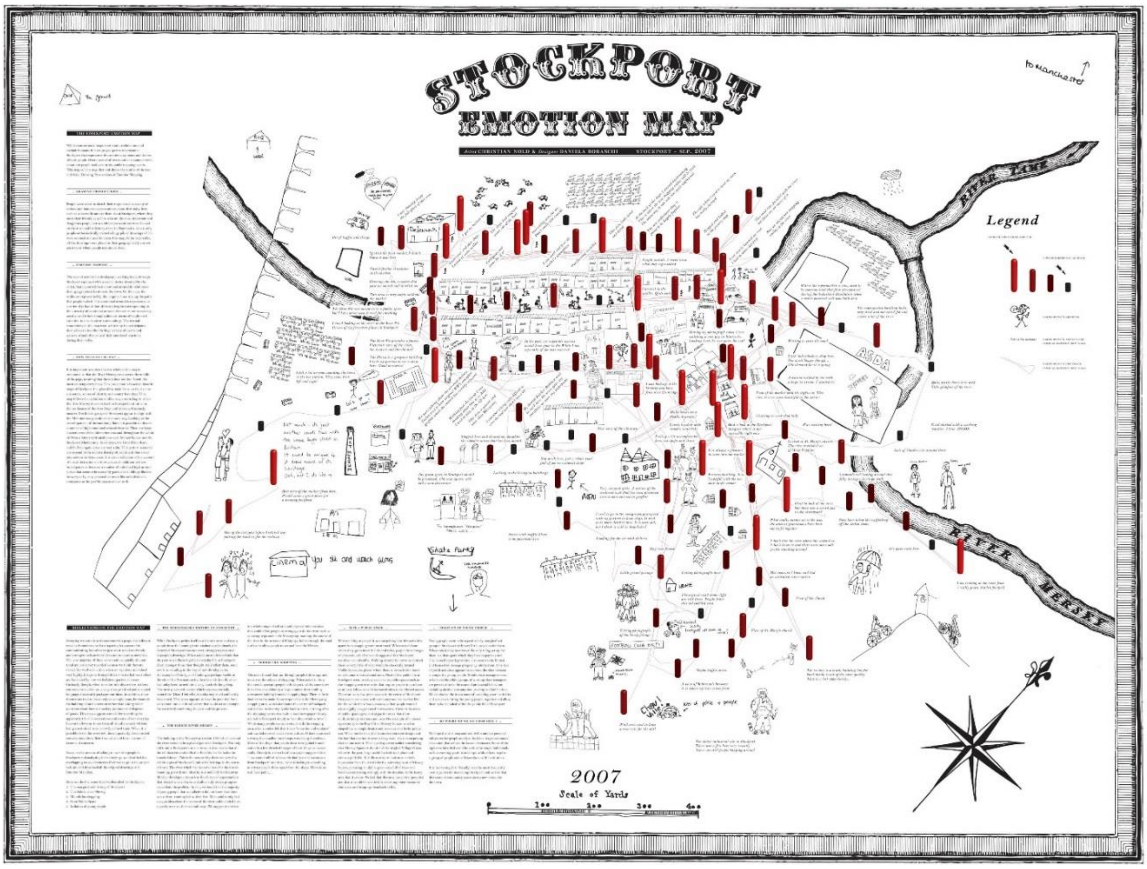


Figure 21. Psychogeographical map of Stockport, using participants' drawings, and showing their emotional responses to areas of the town through red bars which indicate their levels of response, measured via electrical conductivity of their skin (reproduced by permission of the artist)(Nold, 2007).

The use of walking in this research primarily aims to directly address the issue of speed and embodied engagement. In her book *Wanderlust*, Rebecca Solnit makes this point very simply; "I like walking because it is slow, and I suspect that the mind, like the feet, works at about three miles an hour." (Solnit, 2014: 10). To say that walking offers opportunity for thought is not to imply that one cannot think whilst moving at speed on a train or car through a landscape, but that the nature of the thinking, opportunity for reflection and observation made possible by that presence in and slow movement through the landscape is a unique kind of engagement. Walking, unlike driving, enables exploration of corners of fields and bends in the river, and allows time in which the specific nature of an individual's engagement can emerge. As Solnit says, after the coming of the railways;

> "the spatial and sensual engagement with the terrain between here and there began to evaporate. Instead, the two spaces were separated only by an ever-shortening amount of time"

(Solnit, 2014: 257)

It is not only speed or time, however, that are the relevant factors here. In *The Making of the English Landscape*, WG Hoskins proposed that:

> "the railway has been absorbed in to the landscape, and one can enjoy the consequent pleasure of trundling through Rutland in a stopping-train on a fine summer morning: the barley field shaking in the wind, the slow sedgy streams with their willows shading meditative cattle, the elegant limestone spires across the meadows, the early Victorian stations built of the sheep-grey Ketton stone and still unaltered, the warm brown roofs of the villages half buried in the trees, and the summer light flashing everywhere. True that the railways did not invent much of this beauty, but it gave us new vistas of it."

(Hoskins, 1955: 222)

This insight from a different age is a reminder that perceptions of speed of travel are very much relative and that different speeds produce different experiences. Hoskins' point here pertains to viewing the landscape from the isolation of the train and therefore an aesthetic appreciation of 'vistas' rather than an understanding of dynamic processes, but it is interesting to note his idea of a railway opening up the countryside to new visual interactions, rather than closing it down. He has no problem with assimilating his idea of the 'trundling' and 'stopping' railway in to his conception of the landscape with its slow streams. The two are one. Elements of the infrastructure itself – the early Victorian stations - are admired and the fact of their construction from local stone is appreciated. In this description, the railway line is not a static or alien, separate landscape, perhaps because of the 'stopping' train, which permits contemplation and interaction; the line, to some extent, has permeability. This tempting description should not, however, seduce us in to thinking that rail travel could ever provide an emergent engagement with the landscape. The rails themselves prevent this possibility, whereas the potential of the human body to react to the landscape provides potential for a limitless cascade of interactions. Hoskins is also a proponent of walking a landscape as a way of knowing it in a full and meaningful way:

> "So, behind every generalisation, there lies the infinite variety and beauty of the detail; and it is the detail that matters, that gives pleasure to the eye and to the mind, as we traverse, on foot and unhurried, the landscape of any part of England."

(Hoskins, 1955: 171)

Here, for Hoskins, speed of movement is again at the heart of the embodied experience and its fruitfulness in terms of knowledge gained and understanding attained. Pleasure is also clearly of importance to Hoskins, and it is not unrealistic for a public engagement methodology to be a source of pleasure, though the two things are rarely mentioned in the same breath. I would also suggest that the slow assimilation of knowledge through walking is not something that usually has great currency in the commercially-orientated and deadline-driven modern world. However, it is quite possible to find time to make use of it within the timespan of a high-speed rail project which has something in the region of fourteen years between announcement of initial alignment proposals and work starting on site.

All walking research methods are not the same. Evans and Jones' research used a qualitative GIS technique in urban settings, to test claims that walking interviews access improved understandings of place (Evans and Jones, 2011). They found that, compared to non-walking interviews, such methods were "more spatially focussed, engaging to a greater extent with features in the area under study" (Evans and Jones, 2011: 856), and conclude that they are a "highly productive way of accessing a local community's connections to their surrounding environment" (Evans and Jones, 2011: 857).

Ingold and Vergunst's compilation of ethnographers' essays, *Ways of Walking*, endorses walking as a methodology that has been used successfully in many parts of the world with a number of culturally varied populations, and walking is cited several times as a method which earns the respect of participants. In Allice Legat's chapter *Walking Stories, Leaving Footprints*, about her work with Canadian hunter-gatherers, she finds that "To walk is to pay close and careful attention to one's surroundings …Individuals who walk the land are respected because they have experience"(Legat, 2008: 47). In the same volume, Ingold and Vergunst comment on the work of Lye Tuck-Po amongst the Batek people of Malaysia; "the movement of walking itself is a way of knowing. A knowledgeable person is distinguished…by observational acuity and an awareness of the consequences of actions" (Ingold and Vergunst, 2008: 5). Here, then is the sense of responsibility and reciprocity which comes with engagement with one's surroundings. Tuck-Po recounts thoughtlessly pulling carelessly on a hanging vine on one of his forest walks with the Batek. They are horrified at the lack of awareness in this action, as hanging branches high in the canopy could be brought down on their heads. Only through an embodied experience of walking and interacting with surroundings could the visitor have learnt this – it was not available via a journal or online search.

The simplicity and familiarity of walking means that prospective participants are less likely to see the research as an exclusive 'academic' activity. It is useful that, in the initial stages at least, there is no complex technology or opaque intellectual explanation. An invitation to go for a walk is exactly that, though it may still be declined or ignored. Solnit also values walking because;

> "it trespasses through everybody else's field – through anatomy, anthropology, architecture, gardening. Geography, political and cultural history, literature, sexuality, religious studies"

(Solnit, 2014: 4)

In a transdisciplinary study of landscape, then, it is a transferable operation and facilitates meaningful contact with professional and non-professional participants alike.

As expressed in the CPRE's film, Rural England (CPRE, 1938), walking the rural landscape has a long history of egalitarian participation in the UK, perhaps most notably since the Kinder Scout mass trespass by ramblers from Manchester and Sheffield in 1932, which according to the Ramblers Association was "the start of an access movement that saw the establishment of National Parks, long distance footpaths …and finally, the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000" (The Ramblers Association, 2012). This is just one example of a practice which is a very accessible form of bottom-up action and political activism, and which always has the potential to change circumstances; "Walking has created paths, roads, trade routes; generated local and cross-continental senses of place; shaped cities, parks; generated, maps, guidebooks, gear," (Solnit, 2014: 4). Thus, it is a powerful instrument which physically and psychologically shapes the landscape, in reaction to the landscape; a highly emergent characteristic. In *Walkscapes* (Careri, 2002), Francesco Careri also explores how walking affects both landscape and walker, argues that walking:

> "turns out to be a tool which, precisely due to the simultaneous reading and writing of space intrinsic to it, lends itself to attending to and interacting with the mutability of [those] spaces."

(Careri, 2002: 26)

The researcher, therefore, needs to be aware of 'observer effects' in their wake; that their walking will have an impact on the spaces walked, most particularly in rural places which arguably have greater mutability than well-trodden urban paths. Considered in this way, walking also has the potential to be used as an emergent design tool, as is commonly illustrated by the arising of 'desire lines' inscribed in to turf by walkers who understand the necessary alignment for a path better than landscape architects do. Careri traces the origins of walking and proposes that as civilisations developed, walking resulted in "the slow, complex operation of appropriation and mapping" (Careri, 2002: 44) of territories, which was "the only symbolic architecture capable of modifying the environment" (Careri, 2002: 49). Thus, walking is simultaneously forming the landscape and recording it. Careri offers the example of the art of Richard Long, author of the 1967 work *A Line Made by Walking* (Figure 22), in which he makes a line of trodden grass in a field, and which Careri admires for its reversibility and 'freedom' from technological aid (though a camera is used to record the work).

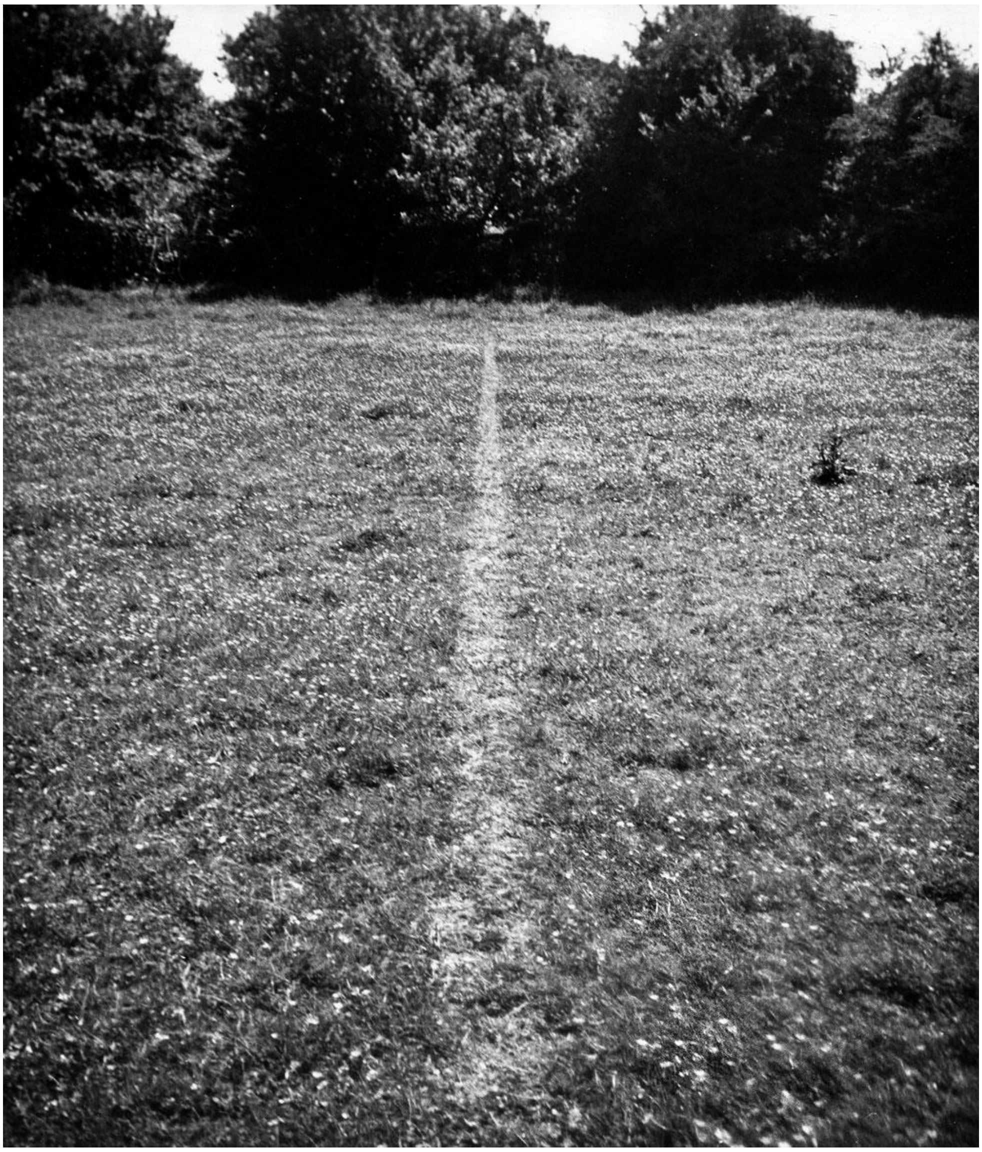


Figure 22. A Line Made by Walking, England 1967, Richard Long. An example of how walking can make a design intervention in a landscape; as such it is a design tool available to any walker, not only to artists or landscape architects (Long, 2011).

Schultz and van Etteger (Schultz and van Etteger, 2017) take a constructivist view in their writing about walking, and, citing Merleau- Ponty amongst others, take a phenomenological approach which means that direct experiences of the landscape are crucial for the designer. They find that "Walking is especially suitable for answering research questions dealing with complex and unfamiliar tasks that require engagement with the object of research." (Schultz and van Etteger, 2017: 179). They maintain that walking and therefore perceiving the landscape with one's body supports understanding of the terrain, and of the design problem. They also argue that it is a highly appropriate way of both generating knowledge and making implicit knowledge explicit. This is a particularly relevant benefit of the method in a little-known place such as Ashley where landscape knowledge built up over daily experience is not often narrated, theorised about or debated. This process means that inhabitants are to some extent empowered, because:

> "Armed with the personal experience of a walk, people can contribute to an engaged dialogue about the characteristics of a landscape, its challenges and questions. They can generate working knowledges that are shared and discussed right away on site… walks can be conducted as interventions…to test first assumptions, specify questions and allow everybody to participate in experiencing processes of landscape transformation."
>
> (Schultz and van Etteger, 2017: 190)

This framing of the walk as a tool not just to elicit knowledge, but also to develop the direction of research and to actively intervene in the landscape, demonstrates the suitability of walking within an emergent action research project. Above all, however, it is the embodied nature of walking that primarily serves the purposes of this research, as exemplified by Nan Shepherd:

> "Walking thus, hour after hour, the body is not made negligible, but paramount. Flesh is not annihilated, but fulfilled. One is not bodiless, but essential body…I have walked out of the body and in to the mountain. I am a manifestation of its total life"
>
> (Shepherd, N., 2011: 106)

Whilst walking in Ashley poses far less of a challenge than would be the case in the Cairngorms, still it draws both researcher and participant in to this closer engagement with the landscape. In fact, physical challenge has not been sought out in this research. For some potential participants, the challenge of any kind of walk has been insurmountable. Many inhabitants who are able to find time to spend with a researcher will, naturally, be retired people. This demographic contains some participants who have very rich local knowledge but are unable to walk. In these cases, I have used maps to substitute for walking, as a medium to connect the person to the landscape. This is less than ideal, due to the subjective nature of maps; they are not the territory, they are the cartographer's interpretation. In the case of one participant, Peter Wright, we visited locations by car and photographed them together (see Chapter Five). Such methods cannot fully compensate for missing the embodied experience, though in Peter's case his experience of the landscape is lifelong and his memory very sharp, so reflections on the place were plentiful. This must be acknowledged as a drawback of the method, which cannot be entirely overcome. An additional limitation is that of constraints on walking due to daylight hours during the winter, which is particularly applicable to working people. This, perhaps hand in hand with weather conditions, meant that it was far more difficult to get participants to walk with me in winter, to such an extent that I conclude that this research method is best suited for use between spring and autumn.

2.6 Conclusions to this chapter

This section of the thesis has distinguished between engagement and consultation; preferring the term engagement to describe the desired high-quality interaction between people and landscape. It has examined the concept of embodied engagement with landscape and the two-way process of humans shaping landscape, as it in turn shapes them. This has led to a discussion of the validity of the role of the visitor in a landscape, and a consideration of walking as an emergent research tool for that visitor to cultivate their own embodied engagement with a place and also access the knowledge of others. It acknowledges the power of walking to not just access and observe the landscape, but potentially to directly influence it.

Chapter Three

Ashley, a landscape past and present

"…the beauty about us – that is, the beauty of country, town and village, the normal visible setting of our ordinary everyday lives – not that which is mewed up in galleries and museums or between the covers of books. It is this common background of beauty that this book seeks to champion and defend."

(Williams-Ellis, 1975: 23, first edition 1928)

3.1 Abstract

I originally wrote the majority of this description of the Parish of Ashley as the Local Landscape Character Assessment (LLCA) for the Ashley Neighbourhood Plan (see Chapter Six for description of this process) and sent it to the Parish Council for them to use as the Plan progresses in future. I have adjusted it to fit the purposes of this thesis. It is presented here in order to familiarise the reader with the place. It describes the present landscape character of Ashley, and also the changes that have occurred in that landscape over time. Its aim is to explain the landscape context and to highlight what is, in my view and informed by residents, the significance of the cumulative effects of transport infrastructure on the parish. It traces the emergence of the place and begins to look to the future of this rural landscape. It proposes that Ashley has its own individual character but at the same time has much in common with many other rural places in the UK that are not designated landscapes, and which will bear the impact of large-scale infrastructure projects.

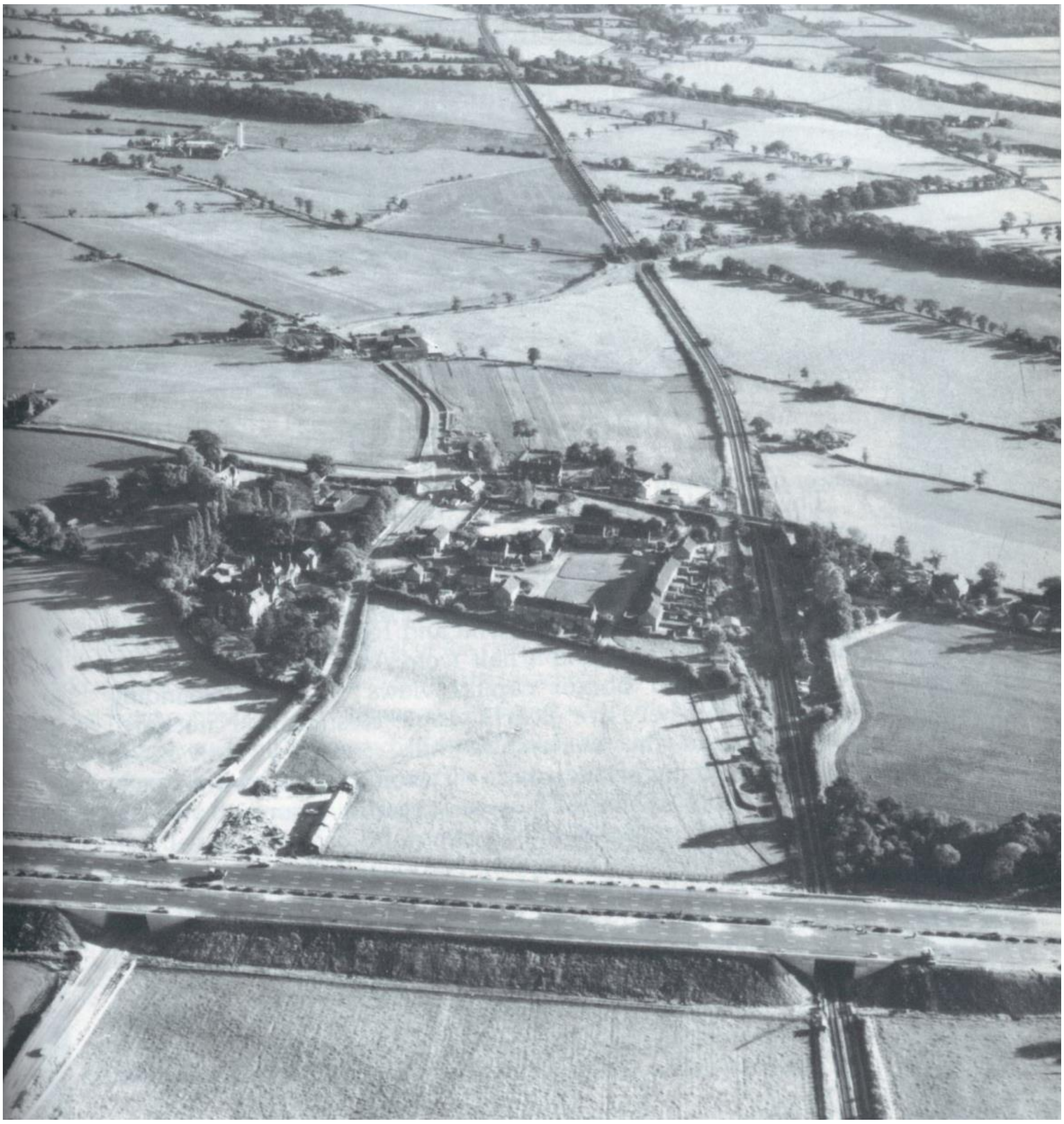


Figure 23. Ashley 1971, looking south, M56 nearing completion (Laver and Rendell, 1987). A handful of houses have been added since this photograph was taken, but the visual character remains very similar.

The contribution of residents in the making of this chapter has been made in two ways. Firstly, they have made significant direct verbal contributions of knowledge through all the walks on which they accompanied me (listed in Appendix A). Secondly, their opinions and insights have been communicated to me through all of the conversations we have had (listed in Appendix B). For more details on how this co-creation happened, please see Chapters Five and Six, which describe and evaluate the methods used. In addition, fifteen people responded to a short survey in which I asked them whether Ashley was a rural place, the results of which are tabulated in Appendix E. As this was a small sample, the results were of limited use, but all respondents did consider Ashley to be a rural place, and this result has contributed to my framing of the place in this chapter.

This chapter, therefore, is to some extent co-created with the residents of Ashley, and is part of the output of my action research. It is included at this point in the thesis in order to give the reader a more detailed insight in to the place, and to illustrate the nature of ongoing change in the parish.

3.2 The landscape character; present

A number of existing documents are informative as to the character of the parish of Ashley. It falls within Natural England's *National Character Area Profile: 61 Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain*, (NCA 61) (Natural England, April 2014). This document sets out an understanding of the wider landscape setting, and highlights several characteristics of the area which particularly apply to this Parish. It notes, for example, the glacial origins of the Plain, which result in the large number of field ponds and meres (Natural England, April 2014). It also refers to road schemes in the area, that "risk the urbanisation of rural villages" (Natural England, April 2014: 4) and reports on loss of tranquillity; "Undisturbed areas have decreased from 69 per cent in the 1960s to 44 per cent in 2007 with loss of tranquillity associated with increased traffic levels" (Natural England, April 2014: 5). Recent works affecting Ashley include the considerable alteration of the adjacent Junction 7 of the motorway as part of the new A556 Mere relief road. In the foreseeable future significant road developments, including motorway realignment, will take place in order to accommodate the proposed HS2 station at Manchester Airport. Such influences contribute to a loss of tranquillity in Ashley, not only in the resulting increases in traffic flow, but in the impact of the construction period itself, the road diversions and closures, compounds, and construction traffic. Councillor Emma Capp in particular raised my awareness of this during the public mapping workshop at St Elizabeth's (conversation 27, Appendix B).

Cheshire County Council's *Cheshire Landscape Character Assessment* (Cheshire County Council, 2008) reinforces the impression of Ashley as a place under pressure from infrastructure developments, describing "very intrusive manmade features such as motorways and the sprawling complex of Manchester Airport" (Cheshire County Council, 2008: 235) and noting that "The M56 is the most important highway traversing the area and visually dominates a corridor of agricultural land along an east-west axis." (Cheshire County Council, 2008: 235). The same document also describes the landscape impact of the airport:

> "Manchester Airport has a massive intrusive presence within this character area in terms of buildings, structures and aircraft. At peak times moving aircraft are a constant element within the landscape and provide a major visual intrusion within the surrounding agricultural landscape... The obvious artificial element of the extensive level runway and perimeter fence is evident even when aircraft are absent."
>
> (Cheshire County Council, 2008: 235)

Evidently, then, although the 2008 assessment describes a place which is for the most part rural, it also highlights the significance of the cumulative impacts of transport infrastructure. The nature of these linear forms divides the landscape and affects the social fabric and the spirit of the place. Recent development at Airport City (in 2016 and ongoing) adds to the 'sprawling complex' that constituted the airport in 2008. The *Greater Manchester Spatial Framework* (Greater Manchester Combined Authority, 2017) allocates more land (shown in orange on Figure 24) for Airport City, bringing the development up to the north-eastern edge of Sunbank Wood and the northern edge of Cotteril Clough (designated a SSSI and belonging to the Cheshire Wildlife Trust), and so much closer to Ashley's border (shown in black).

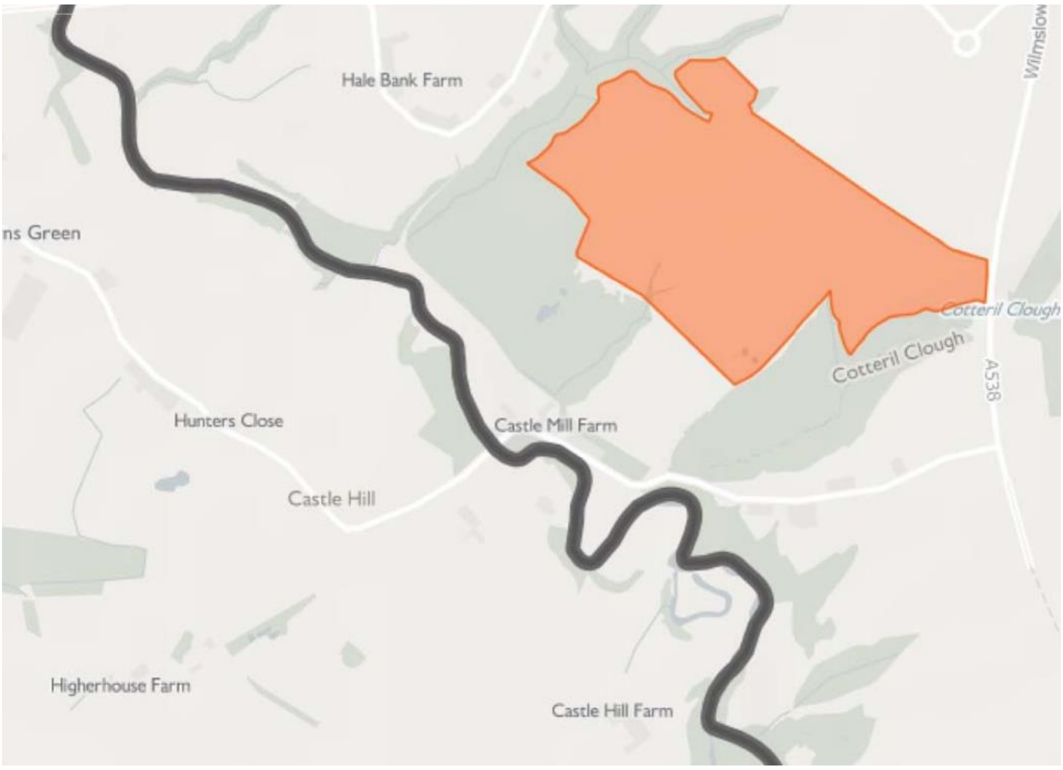

Hale Bank Farm
ns Green
Hunters Close
Castle Hill
Castle Mill Farm
Cotteril Clough
Cotteril Clough
Wilmslow
A538
Higherhouse Farm
Castle Hill Farm

Figure 24. Extract from GMSF map (Greater Manchester Combined Authority, 2017), showing land allocated for development at Airport City, just northeast of Ashley Parish boundary, shown in black. This green field site is in the parish of Ringway, which is described in an email from a Ringway parish Councillor at the start of Chapter Five.

Airport City is already visible from Ashley (see Figure 25) and intimately connected by the road network. It is, therefore, clearly an urbanising influence on the views out of the green belt. HS2 proposals mean that Ashley will continue to experience the accumulating landscape impacts of transport infrastructure. Many residents, including particularly Peter Wright and Chris Frankland, highlighted this problem to me during our conversations (see Appendix B).

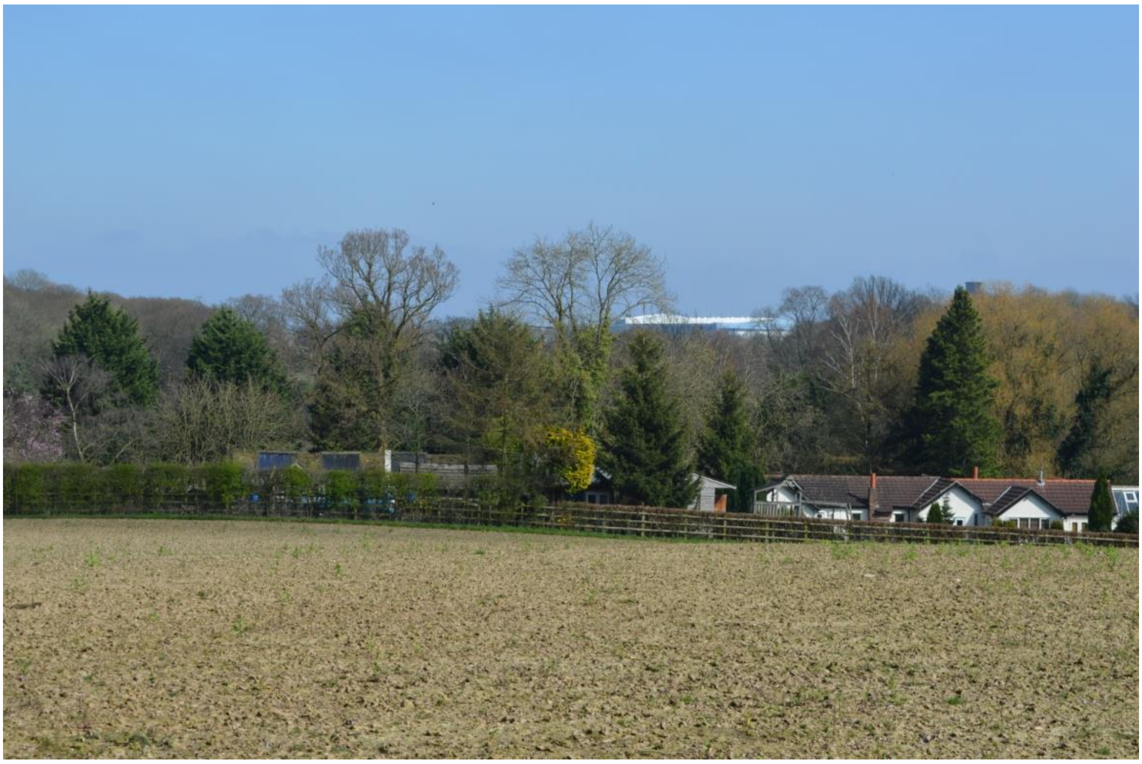


Figure 25. View to Airport City from the access lane to Castle Hill Farm, Ashley. This visual connection gives a sense of the proximity of the 'big box' development to green belt land.

An additional source of description of the current conditions is the *Cheshire East Borough Design Guide*, (Cheshire East Council, January 2016). This is intended as a toolkit of measures to make sure that developers design appropriately and respect the individual aesthetic character of settlements. Though not a landscape character assessment, it expresses both an appreciation of the visual character of Cheshire East and an awareness of the significant pressures on the environment brought about by the popularity of the area as a place to live and to invest in. Volume 1 acknowledges that "All too often, development in the recent past has detracted from rather than added to the character of Cheshire East." (Cheshire East Council, January 2016: 5) and notes "a great deal of this past development lacks local identity or any 'sense of place'" (Cheshire East Council, January 2016: 6). It elaborates on this point:

> "Sense of place is an emotional response to the form, layout, materials, spaces and landscape of a settlement. Post war development, in the main, forgot the need to provide that emotional dimension. It must therefore be made clear that post war developments on the fringes of settlements are not appropriate justification for building more of that same 'anywhere vernacular'."

(Cheshire East Council, January 2016: 6)

My own observations and knowledge shared by local people contribute a more detailed sense of Ashley's character. They confirm, for example, that woodland in the Parish is fragmented and sparse. This condition was significantly worsened by the construction of the M56, which destroyed most of the links in the Parish's only (intermittent) chain of woodland (see Figure 26). To the north of the motorway is an agricultural character area of mixed farming, bounded by the Bollin River valley to the north and east, and the Birkin Brook valley to the west.

The Bollin valley, together with tributaries Sugar Brook and Birkin Brook, forms the greater part of the parish boundary. The source of the river lies in Macclesfield Forest, at the edge of the Peak District. In Ashley the river itself is deeply meandering, altering its course and forming ox-bow lakes over time. This is one of the most observably emergent features of the parish and its continual state of change can be clearly seen in maps and photographs. The course of the Bollin changes quite significantly over time as currents deepen the meanders and create ox-bow lakes in the soft sands, silts and clays of the valley. The resulting changes in landform can necessitate the renegotiation of public rights of way, such as in recent years at Prestbury, described to me by Emma Houghton of the Bollin Valley Partnership on our walk of 15.10.2015. It has a flat, sandy and pebbly bed and usually a shallow gentle flow, though when in spate it can be formidable.

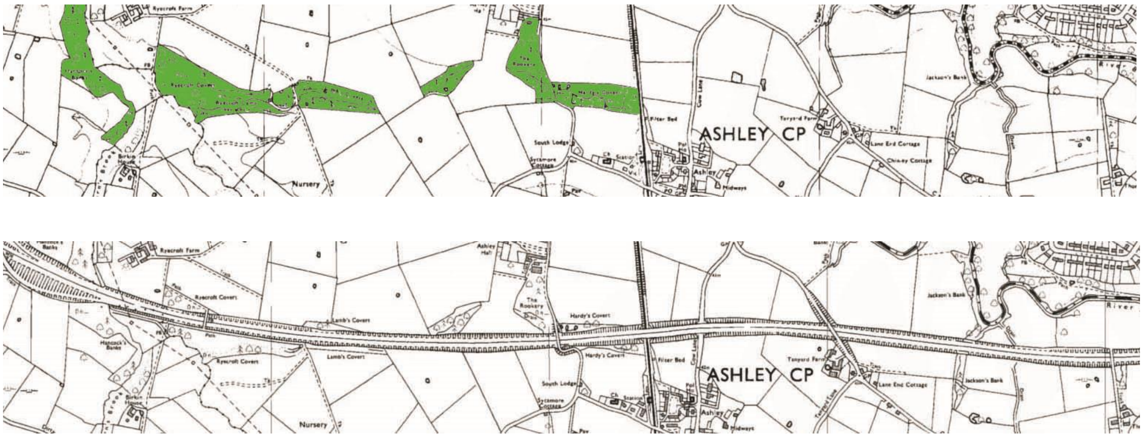


Figure 26. Above, 1970s map of the M56 corridor in Ashley (woodlands in green) immediately pre-construction. Below, 1980's map, showing the destruction of the partial woodland chain. (Author's image using base maps from: EDINA Digimap Ancient Roam Service, <http://edina.ac.uk/digimap>, created: October 2017, not to scale)

Narrow footbridges over the river serve Ashley's public rights of way (PROW) in three places within this character area. The grade 2 listed 19th century Ashley Bridge road bridge, with adjacent footbridge also takes Ashley Road over the Bollin to the suburb of Ashley Heath, lying just west of the railway bridge. Bridges across the river also remain in their 1838 positions, as at Castle Mill, Ashley Road and Pigleystairs Bridge. The Bollin Valley was previously designated as an 'Area of Special County Value' in Macclesfield's Local Plan (though this no longer has any statutory weight) and is characterised by long stretches of mixed-species riparian woodland along almost the whole of the Ashley boundary. It has many minor tributary brooks lying in small cloughs along its course. The Bollin Valley Partnership have managed woodland sites along the river since 1972, and also created the Bollin Valley Way, a 25-mile footpath, in 1993. Their activities on this stretch of the river are mostly focussed outside the Parish, on the Greater Manchester side of the river. During our walk on his land, Ian Warburton of Dairy House Farm contributed to my understanding of the river, as did the Reverend Keith Addenbrook, who informed me of residents' emotional attachments, and Sarah Atkinson, whose children play on the river banks very frequently on their way home from school (see relevant conversations in Appendix B).

The north Ashley area features large, open, arable fields, which are gently undulating with low narrow hedges. Solitary oaks appear as remnants of hedgerows and within remaining hedges. The Greater Manchester conurbation lies immediately to the north of the parish boundary. However, there are no significant views of the suburban fringes, other than the spire of Bowdon Church which can be glimpsed from some vantage points. The area is enclosed by elevated sections of the M56, the trees of the Bollin valley and also by dispersed small woodland coverts which, despite their diminutive area, make a significant contribution to visual character. At the highest points, and in clear conditions, the edge of the Peak District can be seen to the east. In winter, this area has a remarkable visual stillness and a relatively isolated quality, as evident in Figure 27, despite some views of motorway gantries. The western part is not accessible by road and, despite the presence of pylons and motorway signage, retains some of the quality of an ancient water-meadow (see Figure 28).

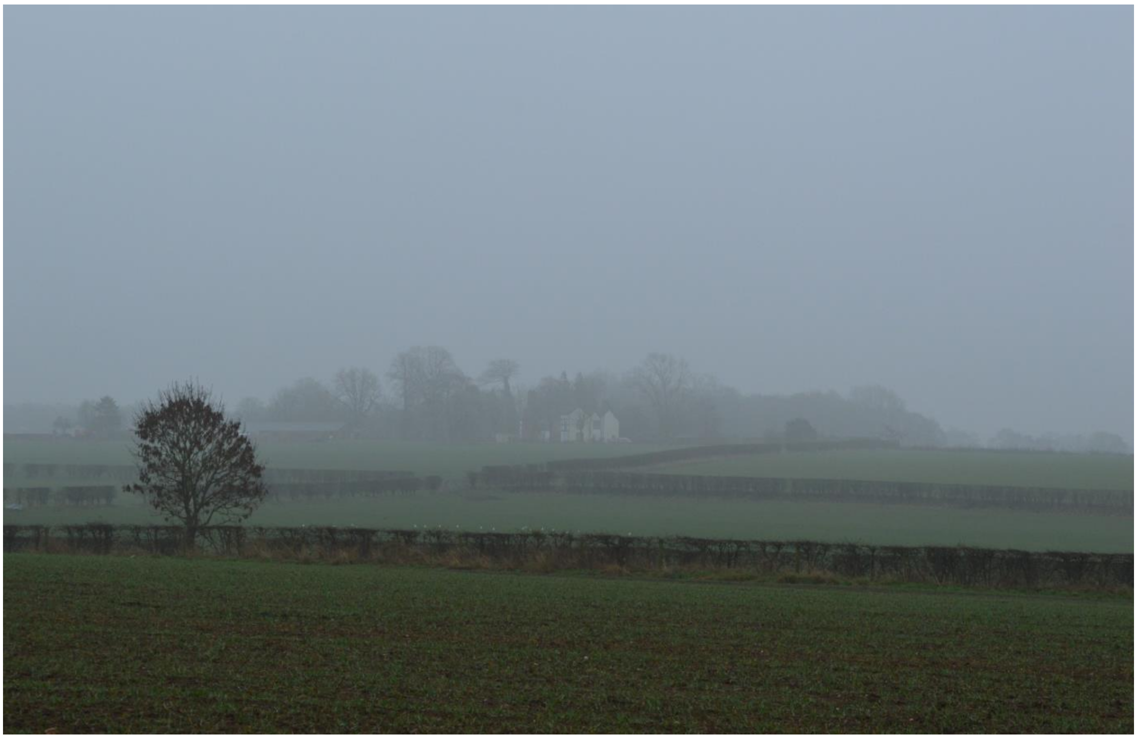


Figure 27. View to Ashley Hall from the north, winter. Aside from motorway noise, the sense of rural isolation in this part of the parish is very apparent (author’s photo, 23.1.2017).

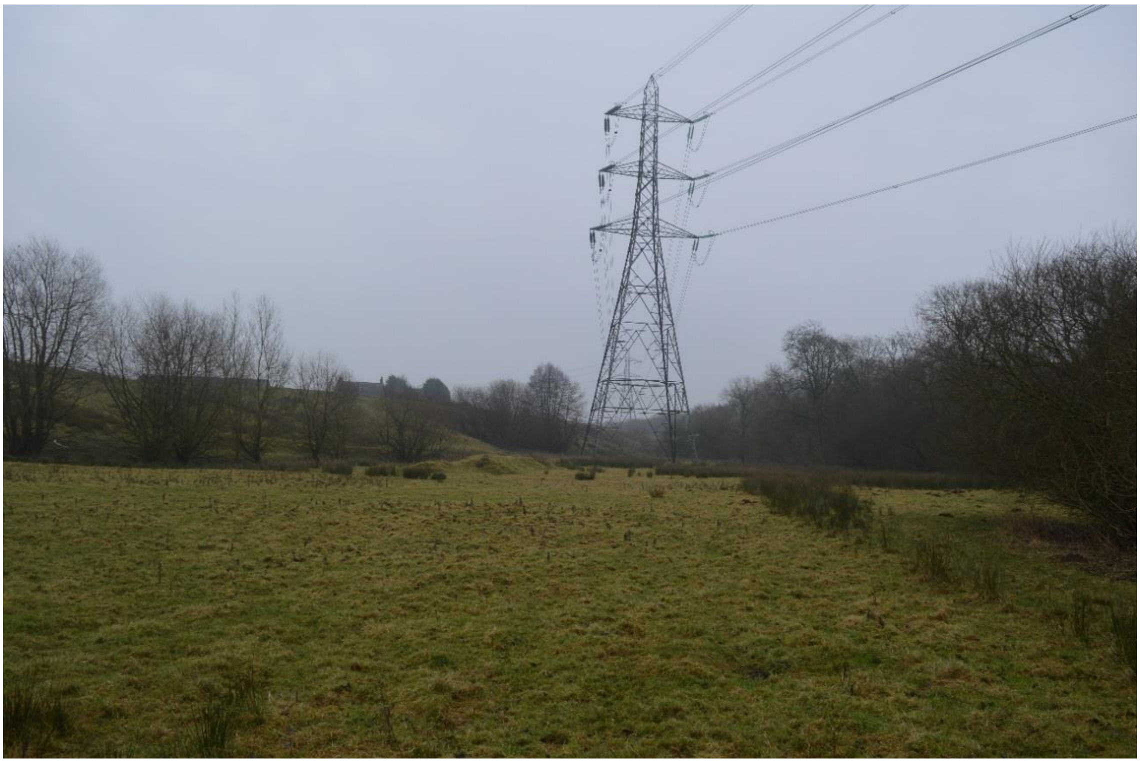


Figure 28. View of land at the western tip of Ashley, adjacent to M56 junction 7. This low-lying land has the feeling of an ancient water meadow, despite the intrusive buzz of the pylons (author's photo, 23.1.2017).

North Ashley contains six field ponds which are big enough to feature on OS maps at 1:5000, the larger of which are vegetated at the margins with birch, alder, oak and bulrushes. This is typical of the wider Cheshire landscape, and field ponds are noted for their significance in Statement of Environmental Opportunity (SEO) 1 of the Natural England NCA 61 profile, which recommends their retention and creation (Natural England, April 2014). However, twice this number of ponds appear in this part of Ashley on the 1970 map, suggesting that farming practices are eradicating such features. This, in my own opinion, contributes to an erosion of the distinctiveness of the place.

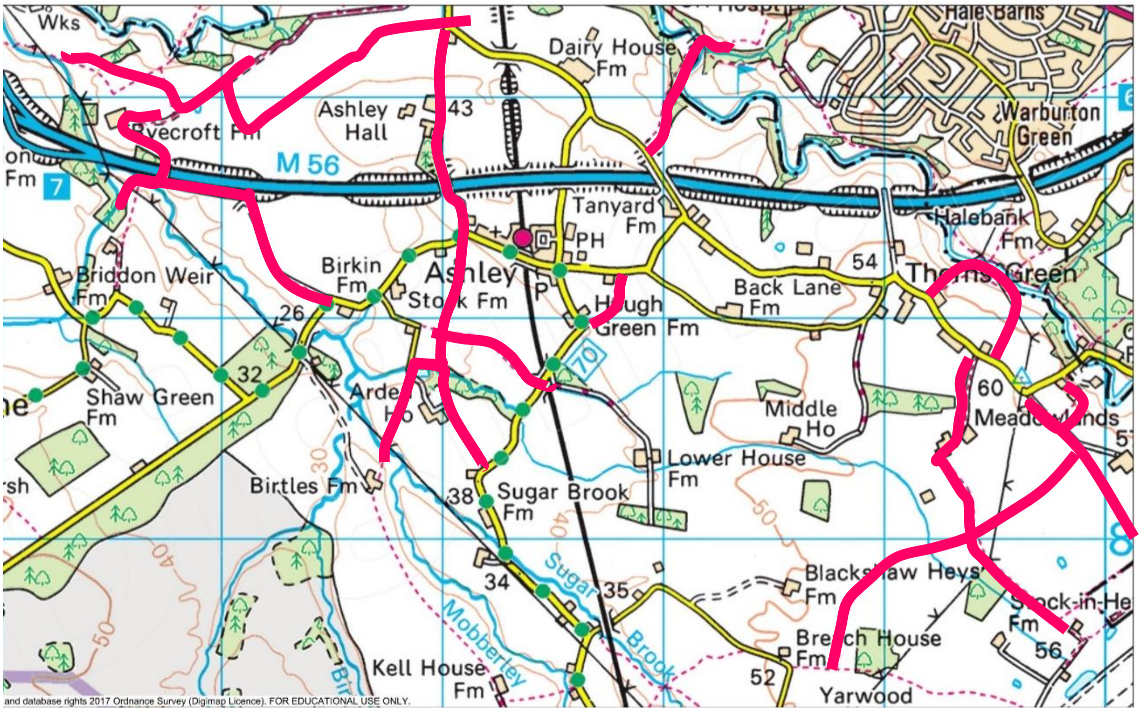

Wks
Ryecroft Fm
Ashley Hall
Dairy House Fm
Hale Barns
Warburton Green
M 56
Tanyard Fm
Halebank Fm
Birkin Fm
Ashley
Stock Fm
PH
Hough Green Fm
Back Lane Fm
Thorns Green
Riddon Weir Fm
Shaw Green Fm
Arden Ho
Middle Ho
Meadowlands
Lower House Fm
Birtles Fm
Sugar Brook Fm
Sugar Brook
Blackshaw Heys Fm
Mobberley Brook
Kell House Fm
Brerch House Fm
Yarwood
and database rights 2017 Ordnance Survey (Digimap Licence). FOR EDUCATIONAL USE ONLY.

Figure 29. Public Rights of Way (PROWs) in Ashley. Gaps in the network necessitate walking on roads (author’s image using base map from: EDINA Digimap Ordnance Survey Service, <http://edina.ac.uk/digimap>, created: November 2017, not to scale).

The public rights of way in this part of Ashley (see Figure 29), are clearly marked, generally in good condition and well-used by dog owners, many of whom walk here from Bowdon. For these visitors to Ashley, this landscape is a valuable leisure resource which they can access without using a vehicle, illustrating one example of the value of Manchester’s green belt to residents of the city. I listened to un-named walkers talk about this in the fields near Ryecroft Farm.

Additional value resides in the heritage assets of the landscape. There are seven listed buildings in this northern part of Ashley; a 16-17th century outbuilding at Ryecroft Farm, a 16th-17th century cruck barn once associated with Coppice Farm, Ashley Hall Farm, and four other structures at Ashley Hall. There was a hunting lodge at the Hall by the thirteenth century and the present Hall was built in 1490, as a three-story manor house (Warrender, 2013). Two unusual features, visible on the 1838 tithe map, were located close to the Hall. The first, to the south east, is what appears to be a moated area with an adjacent rectangular pond. By the 1880s the area was grown over by the trees of Hardy's Covert, which in turn was destroyed by the M56. The second, to the south of the Hall, was a large serpentine body of water with a central island, but is now 'The Rookery' woodland (see Figure 30). Such comparisons help me to understand what Ashley has lost to previous infrastructure projects, and to reflect on the needs of the emergent landscape.

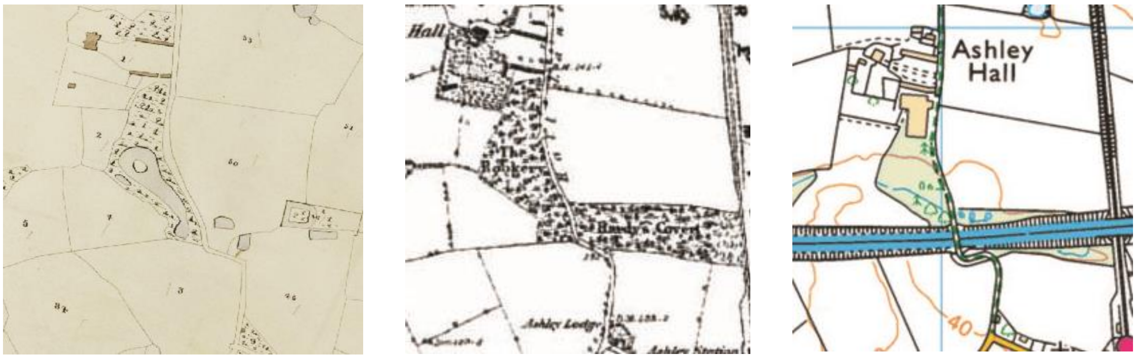


Figure 30. Changes at Ashley Hall, showing (l-r) the serpentine lake at the Hall in 1838, the same area as woodland, with the addition of the railway in the 1880's, and as motorway in the present day. Sources; (left) the Tithe Map, Cheshire Records Office, (centre and right author's own images using base map from: EDINA Digimap Ancient Roam Service and Ordnance Survey Service, <http://edina.ac.uk/digimap>, created: October 2017, not to scale)

The M56 corridor is distinct in every way from the adjacent character areas. It divides the northern part of Ashley from the southern, acting as a psychological, visual, ecological and spatial barrier. Two walks with the Ramblers (see Appendix B) helped me to appreciate the nature of this barrier. Footbridges take public rights of way over the top in two places, at Ryecroft Covert and Hardy's Covert, and underneath in one place, where the Bollin passes under the motorway between Hale Barns and Thorns Green (see Figure 31).

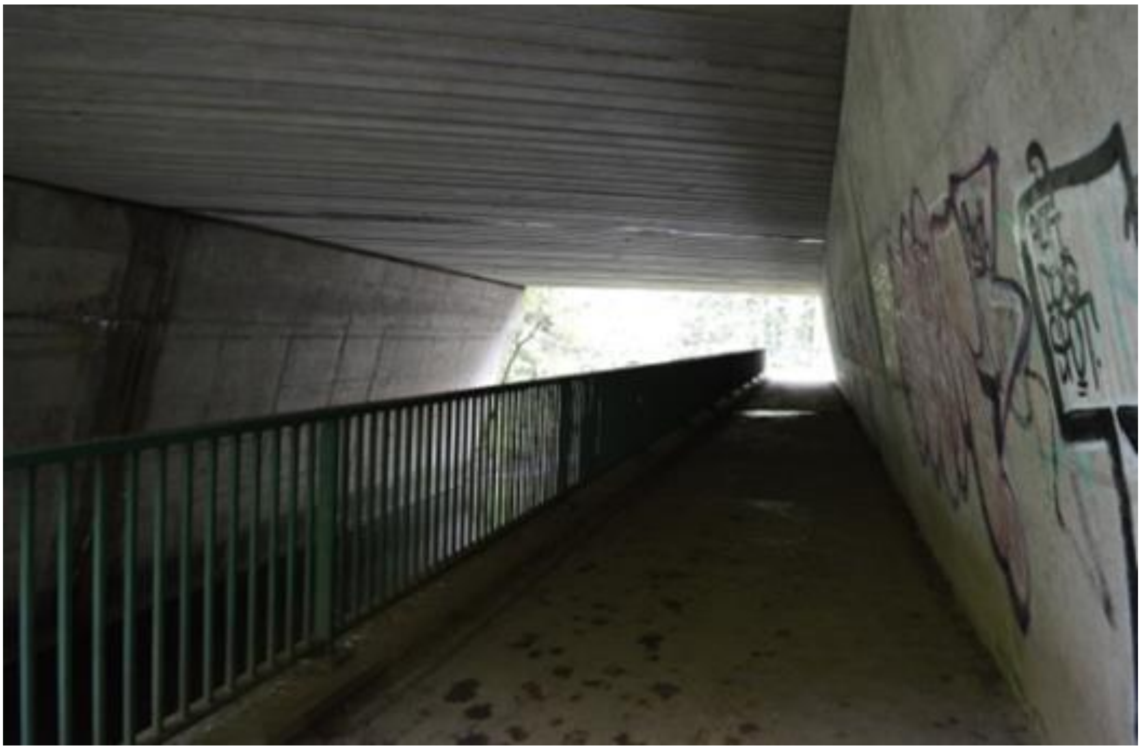


Figure 31. The Bollin underpass beneath the M56 in Ashley; evidence of urban qualities entering in to the river valley, resulting in a forbidding experience for any solo walker (author's photo, 15.10.2015)

Cow Lane and the railway line pass beneath the motorway, and Castle Mill Lane goes over the top, as does Hall Lane (see Figure 32). The motorway infrastructure is approximately 70 metres wide at the widest point and noise pollution from it has variable effects depending on the season and wind direction, typically affecting farms to the north. Peter Wright and Amy Unwin (to the south) and Ian Warburton (to the north) both spoke to me about the noise problem at their homes (see relevant conversations, Appendix B). Associated gantries and signage can be seen from many vantage points, for example from the church, the day-care nursery, Cow Lane, Ashley Road and Ryecroft Farm. Litter from vehicles accumulates in the marginal vegetation. Resident Sarah Atkinson, ex-United Utilities expert in surface water, spoke to me about polluted run-off from the road surface entering the ground water and water courses, and contributing to localised flooding.

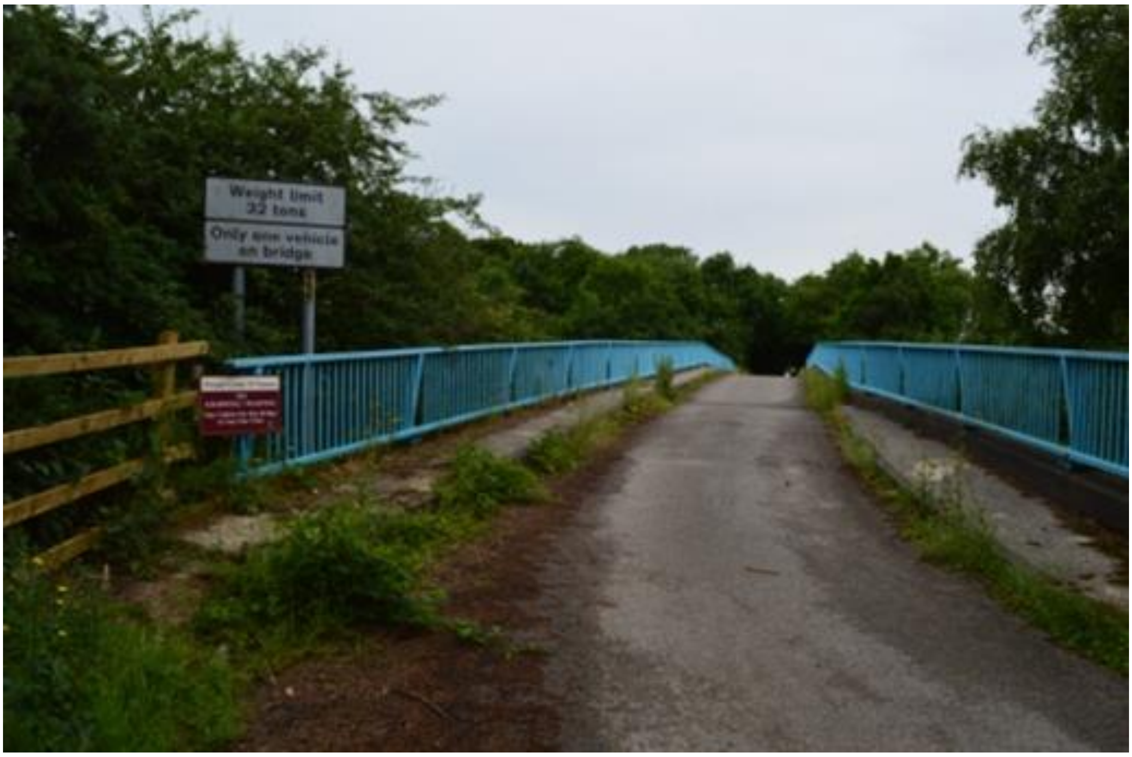


Figure 32. Hall Lane, Ashley, crossing the M56. It is a private road and designated public footpath; cyclists are banned from using it, warned off by signage and asked to dismount by Tatton Estate employees (author’s photo, 12.09.2015).

One irreversible effect of the motorway is that it divides the parish in to two parts, north and south. It may also result in the northern portion of Ashley being seen by non-residents as a part of the urban mass of Greater Manchester, because of the perception of the motorway as such a significant landscape element that it forms an ‘edge’ or boundary to the city. The power of this perceived edge, in the minds of planners and local politicians, may, in practical decision-making terms, override the material reality of the rural landscape character of this place.

In contrast to the area north of the motorway, which is influenced by the tranquil Bollin valley and for large areas accessible only on foot, to the south of the M56 is the larger part of Ashley’s road network, which experiences relatively high volumes of traffic at peak times, as motorists seek to avoid congestion. It is also much closer to the airport runway and as such is subject to more noise pollution from take-offs. Views northwards from this area are predominantly of the village and of motorway embankment and associated vegetation. Views south are longer in some places, for example from Back Lane Farm. Runway Two, Airport City, and the control tower are visible on the skyline in the east of this area. Figure 33 shows aircraft queuing for take-off. The airport creates the only long views to the horizon in Ashley that are not entirely rural in character.

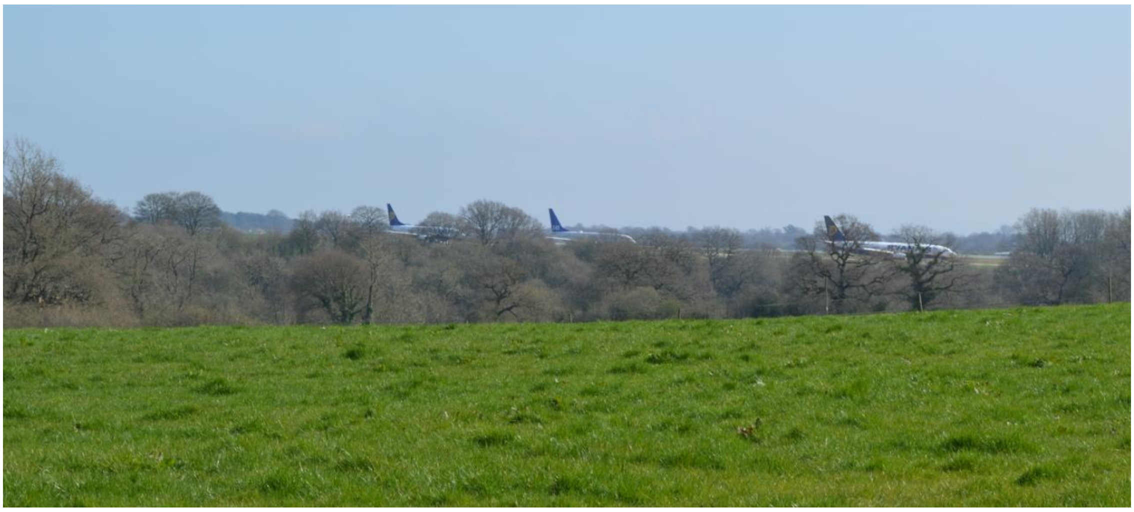


Figure 33. Aircraft queueing for take-off on Runway Two, taken from Castle Mill Farm, again indicating urbanising influence on the green belt (author's photo, 27.1.2017).

This is the part of the parish that will be most directly affected by the construction of the HS2 rail line. As can be seen from Figure 34, the line will divide this southern part of Ashley roughly in two. It will lie mostly in cutting to the west, rising on a long embankment over the Mobberley Road and existing railway line and continuing eastwards to cross the Bollin Valley on a viaduct before reaching the proposed station at the airport. I would argue that the negative landscape impacts of the infrastructure in this place will be very significant, and will include but not be limited to;

1. an erosion of the quality of the green belt and therefore risk of attracting excessive development in the medium-to-long term;
2. demolition of houses and business premises;
3. interruption of views south from the village and farms;
4. significant land-take in the parish;
5. loss of tranquillity for the village, other dwellings, PROWs, cricket ground, fields, woodlands and the Bollin valley;
6. destruction of farm land, PROWs, hedgerows and field ponds;
7. impacts of as-yet-unspecified associated work to the M56;
8. isolation of the village on an 'island' of land between HS2 and the M56;
9. reduction of affordability in houses for local people due to close proximity of HS2 station;

10. road closures and general disruption during construction period;
11. the hamlet of Thorns Green, marked in green on Figure 34, will be largely destroyed by the line, with the loss of at least four dwellings.

The Parish Councillors in particular have contributed to my understanding of these issues, due to discussions I have observed at Parish Council meetings (see Appendix B).

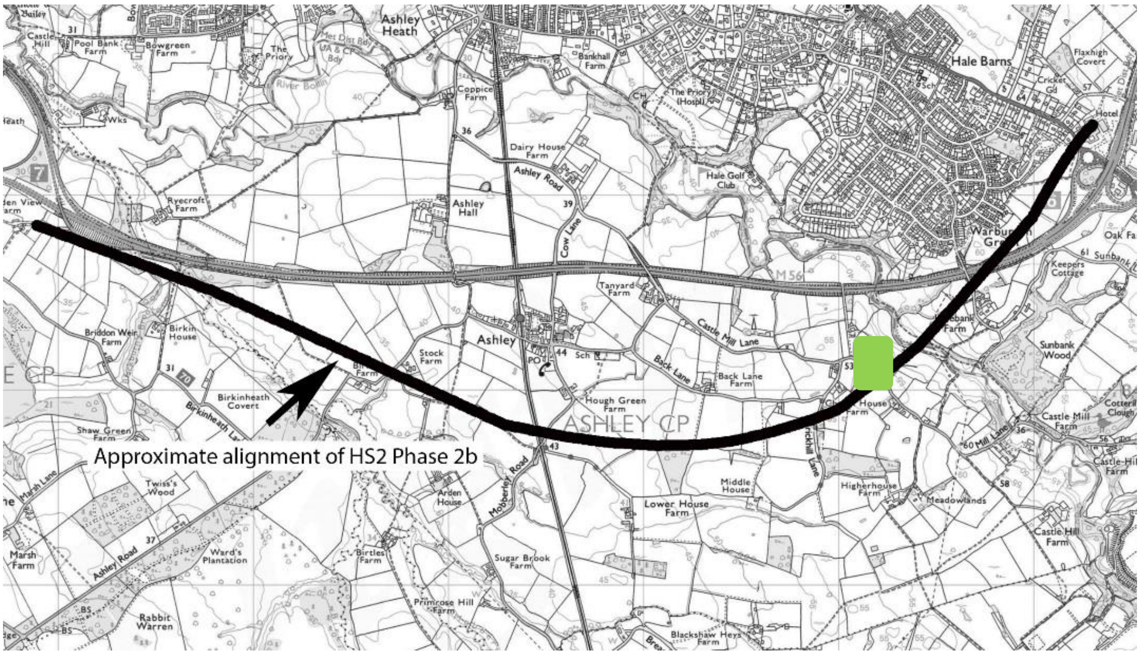

Approximate alignment of HS2 Phase 2b
Ashley Heath
Hale Barns
Ashley
ASHLEY CP
Ashley Hall
Ashley Road
Castle Mill Lane
Back Lane
M56
Birkinheath Covert
Hough Green Farm
Stock Farm
Tanyard Farm
Dairy House Farm
Hale Golf Club
Middle House
Lower House Farm
Higherhouse Farm
Sugar Brook Farm
Primrose Hill
Blackshaw Heys Farm
Rabbit Warren
Ward's Plantation
Twiss's Wood
Marsh Farm
Shaw Green Farm
Briddon Weir Farm
Birkin House
Ryecroft Farm
Pool Bank Farm
Bowgreen Farm
Coppice Farm
Bankhall Farm
Sunbank Wood
Castle Mill Farm
Castle Hill Farm
Meadowlands
Keepers Cottage
Arden House
Birtles Farm

Figure 34. Division of Ashley by proposed HS2 alignment, showing location of Thorns Green. At least four dwellings will be demolished here. (author’s image using base map from: EDINA Digimap Ordnance Survey Service, <http://edina.ac.uk/digimap>, created: December 2017, not to scale)

Southern Ashley is characterised in part by the minor roads with frequent sharp bends. The popularity of the area with leisure cyclists at weekends is a source of some anxiety for residents due to the nature of the roads and their frequent use by large farm vehicles. There are few footways alongside the roads. Where present, these footways are unusable by prams and wheelchairs as they are overgrown by vegetation, reducing their usable width to just a few centimetres, as shown in Figure 35, showing Ashley Road near the junction with Lamb Lane. These factors contribute to a general difficulty in walking the neighbourhood and encourage residents to rely on cars. Although Ashley is a convenient short cut for through traffic, some of the lanes have a very peaceful and unspoilt quality, such as Lamb Lane (Figure 36) and Back Lane, for example.

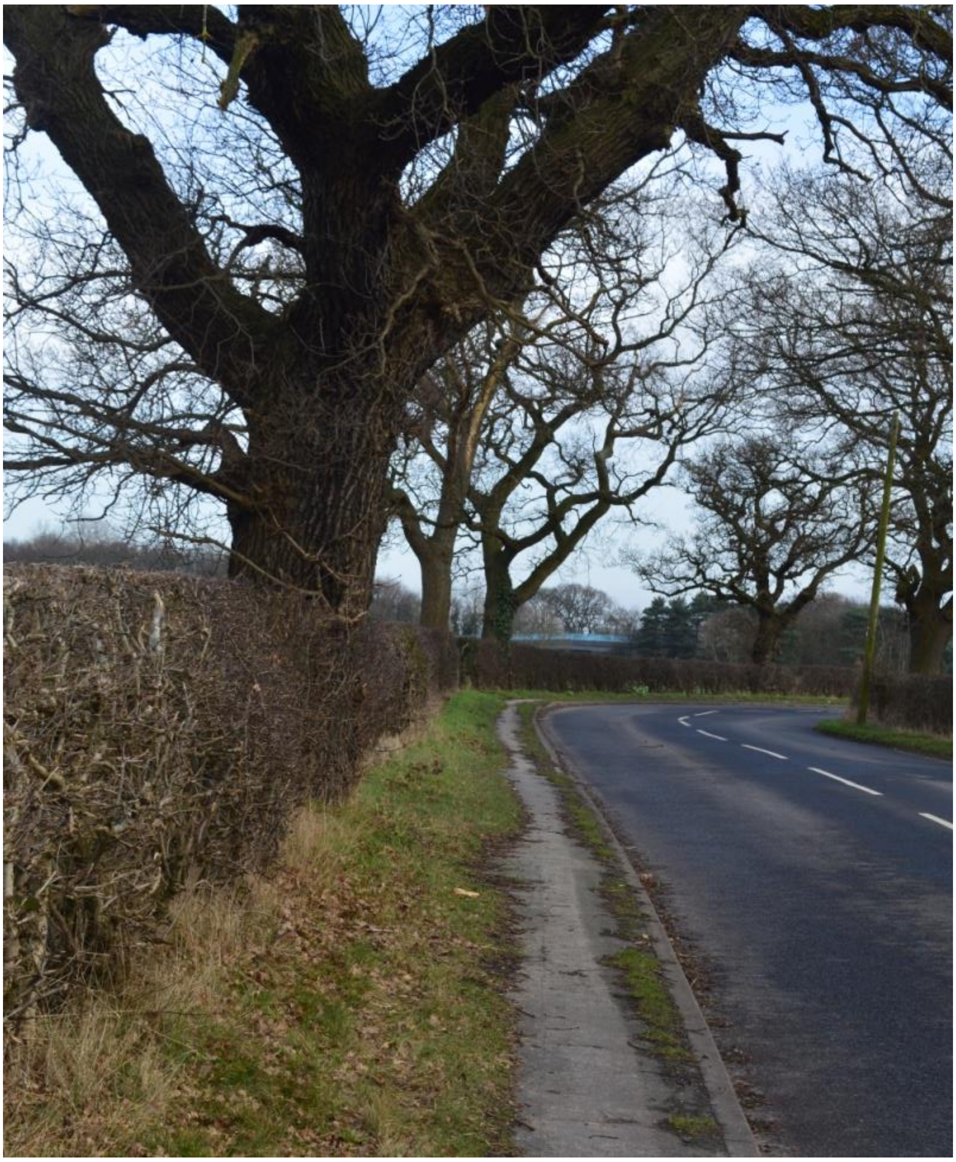


Figure 35. Overgrown footway on Ashley Road near Lamb Lane, note characteristic hedgerow oaks (author’s photo, 23.1.2017).

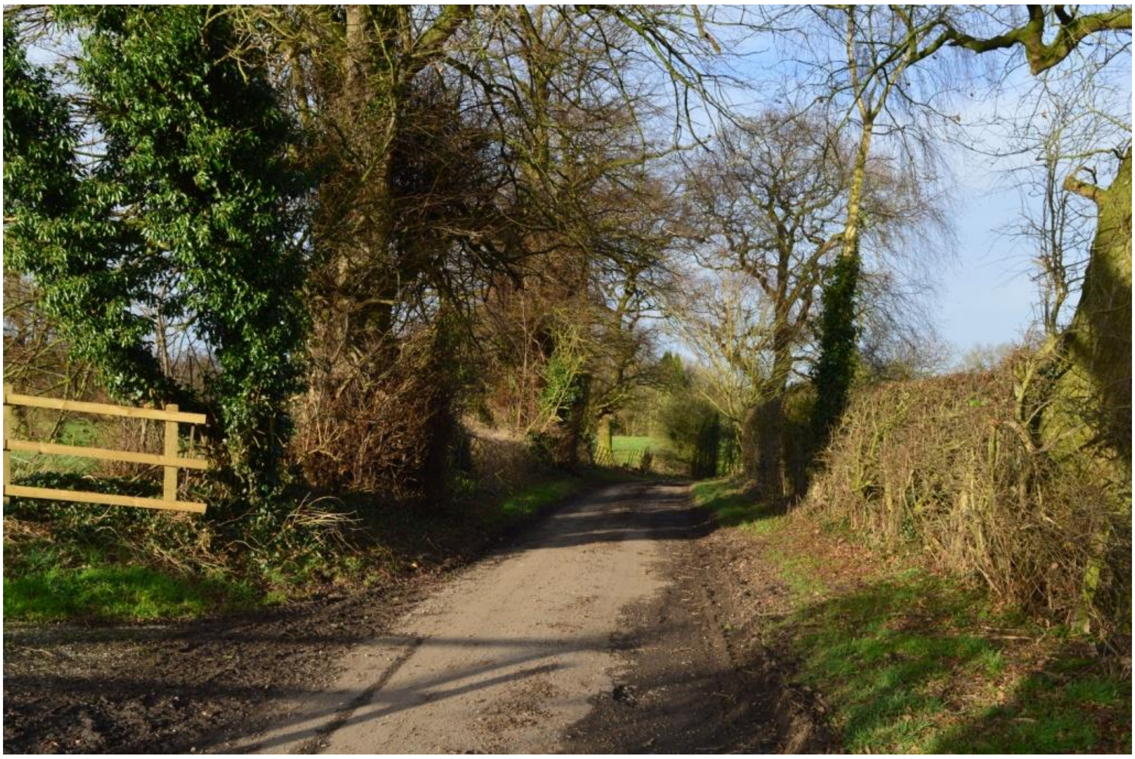


Figure 36. Lamb Lane; rural and tranquil. HS2 will cross at this point (author's photo, 23.1.2017).

There are ten large farmsteads which maintain their original use within this area, and these again have a mix of traditional red brick vernacular buildings and modern barns. All appear on the Tithe map of 1838. Stocks Farm is of similar character and date, and is currently undergoing a change of use to become a wedding and conference venue. The farm land has the open and undulating character of north Ashley, with similarly small scattered woodlands and vegetated field ponds. Much of Brickhill Wood, which was enlarged between 1870 and 1890, is an Ancient Woodland, as is the narrow stretch of woodland along the brook to the northeast of Arden House. There are more than 30 small field ponds in the area and in many places the land drains poorly. Again, hedgerow oaks are frequent and characteristic, as in Figure 35.

There is very little sense of visual or physical connection to the historic landscape of Tatton Park, which lies so close to Ashley's boundary. This may in part be due to the lack of connecting public rights of way that would provide visitors and residents with access.

3.3 The landscape character; past

My historical study of Ashley has been partly based on five different maps from the University of Edinburgh's Digimap service, from circa 1880, 1910, 1950, 1970 and 1980. I have also used the Tithe map of 1838, online via the Cheshire Records Office (http://maps.cheshire.gov.uk/tithemaps) and the current Ordnance Survey maps at various scales.

The ink of the tithe map is faint and more difficult to read than the more recent maps, but overlays, using Adobe Photoshop to adjust scale and transparency have enabled me to make comparisons in order to better understand changes in the landscape over time (Figure 37).

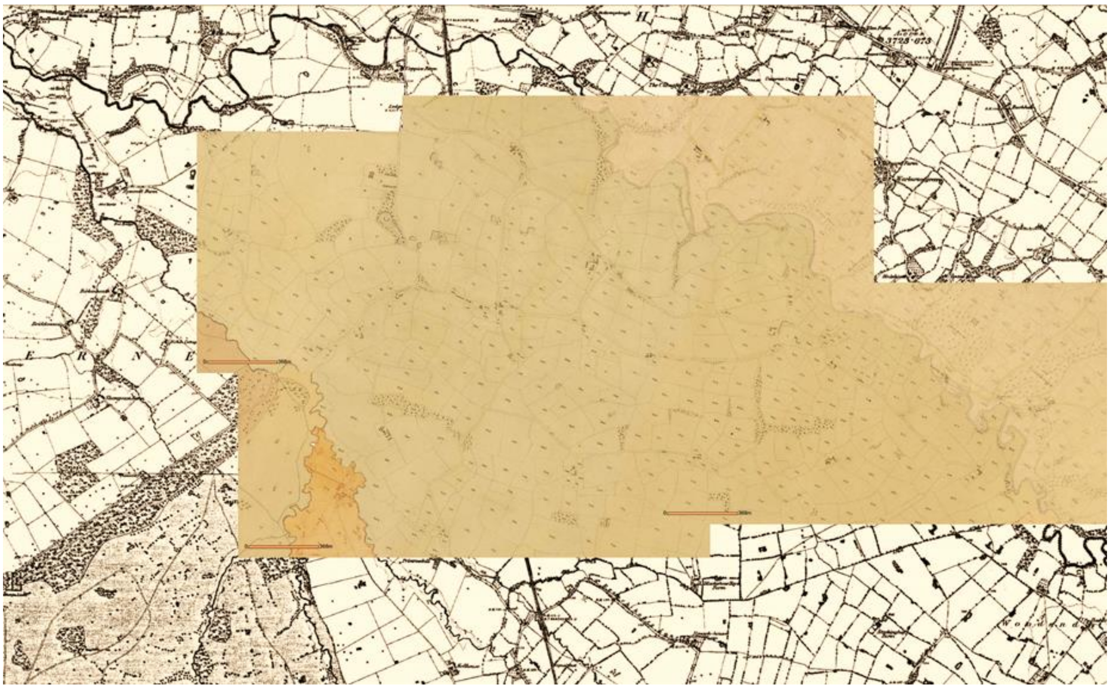


Figure 37 - the 1880s map overlaid with sections of the 1838 tithe map: transparency has been manipulated in Photoshop in order to compare changing details in the landscape (author's image using base map from: EDINA Digimap Ancient Roam Service, <http://edina.ac.uk/digimap>, created: September 2016, not to scale)

The first transport infrastructure in Ashley was probably the River Bollin, which is said locally to have been navigable during Roman times, but the first mapped evidence of a transport network is the unclassified roads. There are no road names on the tithe map, but the pattern of the roads in Ashley has altered very little since the 1838 map and their names are unchanged since the 1880s. Only Hall Lane has significantly changed in character. Though it follows an unchanged route it has become a track or green lane, and is no longer a public road. It leads north from the village outskirts across the M56 and past Ashley Hall.

Several of the lanes now have bridges over or underpasses beneath the motorway. Mobberley Road now crosses the railway line, which was built in 1862. The railway line itself has not changed. This may sound obvious, but it is notable that the most unchanging element of this landscape is arguably the transport infrastructure. The railway line predates the church in Ashley; St Elizabeth's was built in 1880 by Lord Egerton as a 'chapel of ease' for locals (conversation 12, with Keith Addenbrook, Appendix B), so that they did not have to walk to church in Bowdon. Bridges across the Bollin river also remain in their 1838 positions, at Castle Mill, Ashley Road and Pigleystair Bridge). The larger houses in Ashley such as Arden House, Lower House Farm, Higher House Farm, Tanyard Farm and Back Lane Farm all have changed footprints, but they continue as dwellings in the landscape. Woodland is a far less persistent presence. Ashley has had a low proportion of woodland (compared to other parts of Cheshire) throughout the time period, and woodlands that have existed in the past have not survived to the present. Many bear the name 'covert', a thicket in which game birds can hide, planted in order to rear pheasants for shooting.

The 1880s and 1910s maps show that there was a brick and tile works just south of the Mobberley Road bridge (Figure 38). This land is now part of Sugar Brook Farm, and the site was shown to me by farmer John Erlam (conversation 20, Appendix B). The location of the brick field can still be seen on his land. This works would have supplied the materials for most of the buildings in Ashley.

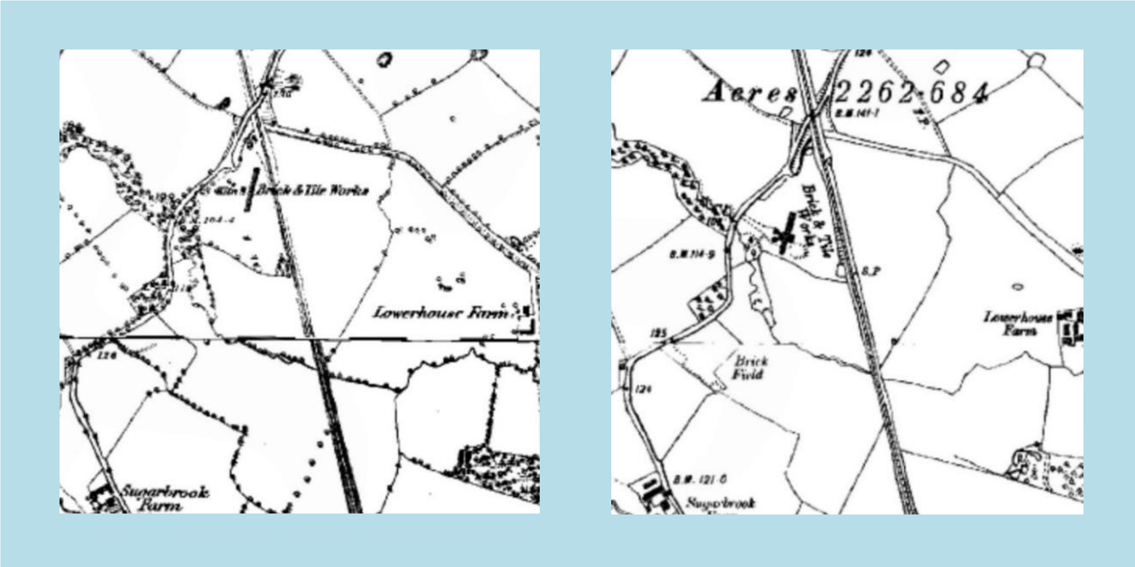


Figure 38. Maps showing Ashley Brick and Tile works in 1880 (left) and 1910 (right) (author's image using base map from: EDINA Digimap Ancient Roam Service, <http://edina.ac.uk/digimap>, created: March 2017, not to scale). These maps show the place illustrated in HS2 Ltd's initial road proposals, Figure 61.

The village itself has seen many changes and Figure 39 indicates its mapped development between 1838 and the 1970s. It is a small settlement containing just over half of the dwellings in the Area. In 1838 it comprised a smithy, approximately ten agricultural dwellings and associated barns. The village was loosely nucleated around the central staggered crossroads.

By the 1870s the railway line and station meant that milk could be transported to Manchester, and that goods destined for Tatton Park could be brought in by rail and taken onwards by horse and cart. The village grew, acquiring a school, post office and police station. The smithy profited and became a social hub at the centre of the village, as did The Greyhound pub (according to Peter Wright, in several of the conversations listed in Appendix B).

In the 1890s there were up to twenty dwellings in the village, and Ivy Cottages still stood on Mobberley Road, opposite the Smithy. At this point Ashley had gained St Elizabeth's Church, a new Vicarage, the large house now known as Midways and five new houses on Cow Lane. These developments suggest that it was a desirable place to live, and with a distinct centre evolving around the crossroads that forms the junction of Cow Lane, Mobberley Road and Ashley Road. The large sidings visible at the station indicate its importance for the transport of goods.

The maps show little change from the late Victorian period up until the 1930s, but by the 1960s the Hough Green development added nearly 30 houses to the village, with a large central grassed area. The 1960s map shown here illustrates the original layout of the road junction, with Ashley Barn intact and police station on the opposite side of the road. However, in 1970 the end bay of the barn was removed, the police station demolished and the junction altered to become a non-staggered crossroads. The focus of the village shifted to the west of the crossroads, with an increasingly busy road junction reducing the walkability and the tranquillity of Ashley. This change, and the later addition of the Egerton Moss development, resulted in a dilution of the sense of place, with the new village green competing with the pub, church and post office to act as a social focal point. The relatively marginal locations of the school and church contributed to this effect, which persists to this day and means that Ashley has no single distinctive village centre.

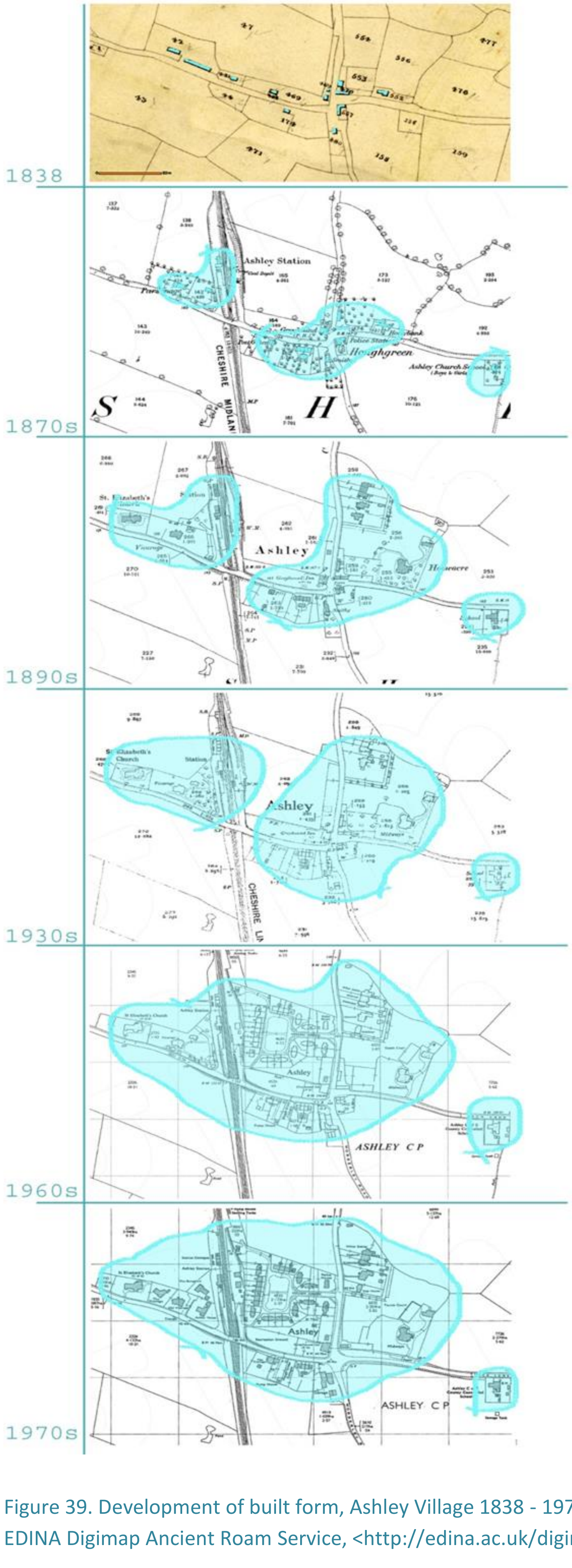

1838
1870s
Ashley Station
Hough Green
Ashley Church School
CHESHIRE MIDLAND
1890s
St. Elizabeth's
Station
Ashley
1930s
St. Elizabeth's Church
Station
Ashley
CHESHIRE LIN
1960s
Ashley
ASHLEY C P
1970s
Ashley
ASHLEY C P

Figure 39. Development of built form, Ashley Village 1838 - 1970's (author's image, base map from: EDINA Digimap Ancient Roam Service, <http://edina.ac.uk/digimap>, created: March 2017, not to scale)

A number of local history texts have informed my understanding of the emergence of Ashley as a parish and village. Some, such as *the Cheshire Village Book* (Cheshire Federation of Women's Institutes, 1990) (CFWI), provide a factual outline and give information such as the size of the parish at 2173 acres, the date of the building of the M56 (1971) and the number of residences: 115. This book also notes that “All the essential services for village life are contained in the village centre – the church, school, pub, post office, cricket club, garage and police house.” (Cheshire Federation of Women's Institutes, 1990: 20-21). The railway station is not mentioned, but has continued to operate, although it is unstaffed and the buildings are now residential. Many other things have changed since 1990, however. The junior and infant’s school closed in 2004 and is now a private day care nursery. The post office closed in 2008, and village shop in 2016. The Police House at Hough Green no longer has its original function and is a private residence. The forge is now an interiors shop.

The CFWI inform us that Ashley’s church was built in 1880 “for £4000 by Lord Egerton of Tatton, who had bought the Ashley Estate in 1841” (Cheshire Federation of Women's Institutes, 1990: 21). Although it remains and has had recent improvements so that it provides an excellent small community space, the vicar, based at St Peter’s in nearby Hale, has only 6 hours per week allocated to the care of his parishioners (conversation 12, Appendix B). The cricket club is arguably no longer a key community resource as its players come largely from outside the parish. Sadly, the Ashley Women’s Institute itself also ceased, in 2011 (Wright and Turnbull, 2013: 28) just as the movement was enjoying a flourishing of interest in other parts of the country. These losses significantly contribute to an erosion of the individual character of Ashley, both as a physical landscape and a commercial and social one.

It is possible to see the lack of a space acting as a public and outdoor social focus as directly connected to the loss of social activity. Residents of Hough Green say that the village green is used for children to play football, but adults do not appear to use it. For Lefebvre (writing pre-Internet, of course) this understanding is fundamental to his conclusion that “Social relations, which are concrete abstractions, have no real existence save in and through space. Their underpinning is spatial.” (Lefebvre, 1991: 404).

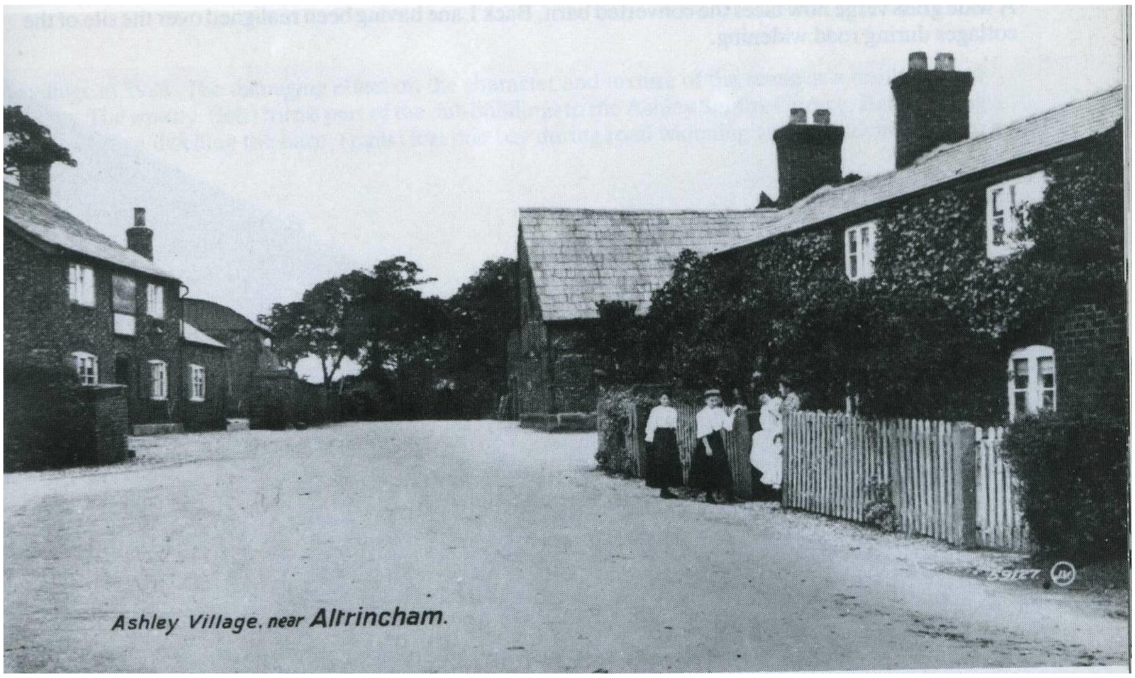


Figure 40.1908 postcard, showing the Greyhound to the left and Ivy Cottages to the right, with Ashley Barn beyond. These three built forms, along with the smithy, constituted the entire village centre on the Tithe Map of 1838 (postcard supplied by Peter Wright)

Figure 40 shows the old centre of the village, looking north, to the Greyhound Pub on the left and Ivy Cottages to the right, with Ashley Barn just visible beyond. These cottages and the end bay of the barn were the structures demolished in 1970 in order to alter the road junction (Figure 41). These three built forms, along with the smithy, constituted the entire village centre on the Tithe Map of 1838. The pub stands at the central crossroads of the village and, although this could still be considered the village centre in the present day, this is no longer necessarily apparent to the outsider when arriving.

The road junction is wide and occupies the central territory of the place, putting passing traffic at the heart of Ashley, rather than a village shop or green which might usually be a marker of centrality. The decision to create the crossroads effectively sped up the passage of traffic through the village. The high speed of passing traffic on winding roads is now perceived locally as a significant problem and has been taken up by the Parish Council; talking to residents about such issues has been the third method of sourcing knowledge about parish history.

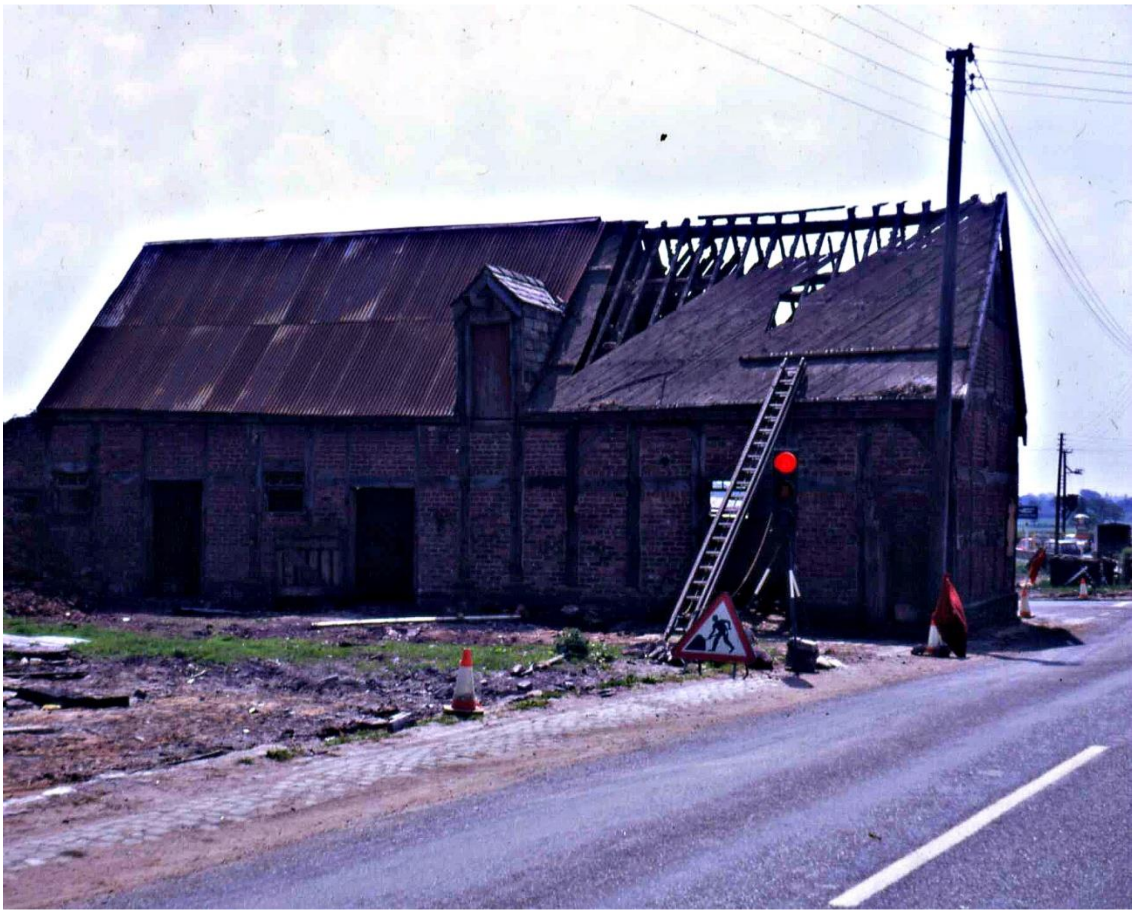


Figure 41. Demolition of end bay of Ashley Barn, 1970, in order for road widening to take place at the centre of the village (photo taken and kindly supplied by Peter Wright).

Photographs and written records and personal recollections indicate that in the last century the Bollin was used as a leisure resource far more intensively than its typical present use by ramblers and dog-walkers. Figure 42 (date unrecorded) shows the Pigleystairs Bridge area used for bathing. On my walk with Paul O'Hare in the hot weather of June 2016 we saw a father and son paddling in the water here, but today the increased tree cover, and therefore shade, in the valley probably renders the spot less attractive for potential bathers, where once it was "an area enjoyed very much by children in the summer – swimming, paddling or having picnics." (French and Warrender, 1984: 29). This is also the point on the Bollin at which the HS2 viaduct is proposed to cross.

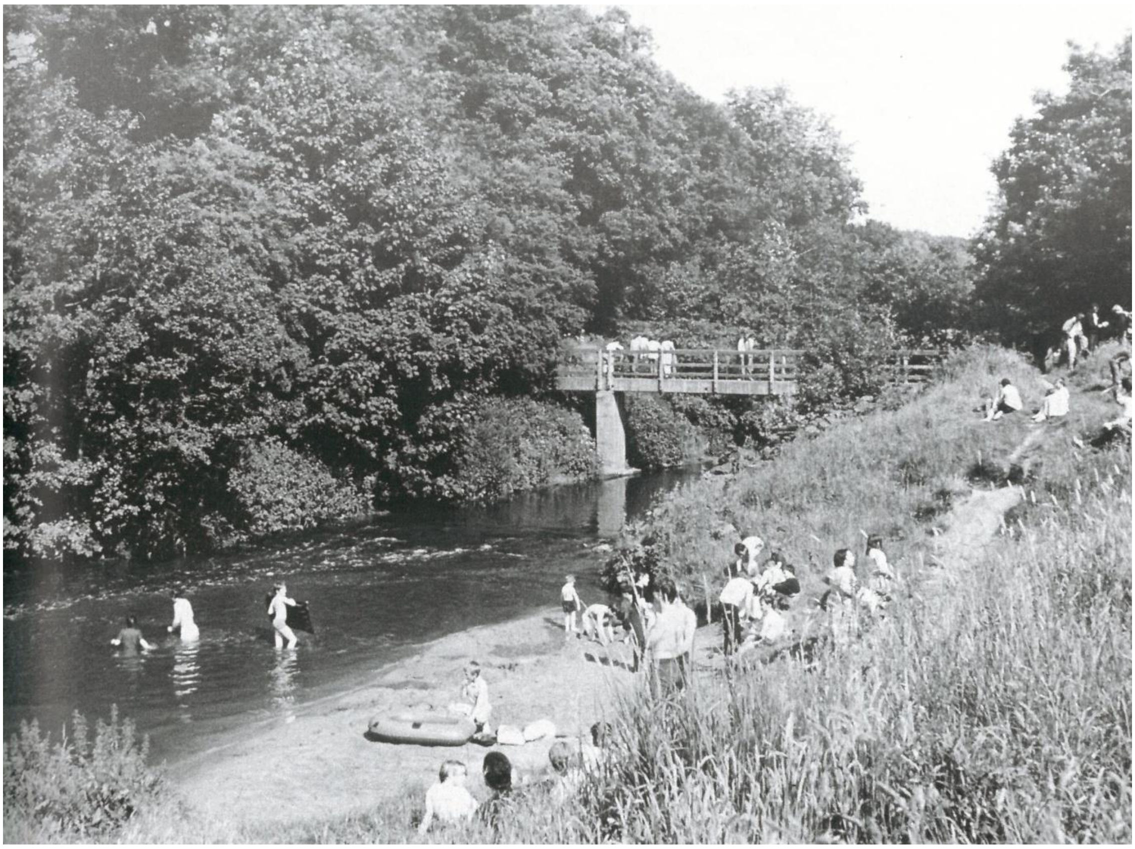


Figure 42. Bathing at Pigleystairs Bridge, a popular social space (French and Warrender, 1984).

Bathing was also very popular further up the Bollin at Castle Mill open air pools, from 1932 to 1975, as seen in Figure 43. The pool “attracted many people from miles around on hot summer days” (Cheshire Federation of Women's Institutes, 1990: 22), and it was a “favourite resort of visitors” (Laver and Rendell, 1987: 212) but the pools here have since been filled in, and a “Spanish-style villa was constructed in their place” (Wright and Turnbull, 2013: 34).The pools were filled with filtered water from the Bollin (Warrender, 2013), and Peter Wright recalls the murky nature of the water, and the glass from broken bottles which accumulated at the bottom of the pool. There were also many river baptisms in the Bollin circa 1900 (Warrender, 2013). Although schoolchildren coming home from Bowdon do still paddle at Ashley Mill, these photographs suggest that Ashley has, by comparison, perhaps lost some of its close relationship with the river, access to which is restricted by the small numbers of public rights of way, which have poor connectivity.

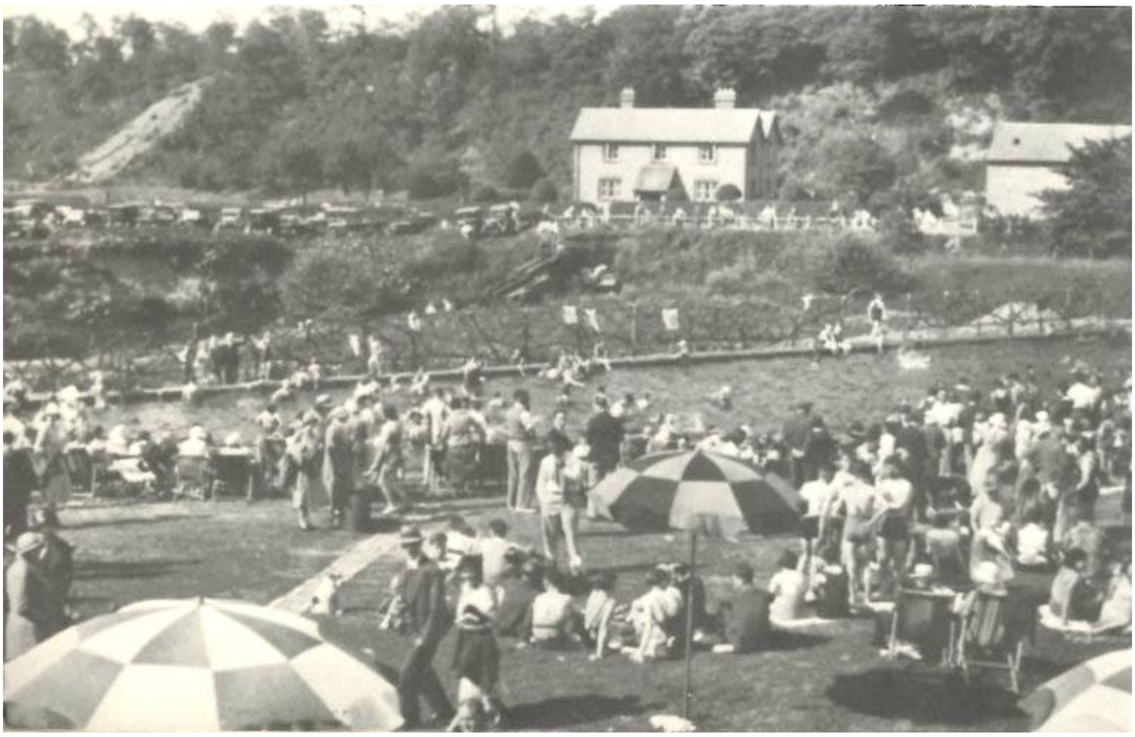


Figure 43. Castle Mill Pools in 1934, a well-used local amenity (photograph, Hale Civic Society, 1976).

As with any emergent entity, the usually shallow and amenable river can be the site of sudden and dramatic changes. The floods of May 1872 caused a dammed reservoir upriver near Macclesfield to burst and devastate the Bollin Valley, such that in Ashley "The weir was washed away and Ashley Mill was also damaged and put out of use" (French, 1984: 27). The estate owner, Lord Egerton, refused to repair the mill (see Figure 44, ruined mill-wheel) and the miller was presumably put out of work (French, 1984).

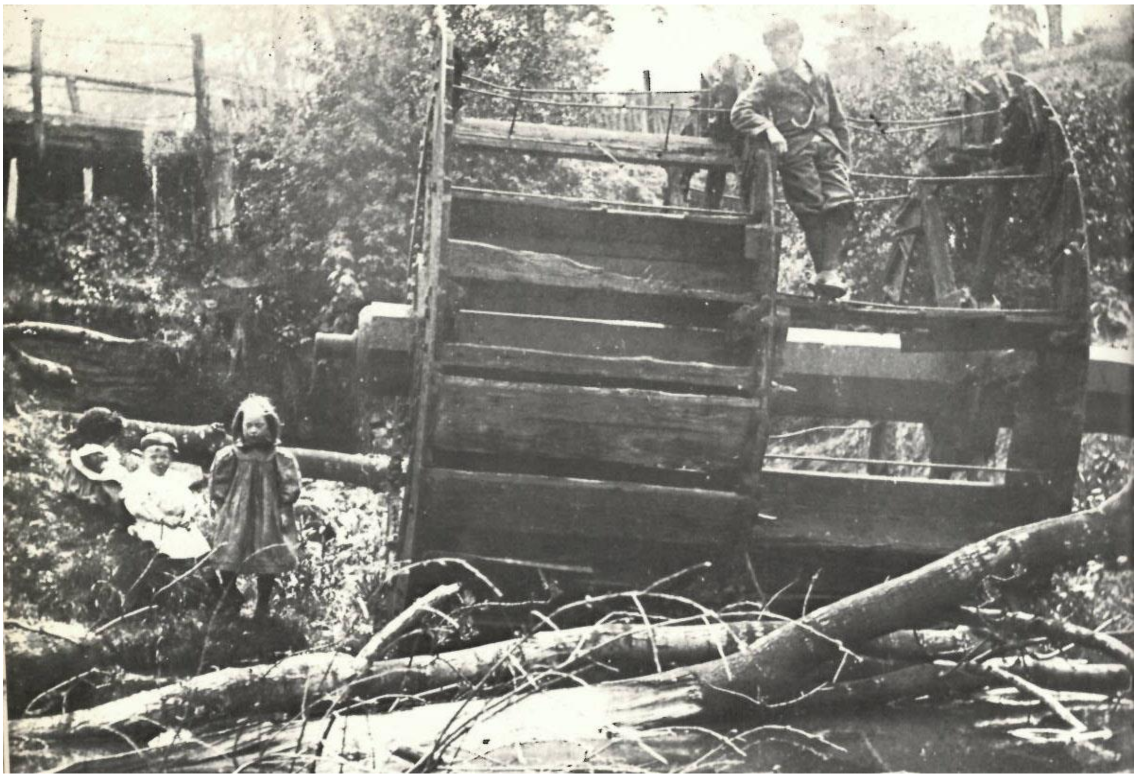


Figure 44 Derelict mill wheel, after flooding at Ashley Mill in 1899. The mill was never restored to use. (photograph Hale Civic Society, 1976)

There are some surprisingly diverse elements to the social history of this quiet parish, such as Robert Jackson's collection of reptiles at his house on Back Lane in the 1940s, which in 1963 moved to north Wales and became Colwyn Bay Zoo (Wright and Turnbull, 2013), or the anti-aircraft emplacement of World War 2 which was home to forty personnel (Wright and Turnbull, 2013). *Kelly's Directory of Cheshire* (1934) describes how, after the Norman conquest, Ashley was held by the de Masseys of Dunham Massey and thereafter the estate passed through the hands of several families until in 1841 it was sold to Wilbraham Egerton esquire, ancestor of Lord Egerton of Tatton (the landowner in 1934). It notes the population of the civil parish in 1931 was 359, significantly more than today's figure. This history of ownership by wealthy landed families continues to the present day, with most of the Parish lying within the Tatton Estate (see Figure 45) and owned by the Brooks family, who, according to Peter Wright, made their fortune in furniture retail during the Second World War. Whilst most of these things are not legible in the physical landscape of Ashley today, finding out about them, from texts and from verbal accounts, has supported my appreciation of the parish as a lived and changing place. The only one of these which has an enduring visible presence is the ownership of buildings by the Tatton Estate, as their ownership is signified by a distinctive burgundy paint on woodwork and drain pipes.

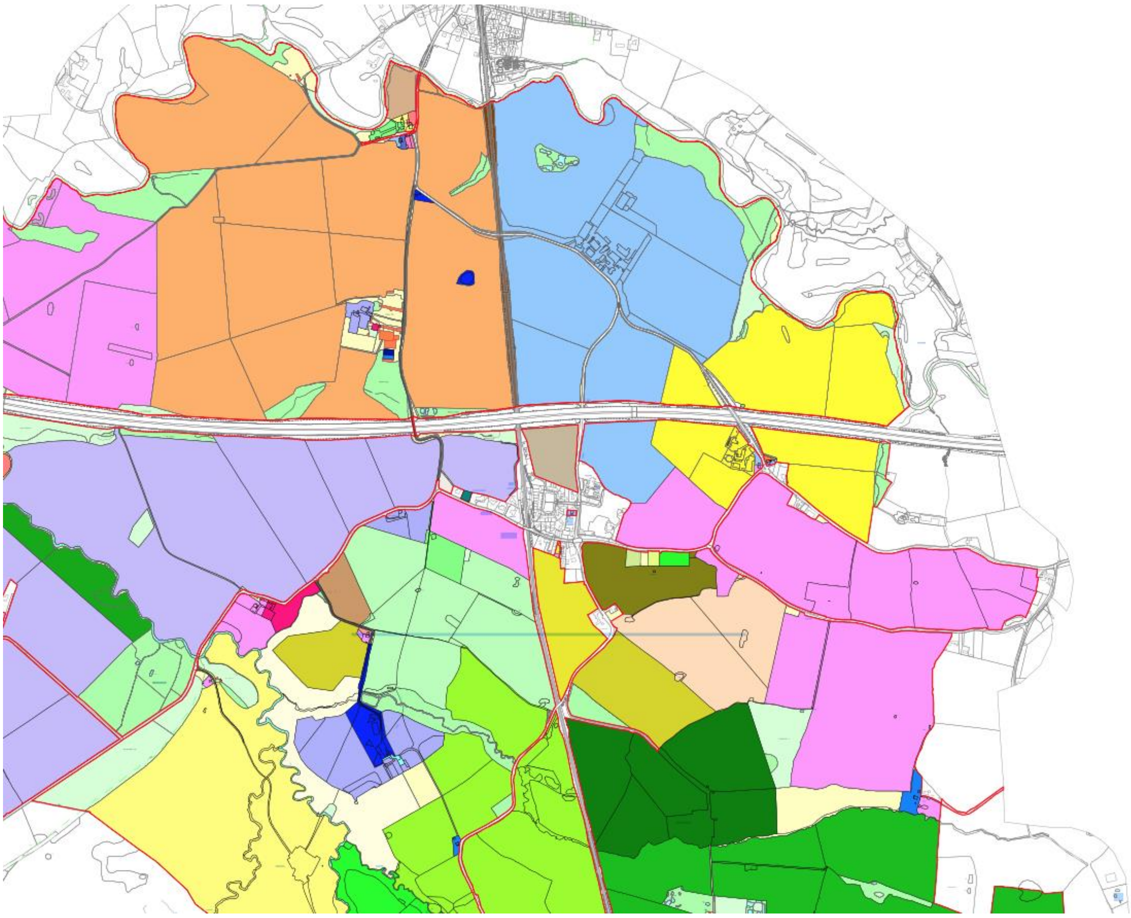


Figure 45. Map of Tatton Estate's land holdings in Ashley. The coloured areas indicate different farms and are all owned by the Estate. The village is visible as the largely uncoloured area to the south of the motorway, at the centre of the map. Image kindly provided by Sam Stephenson of Tatton Estate Management, 24.1.2016

Kelly's Directory also identifies Ashley Hall as the location for a meeting of noblemen and gentlemen in support of the reigning sovereign, George the Second, during the Jacobite rebellion in 1715 (Kelly's, 1934: 36). Peter Wright (personal communication, 7.6.16) suggested to me that this was an indication of the importance of the Hall and of Ashley itself at the time. This event located Ashley within the development of important national political events of the time. Becoming the site for proposed large-scale linear infrastructure arguably has the reverse effect, as progressive dissection of the Parish detracts from its individuality and it becomes perceived as a place which is simply on the way to somewhere else.

Two useful local history sources which give a more qualitative view of parish life are *Hale and Ashley; the Past 100 Years* (Laver and Rendell, 1987), and *It's All About Ashley* (Wright and Turnbull, 2013). The former is a historical account produced by Hale Civic Society, and the latter is a collection of creative pieces, historical descriptions, personal recollections, accounts of local buildings and interviews with locals. These texts collage together a picture of Ashley as a place formed by the farming way of life, where agriculture is perhaps the most significant anthropic driver of the emergence of this landscape since well before 1838. Inextricably part of the agricultural landscape are the farming families, several of whom have worked the land in Ashley for more than one generation and continue to do so today; for example the Erlams, of Sugar Brook Farm, are one of the oldest families in the parish (Laver and Rendell, 1987).

This rural place is not unusual in the loss of local amenities, but the potential impact is clear. Chance social interactions such as might happen at the petrol pump or post office counter are now far less likely to happen. More sustained community bonds which would once have grown around the school or the WI do not have the same ground on which to flourish. Church congregations are small. In such a context of reduced opportunity for social connections it is likely that local issues are therefore discussed less frequently, opinions are not shared and news is not circulated to the same extent as it previously was. In these circumstances it would not be surprising if there were a low level of awareness or informed concern in Ashley about planning or landscape issues in general. Indeed, it would seem very unlikely that, when faced with a proposal as complex and apparently so far in the future as HS2, there would be any concerted effort to engage with its potential impacts. The forum for such matters to be discussed is Parish Council meetings, which only a relatively small number of people attend (see Chapter Five).

Ashley's pub, the Greyhound, is one of the few remaining focal points for public parish life. It was originally named The Orrell Arms, after Robert Orrell of Arden House, but;

> "In time, Ashley was subsumed in to the Egerton Empire and, perhaps inevitably, the Orrell Arms became the Greyhound, in honour of the incumbent Lord Egerton's favourite dog. It's called paternalism."

(Wright and Turnbull, 2014: 58)

The pub is no longer a free house and it now has the character of a successful Cheshire gastro-pub, which attracts customers from the wider county as well as the parish. The pub stands at the central crossroads of the village and has been a useful meeting point for discussions during my visits to Ashley.

The local histories acknowledge the coming of rail, airport and motorway infrastructure and their influence on the place. The writers of these histories have varying opinions about such changes and on occasion they are very accepting, for example;

> "the river runs through agricultural land under and alongside the M56 motorway, which in recent years has helped so many in this area to gain a quick retreat from Greater Manchester to Chester and North Wales."
>
> (French and Warrender, 1984: 35)

Similarly pragmatic, Hale Civic Society find that the village "was stimulated by the arrival of the railway. In its wake came cottages for railway workers and a parish church, vicarage and local school." (Laver and Rendell, 1987: 213). The railway was built here in 1862. The CFWI also acknowledges the importance of the railway, observing that,

> "Village horizons were greatly widened …with the coming of the railway and Ashley station. Apart from enabling people to travel, it opened up markets for the sale of farm produce and brought supplies direct to the village"
>
> (Cheshire Federation of Women's Institutes, 1990: 21)

Peter Wright, in our interview of 24.5.16, elaborated on this. He told me that Ashley station was built specifically to supply the Egerton family at Tatton Park. It had a large goods siding and three men had full time employment in transporting coal from the station by horse and cart to Tatton. Railway cottages and a signal box were built and the village smithy became a very active centre of the community, shoeing the carthorses. Peter recalls getting off the train from school and going straight to the smithy where he and other boys were allowed to pump the bellows. Such praise of increased connectivity and its benefits for leisure and business is uncontroversial, and is perhaps to be expected given the passing of time and the benefit of hindsight. Sheila Norbury, who came to Ashley as a 'land girl' in 1948, contributes her recollections to Wright and Turnbull's book in the form of 'a speech prepared but not given' for the 80th birthday of Ashley Women's Institute (which was to close before said anniversary). She remembers that in the 1940s,

> "farmers used to take the milk down to the station, where it was out on a train and taken off to a Manchester dairy. It was all steam trains in those days, the sound of which the horses hated and would always run away."
>
> (Wright and Turnbull, 2013: 44)

Here, then, is some local evidence of the commercial benefit of the railway station to farmers on the one hand, and the disruption to peaceful rural life on the other.

Wright and Turnbull's book has, on occasion, a pessimistic tone with respect to changes in Ashley. Referring to the Castle Mill site, they are moved to;

> "…reflect on the nature of human progress that first builds a small Anglo-Saxon fort on a parcel of land. Then a farm. Then a mill. Then a swimming pool. Finally a hacienda. And, no doubt in time, a car park for a high-speed railway line."
>
> (Wright and Turnbull, 2013: 34)

This tongue-in –cheek acceptance of landscape change implies that, to the authors, developments on this site have had varying degrees of acceptability. The tone suggests perhaps that the fort, farm and mill emerged from the place in order to fulfil fundamental local needs. There is a clear link between the parish landscape and requirements for particular built forms. The swimming pool can be read as emerging from a different order of need which developed after the industrial revolution; a requirement for leisure facilities. It is plausible to frame this land use as part of a tradition of bathing and relaxing on the banks of the Bollin. The ironic use of 'haçienda' for the villa-style house currently on the site, however, indicates a distinct sense of disapproval of the otherness of the alien architectural style in the context of a boggy field in the northwest of England. The functional and aesthetic properties of this house do not answer a need and appear contrary to the spirit of place.

The projection of the future of this specific site as being used for an HS2 car park is not an entirely improbable one, given the location in relation to the proposed Manchester Airport station, less than a mile away. Wright and Turnbull were writing following the initial announcement of the route alignment by HS2 Ltd on 28th January 2013. Wright and Turnbull offer this point as an opportunity for reflection on human progress, and the point about car parking could be read in several ways. Is the car park representative of the impressive progress of technology, symbolised by high speed rail, or more likely does it suggest our insensitivity to place which would lead to such a history being concreted over and effectively permanently hidden from view? Both readings are possible but I would propose a third interpretation. The car park, like the haçienda, is derided because it does not emerge from local needs or conditions. True, once the line and station are built there will be a need for commuters to park their cars, but this will be a need that emerges from a national-scale railway scheme, conceived in the context of European transport policy and in all probability with the aesthetic of globalised infrastructure. It will not have emerged from the landscape of Ashley.

The map data shows that the oldest infrastructures in the parish are the field boundaries and the network of minor roads; there are no ‘A’ or ‘B’ roads here. These two elements are closely related as they are likely to have each emerged from the alignment of the other in a reciprocal relationship. The position and condition of the field boundaries contribute very significantly to the landscape character, affecting Ashley on both an aesthetic and an operational level as they are a key factor in determining the visual permeability and physical accessibility of the place.

GW Hoskins is informative about the development of local minor roads such as those in Ashley, which “run from village to village … with perhaps an occasional sudden right-angled bend and then on again” (Hoskins, 1955: 163). This description suits the dog-legged roads of Ashley very well. Their lack of purposeful direction seems to suggest that they may have arisen from combinations of ancient and medieval desire lines which emerged from habitual local use, unlike modern infrastructure which traverses the countryside along direct alignments. Hoskins supplies an account of how this may have occurred:

> “these right-angled bends in the road …reflect some stage in the medieval colonisation of the parish when a new furlong[1], brought in from the waste perhaps in the twelfth or the thirteenth century, cut across the direct path to the next village and forced it to make a sudden turn for a few yards before resuming its onward course.”
>
> (Hoskins, 1955: 166)

If this is the case in Ashley, it would be reasonable to propose that the roads have indeed emerged from the landscape rather than being imposed upon it, in that they became formalised from desire lines as a result of the patterns of agricultural practice of the villagers. It is also possible however, that they take their form in part from the effects of the enclosures of land in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Hoskins also suggests a reason for the scattered distribution of farmhouses built in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century English countryside, which again are clearly apparent in Ashley. The parliamentary enclosures were very costly for farmers due to legal fees and the need for new fencing and, thereafter:

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[1] A furlong is the distance a team of oxen could plough without resting, so here Hoskins refers to a new strip of field brought in to agricultural production.

> “Many of the smaller farmers continued to live therefore in the ancestral homestead on the village street, but carried out no repairs to it ...When the old house was practically uninhabitable, they or their sons built a new farmstead in the midst of their own fields and migrated from the village. That is why one sees so many Victorian farmhouses in red brick in the midst of the fields”
>
> (Hoskins, 1955: 167)

Such farmsteads are a significant feature of the landscape on the Tithe map and have changed very little to this day, almost certainly due to their always having been a part of what is now the Tatton Estate. Hoskins’ aim is to narrate a coherent story of the development of the English landscape, creating a line of reasoning which articulates his observations of the environment around him, cross-referenced with maps and aerial photography. He wishes to frame the emergence of the landscape as a knowable and coherent development, which in his view has its fulfilment in the scenery he observes in 1955. This is evidenced by the caption to plate 82 (Figure 46), which, to him, depicts “the completed English landscape”.

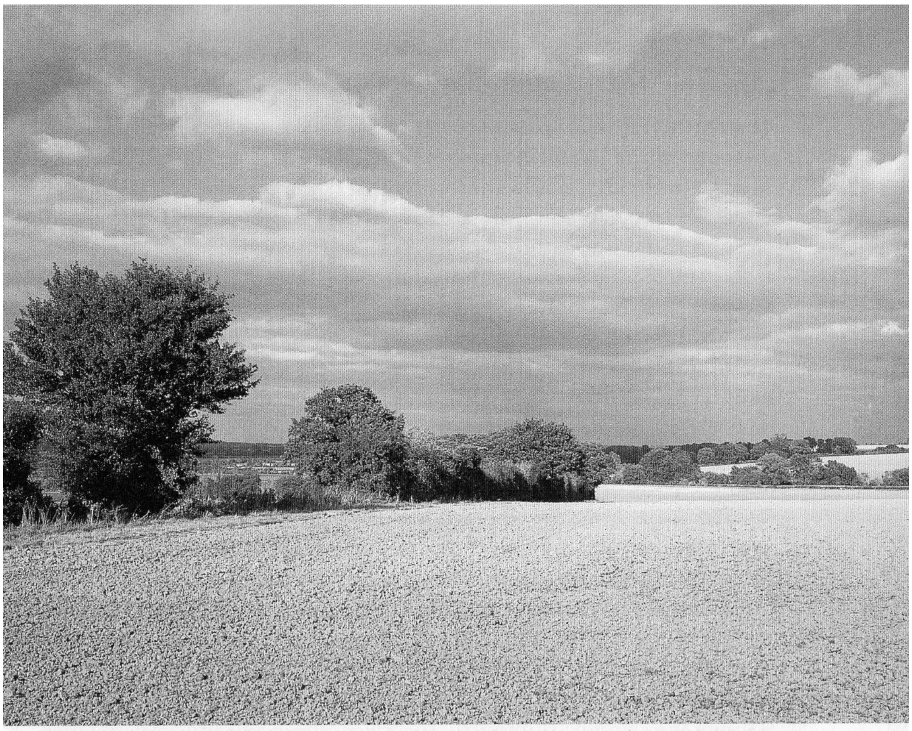

Plate 82. The completed English landscape: near Wantage in Berkshire. A fertile strip of the Upper Greensand runs along the foot of the chalk downlands. A string of villages were founded in Saxon times on this narrow belt of water-bearing sands between the porous chalk of the hills and the impervious Gault clay of the Vale

Figure 46. “Plate 82. The completed English landscape: near Wantage in Berkshire.” (Hoskins, 1955: 253). Hoskins does not subscribe to a view of landscape as emergent.

His caption suggests a notion of landscape which is based on a view dominated by evolution from the bedrock of the place itself, but which takes little account of factors which might be imposed from 'outside' and that has culminated in a 'natural' ending. This view of landscape as somehow fulfilled and 'completed' has an absurd quality. Twenty-seven years earlier, Clough Williams-Ellis' book *England and the Octopus*, about the development of post-industrial urban and rural English landscapes, had a more open vision of the future which admits the possibility of unforeseen emergence:

> "England shall cease to grow less lovely year by year, but shall halt, then face about, and begin to regain order and beauty…a new beauty from a new and intelligent synthesis of needs and factors that are utterly different from any in the past"
>
> (Williams-Ellis, 1975: 118)

It is this, more flexible, view of the nature of change in the landscape which arguably comes closer to the mindset that, I would argue, is needed in the face of major infrastructure proposals. It also admits the possibility of wholesale change, rather than just gradual development. In order for inhabitants of rural places to take up opportunities to influence the design of their future landscapes, they need perhaps to first accept that radical landscape change might have the potential to be beneficial.

In saying this, it is emphatically not my intention to diminish the attendant negative impacts of rail infrastructure. The Mid Cheshire Line and station, for example, were built in Ashley in 1862, just 20 years before George Ormerod wrote the second edition of his *History of the County Palatine and City of Chester*. His book demonstrates the fascination of the writer and his contemporaries with the new infrastructure and its effects on Cheshire life:

> "This great revolution has affected this county to a much more considerable extent than most others. There is no longer that privacy and retirement that, in an age like the present is, in some respect, wanted more than ever. Rural life has vanished."
>
> (Ormerod, 1882: LXXIV)

Ormerod notes that although the railways enabled savings to be made in both money and time they also caused substantial losses, due to:

> “the cutting of lines through residential properties…the best arable land and richest pastures…the loss of privacy and repose…the incroachments [sic] of the builder, the fumes of manufactories, the poisoned rivers and brooks”
>
> (Ormerod, 1882: LXXV)

In this way he builds a picture of urban problems and demands culminating in solutions which are of great cost to rural areas. This problem is essentially the same today. Perhaps surprisingly, he concludes that the locomotive engine, “the new servant of the age…must on the whole be generally acknowledged to be beneficial to the entire county” (Ormerod, 1882: LXXIV). He specifically praises two particular infrastructural elements, the ‘picturesque and striking’ viaduct near North Rode, Macclesfield, and the “magnificent bridge of iron thrown over the Mersey” at Runcorn (Ormerod, 1882: LXXIV). Again, the problem has not changed; we can see the undoubted benefits of a good railway network, and even appreciate their design, but the price paid by rural landscapes is high.

Our commonly-held modern view of railways as essential for both the convenience of commuters and the benefit of the wider environment should not lead us to dismiss Ormerod’s point about the loss of rural life. Much was gained, but something was also lost. The fact that we have, to some extent, grown used to such disruptions to the landscape does not mean that their impact is insignificant. As Hoskins points out:

> “Almost from the start, therefore, the railways manipulated the landscape on a grand scale. Nothing like their earthworks had been seen since the earlier Iron Age of pre-Roman times.”
>
> (Hoskins, 1955: 215)

The impact of such major construction works is not just in such physical effects, but in the manner of their strategic implementation; “The British railways in their youth…habitually used their monopolistic powers with a ruthless disregard for general amenity” (Williams-Ellis, 1928: 140). Once again, arguably, the same problem remains.

One common criticism of HS2, repeated to me often by people enquiring after the progress of this research, is that the taxpayer should not be wasting resources on transporting business travellers from A to B for meetings, when the technology has for some time existed that enables them to communicate with each other remotely, and instantly, at no cost to the environment. This too, is not a particularly new point of view, as demonstrated by John Ruskin's opinion of the 'new' Buxton to Bakewell line, expressed in one of his letters of 1871, to 'the workmen and labourers of Great Britain':

> "You enterprised a railroad through the valley, you blasted its rocks away, heaped thousands of tons of shale in to its lovely stream. The valley is gone, and the gods with it; and now every fool in Buxton can be at Bakewell in half an hour and every fool in Bakewell in Buxton; which you think a lucrative process of exchange, you Fools, everywhere."

(Ruskin, 1907: 86)

The problem, then, as railways will be no doubt continue to be built, is how to engage local people such that they are built at the least possible cost and the greatest possible benefit to the places through which they pass.

3.4 Conclusions to this chapter

This section of the thesis has sought to illustrate the condition of Ashley as a rural parish facing many changes, which arise from a context of significant past developments in the landscape. Its position on the margins of an economically successful and growing city, and particularly next to a major international airport, means that development pressures on this place are growing. Rural localities on the urban fringe can be mistaken for urban areas, or can be viewed by the urban population as being degraded and of little value, commonplace and therefore disposable. In the opinion of this Guardian journalist, for example;

> "Green belt land has no inherent ecological or agricultural value, nor is it chosen because it has natural beauty or protected wildlife. Much of it is poor-quality scrubland or used for intensive farming."

(Wiles, 21.5.2014)

This view can be used as an argument for the development of such land for housing or industrial uses; seldom to improve its green infrastructure, or farming practices, so that it could provide better quality multi-functional ecosystem services. Such 'ordinary' rural places are seldom seen as sufficiently important to merit serious thought about their complexities. Inhabitants of these places, as a result, can be disregarded and marginalised by our society's urban bias. City dwellers, by contrast, can feel unthreatened by the prospect of change in their local landscapes because they can be reasonably sure that nobody will get planning permission to build an Amazon warehouse on their local park, for example. Their place is secure in its defining identity; it will continue to be urban. Rural people, particularly those close to new transport infrastructure, do not have this sense of safety; change, when it comes, could be massive and very unwelcome. Inhabitants here can be poorly understood, and dismissed as ‘nimbys’ (McClymont and O'Hare, 2008).

Understanding the pace and nature of landscape change in this place is a key part of gaining some insight in to how its inhabitants might already engage, or how they could become engaged, with their landscape. Rural places like Ashley, undervalued because they are seen as commonplace, can remain virtually ‘unknown’ in academic and professional knowledge bases. The only way to prevent this deficit in understanding from having a detrimental effect on the future of such parishes is to visit those places and gather the missing local knowledge. It is quite possible to do this.

The information used in this chapter has in part come from mapped and written sources, but also from embodied experience of the landscape, in the company of Ashley residents. The intention is that this allows the researcher to, in some part, see this landscape through the eyes of those residents, in order to better understand the costs of transport infrastructure to the place.

Chapter Four

HS2 Limited and Public Engagement[2]

"The Hybrid Bill Select Committee noted in its First Special Report of Session 2014-15 at paragraph 93: 'We have heard that HS2 Ltd's record on engagement has been poor but we do not generally find it helpful to go into the whys and wherefores of this.'"

(Bynoe, April 2016: 11)

4.1 Abstract

This chapter sets out how HS2 Ltd's public engagement strategy has worked up until the spring of 2018, including its aims, the role of the Environmental Statement, associated Parliamentary procedures and experiences of residents in rural areas. It examines a case study from Phase 1 of HS2 in order to understand the experience of an affected parish in the later stages of engagement. It also considers other theories of public engagement, evaluates these various procedures and proposes that methods more suited to an emergent landscape could be considered.

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[2] A version of this chapter has been published in Planning Theory and Practice as *The "whys and wherefores" of citizen participation in the landscapes of HS2* (Phillips, 2017). This paper is reproduced in Appendix E.

4.2 The role of the environmental statement

Since the announcement in January 2012 of the Government's decision to go ahead with Phase 1 of High Speed 2, an enormous amount of literature has been generated, to communicate various aspects of the scheme. Information proliferated when the proposed route for Phase 2, north of Birmingham, was announced in January 2013. The document that communicates intentions to members of the public who live along the proposed route is the Environmental Statement (ES) for Phase 1. According to the HS2 Ltd publication *Understanding the Environmental Statement*, the stated purpose of the ES is "to ensure that Parliament considers these effects of Phase 1 before determining whether it should receive development consent" (HS2 Ltd, November 2013: 1). Inherent in this purpose is the status of the ES as the main document through which the public are consulted about their landscapes; their responses to it contribute to members of parliament considering the effects of the proposals.

Environmental Impact Assessment is a process used around the world and required in the European Community (European Union, 2011) in the case of some construction projects, including all transport infrastructure projects of any significant size. They investigate and document all likely environmental effects of the proposals and weigh up the positive and negative consequences in order to inform a decision by the relevant authorities. The Phase 1 ES is the documented output of the EIA process. Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) is a tool that is used within the framework of the EIA, which

> "specifically aims to ensure that all possible effects of change and development both on the landscape itself and on views and visual amenity, are taken in to account in decision-making."
>
> (Swanwick, 2013: 4)

The process takes place according to guidelines published by the Landscape Institute, the *Guidelines for Landscape Visual Impact Assessment*, third edition (Swanwick, 2013) and focuses on the visual aesthetic. HS2 Ltd has used these methods to inform the ES, volume two of which contains a report for each of the twenty-six Community Forum Areas[3]. Section nine of each report summarises the baseline conditions of each area and then visual impacts during and after construction. In the map books accompanying the written reports are photomontages, produced to illustrate the visual impact from specific viewpoints in the landscape (Figure 47, for example). The reports are structured around Landscape Character Areas that HS2 have defined, based upon work previously done by relevant local authorities; the boundaries of these areas do not correspond with CFAs. The reports also list proposed mitigation measures. Because the (inherently visual) LVIA underpins much of the ES, and the design of these mitigation measures is to a great extent led by the ES, landscape mitigation designs are at risk of taking a piecemeal approach based on individual 'views' of the place, rather than having a joined-up understanding of the landscape's interconnected systems.

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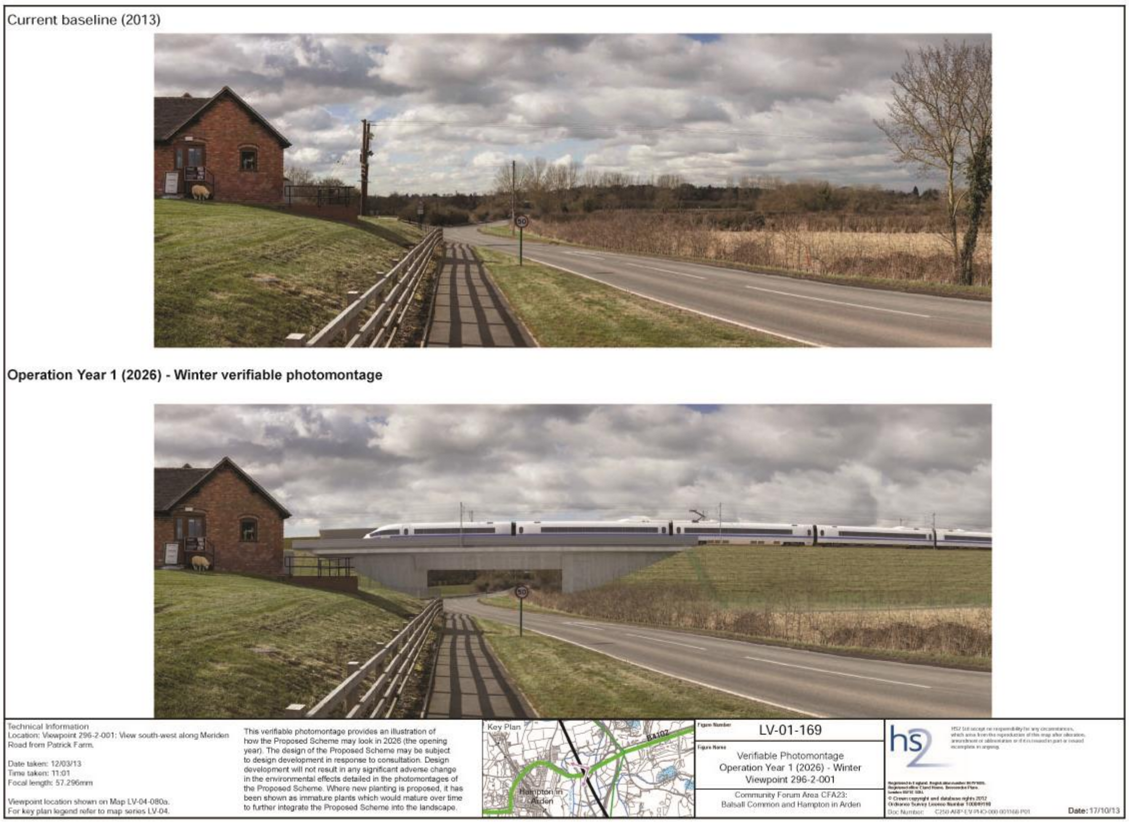
[3] The CFAs are sections of the proposed alignment which HS2 Ltd used for administrative purposes in engagement with Phase 1



Technical Information
Location: Viewpoint 296-2-001: View south-west along Meriden Road from Patrick Farm.

Date taken: 12/03/13
Time taken: 11:01
Focal length: 57.296mm

Viewpoint location shown on Map LV-04-080a.
For key plan legend refer to map series LV-04.

This verifiable photomontage provides an illustration of how the Proposed Scheme may look in 2026 (the opening year). The design of the Proposed Scheme may be subject to design development in response to consultation. Design development will not result in any significant adverse change in the environmental effects detailed in the photomontages of the Proposed Scheme. Where new planting is proposed, it has been shown as immature plants which would mature over time to further integrate the Proposed Scheme into the landscape.

Figure Number: LV-01-169
Figure Name: Verifiable Photomontage Operation Year 1 (2026) - Winter Viewpoint 296-2-001
Community Forum Area CFA23: Balsall Common and Hampton in Arden

HS2 Ltd accept no responsibility for any circumstances, which arise from the reproduction of this map after alteration, amendment or abbreviation or if it is issued in part or issued incomplete in any way.

Date: 17/10/13

Figure 47. Example Phase 1 photomontage from the Environmental Statement for CFA 23, showing proposed embankment. The EIA for Phase 2b will have many such illustrations. This embankment, in a flood plain, was redesigned as a viaduct following input from local people.

Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) is "a tool for identifying features that give a locality its 'sense of place' and identifying what makes it different from its neighbouring areas" (Mahony, 2004: 27). It is a transdisciplinary exercise that uses the judgement of the landscape architect to report on how geology, topography, vegetation, soils, land use, settlements and the perceptions of people combine to produce the individual character of the place. It is considered good practice to include local stakeholders in this process and it addresses the sensitivity of places to landscape change. It is also now used to help inform the neighbourhood planning process.

The complete 50,000-page ES was made available to the public online on 18th December 2013 and the public consultation period ran up to 27th February 2014 (HS2 Independent Assessor, 7th April, 2014: 3), giving citizens 71 days to submit comments. This was their first opportunity to see actual design proposals. It includes written and mapped information about the impacts of the proposals on places along the route and also presents digital visualisations of changes to landscapes. It is the only collated source of accurate information regarding the future of those landscapes and constitutes almost the whole of the Hybrid Bill that enshrines HS2 in law.

Individuals and groups who are directly affected by the proposals in specific geographical locations were then given 23 days, between 30th April and 23rd May, to respond to the contents of the ES by submitting a petition to parliament. If the petition was judged valid then petitioners presented their evidence in person, in parliament, to the House of Commons select committee. 1,925 petitions were received. A similar petitioning process occurred in the House of Lords in April 2016, during the second Lords reading of the Bill, when 820 petitions were accepted. None of these petitions, to the Commons or the Lords, had the potential to stop HS2 entirely or to substantially affect the route or stations, as this is beyond the power of the select committees. They simply allow the petitioner to appear before the select committees, present their evidence and be questioned about it.

During December 2013 Golder Associates were appointed as the HS2 Independent Assessor and were tasked with summarising the initial comments on the ES submitted by the public. Their report notes that “The public consultation produced 21,833 comments during the consultation period.” (HS2 Independent Assessor, 7th April, 2014: 1) and identifies patterns in the data. Over half of the comments were submitted in the form of a postcard containing some standard text because they had been coordinated by a campaigning group, the rest were letters, emails and forms of various kinds, with the longest being an individual letter of 800 pages. They came from “a range of organisations including public authorities, special interest groups and others of a national and local level.” (HS2 Independent Assessor, 7th April, 2014: 6) and it is noted that “Many respondents begin their submissions by questioning the integrity of the ES.” (HS2 Independent Assessor, 7th April, 2014: 15).

The patterns of comment as identified by Golder Associates indicate the scale of concern about specific categories of landscape issues, with, for example, the topic of tunnelling under the Chilterns garnering the most comments, disruption to communities in different areas the second most and sound/noise/vibration the third. The fourth largest response, however, was about the consultation process itself. Key concerns on this topic were as follows:

1 The difficulty of understanding key issues for local areas due to "the amount of cross-referencing amongst documents that readers need to follow…This has been commented on with a degree of cynicism as a deliberate manoeuvre by the ES proponents by many respondents." (HS2 Independent Assessor, 7th April, 2014: 16);

2 The short time period allowed for formulating detailed and high-quality responses to the very lengthy ES, including "the timing of the process over the Christmas period" (HS2 Independent Assessor, 7th April, 2014: 15);

3 That the consultation is "focussed on relaying information rather than a dialogue. Many respondents are disappointed that alternative solutions that they have presented to HS2 to specific alignments and areas of local detail have not been fully considered or responded to." (HS2 Independent Assessor, 7th April, 2014: 16).

These three points are linked, and there follows an examination of their contribution to an understanding of the overall process.

1. Cross-referencing in the ES

From personal experience, I can confirm that cross-referencing in the ES is difficult to follow. A search for information relevant to one of the twenty-six CFAs, for example the largely rural CFA 23 (Balsall Common and Hampton-in-Arden) entails extracting details from various sections of the ES, which are contained across the *Non-Technical Summary*, plus volumes two and three as a minimum, and then the twenty-three separate sections of volume five. The CFA 23 Map Book and the CFA 23 Report are two entirely distinct documents so that explanatory text is separate from mapped information. A code number, such as 'CT-05-105a', identifies the maps relevant to the different parts of the CFA in the text. Once you have found the right map you can try to work out what the impact on your location might be, by locating the positions of the different viewpoints that have been chosen for the photomontages (separate section). In this way you can access image number LV-01-167, for viewpoint 293-4-003, from map number CT-10-052 within CFA 23 (all maps HS2 Ltd, 2013).

It is not difficult to imagine the frustration likely to be induced by such complexities in a non-expert resident. Whether this cross-referencing has been made deliberately abstruse it is not possible to say, but it is reasonable to conclude that no priority has been given, in this key consultation document, to making the ES accessible to the average lay-person who might wish to understand what their area will be like during and after the construction period. The difficulty of arriving at a clear understanding of landscape impacts local to individuals was undoubtedly exacerbated by the short time period over which comments on the ES were accepted. Arguably, genuine citizen participation was not the intention of HS2 Ltd at the time the ES was produced. The purpose of the ES is to be a static, not emergent, representation of a set of landscape conditions and of a proposal, when in reality both of these things are continually evolving. This is an unfortunate necessity of the Hybrid Bill process, as it is a document that will ultimately be approved, or not approved, by parliament. I argue that such a document is not appropriate for use as the cornerstone of a meaningful public engagement procedure.

2. Time period for responses to the ES

Originally, a period of 56 days was allocated for the comments on the ES to be received. This is the statutory minimum and was only extended due to issues with missing elements when the ES was originally made available online (HS2 Independent Assessor, 7th April, 2014). Even when extended to 71 days, this gave ordinary citizens over 704 pages of technical language to digest per day. It also excluded any possibility of a two-way communication evolving over the comments period. In this time-frame, it was not possible, for example, for local inhabitants to consult with a representative of HS2 'on the ground' in their parish, to better understand implications of the supplied information. Such a time-frame is also not designed to support a lay-person's true understanding of the scheme, or enable a meaningful two-way process to emerge. Instead, it is in danger of positioning local inhabitants not as participants in dialogue concerning a primary engagement with landscape, but as one-time passive receptors of a vast quantity of information.

3. The relaying of information, and the purpose of the consultation process as a whole

An examination not only of the ES but also of HS2 Ltd's wider consultation activities also suggests that dissemination of information from the 'top' might be amongst their main aims, rather than a genuine bottom-up knowledge gathering exercise with the purpose of informing the running of the project and design of the landscape. The HS2 Ltd Residents

Charter, set out in January 2015 by the then newly appointed Residents Commissioner, might be expected to outline the aims of the consultation but it seeks to clarify only matters relating to contacting the commissioner, the complaints procedure and compensatory ‘property schemes’. It does not mention landscape, design, dialogue or any synonym thereof. It sets out no aims for the consultation, engagement or participation. This is perhaps unsurprising, as although the Department for Transport requires HS2 Ltd to deliver on 20 different themed outcomes in the “construction, commissioning and operation of the railway… covering all aspects of the railway” (as set out in the *HS2 Ltd Corporate Plan 2015 to 2018*) (HS2 Ltd, 2015: 16) public engagement is not one of them, and although quality of architecture is mentioned, landscape is not.

4.3 HS2 and consultation aims

Arguably, one significant limitation of HS2 Ltd’s public consultation is that from the beginning it has lacked a set of aims that are clearly set out and, crucially, upon which the various documents agree, and which are transparently and consistently enacted by HS2 employees on the front line in the CFAs. The literature sets out to describe some processual elements and a variety of principles, often without identifying the unifying purpose of these. At a Phase 2b local consultation ‘surgery’ event near Manchester in May 2016 I asked an HS2 representative what the aim of the Company’s public engagement is. The answer was provided without hesitation; it is to save money from the public purse by easing the passage of the Phase 2 Bill through parliament with the least possible delay. In other words, the overriding concern, in this person’s view, is to dissuade the public from presenting petitions to parliament and thereby slowing down the process. This clear, honest and pragmatic statement suggests an overriding desire on the part of HS2 Ltd that the public voice not be heard and that local inhabitants are instead persuaded not to contribute their thoughts to the process. This may not be uncommon in consultations. Local events within CFAs are seemingly intended to act as buffers to prevent any impact upon the infrastructure project itself.

This ‘covert’ aim expressed by an inexperienced employee of HS2 is of course not stated anywhere in the Company’s publications. The Labour government established HS2 Ltd in January 2009 and yet *Information Paper G1 ‘Consultation and Engagement’* (which refers to Phase 1 only) (HS2 Ltd, August 2014) was not published until 2014, missing the opportunity to set out guiding aims from the early stages. *G1* does contain laudable objectives regarding providing information, understanding local concerns, consulting at appropriate points in time and helping to "develop an improved scheme and propose steps to avoid, reduce or, where reasonably practicable, off-set any significant adverse effects." (HS2 Ltd, August 2014: 3). These objectives are in the mould of consultation, rather than engagement, as discussed in section 2.2, and as expressed by Ian Bynoe, in his report of 2016, which is cited at the head of this chapter, there is little evidence that such aims have guided the project. Arguably, the 'whys and wherefores' of this need do to be examined in order that the situation might be improved, not only in this particular infrastructure project but for others which will also shape the future of our landscape.

The HS2 consultation model has been based around the aforementioned system of Community Forums which are intended to facilitate "Local community engagement to discuss local design and environmental matters" (HS2 Ltd, August 2014: 6). It is worth noting that the aim here is restricted to discussion, implying events which remain contained within the four walls of the room in which they are held, without necessarily producing material impacts on the landscape. The claim is made that "Issues raised are escalated through the HS2 Ltd internal governance structure as appropriate" (HS2 Ltd, August 2014: 6). A bottom-up engagement process is therefore seemingly intended, through which design issues identified at an initial stage and a local level will be examined through a process of expert scrutiny 'higher up' the chain, as local authorities, non-governmental organisations and statutory bodies begin to be involved. This approach is expanded upon in the more recent draft *EIA Scope and Methodology Report* [4](SMR) of March 2016, in which intentions for community and stakeholder engagement for Phase 2a, north to Crewe, are set out. The authors, Arup and ERM, specifically aim to use engagement to

> "obtain local experience and knowledge that will allow for the identification of potential effects that might not otherwise have been considered, ensuring that local needs and considerations are taken into account when identifying appropriate mitigation and enhancement measures…to facilitate the early identification of such measures and their timely integration into the scheme design"

(Arup/ERM, March 2016: 20)

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[4] Terminology has changed since Phase 1; the 'ES' is replaced by the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for Phase 2.

These intentions theoretically represent significant progress on behalf of HS2 Ltd towards genuine gathering and use of local knowledge. My observations drawn from field research on the Phase 2b route in Ashley, and continuing contact with the Parish Council, suggest, however, that escalation of issues from a local level to the landscape design team does not yet take place. At the time of writing, the process of compiling the EIA for this phase is underway, and the Hybrid Bill is due to be deposited in Parliament in 2019. The HS2 representative who spoke to me at the May 2016 drop-in surgery near Manchester volunteered an apology for the local two-year dearth of information forthcoming from HS2. He stated that overstretched budgets were the reason for this. Conversation with another HS2 Ltd engagement representative at a surgery event in September 2016 suggested that the laudable intentions of the SMR may be upheld at local level on Phase 2a, but some evidence indicates that the experience on the ground is the same as for Phase 1. Lichfield District Council, for example, lies at the point at which Phase 1 will join to Phase 2. Recent Council cabinet minutes indicate discussion of petitioning parliament for Phase 2a as they did for Phase 1, including the recommendation to "engage a Parliamentary Agent to assist in making its case if and when a decision is made to petition" (Lichfield District Council, 16.11.17: 4). These minutes contain a detailed report on the landscape impact in Lichfield, and on how the response to HS2 Ltd will be made, but no reference to any community engagement. In any case, it is already too late for these people to have been meaningfully involved in the project from the start, given that the intention to construct the line north from Lichfield to Manchester Piccadilly was announced in July 2013.

4.4 Policy in action: experiences from a phase one CFA

In order to better understand a rural parish's experiences of being consulted by HS2 Ltd in the period between route announcement and the end of the petitioning process, I visited a parish on Phase 1. In August 2016, I carried out interviews with members of a parish council (PC) from the Phase 1 CFA23, just south of the West Midlands conurbation. I chose this area because its landscape has many similarities with Ashley; it is a rural area in proximity to an international airport and major city, with existing motorway infrastructure and proximity to a proposed HS2 station. They had been engaging with HS2 Ltd since October 2010, when Phillip Hammond (then Transport Secretary) attended a meeting in the local area to reveal detailed plans for the line. A series of six CFA meetings ensued and ended in 2014 when the hybrid bill was presented to Parliament. The Commons and Lords select committee transcripts of this parish's representations to Parliament evidence the considerable extent of their determination and thoroughness in expressing their objections to various aspects of the proposals that specifically affect their landscape. They voice three key concerns; firstly, the proposed construction of a large embankment on a flood plain, secondly the relocation of a council recycling centre (or 'tip') and thirdly the diversion of an existing lane which in effect entails building a new road.

In summary, the findings from my interviews with two members of the PC are as follows:

1. Regarding the embankment. In the PC's view, HS2 engineers seemed to be unaware that their proposed 300-metre embankment (see Figure 47) along the Blythe river valley (a Site of Special Scientific Interest) had been subject to five '1 in 100-year' flood events in the winter of 2013 (House of Commons, 11.12.2014, morning). A retired high-speed railway engineer living in the parish therefore re-designed that stretch of the line as a viaduct rather than an embankment. HS2 Ltd adopted his recommendations. None of this occurred within the CFA system. Instead, it was raised via a parliamentary petition and escalated by the PC themselves, in communication with an HS2 engineer who visited them for a number of "very helpful" (interview, CFA23, 4.8.16) meetings entirely external to the engagement process. All meetings were at the request of the PC. Interviewees described the CFA meetings as "a waste of time" and "purely a talking shop" (interview, CFA23, 4.8.16). It was also the experience of this PC that there were large numbers of HS2 Ltd employees at these meetings; "they flood it" (interview, CFA23, 4.8.16). This example demonstrates the crucial importance of local knowledge in achieving design quality; the degree of expertise and determination needed on the part of members of the public in getting their voices heard, and the inadequacy of HS2 Ltd's engagement procedures in facilitating this. Significantly, it also illustrates the dangers of basing landscape design on a 'snapshot' of conditions; in this case flood event data which appears to have been out of date. An emergent engagement methodology may have been more suited to taking account of such landscape developments.

2. Regarding the new road. This development was not part of the original plans presented in the ES, but was subsequently published as Additional Provision Two

(AP2). The decision was made without the knowledge of the PC, in discussions between HS2 Ltd and a local estate who are key landowners in the area. In the opinion of interviewees, it is very unlikely that this decision was made without the knowledge of the Borough Council. The news of this development was presented to members of the PC as they waited in the Houses of Parliament to present to the select committee. In a comment on AP2, Mr Robert Syms, chairing, said that this deal had been done 'in a corridor' and elaborated thus "It is part of the process; people settle; today, there are several businesses that are settled in the corridor" (House of Lords, Wednesday 27th January, 2016, paragraph 46). This oblique statement implies that decisions are commonly made out of view of the public, denying opportunity for true engagement of any kind in the design process.

This example is also a reminder that many decisions about sizeable changes to landscape are continually emerging along the length of the alignment. For Phase 1, however, the official consultation period, CFA meetings and opportunities to petition are finished. Many more changes to the proposals of the ES are likely to be made as work progresses and conditions evolve, but, if this case is typical, they may not be subject to any scrutiny by non-governmental organisations, by the public or their democratically elected representatives. It is possible that they will be disseminated to the public during the construction phase, immediately prior to implementation.

3. Regarding the council recycling centre/waste tip. The relocation of the tip to a site within the green belt was "a complete surprise until AP4 was published" (interview, CFA 23, 4.8.16). The new tip is to be paid for entirely by HS2 Ltd, though owned and run by the Borough Council, who will gain a substantially improved, modernised and 40% larger facility. A resident of CFA23, made this relevant point to the parliamentary committee:

> "Now, when I went through a planning process to put an extension on the back of my house, my neighbours were all stakeholders and they got to put their point forward. It was fact-based and rule-based. I had to go to any number of details."
>
> (House of Lords, Tuesday, 5th January 2016, afternoon, paragraph 249)

In the case of the relocated tip, however, no such procedure will occur, because it is a provision of a scheme that is enshrined in the Hybrid Bill, and not subject to local planning processes. The resident goes on to put the problem clearly:

> "we understand the Hybrid Bill, the nature of the Hybrid Bill and the fact that it overrides certain processes around what can be done. We thought this was in relation to building HS2. We thought this was in relation to moving roads and traffic. We didn't realise it was in relation to things like…like a rubbish tip could be moved. It feels to me like, if that's the case, anything could be up for grabs."
>
> (House of Lords, Tuesday, 5th January 2016, afternoon, paragraph 254)

This is a significant point. It draws our attention to how members of the public could be excluded from local planning decisions made in the wake of HS2 (some might say under the cover of HS2) in which HS2 Ltd and the local councils in question strike mutually beneficial deals over development which cannot be overridden. A considerable amount of further scrutiny of such events along the length of Phase 1 is called for, to ensure that developments are not 'up for grabs'. It is relevant to recognise that as landscape contexts emerge, unforeseen circumstances can arise, which may prove unstoppable and will be irreversible. An emergent public engagement process could act as a check on such developments and contribute to an overview of the quality of landscapes along the length of alignment, as these places become attractive for developments of all kinds, including station car-parks, motorway service stations, housing estates and distribution centres.

The value of the local knowledge held by citizens is explicitly referred to on a number of occasions during the select committee proceedings relating to CFA23, for example in this exchange between Robert Syms (chair), Mr Michael Thornton and a petitioning Parish Councillor, Mr A:

> "95. MR A:..I have no qualifications in water management or anything like that. I can't claim those.
>
> 96. MR THORNTON: No, but you do have other qualifications?
>
> 97. MR A: Well I do have other qualifications. Indeed I do.

98. CHAIR: Local knowledge is one of the best qualifications."

(House of Commons, 11.12.2014, morning: 15)

A statement, then, of the value of the petitions, but without the context of a structure that will enable such knowledge to be properly valued and used. The time devoted to preparing for these petitions is considerable "this has taken hundreds of hours of our time", according to Mr A (House of Lords, Wednesday 27th January, 2016). Interviews in the parish reiterated this view "It has taken over our lives" (interview, CFA23, 4.8.16). Despite the perception that local knowledge is an important qualification, it is evident that having a retired high-speed rail engineer on your side, alongside an array of retired highly educated and experienced professionals and business-people such as those in CFA23, could also be very much in your favour. It is not difficult to imagine the problems faced by smaller rural parish councils that might be comprised of busy working people who do not have the time or relevant expertise to take the initiative by putting together a petition. The mores of the system are discouraging. The layperson first has to understand that this 'petition' is a letter, not a list of signatures, as in the common usage of the word. Latin legalese is used, in that the QC can question the petitioner's *locus standi*, or right to be heard, for example. There is a necessity to submit your petition twice, once each to the Lords and the Commons, if you want to be heard by both, and to pay the administration fee twice.

The petitioning system is essentially an adversarial one. When you speak in front of the select committee counter arguments against your case can be presented. This will be done by some of the most senior barristers in the country, representing the power and weight of parliament, set against the individual who stands before them. The petitioner is likely to be heard by approximately eight officials, including the Chair, members of the Lords or Commons, at least one Queen's Counsel (QC) for the Department of Transport and HS2 officials.

The landscape impacts of Phase 1 on CFA23 will be very significant, and the response of these residents to the challenge of HS2 is impressive. They could not have their views represented in the usual way in Parliament by their MP, as MPs do not have *locus standi*. The interviewees here were already very engaged with landscape and community matters, and willing to work with the highly specialist and detailed documentation put forward by HS2 Ltd. Alongside the CFA process they were working on a neighbourhood plan for their parish. This document is also beyond what could realistically be expected, written and researched by members of the PC; unpaid non-specialists. Even in this place, however, wider engagement by citizens beyond the PC did not occur until the AP2 and AP4 announcements, which prompted a very active village action group because people could see clearly how they would be directly affected by specific proposals. Arguably, very few CFAs will be equipped to respond to proposals as readily as this one did.

4.5 The Bynoe report

The Bynoe report (Bynoe, April 2016) provides an independent critical overview of HS2's public engagement activity. Ian Bynoe is a former independent police complaints commissioner and currently independent complaints assessor for the Department for Transport. His report takes as its starting point a review of HS2 Ltd's handling of the case of Mr and Mrs D, and their small rural Staffordshire community, the demolition of which for Phase 1 of the line was proposed by HS2 Ltd in January 2012. Bynoe describes how the community initially requested assistance from HS2 Ltd in moving to new purpose-built properties in the area, in order to retain some continuity of connection to place and to each other. Bynoe finds that this aspiration was not successful as HS2 Ltd were not willing to negotiate with the community about the proposals until mid-2014, by which time most of them had decided to sell their properties and move elsewhere. The Parliamentary and Health Services Ombudsman (PHSO) initially investigated complaints from the community about HS2 Ltd's public engagement, and identified a number of specific failings in communication and engagement in this case. The Company's response to the ombudsman was that they had made a number of improvements to their engagement and communication strategy, and Ian Bynoe's review sets out his analysis of the facts of the case, then broadens the scope of the report by setting HS2's failings in the context of wider problems with their engagement activities. His report is useful in understanding the gap which can exist between the rhetoric of a company's statements about public engagement and the actual experiences of the citizens ultimately involved, and, one suspects, more frequently those not involved. Bynoe references the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee HS2 inquiry report of June 2016, which finds that in the case of Mr and Mrs D's community:

> "consultation events had turned into 'public relations exercises' with information which was too generic to be of use or inconsistent: the process was treated as a "one way "box-ticking" exercise with no genuine two-way engagement…The

> Company needed to address its “defensive” style of communication and to embrace openness and transparency.”
>
> (Bynoe, April 2016: 12)

The Bynoe report gives numerous insights in to the wider context of HS2 Ltd’s public engagement for Phase 1 (though, as in the above quote, the word ‘consultation’ is often used to describe the process). It finds that their procedures are based around a confrontational model in which they seek to defend themselves against attack by the public. It is reported that they informed the PHSO that they had learned from failures in the community forum process in Phase 1, in such a way that in future they could “head off disruptive confrontations” (Bynoe, April 2016: 6). The desire to avoid confrontations from developing at CFA events does not address the problem of a consultation procedure which alienates rather than engages citizens in a design process as it emerges.

Ian Bynoe was specifically asked to report on whether the promised changes had in fact been introduced by HS2 Ltd, and to review their effectiveness. He takes the evidence of the HS2 Residents’ Commissioner as a significant source of information for his review. She informs him of understaffing of ‘basic community engagement’ since her appointment in early 2015, at which time “the team for the whole of Phase 1 comprised five persons… The effect of this shortage was that there had been little or no direct community engagement during 2014.” (Bynoe, April 2016: 9). This shortage, according to Bynoe, was due to large numbers of staff dealing with petitions to Parliament. Thus, the adversarial, top-down public consultation exercise predominated, based around a model in which information is disseminated and complaints received.

Bynoe states that in her own report of February 2016, the Residents Commissioner, Deborah Fazan, found “engagement activity for Phase 2 appeared to be working well.” (Bynoe, April 2016: 9). This statement does not sit well with my experiences in the same year, on the ground along the Phase 2 alignment, where events were more than adequately staffed but very poorly attended due at least in part to lack of local publicity. He also draws attention to the final report of the select committee on the hybrid bill for Phase 1, in which the point is made that it is difficult to ‘mollify’ those people whose lives will be disrupted by HS2. Perhaps, then, it is ‘mollification’ that is the true aim of the exercise. It is an inescapable fact that if the public chose not to engage at all with the specifics of these landscape impacts, the exchequer would be saved huge amounts of money and Parliament a great deal of time, albeit with arguably significantly negative long-term impacts on the UK landscape.

Ian Bynoe draws a number of conclusions. He expresses curiosity about forthcoming community engagement development plans and also concern that staff were recruited to write these plans a full four years after the project was announced. He finds that the Residents' Charter "does not offer more than the Help Desk service – which is known to act often as a barrier rather than an aid to quick communication." (Bynoe, April 2016: 20). He criticises the means of disseminating information through the Gov.uk website as "entirely unable to provide the capability and fitness for the purpose which the Company needs from its web portal." (Bynoe, April 2016: 23). This was, at the time, HS2 Ltd's only on-line means of engaging with the public: they do now have their own website. He also notes that HS2 Ltd have an advisory Design Panel made up of independent professionals, and suggests that "there may also be benefits in convening a Community Engagement Advisory Panel, drawn from those who have recent and relevant experience of community engagement work." (Bynoe, April 2016: 25). Such a panel, had they been appointed in 2012, would perhaps have designed a radically different approach to public consultation, saving money and demonstrably improving both the quality of the resulting landscapes and degrees of public acceptance of the project. Only at the end of 2017 has this recommendation been explored through a 'workshop', with a view to defining the terms of reference for such a panel, as evidenced in a letter from Jim Crawford, Managing Director HS2 Phase 1 to Gareth Epps, Independent HS2 Construction Commissioner (Crawford, 24.10.2017). It will arguably be far too late for such a panel to solve any of the underlying problems that HS2 Ltd have created through their initial lack of attention to this matter.

Perhaps the most significant finding of the Bynoe report, however, is that although HS2 Ltd is now contractually obliged to write and adhere to certain strategies covering many aspects of its procedures, "None of these relate to community engagement." (Bynoe, April 2016: 13). He calls for the Company's draft *Community Engagement Framework* to be finalised, which in the autumn of 2017, it eventually was. In draft form, the Framework was a document largely concerned with complaints procedures, dissemination of information and 'community relations' during the imminent construction of Phase 1, for example allocating to the Residents' Commissioner the duty of investigating complaints against the Company where it is alleged that the complaint has not been 'satisfactorily addressed'. The final version, does however, make some promising statements about the crucial relationship between the processes of public engagement and design development:

> "The contractor shall undertake stakeholder and community engagement in relation to stations and key design elements… Engagement should be undertaken

> sufficiently early in the design process to inform and guide the eventual design solution”
>
> (HS2 Ltd, July 2017: 12)

This language, encouragingly, begins to recognise the need for emergent public engagement that contributes to the evolution of design work. The document also specifically recognises and makes a distinction between engagement which is only about dissemination of information, and engagement which is “an ongoing dialogue that can influence how we deliver.” (HS2 Ltd, July 2017: 22).

An additional policy document has also been produced, the overarching *Community Engagement Strategy*, which targets the general public as its audience and does set out some much-improved intentions. It begins by framing engagement with HS2 as an opportunity for residents “now to make the very best of the arrival of HS2 for their local area.” (HS2 Ltd, September 2017: 2). This demonstrates an awareness that any potential benefits of HS2 to local areas will not be automatic; they will need to be claimed by local people. Such rhetoric could be interpreted as an empowering bottom-up approach; conversely it could be ‘played out’ as an exercise in which those communities least able or prepared to pro-actively engage with HS2 are left without any benefits for their area. The problem is very similar to that of devolving responsibility for neighbourhood planning to parish councils, which is discussed in Chapter Six.

The *Community Engagement Strategy* does, however, contain other evidence that more thought has now been given to the problems of engagement. There is a recognition that “Our success will depend on our ability to talk to local communities and act on what they tell us.” (HS2 Ltd, September 2017: 7). It is not clear whether this statement refers to the success of the community engagement as a discrete process, or the ultimate success of outcomes for local landscapes, but it does suggest a prioritisation of these matters which has previously been lacking. There are also definite commitments to involving the community, for example a promise that there will be;

> “Specific workshops and discussions on the design of key features along the line of route, such as stations, vent shafts, viaducts and hoardings…Interactive archaeology and ecology programmes.”
>
> (HS2 Ltd, September 2017: 18)

Such engagement with the design process itself has previously been lacking and will represent a distinct change in direction, if and when it happens. Significantly, an intention is also expressed to "join local groups or meetings that are already in existence, such as local resident association or parish council meetings." (HS2 Ltd, September 2017: 3) and to base engagement personnel in communities in order to build trust and sustain two-way dialogues. This thesis suggests that such an approach is far more likely to contribute to genuine public engagement, as explored in Chapter Five. However, the ultimate overriding impetus for the HS2 project is reiterated; "Our vision is for HS2 to be a catalyst for growth across Britain." (HS2 Ltd, September 2017: 8) and it may prove to be an unavoidable reality that an unquestioning drive towards economic growth can never foster the kind of genuine public engagement that is desired, because the two things have irreconcilable aims (see Chapter Six).

On the twenty-second of May, 2017, Deborah Fazan, the HS2 Residents' Commissioner, asked me for a copy of my research paper *The "whys and wherefores" of citizen participation in the landscapes of HS2,* which had been published in the journal Planning, Theory and Practice in that same month. The content of my paper is a distilled version of this thesis chapter, and it contains a set of recommendations resemble my own. It is not possible to be sure whether my recommendations did in fact influence the *Community Engagement Strategy* and *Community Engagement Framework* documents, which were being written at that time. I enquired as to whether my paper had been used, and was told that it had not. There is no evidence in Ashley, at the time of writing, that significant changes have yet been implemented.

4.6 Alternative ways to engage the public

The study of HS2 Ltd's journey through public engagement policy brings to light a number of key problems that they have encountered along the way. Perhaps the most fundamental of these is best described by Robyn Eversole:

> "Participation focuses on 'bringing in' people and communities into the formal processes and institutions of development…The problem with this approach is that it reflects a deeply embedded assumption… that development is created by formal agencies of development, flowing from us to them in the binary, depending upon the knowledge, institutions and best practice of professionals."

(Eversole, 2012: 31)

This assumption of the primacy of professional knowledge in the engagement arena has been deeply ingrained in the HS2 project up to now, as evidenced by many sources, not least Ian Bynoe, but also the inhabitants themselves. Guardian columnist Patrick Barkham reports the experience of an anonymous famer in the Chilterns:

> "What about the consultation process? He felt it had not included the little people... And so he had not petitioned parliament. Instead, he had simply received official HS2 letters addressed "to the owner". Over the last five years, he said, no one had bothered to discover his name. "We haven't seen anyone with a collar and tie yet, with money in his pocket, who can tell us what to do".
>
> (Barkham, 17.11.2015, accessed 23.11.2017)

In this case, the farmer's pride in not being told what to do by professionals is rather poignant, as of course the Department for Transport do have the ultimate power to remove people from their homes by compulsory purchase order, where they lie in safeguarded land. The problem illustrated here is that inhabitants have been left until last in the consideration of this project, when all parties could have benefitted if they had been active instigators of engagement on their own terms and, consequently, equal partners in co-design.

Examples from the field of engagement in advances in science and technology are helpful in expanding on this point. Initiatives towards engaging the public 'upstream' of developments in science and technology, rather than later on in the process, have been seen as a reaction to the 'Public Understanding of Science' (PUS) model, launched by the British Royal Society in 1985 (Bauer, 2009, Joly and Kaufman, 2008). The PUS model was criticised for addressing an "undifferentiated entity called 'the public', which was to be educated and informed in order to secure support for innovation and reduce social resistance to technology." (Joly and Kaufman, 2008: 2). The assumption that the public are a single unit of people with a coherent experience, and furthermore that they can be designated as 'uneducated' clearly does not stand up to scrutiny, and neither does the assumption that increased education on a particular topic will in fact lead to greater support for that issue. The PUS model "assumed that if people had all the information, and were able to understand probabilities, they would be more supportive of science" (Bauer, 2009: 4). Bauer, of the London School of Economics, finds that, on the contrary "on controversial issues there is no correlation at all" (Bauer, 2009: 4) between degree of knowledge about a scientific topic and inclination to support that technology, because people felt no sense of ownership or agency in relation to the topic.

This model, “in which lay people are conceived as passive and empty recipients of information” (Joly and Kaufman, 2008:2) has powerful covert influence over thinking and policy. In writing about community participation in riverfront development, Henry Sanoff, despite advocating participatory democracy, casts citizens in passive and reactive roles, endorsing the view that;

> “In a general sense, the purpose of citizen participation is to inform the public, get the public’s reactions regarding the proposed actions or policies, and engage in problem-solving “
>
> (Sanoff, 2005: 63)

Sanoff also lists “Minimizing cost and delays… Increased ease of implementation…[and] Maintaining credibility and legitimacy” (Sanoff, 2005: 64-5) as benefits of public participation to the community, when in reality these are all benefits to the developer. They appear, in fact, to be the gains made by an effective public-relations exercise, the aim of which is to increase public acceptance of development proposals imposed upon them. These gains are likely to be the motivation behind HS2 Ltd’s public engagement efforts. They invest a great deal of time and effort in producing large, informative ‘road show’ style events. However, I would argue that any public engagement based purely on a deficit model and dissemination of information would be highly unlikely to increase popular support for infrastructure proposals. On the contrary, it is possible that the more people learn about the probability of cascading development proposals in the wake of core infrastructure development, the greater the likelihood of objections being raised (see Chapter Five). HS2 are, in all likelihood, well aware of this risk.

In these circumstances, to deliberately draw the attention of citizens to some of the likely future developments would not be in the commercial and/or political interests of powerful stakeholders. An example of this might be the construction of a high-speed station at Manchester Airport, adjacent to Ashley. HS2 Ltd confirmed that this is their intention on the 15th of November 2016. Land development pressure and increase in values as a consequence of this decision will be significant: such stations require public transport links, car parking, increased road traffic capacity and hotel accommodation for example. These are likely, in the early years, to be built largely on green field sites immediately to the east of Ashley’s boundary, in the parish of Ringway. None of these developments will gain popular support from residents in Ashley, most of whom are tenants and not property owners, so have no financial gain from knock-on effects and a great deal to lose in terms of landscape character and tranquillity. The temptation to minimise ‘education’ about such likely developments must be significant. Sherry Arnstein's influential *Ladder of Participation* (Arnstein, 1969) places 'manipulation' on the lowest and least desirable rung of the ladder, with 'therapy' just above it. The function of both is to educate people in to a view that the proposed plan is best. Arnstein's ladder (Figure 48) does not extend below ground in to the cellars of public consultation, where it is possible to imagine that an additional rung, perhaps called 'obfuscation', would denote a desire to avoid educating a public about matters that will affect them.

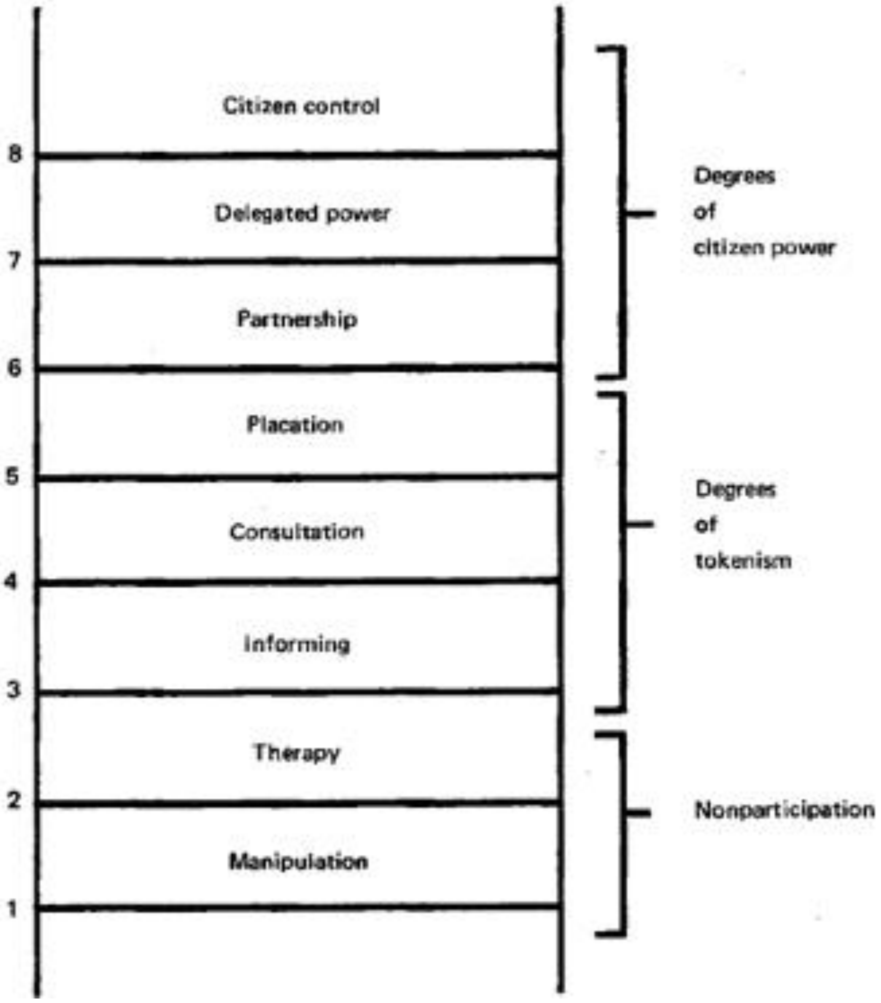
Citizen control
8
Delegated power
7
Partnership
6
Placation
5
Consultation
4
Informing
3
Therapy
2
Manipulation
1
Degrees of citizen power
Degrees of tokenism
Nonparticipation

Figure 48. Eight Rungs on a Ladder of Citizen Participation, indicating the worst possible type of participation, at the bottom, climbing to the most desirable at the top (Arnstein, 1969).

In recent years upstream engagement has been discussed in the context of its application in the early stages of scientific research projects, particularly within fields that are potentially ethically controversial, such as nanotechnology. The premise is that members of the public should be involved in identifying the aims of and possible problems with the technology in question at a crucial stage before, or 'upstream of' the making of key decisions about the research. Democratic prioritisation of the work of scientists is one important desired outcome, as is influencing the trajectory of research. The idea originated in the UK and has been "actively advocated by the political think-tank Demos and other scholars" (Wang, 2016: 63). Demos, a cross-party organisation, characterises upstream engagement as addressing questions which affect the very direction of or even the need for specific research:

> "Why this technology? Why not another? Who needs it? Who is controlling it? Who benefits from it? Can they be trusted? What will it mean for me and my family? Will it improve the environment? What will it mean for people in the developing world?"
>
> (Wilsdon et al., 2005: 32)

The same questions could have been applied to HS2, before the decision was taken to go ahead with the project, but the public were not consulted on this. Evidently, such questions require time and open-minded exploration, and not the gathering of yes/no responses, with the result that this kind of engagement is undertaken through deliberative methods, in which issues are explored, debated and discussed. Unlike questionnaires or polls, this supports the thorough examination of such questions, allowing time and opportunity for the in-depth consideration of important issues. The method is grounded in an assumption that lay participants hold valuable knowledge, which is being sought out by professionals. The relationship between these two groups should become a reciprocal one, according to the National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE), who state that the ongoing engagement activities can "help the emergence of a new consensus about a controversial issue as participants – both experts and lay – move towards deeper understandings." (NCCPE, 2017). Reaching a consensus will not be possible in all contexts, but the aspiration to move towards the emergent formation of a new body of knowledge, shared by previously disparate groups, is laudable and realistic.

The types of engagement activity usually undertaken in upstream engagement include deliberative workshops via facilitated group discussion, and deliberative mapping in which a panel decides upon and scores a range of options to facilitate a decision-making process. The map-based activities undertaken in Ashley for the purposes of this thesis have much in common with the deliberative workshops model, using maps of the place as the focus for discussion which can elicit a broad range of knowledge and ideas (see Chapter 5). The giving of 'options', however, is a method which has been used in planning consultations for many years, and which can lack credibility because the consulted public are aware that of any three options given, two will be patently undesirable. This was the case in Ashley, for example, when consultations were made over the position of runway two of the airport. In the opinion of residents, only one of the three options on offer was ever going to be built, and this was obviously the case (conversation with Ashley Parish Council, 17.7.2017).

The concept of upstream engagement does attract some criticism. For example, it could still be applied in the context of a model in which the public are characterised as lacking knowledge and are therefore 'educated' into more well-informed views, in order to persuade them. Joly and Kaufman "wonder whether [upstream engagement] announces a genuine paradigmatic shift or if it is just a rhetorical change, a new way of educating 'lay people'" (Joly and Kaufman, 2008: 2). This could be a possible scenario if the process is not undertaken in good faith.

The implied linearity of the model is also a weakness, as,

> "of course, innovation doesn't happen in a line. Successful technologies are the products of networks of interaction between inventors, scientists, engineers, users and business people."
>
> (Wilsdon et al., 2005: 36)

The very word 'upstream' implies that there is an expected single direction of scientific progression (Joly and Kaufmann, 2008), or "deterministic connotation of a necessary direction of flow" (Stirling, 2007: 264) rather than the complex web of interacting emergent factors which in fact constitute research. The implication of 'upstream' may be that the trajectory of research may in fact be pre-determined. Public involvement at the start of the process might not necessarily be sustained throughout the development phase, during which the direction of the research is highly likely to change and diverge as knowledge evolves. In an emergent landscape, then, a linear engagement model cannot support a strategy for engagement with a large-scale infrastructure project. This is the crux of this thesis.

Beth Lawrence, writing for *Corporate Watch Magazine*, makes the pertinent point that "upstream engagement assumes that agreement between diverse 'stakeholders' is desirable and possible." (Lawrence, 2011). It is true that, in the hands of a large corporation or government department, the compulsion to engineer some kind of enforced consensus may be overwhelming, in that the outcome of the engagement may be deemed as a failure if only very diffuse and complex results develop. Lawrence also posits that;

> "data gathered about people's concerns over technologies as part of the studies can be used to market technologies back to us in a way that we may find more acceptable"
>
> (Lawrence, 2011)

This risk of exploitation could certainly be relevant to planning and land development contexts, in which growing public concerns might be detected at an early stage and then marketing exercises undertaken, with the aim of pre-empting any official registering of objections. In the case of high speed rail, if early consultations suggested, for example, that a key public concern is destruction of ancient woodland, then a high-profile public commitment to planting large numbers of trees could swiftly be made. This commitment might not necessarily be above and beyond a baseline obligation, but could still gain headlines and appease the media, giving a general impression of commitment to environmental quality without any very specific promises about location, quality of habitat creation and so on. An additional problem with upstream engagement is that members of the public could ultimately find themselves in the position of taking the blame for decisions which have been consulted over, but the outcomes of which have been undesirable.

There are many parallels between engagement with cutting-edge scientific research and participation in proposals for high speed rail. The matters under discussion in both cases are not necessarily seen in a positive light by participants, and the consequences of any decisions are likely to be highly complex and with unforeseen consequences. In other words, future developments are emergent and likely to be beyond the control of individuals, corporations or government. This lack of certainty can generate fear of future developments. Demos are keen to stress that upstream engagement is about "…building more reflective capacity into the practice of science" (Demos, 2005: 34). The complexity of landscape issues likewise calls for an input of local knowledge to develop this reflective capacity.

There are further similarities. An editorial in the journal *Nature* reminds readers that "Taxpayers fund research, buying themselves the right to help shape its course" (*Nature*, 2004: 883). As it is with scientific research, so it should be with infrastructure proposed, funded and implemented by central government and with enormous impacts on the public. All inhabitants along a proposed alignment will make a significant sacrifice of landscape to enable the project to take place. The fact that the land is mostly not willingly given up, but compulsorily purchased, arguably 'buys' an even greater right to participate.

Demos emphasise that “funding organisations must make a genuine commitment to react to the results of [upstream] engagement processes” (Wilsdon et al., 2005: 32). Again, this is applicable to high speed rail, in which context any perceived lack of commitment to proposed actions resulting from local engagement processes is likely to result in non-participation and significant disaffection in the communities along the proposed alignment. There is already some evidence of this in both Ashley and CFA 23 (see section 4.4).

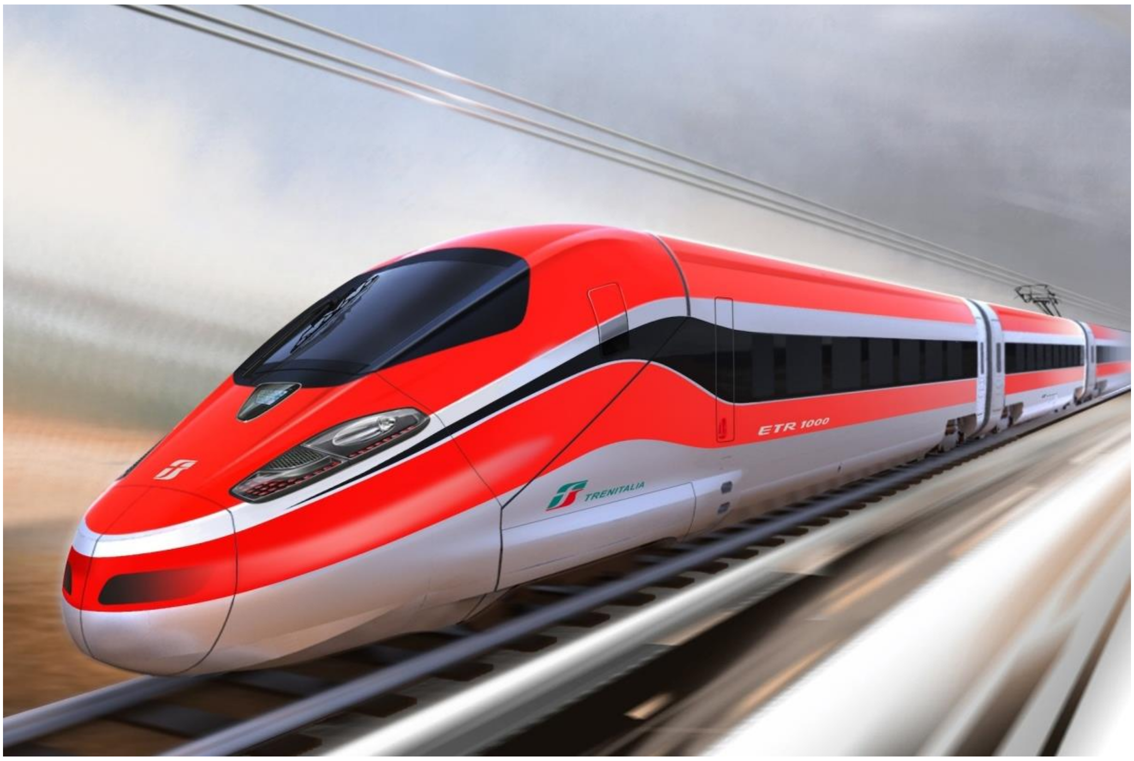

Figure 49 V300ZEFIRO electric multiple unit (EMU), Italy. Landscape is entirely subservient to technology in this image from Bombardier Inc.

In *Revisiting Upstream Engagement from a Habermasian Perspective* (Wang, 2016) Wang concludes that although upstream engagement promises much in terms of democratising processes of scientific innovation, this is in practice hampered by three things: “the pro-technology belief system, the inertia of administrative power, the intense industry lobbying” (Wang, 2016: 72). Unfortunately, these problems could equally apply to the context of high speed rail and landscape. Firstly, the pro-technology lobby certainly exists in relation to rail engineering, for example as seen in the promotional use of images of glossy rolling stock, frequently with surrounding landscape expunged to give the impression of great speed (Figure 49 is typical). Neglect of the landscape context is such that in this image the overhead wires are shining and dominant, symbolic of the designer’s power, and magically suspended from invisible sky-hooks. Such images are emblematic of a desire for engineering at its most sleek, ordered and modern, superseding untidy and chaotic nature, which becomes a mere insignificant blur. It is worth noting that there is a long tradition in the UK of both the fetishisation of rolling stock and its illustration in the three-quarter view with landscape denuded, as in Figure 50.

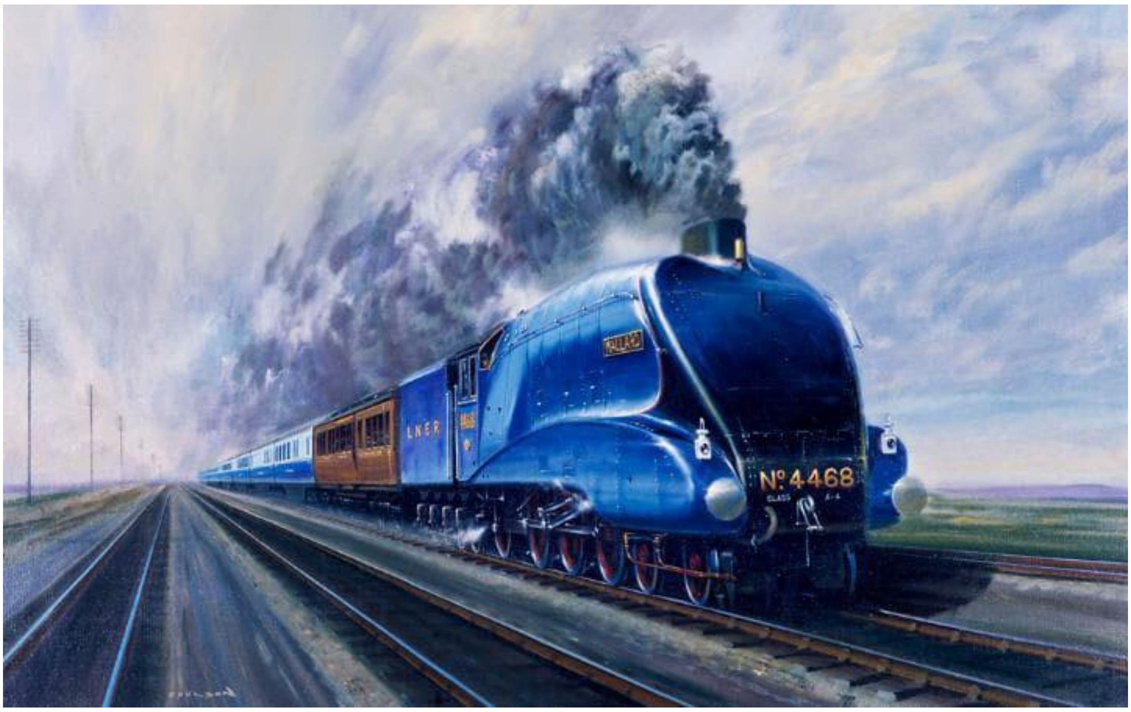

Figure 50. The Mallard (artist Barry Price, 1938) set the world speed record for a steam railway locomotive of 125.88 miles per hour (202.58 km/h), on the East Coast Line on the third of July 1938. Here, again, the presence of the landscape is minimised by the artist

To take Wang's second point, the lack of flexibility and responsiveness in the workings of Westminster and the parliamentary petitioning system is indeed a seemingly immovable blockage to reformulating public engagement, as discussed above. Thirdly, industry lobbying is doubtless intense given the values of HS2 Ltd's contracts with both global construction companies. *The Independent* newspaper reported in 2013 that the Department for Transport (DfT) itself had employed a lobbying firm, Westbourne Communications, to promote HS2 to the public (Leftly, 24.08.2013), thereby using the taxpayer's own money to market the project back at them. This use of public money is repeated at the regional level, with local authorities allocating budgets to persuade the DfT to make decisions which are favourable to the economy of their region (Reed, 2015).

The three considerations that Wang brings to our attention may seem to render the aspiration of truly reciprocal engagement hopelessly optimistic. A fourth problem may be the almost inevitable fragmentation of 'the public' or community groups. In the face of this, it is important to remember, however, that there are two powerful forces 'on the ground' and at the heart of the process: on the one hand the intelligence, good intentions and determination of members of the public, and on the other the professionalism and goodwill of the designers in this field. These two groups are at the core of high-quality emergent citizen participation in landscape and this thesis argues that they have, between them, the potential to make it succeed. Demos say that "we need to bring out the public within the scientist – by enabling scientists to reflect on the social and ethical dimensions of their work" (Wilsdon et al., 2005: 35). This is a highly critical view of a body of people who are assumed to have left their humanity and code of ethics at the laboratory door. In the landscape context, landscape architects, civil engineers, planners and architects all work in fields which can or should be very much based in the outside world of physical sites, places and landscapes. It should not be unreasonable to expect them to see themselves as members of the public within their professional roles; what Aeschbacher and Rios call 'citizen-designers'; "both members and enablers of communities" (Aeschbacher and Rios, 2008: 87). They could certainly fruitfully participate in eliciting valuable local knowledge, and to varying extents do so already. The pressing question is how to reliably and consistently bring these two groups, the publics (who include professional elements) and the professionals (who include a public element), together in a process that works and is grounded in a sound theoretical basis.

4.7 Emergent public engagement with landscape; a proposal

Important to this research is my proposal that innovative emergent public engagement with landscape could avoid some of the problems with both 'bottom-up' and upstream types of public engagement. Demos acknowledge that

> "the social intelligence generated by [upstream] engagement might become outdated or irrelevant as technologies twist their way through the choices and commitments that make up the innovation process."
>
> (Wilsdon and Willis, 2004: 33).

Not so with an emergent process that would not only set the initial agenda but also progressively re-set it. Engagement would be sustained throughout the life of the project and flex, grow and pass through phases of increasing and decreasing complexity. The problem of linearity, which is also arguably inherent in the idea of a 'bottom-up' process, is highly relevant to landscape proposals. In the construction industry, it is acknowledged that unexpected circumstances are likely to arise when breaking the ground, for example.

Even in an age of excellent multilayered data provided through Geographic Information Systems (GIS), conditions below the surface can yield hydrological or archaeological surprises and unforeseen issues of soil contamination. Above ground, anything from political upheaval and public protest to extreme weather conditions can delay a project or send it in a new direction. Any linear public engagement process is clearly unsuited to this unpredictable landscape context (see Chapter One) and can be improved upon.

Jeffrey Johnson, writing about complexity science in the context of collaborative design, reminds us that, in an emergent entity, "new order may emerge from existing system states…[and] wholes can have properties not possessed by their parts" (J. Johnson, 2005: 224). He suggests that this theory can help to understand how design teams might be brought together through the emergent principle of self-organisation, in which "system behaviour can emerge from autonomous agent interactions" (J. Johnson, 2005: 224). His paper is concerned with teams of professionals, and not with landscape or public engagement, but he does provide an interesting and pragmatic description of 'design' as:

> "the process of deciding what kind of emergence is desirable, and finding sets of parts and ways of assembling them to create wholes with desirable emergent properties and without undesirable emergent properties"
>
> (J. Johnson, 2005: 227)

This idea, therefore, leaves us with the question of who decides what kind of emergence is 'desirable', and how do they become involved? My study of HS2 Ltd's procedures has led to four observations (below) about how they could begin to use ideas about emergent citizen participation, even at this late stage of the project.

4.8 the present challenge for HS2 Ltd

In the main, opportunities for HS2 Ltd to adjust their landscape engagement procedures for Phase 1 have passed, although there could still be some benefit if the top-down ethos whereby information is disseminated and the public mollified is to be put aside and replaced with genuine and open dialogue over design refinements. It is also possible that some significant impact could still be made where the design process has been accelerated and completion date brought forward, along the Phase 2a alignment north of Lichfield to Crewe.

There is still some potential for emergent citizen participation in co-design of landscape north of Crewe (Phase 2b). It is far from being the ideal opportunity, as key landscape decisions are already being made during the compilation of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA[5]). The final section of this chapter proposes four key ways forward for immediate public engagement along Phase 2b. These are interim conclusions, having closely studied HS2 Ltd's current procedures:

1. Positioning the landscape itself as the driver of engagement, rather than the ES/EIA. The EIA is a necessity where parliamentary approval is needed to safeguard land for development and to enact compulsory purchase orders. This does not mean that it must necessarily act as the single meaningful locus for engagement procedures. These should be located instead in the physical places that are the material territories of HS2. A fruitful process would be one that initially prioritises building networks of local contacts. In order to efficiently communicate with the most informative residents, HS2 Ltd would need to invest time and effort in to finding out which people on the ground are both willing to talk to them and able to be informative. Community gatekeepers can act to block access to residents and may have their own agendas to pursue (Sixsmith et al., 2003), so a reliance on email communications with the parish council clerk (as currently happens) can absolutely not be relied upon to form a robust and open channel of communication with key local people. These residents might turn out to be farmers, amateur historians, wildlife enthusiasts, ramblers, retired engineers and so on, who may have no involvement with their parish council whatsoever. Initial networking is essential in order to get the most benefit from engagement activities by encouraging good attendance and enlightened responses from local people. It is not possible to predict the forms that each local network will take, so the process by which that network evolves must be emergent, supported by responsive and flexible methods. This places the landscape and the people who know it best at the beginning of, and arguably therefore at the 'top' of, the process. A significant hurdle in getting members of the public to become engaged with such a project is resistance in the form of an initial phase of psychological denial that the proposals will ever be built. The bigger the project the more entrenched the denial. This state of mind will be extended over many years in the event of a dearth of communication from the proposers. Replacement of the EIA as means of engagement, with landscapes themselves as the

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[5] this term replaces the 'ES' of Phase 1

focus, would also allow procedures to develop which are not based around the adversarial system of parliamentary petitioning, and not dependant on the publication of any document.

2. Finding out how people would like engagement to happen. A truly emergent engagement process would not shrink from asking the evolving network of local contacts how they would prefer to be engaged. Would they, for example, prefer to be involved as a civil parish with a strong identity of its own, or where populations are small, would they prefer to join forces with two neighbouring parishes? Would any of them choose to identify with the arbitrary boundaries of the CFA structure? It would be beneficial to support the local network of people in a process that raises concerns that they think are of the most significance in their landscape. They will best know if flood risk is a priority concern, or whether traffic problems are more relevant in that place. They will have detailed knowledge about the evolving nature of such challenges and be able to locate pressure points on maps of the area. This could all happen alongside preparation of the ES and feed directly in to it. Such co-design would need to be supported by engagement professionals who would co-ordinate direct contact between local knowledge sources and HS2 Ltd's design team. Design team members would ideally make frequent visits to the places over which they have so much power, perhaps becoming a familiar and approachable presence. Their direct, embodied experiences of these landscapes would doubtless inform more effective and sensitive landscape design.

3. Making aims that allow engagement and design to emerge reciprocally. Emergent citizen participation does not mean that the exercise should be without specified aims, but that the aims must support flexibility in the routes that the engagement will take and the kinds of outcomes it will produce. Specific aims could well be set in consultation with citizens. Arguably, given the transient nature of human populations, all such aims need to be produced with the ultimate benefit of the landscape – and consequently its inhabitants – as the priority. Engagement aims need to encourage a reversal of the flow of information in the system, supporting the role of local inhabitants as true advisors to HS2 Ltd. The aims need to be robust enough to survive the lengthy evolution of a megaproject and should be consistently upheld across all documentation and enacted by events on the ground.

4. Prioritising true dialogue as chief amongst said aims. Kent and Taylor (2002) define 'dialogue' as being the desirable outcome of communication between an

organisation and its public(s). They propose that dialogue can achieve an equality of status of public participants and the organization in question, in which no party claims to possess the truth, is held to win or lose, or required to compromise. They set out a number of implicit and explicit tenets for such dialogue. Of these, the most relevant to a view of citizen participation as necessarily emergent is that of propinquity, meaning “the temporality and spontaneity of interactions with publics” (Kent and Taylor, 2002: 24). The notion of propinquity is highly relevant to citizen participation in landscape design. The overriding necessity here is that the co-designers have direct and embodied experience of the landscape in question in order to be able to understand its continued emergence from a past combination of conditions and in to the future. In the case of HS2, the vast scale of the UK’s largest ever transport infrastructure construction project means that landscape designers may be working at some distance from the places they seek to understand, with infrequent opportunities for site visits. In a complex network of interrelated open systems, dialogue operates as a means of eliciting all kinds of relevant information that would not necessarily have been deliberately sought out or indeed been predicted to be important. Dialogue is a means by which the self-organizing powers of society can work fruitfully, and is very powerful in overcoming the constraints of hierarchical structures. A significant problem for HS2 Ltd is that local inhabitants are inclined to see them as ‘the enemy’ from the very beginning of a lengthy process. As engagement activity develops, the company increasingly takes the role of defending itself against attack by a hostile public. Development of dialogues from day one could only contribute to breaking down these perceptions on both sides. It is the case that landscapes in anticipation of HS2 are subject to impacts of the project from the time of first announcement, even though the line will only be operational some 20 years hence. This state of anticipation has effects on the psychology of individuals, on business interests in affected areas, on property values, and on the physical landscape. Decisions are made about the landscape in the light of expected developments imposed by the awaited megaproject. It is in the interests of these localities that dialogue is not delayed until after the ES or EIA is published.

Kent and Taylor’s tenet of propinquity presupposes a “feature of immediacy of presence [which] suggests that parties involved are communicating in the present about issues, rather than after decisions have been made (Kent and Taylor, 2002: 26). This is arguably not at all true of HS2’s procedures, as has been argued here. The desirability of improved public participation has long been recognised. Arnstein’s ’

> Ladder of Citizen Participation' (Arnstein, 1969) addressed the difference between placation, on rung 5 of the ladder, which she identified as a form of tokenism, and real citizen power, which might take the form of a partnership, on rung 6. This is the step up that HS2 Ltd need to take.

4.9 Conclusions to this chapter

Chapter Four has offered a critique of HS2 Ltd's use of the ES as the cornerstone of public engagement with HS2 in Phase 1. The vast and complex nature of the document means that it is entirely unsuitable as a tool for dissemination and engagement. The ensuing parliamentary petitioning procedures exacerbate the problem by eschewing genuine engagement and turning consultation in to an extended series of adversarial encounters. I have argued that it is very difficult for HS2 Ltd to make up ground lost because of the confused aims of their engagement activity for Phase 1. Recent publication of their revised intentions, as a response to serious criticisms, is encouraging, but the enactment of these in local places has yet to be evidenced. It is also too late for their engagement activity to genuinely originate proposals from local people from the start of the process, so it seems likely that, for Phases 2a and 2b, the process will once more be one of delivery of information, answered by negative reactions to that information. Existing policies do not explicitly require responsiveness to local landscape emergence; a flexibility which would only contribute to the robustness of a project.

Upstream engagement offers an insight in to alternative ways to engage, but its inherent problem of linearity remains; and so an alternative model for engagement is needed, if the emergent nature of landscape is to be accounted for.

A new kind of public engagement process, based on the principles of emergence theory, is my proposed response to the challenges of a major infrastructure project set in an emergent physical, social and political landscape.

Chapter Five

Action Research in Ashley

“The community and its members know and respect the particular constraints and possibilities of a given physical ecosystem or cultural value system. Thus, the farmer knows the capabilities of her soil, and the community leader knows the appropriate ways to suggest change without causing offense – including whom to talk with, and what to say. Outsiders seldom have this deeply placed knowledge and may too easily suggest ‘solutions’ that are inappropriate, unsustainable, or from a local perspective, clearly ignorant.”

(Eversole, 2012: 33)

5.1 Abstract

This chapter describes the action research element of the thesis, as undertaken on the ground in Ashley (but not including neighbourhood planning, which is covered separately, in Chapter Six). It covers the different methods used, including walking the landscape, networking, involvement in village occasions, and mapping with residents. It also proposes ten ‘working’ principles for public engagement with landscape (see Table 1) which are drawn from my understanding of how emergence theory might be applicable to engagement with landscape. This action research tests three things;

1. whether the methods I have experimented with are suited to an emergent public engagement strategy,
2. whether the ten working principles can realistically be applied on the ground,
3. and, ultimately, whether it is reasonable to base public engagement methods on a strategy grounded in emergence theory.

In other words, the principles are used to test whether each engagement activity would be valid for use as part of a strategy informed by emergence theory. This ‘on-the-ground’ exploration of applicability of the methods then prompts reflection on the validity of the working principles themselves, which are later used to inform the final recommendations in this thesis (see Chapter Seven). In this way, the action research is used to inform an understanding of whether, and how, the proposed methodology could be useful when applied in a landscape. A traffic-light rating is used to summarise and give an indication of whether each action research activity was either well suited to an emergent approach (green), partially suited (amber), or not suited (red). The website has not been rated as it was a supplementary method, for information purposes only.

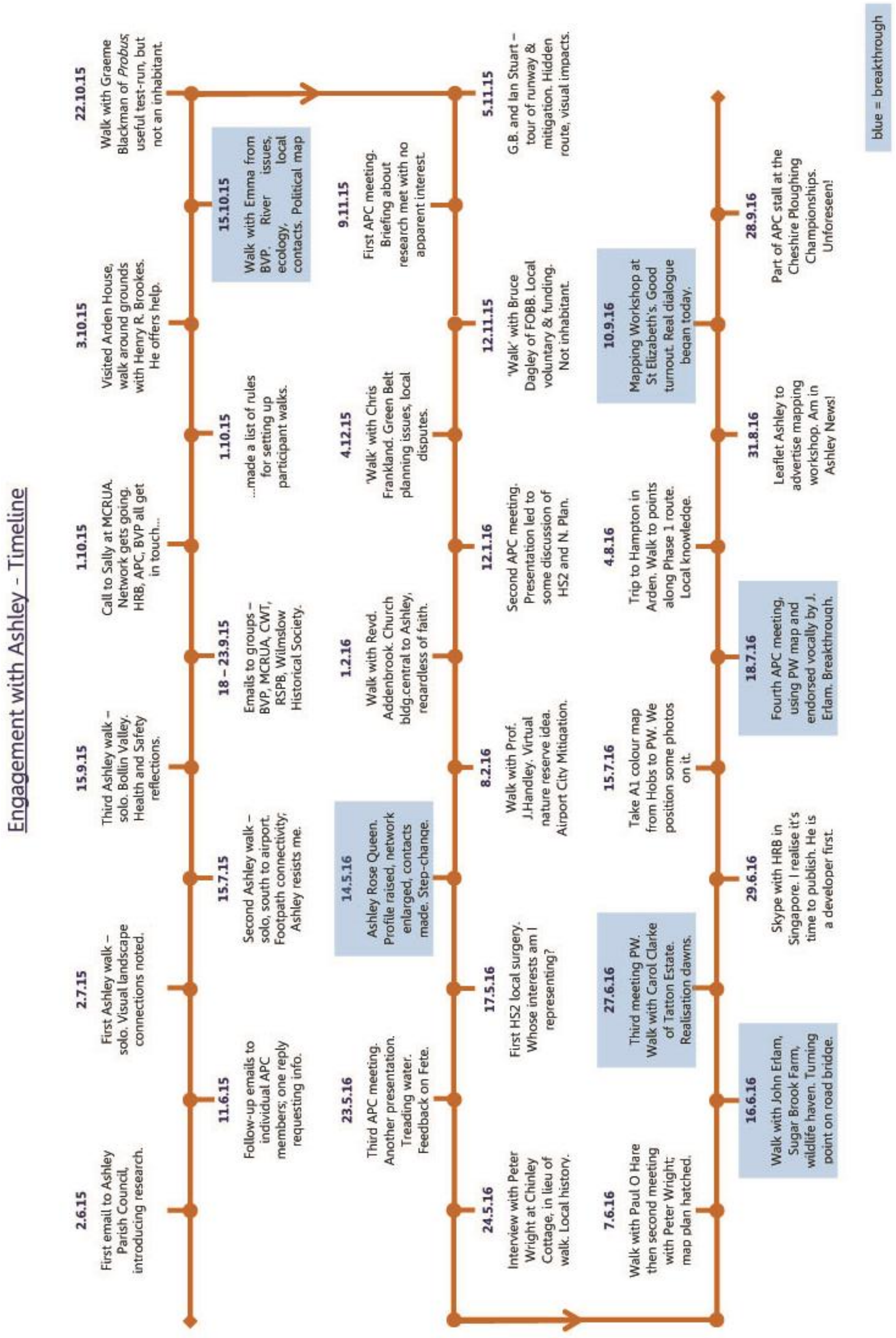

Engagement with Ashley - Timeline
2.6.15
First email to Ashley Parish Council, introducing research.
11.6.15
Follow-up emails to individual APC members; one reply requesting info.
2.7.15
First Ashley walk – solo. Visual landscape connections noted.
15.7.15
Second Ashley walk – solo, south to airport. Footpath connectivity; Ashley resists me.
15.9.15
Third Ashley walk – solo. Bollin Valley. Health and Safety reflections.
18 – 23.9.15
Emails to groups – BVP, MCRUA, CWT, RSPB, Wilmslow Historical Society.
1.10.15
Call to Sally at MCRUA. Network gets going. HRB, APC, BVP all get in touch...
1.10.15
...made a list of rules for setting up participant walks.
3.10.15
Visited Arden House, walk around grounds with Henry R. Brookes. He offers help.
15.10.15
Walk with Emma from BVP. River issues, ecology, local contacts. Political map
22.10.15
Walk with Graeme Blackman of *Probus*; useful test-run, but not an inhabitant.
5.11.15
G.B. and Ian Stuart – tour of runway & mitigation. Hidden route, visual impacts.
9.11.15
First APC meeting. Briefing about research met with no apparent interest.
12.11.15
'Walk' with Bruce Dagley of FOBB. Local voluntary & funding. Not inhabitant.
4.12.15
'Walk' with Chris Frankland. Green Belt planning issues, local disputes.
12.1.16
Second APC meeting. Presentation led to some discussion of HS2 and N. Plan.
1.2.16
Walk with Revd. Addenbrook. Church bldg.central to Ashley, regardless of faith.
8.2.16
Walk with Prof. J.Handley. Virtual nature reserve idea. Airport City Mitigation.
14.5.16
Ashley Rose Queen. Profile raised, network enlarged, contacts made. Step-change.
17.5.16
First HS2 local surgery. Whose interests am I representing?
23.5.16
Third APC meeting. Another presentation. Treading water. Feedback on Fete.
24.5.16
Interview with Peter Wright at Chinley Cottage, in lieu of walk. Local history.
7.6.16
Walk with Paul O Hare then second meeting with Peter Wright; map plan hatched.
16.6.16
Walk with John Erlam, Sugar Brook Farm, wildlife haven. Turning point on road bridge.
27.6.16
Third meeting PW. Walk with Carol Clarke of Tatton Estate. Realisation dawns.
29.6.16
Skype with HRB in Singapore. I realise it's time to publish. He is a developer first.
15.7.16
Take A1 colour map from Hobs to PW. We position some photos on it.
18.7.16
Fourth APC meeting, using PW map and endorsed vocally by J. Erlam. Breakthrough.
4.8.16
Trip to Hampton in Arden. Walk to points along Phase 1 route. Local knowledge.
31.8.16
Leaflet Ashley to advertise mapping workshop. Am in Ashley News!
10.9.16
Mapping Workshop at St Elizabeth's. Good turnout. Real dialogue began today.
28.9.16
Part of APC stall at the Cheshire Ploughing Championships. Unforeseen!
blue = breakthrough

Figure 51. Timeline summarising my engagement with Ashley up until September 2016. The diagram was made just before the ploughing championships of 28.8.16, and in the event, I did not attend.

5.2 Introduction; the two engagement gaps

Figure 51 is a timeline summarising the key action research milestones in the first part of my engagement in Ashley. It was drawn up in September 2016. For the remaining half of my research activity, I decided not to illustrate the research in the same way, as I had begun to draw conclusions about problems with linear concepts of public engagement. A linear graphical representation was clearly not sufficient as an explanation of the emergence of the process. The reasons for this are explored in this chapter and summarised in Chapter Seven.

Action research (as described in introductory section v.iii), informed by emergence theory, has been the strategy for the greater part of my work in Ashley. This is firstly in order to understand the challenges presented by the anticipated infrastructure of HS2 in this place, and secondly in order to explore inhabitants' engagement both with the present landscape and with infrastructure proposals. It is important to note that these are two distinct gaps with potential for engagement to occur, as represented in Figure 52, below. This diagram illustrates my proposal that the nature of public engagement with a landscape design is distinct from that of baseline public engagement with the inhabited landscape itself, which is a form of primary lived commitment to the place.

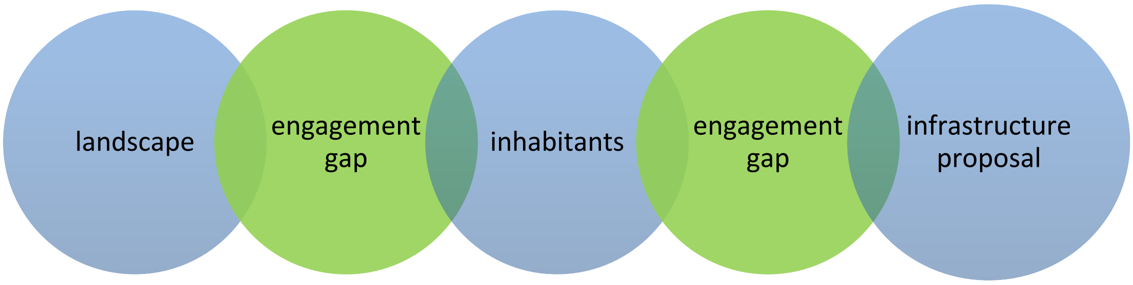


Figure 52. the two engagement gaps, between inhabitants and landscape, and inhabitants and proposals (author's image).

Both types of engagement are addressed in this chapter. I propose that the relationship between engagement with the lived landscape itself and engagement with infrastructure proposals is that the success of the latter depends on the quality and extent of the former. In other words, inhabitants cannot be expected to engage positively with landscape proposals if they are not already engaged with the landscape they inhabit. In Ashley, for example, it is not reasonable to expect residents to make contributions of their landscape knowledge to the design of HS2 landscape mitigation, or indeed to a neighbourhood plan, unless they are already engaged with their place, and unless they value the landscape knowledge that they hold.

At the time I withdrew from research in Ashley in February 2018, engagement with the Parish by HS2 Ltd had been scant. Two meetings had taken place. At the most recent, in November 2017, railway engineers were present, speaking to three parish Councillors. This represented a significant development in Ashley, perhaps in the light of the new *Community Engagement Strategy* (HS2 Ltd, September 2017)(see sections 4.5, 5.4.2 and 5.5.3). At the first such meeting, on 6th February 2017 (conversation no. 37, Appendix B) Raj Chandarana, the regional team leader for public engagement, visited Ashley to talk to residents, at my suggestion. His advice to this small gathering of people was that they should simply pro-actively approach HS2 Ltd with their landscape mitigation requests. This had also been my advice to Ashley PC when I first began a dialogue with them. This was before I had undertaken much of the action research and, at the time, I had not understood how problematic this advice was. In order to respond to an open invitation to contribute landscape proposals to the local HS2 engagement team, they would need to access resources culled from primary engagement with landscape, as outlined above. They would also need to be aware of how best to formulate and proffer their knowledge. Furthermore, they would need to perceive that the knowledge they held could potentially be valued more highly than that already held by HS2 Ltd. All of this depends on a high quality of primary engagement with landscape, both on the part of individual inhabitants, and shared and synthesised as a community group.

Coming from HS2 Ltd themselves, this seemed to me to be a shrugging-off of responsibility rather than an openness to suggestions. It gave the impression of an organisation that was not prepared to genuinely facilitate local voices, and that despite all their resources and the huge timescales available, they were not planning to nurture any meaningful local dialogue. In the course of the meeting, Mr Chandarana cited a nearby parish, High Legh, as having already approached him with several ideas, and we were told that this parish was an admirable model for active pursuit of a conversation with HS2 Ltd. Such outliers as High Legh will, of course, emerge, as in the case of the excellent work on Phase 1 by the retired rail engineer in CFA 23 (see Chapter Four). My research in Ashley, however, suggests that a rural parish will more typically be neither ready, willing, nor able to make mitigation proposals in this way. Naturally, this has led me to reflect on the inadvisability of that same advice, issued to the Parish by myself. My well-meaning guidance was in fact impossible for residents to achieve at that time, and they made no attempt to follow it. I would suggest that after two and a half years of shared efforts to increase engagement, as described below, they were somewhat closer to being ready to pursue their own interests, but not yet in a position to take proposals to HS2 Ltd. The activities described below could form elements of an extensive engagement process. This not necessarily unrealistic in terms of staff time and other resources.

This chapter firstly describes and then evaluates each public engagement activity I have undertaken in Ashley in the course of this research. For each activity I have tested its validity in addressing ten working principles for emergent engagement. I have applied a 'traffic-light' rating system to an evaluation grid for each activity, with red meaning not suited, amber meaning partially suited, and green meaning the activity is well suited to that principle for emergent engagement. For each type of engagement activity, I set out my reasons for using it, with reference to emergence theory, the experience of the process, for myself and participants, an indication of the type of knowledge gained and an evaluation of the activity.

5.3 Evaluation of engagement methods

My reflections on the various action research activities described in this chapter aim to;

i. assess the methods in terms of their value in applying an emergent engagement strategy in the field

ii. test the proposition that emergence theory is a valid basis for public engagement with landscape

In order to provide a structure for these reflections I have proposed, below (Table 1), a working definition of ten principles for an emergent public engagement activity. These properties are used as criteria in an evaluation grid for each method. The testing of these ten working principles leads to refinement of the ideas, and from this, my final proposals are made in Chapter Seven.

Table 1. ten working principles for an emergent public engagement activity

	Working principle	Basis in emergence theory
	For primary engagement with landscape, the engagement activity:	
1.	begins with simple interactions but embraces evolving complexity	A basic principle of emergence, see sections 'Introduction (ii)' on unpredictability, 1.8 on disturbance and response, 1.4 on the linear and the non-linear.
2.	allows inhabitants to set the agenda, initiate and sustain methods of engagement	See, for example, Johnson (2002) in section 1.4, D. Shepherd (2009) in 1.8. Also sections 1.5 and 5.5.2 on bottom-up behaviour, self-organisation and the agency of the landscape.
3.	values the role of embodied landscape knowledge	Inseparability of landscape systems, see for example section 1.3 (Barnett, 2013: 54). Embodied reciprocal engagement, see section 2.3.
4.	responds to emerging circumstances	Disturbance and response, and unpredictability, see 'Introduction (ii)', sections 1.4, 1.5, 1.6 (Lewin, 1993), 1.8 for example.
5.	aims to achieve a public conversation about landscape issues, and a reflective capacity rather than simplistic consensus	As complexity increases, time needs to be taken to acknowledge and deliberate over responses to said complexity, see sections 1.4 on the linear and the non-linear (Belanger, 1995: 2) and 1.9 on local knowledge and complexity.
	In addition, in the case of engagement with specific landscape proposals:	
6.	is 'in at the start' & sustained for the life of the project, including construction period and post-occupancy	This acknowledges the extended time periods involved as landscape emerges unpredictably through the duration of an infrastructure project, see sections 2.2, Introduction ii and 1.8.
7.	connects local people directly to designers of infrastructure and landscape	This recognises the significance of embodied reciprocal engagement (see sections 1.3, 1.9, and 2.3), and the inseparability of systems, sections 1.4 and 1.5.
8.	uses qualitative and deliberative methods to examine landscape issues in depth	This develops principles 5 and 7, above, and also supports qualitative deliberations, rather than sole focus on quantitative data, see definitions of weak and strong emergence, 'Introduction (ii)'.
9.	values and utilises the knowledge and creativity of the public in order to inform decision-making by professionals	This develops principle 2, above, and depends on acknowledging the agency of the landscape and the emergent phenomenon of self-organisation (see sections 1.4, 1.5, 1.8 and 5.5.2).
10.	welcomes proposals originating from the public and furthermore *seeks to elicit such proposals*	This builds on the above principles and describes a desirable defining characteristic of an emergent process of engagement with landscape, in which there could be a phase transition to widespread public engagement with landscape and autocatalysis of participation, see sections 1.6 and 1.7.

5.4 Walks

The principles supporting the use of walking as a research method have been discussed in Chapter Two. Using this embodied method of acquiring knowledge of the landscape at a 1:1 scale proved to be a fruitful way of accessing the place and people.

5.4.1 Lone walks

My first three walks in Ashley, during summer 2015, were unaccompanied, as were a further four over the course of the following two and a half years. These lone walks were important in informing my own understanding of the landscape, and for a number of practical reasons:

1. to 'recce' walk routes with co-walkers' safety in mind, particularly with regard to footpath accessibility and road safety issues;
2. to plan the most workable routes for participants, estimate the duration of a walk and investigate facilities en-route;
3. to make my own mental map of the territory and come to a basic understanding of topography, noise pollution, visual impact of existing infrastructure and many other qualities.

These walks also provided a dynamic space/time for thinking whilst immersed in the landscape, to consider my research aims and to imagine possible strategies that I could use to engage people. They provided time for ideas to emerge and develop. I recorded my observations and ideas on a voice recorder, took field notes and photographed key features of the landscape. In the course of these walks, I dawdled on river and rail bridges, had drinks in the pub, bought newspapers at the shop, and spent time in the garden of remembrance at St Elizabeth's. A key finding of this thesis is that such simple but embodied experience of a landscape is essential in order for the landscape architect to understand the place, both in its physical manifestations and in the 'genius loci'. In this way I became, for a time, part of the emergent landscape of Ashley.

My field notes from the first three solo walks are summarised in Table 2 below, and the routes indicated on Figure 53.

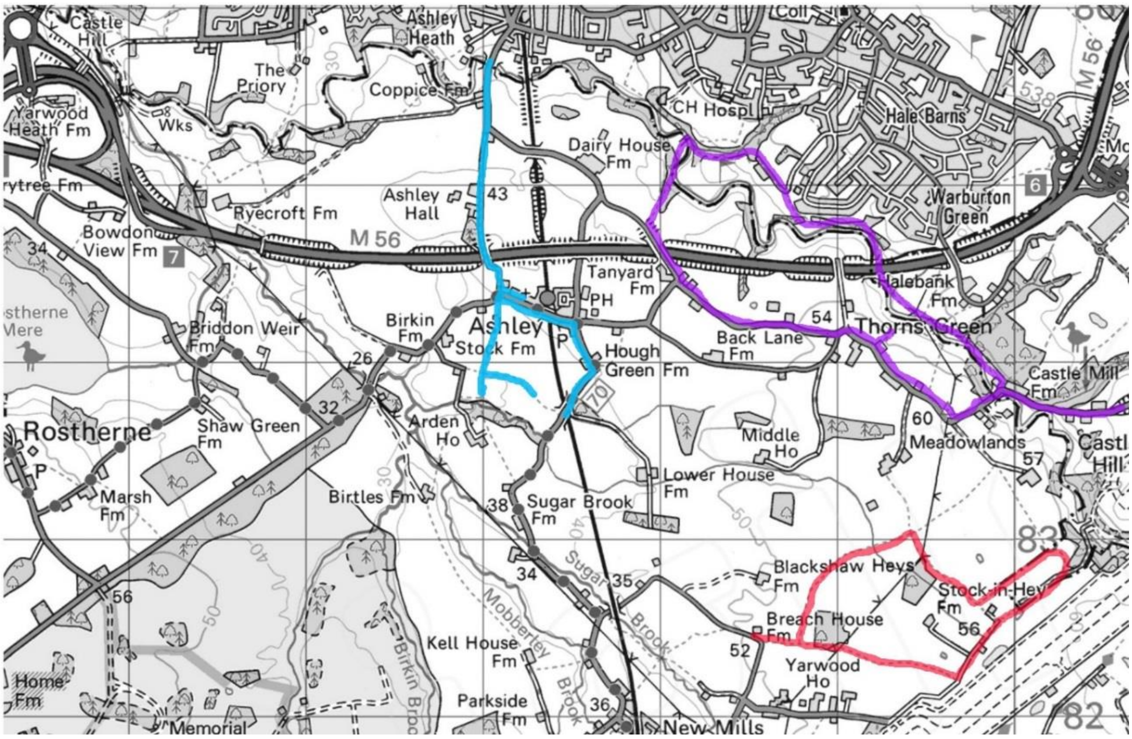


Figure 53. My first three lone walks in Ashley, chosen to help me learn about the village, the river and the runway; see Table 2 for description (author's image using base map from: EDINA Digimap Ordnance Survey Service, <http://edina.ac.uk/digimap>, created: November 2017, not to scale).

Date	route	Field notes
02.07.2015 (Blue route on map)	From church north to Bollin, past Ashley Hall, retraced steps south to cricket club (blocked path) doubled back to village (shop) then south to Mobberley Road bridge along road, back to church via the Greyhound.	Strong visual connections to significant locations, especially church, cricket club, school, motorway gantries and Mobberley Rd bridge (over railway). Negligible visual connection to Greater Manchester despite proximity of the city. Tower of Bowden church is only obvious sign of the city when looking north from village (in summer). These visual factors give strongly rural sense of place. Voice recorder notes 'looks quite a different place' from its appearance on the OS map. Ashley feels resistant to being walked. Blocked access and terrifying hairpin bends on the roads, no footways. Not easy to walk to a neighbour who might live a few hundred meters away. Poorly connected public rights of way. Many cyclists on the roads – leisure, not commuting. Cycling banned on PROW past Ashley Hall – removal of

		this ban would significantly improve north-south connectivity and safety for cyclists.
15.07.2015 (Red route on map)	Southern parish periphery. Started at Breach House Farm and walked to airport crash gate 11. Then west along bridleway around runway perimeter (plane-spotters) and along lane to Stock-in-Hey farm, and returning over wildflower meadows managed by DEFRA.	Proliferation of CCTV and 'Keep Out' signs suggest significant fear of crime here, close to the airport. Footpaths could not be found/followed. Frustrating – Ashley is resisting again. Apparent permeability not matched by pedestrian accessibility. Contrast between visual tranquillity and significant sound pollution from runway take-offs. A sense of hostility here perhaps created by relationship between the runway and the rest of the landscape. An intimidating place for the outsider, noise but also hostile infrastructure-related visual elements (see Figure 55, Figure 56). Ecological mitigation in strips and pools around runway.
15.9.2015 (Purple route on map)	Northern parish boundary. From Castle Mill farm lay-by along the Bollin Way to Hale Golf Club, going under the M56, crossing river after golf course then back to car along the verges of Castle Mill Lane. Pause at Magnolia Cottage to photograph field at back where HS2 will cross Bollin.	Must not meet participants at this lay-by – too dangerous to walk. Bollin Way feels very isolated, no views out as valley is incised, protected from noise, apart from at M56 underpass which is significant disturbance in the landscape. Mused about issues of working/walking alone here. Huge Himalayan Balsam problem all along Bollin and in adjacent fields; dominates the riparian ecosystem. Pylons a significant presence. Golf course makes significant contrast – a sanitised landscape. Personal annoyance at the occupation of large areas of territory by these facilities for social elite. Considered impact of wide HS2 cutting and destruction of cottages at Thorns Green. Standing here clarifies the visual impact. Met no-one along the way. Need to consider carefully how to plan walk routes here with participants, avoiding roads.

Table 2. Extracts of field notes from unaccompanied walks

I also took six walks over the winter and spring of 2016/17 specifically in order to make observations to inform my writing of the draft Local Landscape Character Assessment for the neighbourhood plan (see Chapter Five and Chapter Three, which is an edited version of the LLCA). These walks covered each of the public footpaths in Ashley, and four of them were taken alone. They were recorded through photography and notes made in pencil on a large-scale OS map (see Figure 54).

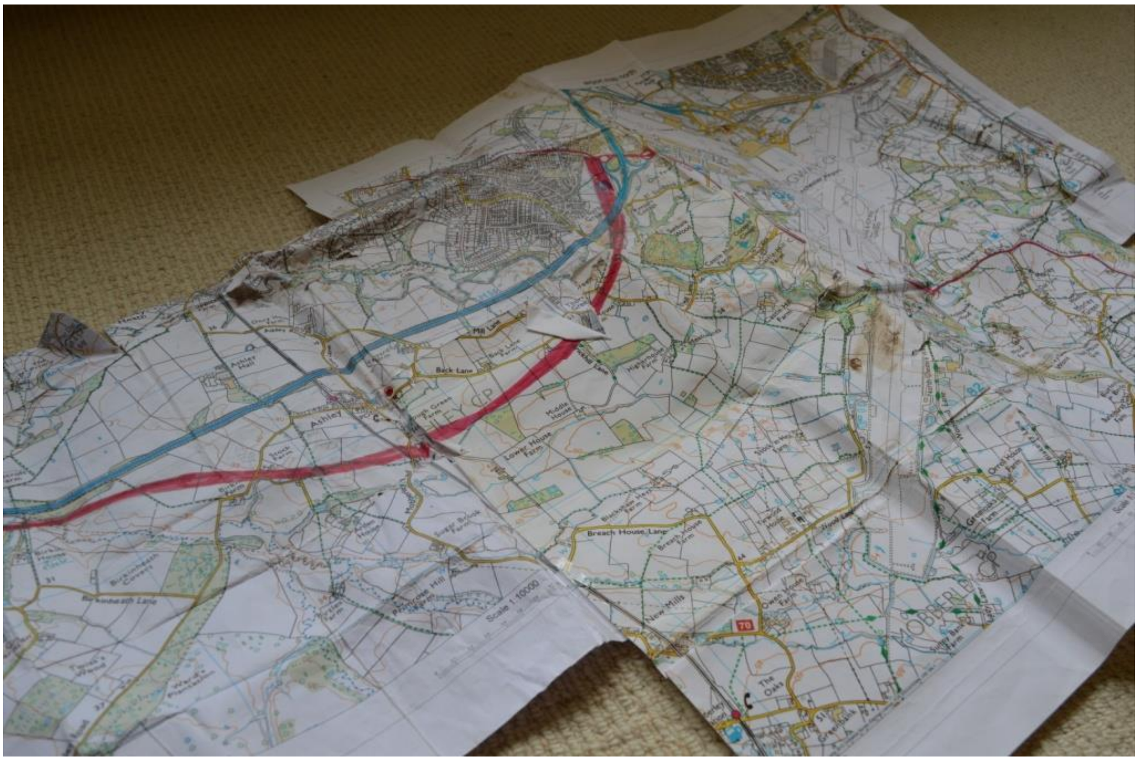


Figure 54. First walking map of Ashley, showing signs of wear. HS2 alignment added in pink felt tip.

Although my activities were focused on the Parish itself, for these early walks I made sure that I crossed the parish boundaries and observed the relationship between Ashley and the surrounding landscapes. This supported my understanding of this landscape as a complex, connected and open system, effectively without any material boundaries. It helped me to consider how Ashley relates to Greater Manchester, to the rest of Cheshire, and to the airport. These boundaries are all very different, as one might expect, as they date from different periods. The transition from Ashley South into Cheshire is ancient and imperceptible, there is no physical evidence beyond the roadside sign and no material change in character. The border only exists in human perception and a history of legislature. To the north, the Bollin, the fluid and emerging boundary with the city, makes intuitive sense to the pedestrian visitor. It is deeply incised in to the land, given height by mature trees, and, though shallow in places, is only passable at the bridges. As the boundary with Manchester it dates back only to 1974, but maps show that it has long been the border with the parish of Hale (Speed, 1610) which was historically part of Cheshire. The riparian woodland forms an almost complete visual barrier in summer, and an effective sound barrier.

The airport perimeter fence does not form part of the Ashley parish boundary, but lies just a few hundred meters to the south east, such that it functions very much as a perceptual and physical boundary to the parish. It is visually permeable, see Figure 55, but physically impenetrable, and has been here since work on the runway was completed in 2000. Early walks around the runway perimeter prompted me to consider the ways in which transport infrastructure can sit in a landscape, and the consequences of defining and designing such boundaries. The use of wire mesh fence here, alongside traditional-style timber post and rail, implies a somewhat flimsy or temporary divide, whereas in fact the impact of such a barrier to movement is significant, lasting, and to the detriment of the 'host' landscape. The design of this landscape element expresses a divide between rural and urban territory. Despite the open green spaces on both sides, the un-metalled path, wildflowers and timber fence seen on the right of Figure 55 signify a kind of cosy unkempt rurality, whereas to the left, just a couple of metres away, the black paint and razor wire speak of a controlled zone, where the grass is mown short, and the land no longer belongs in any sense to its previous inhabitants. In places, signage reinforces this reading of the place, see Figure 56. Walking in these locations on my own gave me the opportunity to reflect on the likely experiences of local residents during the proposals for and construction of the runway during the 1990s, and meant that I was better informed about the topic when eventually discussing it with people. It seemed to me to be important to attempt some emotional, not simply intellectual, understanding of what it might be like to have land appropriated by the authorities.

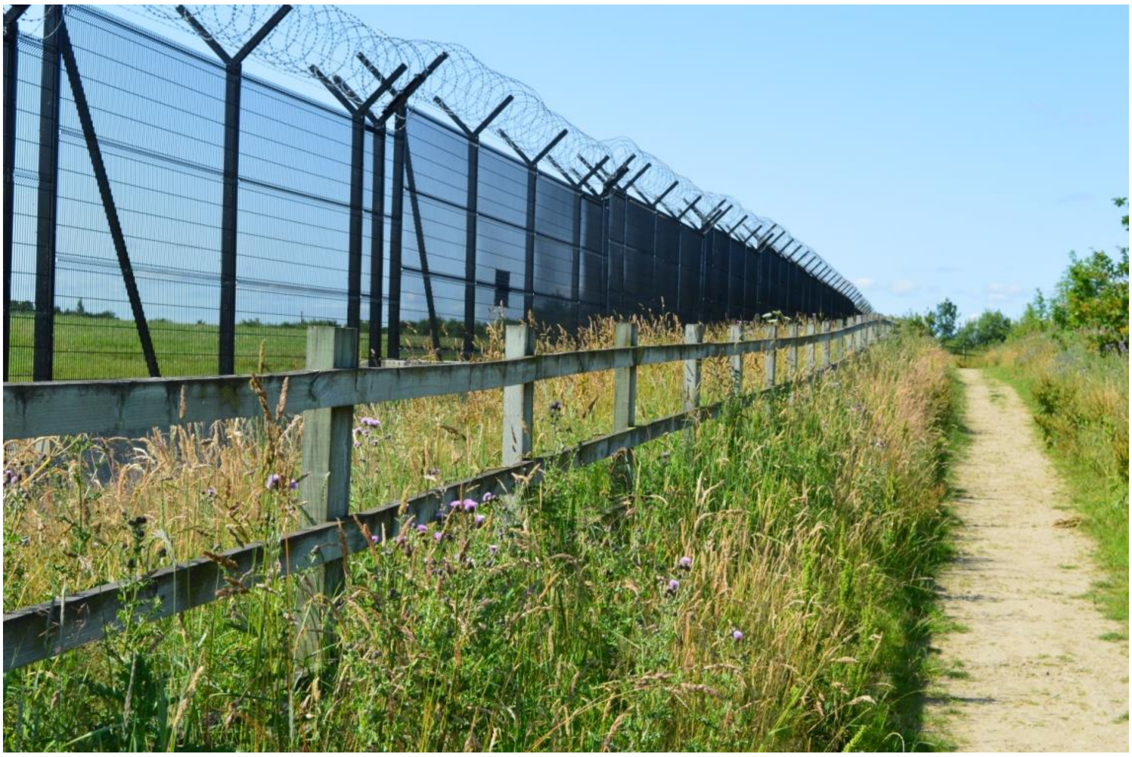


Figure 55. Interface between airport runway and surrounding rural landscape, habitat strip to right of photo (author's photo, 15.07.2015).

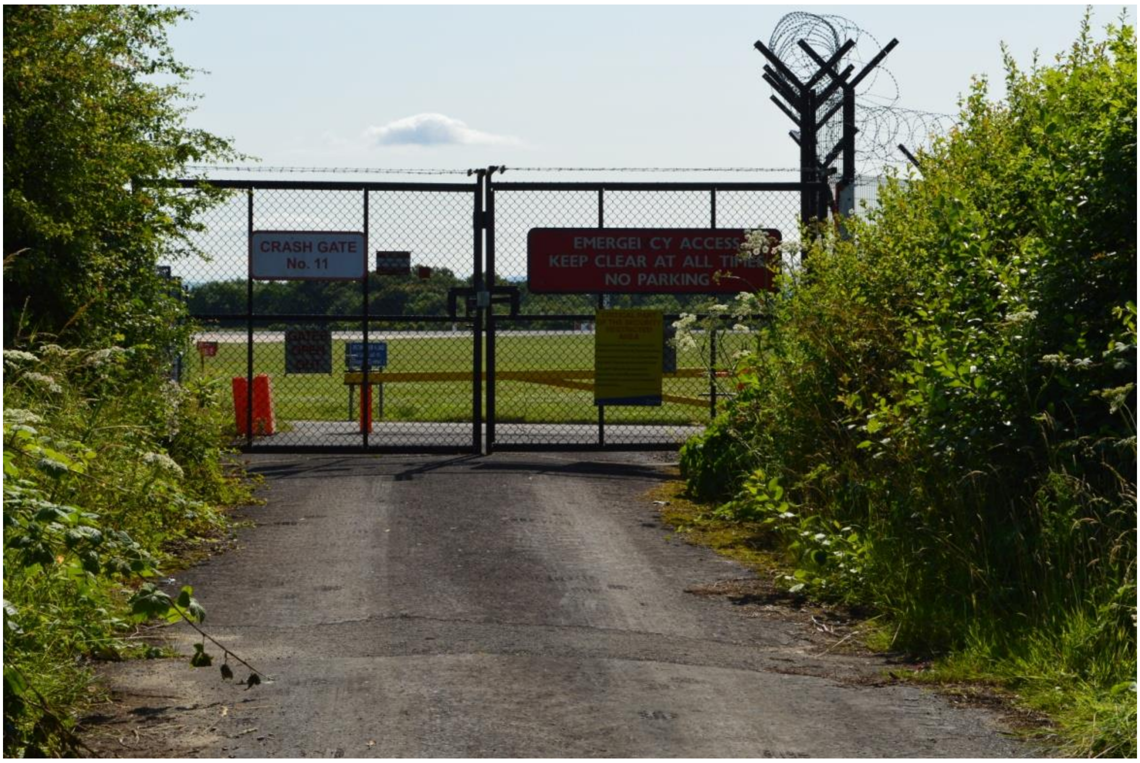

CRASH GATE
No. 11
EMERGENCY ACCESS
KEEP CLEAR AT ALL TIM
NO PARKING

Figure 56. Runway crash gate 11, showing visual impact of barrier and signage (author's photo, 15.07.2015).

In July 2017 it was reported that a UK development company, working jointly with a US private equity firm, had purchased 45 acres of agricultural land to expand Airport City, located in the parish of Ringway. This is a green field site (also walked with Professor John Handley, 8.12.16) which the company, Icon Industrial, "plans to build into a £100m (€113m) prime logistics asset…The land has planning permission for 952,000sqft of lettable logistics space" (Lowe, 2017). Some insight in to the emotional impact of such business propositions was provided to me by the Clerk to Ashley Parish Council, who received from a representative of Ringway Parish Council, the email that is reproduced in full below (by kind written permission of both parties). This was part of an exchange they were having about the possibility of Ringway making a joint neighbourhood plan with Ashley. The Ringway Councillor clearly sees no possibility of a neighbourhood plan benefitting Ringway. In this way, through lived experiences of the place, lone walks have helped me to connect with people and landscape, because I have experienced for myself the local conditions, I can better understand the emotions expressed by residents.

From: [redacted]
To: [redacted]
Date: Sunday, May 21, 2017, 4:15:04 PM
Subject: Ashley Neighbourhood plan

===============Original message text==============
Dear [redacted]
Thank you for your emails. Sorry I haven't got back sooner.
We had our meeting on 4th May and it was unanimous that it wasn't something that would benefit our Parish. Our Parish is now so small and the airport so big, plus as you say we are under Manchester and it just would not work. Also having looked into it we felt that it would cost a lot in the long run which is something that we just could not contemplate, having no precept or money.
It was decided though that if you did want us to go on your website with you that would be a nice idea, but if that isn't possible just let me know.

We do advise that your council put tree preservation orders (TPO) on any trees that you think should be preserved. We tried to save all our trees especially all the oaks down Sunbank Lane even the Manchester Poplar but they all came down.
We wish we had done it years ago but sometimes it is not possible to know how things

can change so drastically.

The hedges along the A538 has caused great distress for our council and neighbours but the airport just goes ahead and they have answers for everything.

There could be an attempt to expand the so called Greater Manchester boundary that could include Ashley the same as Ringway was included in 1974. The airport is land grabbing every possible land, mainly for car parking. Ringway is now just a giant car park full of pollution.

It is just something to think about and be prepared for.

Thank you though for trying to include us but it was just not to be so don't feel bad about it especially as HS2 is another great problem and more misery.

Hope you are keeping well.

Kindest regards,

[redacted]

I have included the whole of this email because it authentically expresses, far more effectively than my own words could, the gravity of the development of transport infrastructure for inhabitants of such places. My own perception is that such voices are not being effectively heard, understood, or given any credence.

Evaluation and commentary on findings from lone walks

	principle for engagement	rating
	Supports emergent public engagement with landscape…	
1	**begins with simple interactions but embraces evolving complexity**	🟩
2	**allows inhabitants to set agenda, initiate & sustain methods of engagement**	🟩
3	**values the role of embodied landscape knowledge**	🟩
4	**responds to emerging circumstances**	🟩
5	**aims to achieve a public conversation and a ‘reflective capacity’, not consensus**	🟧
	and in the case of engagement with specific landscape proposals…	
6	**is ‘in at the start’ and sustained for the life of the project**	🟩
7	**connects local people directly to designers of infrastructure and landscape**	🟥

8	**uses qualitative and deliberative methods to examine landscape in depth**	🟩
9	**utilises knowledge and creativity of public to inform decision-making**	🟥
10	**welcomes proposals originating from public and seeks to elicit such proposals**	🟩

Table 3. Evaluation grid for lone walks as a tool for emergent engagement with landscape

The grid, Table 3, above, indicates that lone walks are a valid method for supporting direct engagement with the landscape itself (**principles 1 to 5**). This engagement method nurtured my own personal engagement with the landscape of Ashley, and most obviously tested **principle one** of the framework for emergent public engagement with landscape that it should 'begin with simple interactions but embrace evolving complexity'. This very simple beginning made a sound foundation for evolving complexity because it left open many potential directions for research. The rating for **principle two** is green because inhabitants could easily choose to use this method, and many already do. Its only weakness here is on **principle five**, in that it could be a building block which supports reflective capacity, but does not in itself include public conversation; rather, it is perhaps a pre-requisite for such informed conversation to take place. It allows the opportunity for individuals to consider their perceptions of place before they engage with the perceptions of others. An additional benefit to the researcher is that repeatedly walking on one's own in a fairly restricted local area means that the walker is observed by inhabitants; it is a public act, which prompts people to wonder why you are there, and there is a value in this. It achieves a kind of transparency and openness on the part of the researcher, who is 'putting themselves out there'; approachable, visible and public. It should be acknowledged that there is also a potential drawback in this when walking with participants, because it puts anonymity at risk (Clark and Emmel, 2010) and therefore may discourage potential walkers.

The grid indicates that in the case of engagement with specific landscape proposals (**principles 5 to 10**), lone walking can have the same role of informing and supporting the understanding of individual residents. It provides a space for people to observe, reflect and form ideas without the pressure of anybody else's input. It does, however, lack the crucial element of linkage to design professionals in order to inform decision-making (see **principles seven and nine**), and so would not be sufficient as a stand-alone measure.

The field notes serve to illustrate my first steps towards building a mental map of Ashley, which I continued to piece together over the course of the research. I did not anticipate how enduring some of these first impressions would be, or that much of the subsequent research would support these initial ideas. The positive significance of specific locations such as the church, pub, cricket club and shop was very quickly apparent and so were the detrimental effects of noise pollution from runway and motorway. More important, perhaps, was the identification of the parish as a rural place (see section 1.8, and Chapter Three), which is a simple enough observation, but which grew in significance as I listened to a wider variety of people talk about Ashley. On showing the map of Ashley indicating the HS2 proposals to colleagues within the Manchester School of Architecture, and asking them whether they thought this was a rural or an urban place, the unhesitating reply on different occasions was that it was urban, due to proximity to the city and the cumulative presence of transport infrastructure.

This difference in perception of the place between people who have been there and those who have not is important. It exemplifies the reasons for my proposal that accumulating embodied experience of a place (**principle three**) is an essential part of the role of the landscape professional. As Lucy Lippard noted some twenty years ago, modern maps;

> "make public that which we cannot see, and we are supposed to trust their accuracy and authority...Today, construction of a map may not even demand the cartographer's presence on the land."

(Lippard, 1997: 77)

In 2017, with huge advances in digital representations of landscape such as LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging, see Figure 57 for example), construction of maps, survey drawings and engineering drawings most certainly does not require the cartographer's presence in the land. However, it is not possible to replace the qualitative and analogue knowledge gained from being in the place, with the quantified digital knowledge provided by such technologies, nor should it be acceptable for those responsible for designing places to use this data to replace personal experience. To mistake a rural area for an urban one would be a significant error with potentially huge repercussions for the future of the place.

It is not just the professional who, I would argue, benefits the process through embodied experience of the place. The inhabitant also increases their own engagement, and knowledge gained by them, in this way, is the foundation for the emergent process which this thesis proposes. As Ingold claims of walking, “It is in these dextrous movements along paths of life and travel… that inhabitants’ knowledge is forged.” Ingold, 2011: 17).

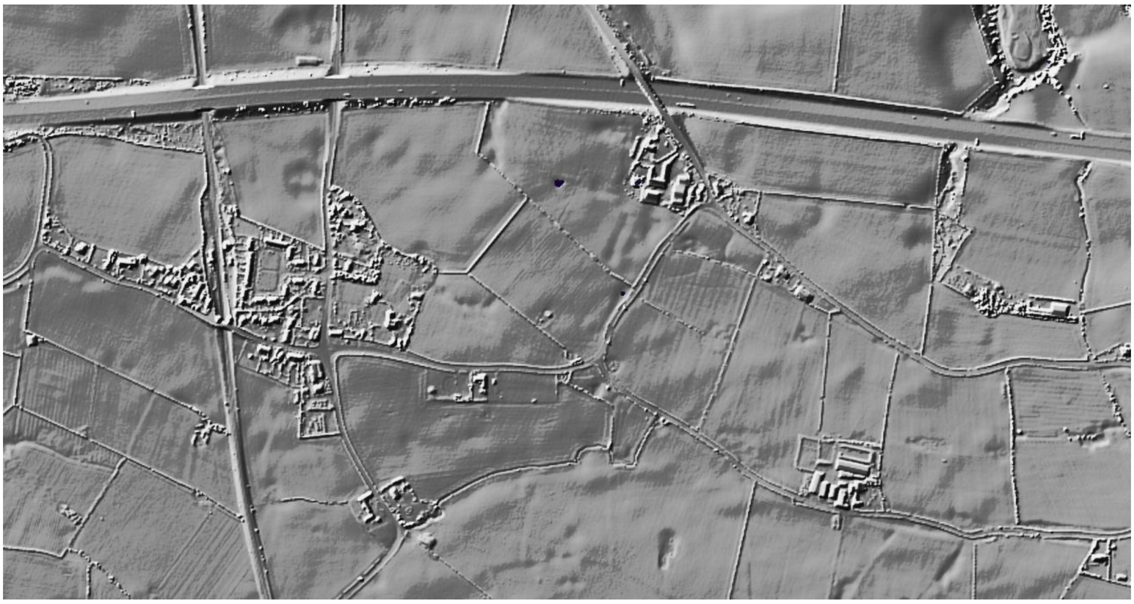


Figure 57. LiDAR image of Ashley village, showing topographical detail; this form of knowledge does not replace embodied experience of place (source https://houseprices.io/lab/lidar/map accessed 09.08.17).

It is also worth making a point about scale here. The scale of the map used will affect perceptions of that mapped place. If a place is observed at a scale of 1:200,000, for example, it will obviously appear to be different to the same place portrayed at 1:10,000 (see Figure 58). These effectively depict two different Ashleys. When a landscape professional is looking at maps of a place they will examine it at several different scales to gain the fullest impression. Reconciling one scale of map with another may be difficult, as the type of information shown is very different on each map. Experiencing the landscape in an embodied way, at a scale of 1:1, whilst walking it, removes this problem by focussing the mind on the human scale.

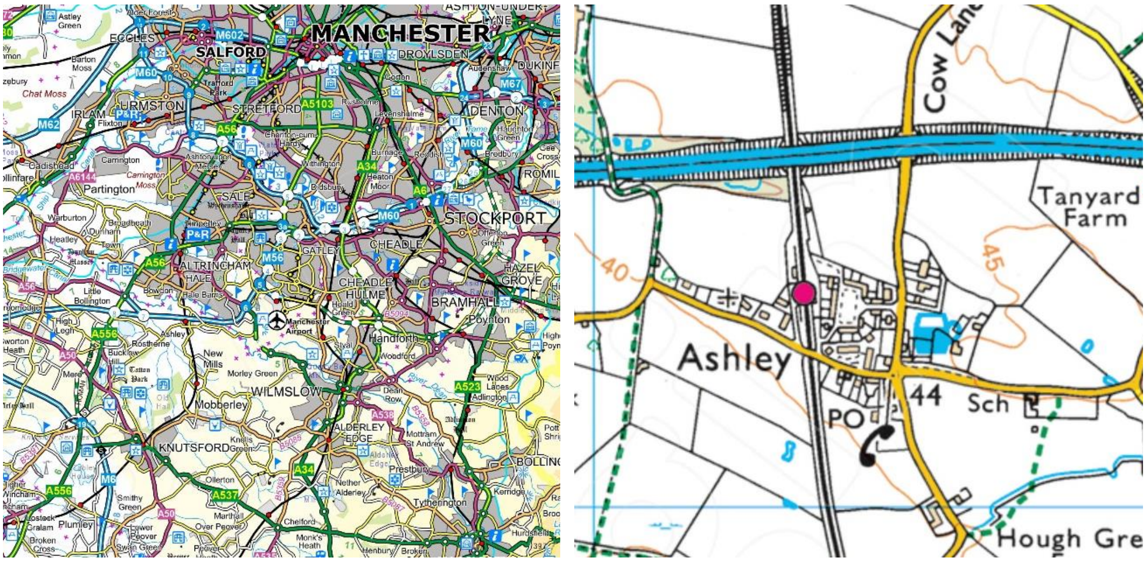


Figure 58. Ashley at 1:200,000 (left) and at 1:10,000 (right) (maps from: EDINA Digimap Ordnance Survey Service, <http://edina.ac.uk/digimap>, created: August 2017, not to scale).

Reflecting on these field notes, it is noticeable that the lone walks allowed my own emotional response to the place to develop. This was not possible to such a great extent on the later, accompanied, walks. It was therefore important to use this method initially, before my attention had to be fixed on listening to the person with whom I was walking. I think this was important in forming a connection with the place to which I was to commit for a three-year period, in order to sustain my own personal bond with my research. This genuinely-felt commitment to the landscape was needed, not just for my own motivation, but because if it had not been there, this would have been apparent to all the inhabitants with whom I came in to contact.

Lone walking is particularly well suited to **principle four** of my framework for emergent public engagement with landscape, in that it ‘responds to emerging circumstances’ very easily. As long as public rights of way exist, one can always change the route of a walk, or decide to observe a new aspect of the landscape. If paths are blocked, a new way around can be found. There are no cost implications or administrative constraints. The field notes also show that my preoccupations are those of a designer; I want to improve routes, connections and habitats. Thus, although the practice of producing landscape designs has not been at the heart of this study, the development of my own opinions from the point of view of a design professions cannot be erased from it. These opinions and my education as a landscape architect will of course have coloured all the observations, analysis and conclusions made in this research.

In summary, these initial lone walks were both an essential pragmatic foundation for engagement with local inhabitants, and a formative experience in terms of my own engagement with this landscape. They were well suited to the beginnings of an emergent engagement process and to a great extent in line with the working principles for primary emergent engagement with landscape. It is clear that this method is limited in terms of its applicability to engagement with landscape *proposals*, because it does not make direct links with the proposers, but it could still form a useful part of a person's individual engagement with anticipated developments such as HS2.

5.4.2 Accompanied walks

Accompanied walks have formed a large part of my action research activity. They have been a testing ground for my hypothesis that such walks provide a space in which the inhabitants of Ashley can comfortably assume the role of educator and communicate to me their understanding of their landscape, in the context of an emergent methodology. The methodological justification for this is examined in Chapter Two and recapped in Table 1, but these walks also performed a number of pragmatic functions:

1. continuous improvement of my knowledge of the landscape conditions in general, including rights of way;
2. formation of a network of participants;
3. gathering local knowledge of landscape past and present;
4. discussing the future of the landscape;
5. raising awareness of landscape issues and prompting further engagement;
6. supporting my understanding of how local people already engage with their landscape;
7. creating links with special interest groups and accessing their specialist knowledge;
8. generation of ideas for creative infrastructure and landscape mitigation;
9. building trust between researcher and local people by being seen to be actively involved;
10. garnering insights from non-resident experts in related fields.

Following the solo walks, I considered the concerns that has arisen, and made myself a list of ground rules for accompanied walks. These were:

a. that the participant determines the route, location and duration of the walk, where practical, and if they so desired;

b. to make clear that participant is welcome to invite others to join in;

c. that the participant co-determine the purpose of the walk, which need not be defined in advance;

d. but that a precise meeting point is essential (if possible swap mobile numbers);

e. not to walk with any unknown person who approached me;

f. to inform a responsible person who I am meeting, where, and the estimated duration of walk;

g. to bring an A1 size large-scale map, for readability by participants.

A full list of these walks is reproduced in Appendix A. A number of examples have been drawn from this and listed in Table 4, for the purpose of discussion. They are also represented on the map below, Figure 59.

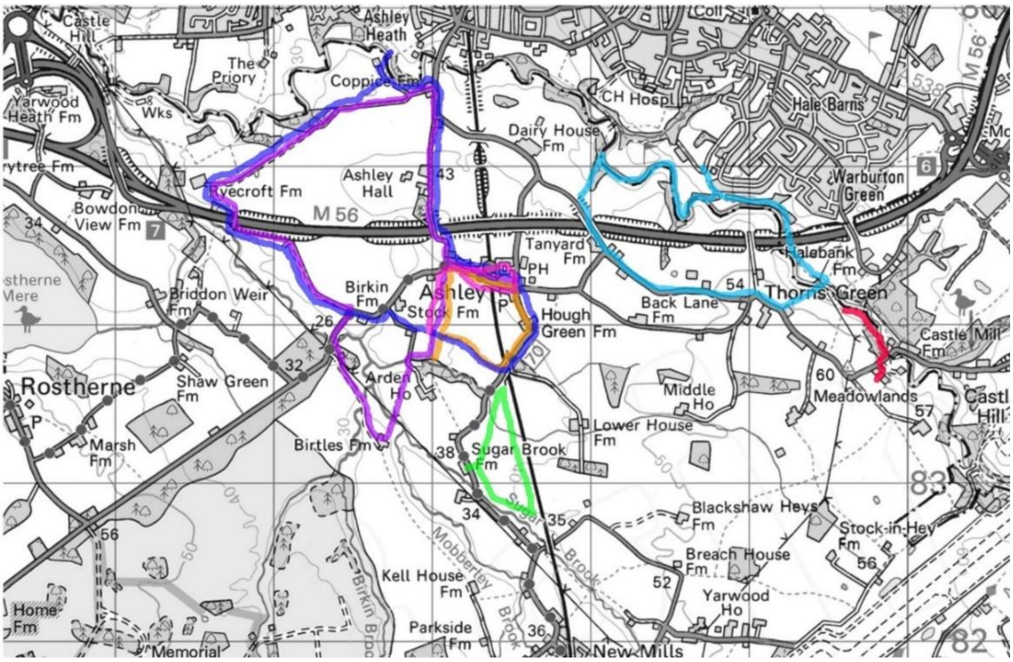

Ashley Heath
Castle Hill
The Priory
Coppice Fm
Yarwood Heath Fm
Wks
CH Hospl
Hale Barns
Dairy House Fm
Ashley Hall
43
Ryecroft Fm
M 56
Bowdon View Fm
Warburton Green
Tanyard Fm
Halebank Fm
Rostherne Mere
Birkin Fm
Ashley
Stock Fm
PH
Hough Green Fm
Back Lane Fm
54
Thorns Green
Riddon Weir Fm
Castle Mill Fm
Rostherne
Shaw Green Fm
Arden Ho
Middle Ho
Meadowlands
Castle Hill
Marsh Fm
Birtles Fm
Sugar Brook Fm
Lower House Fm
Blackshaw Heys Fm
Stock-in-Hey Fm
Breach House Fm
Kell House Fm
Yarwood Ho
Home Fm
Parkside Fm
Memorial
New Mills
Mobberley Brook
Birkin Brook

Figure 59. Map of accompanied walks listed in Table 4, chosen to cover as much of the relevant territory as possible (author's image using base map from: EDINA Digimap Ordnance Survey Service, <http://edina.ac.uk/digimap>, created: August 2017, not to scale).

Date	Name	Relationship to Ashley	Extracts from Field Notes
15.10.15 (light blue route on map)	Emma Houghton	Public Engagement Officer, the Bollin Valley Partnership.	Along Bollin from Rossmill Lane, upstream, cross river at Pigleystairs and pass cottages at Thorns Green. Cross motorway at Tanyard then return, opposite bank. Issues raised by Emma; alien plant species, bank erosion, lost footpaths, fragmented funding, water pollution, runway, Mere relief road, anti-social behaviour, flooding, land ownership, problems with canalisation. BVP instated and maintain the Bollin Way. Funding is on a catchment-based approach, so they work with many partners. Talked about HS2 crossing point. Difficulty of engaging with local farmers. Work with Manchester Airports Group (MAG), Natural England, the Ramblers. MAG own farms in the area.
22.10.15 (Purple route on map)	Graeme Blackman	Member of PROBUS walking group, he wrote the Ashley Rail Walk leaflet for Cheshire East Council.	From the Greyhound north past the Hall, towards Ashley Mill then down towards Arden House, back to pub via cricket club. Extensive autobiographical discussion. Graeme raises the legalities and practicalities of PROWs, the nature of walking itself, reflection, experiencing nature, socialising and contemplation.
4.12.15 (Red route on map)	Chris Frankland	Tree surgeon and craftsman in wood, Ashley resident.	A huge amount of knowledge, generously shared by Chris. He showed me his offices (hand built), home (entirely fitted out by himself), garden and two nearby timber yards. Chris raised planning problems, community tensions, importance of local materials and sustainable building. Multiple insights in to how the community in Ashley might work, or not work.
16.6.16 (Green route on map)	John Erlam	Tenant farmer of Sugar Brook Farm, Ashley.	Timeless character of buildings and land but modern outlook – species-rich grassland. John talks about his deep concern for habitat that has been created here, the lifetime tenancy,

			threat of farm amalgamation and contract farming, dwellings divorced from farming way of life. No benefit to the estate in creating more long-term tenancies. Tour of land and brook. Slope where schoolchildren come to roll in the grass. 'Farmer John'. Carpets of primroses, anemones, wild garlic in Spring, species reel from John's tongue. Snipe, Himalayan balsam. The field that used to be the brick and tile works, a rich ex-industrial site – patches of lime in the soil encourage diversity. Likelihood of infill housing development as HS2 passes at the margin of his land. His concern for the next generation and how to get them to care sufficiently for this place to want to protect it.
27.6.16 (Orange route on map)	Carol Clarke	Planning professional, Tatton Estate Management, new to the area.	Across fields from church to cricket club and Arden House then east along HS2 alignment to Mobberley Road bridge, back to village. We battle through chest-high maize planted on estate land, illegally, across the public footpath. We are soaked. We stand on the road bridge and contemplate the village, I relate John Erlam's fears of housing development on these fields. Carol has a map. She takes in the scene, and carefully pencils two small crosses on the places that have caught her interest.
8.7.2017 (Dark blue route on map)	Mid Cheshire Ramblers Association	Twelve members who have signed up for a guided 'HS2 walk'.	The second of my Ramblers' walks, around the river and near the proposed alignment. A briefing by me in the church car park, map spread on somebody's bonnet. This group are politicised, talkative, interested, aware of rural issues. They are great listeners, and very concerned about the future of rural places. These are members of the general public, non-specialists, who are highly engaged with landscape. What makes them different to most people – why are they so fully engaged?

23.7.2017 (Pink route on map.	Ashley residents	People who have turned up to a neighbourhood plan engagement walk, guided by me.	A short walk to discuss some key points around the village about landscape and built form. Aim is to stimulate debate about visual character, and to make people aware of possible directions of future land development. We look at the Greyhound crossroads and the Barn, the Green, Egerton Moss, the churchyard, cricket club, line of oaks and Mobberley Road bridge.

Table 4. Summary of field notes from a selection of accompanied walks.

The first four of the above walks, and other walks taken at around the same time, were recorded using a hand-held voice recorder, and all participants signed consent forms. This worked well in some cases, particularly for those people who had no concerns about being recorded. Some problems with this approach, however, began to arise. Windy conditions on walks meant that whole recordings were impossible to hear. Trials of different recorders did not solve this problem. If more than one participant was present, and walkers were proceeding single-file along a path, much of what was said could not be effectively recorded. The value of listening again to well over four hours of talk, in some cases, was also questionable, so I took instead to manual note-taking. More significant than the practical issues, though, was my growing awareness that being recorded affected what people were prepared to say, and in some cases made them unwilling to relax at all; they found it intrusive. This was particularly apparent with tenants of the Tatton Estate, and by the end of the research I had conversations with tenants, and others, which could not have taken place at all if I had raised the issue of recording them, so I did not record them. There were even times at which I was asked not to write down what had just been confided in me; again, I complied.

Over time, I realised that voice recording was compromising the value of the research as well as discomfiting people who had kindly offered me their time. The walk with John Erlam was perhaps a turning point. The Erlams had been previously described to me as a "very, very progressive farming family" by Professor John Handley (conversation 13, Appendix B). Though John Erlam did consent, I realised that for him, my recording could theoretically represent a risk to the continued goodwill of his landlord, who will decide the future of Sugar Brook farm when John's lifetime tenancy ends, and that it was not acceptable to ask people to take such a perceived risk. As we stood on the Mobberley Road bridge, John said he was "deeply concerned at the prospect of infill housing development" (conversation 20, Appendix B) between the HS2 line and Ashley village. This conversation gave much greater clarity to my unformed perceptions of how Ashley might change as a result of HS2 and helped me to visualise what the landscape impact might be. It also began to help me to understand that local farmers have a very good understanding of current planning and land use issues, which is very much contrary to any hackneyed perception of them as being in some way remnants of a bygone way of life. The farmers I met and walked with were modern business-people, on the whole, who were negotiating the difficulties of life as tenants. One of them told me that “people don’t realise we’ve still got this feudal society” (conversation 48, Appendix B), and was very clear that I should not report her identity, as she expressed strong feelings about her home and livelihood being controlled by a powerful land-owning family. She also said that she felt the Neighbourhood Plan process was a “waste of time” and cited a neighbouring farmer as having the same view, as the development of the parish would always ultimately be in the control of the landowner. At the time of this conversation I felt that this was an overly negative opinion, but in the face of further experience in Ashley I would concede that their view was based on significant life experience, and they probably knew better than I (see Chapter Six).

I have not transcribed whole interviews (each of which are generally between 2 and 4 hours long), as the activity of walking tends to produce lengthy passages of personal information the content of which is not immediately relevant to the research. That such ‘asides’ take place, however, is of value in strengthening trust between the researcher and participant. Walking whilst listening and talking has proved to be a very personal interaction with, in these cases, a stranger. People may confide details about their family members, for example. An awareness of this may be a reason why, for the first year or so of this research, some people in Ashley were reluctant to confirm a walk with me, whilst in theory expressing an interest. They may have been very wary of such exposure to a researcher. This does, however, support the contention that walking interviews are a good method in that they do prompt engagement with the project in a way that requires a productive level of honesty and frankness that can access previously unmapped knowledge. The people who have walked with me have been those who are generally outgoing and could be characterised as public-spirited. This is typical of those who get involved in any public engagement exercise and is no bad thing. Ultimately, if the process requires some degree of commitment from participants, it is these people who are relied upon to do the work of the community. A key question is how to inspire that sense of engagement with landscape which makes more people feel that they should do what they can to have their say in its future; how to awaken their sense of responsibility for the place. This could be framed as a challenge for knowledge transfer; it is possible that the more effectively landscape knowledge is transferred between inhabitants, perhaps from old to young, for example, the more people will become actively engaged with landscape. It is difficult to think of a more effective medium for this transfer, than the 'walking and talking' method:

> "Making their way from place to place in the company of others more knowledgeable than themselves, and hearing their stories, novices learn…it is in the movement from place to place – or from topic to topic – that knowledge is integrated."
>
> (Ingold, 2011: 161)

The novices in Ashley are the researcher, the landscape architect, the engineer and the engagement professional, but perhaps also the younger or more recently-arrived inhabitants of a place.

In some cases, a walk produced knowledge in the interplay of ideas between myself and the participant, situated in the landscape, rather than being straightforwardly transmitted from one to another. This was the case on the walk with Emma Houghton (conversation 4, Appendix B), when we stopped at the point in the Bollin that HS2 will cross, and both imagined the impact at that spot, leading, for example, to her observation that "the disturbance is going to push some species out and encourage others". The walk was an enlightening experience for both of us, as it gave an opportunity to reflect on the place, whilst in the place.

Other walks gave me a basic understanding of how Ashley works as a social place, for example the vicar of St Elizabeth's Church, the Reverend Keith Addenbrooke, walked with me around north Ashley early in the research (conversation 12, Appendix B), when he was new in his post. He told me that he deliberately wore his 'dog-collar' for this walk, so that he would be visible and approachable by parishioners we met along the way. He explained to me that the church was an important part of village life, regardless of religious belief, citing the fact that eighty people had attended the dedication of the new community rooms in the church the previous day, although only eight might attend on a Sunday. He said that "the church belongs to the community here…everybody knows everybody…any suggestion that they are not members of the church would be offensive" (conversation 12, Appendix B). This view was supported by a later comment from Peter Wright, who told me that he was a Church Warden and raised money for the church, despite his enduring atheism (conversation 46, Appendix B). From this I understood that the social significance of the church here is very different to how it would be in a city.

I also undertook two walks with non-resident experts. These were Dr Paul O'Hare, a Senior Lecturer in Geography from Manchester Metropolitan University (conversation 20, Appendix B) and Professor John Handley of the School of Environment, Education and Development at Manchester University (conversation 13, Appendix B). Both were invaluable in improving my own understanding. With Dr O'Hare the walk took in the M56 and proposed HS2 alignment and we talked about the politics of place and development proposals. This walk was an exchange of ideas and a co-creation of knowledge through embodied experience of the place. Dr O'Hare helped develop my ideas about landscape justice and I showed him how these might apply in Ashley. Professor Handley lives nearby and knows the area well, and showed me around Cotterill Clough, Sunbank Wood and the fields now scheduled for Airport City developments (as shown on Figure 24). He shared with me his expertise in plant and amphibian species, and helped me to recognise the diversity, beauty and ecological value of the Clough, which is a tiny pocket of SSSI, not normally accessible to the public, and which he described as " like going in to the garden of Eden…you can experience the highest quality nature close to the city" (conversation 13, Appendix B). Professor Handley also encouraged me to develop my ideas about the importance of embodied experience of landscape when he spoke of his thoughts on cycling the Cheshire landscape, noting that;

> "you are constantly dipping down in to those steeply cut valleys and then coming up the other side…and you do not appreciate that in a car…if you're a planner and you drive in here to do your work, you've no idea what this landscape is like".
>
> (conversation 13, Appendix B)

This comment does not denigrate planners, it simply suggests that a direct and more slow-moving experience of a place enhances their knowledge of it.

Evaluation and commentary on findings from accompanied walks

	principle for engagement	rating
	Supports emergent public engagement with landscape…	
1	**begins with simple interactions but embraces evolving complexity**	🟩
2	**allows inhabitants to set agenda, initiate & sustain methods of engagement**	🟩

3	**values the role of embodied landscape knowledge**	🟩
4	**responds to emerging circumstances**	🟩
5	**aims to achieve a public conversation and a ‘reflective capacity’, not consensus**	🟩
	and in the case of engagement with specific landscape proposals…	
6	**is ‘in at the start’ and sustained for the life of the project**	🟩
7	**connects local people directly to designers of infrastructure and landscape**	🟩
8	**uses qualitative and deliberative methods to examine landscape in depth**	🟩
9	**utilises knowledge and creativity of public to inform decision-making**	🟩
10	**welcomes proposals originating from public and seeks to elicit such proposals**	🟩

Table 5. Evaluation grid for accompanied walks as a tool for emergent engagement with landscape.

The evaluation grid, and supporting text above, indicates that this method is highly applicable in every dimension to supporting public engagement with both landscape and design proposals. In the latter case, success in some of these dimensions depends to a great degree on the contribution of the ‘proposer’ of infrastructure, for example in providing designers and engineers to walk with local people (**principle seven**), treat them as equals (**principle nine**) and listen to what they have to say (**principle ten**). If such cooperation is not achieved, the value of accompanied walks is vastly decreased, because although it will increase the level of public engagement with proposals, the knowledge from that body of people will not have direct input in to the design team. In this situation, one possible outcome is that activism will gain ground.

There are, at present, significant cultural barriers to this level of cooperation. The chief of these is the sense of the purpose of public engagement that is shared by employees, for example, of HS2. As discussed in Chapter Four, if the aims of engagement are not to genuinely access local knowledge that might inform the landscape design, then there will be no desire to engage with the public from the outset. In reality, the reverse may well be the case, and a defensive culture within the proposing organisation will tend to result in a model that disseminates information in such a way as to provoke the smallest possible response from inhabitants (see section 4.6). HS2 Ltd would also have nothing to gain from extending public engagement through to post-occupancy, although of course the landscape itself might have everything to gain.

It is not possible, or relevant to my research question, to report all of the landscape knowledge that I gained from these walks over a period of more than two years. There are too many facts, opinions and insights to recount here. There is also a kind of cumulative experiential learning which does not translate well in to the written word. This learning was on the part of both parties in the walks. Emma Houghton, for example, had not known where HS2 would cross the Bollin, and as we stood on that spot was clearly surprised; "it's the scale of it…I hadn't realised how massive it was going to be, the width of it" (conversation 4, Appendix B). In turn, she informed me about some of the many species inhabiting the river and its banks, including newts, bats, badgers, lizards, salmon, trout and otters. From her, I gained an insight in to the complex interrelated issues of regulation, legislation and land ownership which determine the futures of such landscapes (see Figure 60). Emma also spoke of the difficulty of engaging with local people, such that, for example, her organisation, the Bollin Valley Partnership, have no relationship with Ashley Parish Council.

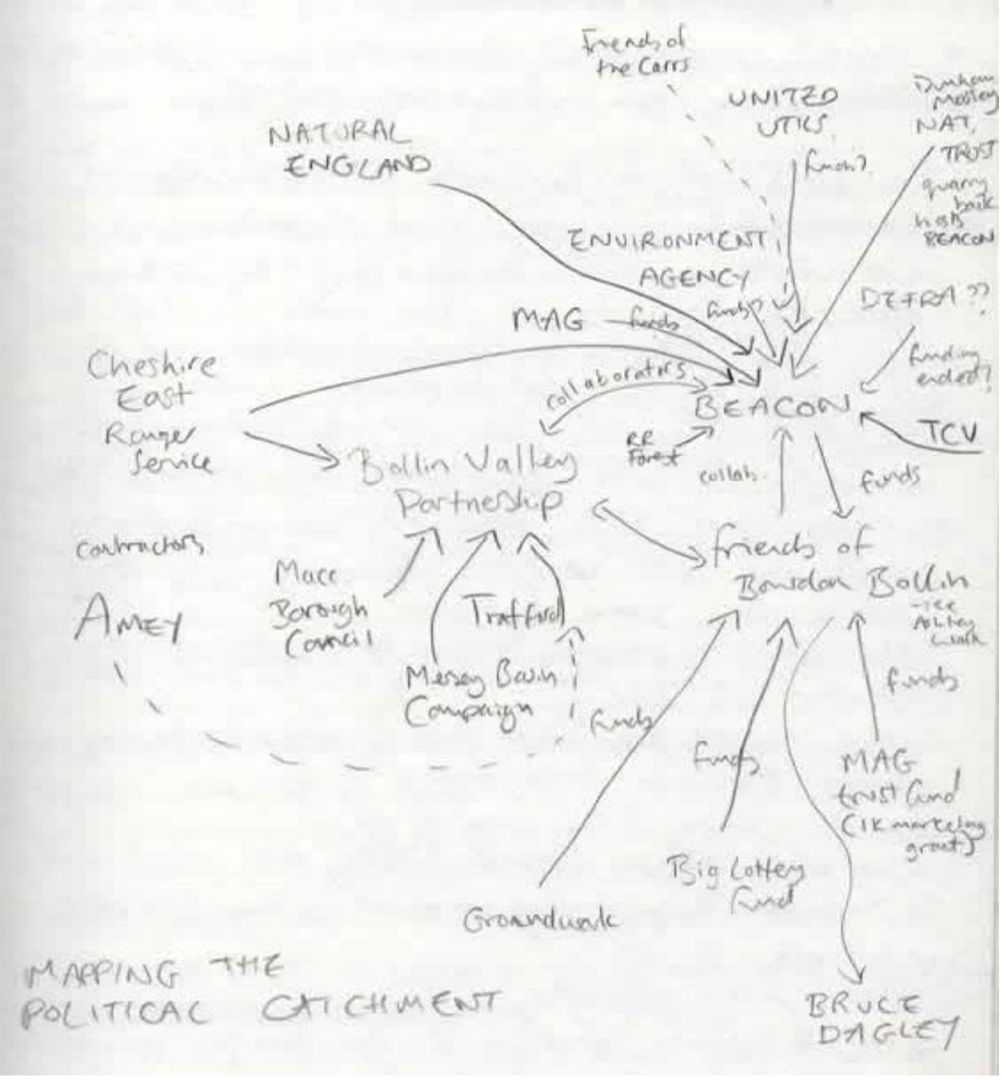

Friends of the Carrs
UNITED UTILS
funds?
Dunham Massey NAT. TRUST
quarry bank hosts BEACON
NATURAL ENGLAND
ENVIRONMENT AGENCY
funds?
DEFRA ??
MAG
funds
funding ended?
Cheshire East Ranger Service
collaborators
BEACON
TCV
RR Forest
collab.
funds
Bollin Valley Partnership
contractors
AMEY
Macc Borough Council
Trafford
friends of Bowdon Bollin
- see Ashley walk
Mersey Basin Campaign
funds
funds
funds
MAG trust fund (1K marketing grant)
Big Lottery fund
Groundwork
MAPPING THE POLITICAL CATCHMENT
BRUCE DAGLEY

Figure 60. page from field notes, 15.10.15. An attempt to map the 'political catchment' of the Bollin Valley, to illustrate the complexity of relationships between organisations with an influence over the Bollin.

This method suggests that the valid first steps towards a more inclusive public conversation could well be these one-to-one conversations, immersed in landscape. Based on experience in Ashley, I would argue that there is a value in providing a time and space for inhabitants to talk through their own personal views and landscape values, as a means of becoming more conscious of their own perspective, before those individuals come together to debate landscape issues. In some measure, these conversations moved the research towards a more public dialogue because they involved key people who represent public bodies. The walk with Reverend Keith Addenbrooke, for example, was interesting for its content but also represented reaching out to a body of people, as did walks with members of the Parish Council, and possibly those with representatives of the Tatton Estate. The method also supports the building of a reflective capacity from the ground up. Rather than hiring a room and inviting a group to sit in it and discuss landscape, the discussions begin in small ways, whilst walking; themes arise. Over a period of time a sense of urgency builds up such that a room eventually has to be hired, and interested parties make sure they are at the table and ready to discuss. This eventually happened in Ashley after a period of about 18 months, and the vehicle for discussion was the neighbourhood plan (see Chapter Six).

The method is well suited to an emergent methodology, particularly **principles one** and **four**, because it allows time and space for dialogue to develop in unforeseen ways; it provides ”opportunities for the serendipitous and the unanticipated” (Clark and Emmel, 2010: 2). As Jones et al found, such walks “allow the environment and the act of walking itself to move the collection of interview data in productive and sometimes entirely unexpected directions.” (Jones et al., 2008).

It has not been possible to test the efficacy of these walks in making connections between HS2’s landscape designers and the inhabitants of Ashley, as my contacts at the Northwest engagement team were not able to walk with me. All employees and subcontractors, such as the ecologists and engineers whom I met at public engagement events, and even engagement staff from other parts of the route, have signed confidentiality agreements which have prevented my developing any useful dialogue with them. As they will not have a role in making design proposals from the start of the project, people in Ashley would at least like to have detailed information about developing design work, so that they can begin to understand what will happen to their place, when and how it will be done. In November 2017, more than 5 years after route announcement, four representatives of HS2 did come to Ashley to meet three Parish Councillors. They presented a proposal for the closure of a road and construction of a new section of road (see Figure 61). Perhaps this will mark the start of a fruitful dialogue, in accordance with their new public engagement policy, the *Community Engagement Strategy* published in November 2017.

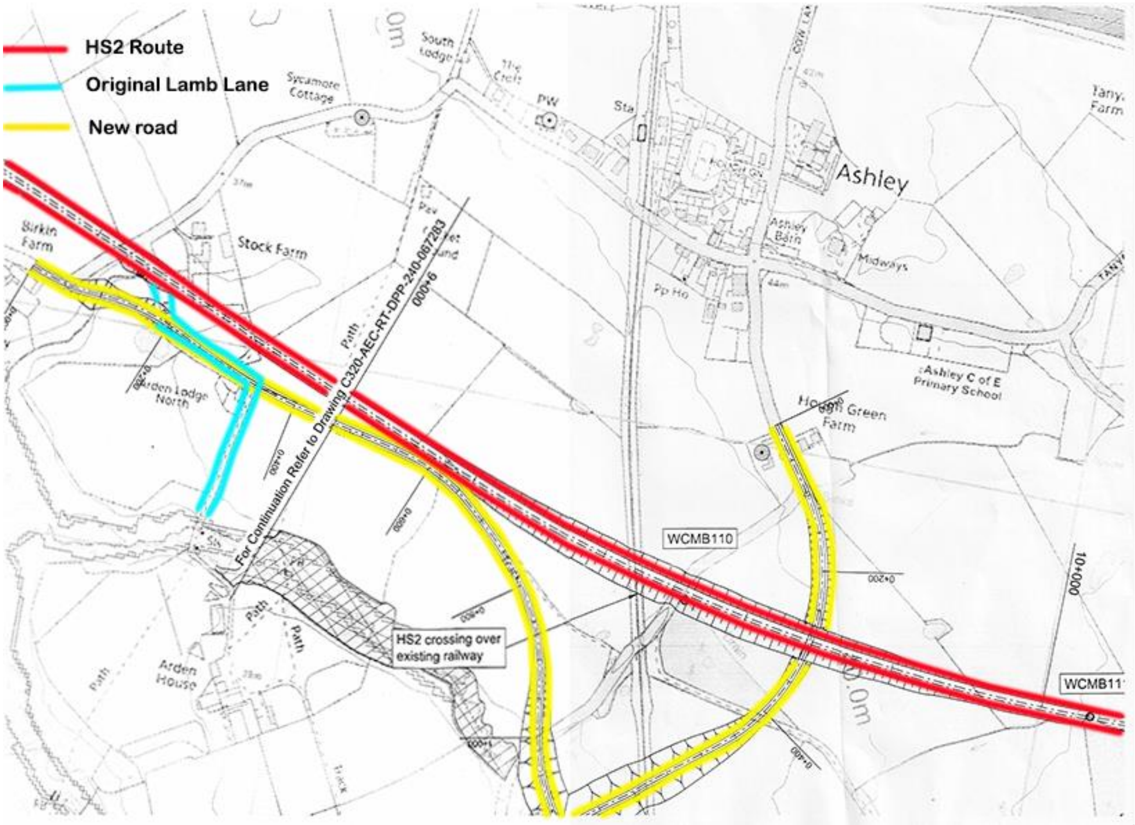

HS2 Route
Original Lamb Lane
New road
Ashley
Stock Farm
Birkin Farm
Arden Lodge North
Arden House
Ashley Barn
Midways
Ashley C of E Primary School
Hough Green Farm
South Lodge
Sycamore Cottage
For Continuation Refer to Drawing C320-AEC-RT-DPP-240-067283
HS2 crossing over existing railway
WCMB110
WCMB11
Path

Figure 61. Proposal for new road in Ashley as presented to Parish Councillors, November 2017. The proposal would mean reduced traffic in the village, but increased land take (image: HS2 Ltd, unpublished).

Repeated invitations to HS2 Ltd's public engagement representatives in the Northwest, to come for a walk in Ashley, have not succeeded in producing anything more than appointments to walk, which were eventually cancelled. To interpret this generously, it is possible that they were disinclined to walk with me due to my humble position as a PhD student, lacking the status of a resident.

In late March 2018, however, I did enjoy a walk in Ashley with a landscape architect from HS2 Ltd (conversation no. 61, Appendix B). This participant walked with me around north Ashley, to the Bollin, and then in south Ashley along the proposed alignment. This walk, taking place at the very end of my research, could not particularly influence my work, but it did confirm much shared ground in terms of the best interests of landscape.

5.5 Website, networking and the Parish Council

5.5.1 Website

Before making contact with any residents of Ashley I set up a website at www.jophillips.net, in order to provide a source of information about myself and the research to any prospective participants whom I contacted. As the research has not focussed on the role of social media, the site was not set up with online interaction as a priority, although comments were invited and some contributions received. In retrospect, this type of online presence was suited to research in this parish, but similar work in places with a different age demographic would probably justify a coordinated social media strategy and greater online interactivity. The need for a site was to address the problems which arise from contacting strangers and inviting them to walk. I judged that their likely first reaction would be to follow the link in my email to the site, to find out more and assess whether they felt they could trust me. If desired, they could also follow links to the MMU web pages, and contact the University to check out my credentials. I used an informal and friendly tone and provided my mobile phone number, which no resident ever used, but perhaps functioned as a sign of good faith on my part.

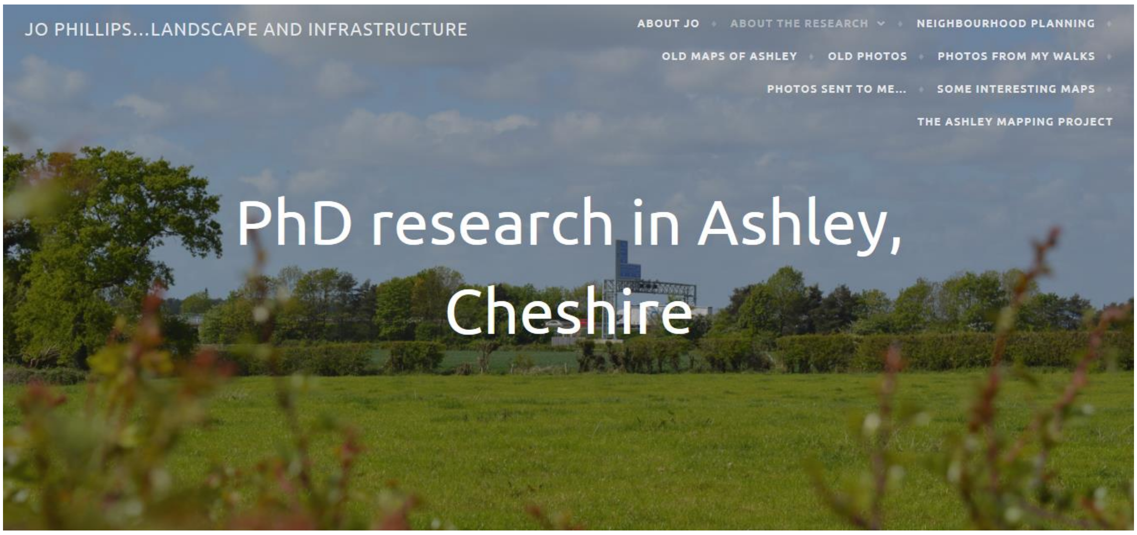

JO PHILLIPS...LANDSCAPE AND INFRASTRUCTURE
ABOUT JO
ABOUT THE RESEARCH
NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING
OLD MAPS OF ASHLEY
OLD PHOTOS
PHOTOS FROM MY WALKS
PHOTOS SENT TO ME...
SOME INTERESTING MAPS
THE ASHLEY MAPPING PROJECT
PhD research in Ashley, Cheshire

Figure 62. website front page, showing view across fields from village to motorway gantries (www.jophillips.net).

After one year the site (see Figure 62) had had 446 page views, and by February 2018, 1780 views. This level of traffic would not, of course, be considered a success for a national online campaign, but, as the audience for the site is restricted to Ashley (population 325), there is enough evidence that it has been used for the intended purpose. The vast majority of these visitors were from the UK and many were following the link from the Ashley Parish Council website.

This aspect of my work has been a necessary piece of the jigsaw, in support of my main research aims. Its purpose has been pragmatic, to allow people to find out more about me and my research, rather than to act as a significant conduit for knowledge. If work in Ashley were to be extended, the website could accommodate many more functions, but the audience for this would still be small. If a more active and participatory website were to be used as part of an emergent engagement with landscape, the impetus for such a forum might need to come from the inhabitants themselves. The purpose, scope and design of such a site would need to be fully informed by residents and would need to change and develop with emerging conditions. In my view, further development of the website was not justified in the context of research based around embodied engagement with landscape.

5.5.2 Networking

My approach to networking has been very simple, and has taken a similar anthropological approach to that described by William Foote Whyte (see Chapter Two). In Cornerville, he finds that acceptance in the district "depended on the personal relationships I developed far more than on any explanations I might give." (Whyte, 1993: 300). He finds that the support of 'key individuals' had been crucially important. For Whyte, not least of these is Doc, his main participant and, in practice, his co-researcher, who tells him "If people accept you, you can just hang around, and you'll learn the answers in the long run without even having to ask the questions." (Whyte, 1993: 303). Whyte finds that, by following this advice, he gets answers to questions that he would not have known to ask. He also gains knowledge that develops with the emerging conditions in which he is immersed; he says "I was taking a moving picture instead of a still photograph" (Whyte, 1993: 323).

From the beginning of my research it was clear that building a network of contacts was going to be important in order to spread word of my activities in Ashley, so that interested people might get in touch with me or be more inclined to cooperate when I approached them. This networking has not excluded any person with any kind of interest in the place. As well as inhabitants of Ashley it has included non-residents, such as academics, landscape professionals, experts across disciplines and local people from neighbouring places. I have encouraged the network to emerge across perceived boundaries, so that academics have connected me to non-academic practitioners and locals, for example. I have worked on the assumption that people were more likely to be willing to participate in the research if they had heard of me via their own network of connections. This has proved very important in building an element of trust in the Parish, and has given me access to key knowledgeable individuals who, on the whole, do not attend PC meetings or get involved with village events.

Networking began very simply, by inviting people to walk with me. One of the first contacts I made in this way was with Emma Houghton of the Bollin Valley Partnership, which is primarily a conservation organisation. We walked along the Bollin together in October 2015, on my first accompanied walk in Ashley, and she subsequently emailed me with many different suggestions for contacts (see Figure 63).

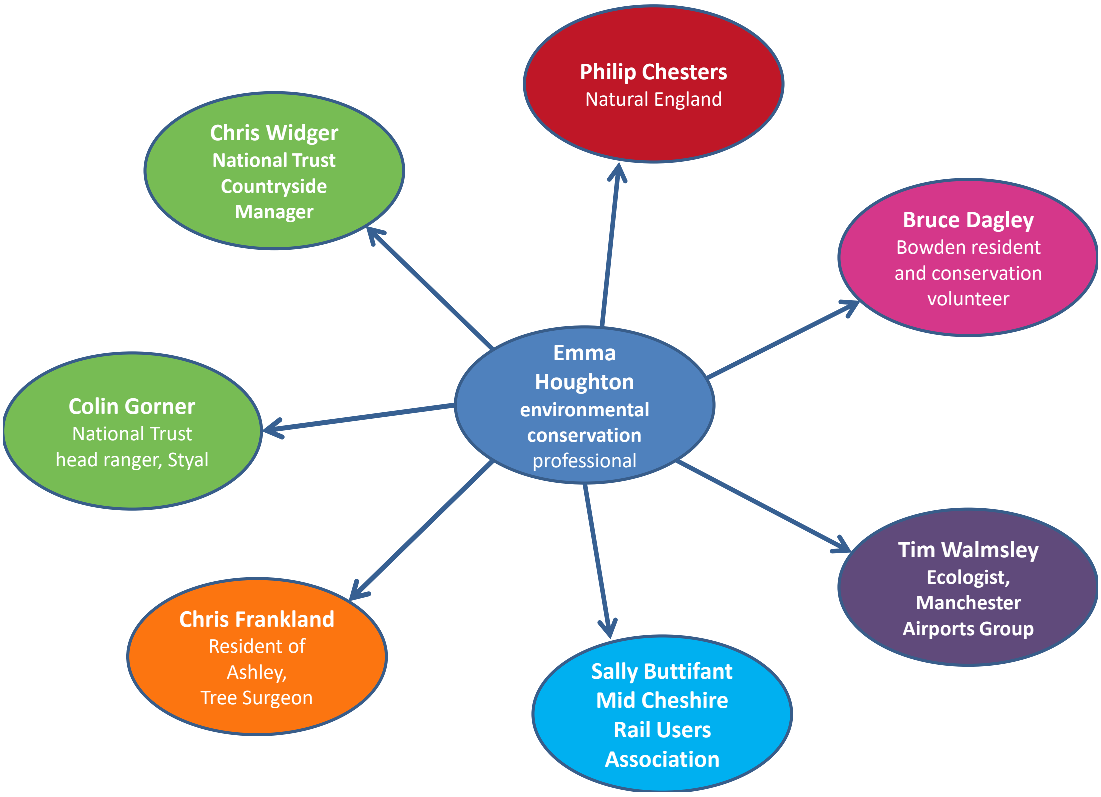

Philip Chesters
Natural England
Chris Widger
National Trust Countryside Manager
Bruce Dagley
Bowden resident and conservation volunteer
Emma Houghton
environmental conservation professional
Colin Gorner
National Trust head ranger, Styal
Tim Walmsley
Ecologist, Manchester Airports Group
Chris Frankland
Resident of Ashley, Tree Surgeon
Sally Buttifant
Mid Cheshire Rail Users Association

Figure 63.Initial network of contacts leading from Emma Houghton (author's image)

As shown, this group links together managers from the not-for-profit sector, a central government agency, local individuals who are not landscape experts, and an ecologist from a large commercial organisation. Although I followed up all these leads, not all responded, and this is to be expected when approaching busy working people. Throughout the research, for example, I have not achieved any response at all to acknowledge my several approaches to the landscape and ecology team at Manchester Airport, despite being referred to them by other participants. I did, however, meet and interview Bruce Dagley and Chris Frankland (see Figure 63). Mr Dagley, a volunteer residing just across the river from Ashley, provided many insights about the Bollin Valley which I did not access from residents of the Parish itself. Chris Frankland was a hugely engaged participant with deeply held ecological views and with whom I later worked on the neighbourhood plan steering group. He also proved to be a highly connected individual. I heard of him at Parish Council meetings, from his neighbours, and from a parent at my daughter's school gates in South Manchester. He had also built some of the play equipment in my local park in Manchester. Sally Buttifant proved to be another such individual, who could not walk with me herself for health reasons, but who, after a quick phone conversation, put me in touch with a variety of contacts, including Professor John Handley (Manchester University) and Henry Brooks, owner of Tatton Estate. Both were interested and walked with me. There have been several more of these highly-connected people who have become part of the network. The chief of these have perhaps been Amy Unwin, chair of the Ashley neighbourhood plan steering group, and Peter Wright, Ashley's retired milkman (see section 5.6). Amy, a member of the Warburton family, who have lived for several generations in Ashley, is now Ashley's youngest parish councillor. William Foote Whyte's findings hold true here; I am sure that being seen to have the friendship and cooperation of people like Amy and Peter meant that I was trusted and accepted to a far greater degree than would otherwise have been the case. Thus the network expanded.

Evaluation and commentary on findings from networking

	principle for engagement	rating
	Supports emergent public engagement with landscape…	
1	**begins with simple interactions but embraces evolving complexity**	🟩
2	**allows inhabitants to set agenda, initiate & sustain methods of engagement**	🟩
3	**values the role of embodied landscape knowledge**	🟥
4	**responds to emerging circumstances**	🟩
5	**aims to achieve a public conversation and a 'reflective capacity', not consensus**	🟩
	and in the case of engagement with specific landscape proposals…	
6	**is 'in at the start' and sustained for the life of the project**	🟩

7	**connects local people directly to designers of infrastructure and landscape**	🟥
8	**uses qualitative and deliberative methods to examine landscape in depth**	🟥
9	**utilises knowledge and creativity of public to inform decision-making**	🟥
10	**welcomes proposals originating from public and seeks to elicit such proposals**	🟩

Table 6. Evaluation grid for networking as an emergent engagement method with landscape

It can be seen from the above evaluation grid (Table 6) that networking alone is not sufficient as a method for the kind of landscape engagement proposed here. This is because it does not necessarily require embodied experiences of the landscape (**principle three**), although it may well be facilitated by such experiences. Neither does it necessarily make connections between local people and landscape designers, although it may well ultimately achieve this. A network could also be formed without the use of any deliberative methods to examine the landscape (**principle eight**) or inform decision making (**principle nine**).

As the research has progressed, however, networking has been essential in order to access the most interested participants. Because this web of engaged inhabitants is emergent (**principle one**) it is not possible to predict how it will grow, or how active each person will be in its further evolution. Individuals who may seem to be good contacts because they are in a public role, may in fact have no interest whatsoever in speaking to the researcher and can act as a dead-end to enquiry. The converse is also true, such that less high-profile individuals can prove to be a rich resource. This is a great strength of the engagement network, in that it 'responds to emerging circumstances' (**principle four**) and so can flex and change as the landscape conditions do. It can repair itself if a person drops out, because it is non-linear. It is an open system in which anyone can potentially play a part, because it is non-hierarchical. It is also public (**principle five**) in that members of the network will witness the actions of others, hopefully supporting positive actions across its web.

A significant finding is that sufficient time must be allowed in order for the network to develop. People will come forward at their own pace and at times suitable to them, so rushing this process is unlikely to yield good results. Fortunately, however, extended timescales are not a problem for projects like HS2, and a drip-feed approach to developing a useful network can be very efficient in terms of time and financial resources. The length of time taken means that it is all the more important that work begins early (**principle six**) in order that the network might establish sufficiently to include landscape designers in its later stages (to improve the rating for **principle seven**) and that deliberations have time to develop and be sufficiently in-depth (**principle eight**). Furthermore, a robust network includes many of the most positively motivated people (**principle nine**), as they have become part of the network largely by self-selection. I acknowledge that there are potential drawbacks to this, in that single-interest groups may in theory be able to hijack proceedings and pursue a specialised agenda, but the way that the network is used is to some extent determined by the researcher. More investigation on this point would be useful in the future, but pursuit of single-interest lobby groups has not been a problem in Ashley. I propose that if a network is sufficiently robust it will continue to function and expand beyond the lifespan of the research or engagement period, and will ultimately result in original landscape proposals, coming from inhabitants themselves (**principles two and ten**).

Tim Ingold has little use for the notion of a network, preferring to use the term 'meshwork', which he takes up from the work of Henri Lefebvre (Ingold, 2011), and which also resonates with Deleuze and Guattari's 'rhizome'; "There are no points or positions in a rhiazome…there are only lines." (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004: 8). He describes the meshwork as akin to a spider's web, but distinguishes his ideas from Bruno Latour's Actor Network Theory in that, for Ingold, the spider perceives and acts along the lines of the web itself, such that the web is not meaningfully divisible from the spider. He constructs an imagined dialogue between ANT and Spider, in which ANT represents Latour, and Spider, Ingold's own point of view. His opinion, voiced by Spider, is this;

> "The world, for me, is not an assemblage of bits and pieces, but a tangle of threads and pathways. Let us call it a meshwork, so as to distinguish it from your network. My claim, then is that action is not the result of an agency that is distributed around the network, but rather emerges from the interplay of forces that are conducted along the lines of the meshwork."

(Ingold, 2011: 64)

Ingold may perhaps be expressing a difference in emphasis to Latour. Arguably both thinkers are drawing our attention to the agency that emerges in the connections between entities, rather than in the entities or actors themselves. The difference, perhaps, is that, for Latour, the actors are connected but discrete entities, but for Ingold, the actors are indivisible from the meshwork. As Ingold says “Things are their relations.” (Ingold, 2011: 70). If one conceives of the emerging network/meshwork in either of these two ways, the importance of lived connections via accompanied walks, or map making, for example, becomes more apparent. Without connection, inhabitants would, in Ingold’s view, have no agency or power to act. An example in Ashley would be a public forum such as the PC meeting, which should, in theory, wield a power to initiate change that its individual members would not have had if they stayed at home.

Emergence holds in common with Actor-Network Theory a view of non-human entities as participants in networks in which they have agency. In a landscape context, both theories would accommodate the notion of a river, for example, as an agent which functions as an active part of a network and which itself constructs landscape forms as it erodes and deposits material. Similarly, a non-human creature such as a might be part of the same network and also shape the landscape, forming terraces above the banks of the river as it excavates its sett. These two agents, badger and river, are in a network which is continually in process and might include anglers, farmers, dogs, kingfishers, trees, soil, the concept of badger conservation, the concept of badger culling, Airport City, HS2 and any number of other elements. It will overlap with and form exchanges with any number of other networks. Networks in any landscape could be described as having a rhizomatic structure, as defined by Deleuze and Guattari, which “ may be broken, shattered at a given spot, but it will start up again on one of its old lines, or on new lines.” (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004: 9). This resilience is a very important feature of emergent landscapes, and a highly desirable feature of a process of engagement with landscape.

5.5.3 the Parish Council

I first contacted Ashley Parish Council (APC) on the second of June 2015, via an email sent to the parish clerk and all six councillors at their individual email addresses. In hindsight, this introductory letter used overly formal and elaborate language, for example asking to meet them ‘at your earliest convenience’. Though polite, it was too much like a letter from an academic, and requested meeting them, if possible, as a group. This was presumptuous, as parish councillors are busy people who already devote one long evening every month (approximately) to meeting, as well as other incidental duties. I now realise that they would never consider calling a special meeting of the Council at the request of an unknown person. I received no replies to this first email. After further prompts from me, the Chair replied, asking for more details, which I supplied. Some weeks later, the parish clerk called me and invited me to the APC meeting on the ninth of November, 2015. At the time, I was frustrated by what I felt to be the painfully slow progress in making this first face-to-face contact, but again, in retrospect, this is the normal pace at which APC works, and I suspect that it is not atypical of parish politics. I think it is also a fair assessment to say that this group of people required several weeks in order to get used to the idea that an academic was interested in their place, and for an initial element of tentative trust to develop. My first walk with a parish councillor did not take place until the sixteenth of June 2016, a full year after my first contact with APC. Attempting to gain their trust and active participation was perhaps a difficult process as they had previously voted to oppose HS2 and invested in 'Stop HS2' signage, which was displayed around the parish. By agreeing to engage with me they would be tacitly engaging with the real prospect of the construction of HS2, which is something they were not at first willing to do. In order to progress research whilst waiting for APC to become more actively involved, I established local contacts which did not depend on them, such as the Vicar, amateur local historian Peter Wright, representatives of the Tatton Estate, conservation enthusiasts and so on.

At this first parish council meeting, in the old Ashley School building, I gave a short presentation about my research. From this point onwards the parish clerk included me on each APC meeting agenda, to give the Council basic updates on my progress. This supportive action from a key person in the parish was very helpful. It gave an impression to anyone attending the meeting that I was a bona-fide person and approved of by the council, creating a sense of the legitimacy of the research, although I was, at first, still very much an outsider. I spoke as briefly as possible, given the very lengthy agendas that are typical. The parish clerk is the only paid person on a parish council, and has probably been employed because they are organised and prepared to take action where necessary. This makes them likely to be a good first point of contact, whereas the elected councillors themselves may be motivated by any number of unknown factors which are part of the complex web of local politics. At the start of this research period, APC seemed to me to be surprisingly isolated from the residents of the Parish. At the second meeting I observed (conversation 11, Appendix B), two members of the public attended and repeatedly remarked to each other "we haven't heard about this in the village!" as the agenda items rolled past. After two years, however, participation in APC matters by non-councillors had significantly increased. My interpretation is that this has been due to the 'twin challenges' of HS2 and neighbourhood planning which, in different ways, have prompted some increase in citizen engagement. At the same meeting (conversation 11, Appendix B), it was noted in the minutes of the previous meeting that "if, for example, the neighbourhood plan had a chance of getting off the ground, it would be essential to have a good dialogue with the community".

I continued to regularly attend and speak at APC meetings until summer 2017, when I began to wind down my involvement in the Parish, attending my last meeting on 27.11.2017. In every case but one, I attended the whole of the meeting, and this was very valuable in gaining an overall impression of the concerns of the parish. Many of these were ongoing landscape and transport issues, though not couched in such terms, and recurred on almost every agenda over the period. These were:

- Blocked drainage gullies along roadsides, leading to localised flooding;
- public footpaths along roads impassable due to overgrown hedgerow plants;
- speed and volume of traffic, and road traffic accidents;
- problems related to cycling in general, and in particular cyclists on the Ashley Hall road;
- lack of communication and information from HS2 Ltd;
- local bypass and other road building schemes;
- airport noise pollution and increasing land development at Airport City;
- individual planning applications and ongoing disputes.

It therefore seems to be the case, from this sample, that the majority of a parish council's concerns are likely to be landscape issues, all of which, due to the open and interacting systems of the landscape, have some relationship to the anticipation of HS2 infrastructure. Speaking at the meetings enabled me to prompt some specific discussion about HS2 issues and glean some information about the views of inhabitants. Some aspects stood out, including:

- initial denial that it would really be built;
- the impact of a station at the airport on local road traffic;
- disposal of excavated waste materials from the tunnelling under Manchester as a likely problem for Ashley;

- HS2 as a 'vanity project' for George Osborne (their MP at the time);
- they felt utterly 'in the dark' as to details about what would happen in Ashley, before, during and after construction.

At early meetings, there was a strong sense that the construction and operation of HS2 seemed a very far distant reality, with the Chair commenting that he would be "long gone" by the time it was due to be built, in 2033. There may have been some truth in this, but by the end of my involvement with Ashley, just two years later, this attitude had changed markedly. Proposals for the railway suddenly seemed to loom large, and an urge to involve young people in the parish came to the fore, as older residents recognised that their grandchildren's experience of their future in the place would be affected. This could perhaps be due to some extent to my continual presence at APC meetings, which may gradually have created a sense that the construction of HS2 was a real prospect in what is, in a landscape timescale, the short-to-medium term. I propose that this growing awareness of landscape timescales is important in engaging inhabitants and parish councils with big proposals. They may be accustomed to planning applications for single dwellings, for which the 'medium term' might mean two years, and the 'long term' five years. For infrastructure proposals, though, they need time to accustom themselves to the idea that the timescales are more akin to those of the establishment of new woodland, for example, where the short term might mean five to ten years, and the long term might mean seventy. The length of timescales involved doubtless contributes to the attitude of denial that I frequently encountered on my first visits to Ashley: for some locals, it was as if something planned for nearly twenty years hence was so unlikely as to be pure fantasy. This is to be understood in the wider context of the complex nature of landscape change, as discussed in Chapter One. Incremental changes can be visualised and accommodated in the inhabitant's conceptualisation of their place. Sudden dramatic changes, however, are much less easily assimilated in to an individual's world view. In this aspect of the research I find that, though there are very few things about landscape which I felt could be learned by local inhabitants, this was one such. Despite the implication here that residents were 'lacking' this understanding, I would not argue that they need therefore to be taught about it. Rather, I would consider that they could acquire this different way of conceiving of landscape timescales themselves. It is part of a natural progression in the process of anticipating large-scale infrastructure, which needs only a little stimulus from an outside person, to help residents to prepare themselves to consider when and how to take action in the best interests of their place.

Conceiving of large spatial scales is also a skill that residents can acquire through this anticipatory period. Perception of scale maps and drawings is a difficult and highly individual thing. It is noticeable in Ashley, for example, that people could not always estimate the distance of the proposed railway from the village centre, when looking at a scale plan. The distance was estimated at anything up to a mile, but is in fact less than a third of a mile. This problem presented some degree of difficulty for using maps as engagement tools, and contributed to more diverse methods being used, including walking the landscape, which overcomes the problem quite easily, and other methods as described here.

Evaluation and commentary on findings from involvement with Ashley Parish Council

	principle for engagement	rating
	Supports emergent public engagement with landscape…	
1	**begins with simple interactions but embraces evolving complexity**	🟧
2	**allows inhabitants to set agenda, initiate & sustain methods of engagement**	🟧
3	**values the role of embodied landscape knowledge**	🟥
4	**responds to emerging circumstances**	🟧
5	**aims to achieve a public conversation and a ‘reflective capacity’, not consensus**	🟧
	and in the case of engagement with specific landscape proposals…	
6	**is ‘in at the start’ and sustained for the life of the project**	🟩
7	**connects local people directly to designers of infrastructure and landscape**	🟥
8	**uses qualitative and deliberative methods to examine landscape in depth**	🟧
9	**utilises knowledge and creativity of public to inform decision-making**	🟧
10	**welcomes proposals originating from public and seeks to elicit such proposals**	🟧

Table 7. Evaluation grid for involvement with the Parish Council as an emergent engagement method

In common with the website, my engagement with APC by attending and speaking at their regular meetings has had two basic pragmatic functions in this research; firstly it has made me more visible in the parish and therefore more trusted. I have accessed more participants and grown the engagement network as a result. Secondly, it has given me many opportunities to learn about the everyday functioning of the parish simply by listening to the discussion.

In these ways this method helped to lay the foundations for emergent public engagement, in that it was based on simple interactions (**principle one**) and was entirely and quite literally led by the agenda of inhabitants (**principle two**). It did have some disappointing limitations, however. A Parish Council may theoretically have the capacity to respond to emerging circumstances, because they live on the spot and meet regularly, but the meetings can, in reality, become ensnared in recurring issues of a very long standing. The regulations by which they operate mean that a spontaneous meeting of councillors who decide to go for a walk together cannot 'officially' happen due to rules governing the presence of the Clerk, advance circulation of a fixed agenda, openness to members of the public, minutes and so on. These rules may mean that there is little willingness to take on a flexible or responsive approach to meetings, and that open debate and conversation cannot take place between members of the public and councillors at the meetings. APC, for example, enforces a rule stating that the public may not speak unless invited by the Chair to do so, with public contributions corralled in to a brief time slot at the end of the agenda (usually around 9.45 pm). These considerations leave the PC unable to respond flexibly to emerging demands, or to accommodate evolving complexity, and this contributes to the low scores achieved on many of the above principles.

For these reasons, a parish council is, at present, very unlikely to be the forum through which inhabitants participate in emergent engagement with specific landscape proposals. It is not well suited to the task, despite being the official, funded public forum for people to have a say in their place. This presents a significant problem for public engagement initiatives, because the PC acts as gatekeeper both for large organisations who wish to engage with residents, and for residents wishing to initiate proposals. The example of the Councillor who wishes to change the status of the footpath past Ashley Hall so that cycling is permitted, is a case in point. The PC told her that this would not be possible, whereas in fact she was quite entitled to take the request to Cheshire East Council, and eventually did so, without their support. In the case of HS2, communications with Ashley residents are likely, in the fullness of time, to be channelled through the PC, but a revolution in the way in which they operate would be needed in order for them to function as a deliberative forum. This is not necessarily impossible; major challenges to place identity, such as HS2, could perhaps be a catalyst for such a shift. The neighbourhood plan group, as an offshoot of the PC, may prove to be a better route for engagement if the PC is not to actually prevent engagement.

At the last APC meeting which I attended (conversation 44, Appendix B), two Councillors reported back on the meeting that they had had, a fortnight previously, with one other Councillor and four representatives of HS2. This had been the meeting at which the new road proposals, shown in Figure 61, were first communicated. There was no discussion at the APC meeting as to how the HS2 proposals might be communicated to the wider public, or their opinions sought. It may be that wider deliberations with the general public about this specific issue will develop. Alternatively, APC may decide to 'consult', rather than engage with, inhabitants. It is also possible that discussions will not reach beyond the PC, and comments to HS2 Ltd will come solely from parish councillors.

5.6 The Rose Queen fêtes

APC invited me to have a stall at the Rose Queen Fête in 2016. I was pleased to be given this opportunity to communicate with residents, and felt that it was a sign that I had been, to some small extent, accepted. I printed a number of leaflets to hand out, summarising my research aims and inviting contacts. I also made and distributed an Ashley HS2 guided walk leaflet with a map I had drawn (see Figure 64) and text to guide the walker along the proposed route. I set up a stall with a large map of Ashley which I had divided in to 80 grid squares, to be used as a 'treasure map' (see Figure 65). People chose their preferred square of the Parish and I asked them to write on the map their reasons for choosing that location. At the end of the afternoon a random square was picked and I sent the winner a book token.

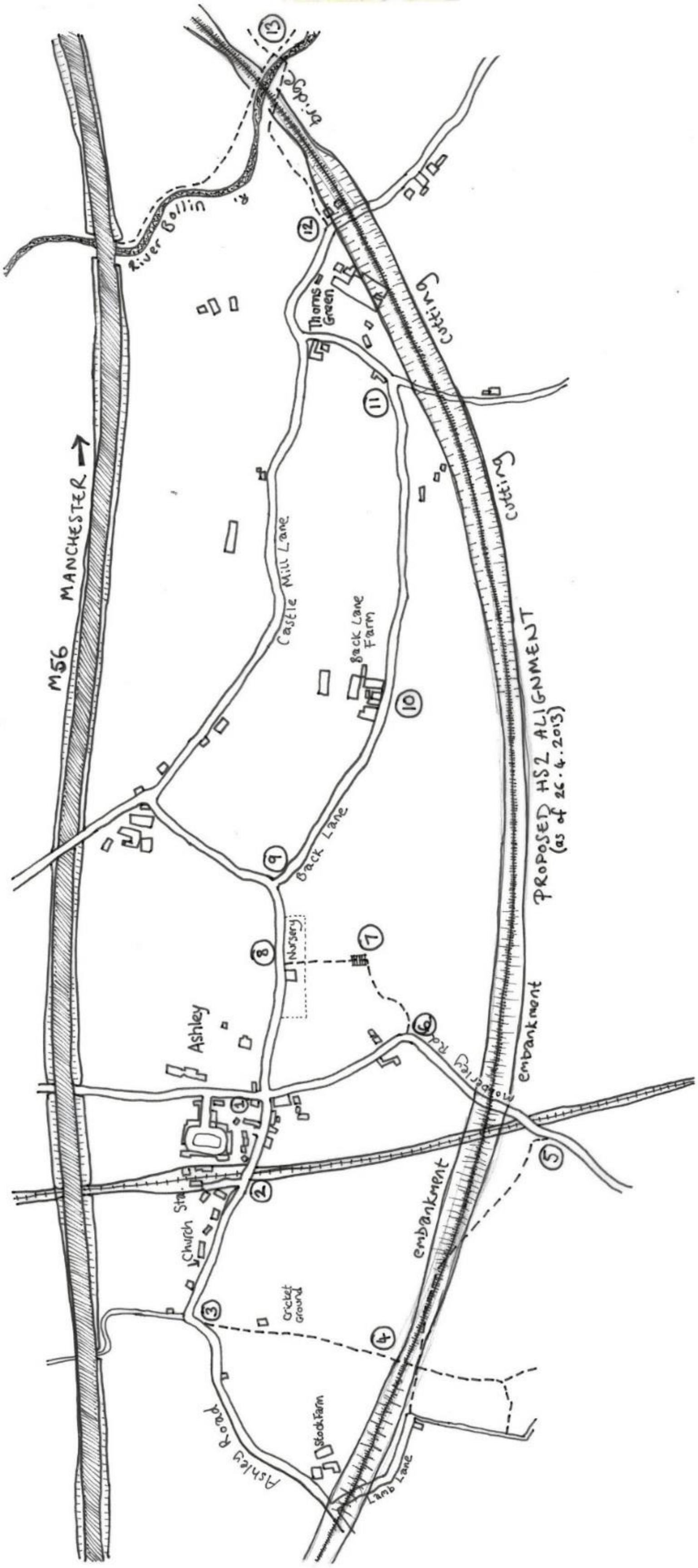

M56
MANCHESTER →
River Bollin
bridge
cutting
cutting
Thorns Green
Castle Mill Lane
Back Lane Farm
Back Lane
PROPOSED HS2 ALIGNMENT
(as of 26.4.2013)
Ashley
Nursery
Mobberley Road
embankment
embankment
Church St.
Cricket Ground
Ashley Road
Stock Farm
Lamb Lane
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13

Figure 64. My hand-drawn map for the Ashley HS2 walk leaflet, distributed at Rose Queen, 2016. The numbered points referred to text which guided the walker and prompted reflection on impacts of HS2.

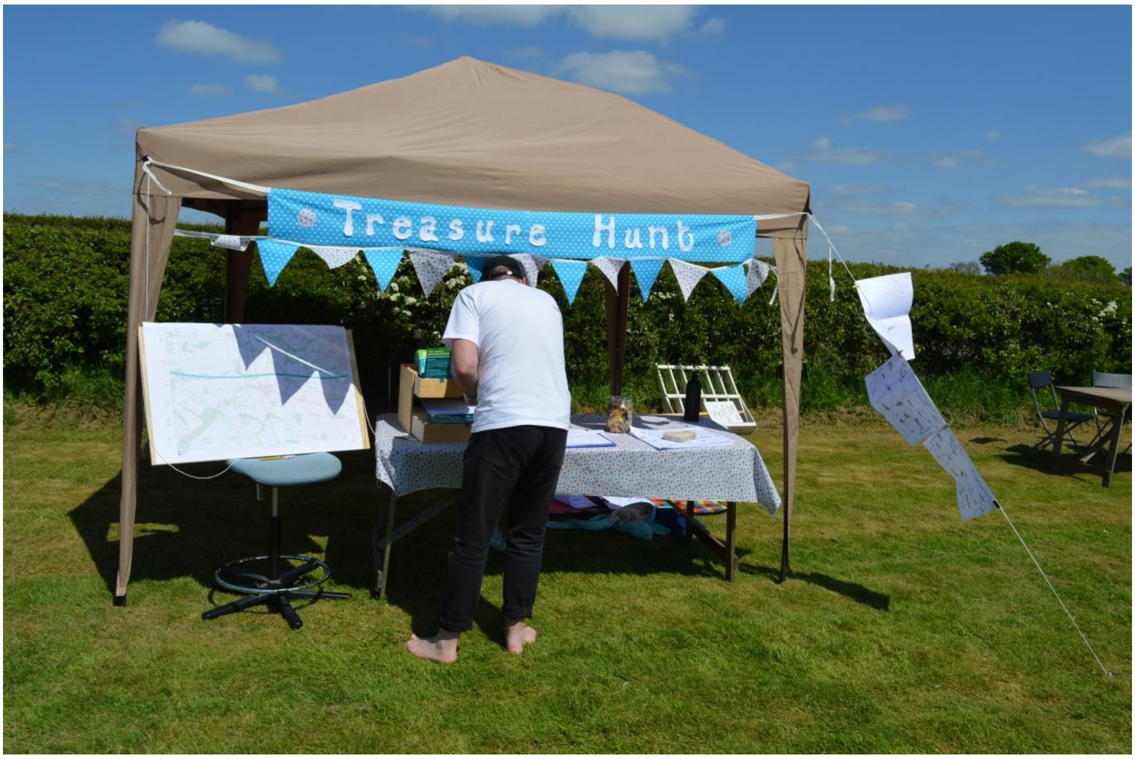


Figure 65. My stall at the 2016 Rose Queen, maps of Ashley drawn by children were pegged to the guy ropes (author's photo, 14.05.16)

The simple format meant that all age groups were able to participate. Some of the 'reasons' written on the map were therefore difficult to interpret, but others indicated engagement with the landscape, for example "because there's lots of water on it", "I used to play here as a child", and "its my way to school". The purpose of the map, however, was to attract people to my stall with the promise of a game. Once conversation about the map began, it was easy to draw people in to chatting about the landscape, my research and HS2. It was a sunny day and attendance was good, so I was able to talk for three hours without stopping, to a wide variety of people, most of whom were parish residents. I spoke to farmers, church wardens, parish councillors, many children and the Church of England's first female bishop, Libby Lane. Many people were very interested in talking about the Parish and about HS2, but it was clear that, with one or two exceptions, there was only the vaguest awareness of what it might mean for Ashley.

At this fête I also asked people to respond to a questionnaire asking whether Ashley is a rural place; respondents were asked to circle 'yes' or 'no'. I received 12 responses, all of which replied 'yes'. One respondent did note that the motorway, airport, HS2, traffic and motorway signage all contributed to making it less than entirely rural. The results of this brief survey are tabulated in Appendix E; they helped to inform the writing of the LLCA, as described in Section 3.1.

The following year, in May 2017, I assisted the neighbourhood plan steering group in making a double Ao-sized map (see Figure 66) of the parish for use at the Rose Queen, and then ran the stall alongside Amy Unwin, chair of the group. Under the banner of the neighbourhood plan, we talked to residents about what the Plan would be like, and asked them to place pins of different colours on the map to indicate their concerns about different landscape issues. This provoked valuable engagement with the plan, but heavy rain did mean that attendance at the fête was low.

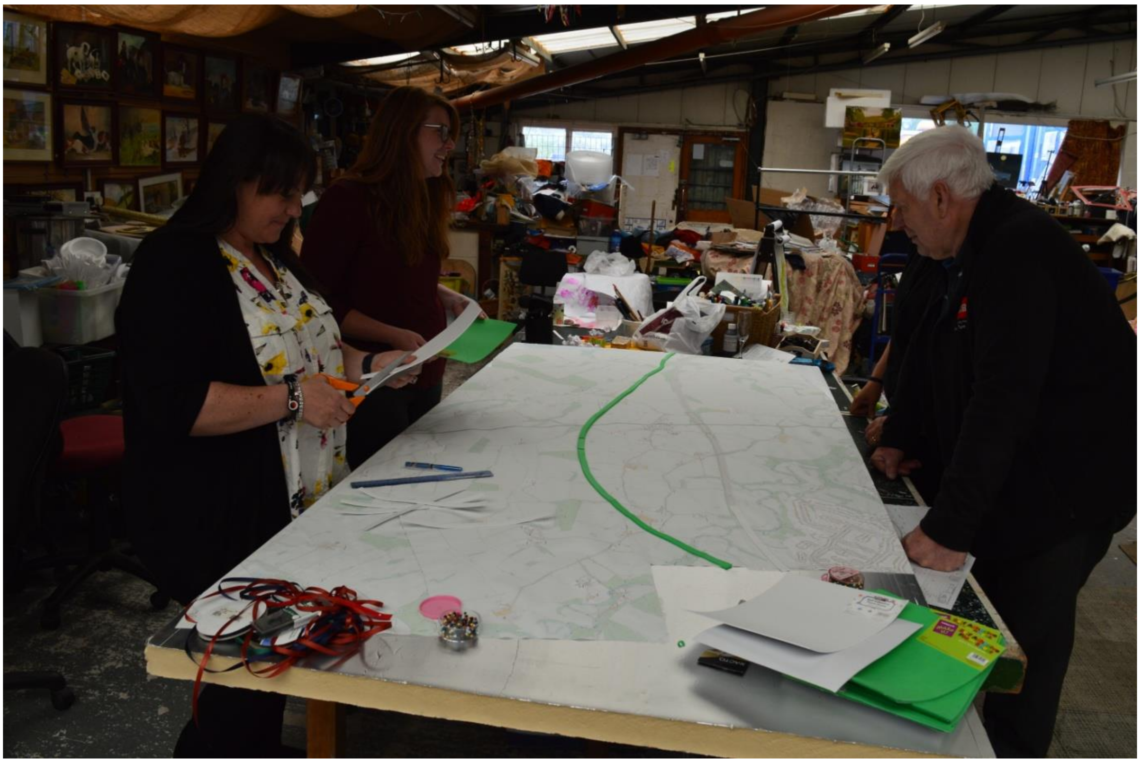


Figure 66. Ashley residents making the map for the Rose Queen 2017 (author's photo). There was much debate over how best to indicate the alignment of HS2.

These two occasions were good opportunities for 'inhabitants to set the agenda' for engagement (**principle two**) because the map represents a simple foundation for more complex interpretations to arise.

Evaluation and commentary on findings from the Rose Queen Fétes

	principle for engagement	rating
	Supports emergent public engagement with landscape…	
1	**begins with simple interactions but embraces evolving complexity**	🟩

2	**allows inhabitants to set agenda, initiate & sustain methods of engagement**	🟩
3	**values the role of embodied landscape knowledge**	🟩
4	**responds to emerging circumstances**	🟧
5	**aims to achieve a public conversation and a ‘reflective capacity’, not consensus**	🟩
	and in the case of engagement with specific landscape proposals…	
6	**is ‘in at the start’ and sustained for the life of the project**	🟩
7	**connects local people directly to designers of infrastructure and landscape**	🟥
8	**uses qualitative and deliberative methods to examine landscape in depth**	🟧
9	**utilises knowledge and creativity of public to inform decision-making**	🟧
10	**welcomes proposals originating from public and seeks to elicit such proposals**	🟩

Table 8. Evaluation grid for involvement with the Rose Queen Fêtes as an emergent engagement method with landscape

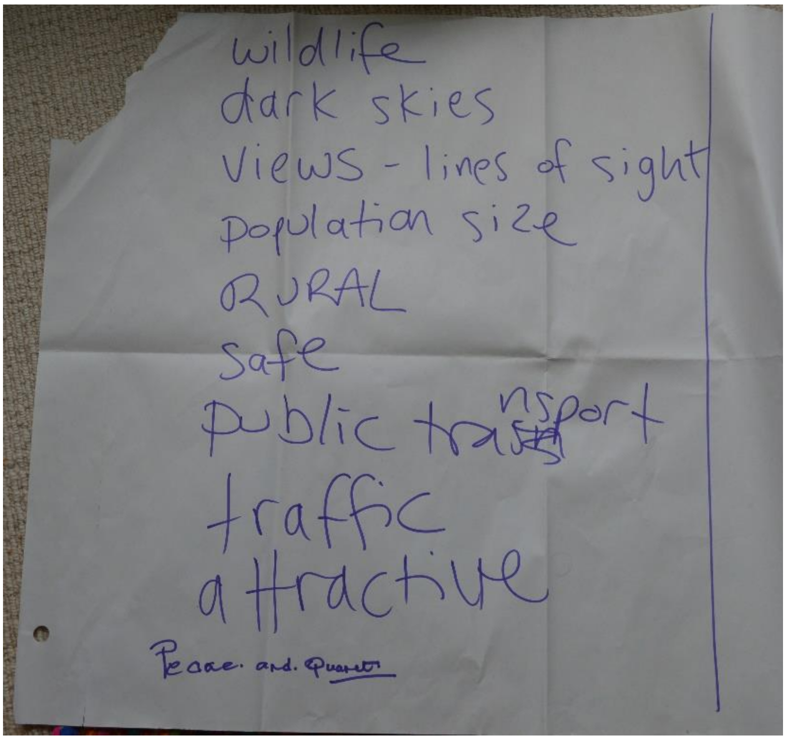
These occasions were valuable chances for me to make more contacts in Ashley, and they were also good opportunities for inhabitants to discuss their landscape and engage with it through the medium of the maps. This was a very simple starting point for engagement, but can be the foundation for detailed and complex discussion (**principle one**). It did allow people the opportunity to approach me and propose other methods of engagement (**principle two**), in particular Peter Wright (see below). Responsiveness to emerging circumstances (**principle four**) is somewhat limited with an event that only happens annually, but in the timescale of a large infrastructure project it is probably still responsive enough to be a worthwhile strand of a wider conversation.

In my case, these village events could not be used to connect local people directly to landscape designers (**principle seven**), but this would be possible for companies such as HS2 to organise. Unlike a typical roadshow event, their presence at a fête could be small, simple, informal and even friendly. In this way, such engagement activity would be an improved opportunity to use inhabitants’ knowledge to inform decision-making (**principle nine**).

I have found that grouping residents around a map prompts a public discussion (**principle five**) that can be sustained for long periods (**principle eight**). Everyone has an opinion. Some people like to reminisce about particularly evocative locations, and talk about their associations with memorable events or people. Others use maps as windows to the future, because they bring to light spaces which might be potential development sites. Many people will never normally take time to look at a map of where they live, as they don't need to do so, but only from a map does one get the sense of just how bounded by water the parish is, or of how very little woodland it has left. Such discussion, given time and space to develop, could lead to original proposals from inhabitants (**principle ten**). It was a desire to further explore the potential of maps as tools for emergent engagement that led me to attempt to set up the Ashley Mapping Project.

5.7 The Ashley Mapping Project at St Elizabeth's Church

On Saturday the tenth of September 2016, I held a mapping workshop at St Elizabeth's, Ashley. It had been advertised via the parish newsletter, which is distributed every month to all the households in Ashley. The church provided the space and facilities at no charge, and the churchwardens supplied tea and biscuits to all, for which I was very grateful. Numbers of people in the room ebbed and flowed, but at the busiest point there were sixteen present, with a total of twenty-three attending by the end. I began the session with a ten-minute presentation to explain the aim for the afternoon. This was to put on the map things that were not already on the map, and which they thought were important strengths or weaknesses of their place. I then asked the group what they would like to map, in order to come up with 'headings' for the maps which would reflect the most significant aspects of the landscape of the parish, in their own eyes. We recorded these on a flip chart, as shown in Figure 67, below. I had felt wary about what headings they might offer, but in fact they came up with very workable ideas, the only significant surprise being 'dark skies', which was a pertinent theme that I had not considered. The size of the group was ideal for this activity; fewer people may have made it more difficult and would have been less representative of local opinion.



wildlife
dark skies
views - lines of sight
population size
RURAL
safe
public transport
traffic
attractive
Peace. and. Quiet

Figure 67. Map headings elicited from residents at the mapping workshop of 10.09.16 (author's photo).

We discussed which of these aspects would be most 'mappable', in order to prioritise work, and decided on:

1. Wildlife;
2. Traffic;
3. Views;
4. Peace and noise;
5. Walking.

This last was my suggestion, because I wanted to find out what they thought about the walkability of the parish. As mapping got underway (see Figure 68), a sixth theme emerged, as one group decided they wanted to map potential problems with road closures during the HS2 construction period (see Figure 69).

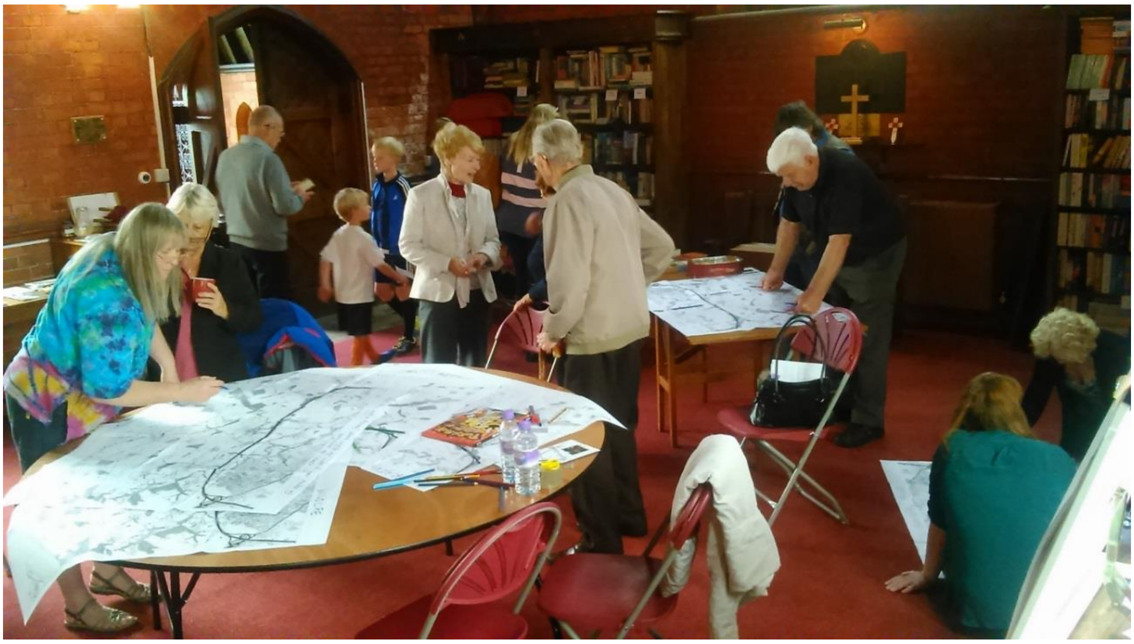


Figure 68. Group mapping workshop underway, at St Elizabeth's Church; all age groups were represented (author's photo, 10.09.16).

I provided an A0 size map of the parish at 1:5,000 for each theme, and bundles of felt tip pens. The maps were spread on tables around the space and people grouped around them. When the 'road closures' group emerged, we ran out of table space and they used the floor.

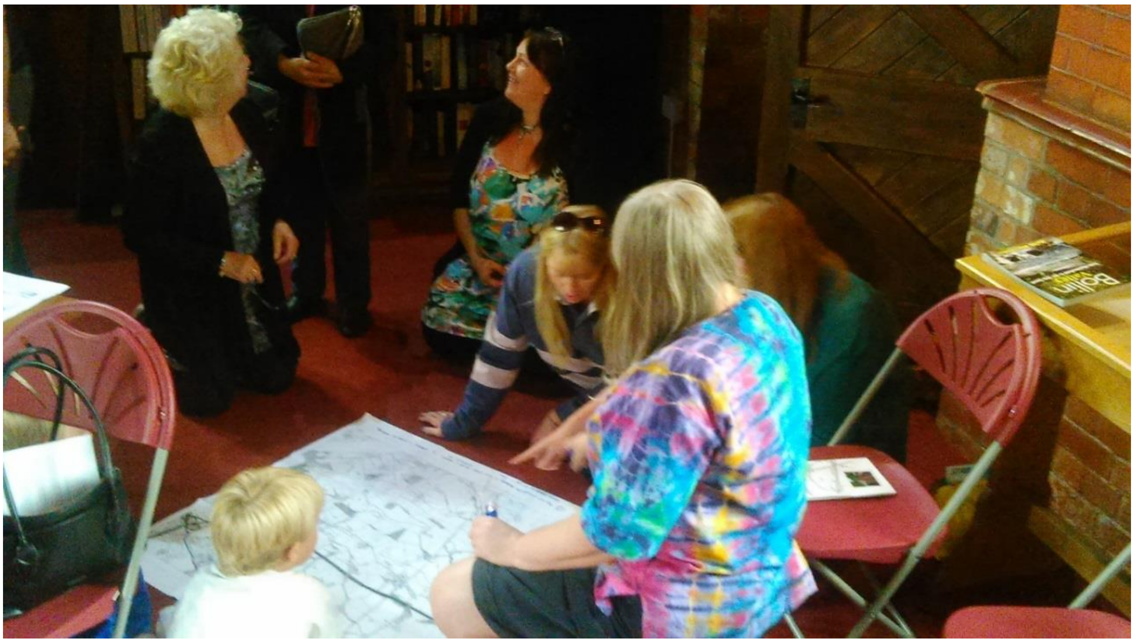
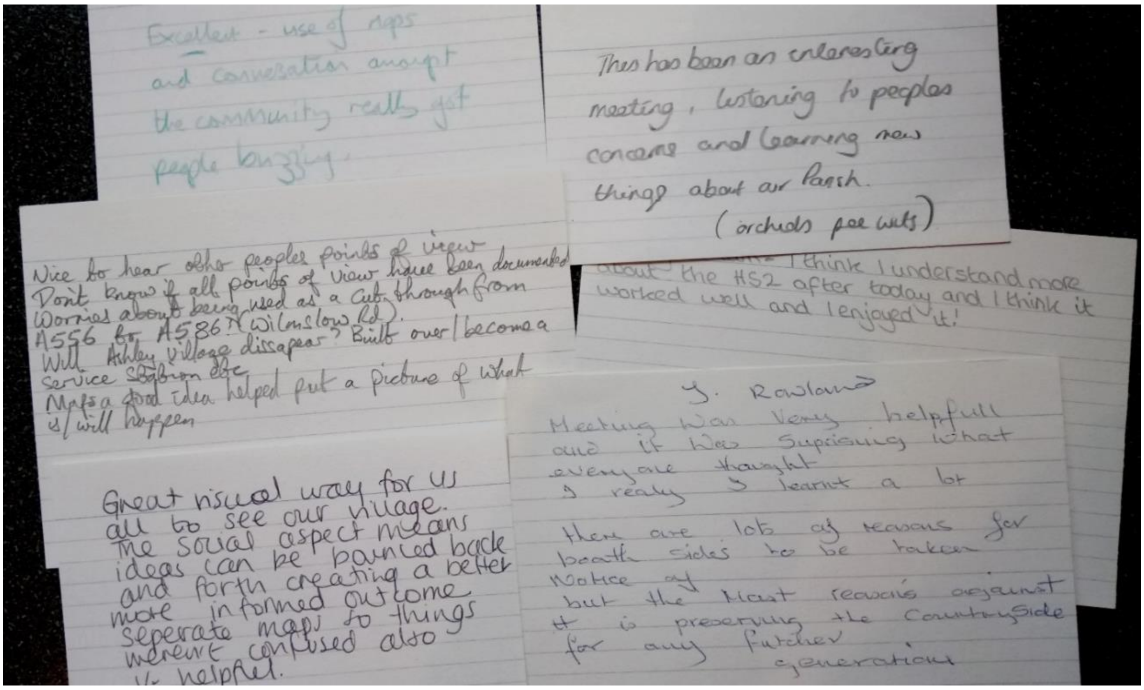


Figure 69. One group decides to take to the floor to map road closure issues during HS2 construction period (author's photo, 10.09.16).

Mapping and general conversation about the landscape continued until it was time to ask people to leave because the churchwardens needed to lock up. Before leaving, some participants filled in comment cards, see Figure 70, which were mainly positive, although one person felt that not all comments may have been recorded. Verbal feedback and observations on the day led me to conclude that although mapping worked very well for some individuals, not everybody was attracted by this form of participation. For some, maps were not easy to interpret, and for others, impaired eyesight meant that this activity was not easily accessible.


Excellent - use of maps
and conversation amongst
the community really got
people buzzing.

This has been an interesting
meeting, listening to peoples
concerns and learning new
things about our Parish.
(orchids pee wits)

Nice to hear other peoples points of view
Don't know if all points of view have been documented
Worried about being used as a cut through from
A556 to A5867 (Wilmslow Rd).
Will Ashley village dissapear? Built over / become a
service station etc
Maps a good idea helped put a picture of what
is/will happen

I think I understand more
about the HS2 after today and I think it
worked well and I enjoyed it!

Great visual way for us
all to see our village.
The social aspect means
ideas can be bounced back
and forth creating a better
more informed outcome
seperate maps so things
werent confused also
v. helpful.

J. Rowlands
Meeting was very helpfull
and it was suprising what
everyone thought
I really I learnt a lot
there are lots of reasons for
both sides to be taken
notice of
but the most reasons against
it is preserving the countryside
for any futcher
generations

Figure 70. Comment cards from mapping workshop; these were filled in by some participants on their way out (author's photo, 10.09.16)

Evaluation and commentary on findings from residents' mapping workshop

	principle for engagement	rating
	Supports emergent public engagement with landscape...	
1	**begins with simple interactions but embraces evolving complexity**	🟩
2	**allows inhabitants to set agenda, initiate & sustain methods of engagement**	🟧
3	**values the role of embodied landscape knowledge**	🟧
4	**responds to emerging circumstances**	🟧

5	**aims to achieve a public conversation and a ‘reflective capacity’, not consensus**	🟩
	and in the case of engagement with specific landscape proposals…	
6	**is ‘in at the start’ and sustained for the life of the project**	🟩
7	**connects local people directly to designers of infrastructure and landscape**	🟥
8	**uses qualitative and deliberative methods to examine landscape in depth**	🟩
9	**utilises knowledge and creativity of public to inform decision-making**	🟧
10	**welcomes proposals originating from public and seeks to elicit such proposals**	🟧

Table 9. Evaluation grid for residents’ mapping workshop

The mapping workshop was, on the whole, a successful tool for emergent engagement. It was simple to set up and explain, but allowed for responses to become increasingly complex. This dimension (**principle one**) could have been improved by allowing for a slot longer than the one and a half hours available; I think that two to three hours would have been useful, as it had to be cut short whilst people still had things to say.

The method allowed participants to set the agenda, because they chose the headings for the maps (**principle two**). The rating for this is amber, not green, however, because the proposal for a mapping workshop came from myself rather than responding to an inhabitant’s suggestion, and also because I suggested one of the map headings. In retrospect, I should not have done this; it was not in line with my methodology. It was difficult to resist the opportunity to find out about a specific theme that was of interest to me, but in the event this map was the least successful. Several participants did not see the point of this map; in their view, if they wanted to go for a walk anywhere in Ashley, they could just go. This opinion was very much at odds with my perception as a visitor to the parish. It may be that perceived walkability is very different form actual walkability, but there was not time or inclination on the part of participants to explore this issue on the day. The relative failure of this map was a reminder to me of the inadvisability of attempting to impose one’s own priorities on people in the context of public engagement.

This mapping activity valued embodied landscape knowledge very highly, as it sought to impose this kind of unmapped, lived experience in a layer over the ‘official’ mapped data (**principle three**). Were the activity to be repeated at intervals over a period of time, it is possible that it would respond to emerging circumstances, in particular new proposals from HS2 Ltd (**principle four**). Perhaps the most obvious benefits of the method, however, is that it provides a forum for deliberative discussions that do not need to be directed by a facilitator, as the maps themselves provide the provocations for debate (**principle eight**). Similarly, it provides a forum for public discussion (**principle five**). The comment cards suggest that this was recognised to be a valuable aspect; "conversation amongst the community really got people buzzing", "the social aspect means ideas can be bounced back and forth creating a better more informed outcome" and "nice to hear other people's points of view" (see Figure 70).

The apparent weakness on **principle seven** is, in reality, a matter of timing. I do not feel that this workshop would have worked in the same way had design professionals been present. Though this cannot be proved, I suggest that an awareness of such expertise in the room would possibly have led to group work becoming focussed on specific design solutions, rather than on a more open exploration of the constraints and opportunities in Ashley. Local participants might perhaps have felt that, given access to experts, this was their opportunity to get some clear answers about how, for example, particular road junctions would work post-HS2. Due to this consideration, this method would be best used at the very early stages of any engagement process (**principle six**) in order to provoke broader creative responses and decision making about landscape further down the line (**principles nine and ten**). It could then be used again later in the process, when design decisions are being made.

After the workshop, in order to synthesize the data collected, I transferred all the marks on the maps to one map (Figure 71). It indicates the great importance of the river Bollin to the Parish, and the negative impacts of the motorway and traffic on the minor roads. It tells a story of fragmented and dispersed wildlife habitats, and locates some key views of surrounding countryside. It was noticeable that most of the discussion in this workshop focussed on how the landscape would work, during and after the construction of HS2, rather than its visual appearance. It seems to me that this suggests inhabitants have an emergent view of landscape, to a far greater extent than they have a romantic, picturesque view. This is perhaps not what might be expected by outsiders.

This workshop took place approximately twelve months after my first meeting with APC. This period of time seemed to be necessary for the Parish to accept me sufficiently, such that the workshop was welcomed rather than rejected, or ignored. It had taken one year, but at the end of the workshop something had changed in Ashley. The HS2 proposals no longer seemed to be in the distant future and appeared instead to be a problem that inhabitants could take ownership of. In the words of Amy Unwin and Emma Capp on the day;

“Ten years, that’s really soon!”, and “God, we really need a Parish Council meeting about this.”.

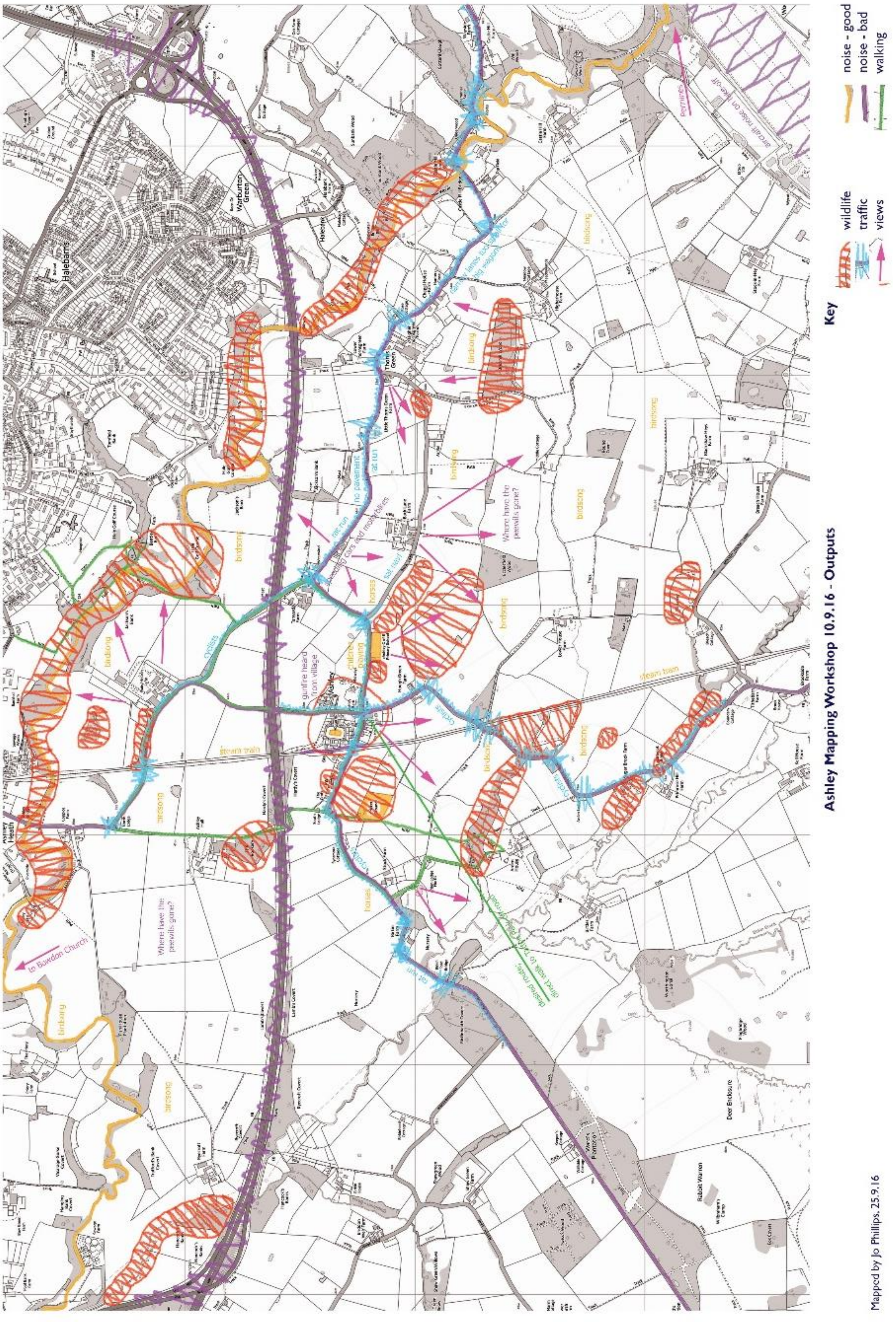

Ashley Mapping Workshop 10.9.16 - Outputs
Key
wildlife
traffic
views
noise - good
noise - bad
walking
Mapped by Jo Phillips, 25.9.16
Halebarns
Warburton Green
Ashley
Ashley Heath
birdsong
Where have the peewits gone?
gunfire heard from village
steam train
horses
cyclists
rat run
to Bowdon Church

Figure 71. Outputs from mapping workshop, summarised by myself, showing results from five maps on one. This highlights key landscape issues, positive and negative (author's image using base map from: EDINA Digimap Ordnance Survey Service, <http://edina.ac.uk/digimap>, created: September 2016, nts).

5.8 the Peter Wright map

Peter Wright has been a very significant participant in this research. I first met Peter at the Ashley Rose Queen fête in 2016, when he came up to my stall to talk. His interest had been caught by the map of Ashley that was on display. Peter was born in Ashley, at Little Thorns Green Farm, his father was born just a few minutes' walk away at Back Lane Farm, and Peter himself raised his children and now lives a short walk away from both of these locations, in a cottage where he has lived since 1957 (conversation 18, Appendix B). He is the retired milkman of the Parish, having lived and worked in Ashley all his life, and coming from a dairy farming family. He is also a church warden and previous Chair of the Parish Council, retiring from the post some eleven years ago. He is the most long-standing resident of the Parish, to the best of his knowledge, and is also the co-author of the book *Its All About Ashley* (Wright and Turnbull, 2013), cited in Chapter Three. His willingness to talk to me about the place has been very generous and provided great insights, particularly of value to a city-dwelling researcher with no experience of living day-to-day in a rural place. His knowledge is rich and varied, stretching back to his boyhood in the 1930s and 40s, when he used to get off the train after school and ran straight to the forge to help pump the bellows for the blacksmith (conversation 21, Appendix B). His work on his milk-round no doubt meant that he knew the physical place and its people like nobody else, and his many social connections are still strong. He is a super-connected inhabitant at the centre of a complex meshwork of people, and therefore an excellent contact and source of local knowledge. I would not have known, however, to seek him out, as he has no current 'official' role in the village, and so it was important that I had made myself publicly available at the Rose Queen.

Peter's interest in landscape is evident in his memory of the contentious nature of the public footpath through the school grounds, for example, and his statement that there was "no campaign against the M56 at the time" of its construction (conversation 18, Appendix B). He told me of how the section of the motorway just north of his cottage was delayed, and very difficult to construct as shifting sands were found during excavation. He drew my attention to the fact that although dairy farming was once the main source of income in Ashley, there is now only one herd left, at Back Lane Farm. He told me of how Brickhill Wood "burnt down" in the 1940s, information for which I found no other source. He was of the opinion that "Ashley *is* Cheshire, it looks south, not north to the city" conversation 18, Appendix B).

At the fête, Peter told me that he had an idea for a map he would like to make of the Parish. From the start, then, my interactions with Peter were on his terms. For family reasons, he was unable to join me on walks, but this was not a problem as he proposed to me his alternative method; that together we make a new map of Ashley to include a photo of every single building in the Parish. Undertaking this joint project became the framework for our conversations and his transmission of knowledge to me over an eighteen-month period.

I talked with Peter once a month, on average, for between an hour and three hours each time. On three occasions, we spent the morning driving around Ashley taking photographs. The procedure was that I would drive to wherever Peter planned to photograph, he would get out and knock on doors or waylay people in their driveways, ask permission, perhaps introduce me, and take the photos. This worked well in a number of ways. Firstly, Peter is a keen photographer and could quickly get the right shot. Secondly, almost everyone knows him and so he was trusted; this would not have been the same if I were the one knocking on doors. Thirdly, it meant that I began to know Ashley in a more intimate way, and more people began to know me, at least by sight. Each place we stopped at was an opportunity which prompted Peter to recall significant events and details of parish life. Peter took many more photos on his own, and I contributed a few to the collection. He printed them out and we painstakingly collaged them on to a large base map, at first by hand, with pins (see Figure 72) and then using Photoshop when the task became too complex. Each photo we looked at provoked further conversation about the place and its people. Some buildings were particularly interesting from a landscape point of view, such as Ashley Barn. Looking at this prompted Peter to show me his photo of the barn from 1970 (as shown in Figure 41, Chapter Three) during road widening works, and we talked about traffic in the village. We discussed how traffic had developed as a significant problem in Ashley, how the road widening had contributed to this, and the measures he took whilst Chair of the PC.

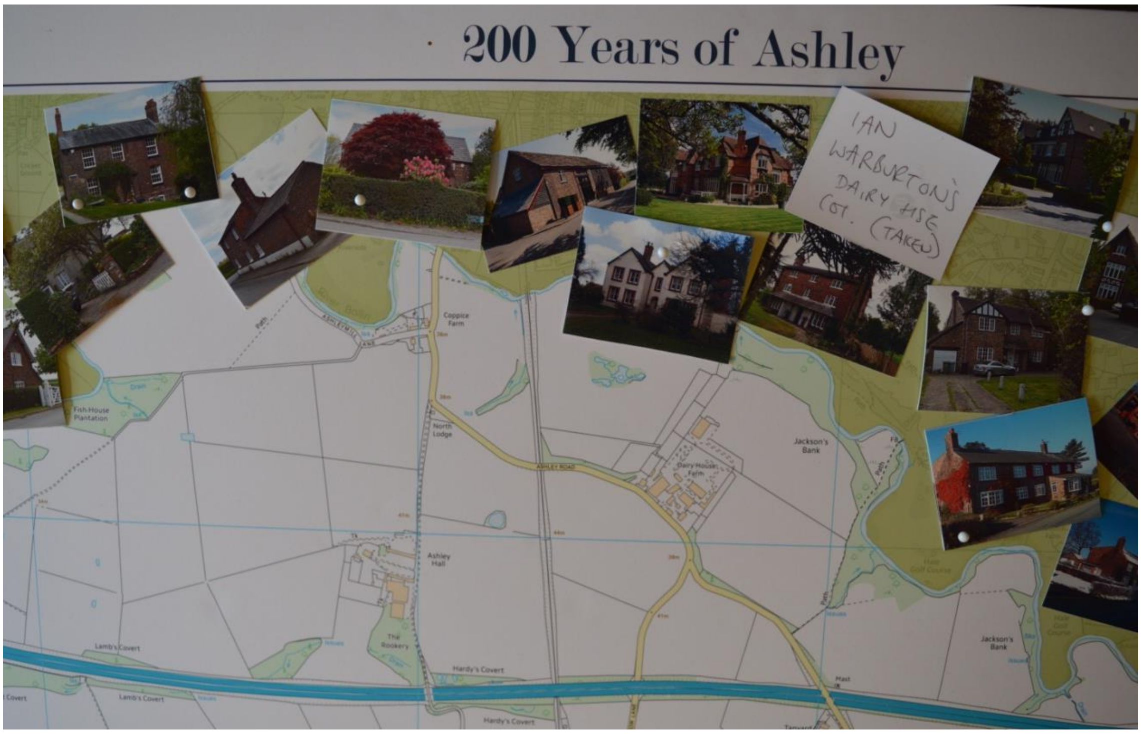

200 Years of Ashley
IAN WARBURTON'S DAIRY HSE COT. (TAKEN)
Coppice Farm
North Lodge
Ashley Hall
The Rookery
Jackson's Bank
Dairy House Farm
Fish-House Plantation
Lamb's Covert
Hardy's Covert
ASHLEY ROAD

Figure 72. Photos roughly collaged on to base map of Ashley; work in progress on the Peter Wright map (author's photo)

Evaluation and commentary on findings from the Peter Wright map

	principle for engagement	rating
	Supports emergent public engagement with landscape…	
1	**begins with simple interactions but embraces evolving complexity**	🟩
2	**allows inhabitants to set agenda, initiate & sustain methods of engagement**	🟩
3	**values the role of embodied landscape knowledge**	🟩
4	**responds to emerging circumstances**	🟧
5	**aims to achieve a public conversation and a 'reflective capacity', not consensus**	🟥
	and in the case of engagement with specific landscape proposals…	
6	**is 'in at the start' and sustained for the life of the project**	🟥
7	**connects local people directly to designers of infrastructure and landscape**	🟥

8	**uses qualitative and deliberative methods to examine landscape in depth**	🟩
9	**utilises knowledge and creativity of public to inform decision-making**	🟥
10	**welcomes proposals originating from public and seeks to elicit such proposals**	🟥

Table 10. Evaluation grid for the Peter Wright map

This joint map-making venture had some significant strengths as an example of emergent landscape engagement. The conversations that we had were not in the form of structured interviews, but were dictated largely by Peter himself, and by his lived experience of the landscape we were discussing. My role was to listen, and to engage in debate over the best way to arrange the map. This results in the high ratings for **principles one to three**. Making the map did become a much more complex activity than we had at first realised, and could have led to further mapping projects, which Peter was keen to do together, but time did not allow. Using the map as a basis for extended discussion also means that this activity rates highly as a qualitative and deliberative method (**principle eight**). As the grid makes apparent, however, it has some limitations. Firstly, though the forays in to village photography did have a public element, the ensuing conversations were not at all public, taking place between the two of us, at Peter's dining room table. This severely limits the potential for the engagement activity to expand the network of contacts and have wider impacts. Secondly, Peter had little interest in engaging with the specific proposals for HS2; what he wanted was a visual record of how Ashley is at the present time. This meant that for the most part, the principles relating to engagement with landscape proposals could not be addressed in this instance of application of the method.

I have given **principle seven** a 'red' rating as in this case there was no connection made with designers at HS2. It is not, however, impossible to imagine that such a mode of engagement with an inhabitant could be used by engagement professionals at the start of a project, in order to begin a networking process and gain basic local knowledge.

The finished map can be seen below, Figure 73.

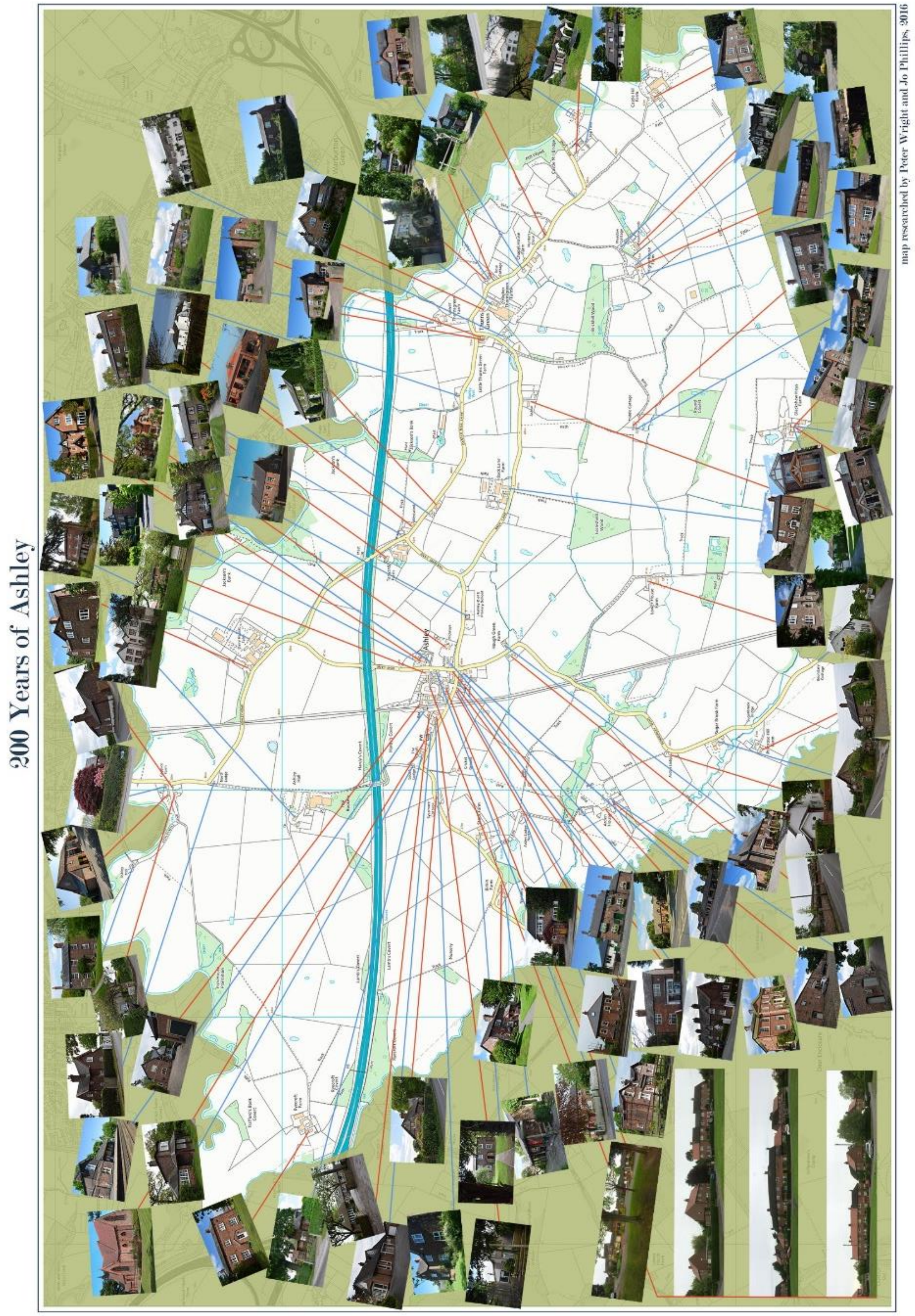

200 Years of Ashley
map researched by Peter Wright and Jo Phillips, 2016
Ashley

Figure 73. The final Peter Wright map, showing the facades and locations of all the buildings in Ashley (original size A0). It is a good record of the visual character of the built form of Ashley.

5.9 Conclusions to this chapter

This chapter has reported on and evaluated a diverse collection of methods which I used to learn about Ashley from the people who live there. Some of these methods, in particular walking and map making, were planned at the start of the research, although their precise nature evolved as part of the action research cycle. Other methods, such as the Rose Queen fêtes, the Peter Wright map, and the involvement in neighbourhood planning, emerged from interaction with the Parish and were proposed by residents. All have made a combined contribution, in a complex relationship, such that it is not possible to say that any were superfluous.

As set out at the start of this chapter, three things were being tested here; the methods used, the ten working principles, and through these, the emergent methodology itself.

The methods have been evaluated through each grid, and it is clear that some were markedly more suited to an emergent methodology than others. Walking the landscape with participants was the best fit for an emergent methodology. It was a flexible and fruitful method and indispensable to the research. This was because at the same time as providing experiences in which direct connection to the landscape was foremost, it also formed a crucial part of the networking process. This was essential to progress, although it did not succeed in extending the network very far in to the ranks of HS2 employees.

The Rose Queen mapping activities and web site had some specific strengths but were of more limited scope in terms of fulfilling the principles of emergent engagement. The least successful method was the time spent engaging with the Parish Council, although it was arguably essential out of courtesy and respect for the democratic process and did have real value in publicly legitimising my research within the Parish.

The ten working principles for emergent engagement with landscape were derived from my hypothesis that emergence theory can be used to understand the landscape of Ashley (as set out in Chapters One to Four and summarised in Table 1). They have been applied to each method, to test whether the principles are a *workable* basis for evolving a set of practical guidelines for strategies of engagement with large scale infrastructure. The evaluation grids indicate that the most workable guiding principles for the methods used are **one**, **two** and **six**, with six, five and six 'green' ratings, respectively (see Figure 74). The majority of the working principles, eight of the ten, earn a number of 'green' ratings which far outweigh the 'red'. Of the remaining two, by far the least workable principle using these methods is number **seven**, relating to connecting local people directly to landscape designers, which gains six 'red' ratings and only one 'green'. This reflects the fact that I was not successful in developing the work sufficiently to get HS2 designers walking or working with residents. In time, this would, perhaps, have been possible, but it means that this thesis cannot test the proposition that such direct contact would be valuable. I would still contend, however, that everything points to the likelihood of this, and that further research could explore this aspect as a later-stage development of an emergent engagement process. This would not be the same as direct contact between designers and inhabitants (such as a design charrette) which had *not* arisen out of a process based on emergent principles.

The second-least workable principle using these methods is number **nine**, relating to using the publics' knowledge to inform decision-making by professionals. This has not been significantly tested by my action research methods for similar reasons; a lack of developed contact with HS2 Ltd, which proved impossible within the available time.

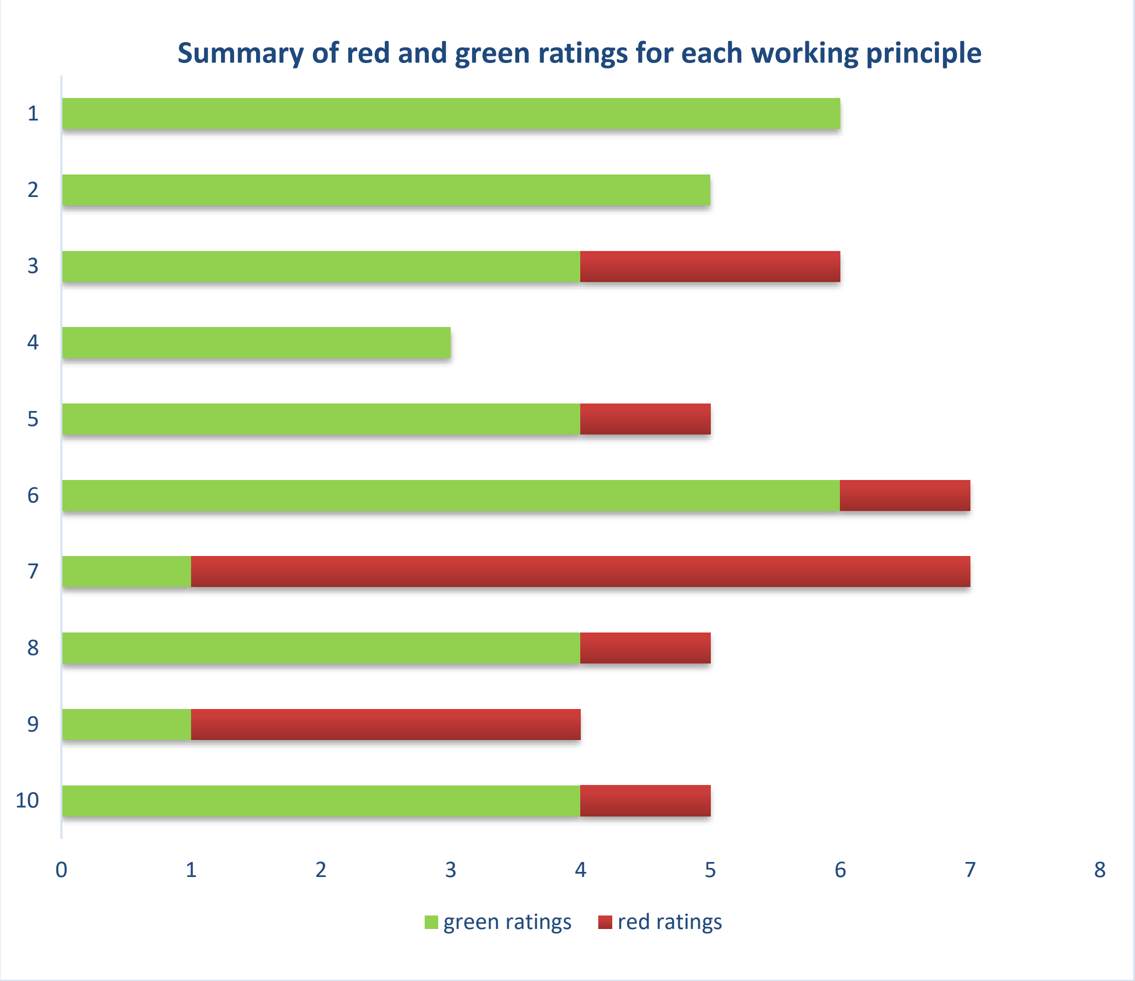


Figure 74. Graph summarising red and green ratings for each of the ten working principles

These ten working principles have been used to derive my five 'recommendations for cascading primary engagement with existing landscape' (see section 6.5) and five 'recommendations for cascading engagement with infrastructure proposals' (see section 6.6). Due to the complex and interconnected nature of this work, it would not be realistic to attempt to map each one of the ten principles directly on to one of the ten final recommendations. An attempt to draw these interconnections results in a spaghetti-like confusion, because every aspect of this research links to every other aspect (see Section 1.4 regarding open systems). There is, however, one aspect which has arisen from the action research which I did not anticipate in the ten working principles. This is expressed in my final recommendation number four (proposing the need for landscape advocacy) and is not specifically linked to any one of the working propositions. See section 5.9.1. below, for further discussion of this.

The emergent methodology has been tested in this chapter, in that its capacity to support an engagement process and aid in devising workable methods for that process has been examined through the scrutiny of both methods and working principles. I find that the trialling of emergent methods does indicate that the methodology supports a fruitful engagement strategy which answers some of the significant challenges of engaging with an emergent landscape, and specifically of public involvement in HS2 (as outlined in earlier chapters). It was particularly important that most of the methods were either very flexible in order to respond to emerging circumstances in Ashley, or were initially proposed by residents themselves, as was the case with the Peter Wright map, the Rose Queen Fetes, and also neighbourhood planning, of which more in the next chapter.

5.9.1 Landscape Advocacy

This aspect has emerged from the whole experience of undertaking the action research. It was not something I had expected to discover. What I had not anticipated was finding the significant need for a person to take the role of 'landscape advocate' in local places.

In the context of Planning, Robyn Eversole finds that "there is a need for translation agents who are comfortable in the circles of both the powerful and the powerless, and who are able to facilitate the journeys of both." (Eversole, 2012: 37). This idea of translation goes some way towards describing what the role of a landscape advocate might be. From a review of placemaking literature, Eggertsen Teder finds four identifiable roles for professionals in co-creational placemaking. These are the curator, the facilitator, the metadesigner and the negotiator. To these she proposes two additions, the involver and the enthusiast (Eggertsen Teder, 2018). All of these roles relate to the careful operation of inter-personal dynamics, with the aim of making interactions between inhabitants and professionals more productive and positive. Whilst any of these roles might also be performed by a landscape advocate, my research strongly supports the idea that there is a need for a person acting as intermediary *between the landscape itself and the people and institutions who stake their claims upon it*. The landscape advocate would seek to ensure that the best outcomes for the place itself are the priority, rather than political and commercial aims; the interests of particular individuals, groups, companies and government.

Huybrechts et al (2016) describe different roles for designers which they identified in the context of participatory design of the city. These include the "role of discovering or surfacing the existing publics that exist around a certain issue" (Huybrechts et al., 2016: 102). They found that this role as a 'trigger' of publics resulted in an "organic inventory and creation of attachments" (Huybrechts et al., 2016) between inhabitants. This function is close to what I have described in section 5.5.2 regarding networking in Ashley and would form an aspect of the role of landscape advocate, in line with an emergent methodology. Huybrechts et al also discuss the designer in this function as a kind of catalyst, but note that this gives this person a 'prominent' role (Huybrechts et al., 2016). Although the concept of a catalytic role is a good fit with an emergent strategy, in that the advocate could catalyse increased public engagement, it would be important that the landscape advocate were not performing the function of 'designer', as this presupposes that a landscape intervention of some kind will be designed. Although the person might have previously trained as a landscape designer they would not be performing as such within the advocacy role, as this would be a conflict of interest.

In the case of HS2 the only mediators currently available are those engagement professionals who are employed directly by HS2 Ltd. These teams are, as has been discussed, not currently in any position to act effectively as landscape advocates. In the case of neighbourhood planning, the only available mediators are planning consultants and local authority planning officers, who, I would suggest, could be in a biased position due to their professional stance. This thesis proposes that there are therefore good reasons to look for a landscape advocate with no specific political allegiances or attachment to national government, who is in a position to help residents to face pressures brought to bear by development proposals. It is crucial to recognise that "The person facilitating the discourse arena is [also] in a potentially powerful position." (Tewdwr-Jones and

Allmendinger, 1998: 1985). An understanding of the ethical dimension of the role is therefore also important. Eversole finds that ultimate goal of true participation in planning is,

> "a veritable mirage: the way of thinking that creates it, also makes it impracticable. Formal development organizations, by virtue of their own identity and positioning as change agents, have difficulty seeing the change agency of others."

(Eversole, 2012: 31-32)

The policy mediator role therefore needs to be effective in activating, enabling and supporting the change agency of inhabitants.

Gallent finds that, in his case studies; "what stands out here as a key message is that those actors perceived to be further away from regulatory process found it easier to work with communities." (Gallent, 2013: 392). The research in Ashley suggests to me that an academic researcher could fulfil these criteria. They would need to have no commercial, professional or political interests in the specific policies of the NP and could stand independently from the planning profession. Landscape architects would be suitable specialists with the relevant overview of landscape concerns needed to be able to fulfil the role, though no design work would be required. The landscape advocate could be the stimulus for a phase transition in to cascading engagement with landscape. Furthermore, they could seek to nurture potential future advocates in order to sustain the engagement process over ever-extending periods. Huybrechts et al experimented with how to pass on the role of engagement facilitator over time, in the context of developing a web platform with communities, and found this to be a key aspect of self-organisation in long projects (Huybrechts et al., 2018).

In summary, the investigations in Ashley support my concluding proposal for 'cascading engagement with landscape'. *Crucially, this describes a process which is self-organising* (see Section 1.4) and so out of the control of central government agencies, local groups and individual residents, but which could perhaps address landscape challenges on the scale of those presented by the anticipated HS2 railway. This lack of controllability could avoid dominance by parties with vested interests and form the basis for a strengthened and broadened culture of participation in landscape. It is a way of conceiving of a response to cascading land development (see section 1.7) which could hope to match the scale of that challenge. The concept of cascading engagement with landscape is the ultimate conclusion of this research and will be further explained in Chapter Seven.

Chapter Six

Neighbourhood planning

“while we want to encourage desirable stability…we also want to avoid pathological stability (e.g. chronic unemployment, a state of war or a dictatorship) …it rests on the recognition that humans are not outsiders to any ecosystem – rather, we are participants in its unfolding, and agents of its design.”

(Lister, 2015: 126)

6.1 Abstract

This chapter describes why I agreed to become involved in Ashley’s neighbourhood plan and how this came about. It examines how, in theory, a neighbourhood plan should be based on originating landscape proposals from inhabitants, from the ground up, working in much the same way as an emergent process of engagement with landscape. It briefly outlines local contextual factors of housing supply and related government policy. It looks at recent critiques of neighbourhood planning and assesses why it is not, in fact, suited as an emergent engagement method, using direct experience in Ashley to reflect on the academic literature.

Neighbourhood planning policy is briefly described in Appendix C.

6.2 Reasons for involvement in Ashley’s Neighbourhood Plan

Helping APC to prepare and compile evidence for their neighbourhood plan (NP) was a significant development which I had not foreseen at the outset of the research. I believe that this opportunity arose partly because my continued presence as a researcher in the Parish meant that landscape issues had become publicly acknowledged as a significant current issue. In the opinion of Councillor Capp, “None of this would have happened” without my involvement in the Parish (conversation no. 31, Appendix B). When a Parish Councillor asked me to join the Ashley NP Group in December 2016, I agreed, in order to better understand the relationship between neighbourhood planning and engagement with both landscape and landscape proposals. APC had decided to go ahead with making their NP in the autumn of 2016. By January 2017 a working group was up and running and initial liaison with a NP support officer at Cheshire East Council had begun. From this point in time my role in Ashley changed, as I had to some extent been adopted by the parish council in to an ‘insider’ role, rather than that of an external observer.

In order to focus my activity within the NP, I decided that I wanted to research two specific problems:

1. Within the context of an emergent landscape, what role might a neighbourhood plan play in anticipating the landscapes of HS2?
2. Furthermore, what role might the independent academic researcher perform in such a neighbourhood plan process?

By assisting the parish council to make the NP, it was possible to:

- Continue to carry out public engagement with the local landscape, but with the likelihood of increased participation due to the public backing of the PC;
- Improve my understanding and analysis of the process of neighbourhood planning by experiencing it from the ‘inside’, as appropriate for an action research project;
- Gain access to individuals within other organisations, for example Cheshire East Council, whose insights were very valuable;
- Gain improved access to HS2 public engagement representatives, who were slightly more responsive to the Ashley NP Steering Group than to the requests of a ‘lone’ academic;
- Have the experience of writing the draft Local Landscape Character Assessment (LLCA) for Ashley. This was useful to the PC and hugely improved my detailed understanding of the place, as it offered more opportunities to walk with residents whilst undertaking character assessment of the whole Parish;

- Interrogate the potential contained within the neighbourhood planning process for meaningful emergent engagement with landscapes at a local scale;
- Formulate judgements about the purpose and value of NPs;
- Reflect on the potential usefulness of NPs in the prevention of unwanted cascading development in rural areas in the wake of HS2.

All of these points meant that being a part of the NP process was very valuable; from the point of view of a researcher; there were clear pragmatic reasons for getting involved. The last point, however, became the most pertinent of all in terms of research findings, in order to progress with an understanding of the possible role of the NP in giving the public a say in influencing the direction of landscape change.

In the writing of the NP and in anticipating HS2, Ashley faces two significant landscape challenges which, although separate, are unavoidably connected. The devolved Planning process cannot directly address the challenges of high speed rail. This is, in part, because little more than the bare facts about the alignment itself are known in Ashley, during the period of 2017-18 in which HS2 and its contractors work on the Environmental Impact Assessment and designs for the landscape adjacent to the line.

Inevitably, this makes the NP process more complicated. At the first public meeting for residents (conversation 31, Appendix B) there was some confusion amongst attendees about the relationship between the Plan and HS2. Understanding the system of Parliamentary approval via the select committees, Royal Assent and compulsory purchase is difficult. It is not immediately apparent what will be the relationship between the line itself, on land essentially controlled by an Act of Parliament, and proximate parcels of land in private hands, controlled by local planning mechanisms. This relationship will only become fully legible as the HS2 project evolves over time, but it will be a complex one, and will be both physical (visual and ecological) and legal. My findings, however, suggest that Ashley's two separate landscape challenges do have a very straightforward link. This is that both require inhabitants to proactively engage with powerful external forces of government, by undertaking to synthesise their landscape knowledge and formulate empowered ways of presenting it to agents of that government, whether they be representatives of HS2 Ltd or LA planning officers. Taking this view allows one to conceive of both challenges as potentially very positive for the local landscapes and inhabitants in question. Before the advent of these challenges, public engagement with Ashley's landscape was arguably very limited. Farmers (only 6% of the population of the parish)

(Cheshire Community Action, 2013) have a strong connection to the land, albeit one constrained by economic realities. Other individuals pursue their own interests in photography or wildlife. There was little or no public ‘conversation’ or attempt to move towards any agreed goals for the landscape, because no immediate and distinct threats to it were really perceived, despite general discontent about the airport, or motorway noise (evidenced for example in Ashley mapping workshop outputs, Figure 71). This became evident at my first parish council meetings (conversations 8 and 11, Appendix B). The PC had become, in my personal view as external observer, weighed down by recurring agenda items about maintenance of footpaths, blocked drainage gullies and condition of roadside railings. The degree of engagement with landscape demanded by the twin challenges, however, is considerable, requiring the evolution of a shared understanding of significant and diverse issues such as ecological impacts, traffic management, noise pollution, public rights of way and agricultural practices. They could be seen, therefore, as opportunities for inhabitants to re-acquaint themselves with the nature of their evolving landscape, to thoughtfully consider its needs and its vulnerabilities, and to join together in seeking to devise strategies for its future.

The right of a community to draw up an NP (the most devolved tier of the legislation, see Figure 83, Appendix C) was introduced in the Localism Act of 2011, which says that “local communities should have genuine opportunities to influence the future of the places where they live.” (Department for Communities and Local Government, November 2011: 12). The emphasis of the legislation is on communities deciding on the nature of acceptable development and allocating specific preferred sites. It does not allow for residents to block all development in their neighbourhood. All policies must be in line with those of the Local Plan. In practice, this means that NPs cannot always express the opinions and desires of residents. In the case of housing development, for example, in the current climate of high demand for new homes, local authorities are seeking sites for large residential developments that parish councils are unlikely to want in their area.

Individual NP policies can specify a requirement for very few houses. The parish of Marton, near Congleton, for example which has had its NP adopted by Cheshire East, allows for housing development “to suit the needs of different groups of the population as detailed in the Housing Needs Assessment” (Marton Parish Council, 2015: 33). The ‘Housing Needs Assessment’ referred to was commissioned by the Marton PC itself, from a private consultant, and identifies a local need for no more than four dwellings in the next five years. It is difficult to see how NPs allocating such numbers will contribute to Cheshire East’s housing target of 36,000 new homes, given that the maximum number of NPs in the local authority area will be 108, from the 97 civil parishes and 11 towns with councils in the local authority area. The Neighbourhood planning system is in its early years, and how such tensions between individual NPs and the Cheshire East Local Plan will be resolved is yet to fully emerge.

The Neighbourhood Planning Bill, which received Royal assent on 27.04.2017, has two stated aims, according to the notes accompanying the Bill:

> "First, to help identify and free up more land to build homes on, to give communities as much certainty as possible about where and when development will take place. Second, to speed up the delivery of new homes"
>
> (DCLG, January 2017)

These aims leave little doubt as to the current government's purposes for neighbourhood planning, in that it will be used as a framework to supply land to construction firms who will profit from development. The Bill aims to offer guarantees of house building to communities, when in many cases it is likely to be the exact opposite that is desired by local inhabitants; they would prefer a certainty of no new housing developments.

Such opinions are sometimes discredited by those coming from an urban perspective as being overly conservative and damaging to progress. City-dwellers will nevertheless often protest with vigour should a local city park or playing field become subject to planning applications for housing. Neighbourhood planning should, in theory, offer an opportunity for populations outside of the metropolis to have their own voice in what happens to the landscape in which they have chosen to make their lives. Since the 2012 NPPF, their right to do so is seemingly enshrined in law. My involvement in the early stages of the APC neighbourhood plan was an opportunity to assess whether this works in practice, and to consider how effective the law is in encouraging mass public engagement with landscape.

6.3 Ashley and the national planning context – a 'broken housing market'?

Ashley lies entirely within the green belt and so any development in the Parish must ordinarily be judged against the relevant criteria set out in *the National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF) (Department for Communities and Local Government, March 2012). HS2 operates outside of this system, through the relevant Acts of Parliament. The

Framework sets out the purpose of the green belt as safeguarding the countryside, primarily by checking urban sprawl, preventing towns from merging together, preserving the setting and character of historic towns, and encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land. Fundamental to green belt policy is the requirement that “A local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in green belt” (Department for Communities and Local Government, March 2012: paragraph 89). There are some possible exceptions to this rule, such as buildings for agriculture and forestry, facilities for outdoor recreation and cemeteries. It is also possible to replace damaged and destroyed buildings, and to build housing which fills in vacant sites between existing houses within settlements. Affordable housing in villages can also be considered. These types of development can have a positive contribution to make to the life of a village, and part of the role of the NP is to require such development to meet specific quality criteria, decided upon by residents.

The spirit of this law should mean that the rural and distinct landscape character of places like Ashley is retained, but in practice this is not the case, as in Cheshire East at the present time. Here, the developing Local Plan will allow for 36,000 new homes, a number of which will be on sites identified in land surrounded by green belt around Knutsford (see Figure 75), Wilmslow, Handforth and Macclesfield (Cheshire East Council, 2017). In April 2016, the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) stated that 275,000 homes were proposed on green belt land across the UK; an increase of 25% on the previous year (CPRE, 2016).

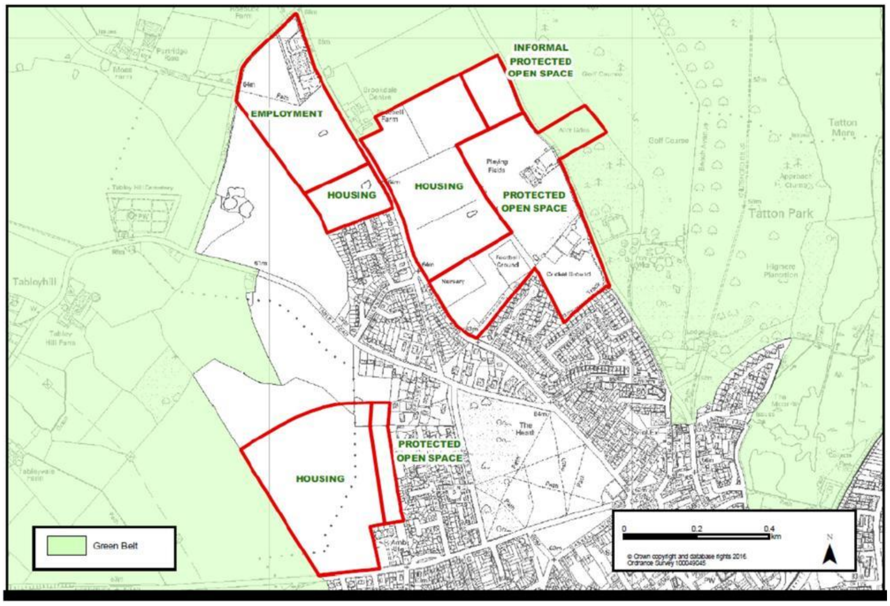

INFORMAL PROTECTED OPEN SPACE
EMPLOYMENT
HOUSING
HOUSING
PROTECTED OPEN SPACE
PROTECTED OPEN SPACE
HOUSING
Tatton Park
Tableyhill
Green Belt
0
0.2
0.4
km
N
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Figure 75. Sites proposed for development around the northern edge of Knutsford. They are not in green belt but are largely surrounded by it (Cheshire East Council, 2017).

This reflects the current perception of an urgent need for new homes in response to strong demand by buyers. At the level of national government, the housing white paper *Fixing Our Broken Housing Market* (Department for Communities and Local Government, February 2017) has the purpose of increasing the supply of new housing in the UK by:

> “allowing rural communities to grow and making it easier to build new settlements…[and] giving communities a stronger voice in the design of new housing to drive up the quality and character of new development, building on the success of neighbourhood planning”
>
> (Department for Communities and Local Government, February 2017: 6)

The government states its belief that these quantities of new homes are needed in order that the increased supply will reduce house prices overall and thereby make housing more affordable for first-time buyers who are trying to get on the ‘housing ladder’. In the words of Theresa May in the foreword to the same housing White Paper, house building “will slow the rise in housing costs so that more ordinary working families can afford to buy a home” (Department for Communities and Local Government, February 2017: 6). The government’s approach is supported by the Royal Town Planning Institute, whose statement in response to the White Paper noted that “RTPI welcomes the Government’s intention to join up development with infrastructure, which we have strongly advocated” (Royal Town Planning Institute, 8.2.2017). This housebuilding strategy is not universally expected to succeed, however. Critics point to evidence such as these findings from researchers at the London School of Economics:

> “there may be short-term disruption and downward pressure on prices in the immediately surrounding area during or just after construction… Thereafter, the evidence indicates that in all types of areas the new development generally blends into the broader housing market quite quickly and prices more closely follow the patterns observed in the wider area. It also suggests that developments… can lead to relatively rapid increases in prices in the neighbouring area.”
>
> (Whitehead et al., 2015: 26)

Other studies find that house building could eventually cause a reduction in prices, but only if the quantities of homes built are far in excess of what is proposed. In January 2016, the Financial Times surveyed 88 economists and found that none of them thought that the government’s proposed policies would reduce prices. Of the 88, “54 said current policies … would only succeed in increasing demand" (Financial Times, January 2016). One of those surveyed, Professor Ray Barrell of Brunel University, notes that;

"A significant increase in housebuilding can only be achieved by a systematic dismantling of the Greenbelt combined with careful planning of the resulting urban development."

(Financial Times, January 2016)

Building on green belt land has recently been much touted as the only answer to the problem of affordable housing supply, but it seems very unlikely that houses built on desirable green belt sites would be within the reach of first-time buyers and young families. In the same survey, Steve Hughes, Head of Economic and Social Policy at the Westminster 'Policy Exchange' think-tank, states that "Demand will be driven by the interest rate environment — even a small rise in interest rates will raise expectations of further rises to come, making first time buyers more cautious taking on big mortgages." (Financial Times, January 2016). Many economists argue that low global interest rates are actually what boost demand for houses and therefore inflate prices. In the period between the global financial crisis of 2008 and December 2016, the three-month Libor rate, which is the global interest rate benchmark, has for the most part, been below 0.4 % compared with a previous historic low of 0.5% (Financial Times, 16.12.2016) (The Guardian, 17.8.09). UK mortgage rates are, at the time of writing, so low that many well-off households with deposits saved can afford a second mortgage on a second home, which takes up housing stock, particularly in rural areas. This effect will contribute to the 600,000 vacant homes in England alone as of October 2015 (most recent available government estimate) (Department for Communities and Local Government, April 2016).

In Ashley, then, there exists a potential for tension between the green belt legislation, which by and large prohibits development, and government directives on Neighbourhood plans, which are intended to support, and arguably promote, development of local rural sites, in pursuit of economic growth.

6. 4 Recent critiques of neighbourhood planning

Neighbourhood planning cannot have any influence over the alignment of HS2. This is fixed by the parliamentary process of approving the High Speed Rail Act via the two Select Committees (House of Lords and House of Commons) and subsequent Royal Assent (granted for Phase 1 in February 2017). The detail of structural and landscape designs is decided by HS2 Ltd's appointed contractors such as AECOM, Arup and Atkins, who will not need to apply for any local planning consent, as all works will be covered by the Act, on land acquired for the purpose by compulsory purchase order. However, NPs could have influence over the long-term future of such landscapes; this is inherent in their stated purpose, to give communities "direct power to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood and shape the development and growth of their local area." (DCLG, January 2017: 1). Thus, they could perhaps determine the quality, nature and location of developments that arise in the wake of HS2 proposals, that is, where developers perceive profitable possibilities in anticipation of the line and stations being built. It may also be possible that NPs could have some indirect but worthwhile influence over mitigation measures proposed by HS2 Ltd. This aspect of my research has been undertaken in the spirit of experimental action research, testing out the idea that the role of Planning is;

> "to acknowledge and address some of the power inequalities in society to ensure that a general 'public interest' is taken into account in this mediation between different and competing interests."
>
> (Allmendinger and Haughton, 2012: 89)

As a starting point, I asked two landscape architects, one employed directly by HS2 Ltd, and the other working on contracts for HS2, and also the HS2 Residents Commissioner, Deborah Fazan, whether HS2 Ltd requires that neighbourhood plans (whether 'made' or in progress) along the route are taken in to consideration by landscape architects, planners or engineers. The contractor's response was that this was not, to the best of the respondent's knowledge, a requirement, and nor had she known it to happen. Her work is specific to a small number of locations, and not route-wide.

HS2's own landscape architect, in contrast, said that sites allocated for development by NPs would definitely be taken in to account by HS2 Ltd's Planners as part of the baseline conditions, and perhaps also by their landscape architects as they would materially affect the plans for the railway. He also said that there was a recognition that there might be ideas in the NPs that could be mutually beneficial for implementing green infrastructure near the line. This is potentially very positive for parishes like Ashley. There is no evidence, however, that HS2 requires its landscape professionals to look at NPs; this may just be determined by good practice of individuals. No mention of neighbourhood plans is made in the 2017 *Community Engagement Strategy*. Deborah Fazan passed my enquiry to the HS2 helpdesk, who have not responded.

As Sanoff says, “History shows that better public decisions happen when the public is involved in the decision-making process.” (Sanoff, 2005: 63). Planning could potentially be seen as a democratic process, in that it is directed by a department of national government and then enacted, or at least overseen, by locally elected citizens on whose initiative the process begins. The localism agenda claims to do this, but my experience in Ashley suggests that things do not work this way in practice, as will be discussed below. Academic planning literature also presents a contrary view and has problematised such assumptions over more than two decades. Allmendinger and Haughton (2012) and Allmendinger and Tewdwr-Jones (1998), for example, provide reviews of the progress of academic critical thought about the Planning system over this period of change in national governments, from Conservative to New Labour and through to the first years of the Conservative/Liberal Democrat Coalition. Although Planning legislation was revised in this period, certain of their findings may remain valid regardless of legislative changes, for example; “It is not news that Planners are market supportive and operate to legitimate and facilitate capital accumulation” (Allmendinger and Haughton, 2012: 98). Should this particular finding prove to be true in the present and future, implications for Ashley and places like it are not just significant, but in the light of the possibility of cascading development (as outlined above) absolutely critical in determining the future of rural places. During the course of my research, an anonymous Cheshire East Council Neighbourhood Planning Manager (conversation no. 40, see Appendix B) emphasised to me that Planning is not a democratic process and has never been so; rather its outcomes are inevitably based on the professional judgement of individual Planners. This view is supported at a local level by an example from Ashley. An anonymous participant (conversation no. 51, see Appendix B) told me the story of his own planning application to convert a small barn into a dwelling. The application was going well and set for approval, until a change of personnel at Cheshire East Council. A new Planning Officer was allocated to the application and rejected it outright because she disagreed with the fundamental nature of the proposals. This is just one everyday instance which illustrates that the ideals of participatory democracy may well not be pertinent to a critique of the Planning system, despite many reiterations in the literature produced by central government, that NPs give communities “a say over how their area is developed” (DCLG, January 2017: 2). Such language gives a general impression of a democratic procedure without any commitment to actual empowerment of local people, who, we are told, will “recognise the benefits that appropriate development can bring.” (DCLG, January 2017: 2). Taking a more positive view, it may be that once Ashley’s NP is in place, it may protect the parish from such unpredictable decisions, by setting out very clear requirements by which any planning applications will be judged.

My interpretation of the process by which Planning legislation is devolved is expressed in Figure 76, which illustrates the Planning process in a more dynamic way than the static diagram of Figure 83 (Appendix C). It suggests that Planning law originates with members of the Planning profession who advise central government, then is administered by Planners at local authority level. It is then controlled by consultant Planners at the parish level, and checked by local Planners to see that the NP conforms to the legislation. It is ultimately examined and recommended by another Planner. This supplies a steady flow of work for independent planning consultants.

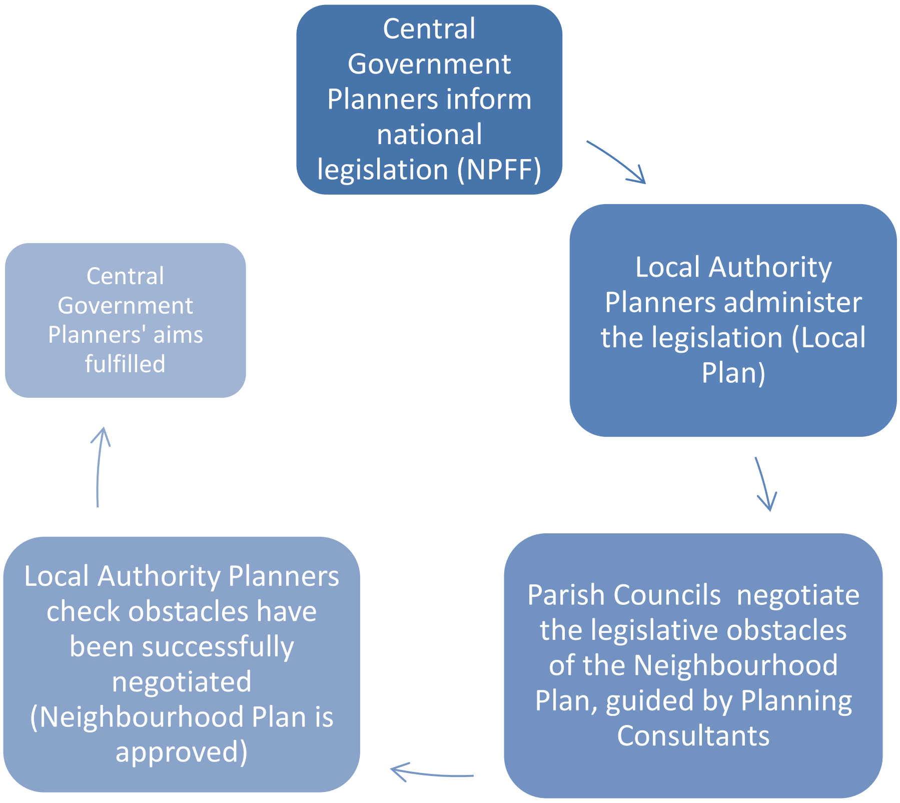
Central Government Planners inform national legislation (NPFF)
Local Authority Planners administer the legislation (Local Plan)
Parish Councils negotiate the legislative obstacles of the Neighbourhood Plan, guided by Planning Consultants
Local Authority Planners check obstacles have been successfully negotiated (Neighbourhood Plan is approved)
Central Government Planners' aims fulfilled

Figure 76. The UK's self-contained planning system is not run by elected officials, but by the Planning profession (author's diagram).

Realistically, then, the spaces within this linear system for actual influence over Planning by local inhabitants appear to be minimal. This observation is in accordance with much of the academic Planning literature. Allmendinger and Haughton, for example, find that the system is:

> "…not so much an empowering arena for debating wide-ranging societal options for future development, as a system focused on carefully stage-managed processes

> with subtly but clearly defined parameters of what is open for debate… focusing on delivering growth expedited through some carefully choreographed processes for participation which minimise the potential for those with conflicting views to be given a meaningful hearing. "
>
> (Allmendinger and Haughton, 2012: 90)

This condemnation of the system is not an isolated view. Parker et al, for example, examine the relationship between the Parish and the Local Authority (LA) and find that it is:

> "one of "critical dependency"; where every stage of the process needs sign-off by the LA and where the NDP must be in general conformity with the Local Plan policies, also devised by the LA. Rather than constituting a truly co-creative relationship, this represents a hierarchical and unbalanced partnership, one that is often complicated by the input of private sector consultants."
>
> (Parker et al, 2017: 8)

In view of such findings, my research in to the NP process in Ashley sought to find out whether the NP might be 'un-stage-managed' and might not proceed from an initial presumption of the need for growth. Neither, of course, should it seek to prevent landscape change. Furthermore, I aimed to encourage the Plan to progress without dependency on Cheshire East Council and sought to write a LLCA which was co-created (see Chapter Three) and which minimised use of private sector consultants. I am aware that my own involvement could perhaps be construed as a 'professionalisation' of the Plan, but I am not a Planner, and will argue that there is a good case for such support from academics (see Chapter Seven).

In practice, NP policies have to allocate land for development. This is not openly stated in the NPPF, but clearly implied; the full official title of the document is, in fact, 'Neighbourhood Development Plan' (as used in the Localism Act of 2011); a name which does not tend to appear in public-facing guidance. The official statements that demand site allocation are very carefully worded, as in this example; "A neighbourhood plan should support the strategic development needs set out in the Local Plan and plan positively to support local development" (DCLG, 2017).

The implication that land must be allocated for development is sustained throughout the supporting guidance literature supplied by organisations such as 'Locality', which is an arm of the DCLG, and the Royal Town Planning Institute's 'Planning Aid', which is funded by the DCLG. Examples from Locality's *Neighbourhood plans Roadmap Guide* include a summary of suggested content for the NP, which has a section entitled "Site allocations and/or development envelopes." (Chetwyn, n.d.: 28) and restates the basic condition that NPs "must contribute to the achievement of sustainable development" (Chetwyn, n.d.: 39). Development, then, is required, albeit softened by the qualifier 'sustainable', which is not meaningful in this context. An example from the Planning Aid literature comes from their *How to work with landowners and the development industry* booklet, which gives three reasons why 'you' should engage with landowners; "To identify potential sites for development…To identify any site constraints…To secure their agreement" (Planning Aid 1, Royal Town Planning Institute, no date-a: 4). This booklet concludes that engaging with developers and landowners could be essential in order to "deliver the sustainable development you want to see in your area" (my italics) (Planning Aid 1, Royal Town Planning Institute, no date-a: 8). It is worth noting the imperative quality of this language. The same suite of booklets also contains guidance on *How to prepare a character assessment to support design policy within a neighbourhood plan*, a title which assumes that the essential baseline conditions work is undertaken in order to prepare for built form of some kind, as it will "be used by developers and their architects to help them understand the local character." (Planning Aid 2, Royal Town Planning Institute, no date-b: 3).

My interview with a planning manager at the local authority supports this interpretation of the legislation in action, as the officer informed me that the reality is that if the NP does not specify sites for housing it "will be foisted on you anyway" (conversation no. 40, see Appendix B). It seems reasonable to conclude that these Plans have the purpose of expediting development, by manoeuvring local people in to a position where they are obliged to propose rather than oppose development, even if their dearly-held wishes would originally have been to retain the existing landscape without further built form.

Soon after the advent of the NPPF in 2012, Nick Gallent, writing about that recent transition in Planning legislation, found that the replacement of the old system of Parish Plans and Regional Strategies was desired by his case study communities because of their;

> "…belief that most decisions had already been made at national and regional level, and that the planning authority was merely the harbinger of bad news, sugar-coating this news with a pretence of participation in a context of mutual powerlessness."
>
> (Gallent, 2013: 391)

Five years on from Gallent's work, it is relevant to ask whether the new system, at NP level, is delivering anything better than a sugar-coating of unwelcome development plans.

6.5 Initiation of the neighbourhood planning process in Ashley

The 'stage-management' and 'choreography' (Allmendinger and Haughton, 2012) of participation in neighbourhood planning can, unfortunately, begin with the very instigation of the NP in an individual parish. At this point, interested parties may see opportunities to steer the process and outcomes of the Plan for their own gain. Neighbourhood planning is prescribed by central government as being within the remit of a PC (or Neighbourhood Forum in unparished areas) and the drive to undertake the preparation of a NP should perhaps, therefore, come from a person or group of people living in a parish. These are likely to be elected Parish Councillors but could be any interested person who has approached or been nominated by the PC. In practice, the Local Authority (LA) has been found to instigate the NP process in individual parishes in over a third of cases (from a sample of 120 Plans, Parker et al, 2015). This is likely to be because it is useful to the LA to speed up the process of communities allocating sites for housing development, in order to contribute to their Local Plan targets. Major landowners (who may also be property developers) can also benefit considerably from a Plan that allocates their land for housing development.

In Ashley, the impetus to write a NP first came not from the LA or the PC, but from the Tatton Estate landowner, referred to here as Mr C. In my first walk with an Ashley inhabitant (conversation no. 3, Appendix B), he told me that he had been trying to get the Parish Council to agree to begin work on the NP. Mr C's specific plans for development in Ashley were put eventually before the APC meeting of 27.11.2107. Although it is not possible to reproduce here the document that the Tatton Estate had submitted to that meeting, it was a response to a 'call for sites' which proposed development of over 30 hectares of their land, across six sites in Ashley.

As a public engagement process is required as part of the evidence base for the NP, I wanted to investigate its potential value in provoking an emergent primary engagement with the landscape of the Parish. I also needed to avoid creating 'engagement fatigue' amongst Ashley residents, which would have been a likely outcome if they had been asked to attend landscape engagement events with me, in addition to those of the NP. I did, therefore, offer significant help with the Plan; in person at PC meetings, and in writing to the Chair of the PC, on 23.11.2017. There was no response to these offers at the time. Autumn 2016, however, brought two vacancies for Councillors, and the two new recruits changed the dynamic of the PC; one of whom, Dr B was highly engaged with landscape issues and wanted to start work on the Plan. At this point I became officially involved; a move that contributed to HS2 and its consequences for landscape becoming a significant part of the agenda for the NP working group.

Dr B took responsibility for getting the Plan off the ground. She accepted voluntary offers of help and brought together an initial steering group. She did not invite any specific individuals to be on this group, so it was made up, initially, of people who had proactively claimed an interest in the landscape of Ashley. In this way, it was, at first, a promisingly bottom-up exercise. In due course, Mr C made contact, and asked to be invited to attend meetings of the core steering group. There is no statutory obligation for landowners to be included on NP steering groups, but members of the group expressed their perceptions that they had angered the landowner by not specifically inviting him (conversation no. 36, Appendix B). At this point, one member officially withdrew from the process and no longer wanted to be linked with it, despite her personal concern for the landscape. At this time, another group member, whose family were long-term tenants, reported that although her parents had initially been keen to offer support to the group, they now wanted to be disassociated from it. I concur with the conclusions of Parker et al, who say that the NP process “may be susceptible to co-option by powerful interests” (Parker et al., 2015: 2). As noted by Huybrechts et al in the context of co-design of the public realm,

> “as a method of bringing together a wide range of actors to identify and develop possible futures…it is not unusual that co-design can act as a conduit for market forces and other forms of private interest.”
>
> (Huybrechts et al., 2017: 145)

With a population of just 325 (Cheshire Community Action, 2013) it was not easy for Ashley to pull together a team of residents able to undertake the major task of making a NP. Meetings were led, for the first few weeks, by the capable Dr B. She resigned from the group following a public meeting at which the landowner questioned the value of the work done up to that point and challenged her impartiality (conversation no. 41, Appendix B). Her great asset had been that she was not a tenant of Mr C, and nor were any of her family.

At this point, there was only one fully active member of the steering group other than myself, and she took over the job of Chair. This was Mrs E, whose family have been residents of the parish for several generations, and who hold the tenancy of one of the Tatton Estate farms.

In such a context, with conflicting interests and unequal power relations in the local landscape, it would be highly problematic to make ‘consensus’ the goal of a planning exercise. Consensus is, in any case, a difficult concept to reconcile with a democratic process in which a majority vote will carry the referendum, as is the case with the residents’ vote on a draft NP. Chantal Mouffe explains the importance of *conflict* to democratic endeavours, saying that conflict must take a form which does not destroy the association between the conflicting groups (Mouffe, 2005). In this case, that association would be formed by various forms of engagement with the landscape. Mouffe asserts that “some kind of common bond must exist between the parties in conflict, so that they will not treat their opponents as enemies to be eradicated” (Mouffe, 2005: 20). Ideally, this common bond would be found through the co-operative and ongoing making of a neighbourhood plan, but the fixed nature of the document, once ‘made’, means that it is very unlikely that it can express the evolving conflicting desires of the parties involved.

Critics point out the drawbacks of aspiring to consensus in the context of engagement with planning decisions, for example; “There is a danger (if not inevitability) that seeking consensus will silence rather than give voice.” (Tewdwr-Jones and Allmendinger, 1998: 1979). The issue here is that residents who feel most passionately and can speak most confidently could prevent others’ contrasting views from being heard at all, as a group attempts to resolve public discussion in to a single consensus view. If people in a community feel obliged to reach consensus then less strongly-voiced opinions will perhaps be cast aside. The term ‘community’ itself is often misleadingly used in the Planning literature, suggesting “a misleading homogeneity and solidarity” (Friedmann, 1989: 128).

Conflict and dissent are positive and necessary parts of the policy decision-making process, in order that views and ideas are fully interrogated (Allmendinger and Haughton, 2012). Writing at the inception of the NP system in 2012, Allmendinger and Haughton feared that:

> “The system that is now being set up … still relies heavily on notions of consensus-building through better public engagement, but allies this to local area politics… which if anything seem designed to further marginalise the opportunities for fundamental conflicts to gain a voice.”
>
> (Allmendinger and Haughton, 2012: 101)

In Ashley, it is not difficult to see how a desire to reach consensus could indeed silence people. In the first residents' engagement meeting for the Ashley NP some considerable time was devoted to an open discussion of whether or not the steering group would be able to get all residents to agree to allocating sites for houses. The NP group representatives sought to explain as clearly as possible that firstly, they were not aiming to persuade people in to allocating sites and secondly there would not need to be full consensus on the Plan, as only a majority of the turnout must approve the plan in order for it to pass the referendum. Thus, in theory, if only three people turn out to vote, and two vote in support of the Plan, one against, it will still pass. In reality, in Ashley and no doubt in other parishes, it is the small core group of people who attend engagement meetings who will actually determine the specific policies of the NP (Gallent, 2013). These are the body public from whom the ideas and views will be drawn which will eventually coalesce in to policies. The idea that it might be a democratic exercise which involves many voices and heterogeneous groups (Mouffe, 2005) is very far from the reality.

I observed Mrs E to be a highly motivated and capable chair of the steering group, but during Spring 2017, they struggled to recruit sufficient members; not just people with relevant experience, but any new members at all. Parish Councillors were eventually forced to take part, and they were joined by three more residents. Thus, the process was initially open to criticism for not involving sufficient numbers of local residents, whose opinions, after all, it is meant to synthesise. In his study of parishes around Ashford in Kent, Gallent found that:

> "an apparently universal feature of the parish groups studied was the difficulty they encountered in reaching out to the wider community, reinforcing the view that parish councils are often cliques with limited capacity to act in the collective interest."
>
> (Gallent, 2013: 385-6)

This problem in Ashley, then, is not an isolated case. Experience here suggests that it cannot be taken for granted that parishes, especially smaller ones, will be able to easily put together a steering group of people who are motivated, committed, free from commercial interests and in possession of some relevant knowledge and skills. The NP legislation, however, assumes that this basic step of recruiting volunteers will be accomplished. The difficulty of this unpaid work, its duration of around three years, and the requirement to have an understanding of Planning law, therefore, commonly means that parish councillors need to seek help in two ways. Firstly, they employ planning consultants who have been brought in to make up for a lack of specialist legislative writing skills in the Parish, and secondly, they lean heavily on the support of Planners from the local authority (Parker et al., 2017). In these two ways, I would argue, the possibility of the NP enacting democratic ideals is substantially compromised.

6.6 'Professionalisation' of the neighbourhood plan

A significant underlying problem with participation in the NP is that it is a means by which unpaid non-experts are persuaded to undertake a demanding and specialist three-year task. Parker et al (2015 and 2017) interviewed 120 NP steering groups about their experiences of the process, and concluded that there are many restrictions which interfere with the NP's potential capacity for creative and truly bottom-up planning:

> "The suspicion is that the authors of NDPs [Neighbourhood Development Plans] have already had their 'pen' directed...Our view is that the agency that is claimed to be unleashed by this localism, and neighbourhood planning in particular, is practically highly constrained."
>
> (Parker et al., 2017: 4)

This constraint, they find, comes from the inherently intensive and specialised nature of the process, leading to participants feeling that they lack sufficient expertise to carry the plan forward without outside help:

> "Interviewees continually highlighted the fact that community aspirations had to be translated and reworked into planning language, often to the detriment of community desires and legibility."
>
> (Parker et al., 2015: 530)

Thus, inhabitants' expressed preferences are to some degree erased from the final policies. This may seem unavoidable in a situation in which non-experts are expected to work in the realm of a specific profession, as Eversole notes; "'Participation' to date has largely moved in one direction only: communities have had to be willing to enter the terrain of others and learn to play by their rules." (Eversole, 2012: 38).

Parker et al find that this 'professionalisation' of the system "was performed jointly between the Local Authority, consultants and the NP steering group itself, and may be read as part of an instrumentalist co-production" (Parker et al., 2015: 530). My participation and observation in the process in Ashley supports these findings. My very presence has perhaps contributed to the professionalisation of the process from the beginning in Ashley. This is most apparent in my role in drafting for them the LLCA (used in this thesis as a basis for Chapter Three) which forms part of the evidence base for the Plan, but also in my contribution to planning and running public engagement exercises. In addition, it was my suggestion that a landscape architect experienced in Planning matters be employed to review my LLCA and make it more robust where necessary. I took these steps in part for research reasons, as outlined above, but also because it seemed to me that there was no local resident likely to step forward and perform this role, with or without any fee. I also recommended to APC that in the later stages of the Plan process they employ a planning consultant to ensure the final Plan and policies be deemed acceptable under examination, and ultimately successfully 'made'. This suggestion seems to me to be the only ethical way forward if they are not to waste their efforts and have the Plan rejected by their examiner, though I am aware that this leaves me open to the accusation of 'instrumentalism' (Parker et al., 2015). Using the perspective of a landscape architect, it has been my intention to support the production of an LLCA that does what it can to test the boundaries of the planning legislation and provide a more challenging evidence base than might otherwise be the case. As I hope can be seen from Chapter Three, which is my redrafted version of the LLCA, I did this by characterising the landscape as an emergent place, rather than presenting a 'snapshot' view of the aesthetic properties of the Parish. I also began to request contributions of writing from residents with particular landscape-related enthusiasms, a process which the NP group plans to sustain. John Erlam was the first to make a contribution (reproduced in Appendix D). The aim of this is to prioritise beneficial outcomes for the landscape itself, as determined by local people.

Professional support for NPs can only be bought in once the steering group has successfully made a grant application to secure the necessary funds. Ashley is entitled to the standard £9,000 maximum grant, supplied in two tranches. I attended the NP steering group meeting at which the application was first discussed, and two particular questions on the form were revealing:

> "23. Are you proposing to allocate sites for housing or mixed development?...
>
> 25. Are you assessing sites within your neighbourhood area with a view to making site allocations in your neighbourhood plan? Please give the number of sites you are assessing." (Locality, n.d.)

This application must be completed in order to receive money so that public engagement sessions can be funded. The costs of engagement will typically include things like church hall hire, leaflet printing, other publicity costs, and materials for workshops. These questions, however, presume that a Parish Council has already decided to allocate sites for development, and is perhaps choosing sites from a shortlist, despite not yet having undertaken any public engagement. It also implies, just by asking these questions, that applications for money will be looked upon more favourably if sites have already been chosen. Two steering group meetings in Ashley were spent on agreeing how to fill in this form, and participants were at first bewildered by the above questions, and then angered as they felt that the outcome of their forthcoming deliberations over the next two years was already being required. This form gives a good insight in to the nature of the NP process, which is quite contrary to the rhetoric of community empowerment. It also led to residents asking whether, in their words, 'the tail was wagging the dog' (John Erlam, conversation no. 52, see Appendix B) or 'the cart was being put before the horse' (John Atherden (also conversation no. 52, see Appendix B). Members of the public are quite able to see through the attempted choreography of neighbourhood planning. This first application for funds was quickly turned down because sites had not yet been assessed or allocated.

Meanwhile, initial engagement events had to be funded from the pockets of members of the steering group, who were now not only donating their time in order to produce a Plan, but were directly funding leaflets, flipcharts, maps and other sundry items.

Whilst it is not realistic or desirable, within the current framework, for NPs to go ahead without any professional guidance whatsoever, observations in Ashley have suggested to me that it is both important and achievable to conduct community engagement and elicit residents' ideas and preferences *before* professionals become involved. Otherwise, local people who may already be reticent about voicing their views, or who take their time about coming forward, could be cut out of the process. If this prioritisation of inhabitants' views is, in fact, achieved, then it is important to consider how they will not be stage-managed out of the process in the next stage, which is the writing up of the evidence base.

6.7 Reflections on the value of neighbourhood planning

My specific pragmatic purposes in writing the draft LLCA were:

1. to share with the PC my ongoing accumulation of knowledge about the landscape of the Parish;
2. to become closely involved with the NP steering group activities so that I could learn about how the process worked through participating in it;
3. by thinking through and enacting this part of the process, to arrive at a better understanding of whether residents' involvement in preparing a NP could potentially have a positive influence on landscape outcomes for places in anticipation of HS2.

The first of these objectives was chiefly an ethical consideration, and easily achieved. It would have been impractical and ungenerous not to have shared my understanding of the landscape with Ashley Parish Council, after enjoying their acceptance, help and hospitality over an extended period.

The second, supported by my action research strategy, was achieved, as taking on the significant task of writing up this document meant that I had a distinct role to play in the steering group; one which was valued by other group members. This worked well. It put me in a position to be ready to help out with all the other business that came up during the course of putting the plan together, such as helping to run engagement events, filling in the grant application, and generally debating approaches to the task. This close involvement enabled me to make observations and draw the conclusions discussed here.

The third objective is more difficult to evaluate, because Parish Councils will, naturally, vary in their composition and approach to the task. From this case, however, I conclude that undertaking the NP process is likely to be of limited use in preparing residents to positively influence landscape outcomes of HS2. I had hoped that this statutory devolution of planning decisions, and the processes of public engagement required for a NP, would cultivate an environment in Ashley that would be stimulating and supportive of a primary emergent engagement with landscape, and that this might prepare the ground for residents to engage fruitfully with HS2. This might still prove to be the case in Ashley, but my research had to end whilst development of the Plan was still ongoing. Residents are, however, well aware that any decisions they make for the NP will have no official standing or influence over a national infrastructure project which is enforced by an Act of

Parliament. This seem likely to discourage participation in what is a lengthy and fairly arduous Planning task, as well as to increase a general sense of powerlessness over landscape decisions.

One key benefit to this research of my involvement in the NP is that it offered opportunity for embodied experiences of the landscape that provided space for very focused deliberations. Walking the landscape, alone and with residents, was central to writing the LLCA as well as building my understanding of the place which has supported my discussions with residents during engagement activities. The involvement of residents in this is somewhat paradoxical, because of the inherent purpose of an LLCA in the neighbourhood planning context; to provide the opinion of an external 'expert'. On reflection, I could perhaps have coordinated an LLCA process in which residents entirely took ownership of both the process and product, but this would have taken a great deal of time and effort on their part. Supportive frameworks and materials could perhaps enable communities to do this in the future, and these could also be used by proposers of transport infrastructure in order to empower local people to define the character of their place.

In Ashley, it would have seemed contrary to suggest they spend time producing a document for which the research had already been done. There would also have been a risk of their resulting 'community-owned' document not being valued as sufficient evidence by the examiner of the Plan. It would not have been ethical for me to experiment with their time and efforts in this way. In other words, the professionalisation of neighbourhood planning is, *at present*, inherent in the current system, so it cannot be easily appropriated as an instrument for bottom-up landscape engagement.

An LLCA, consisting as it does of the written word and still photographs, is also a limited response to emergent landscape conditions. Whilst it can evolve during the research and writing process, and the language of the text can express the emergent nature of the place, once finalised, it is effectively the 'final word' on this landscape, for the life of the NP. In retrospect, my own concerns about this may be why I never completely 'finished' the document, but instead passed it to APC as a draft.

To conclude, then, for the many reasons given in this chapter, study in Ashley suggests that neighbourhood planning, as it stands, does not directly offer significant opportunity or incentive for residents to become more engaged with their landscape. The top-down nature of the legislation, the very small numbers of participants in the Plan, the official barriers to genuine public engagement, undue influence over the plan by interested parties, the constraints of the DCLG's aims for Plans, and professionalisation of the process, all conspire to significantly diminish the potential value of NPs to nurture and express inhabitants' genuine aspirations for their place. I find that their actual purpose is to manoeuvre residents in to proposing development in their parish, under the guise of giving them a say in the quality of that development.

There was, however, another potentially positive outcome from my production of the LLCA. Having understood from residents that they perceived Ashley as a rural place (see, for example, sections 5.5.3 and 5.6), and wished to retain this rurality, throughout the writing I framed the Parish as a rural place facing the challenges of urbanisation (see Chapter Three). Quintin Bradley finds that 'place framing' is important in NPs:

> "Those authoring the neighbourhood plan seek to encode place with specific social meanings that legitimise and normalise a defined set of spatial practices. These in turn provide the rationale for planning policies that seek to determine land use …a neighbourhood plan must assemble a resonant frame of community identity from the diverse place meanings expressed in consultation and engagement with residents."
>
> (Bradley, 2017: 7)

Bradley gives the example of the NP of Thame in Oxfordshire, which frames the place as a 'market town' in order to make a case for retaining features such as walkability, compactness and being surrounded by countryside (Bradley, 2017). If my framing of Ashley as a rural place survives the NP process, there is perhaps a chance that this could contribute to desirable outcomes for residents, although, for the reasons given above, the advent of HS2 is likely to prove the more powerful influence.

It could be that, as a secondary benefit, preparing a neighbourhood plan could 'prime' inhabitants for some very well-informed negotiating with HS2 Ltd over landscape mitigation. It may be that participating in a proactive approach to HS2 Ltd is a good grounding for the taxing demands of making a neighbourhood plan. Or it may be that the twin challenges interact in a complex fashion to lead participants towards a phase transition in engagement with landscape, resulting in cascading public engagement which is beyond the control of any government agency.

There are reasons to think that this might work. Perhaps the most powerful one is that, as Quintin Bradley puts it;

> “The complex emotional interconnections between people and place mean that plans to change a particular environment can be perceived as a threat to personal autonomy or identity.”
>
> (Bradley, 2017: 234)

This emotional attachment to place could be seen as a significant, though perhaps currently latent, source of power, which might surface and become useful in challenging times for Ashley. Indeed, Bradley finds that:

> “The appeal to place is a recurring theme in community opposition to plans for new housebuilding, and numerous research studies confirm place attachment and place identity as factors *driving* environmental activism and community engagement.”
>
> ((Bradley, 2017: 2) (my italics)

The opportunity here could lie in a recognition of the fact that although inhabitants of a small parish may seem to be ranged against overwhelming forces of government and corporate interests, what those bodies cannot ultimately do is control the way in which the local people choose to engage with their landscape, or with any proposals for that landscape. Neither can they determine the numbers of people engaging.

It is not the aim of this thesis to oversimplify what this last statement might mean. Rather, it is an attempt to acknowledge a situation in which inhabitants find themselves dealing with the flawed processes of the NP on the one hand, and HS2 Ltd’s rudimentary engagement activity on the other. A way forward must be found, but public participation is undoubtedly difficult. It can be compromised when a very small proportion of the target population choose to take part. This was a problem for HS2 Ltd’s local ‘drop-in’ consultations near Ashley in 2016. These were not widely publicised and on the two occasions I attended (17.5.2016, 13.9.2016) the public turnout was low, with staff appearing to outnumber residents. Even when the topic of the consultation is framed much more positively, the same problem can occur. I attended such a landscape consultation (21.1.2016) for members of the public, which was aimed at characterising the ‘spirit of place’ of the rural northern half of Cheshire East. It was held by the National Trust on behalf of Cheshire East Council, at Quarry Bank Mill, one of the Trust’s most well-known properties in the area. It was a well-resourced event, with an excellent presentation and high-quality discussion led by the Trust’s representative, but also white linen tablecloths, tea and coffee all day, and a free lunch. The target participants were the entire population of the area under discussion, but only 11 members of the public attended. The two organisations between them had considerable power to publicise this event, but this did not result in wider participation.

Neighbourhood planning could have some real merits. In the best-case scenario;

> "Neighbourhood planning signals a conflict over the value and meaning of place and the spatial norms prescribed by a housing market dominated by speculative building practices. It asserts that the social, material and institutional structures of housing should function through our sense of place and community, and not the other way around."
>
> (Bradley, 2017: 13-14)

Experience in Ashley, however, suggests that this 'signal' about how sense of place should determine housing development does not necessarily empower inhabitants to act in determining the future of the landscape.

In the course of enquiring about neighbourhood planning, Cheshire East's Neighbourhood Planning Manager (conversation no. 40, see Appendix B) told me that he thought the NP process was not at all democratic. This was chiefly because of the range of participants in Plans, in that they are most often over thirty years of age and relatively wealthy homeowners, whereas those with most to gain from allocating sites for housing would be younger people who aspire to own a home in the area in which they grew up. This, in his view, skews the results of the process in the favour of older people who may be more resistant to change than younger residents. There are several studies (Gallent, 2013; Clausen, 2017; Vik, 2017; Allmendinger and Haughton, 2012) about what kinds of people are likely to participate (or not participate) in public engagement exercises, and how particular demographic groups with diverse views can find themselves effectively excluded from such processes. It seems to me, however, that the most pressing concern is the low numbers of any people *at all* who engage directly with landscape issues at a policy-making level. Clausen (2017) in writing about non-participation in Danish landscape planning, emphasises that "the hallmark of much participatory literature is a ubiquitous rationality mindset that assumes that people will generally assess it as being to their own advantage to participate." (Clausen, 2017: 412). In studying lack of engagement in a pilot project for a new national park on the island of Moen in Denmark, she points out that it very seldom appears to potential participants that they will benefit from participating. She proposes reasons for non-participation in landscape engagement, which are briefly examined here in order to consider whether a cascading public engagement with landscape could reduce their effects. They are;

1. “**a general lack of trust in local and global political decision making concerning landscape management**” (Clausen, 2017: 417). She finds that, like Ashley, “Moen was a periphery experiencing the consequences of globalisation” (Clausen, 2017: 417), in which people’s direct working relationship with the land had become disrupted such that there was little embodied connection. Although Moen’s inhabitants had ideas relating to rebuilding that relationship through landscapes for leisure and ecology, such ideas did not drive increased participation. This was because “Not having trust in existing decision-making structures, landscape development was considered to be out of reach of any local influence.” (Clausen, 2017: 417). My suggestion is that cascading engagement with landscape would be such that it could develop powers which might exert force, from within and without, on existing decision-making structures such as neighbourhood planning, by being beyond the control of official decision-making agendas.

2. **Power and ownership by landowning farmers** who “being aware of having ownership of the resource that was up for discussion…demonstrated their superiority by staying out of the public debate” (Clausen, 2017: 417). The farmers effectively boycotted the participation exercise because they knew that they would ultimately have deciding powers over the landscape outcomes. Cascading engagement could perhaps go some way to addressing this problem by persuading landowners to become constructively involved in decisions to the benefit of the landscape itself, through sheer weight of accumulating public activity and opinion within local areas. This is the biggest challenge for cascading engagement with landscape; building up enough force to overcome commercial powers through sheer numbers of engaged people. It is an effect that has recently been seen in the sudden cascade of public engagement with the issue of disposal of plastics, catalysed by David Attenborough’s *Blue Planet II* television series. This looks likely to drive the development of the packaging policies of some supermarkets, and hopefully of related legislation.

3. “**paralysis caused by social control**…manifested as a conscious choice to stay out of discussions, in order to avoid the participants’ own social environment.” (Clausen, 2017: 417). As was also very much the case in Ashley, Clausen found

participants anxious and fearful about threats to their own social standing and relationships through gossip and social exclusion. Furthermore;

> "becoming enemies of the landowners was assessed as a high-risk case… most people assessed landowners' power as too massive and that it was safer to stay out of public debate in order to protect one's relationships and privileges"
>
> (Clausen, 2017: 418)

This point is closely related to point two. In Ashley, visible dissent between a resident and the landowner did indeed become the source of gossip and exclusion from the NP process. As cascading public engagement need not revolve around centralised public meetings or official gatherings, but could operate through multiple loci in many forms, it is possible that the problem may be avoided to some extent. Engagement with a specific infrastructure proposal might require public deliberations, though it may be possible to find ways of making these less 'exposing' to social control. One possible answer to this might be public meetings through anonymised online forums. Such tools could be set up to facilitate neighbourhood planning, though from the point of view of the Local Authority this poses the risk of popular engagement with a Plan, giving residents real, powerful and multiple voices which would be hard to ignore.

4. "**(Self-) exclusion**… arose from the experience that [people] could not assert themselves in the participation context in terms of interests and skills." (Clausen, 2017: 419). Ex-participants said that they found it;

> "difficult to have a voice in discussions within thematic working groups where specialised knowledge and negotiation experiences took control of the debate…Consequently, participation had an exclusionary effect."
>
> (Clausen, 2017: 419)

This problem could potentially be avoided altogether by cascading engagement with landscape because individuals would engage on their own terms, in aspects of the landscape that particularly interested them, or on which they felt they had some knowledge to offer. No specialism would be needed, beyond lived experience of a landscape, and thematic working groups would not be imposed, though they could evolve over time.

6.8 Conclusions to this chapter

The first of my two key research aims for this element of the thesis was to find out whether there was a potential role for the NP in anticipating the landscapes of HS2. I conclude that, whilst there may be some room for resistance in the writing of an LLCA, there is at present little evidence that there is likely to be a directly observable benefit from neighbourhood planning on landscape outcomes in anticipation of HS2. There are two overarching reasons for this;

1. Lack of willingness on the part of inhabitants to engage, due in part to the poor engagement strategies of local and national governments. This is because of failings such as the dearth of measures to protect NPs against influence by commercially interested parties, and the unavailability of funding for genuine public engagement with the Plan. Gallent's findings support this view;

   > "community groups appeared overwhelmed by existing levels of 'engagement' with local government, but underwhelmed by the quality and authenticity of that engagement and its end results."
   >
   > (Gallent, 2013: 393)

2. The fact that neighbourhood planning, despite all attempts to cast its purposes as democratic and bottom-up, in fact seeks to force local acceptance of development, is professionalised at every stage and thus, ultimately, not emergent. As Eversole finds;

   > "Lamenting either the unwillingness of communities to participate, or the unwillingness of top-down institutions to enable real participation, will not solve the basic contradiction of trying to create bottom-up development within a top-down frame."
   >
   > (Eversole, 2012: 32)

This lack of emergent properties means that NPs cannot evolve the kind of local resilience needed to respond flexibly to the complex effects of HS2 proposals, as they come to light over a period of years. The NP may, in fact, cause harm if it facilitates undue pressure on residents by parties who see opportunities for profit.

The second of my key research aims regarding neighbourhood planning was to explore what role an independent academic researcher might take. It became apparent that, perhaps due to inhabitants' general preconception that academics are impartial and well-informed, my input was, eventually, welcome in many aspects of the NP group's activities. I made it known from the start that my PhD has no commercial or government sponsorship. This fact was valued by Ashley residents. They knew my research aims and implicitly approved of them, as they included me in their process. They were offered more expert guidance from elsewhere, but were not comfortable with these offers, as they came from parties with commercial interests. They seemed to value my impartiality over the greater degree of experience held by others, which suggests their own awareness of all the complicating factors discussed in this chapter. Additionally, a period of a full year had elapsed, in which a relationship was formed, before work on the NP began. This meant that there were a number of roles that I was able to take up; source of information during meetings, consultant on baseline conditions, public-facing engagement facilitator, and 'critical friend'. I suspect, however, that none of these individual roles had as much influence on the progress of the Plan as the simple fact of the continued presence of a researcher with an interest in the Parish. Councillor Emma Capp told me that the NP process would never have begun without my repeatedly turning up at PC meetings. Often, my input at these meetings was very small, or restricted to silent observation. I find that the involvement of an independent researcher in such matters does mean that events begin to emerge in a different direction. It is perhaps because of a feeling that if an outsider is sufficiently interested to keep on attending parish events, then perhaps there is something of significance there that local people could themselves be more aware of. I also perceived that my stated allegiance to the landscape itself, whilst perhaps making me seem optimistic and naïve, at the same time meant that they knew there was someone in the room who was able to be reasonably detached from local pressures.

My research finds that meaningful engagement of people in landscape planning and design should be an emergent process, so that decisions can be "discussed, debated, negotiated and ultimately learned rather than predetermined" (Lister, 2010: 540). Frederick Steiner's locally generated goals which "articulate an idealised future situation" (Steiner, 2008: 12) can sit within an emergent system, if flexibility and responsiveness in interactions with planners and designers are maintained. This approach responds to Lister's requirement that 'adaptive design' should emerge "from a deliberative, integrative, cyclic and continuous – rather than deterministic and discrete – approach to planning, design and management." (Lister, 2010: 540). These views accord with my concept of cascading engagement.

There is undeniably a moral dimension to my proposition, but one which seeks to avoid absolutes. John Friedmann, in a speech to the American Collegiate Schools of Planning in 1988 (text published 1989), argued for the centrality of moral discourse to planning, saying that;

> "The common good cannot be assumed a priori, nor can it be determined by research. It is not a given. The public good is a notion of process; it emerges in the course of planning itself and its concrete meaning is constantly evolving."
>
> (Friedmann, 1989: 128)

Neighbourhood Planning in Ashley was very far from this ideal.

Chapter Seven

Cascading Engagement with Landscape, Conclusions and Recommendations

"nature is not a passive storehouse of resources from which we may take as we please; it is, rather, a seamless web from which man is inseparable. Our challenge is to search for answers that will generate new forms and relations between people and nature, and to express those new relationships in architecture and landscape."

(Eckbo, 2015: 23)(first published in *Landscape Architecture Magazine*, May 1983)

7.1 Abstract

This chapter briefly summarises the key themes of the research, the nature of Ashley and the problems with existing processes of public engagement with landscape. As a response to those problems, it proposes the new concept of cascading engagement with landscape and considers how this might be set in motion. It illustrates this with scenarios describing what the possible outcomes of such rapidly evolving public engagement might be and offers ten practical recommendations for public engagement both with landscape and with landscape proposals, which are drawn from experience in Ashley. Finally, it proposes themes for further research.

7.2 Summary: research themes

This thesis has drawn together a number of different themes from emergence theory and explored their relevance to landscape, which I have characterised as a complex interrelationship of evolving, dynamic and unpredictable systems. These systems include the physical, social, political and economic landscapes. It has taken the themes and applied them to the challenges of public engagement with landscape in the context of a large-scale infrastructure project; HS2. It has tested out the applicability of the themes through action research in Ashley (see the ten working principles, Table 1). The themes can be summarised as follows;

1. Unpredictability
2. Inseparability of systems
3. The agency of the landscape
4. Self-organisation
5. The linear and the non-linear
6. Embodied reciprocal engagement
7. Disturbance and response
8. Phase transition and autocatalysis

7.3 Summary: Ashley and beyond

This research has found Ashley to be an emergent rural landscape experiencing a particularly challenging period in which it faces pressures on the landscape from HS2, as well as from housing and commercial development. It is a unique place with its own set of initial conditions, and as such its future cannot be predicted, but it is conceivable that a phase transition could happen here, perhaps within the next two decades, from rural to urban. Whilst having its own individual character, it is possible to see Ashley as quite typical of rural places in green belt land on the edges of major cities; parishes under similar pressure around London, Birmingham, Stoke-on-Trent and Leeds, for example. For this reason, it seems to me to be important to draw the future of such places to the attention of policy makers and forward-thinking landscape planners and designers. I suggest that this is an urgent matter, as in the current uncertain political climate, little attention is being paid to the future of rural landscapes by government, and political thinking rarely seems to happen on the landscape timescale.

7.4 Summary: problems with existing public engagement

This work has also described the current difficulties with processes of engagement with large-scale transport infrastructure. The approach taken by HS2 Ltd leaves inhabitants feeling uninformed, and therefore resentful and disengaged. This risks adverse publicity, protest groups arising, and time being wasted through the petitioning process. Worse than all of these, it could contribute to a growing public mistrust of government decision-making and entrenchment of perceived helplessness in relation to landscape issues.

There are two key problems which could be addressed through taking on board emergent principles for public engagement with landscape. These are;

1. the assumption that inhabitants have sufficient primary engagement with landscape to respond constructively to engagement procedures, and
2. the linearity of existing programmes of public engagement with proposals, which makes them unresponsive to emerging landscape conditions.

The problem of linearity is crucial, because if a system is linear, any one of a variety of filters or blockages to engagement may prevent further progress. As discussed in Chapter Four, the vastness of the Environmental Statement, for example, or the intimidating nature of parliamentary petitioning, will prevent some individuals from engaging with HS2. As a baseline condition, a lack of widespread primary landscape engagement is likely to mean that the majority of inhabitants never travel down the path of 'consultation' as far as either of these two blockages, and perhaps never engage in any way with the anticipated infrastructure.

The emergent landscape context is a significant challenge for projects such as HS2, but inherent in this unpredictability is a possible solution to the challenges I have investigated. Just as landscape can go through phase transition, so might engagement with landscape. What has previously taken the form of linear systems imposed on inhabitants from above, could perhaps become a cascading process; multiple, citizen-led and out of the control of any one organisation.

7.5 Response; cascading engagement with landscape

The differences between linear and cascading engagement are summarised in Figure 77 and Figure 78, below.

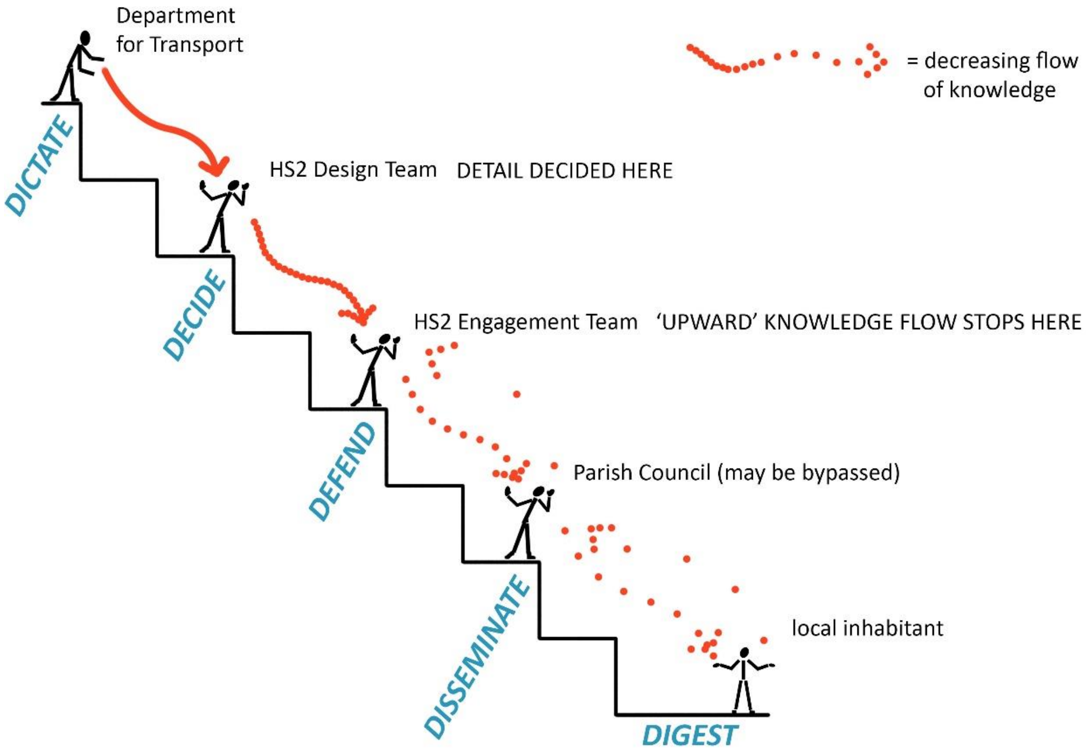
Department
for Transport
= decreasing flow
of knowledge
DICTATE
HS2 Design Team
DETAIL DECIDED HERE
DECIDE
HS2 Engagement Team
'UPWARD' KNOWLEDGE FLOW STOPS HERE
DEFEND
Parish Council (may be bypassed)
DISSEMINATE
local inhabitant
DIGEST

Figure 77. Diagram of existing linear public engagement process, in which knowledge is handed down through organisations which modify and filter it and pass it on. Some is disseminated to inhabitants, who may have some 'bottom-up' input, but this is filtered or blocked on its way back up (author's image). The inhabitant remains in an essentially passive role, unable to bypass the engagement team.

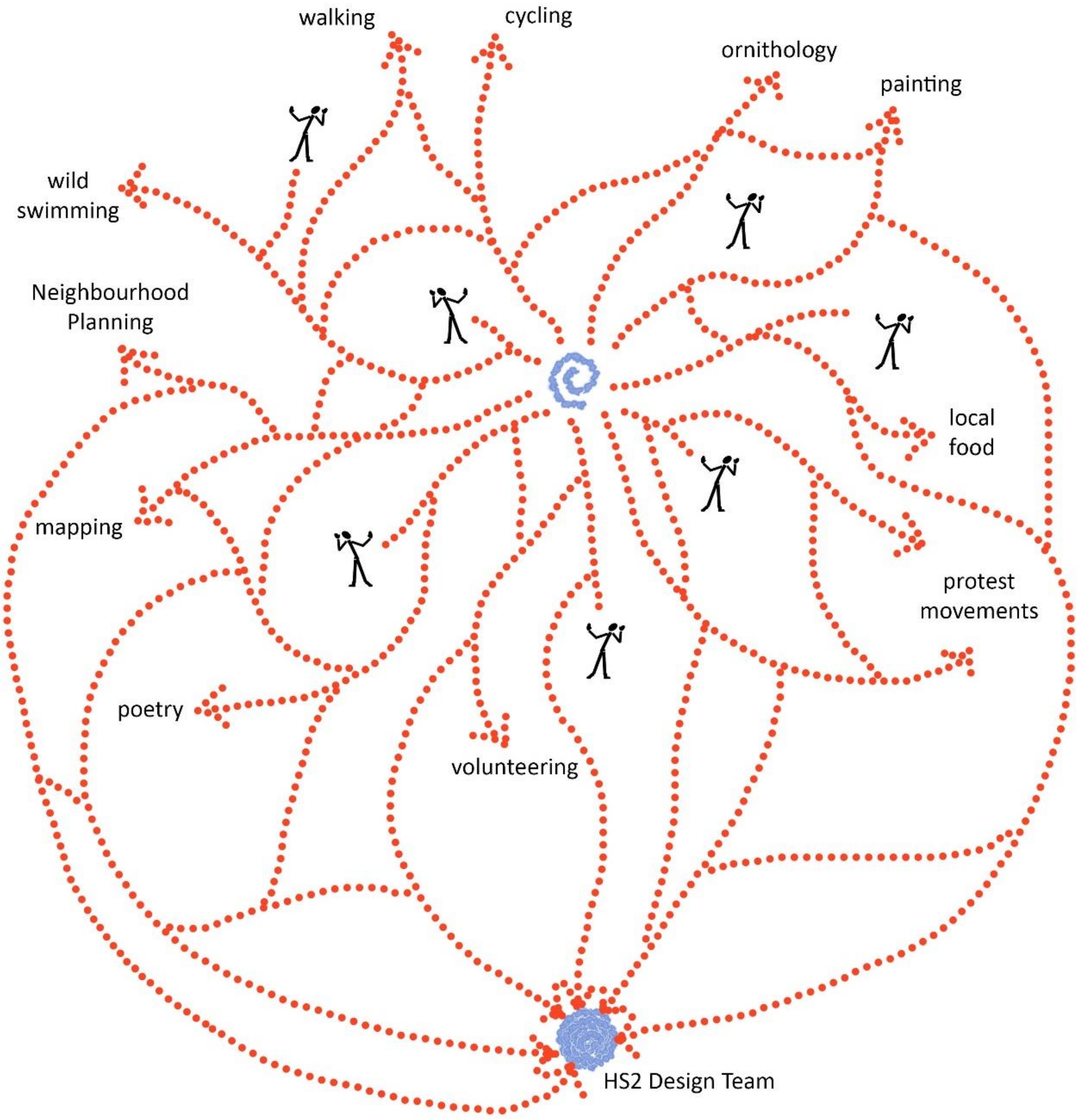
walking
cycling
ornithology
painting
wild
swimming
Neighbourhood
Planning
local
food
mapping
protest
movements
poetry
volunteering
HS2 Design Team

Figure 78. Diagram of a cascading public engagement process, in which a trigger causes an avalanche of primary engagement with landscape, such that multiple forms of engagement flourish and diverge. The pattern is not predictable because it will depend on the specific locality. Blockages are still present, but can be circumvented, due to the branching pattern (author's image). Some of the knowledge created is fed in to the design team, and some will serve other purposes.

Figure 77 shows a linear engagement process, in this case using neighbourhood planning as an example. Edicts are issued from the top step, as the DCLG makes policies which are passed down to the local authority in the form of the NPPF, related white papers and so on. The local authority must enforce this legal framework at county or city level, and they do so by making their own Local Plan. This Plan, alongside the DCLG rules and guidance about neighbourhood planning, is passed down to parish councils. There have, so far, been no opportunities for breaking away from the linear structure. When the PC takes its turn in the legislative process, it is likely that it will form a steering group, and the rules and expectations for the NP are passed on to that group. At every stage so far, the process has been strictly contained, with no opportunity to branch out, circumvent a possible blockage, or reverse the flow. Each step on the way has been presided over by a body which regulates the flow of information 'downwards' to the inhabitant. At any point, such a body can act to make the process more convergent, and less branching. The steering group may decide to have a creative, divergent and deliberative engagement process in order to inform their Plan. However, as discussed in Chapter Six, if any bold and imaginative ideas about landscape do surface from the inhabitants, they will probably only briefly reverse the flow of information, before they are ruled out by the steering group, or the PC, or the Local Authority, if they get that far.

As the diagram demonstrates, linear processes can be so tightly controlled by the stakeholder groups, that there is no potential for cascading engagement. NPs are marketed as a tool for reversing the power dynamic and making the flow of information travel up the steps, from local people. In reality, such a reversal is impossible, due to the force with which legislation issues from above. For this reason, calls for 'bottom-up' public engagement are an unhelpful oversimplification; it is unrealistic to imagine that the simple reversal of this linear flow can be achieved, or would be effective.

Such a diagram could easily illustrate the same linearity of engagement with high speed rail, with the Department for Transport at the top of the steps, then, moving downwards, HS2 Ltd, the HS2 regional engagement team, the PC and the inhabitant, again, at the bottom. In this linear process, common blockages such as an unwilling Parish Council, or lack of publicity for an engagement surgery, can effectively bring the whole process to a halt. As in the NP example, any possibility of significant reversal of the flow of ideas and proposals is an illusion, because of the strictly controlled parameters of the linear model.

Figure 78, by contrast, is one way of illustrating how cascading engagement with landscape could work. The cascade is triggered by a disturbance in the already-complex landscape, in this case at the centre of the diagram. This could be a chance occurrence, such as a flood event, or a deliberate intervention (a stick in the sand) made by a researcher or local activist, an engagement professional, or Parish Councillor. It could be the influence of a landscape advocate, a single community walk, or perhaps this PhD research. It could even be the announcement of a high-speed rail route. There are many potential outcomes from the cascade, but the key aspect is that, whilst blockages to engagement still exist, the multiple strands can diverge, and find new paths. The cascade is as difficult to control as Facebook, or Instagram, but it is grounded in a material place. Like Deleuze and Guattari's rhizome (Section 5.5.2) it can self-repair, " has multiple entryways" (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004: 12) and therefore has the potential to include more individuals. The desired outcome for such flourishing engagement would be that it empowers people, makes policy and shapes the landscape, rather than the place simply being subject to legislation.

In this way, micro-scale actions could lead to unpredictable macro-scale effects; this is how emergence works. It is how landscape creates itself, how it changes and gets things done. This thesis has explored whether the power of the cascade, avalanche, or phase transition, could be harnessed in the interests of public engagement, and if so, how this out-of-control, non-linear, widespread and multiple engagement with the lived landscape might be achieved.

7.6 Scenarios of cascading engagement

During this research I have been in direct contact with many people in Ashley and beyond it, illustrated by Figure 79, which shows contact with individuals in the parish. Contact with these known people, however, has gone on to extend to other inhabitants; their friends, neighbours, children and so on.

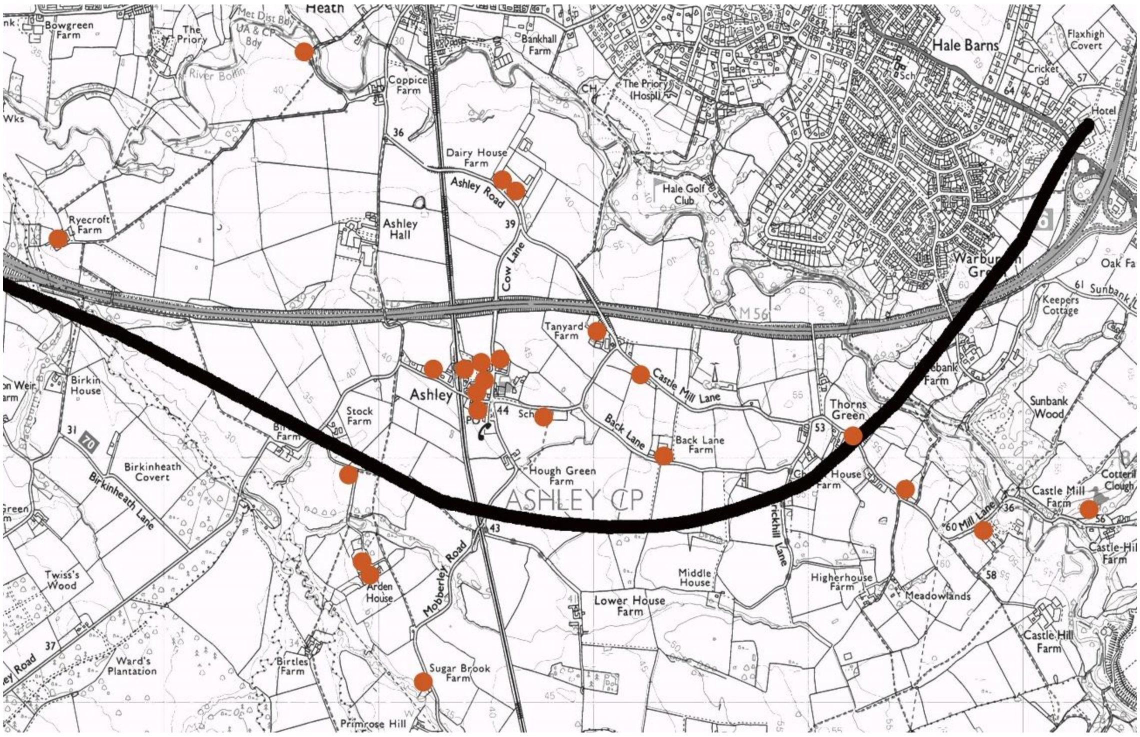
Heath
Bowgreen Farm
The Priory
River Bollin
Coppice Farm
Bankhall Farm
The Priory (Hospl)
Hale Barns
Flaxhigh Covert
Cricket Gd
Hotel
Dairy House Farm
Ashley Road
Ashley Hall
Hale Golf Club
Ryecroft Farm
Cow Lane
Warburton Green
Oak Farm
Sunbank
Keepers Cottage
M56
Tanyard Farm
Ashley
Castle Mill Lane
Birkin House
Stock Farm
Sch
Back Lane
Back Lane Farm
Thorns Green
Sunbank Wood
Birkinheath Covert
Birkinheath Lane
Hough Green Farm
ASHLEY CP
Castle Mill Farm
Cotteril Clough
Mill Lane
Castle Hill Farm
Twiss's Wood
Arden House
Mobberley Road
Middle House
Higherhouse Farm
Meadowlands
Lower House Farm
Ward's Plantation
Birtles Farm
Sugar Brook Farm
Primrose Hill
Castle Hill Farm

Figure 79. Orange dots indicate known individuals with whom I was in contact within the parish boundary of Ashley (author's image using base map from: EDINA Digimap Ordnance Survey Service, <http://edina.ac.uk/digimap>, created: February 2017, not to scale)

Figure 80 is a diagram of the engagement interventions that I have made in Ashley, illustrating their potential to cascade in to a branching pattern of increasing complexity.

This diagram demonstrates the potential effects of multiple small actions, which could create avalanches of engagement that begin to affect large numbers of people. The process illustrated in this figure could apply to primary engagement with landscape, or to engagement with specific infrastructure proposals. The precise effects of a researcher's interventions will, of course, be different to those of the next researcher. The figure is not a forecast of specific future emergent effects, because acceptance of strong emergence (see Introduction ii) entails an acceptance of the impossibility of accurate predictions. Rather it is an indication of the shape that could be taken by a series of interrelated events. The timescale of this project does not allow me to return to Ashley five or ten years hence, to observe and evaluate the outcomes of my experiments. Even if it did so, it would be very difficult to prove that any cascading landscape engagement in the parish had been catalysed by my own efforts.

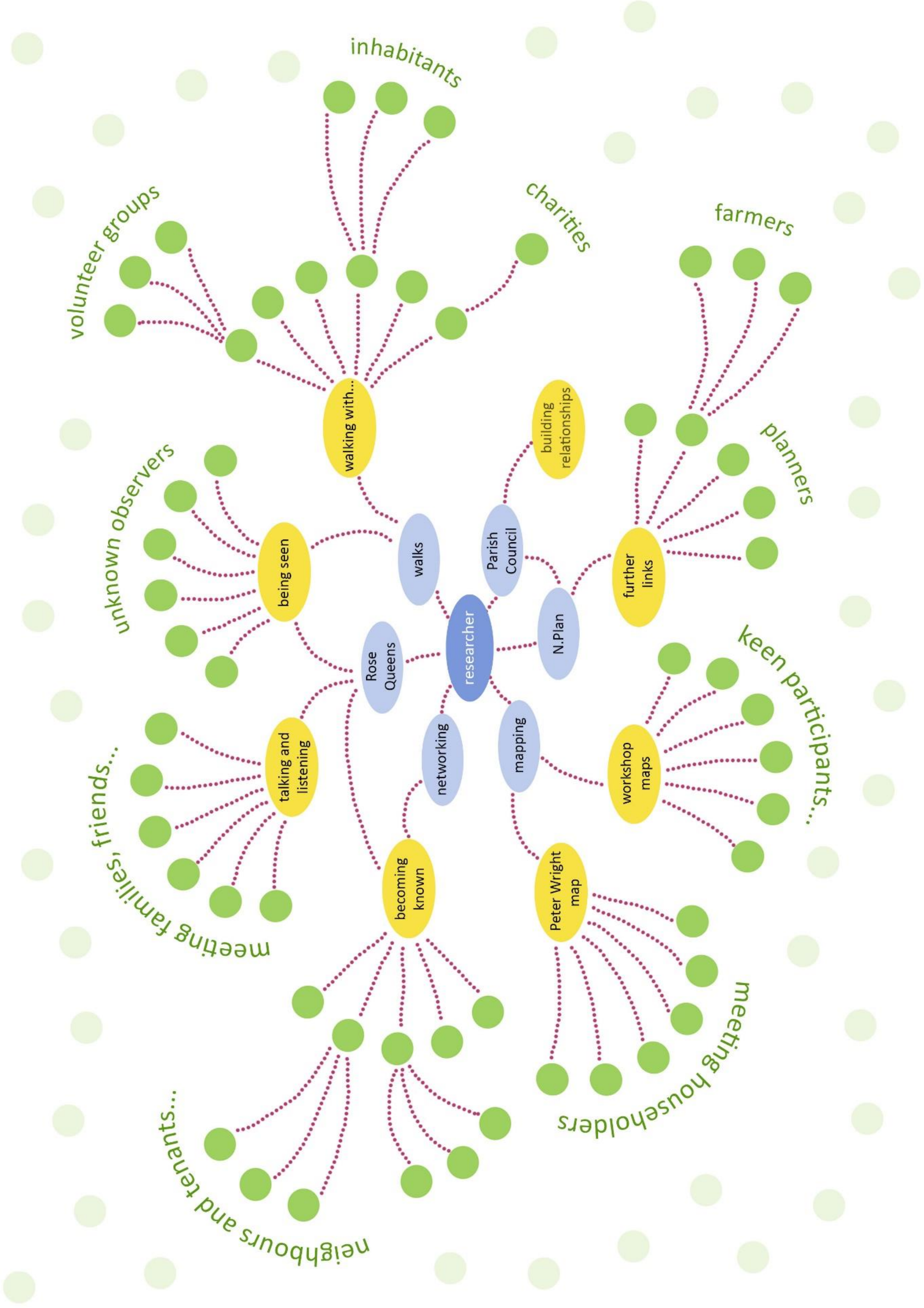
inhabitants
volunteer groups
charities
farmers
walking with…
building relationships
unknown observers
planners
being seen
walks
Parish Council
further links
researcher
N.Plan
Rose Queens
keen participants…
talking and listening
networking
mapping
workshop maps
meeting families, friends…
becoming known
Peter Wright map
meeting householders
neighbours and tenants…

Figure 80. Landscape engagement in Ashley, branching out from my interventions I made for this research, and with the potential to cascade. Each node represents a person or group engaged by the research in this place (author's image).

Figure 80 does, however, explore something which I think people already know from their own experience of how interconnections develop. We have become familiar with the concept of burgeoning online social networks, for example, which illustrate how complex processes can overcome obstacles; finding a way around them by generating more pathways which forge new links to more nodes. The more branching a system becomes, the more connections can be made.

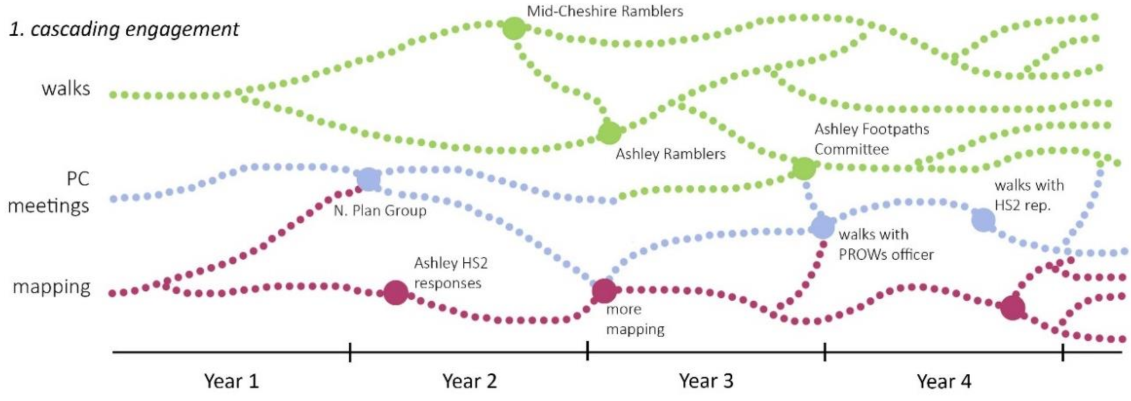
1. cascading engagement
walks
PC meetings
mapping
Mid-Cheshire Ramblers
Ashley Ramblers
Ashley Footpaths Committee
N. Plan Group
walks with HS2 rep.
walks with PROWs officer
Ashley HS2 responses
more mapping
Year 1
Year 2
Year 3
Year 4

Figure 81. A simplified diagram showing how public engagement with landscape could cascade over time in Ashley (author's image). The 'real' process would be much more complex, as only three strands of activity have been depicted here.

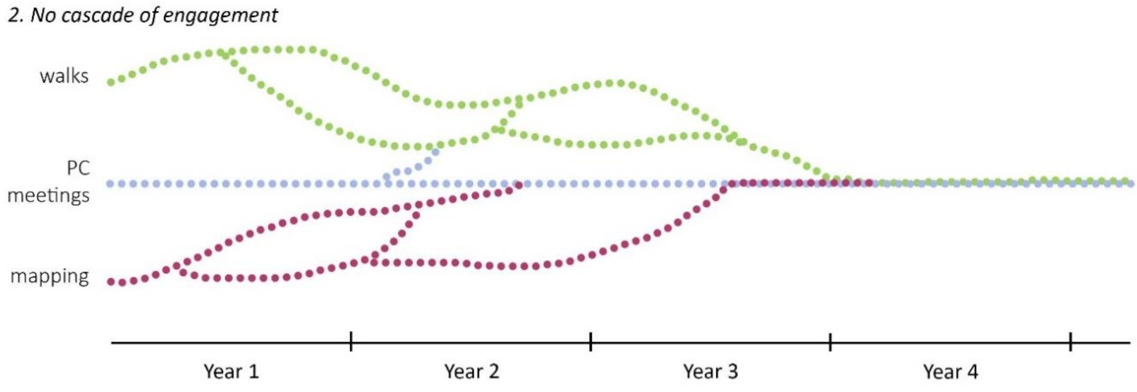
2. No cascade of engagement
walks
PC meetings
mapping
Year 1
Year 2
Year 3
Year 4

Figure 82. A simplified diagram showing how public engagement with landscape could fail to cascade, using the same three strands of activity as above. Initial enthusiasm has waned (author's image).

Figure 81 and Figure 82 illustrate two possible sets of outcomes in Ashley, conceived as timelines. These are based on precedents produced by James Corner Field Operations (Diller Scofidio et al., 2015) which were used to show members of the public how plant and animal species on New York's High Line might diversify over time. Figure 81 shows a simplified projection of how public engagement could cascade in the parish, over the years to come. This is the desired outcome of my research activity in Ashley. The diagram is not simply dendritic (branching in the same way as a tree), as the lines of connection loop back and interconnect.

Figure 82 is a projection of failure to cascade, in which, despite an initial spike in interest and involvement on the part of inhabitants, engagement in landscape tails off and all paths lead back to the parish council, which finds itself unable to support any further branching. This is a possible outcome in Ashley.

The difference between these two scenarios, is that, in the first, autocatalysis (see Section 1.6) is achieved because feedback loops have begun and self-sustaining interconnections are developing. The 'products' of certain engagement actions have become the initiating actions for more engagement. A simple example might be that a public meeting prompts some engagement walks, out of which come issues to be addressed at more public meetings, and so on. Here, branching will tend to lead to further branching, with the potential for increased complexity to lead to a cascade, such that a phase transition occurs. This might result in a population that is hugely more engaged with its own landscape, through a self-sustaining pattern of activity. In Figure 82, the initial disturbance, in the form of engagement activities, has some short-term effects. Over time the initial effects of disturbance wear off and actions are restricted to linear progress.

Reflecting on my production of the research timeline (Figure 51, which appears at the start of Chapter Five), drawn up at the end of the first half of my research, I conclude that it is a very poor summary of the events which took place. I include it in its original form as a contrast to the diagrams in this chapter, and to show how my thinking has changed over time. It is really no more than a list and fails to communicate any sense of the complex processes which connected the events together. As much can be learnt from the patterns of such connections as from the events themselves, and this is what the diagrams in this chapter seek to demonstrate.

My final illustration of cascading landscape engagement in Ashley is a written imagined scenario describing the Parish after phase transition to widespread primary engagement with landscape. This is what might perhaps be achieved by applying the final recommendations made in section 7.7.

7.6.1 Ashley; A Future Scenario

The 'Ashley HS2 Liaison Group' have coordinated with the Wildlife Trust, landowners and HS2 to enable links to the HS2 National Cycleway to be built in the Parish, removing cyclists from the dangerous minor roads and promoting sustainable transport. Farmers have negotiated with Tatton Estate Management, resulting in new leases for agricultural land that allow long term sustainable food production, with profits kept local and methods supporting biodiversity and soil health. They have plans for these areas to include facilities for sustainable power generation. The Parish Council have joined forces with the East Cheshire Ramblers to put pressure on CEC for new public rights of way which join up the existing routes and increase access to land. The neighbourhood plan group has succeeded in allocating land for eight alms houses, which have been built on the site of previously demolished Victorian cottages and are run by a housing cooperative. Fields allocated for development as logistics hubs at Airport City have become pro-greenbelt protest camps, subversively supported by low-profile residents, in echoes of the past runway protests. After action taken by local farmers, two sites have been allocated as nature reserves and recognised as SSSIs. People are largely excluded from these areas. Woodland chains have been re-connected and augmented along the Bollin and the M56 corridor, with local enthusiasts supporting the work of the Mersey Rivers Trust and Bollin Valley Partnership. Some of this has been achieved through tree planting, and some through allowing natural re-wilding to occur. Small pockets of land severed by HS2 are now impossible to cultivate with farm machinery, and inhabitants are debating their future use. Generous bands of mixed native woodland have been created along the HS2 route, providing visual screening and wildlife corridors. HS2 Ltd have liaised fully with inhabitants as to the size, position and component species of these woodlands. Marshy land made wetter by runoff from the M56 and HS2 has been transformed into two wetlands close to the village centre. These work as flood alleviation measures and filter contaminants. They are open for amenity use. Local people contribute to a volunteer programme which maintains these areas and keeps them free of invasive species.

7.7 Recommendations

I propose that disturbance in the landscape systems of Ashley has the potential to result in multiple emergent effects. The crucial problem, therefore, for those interested in seeing long-term landscape futures in the hands of inhabitants, is how they/we, with the aid of landscape advocacy (see section 5.9.1) could steer this change. My work in Ashley has led to the formulation of two separate sets of guiding principles for cascading engagement (see below), to be applied to the two 'engagement gaps' identified at the start of section 5.2 The first set, therefore, aims to support widespread primary engagement with any landscape. Because this type of engagement is between the lived landscape and its inhabitants, it is, as previously discussed, the desirable pre-condition for any effective engagement with large landscape infrastructure projects. The second set is specific to engagement with proposals for large-scale infrastructure. One possible fear about such sustained public engagement in landscape proposals is that it might be too time consuming and therefore costly. However, I propose that in a landscape that is a 'seamless web' (see Eckbo, 2015, at the start of this chapter) new behaviours can arise from very simple interactions so that people's "small changes to their environmental conditions can spiral upwards in to dramatic revisions of social relationships." (Barnett, 2013: 203).

i. Recommendations for landscape advocacy in support of cascading engagement with landscape

1. **Set broad goals that allow specific methods and targets to emerge**: It is important to accept that, whilst there will be location-specific goals, precise outcomes cannot be controlled, so be open-minded and respond positively to changes of direction as needed. An overly-elaborate plan of action could well be wasted, in the face of inhabitants' preferences. In Ashley, although I had hoped for an extended programme of community mapping, in the event it was more appropriate for other methods to take over, as it became clear that residents preferred to walk and talk, for example.

2. **Prioritise embodied engagement but support diverging activities**: the process will only be robust and resilient if activity diversifies, so that blockages to engagement

can be circumvented. If physical access to a site is difficult, for example, then people may need assistance in devising creative solutions to the problem. The valuable work with Peter Wright in Ashley, for example, took place largely in his own home and also by driving around the Parish.

3. **Allow time for engagement to develop**: complex landscape issues demand careful thought, and inhabitants may not have much spare time. This is a slow process. This does not mean that it is overly time-consuming in terms of working hours devoted to the project. Rather, it is a case of a long-term thinking at the landscape scale, and commitment to sustained timely interventions, probably over a period of at least two years. The year I spent in Ashley prior to becoming involved in the neighbourhood plan, for example, was not wasted time, it was an essential period of mutual familiarisation for residents and myself.

4. **Be an independent landscape advocate**: the role of anyone carrying out this work in a local area needs to be transparent to inhabitants. The only possible objective for this person is the best outcome for landscape itself. This reduces potential for bias (although of course does not eliminate it) and helps to make it clear to all that no one interest-group is being favoured. If landscape itself is the key motivator, benefits are long-term. This is an element of the process which requires an understanding of the complexity of landscape. Without initially thinking of it in these terms, landscape advocacy was really my role in Ashley from the start, when I first walked from the village to the Bollin and began to appreciate the sensitivity of landscape conditions on this peripheral place.

5. **Listen to people**: this is the most important function of the landscape advocate. Be humble and learn from what locals have to teach you, including dissenters, lone voices and marginal groups. You will find that there is no limit to what they know and you don't. At the same time, don't be afraid to show them that you are in the process of learning a great deal, as this shows your commitment to and respect for their place. The public mapping exercise at St Elizabeth's was an example of a good way to 'listen' to a roomful of people at once, by asking them to record their knowledge on maps, according to their own priorities: we all learned a great deal from this.

ii. Recommendations for supporting cascading engagement with large-scale infrastructure proposals

Ideally, these guidelines would be used in a landscape that already had an improved capacity for engagement, due to previous work in line with recommendations one to five. They could still be applied, however, where that has not been the case.

6. **Begin visiting and engaging with the locality at the earliest feasible date and continue to the latest possible date**: an infrastructure project will be many years in the planning and construction and has permanent landscape impacts. The investment of time in to public engagement should be significant, and cascading engagement will not be achieved quickly. The duration of my research in Ashley was limited by the duration of the PhD, and as I have argued, a two-year period of engagement seemed to me to be just barely enough.

7. **Go for a walk, and see where it leads you:** then another, and on until you have built a network of knowledgeable contacts, a trusted local reputation, and a good working understanding of the local landscape. From this your next steps will emerge. When I walked with farmer John Erlam, for example, my research took a distinct turn, as the possibility of an urban future for Ashley unfolded before me.

8. **Enable a dialogue for co-design**: set up links between locals and your organisation's designers, planners, engineers and ecologists. Facilitate communications between them, and, most importantly, invite the professionals to walk and observe the place with you and with inhabitants. This will be the most meaningful way to communicate the needs of the landscape to the designers, as well as bringing inhabitants and professionals to the same 'table' for deliberations. I did not progress work in Ashley sufficiently to achieve such dialogue, but I propose that an organisation with the vast expertise and resources of HS2 Ltd should not shy away from this face-to-face contact.

9. **Understand, accept and respond**: your role is to understand what local people are telling you, and to find a way for your organisation to process and use that knowledge.

Be flexible and imaginative in your actions; don't impose your own views. Find out how people would like to be engaged. In Ashley, for example, I had not expected to discover that land ownership was such a key influence on people's willingness to engage, and it was important that I sought to understand this issue and adjust my methods accordingly.

10. **Avoid making assumptions about the place or people**: The landscape you are working in may look similar to other locations, but it is entirely individual, and so are its inhabitants. Treat each place as unique and don't act on any pre-conceived ideas you may have. Working in a rural place demanded that I examine my own preconceived ideas about farmers, for example, such that I could interact with them as individuals rather than seeing them as one cohesive 'stakeholder group'. I learnt about the difference in circumstances of landowning farmers and tenant farmers, which was important.

Potential applications as applied to future phases of HS2

In this case, and in line with the recommendations above, I would propose that resources currently channelled in to big HS2 'Roadshow' events and local surgeries are used instead to set up visits to rural parishes, in which local people can speak directly to one or two landscape architects whilst walking the landscape affected by the proposed alignment. This should happen at the earliest possible opportunity after announcement of the route, and continue at regular intervals, subject to emergent developments in how the inhabitants would prefer to be engaged. The landscape architects assigned to these roles should receive training in landscape advocacy. They should develop a close relationship with the parish/es to which they have been linked, revisiting the same place a number of times over a period of years, as the project develops.

7.8 Further research

This study has drawn together strands from diverse fields of knowledge. This has meant that there are many potential routes for further research which have not been followed up here. Some of them are suited to research by a landscape specialist, others perhaps by public engagement specialists, economists, geographers or sociologists, for example.

Within landscape architecture, case studies of places where cascades of engagement have already occurred, could improve our understanding of how to make it happen. One example would be the *Incredible Edible* movement, begun in 2007 by Pam Warhurst and Mary Clear, in Todmorden, Lancashire, and based on a belief in the power of small actions. They began by growing edible crops in unused spaces around the town, such as the ground around the health centre, spare areas of station car park, graveyards and outside the police station, and quickly became a global movement.

My research has focused on methodology and strategy for engagement, that is, the groundwork for co-design, rather than on what happens next, when inhabitants and designers could potentially work together on landscape proposals around high-speed rail. It is at this point that the relationship between landscape architects and local residents would start to move beyond the accustomed territory of the local person and into the realm of the professional. Designing HS2 is a vastly complex task, in which the extent of the site also means that the professional role is likely to be subdivided in to specific responsibilities for quite discrete aspects of the landscape, perhaps reducing the overall grasp of a sense of place identity. More research could be done to explore the implications of cascading landscape engagement for face-to-face co-design in the context of high-speed rail.

I also propose that a deeper understanding of the rural condition in the UK is necessary in order to assess the likely impact of infrastructure projects on the places they traverse. I contend that more attention is due to rural inhabitants and the disregarded countryside. Several times in the course of this research I have met with the preconceptions of outsiders about what people in Ashley will think. These assumptions have surfaced quickly in conversation, and in general presume that the residents will be against change or built development of any kind. Stereotyped conceptions of farmers are particularly common. However, people in Ashley are just as varied, forward-thinking, closed-or-open minded, opinionated and well-informed as anyone else. Prejudices about rural people can sometimes allow the metropolitan academic (like myself) to feel comfortably distant from, and complacent about, countryside issues. Amongst such issues, I would suggest that the most pressing is the problem of how land ownership affects public engagement with, and decision-making about, landscape. This seems to me to be a very significant barrier to inhabitants ever originating their own forward-thinking landscape proposals.

My hope for this work was that I would be able to navigate through some very complex territory and arrive at a point of relative simplicity. To those who might suggest that my simple findings are wildly optimistic, I would recommend that they visit Ashley, or some other nearby rural place, and meet the people they find there, and walk with them.

Appendices

Appendix A. Walks List

Table 11. List of walks taken in Ashley

date	walkers
02.07.15	lone
15.07.15	lone
15.09.15	lone
03.10.15	Henry Brookes
15.10.15	Emma Houghton, Bollin Valley Partnership
22.10.15	Graeme Blackman
12.11.15	Bruce Dagley (Friends of Bowdon Bollin)
04.12.25	Chris Frankland
01.02.16	Rev. Keith Addenbrooke
08.02.16	Prof. John Handley
11.03.16	John Edwards and the Mid-Cheshire Ramblers
07.06.16	Dr. Paul O'Hare, MMU
16.06.16	John Erlam
27.06.16	Carol Clarke, Tatton Estate Management
04.08.16	Two Parish Councillors from CFA23
23.01.17	lone
03.02.17	lone
08.02.17	lone
27.02.17	lone
10.03.17	Ali
27.03.17	Sarah Atkinson
26.05.17	Ian Warburton
08.07.17	Mid-Cheshire Ramblers
23.07.17	Ashley residents, NP engagement walk
19.03.18	Landscape Assessment Manager from HS2 Ltd

Appendix B. Conversations List

This list of conversations with participants includes all dialogues that took place as part of the action research element of this project. Some of the participants were not Ashley residents but had other links to the place, as indicated in the table. They were not formal interviews with structured questions, but dialogues which emerged as they went along. Some, initially, were recorded, but for reasons given on page 198, the majority were not. Some participants' identities have not been revealed, where they have said things they would not want either their employer or landlord to hear. Many of these conversations were, of course, also walks.

Table 12. Table of conversations contributing to the research

No.	date	location	participant
1.	1.6.15	MMU Art School	Raj Chandarana and Charlotte Bowen, HS2 Northwest Engagement team. I explain my research aims and they express willingness to help and to walk with me.
2.	15.9.15	Phone call	Sally Buttifant, Mid Cheshire Rail Users Association, local representative of the organisation doing outreach work with parish councils. SB provides first links in network of possible participants, including Henry Brookes, Emma Houghton and Graeme Blackman (see below).
3.	3.10.15	Arden House, Ashley	Henry Brookes, owner of Tatton Estate and CEO of Tatton Estate Management. Discussion of the Parish and HB's desire for Ashley Parish Council (APC) to produce Neighbourhood Plan (NP).
4.	15.10.15	Bollin Valley Way, Ashley	Emma Houghton, Bollin Valley Partnership, responsibility for community engagement in the local area. Discussion of physical attributes of the river and also of relationships with local farmers and APC.
5.	22.10.15	North Ashley and Bollin Valley	Graeme Blackman, of walking group PROBUS, lives in south Manchester, very familiar with walking in Ashley. Helpful guidance about local rights of way and an introduction to new paths.
6.	2.11.15	Phone call	Sue McDonald, Clerk to APC, called me to make first contact, discuss the research and invite me to a meeting.
7.	5.11.15	North Ashley and runway 2	Graeme Blackman and fellow PROBUS member Ian Stuart – my introduction to the runway and mitigation measures around it, including tunnel for the Bollin.
8.	9.11.15	APC meeting, nursery school	All parish councillors plus two members of the public. Chaired by Councillor Kevin Gregory, Clerk to the Council Sue McDonald.
9.	12.11.15	Bowdon, just north of Bollin	Bruce Dagley, volunteer with Friends of the Bowdon Bollin. Information about how the Bollin is managed and the various environmental organisations that contribute.

			Insights in to landscape work carried out by volunteers – considerable.
10.	4.12.15	Participant's home & business	Chris Frankland (later to be Councillor Frankland), local tree surgeon and passionate recycler of all kinds of 'waste' timber. Discussion of local planning and environmental issues. Some confidential content.
11.	12.1.16	APC meeting, nursery school	All councillors. Chaired by Kevin Gregory, Clerk to the Council Sue McDonald. Presentation by myself regarding topic of research led to discussion of HS2 and of Neighbourhood Plan.
12.	1.2.16	North Ashley footpaths	Reverend Keith Addenbrook, vicar of St Elizabeth's Church, Ashley. Discussion of importance of the church building to Ashley, regardless of faith. Christian view of landscape around us. Keith is new in post.
13.	8.2.16	North Ashley and Cotterill Clough	Professor John Handley. Ecologist and co-founder of Groundwork. Resident just outside of Ashley. Learnt about ecological mitigation around airport city (minimal) and the value of the Cotterill Clough nature reserve.
14.	28.2.16	Back Lane, Ashley	Councillor Kevin Gregory, organising annual litter pick.
15.	11.03.16	North Ashley and Bollin Valley paths	John Edwards and the Mid-Cheshire Ramblers.
16.	14.5.16	Ashley Rose Queen Fête	Conversations with many residents, over four hours. Significant expansion of network, including meeting Peter Wright.
17.	17.5.16	Knutsford Sports Club, Mereheath Lane	HS2 local surgery, conversation with HS2 representative (identity confidential).
18.	23.5.16	APC meeting, St Elizabeth's	Further discussions with APC about progress of research. New Chair is Councillor Geoff Warburton, Clerk Sue McDonald.
19.	24.5.16	Chinley Cottage, Ashley	Peter Wright, ex-Chair of APC and one-time Ashley parish milkman. Lifelong resident of the parish, as was his father. Discussion of local history and of traffic problems.
20.	7.6.16	South Ashley paths	Paul O'Hare, Senior Lecturer in Geography, MMU. Not local, so interview provides specialised academic view of landscape issues in Ashley.
21.	16.6.16	Sugar Brook farmhouse and land, Ashley	John Erlam, Parish Councillor, farmer and TEM tenant. Some confidential content. Discussion of plant and animal species on his land, and influence of existing railway. Site of brick and tile works.
22.	27.6.16	Chinley Cottage, Ashley	Peter Wright, local mapping plan is formed. His personal recollections of Ashley.
23.	27.6.16	South Ashley paths	Carol Clarke, Head of Planning and Community Engagement at Tatton Estate Management.

			Discussion of HS2 impacts on Ashley and possible sites which may become used for housing.
24.	29.6.16	Skype from Singapore	Henry Brookes, who wishes me to publish findings as soon as possible. Unclear what the motivation for this might be. He expresses feeling under-informed by HS2 and left out of the loop as landowner.
25.	15.7.16	Chinley Cottage, Ashley	Peter Wright. Map project gets underway. Discussions are based around local history and landscape.
26.	18.7.16	APC meeting, St Elizabeth's	Parish Councillors. Geoff Warburton Chair, Sue McDonald Clerk. Various members of the public. Councillor Erlam speaks to the meeting in support of my research and proposes far greater engagement with the prospect of HS2. I show the developing Peter Wright map to let people know what has been happening.
27.	4.8.16	Hampton-in Arden, Warwickshire	Two Parish Councillors who did not wish to be identified, but who had produced a Neighbourhood Plan and also engaged very effectively with HS2 Ltd on the Phase 1 route. A full day spent in their company, as they helped me to understand landscape impacts and took me to sites along the alignment. I subsequently sent Chapter Four of this thesis to them for approval and they endorsed it.
28.	10.9.16	St Elizabeth's	Mapping workshop with a number of residents, see Chapter Five for detail.
29.	13.9.16	Knutsford Sports Club, Mereheath Lane	Conversation with a second HS2 Ltd representative (identity confidential).
30.	26.9.16	APC meeting, St Elizabeth's	Parish Councillors. Geoff Warburton Chair, Sue McDonald Clerk. Various members of the public. I report back on mapping workshop.
31.	17.10.16	Neighbourhood Plan meeting, St Elizabeth's	Lucy Hughes from Cheshire Community Action led public conversation about approach Ashley should take to making NP.
32.	2.11.16	Chinley Cottage, Ashley	Peter Wright, assembling photos on the Ashley map.
33.	7.11.16	Neighbourhood Plan meeting at The Greyhound, Ashley	Councillor Sarah Atkinson chairing, Amy Unwin, Ali, Councillor Emma Capp, Angie Jacques. Issues around members of steering group are discussed.
34.	13.12.16	The Greyhound, Ashley	Councillor Sarah Atkinson for pre-meeting re. NP, then APC Christmas meal. Conversation with Henry Brookes.
35.	10.1.17	Neighbourhood Plan meeting SA's kitchen, Ashley	Councillor Sarah Atkinson (chairing), Amy Unwin, Ali, Councillor Emma Capp, Angie Jacques. Making a 'plan for a Plan'.

36.	30.1.17	NP meeting AU's kitchen, Hough Green	Councillor Sarah Atkinson (chair), Councillor Amy Unwin, Councillor Emma Capp, Angie Jacques. Planning first public engagement meeting for NP.
37.	30.1.17	APC meeting, St Elizabeth's	Parish Councillors. Geoff Warburton Chair, Sue McDonald Clerk. Members of the public.
38.	6.2.17	HS2 meeting AU's kitchen, Hough Green	Raj Chandarana, HS2 Ltd. Engagement Manager, Northwest Region. Councillor Sarah Atkinson Councillor Amy Unwin, Councillor Emma Capp, Angie Jacques.
39.	15.2 17	Ashley HS2 Public Meeting, St Elizabeth's	I present a summary to members of the public attending, and discussion ensues.
40.	17.2 .17	Interview, Macclesfield Town Hall	Cheshire East Council Neighbourhood Planning Manager (identity confidential).
41.	7.3.17	Public NP meeting, St Elizabeth's	Ashley residents and Tatton Estate Management in attendance. Councillor Sarah Atkinson (chair).
42.	10.3.17	Brickhill Lane and south Ashley footpaths	Walk with Ali, Ashley resident, discussion of the terrain feeds in to landscape character assessment.
43.	21.3.17	NP meeting AU's kitchen, Hough Green	Councillor Amy Unwin (chair), Councillor Emma Capp, Angie Jacques.
44.	27.3.17	North Ashley footpaths, Castle Mill	Walk with Councillor Sarah Atkinson. Observing non-agricultural land use.
45.	27.3.17	APC meeting, St Elizabeth's	Parish Councillors. Geoff Warburton Chair, Sue McDonald Clerk. Various members of the public.
46.	27.4.17	Chinley Cottage and around Ashley	Peter Wright. Photos for map project.
47.	8.5.17	Chinley Cottage and around Ashley	Peter Wright. Further photos for map project.
48.	17.5.17	Chinley Cottage and around Ashley	Peter Wright. Further photos for map project.
49.	17.5.17	Farm outbuilding, Ashley	Councillors Unwin and Capp, plus anonymous tenant farmers. Met to work on large scale map for public engagement at Rose Queen.
50.	20.5.17	Ashley Rose Queen	Councillor Unwin, plus members of the public attending fête.
51.	26.5.17	Farm, North Ashley.	Tenant farmer (identity confidential). Candid discussion of problems of being a tenant and challenges he feels are facing Ashley.
52.	8.6.17	NP meeting, St Elizabeth's	Members of NP steering group, now Councillor Any Unwin (chair), Councillor John Erlam, Councillor Emma Capp, Councillor John

			Atherden. Discussion of application for funding for the NP.
53.	26.6.17	NP meeting, St Elizabeth's	Members of NP steering group, now Councillor Any Unwin (chair), Councillor John Erlam, Councillor Emma Capp, Councillor John Atherden. Members of the public.
54.	4.7.17	Chinley Cottage	Peter Wright. Discussion of draft map.
55	8.7.17	North Ashley footpaths	The Ramblers Association, Mid Cheshire Branch, led by John Edwards of the group, and myself.
56.	23.7.17	Central Ashley footpaths, met at The Greyhound	Public engagement walk with 9 residents around HS2 route.
57.	14.9.17	Chinley Cottage	Peter Wright. Final adjustments to map.
58.	20.10.17	Chiney Cottage and The Greyhound	Peter Wright, handover of final map.
59.	27.11.17	APC meeting, St Elizabeth's	Final APC meeting, goodbye from me, bunch of flowers from APC.
60.	14.12.17	Chinley Cottage	Peter Wright. Goodbye from me, handed over old maps of Ashley to Peter, with many thanks.
61.	19.3.18	Central and north Ashley footpaths	David Green, landscape architect, HS2 Ltd.

Appendix C. What is a neighbourhood plan?

In England, parliament devolves some legislative powers to the Greater London Authority and nine combined authorities, such as the Greater Manchester Combined Authority. In other areas, such as Cheshire East, the local government is known as the 'Local Authority', and they have certain powers, some of which are devolved again to the Parish Councils (in rural areas) and Town Councils. Planning powers are devolved in this way. The UK's National Planning Policy Framework (Department for Communities and Local Government, March 2012) sets out the national government's planning policies. It covers the regulations for new housing, for planning in rural and urban places, for transport and communications infrastructure, and for the natural and historic environment. It takes into account sustainability, impacts of climate change, design standards and so on, and requires local authorities to produce their 'Local Plan', which is the next tier in legislation (see Figure 83). It also enshrines in law the requirement to engage local people with their landscapes, including sourcing their knowledge and supporting them to originate their own planning policies, via the process of neighbourhood planning.

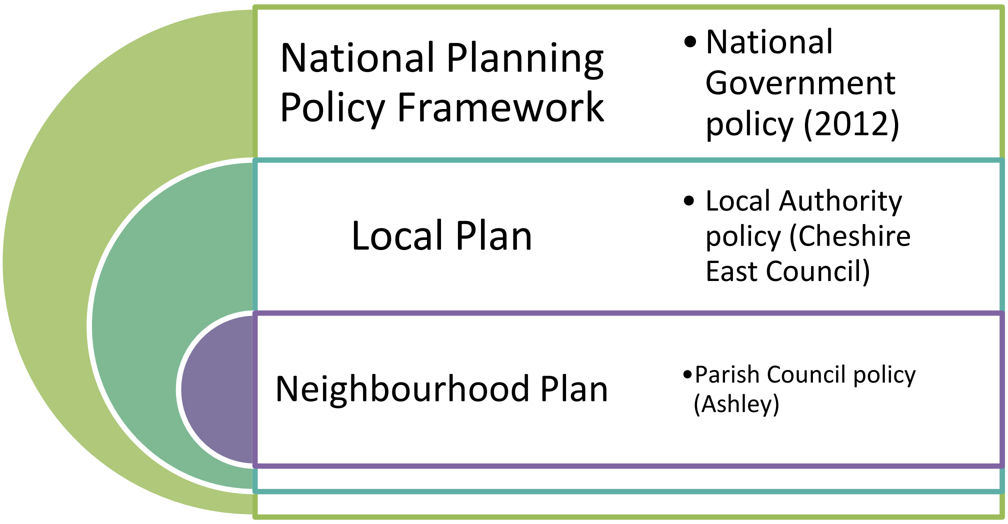
National Planning Policy Framework
• National Government policy (2012)
Local Plan
• Local Authority policy (Cheshire East Council)
Neighbourhood Plan
•Parish Council policy (Ashley)

Figure 83. Tiers of UK Planning legislation (author's own image)

Appendix D. Contribution of writing to LLCA, by John Erlam

Sent to JP by email, 22.04.2017

Ashley derived its name from being a clearing in the ash trees and together with the oaks these are the predominant tree species. Although nearly every other native is present somewhere within the village boundary. Huge beech trees, ancient yews, wet-footed alder, weeping, white and crack willows, scarce black ash and at one time the oldest species of all, the ginkgo grew in the vicarage garden.

The village is vastly diverse in the nature present - this has been helped by having the nationally important sites at Rostherne Mere and Tatton Park as neighbours.

Internationally this area is of high importance due to our resident population of great crested newts - they breed here in larger numbers than the common newt but are extremely rare in the rest of Europe. Other more common resident amphibians are frogs and toads.

When you look into the sky and see the buzzards gliding on a thermal, or see a kestrel hovering above its next meal, or the sparrow hawk rocketing low to the ground flushing its prey out of the hedges you can think that all must be reasonably well with the bird population. If the top of the food chain are thriving, so must the smaller birds, the rodents and the insects that make up their diet.

Foxes, badgers, weasels and stoats head the mammals present. With otters establishing themselves at Rostherne and then making their way up the Birkin and its tributaries such as Sugar Brook. A less welcome ever present is the mink - a voracious killing machine who single handedly has wiped out the water vole population. This North American native was released from a fur farm in Alderley Edge. Man's intervention can have such devastating effects - the initial importation was stupid but the release of the animals into the wild was catastrophic.

Then again, man can benefit his environment - the patchwork of arable crops and grassland encourage the diversity of wildlife. The hedges act as animal motorways between the areas of woodland. As we enter a period when human influence becomes more intense - there must be special thought given as to how these changes can be mitigated to help nature deal with the developments.

We can still go out into the fields of Ashley and see the brown hares boxing in spring, see the swallows nesting in the old farm buildings, hear the skylark singing as she soars up from her nest and in the evening watch the gently flitting pipistrelle bats feeding on flying insects around the woods. Ashley is a jewel to be cherished by us and the future generations.

Appendix E. Table of results from questionnaire, Rose Queen Fete 20.5.2017

Note. For question one, a yes/no response was required. Questions two and three were open questions, so the responses listed all originate from respondents themselves.

Question	responses	count
1. **Is Ashley a rural place?**	yes	15/15
2. **What makes it so (either rural or not rural)?**	farming	10/15
	Green infrastructure such as fields/hedgerows/trees/woodland	9/15
	Open space	7/15
	Small population	4/15
	Sense of community	3/15
	Lack of development of built form	3/15
	The Green Belt designation	2/15
	Public footpaths	2/15
	Farm buildings	1/15
	Heritage assets	1/15
	The River Bollin	1/15
	Lack of parking restrictions	1/15
	The pub as a social resource	1/15
	Low crime	1/15
	Local events	1/15
	Rural views	1/15
	wildlife	1/15
3. What problems do you think Ashley has?	traffic	3/15
	Noise pollution	3/15
	Other pollution	1/15
	HS2	1/15
	Views of signage on motorway	1/15

Appendix F. Published paper, based on Chapter Four

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COMMENT

The "whys and wherefores" of citizen participation in the landscapes of HS2

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High Speed 2 (HS2) is the UK's proposed rail network which will run trains at speeds of up to 400 km per hour. The line will operate from Manchester and Leeds, via Birmingham to London, with eight new stations serving the planned 565 km of track. The impact on the landscape will be significant, as the width of the structure will be comparable to that of a three-lane motorway in many places. Construction will begin in 2017 and the first trains between London and Birmingham are scheduled to run in 2026 (HS2 Ltd, 2016a). Similar projects have caused degrees of controversy around the world, as in the case of Italy's 'No TAV' movement, which claims several individual demonstrations of up to 80,000 people since the early 1990s (infoaut.org, 2013). Despite support for HS2 from all the UK's major political parties, there is significant public opposition to the project, particularly along the proposed route. HS2 developed from plans for trans-European high-speed rail networks that were formalised in 1996. The first report to the government proposing HS2 was produced in 2009 by the consultancy firm Atkins (2009). It forecast huge increases in rail freight and passengers, alongside increasing road congestion and use of domestic flights. At the time, the Labour Government was facing a general election and, in the words of Lord Mandelson in July 2013, was "keen to paint an upbeat view of the future" by proposing HS2 (The Independent Newspaper, 2013). Government reviews of the idea ran from January 2009 to January 2012, with attention largely focussed on the route, the first 'preferred scheme' being announced in December 2009.

Initial public consultation on the route alignment ran for five months in 2011. It found an overall majority against high speed rail, with 5.5% expressing general agreement with proposals for the network. The questions did not address potential transformative effects on cities, and though there has been considerable emphasis on the potential economic benefits, the focus has continued to be largely about cost and route rather than local effects. The estimated £56 billion cost to the public purse is the main focus for concern, as from the outset the UK government's calculations have been based on full public funding. Government claims about positive economic outcomes for the Midlands and the North, under the slogan "Rebalancing Britain", have not countered fears that short journey times could turn Birmingham and Manchester into viable and cheap dormitory towns, with jobs remaining in the capital.

Impacts of the scheme will no doubt be substantial and uneven. Critics suggest that, whilst newly connected city centres and degraded peri-urban landscapes will doubtless benefit, smaller towns and large areas of rural England will be too far from stations to reap any rewards. Debate about mitigation of landscape losses has revolved around the destructive effects of the line on 98 ancient woodlands and the promise that seven million new trees will be planted between London and Birmingham (HS2 Ltd press release, 2016b). Property prices around stations will undoubtedly rise, to the detriment of those in need of affordable housing, and land use patterns may well undergo significant change; for example in the rural area surrounding Manchester Airport's proposed station, agriculture might not be seen as the most profitable kind of business for very much longer.

I am a landscape architect and, as part of my PhD research, use walking and mapping with residents to access local knowledge of landscapes in anticipation of HS2, as well as scrutiny of government policy and actions. This article offers a brief critical review of those documents and policies which are most pertinent to public participation in HS2, and an assessment of how these manifest in the experiences of members of the public whose landscapes are affected. The materials under discussion are chiefly the

Phase One environmental statement (ES) (HS2 Ltd, 2013), the HS2 Residents' charter (HS2 Ltd, 2015b), and Information Paper G1 Consultation and engagement (HS2 Ltd, 2014b), as well as excerpts from parliamentary transcripts, which contribute most to our understanding of the approach of the government body responsible, HS2 Ltd. Broader points are drawn from this, relevant to public participation in any national infrastructure project in any country, regarding problems of timescales, dissemination of large volumes of complex information, unclear or unrealised aims, defensive and adversarial consultation, lack of transparency in land development deals, and dubious links between engagement and design processes.

Legal powers to construct HS2 will be granted following scrutiny of a series of Hybrid Bills in Parliamentary Select Committees, which act as national-level planning hearings and examine evidence about the proposals. Most of this evidence is contained in the ES, which acts as the main document through which the public are consulted about landscape. Its very nature creates significant problems with both timescales and volume of data. It is a catalogue of written and visual information about landscape impacts along the route and the only collated source of information regarding the future of those places. The complete Phase One ES, at over 50,000 pages spread across five volumes, was made available online in December 2013 (HS2 Ltd, 2013). Citizens were given 71 days to submit comments, meaning that non-experts had around 704 pages of report to digest per day.

In 2014 the HS2 Independent Assessor summarised the public's comments on the ES. A large number of responses were about the consultation process and a significant number said that the consultation "focussed on relaying information rather than a dialogue" (HS2 Independent Assessor, 2014, p. 16). The short comments period arguably excluded any possibility of two-way communication evolving. It was not possible, for example, for inhabitants to consult with a representative of HS2 in their local area. Such a time-frame is not designed to support a lay person's true understanding of the scheme, but positions them as one-time receptors of a vast quantity of information. Arguably, dialogue with citizens was not the intention of HS2 Ltd at the time the ES was produced, and the technical nature of any ES is such that it is anyway not suited to forming the basis of public consultation.

The comments period was followed by a 23-day opportunity for those directly affected by the proposals to respond to the ES by submitting a petition, in person, to Parliament. In total, 3407 petitions were deposited in the House of Commons and the House of Lords for Phase One. These small windows for consultation sit in the context of a project with an overall construction phase that will last approximately 16 years. This timescale is not unusual; for example California's current phase of high speed rail is expected to take 14 years. Given that design changes will be made right up to the point of construction, such brief opportunities to officially comment on landscape proposals seem at best unfair, at worst tokenistic.

The Independent Assessor's report on the ES also highlighted the difficulty of understanding impacts on local areas due to the complexity of the cross-referencing of data. The ES divides the Phase One route into 26 Community Forum Areas (CFAs). A search for information relevant, for example, to CFA 23 (Balsall Common and Hampton-in-Arden, but the numbers perhaps deliberately erode a sense of place identity) requires extracting details from various sections of the Non-Technical Summary, plus volumes 2 and 3 as a minimum, and then the 23 separate sections of volume 5. Maps and their explanatory written reports are found in different places. Once you have found the right map you can try to work out what the impact on your location might be by locating the positions of the different viewpoints that have been chosen for the photomontages (separate section again). In this way you might access image number LV-01-167, for viewpoint 293-4-003, from map number CT-10-052 within CFA 23. It is not possible to say whether the cross-referencing is deliberately abstruse, but certainly no priority has been given, in this key consultation document, to making the ES accessible to the average lay person.

An examination of HS2 Ltd's wider consultation activity also suggests that top-down dissemination of information has been their priority. The HS2 Ltd Residents' charter (HS2 Ltd, 2015b), set out in January 2015 by their Residents' Commissioner, might be expected to outline the aims of the consultation but instead seeks to clarify matters relating to contacting the commissioner, the complaints procedure and compensatory 'property schemes'. It does not mention landscape, design, dialogue or any synonym thereof. It sets out no aims for consultation, engagement or participation. This is unsurprising, as although the Department for Transport requires HS2 Ltd to deliver on 20 different themed outcomes in the "construction, commissioning and operation of the railway ... covering all aspects of the railway" (HS2 Ltd, 2015a, p. 16), public engagement is not one of them, and although quality of architecture is mentioned, landscape is not.

A significant limitation of HS2 Ltd's public consultation is that from the beginning it has lacked clear aims. HS2 Ltd were established in January 2009, and yet Information Paper G1 Consultation and engagement was not published until 2014 (HS2 Ltd, 2014b). Paper G1 does set out objectives regarding providing information, understanding local concerns, consulting at appropriate points in time and helping to "develop an improved scheme and propose steps to avoid, reduce or, where reasonably practicable, off-set any significant adverse effects" (HS2 Ltd, 2014b, p. 3) but there is little evidence that these aims have guided the project thus far (Bynoe, 2016). At a Phase Two local consultation 'surgery' event in 2016 I asked an HS2 representative what the aim of their public engagement is. The answer was provided without hesitation; it is to save money from the public purse by easing the passage of the Phase Two Bill through parliament with the least possible delay. In other words, the overriding concern is to dissuade the public from presenting petitions to parliament and thereby slowing down the process. This honest and pragmatic statement suggests a desire that the public voice not be heard, and that local events are placatory and intended to act as buffers to prevent any impact upon the infrastructure project itself. There is no sense here that any landscape might actually be improved by close involvement of residents in the design process.

The HS2 consultation model is based around the aforementioned system of CFAs which are intended "to discuss local design and environmental matters" (HS2 Ltd, 2014b, p. 6). The claim is made that "Issues raised are escalated through the HS2 Ltd internal governance structure as appropriate" (HS2 Ltd, 2014b, p. 6). In August 2016 I interviewed members of a parish council (PC, the lowest tier of local government in England) from Phase One, seeking their experiences of being consulted by HS2 Ltd since 2010. The Select Committee transcripts of this parish's representations to Parliament evidence the extent of their determination and thoroughness in expressing objections to proposals. The petitioning system is an adversarial one. When you speak in front of the Select Committee, "The Promoters [Department of Transport] have a similar opportunity to present counter arguments against your case" (House of Lords Private Bill Office, 2016, p. 2). This means that some of the most senior barristers in the country, representing the power and weight of Parliament, are set against the petitioner, who presents to several officials, including the Chair, members of the House of Lords or Commons, at least one Queen's Counsel (an eminent lawyer) for the Department of Transport, and various other HS2 officials. The Lords' own final report on the process stated that

> "Time and again during our proceedings, we encountered difficulties with the current procedure. It became abundantly clear to us that petitioners found it cryptic and complex to understand, and labyrinthine to navigate" (House of Lords HS2 Select Committee 2016c, p. 8).

Petitioners from the Phase One parish voiced concerns about the relocation of a council recycling centre and a proposed new road, but most significantly about the construction of a 300 metre-long embankment on a flood plain. In the PC's view, HS2 engineers were unaware that their proposed embankment along the Blythe river valley had been subject to five '1 in 100 year' flood events in the winter of 2013 alone (House of Commons HS2 Select Committee, 2014). A retired high-speed railway engineer living in the parish redesigned the structure as a viaduct rather than an embankment. HS2 Ltd adopted his recommendations. None of this occurred within the CFA system. Instead, it was raised in Parliament by residents, and then escalated by the parish themselves, in communication with an HS2 engineer who visited them, outside of the engagement process, and at the request of the parish.

The new road proposal in this parish was not part of the ES, but was subsequently published as Additional Provision (AP) 2 (HS2 Ltd, 2015c). The decision was made without the knowledge of the PC, in discussions between HS2 Ltd and a local estate, the key landowner in the area. News of this development was presented to members of the PC as they waited in a corridor in the Houses of Parliament to present their petition to the Select Committee. In a comment on AP2, Mr Robert Syms, chairing, said that this deal had been done 'in a corridor' and elaborated thus:

> "It is part of the process; people settle; today, there are several businesses that are settled in the corridor" (House of Lords HS2 Select Committee 2016b, paragraph 46: 9).

This oblique statement implies that decisions are commonly made out of view of the public. It is a reminder that many decisions about sizeable changes to the landscape are continually emerging along the length of the alignment. For Phase One, however, the official consultation period, CFA meetings and petitioning are finished. Many changes to the proposals of the ES are likely to be made as work progresses and conditions evolve, but if this case is typical they may not be subject to scrutiny by non-governmental organisations, by the public, or by their democratically elected representatives.

The relocation of the recycling centre in this parish to a site within the green belt was “a complete surprise until AP4 was published” (interview, 4 August 2016). The new facility is to be paid for by HS2 Ltd, though owned and run by the borough council, who will gain a substantially improved and 40% larger premise. As this is a provision of a scheme that is enshrined in the Bill, it is not subject to local planning processes. A petitioner to the Select Committee puts the problem clearly:

> “we understand … the nature of the Hybrid Bill and the fact that it overrides certain processes around what can be done. We thought this was in relation to building HS2. We thought this was in relation to moving roads and traffic. We didn’t realise it was in relation to things like ... like a rubbish tip could be moved. It feels to me like, if that’s the case, anything could be up for grabs” (House of Lords HS2 Select Committee 2016a, paragraph 254: 46).

This is a significant point. It highlights how members of the public could be excluded from local planning decisions made in the wake of HS2, in which mutually beneficial development deals are struck and cannot be overridden.

The Bynoe report of April 2016 provides an independent critical overview of HS2’s public engagement and explores the gap between rhetoric and the experiences of citizens. It finds that the engagement procedures are based around a defensive model. Bynoe takes the evidence of the HS2 Residents’ Commissioner as a significant source of information for his review. She informs him of understaffing of ‘basic community engagement’ since her appointment in early 2015, at which time “the team for the whole of Phase One comprised five persons ... The effect of this shortage was that there had been little or no direct community engagement during 2014”(Bynoe, 2016, p. 9). This shortage, according to Bynoe, was due to large numbers of staff dealing with petitions to Parliament. Thus the adversarial, topdown public consultation exercise prevailed. Bynoe calls for HS2 Ltd’s Draft Community Engagement Framework to be finalised. It seems unlikely, however, that the Framework will improve the matters discussed here; it is a document largely concerned with complaints procedures, dissemination of information and ‘community relations’ during the construction of Phase One.

It may be argued that the difficulties of public engagement with infrastructure mega-projects in any part of the world are the unavoidable consequences of sheer scale of aspiration. However, it is crucially important to recognise that HS2 is both continuously evolving and set in a landscape which is likewise a complex and emerging entity. Multiple cascading effects of the project are triggered even before work starts on site, within a landscape that already has its own flood events, road building programmes, imminent housing developments and so on. A new railway line has impacts apart from its physical presence; on human psychology, social networks and economies as well as on views, road networks, hydrology and all other ecological systems. There is, arguably, nothing along the alignment of such projects that remains unaffected during the phases of anticipation, construction and post-completion. Given such fluid conditions, it should not be considered acceptable for consultation obligations for a 21-year project to be met, even in part, via questionnaires which are conceived in the spirit of box-ticking, administered over just a few weeks and in any case ignored if outcomes are contrary to those desired by government. In the face of such a landscape context, the engagement process itself, even if based on simple interactions, must surely be emergent and embrace evolving complexity. It needs to address the problem of timescales by being sustained for the life of the project, setting the agenda for engagement from the beginning and rewriting that agenda to respond to emerging circumstances. It must reject the one-way flow of information and genuinely value the role of local knowledge. This means making landscape design decisions by connecting local people directly to designers, and ultimately aiming to achieve a cooperative and respectful ‘reflective capacity’ between professionals and citizens. There will be cases where this saves money by avoiding mistakes and costly reversal of controversial decisions. The aims of such engagement could be set out as part of the process and agreed between all parties in an effort to reject the adversarial model. Such a model of engagement would be inherently transparent and integral to the design process. HS2 is an enormously ambitious project unfolding over an extended period of time. Those affected by it deserve equally ambitious engagement which not only seeks just outcomes for landscape, but also aims for the highest standards of participation possible in future infrastructure planning.

Note

1. Phase One is the first of three proposed stages, running Birmingham to London.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Notes on contributor

Jo Phillips is a landscape architect and PhD researcher. She is currently writing up her thesis, provisionally entitled 'Reaching For Simplicity; Citizen Participation, Complexity Theory and the Transport Megaproject'. Her research interests are public engagement with landscape, emergent landscape, neighbourhood planning and cascading land development in rural areas. This is her first publication.

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