

Manchester School of Architecture

MA Landscape Architecture

“Rural communities face an uncertain future. What innovative ideas can be applied to develop sustainable communities in the future?”

By David Legrand

Module tutor: Ian Fisher

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Abstract

Problems facing rural areas have become a popular discussion topic for both experts and residents of rural areas. This study reviews examples of the problems affecting rural Britain and provides evidence of the impact they have on rural communities. The paper argues that there are measures that can be taken to improve the future of rural areas and provide them with a sustainable future, and concludes with a manifesto detailing key drivers which should be implemented in rural regeneration plans to ensure the current and future success of rural communities

Introduction

This paper identifies the multiple issues that rural areas face, particularly when compared to urban areas. It focuses on the causes of these issues and through a range of case studies, explores how some rural areas have attempted to overcome the problems that they face. The analysis of these case studies and other supporting information will culminate in the creation of a manifesto, which sets out key drivers which allow rural areas to develop sustainably.

There are a vast number of issues which can affect rural areas, often preventing them from developing in line with larger towns and cities. There are many opposing views regarding what constitutes a rural area and care must be taken not to become too fixated on this, as this is not the focus of this dissertation. DEFRA (2004) defines rural as “settlements with fewer than 10000 people”.

The commission of rural communities (2010) states that prior to the 2004 above definition being set out, many different organisations used conflicting classifications to define “rural”. Following a large scale review of all existing definitions and classifications around 2001/2, various government organisations collaborated to create a universal definition. This definition will be used in this study as it provides a reliable benchmark for comparison when compiling research on rural areas.

Economic, demographic and housing issues

Many of today’s issues affecting rural areas are not unique to the twenty-first century. Jennings (2005) points out the migration of people from rural areas to urban towns and cities in order to find more plentiful work has been on the increase since the industrial revolution. The Economic Research Society (2010) states that in the period up to the industrial revolution, changes had been taking place in agriculture. One of the main driving forces behind these changes were the Enclosure Acts. Chambers, J. (1975) states that one of the main objectives behind enclosure was that it would allow farms to be more efficient as they would be larger and easier to work, allowing for better balance between arable and pasture. This would also mean that new landowners could better care for livestock, thus increasing the economic viability and food output of a farm. This inevitably led to small pieces of land being consolidated to form large farms usually owned by wealthy landlords and

rented out to tenant farmers. This also caused many small land owners faced with the pressures of increasing prices and an inability to compete with larger farms to sell up and relocate to towns and cities to seek better employment opportunities. Overton, M. (2011) also points out that another factor which pushed many people out of the agricultural industry during the industrial revolution was the invention of farm machinery which meant previously labour intensive tasks such as ploughing fields could now be done relatively easily with less labour. This coupled with vast improvements in farming efficiency through methods such as crop rotation meant that by 1850 despite only 22% of the British workforce being employed in agriculture (the smallest proportion in any country at the time) food output was actually on the increase. These improvements in farming meant there were significantly fewer workers required in agriculture and provided another reason for many to move to larger towns and cities in search of work. Ashton, T. (1996) states that many people migrated to towns and cities to take advantage of the huge increase of workers required to work in the industrial manufacturing sector. These people were required to make a vast array of goods such as pottery, metal wares and textiles. These goods were sold in the UK, but also overseas, and more and more people were coming to live in towns and cities to satisfy the demand for the enormous workforce required to operate the factories making these goods. This instigated a shift in the UK from an agricultural based society to a manufacturing based society.

In the last century an increasing amount of manufacturing jobs have been outsourced abroad, mainly to emerging economies in the east. In the BBC series *Made in Britain* (2011) Evan Davis states that in the last three decades over 3 million manufacturing jobs have been lost in the UK, as companies decide to move production to poorer countries such as China and India. The UK meanwhile, seeks to concentrate on high value industry such as marketing and investment. Mesure, S. and Beard, M. (2002) give an example of a large company which has opted to outsource; Dyson. James Dyson, who had always been an ambassador for British manufacturing, has now developed his position to moving manufacture of his Dyson vacuum cleaners from his hi-tech factory in Malmesbury to Malaysia, blaming the high cost of manufacturing in the UK.

The Council for Science and Technology (2003) states that today service-based industries account for 70% of UK output and this continues to grow. This indicates a further shift from manufacturing to a service-based society. The high concentration of service industries around large towns and cities and ever decreasing agricultural job opportunities effectively force those of employment age to migrate out of rural areas and into urban areas in order to seek employment. Whilst this would suggest a decreasing population in rural areas, Spedding, A. (2010) points out that rural populations have in fact been on the increase. However, demographic research statistics show that rural areas have a higher proportion of older than younger people. Taylor, M. (2008a) provides an explanation for this and states that many people are moving to rural areas in middle age after their children have grown up and they have downsized their properties, allowing them to live a more idealistic lifestyle as they approach retirement. One example of a couple who wish to do this is Linda and Alistair Pickering, who appear on the BBC TV programme *Escape to the Country* (2011). They are looking to move to rural Shropshire in order to semi-retire to a place with a slower pace of life where their grandchildren can come to stay. Taylor, M. (2008b) also points out that as more and more people want to move to rural areas in search of this ideal lifestyle, housing supply is becoming constrained and rural house prices have risen sharply.

Gentrification has also become an issue; Smith, D. and Phillips, D. (2001) claim that the gentry are attracted to “villages and landscapes synonymous with working farms, country lanes, green fields and sheep”. Cloke, P. (1998) and others point out that they are also lured to rural areas with the promise of “village gentry lifestyles”; in particular, the prevalence of activities such as hunting, shooting and riding for both sport and leisure. Shucksmith, M. (2000) states that gentrification has been evident in many areas across Britain; he describes how better-off people migrating to the countryside often displace less affluent individuals who originate from the area, as increased competition for scarce housing prices them out of the market.

Oxley, M. and others (2008) state that another issue which is pushing up rural house prices is that of second home ownership; they point out that in many rural areas the price of smaller “cottage style properties” has increased in areas where second home ownership is more prevalent. The explanation they offer for this is that people prefer smaller properties as their second home. They point out that as the most popular price range for a second home is £100,000 to £200,000, this directly competes with local residents buying their primary homes; this often pushes up demand in an area and in turn can push up price, this has begun to make home ownership in their local area increasingly difficult for young people. Tym, R. (2006) points out that just 55% of first time buyers are able to afford to buy a home in their own ward, inevitably this leads to more young people migrating to more affordable urban settlements. Many feel that the simplest solution to this issue is to build more affordable homes; however, Ward, N. (2006) states that planning policy in rural areas within the UK primarily focuses on preserving rural areas, consequently this restricts their adaptability, preventing them from addressing both current and future requirements. The following table illustrates the extent of the housing affordability problem in rural areas.

Sparsity	Settlement type	Mean House Price 2007 £	Affordability Ratio of mean house price to median household income
Less sparse	Urban settlements of >10k	212,954	5.8
	Town and Fringe	213,142	6.2
	Village	296,682	8.2
	Hamlet & Isolated Dwelling	352,705	
Sparse	Urban settlements of >10k	167,837	6.5
	Town & Fringe	204,315	7.4
	Village	258,831	7.5
	Hamlet & Isolated Dwelling	313,087	
Urban England		212,823	5.8
Rural England		257,600	6.8

Commission for Rural Communities (CRC) (2008)

Infrastructure and access to local services

In recent years many of the local services and facilities which have been the life blood of small rural communities have spiralled into a catastrophic decline. “Institutions” such as post offices, pubs and local village schools are becoming less frequent fixtures in village life. In a report by the Royal Mail, Luccinda, M. (2011) describes how post offices have been declining steadily for 30 years and in the last 11 years 2796 post offices in rural areas have already closed their doors. Similarly, many pubs have suffered the same fate, with 893 countryside pubs closing between 2009-2010 according to British Beer and Pub Association (2010). In response to this the BBC (2011) argues that the closure of pubs and post offices is due to lifestyle changes; for example, people simply post less letters today and spend less time drinking in public houses. However, BBC (2011) also points out that these services provide another vital function: they act as community hubs, providing people with many opportunities for interaction in places where people are often quite isolated. One example of this can be found in Village SOS (2011), which showcases the ‘Barge inn community project’, a lottery funded initiative instigated by a local community who took on the lease of their dilapidated village pub after recognising that their community lacked a place for people to gather and socialise. They felt that since the pubs closure, the village had suffered, as people no longer had the relationship they used to have with one another in their once close-knit community. They also recognised that by building a successful pub/restaurant business, people would be attracted from outside of the local area and the tourism trade and jobs would be increased. So far, the project has been a success and has received good reviews from both media and residents.

Transport is also a major issue in rural areas. Welsh Local Government Association manifesto for rural Wales (2011) states that rural areas have become very dependent on vehicles largely due to lack of public transport and the distances which often have to be travelled to commute to work. The recent ongoing fuel price rises have exacerbated this issue and created a definitive need for more cost effective modes of transport. The graph below shows that whilst vast improvements in the availability of buses have occurred in the last decade, rural areas (in particular smaller villages) still suffer from a lack of public transport in comparison to urban areas. This can have a huge impact on the life of someone who does not have access to a car, particularly affecting the young and the elderly who often fall in to this category.

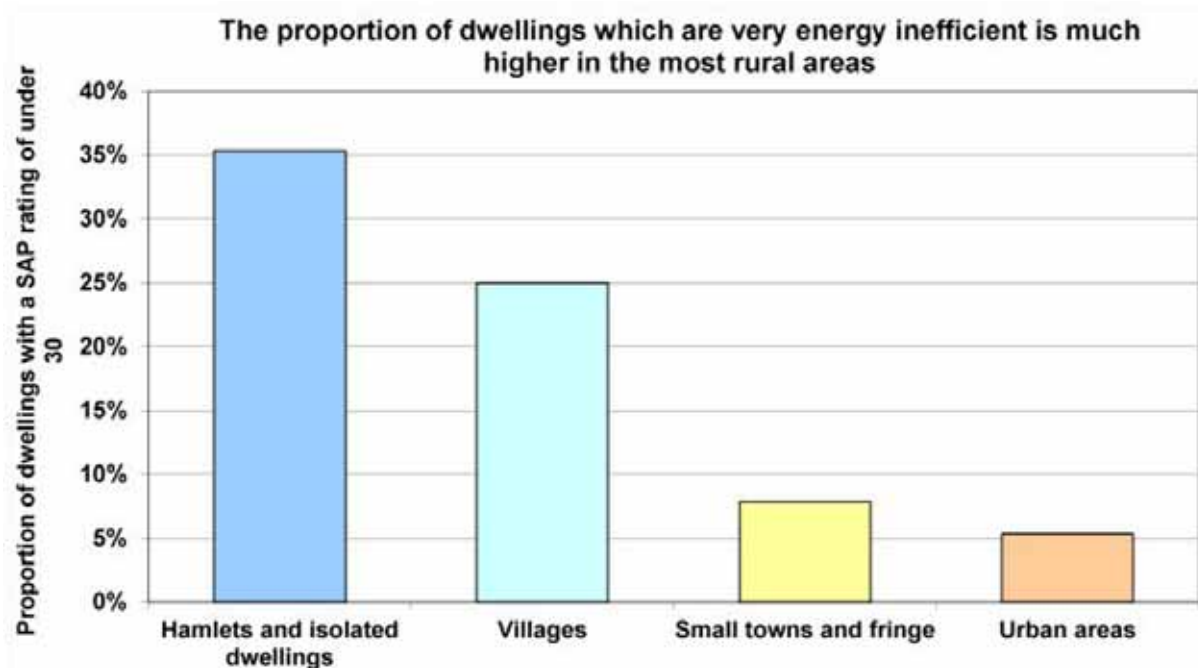
Bus availability, 2002 to 2009

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Urban	93%	95%	95%	95%	96%	96%	96%	96%
Rural town and fringe	76%	80%	84%	80%	80%	81%	83%	82%
Village and dispersed	39%	41%	47%	49%	46%	50%	50%	47%
England	87%	90%	89%	89%	90%	90%	90%	91%

Department of Transport (2010)

The British Medical Association (2005) points out that lack of public transport causes people difficulty travelling to healthcare facilities, many of which are based in larger towns and cities; this is particularly true for the over 70s. Given the ageing population, discussed earlier, this is a major concern. Tahir, T. (2010) states that whilst travel is fairly cheap and easy in urban areas, in London for example under 16s receive free travel cards and have ready access to public transport, young people in rural areas face a patchy and expensive service. This can have an impact on access to education, as many young people in rural areas may not be able to afford to travel to college or university.

Another significant issue affecting many rural households is the availability of some utilities, in particular gas. Baker, W, and others (2008) state that there are many more properties not connected to mains gas in rural areas than in urban areas. These properties are forced to use more expensive alternatives such as bottled gas or oil. This, coupled with high instances of solid wall houses, which are difficult and expensive to insulate, means fuel poverty is an increasingly common problem, which disproportionately affects rural areas in comparison to urban areas. Which (2011) details the average annual cost of heating and hot water for an average three bedroom property using different types of fuel. It states that oil-fired heating systems, generally found in rural properties, on average cost around £850 per year to run. In contrast, a modern gas condensing boiler system, more commonly found in urban properties, costs just £490 to run. This demonstrates the huge difference in fuel cost between rural and urban areas. The following graph illustrates how energy inefficient rural housing is in comparison to urban housing.



www.poverty.org.uk (2011)

Broadband is an additional service which residents and businesses in rural areas often have limited access to. The Prince of Wales (2009) describes how he fears rural farms and businesses are trapped in “broadband deserts” where they are left unable to access essential services through the internet. The table below produced by OFCOM (2011) illustrates the significant differences in broadband speeds throughout the UK. It highlights the slow speeds in rural areas, showing clearly that the fastest broadband areas are all in and around major towns and cities.



The Country Land and Business Association (2011) states that “18-20 percent of rural areas cannot get broadband, they are in not spots – areas where broadband is not available. We estimate that around 100,000 businesses with a total turnover of up to £60 billion are being held back”. This demonstrates the impact that poor internet access has on rural business. This is yet another factor pushing people out of rural areas. Those people/businesses who require good internet connections to conduct their work are often forced to position themselves in urban areas, where the levels of internet access and data speeds available are good. Downing, E. (2011) outlines the coalition government’s current policy on broadband, pointing out that it is in line with the last government’s policy. As such, it too wants to work towards “ensuring that a digital divide between urban and rural areas does not emerge.” The Government has allocated £530 million to do this and seeks to incentivise the rollout of high speed broadband amongst internet service providers through the implementation of new technologies, as well as the removal of potential economic/policy barriers. Whilst the evidence does suggest that there is already a divide between rural and urban areas in terms of broadband access, the fact that central government recognises this as an issue and has allocated funds to rectify this is a positive step forward.

Climate change and food production

The effects of climate change are becoming increasingly apparent, not just in the UK but on a global scale. The changes which occur as a result of climate change have a detrimental impact on plants, animals and humans.

Directgov (2011) points out that some of the key impacts of climate change are:

Changing sea levels - putting many people in low-lying areas at risk of flooding

Extreme weather - for example, floods, droughts and tropical storms

Decreasing availability of food and water - due to increasing droughts and rising sea-levels contaminating fresh water supplies

Loss of plant and animal species and their habitats - many species may not be able to adapt quickly enough to the changes in their environment, as habitats are threatened by the issues raised above.

Whilst many people believe that the effects of climate change are yet fully to happen, it is becoming apparent that at least some of these changes are already upon us. Laing,A. (2009) and others described the extreme floods which occurred in 2009 in Cockerham and claimed the life of a policeman who was trying to direct traffic away from a crumbling bridge. They also make reference to flooding which was happening simultaneously across various parts of the UK, caused by swollen rivers due to excessive rainfall. The flooding of 2009 caused a national crisis, leading not only to huge financial cost but also loss of life. Balmforth,D. (2009), an expert in flooding from the institute of civil engineers says that “deluges on a similar scale to Cockerham will become more frequent as a result of climate change”.

The Commission for Rural Communities (2008) points out that rural areas actually have a more significant detrimental impact on climate change than urban areas. They state this is due to several key factors; principally, rural areas have a much higher carbon production rate per person when compared with urban areas, as a result of higher emissions caused by the large cost of heating a home and from increased use of transport. Agriculture produces large amounts of methane from livestock and organic waste, since agriculture is primarily based in and around rural areas this is another key factor having a large impact on climate change.

One method put forward to address climate change is the increased use of bio-fuels, where crops such as sugar cane or rape seed oil, which would ordinarily be used for human consumption, are instead diverted for use in producing a renewable fuel source. Vidal,J.(2010) describes how the production of bio-fuel has become more necessary in recent years as EU countries now have a legal requirement to include 10% of renewable energy in their transport fuels by 2020. However, he also points out that by trying to resolve one issue, they are creating another – food shortage. He states that these EU policies could actually remove an area the size of Ireland out of food production. Charles,C. (2011) describes how a study carried out by the lead economist at the World Bank identified bio-fuels as the most important drivers of food price volatility, being responsible for 75%

of recent increases in the price of food. He attributed the remaining 25% to other factors, such as failed crops due to flooding and droughts, or other environmental factors.

The food and agriculture organization of the United Nations acknowledges a need for world food production to increase by 70% by 2050 in order to feed the growing population. With the UK currently importing 50% of its food from abroad, according to the Food Standards Agency (2010), this does provide an interesting opportunity for rural communities in the UK to undergo an agricultural resurgence.

Case studies

As the main issues affecting rural areas have been identified, a review of case studies will now be undertaken to demonstrate varying approaches to dealing with these issues.

Ludlow - BBC series: Towns, hidden pasts multiple futures

Ludlow was featured in an episode of the recent BBC series towns, hidden pasts, multiple futures (2011) which was produced in partnership with The Open University. The programme states that Ludlow has a population of just under 10000 people, which according to Defra's (2004) definition of rural, classifies it as a rural town.

Ludlow is located in one of the least populated areas of England; it is an isolated town surrounded by countryside and is more than 40 miles away from the nearest motorway or airport. It is a planned Norman town based on a grid system and is steeped in history, with the main focal point being an exquisite castle. The town of Ludlow was once used as a strategic post to protect the Marchlands and later (at least in the eyes of the English) became the official capital of Wales for over 200 years, housing the Council of the Marches which eventually closed in 1689.

The area around Ludlow is some of England's richest grazing land and as such sheep have always played a huge part in the local economy, so much so that it became a rich hub for the wool trade and clothing manufacture. The wealth gained from wool paid for Stokesay castle and most of the original town buildings, some of which still stand today. Ludlow's historic church illustrates the immense wealth of the area at the time of its construction as it is very large and grand by comparison with churches found in other similar rural towns. Ornate carvings of sheep can be found in various places around the church, illustrating the contribution that the wool industry made to the church's construction.

Today, sheep still play a huge part in the town's economy. Whilst many livestock markets are closing, Ludlow's livestock market is thriving, and people from far and wide come to trade sheep. One of the reasons for this is willingness to diversify, by Ludlow traders and those beyond. In the UK in general, mutton is rarely used and is often considered almost worthless. However, it is commonplace in many Asian/African dishes and there is rising demand for quality mutton from people of these ethnicities. One of the main buyers in Europe, Mohammed Akram, who is responsible for buying half a million sheep a year for use as Halal meat, makes a weekly trip from Birmingham and buys all of his mutton from Ludlow livestock market.

Another example of an historic institution which has also managed to stand the test of time, is Ludlow's medieval market. The market has always been a popular trading hub and never more so than now. Today, the market is held twice a month and people travel from all over the country to go there. It is so successful in its own right that Shropshire Council are currently using it as a case study, as part of a £3.5 million project to rejuvenate its other market towns. Ludlow is famous for its excellent quality produce and is part of the "slow food" movement, which champions the concept of enjoyment of fine food through a better understanding of its taste, quality and production. In line with its "slow food" ethos, Ludlow hosts two Michelin star restaurants, an achievement which not even Manchester, Glasgow or Cardiff can boast, and is now known as the "foodie capital" of the marches. It has also become the UK's first "cittaslow" or slow city, an environment where the quality of life makes it a good place to live.

Ludlow, unlike many other rural towns, has retained almost all of its unique charm and is one of the few places that still has a full range of traditional shops such as: bakers, butchers, hardware shops and bookbinders, to name but a few. In recent years Tesco have built a large store in the centre of town. However, it took eight years of refining planning before permission was finally granted, as local residents and council planners were concerned that the store would take trade away from smaller businesses and also wanted the building itself to be sympathetic with its location. The finished product is a building which not only incorporates a replacement of the old town wall which once stood there, but also has a roofline which mimics the rolling hillside of its backdrop. This is an example of a small town using its initiative to take hold of its own future and triumph over a corporate giant.

Ludlow's scenic location and historical sense of place, along with its wonderful architecture and quality produce, all encourage a healthy amount of tourism which helps to support the local economy and puts Ludlow on the map as a desirable destination. The key factors which appear to be the driving forces behind Ludlow's success are: its ability to embrace its historical past, its utilisation of shared spaces, its ability to utilise available resources, the willingness of local businesses to support one another and encourage small businesses and, crucially, its wider appeal to tourists, which is derived from all of the aforementioned key factors.

However, whilst this seems to be a model rural town and a bright vision for the future, it does have one major problem which has yet to be tackled – that of social segregation. At present, forty percent of Ludlow's population lives in a large council estate on the other side of town known as "sandpits". It is an area which is looked upon unfavourably by those living in the more prosperous parts of Ludlow, possibly because of the stigma attached to council estates, but also because of its high unemployment and relatively high crime rates. It is here where most of the town's under-30s live. Meanwhile, central Ludlow exhibits an ageing population, in common with many other rural areas. This illustrates that whilst central Ludlow appears to be thriving, not far away on the outskirts some of the major rural issues mentioned earlier in this study have yet to be addressed.

Talgarth- BBC series: Village SOS

The BBC series, 'Village SOS' (2011), recently covered the plight of a village called Talgarth, which is located in the foothills of the Brecon Beacons and was once known as the jewel of the Black Mountains. Talgarth was once a vibrant village, which until the 1950s had 55 shops; but by 2011 just 10 shops remained; just enough to sustain the small population of 1600. Meanwhile, tourists simply pass through Talgarth on their way to the surrounding more affluent Welsh villages and towns, in search of the quality shops and eateries they have become accustomed to in similar beauty spots and attractions elsewhere.

In the centre of Talgarth there is a disused water mill which used to process all of the wheat from the surrounding areas until it closed in 1946. The residents of Talgarth recognised the potential of this mill and successfully acquired lottery funding to refurbish it, with the aim of providing a tourism attraction that would help to rejuvenate the village. They also wanted the mill to help bring the community together, create jobs and showcase local tradespeople's skills. The finished mill would incorporate a bakery and cafe ran by local women, who hoped that eventually they would be able to take a salary, enabling them to work in their village. The bakery and cafe would also support local producers by using their products rather than buying in from further afield. The restored water mill would be the main attraction, with visitors able to try their hand at traditional milling and also enjoy walks along the riverside, utilising the newly landscaped walkways around the attraction, before visiting the cafe afterwards.

The project was coordinated primarily by unpaid local volunteers, with the exception of a paid project manager (this is a condition of lottery funding) and also a highly skilled stonemason who agreed to work for just £100 a week. This community involvement is an excellent asset; however, if numbers start to dwindle, or people lose interest, the business may start to lose direction. Locals have expressed concern that if the mill itself is not enough to attract people into Talgarth, the project could end up being a huge "white elephant," as it is reliant upon bringing in visitors from outside.

The approach to rejuvenating this rural village is good in many respects, as it addresses many rural issues such as: community engagement, rural poverty, employment, tourism and includes the introduction of a hub where people can socialise. It is, however, quite one-dimensional, and more needs to be done in and around the village to support the overall aims of the project. The rest of Talgarth is still tired and at risk, the mill is actually surrounded by boarded-up shops which have lain empty for years. This could provide an opportunity to improve the look and feel of Talgarth, as independent shops and boutiques could be offered incentives to utilise these empty units, strengthening Talgarth's tourism credentials. This could provide a catalyst to stimulate other local industries, apart from tourism, such as farming and local crafts.

An MA landscape architecture student's proposal to address rural issues in Overton

Legrand, D. (2011) states that Overton is a village located to the south-west of Lancaster, between Heysham and the Lune estuary. It is a place with little historical context and contains buildings from various eras, all alongside one another. It is surrounded by flat farmland, used for both arable and pasture, and is also located on the edge of a SSSI and RAMSAR site.

Overton, like many other rural areas, exhibits many of the rural issues highlighted in this study, primarily a lack of public transport and good road networks. In fact, many of Overton's roads go down to single track in places. It also suffers from a lack of employment opportunity, with most inhabitants having to travel out of the area to work. In addition, it is under threat from rising sea levels as it is so low-lying and the River Lune is tidal. The soil quality also is quite poor, hence the majority of the land is used for grazing. Lastly, the lack of services and facilities has restricted its growth potential. Appendix 1 illustrates a proposed approach to dealing with these issues, in an attempt to breathe new life into Overton.

The plan shows how one of the biggest threats – that of flooding, can be overcome. By utilising the natural build-up process of peat, the land level is encouraged to rise in line with rising sea levels; also, by allowing natural flood plains to flood it is possible to relieve the pressure of flooding elsewhere. Innovative floating house building techniques would allow such flood plains to be built upon without compromising the houses or the flood plain and would also provide affordable housing as a result of inexpensive build cost. Embracing the flooding would also allow more access via new waterway links.

New roads would also be constructed to connect the east and south of Overton with the surrounding areas; these new roads would pave the way for improvements in public transport, they would also allow for better access to the nearby SSSI and RAMSAR sites. This, in conjunction with the new proposed woodland in and around Overton, with its rich and diverse habitat, would encourage new visitors to the area, giving it more potential for tourism. This rich woodland would also provide a locally sourced building material that could be processed in the proposed saw mill, providing local jobs. Locally sourced food would also be available from the fish farm, glasshouses and the surrounding fields, as well as the allotments, which enable people to produce their own food and also add a social element to the new plans.

Appendix 2 illustrates the fundamental ideology of the design, which recognises the collective value of each individual aspect of the design working together to form a cycle has a greater value than the sum of each aspect working independently. The glasshouses illustrate this concept; for example, they provide sufficient food for the local residents as well as surplus to be sold further afield. The heating of these glasshouses is supplemented by the sustainable fuel source provided by the extensive woodland. This interconnectivity between elements is further illustrated by crop rotation and the use of chickens, which not only produce eggs but also manure which can be used to improve soil quality and food for the fish farm.

This design has been influenced by many case studies and appears to be a sound method for dealing with some of the main rural issues due to its holistic approach to problem solving. However, this approach has not been implemented into an actual build; it is purely theory and so cannot be proven

to work at present, although the separate elements of the design have been proven to work elsewhere, at least in their own right.

Manifesto

This paper has highlighted the problems that rural areas face and identified case studies where these problems are being addressed. From critical evaluation of the problems and case studies, it has become apparent that there are seven key drivers which are required to ensure the long term sustainability of a rural area.

- *Transport links*
People need ready access to reliable public transport and adequate road links, without these issues such as isolation and limited access to educational/health facilities and employment can become prevalent in rural places.
- *Local job opportunities*
Low unemployment and the availability of local jobs is key to ensuring the prosperity of any rural place.
- *Appeal to wider area*
Rural places ideally need some kind of feature that will draw in people from farther afield. Tourism can play a significant role in a successful rural economy.
- *Social hubs*
The availability of places such as post offices, pubs, shops, village halls and churches allow opportunities for social interaction and enhances community spirit, they also help to alleviate the issue of isolation in rural areas.
- *Sense of place*
The development of a rural area should be sympathetic to its past whilst also taking care not to restrict its future. Rural areas should also have a clear identity which sends out a message about what it has to offer.
- *Diverse demographics*
Rural places must work hard to ensure that they both retain and attract a variety of people from different age groups and also ensure that young people are not priced out of rural areas.
- *Encouragement of entrepreneurship and local businesses.*
Small businesses which work together to support each other can be a vital asset to a rural community, this unified approach can strengthen a local economy and provide benefits to the wider community – far more so than if a non unified approach is taken.

- *Availability of local services*

There are some services, which are key to a successful rural place, things such as schools, healthcare facilities and high speed broadband. The latter has become increasingly important over the past few years and lack of adequate broadband links can have a detrimental effect on all of the above key drivers.

Conclusion

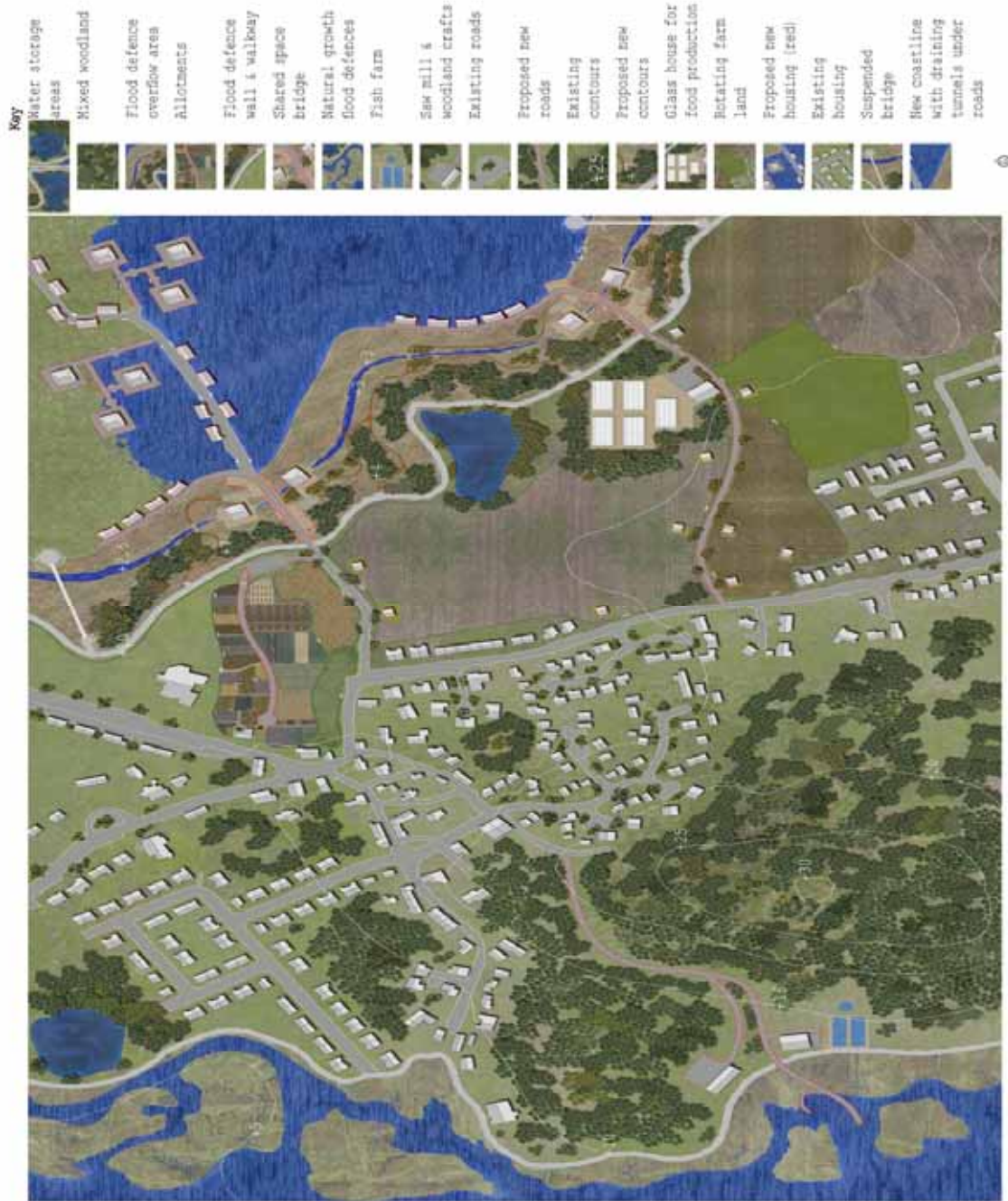
This study has highlighted the problems which face rural areas as well as offering reasons why these problems occur. Through the use of case studies and other supporting research it has produced a manifesto, providing key drivers which, if implemented into the redevelopment of an area can help to facilitate its success.

The findings from this study suggest several courses for action, one of which is change in government policy, it is evident that in many cases rural growth continues to be hindered, especially with regard to affordable housing, high speed broadband access and small business start up's. Government policy should be more pro active as opposed to reactive, it needs to specifically address the needs of rural communities and understand that these needs differ from those of urban communities and can be more complex. Policy also needs to be flexible and allow for more decisions to be made at local level, as those who live in a community are best placed to make informed decisions about changes required in their local area.

This study has been limited somewhat by its timescale which has only enabled a brief overview. It is also reliant on secondary sources as carrying out primary research could not be completed within the allotted time. The timescale also meant that only research on the UK could be undertaken, had more time been available it would have been possible to examine the issues faced in rural areas overseas and cross examine the findings with the UK research. Another important limitation in the study is the absence of proof that the manifesto can work in a real scenario, ideally the manifesto would have been implemented in to a real project and the findings from this carefully evaluated. Whilst each of the individual sections in the manifesto have been implemented in the UK successfully, the holistic approach put forward in this study has not been tested. The holistic concept of all the key drivers working in harmony is in fact one of the most important features of the study and so it would have been beneficial to test this model.

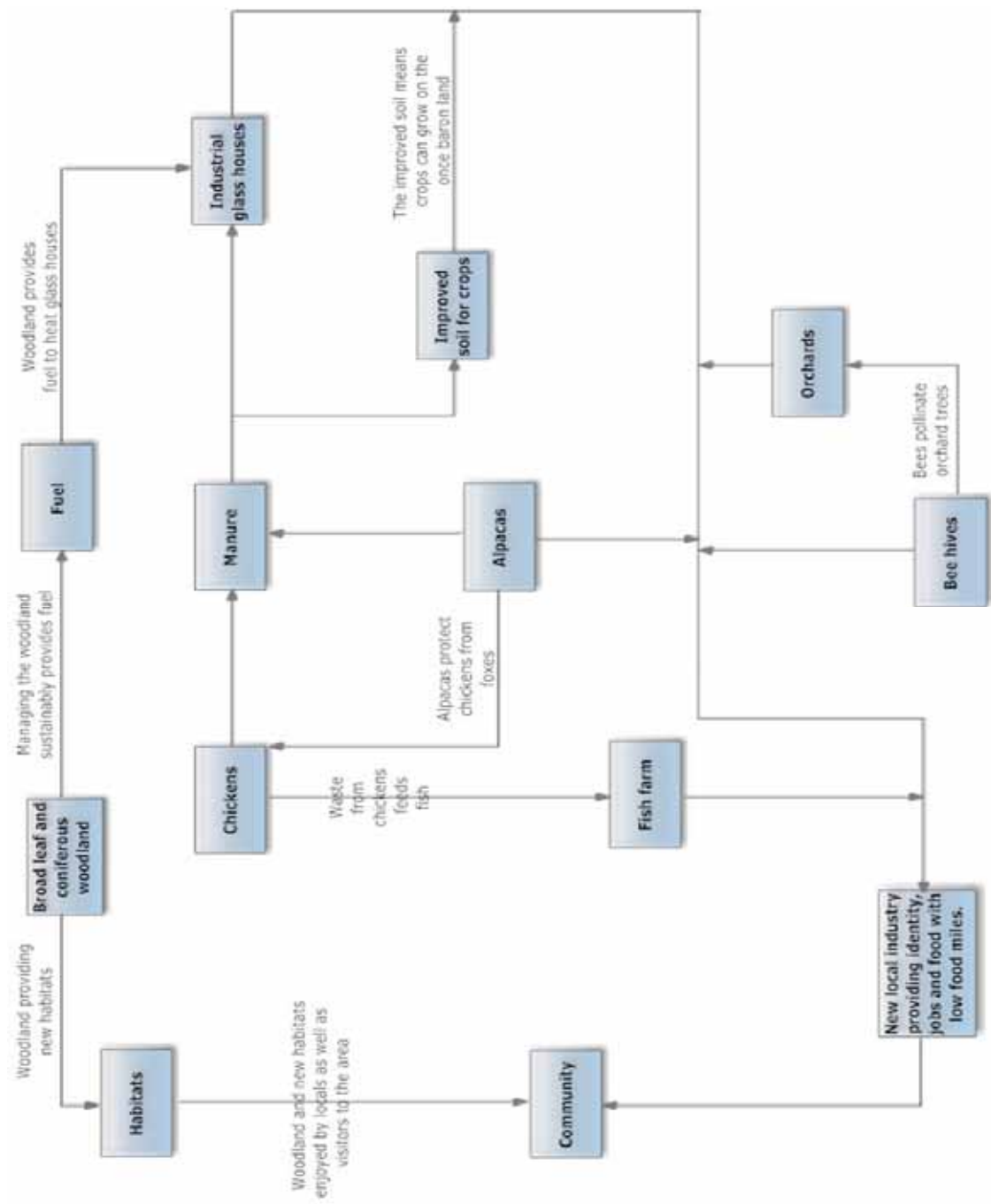
Finally, whilst case studies can be very insightful, they can be somewhat biased as the source may have left out information which could have been valuable. They also have the potential to influence opinion on a given topic and so it is imperative that case studies are used in conjunction with other research.

Appendix 1



1:1250 plan
at A1

Appendix 2



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