

ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING AND RURAL SETTLEMENT POLICY: THE CASE OF THE KINGSBRIDGE AREA

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1. INTRODUCTION

FOR a long time the planned management of villages and small towns in the countryside has been a neglected aspect of environmental planning. Study of the built environment has often been over-shadowed by the importance attached to the more ecological and physical aspects of environmental research (see Dasmann, 1976), and the prominence of this subject area has been emphasised by interest in the future of the total environment which has been stimulated by various doomwatch reports (for example by Meadows *et al.*, 1974). Where environmental enquiry has been directed towards the problem of people and places, priority has been given to the urban areas where difficulties of post-war building, outward movement of population and inner area renewal have been acute (Cherry, 1974).

More recently, however, the problems of rural settlements and communities have been brought into the limelight (Cherry, 1976; Lewis, 1979) as the processes of depopulation (in remoter rural areas) and urbanisation (in more pressured rural areas) have taken their toll on the countryside. Part of this revival of rural social study has entailed a closer investigation into planning policies in the countryside, (Davidson and Wibberley, 1977; Gilg, 1978; and Woodruffe, 1976) and, in particular, attempts have been made to evaluate the success with which particular planning policies have been implemented at ground level (see Cloke, 1979). The social relevance of these studies should not be understated. Many villages are without adequate transport services, leaving the non-mobile rural population stranded and dependent on local shops and services. Moreover these very services (particularly the important village school) are also disappearing (Standing Conference of Rural Community Councils, 1978), as are job opportunities and housing opportunities, with few if any houses being built in many villages and those which are constructed being often suitable only for affluent long distance commuters or as second homes. Consequently, it is important that village planning policies should be subjected to study at all levels, both to increase and broaden our knowledge and awareness of village problems, and to decide on suitable management policies for the future.

The fact that the pages of *Field Studies* are predominantly filled with the more “physical” and “ecological” aspects of environmental measurement gives a fair indication of the relative difficulty involved in the construction of meaningful and workable field measurement exercises in the “human” and “social” spheres. Any project designed to evaluate the effects of a planning policy on a village or group of villages is no exception, since much onerous preparation is required so that field observations may be matched against current and historical policy objectives in the field area. In addition, each county (and even sub-areas within counties) will have different policy statements and therefore to a certain extent the measurement and interpretation of policy success will be area-dependent as well as time-dependent. However, most counties have issued Development and Structure Plans which

include similar types of rural settlement policy—that is some form of concentration of housing, services and employment into selected centres and the restriction of growth in other (usually smaller) villages. Therefore the analysis and interpretation used in the Kingsbridge example will be broadly applicable in other parts of England and Wales.

2. RURAL SETTLEMENT POLICY IN DEVON

A key settlement planning policy in Devon took shape in the First Review of The Development Plan (Devon County Council, 1964) in the light of large-scale depopulation from many of the rural areas of the county. Two important sets of guidelines were produced in this Plan. First, it was recognised that a thriving rural community should possess the following facilities and services:

1. Public utilities—mains water, electricity and sewerage.
2. Social facilities—primary school, places of worship, village hall, and possibly a doctor's surgery.
3. Shops, for day-to-day needs, and Post Offices.
4. Employment, either in the village or conveniently situated nearby.

Secondly, it was realised that in order to create thriving rural communities such as these it was necessary to “ensure that services, facilities and new development are provided or maintained in the most appropriate places and that these various efforts to improve the environment support each other” (Devon County Council, 1966; 64). Therefore 68 key settlements were selected where all growth in housing, public utilities and small-scale employment was to be channelled. (Figure 1). These key settlements were simply one order in a growth centre hierarchy which also included higher order suburban centres, coastal resorts, key inland towns and subregional centres. Of particular interest in the context of the key settlements are the key inland towns (such as Kingsbridge) which were programmed for both residential and industrial growth and would thus serve as the centres for employment and non-essential shopping around which most of the satellite key settlements would revolve.

Those villages not selected as key settlements were classed together as being locations where further residential development should be restricted. Permission for development in these non-key settlements was only to be granted to relieve a particular need, and even then the village concerned should possess sufficient public utilities, social services and transport services for the proposed population increase. This attitude towards non-key settlements was strengthened in the Second Review of the Development Plan (Devon County Council, 1970) and although some minor alterations were made to the number of key settlements (resulting in a net loss of three), the main tenor of the policy was vigorously maintained up to the Structure Plan stage. Although the written policies of County Councils for their rural areas give some indication of the effects of planning at ground level, this stated attitude towards growth in non-key settlements provides an example of a policy which is written down in the plan, but not fully adhered to in practice. For instance the village of West Charleton in the Kingsbridge area is not designated as a key settlement and yet has received a substantial development of new housing (see section 3b) during the plan period. Therefore, despite the seemingly harsh “no-growth” policies for non-key settlements it is clear that some of these settlements have, in fact, continued to grow.

The draft Structure Plan for Devon (Devon County Council, 1978) proposed a



FIG. 1
Development Plan settlement policy for Devon (Devon County Council, 1977).

variation on the key settlement theme (Figure 2). The policy again maintained a strategy of concentrating housing, services and employment, but replaced the key settlement designation with *selected local centres* and *local centres*. These local centres were omitted from the final plan (Devon County Council, 1979), but the selected local centres were retained as service nodes where infrastructure will be provided for minor expansion, the scale of which will depend on the character of the individual village. Development outside these selected settlements will only be permitted where the existing infrastructure and character are able to cope with minor growth.

During all stages of rural settlement planning in Devon, an added policy designed to restrict rural development has been operated alongside the key settlement policy. This policy concerns those areas designated as *Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty* (A.O.N.B.) and *Areas of Great Landscape Value* (A.G.L.V.) and this additional policy stratum is of particular relevance to the Kingsbridge area where:

- (i) an A.O.N.B. was designated in 1960 which covers all the coastal parishes and extends inland in the Slapton area, and in the Avon Valley area near Churchstow and Loddiswell, and
- (ii) an A.G.L.V. affects the north-eastern tip of the study area.



FIG. 2

Draft Structure Plan settlement policy for Devon (Devon County Council, 1978).

In both cases, it is the County Council's policy to exercise particular care over development control, with special attention being given to siting and appearance, and this additional factor should be added to the key settlement policy for an overall view of planning regulations in the Kingsbridge area. It should be said however, that evidence uncovered by Blacksell (1979) suggests that, as in the case of development in non-key settlements, the restriction of growth in A's.O.N.B. and A's.G.L.V. has not been strictly adhered to in practice.

Although it is the effects of the rural settlement planning policy up to 1978 that are analysed in the Kingsbridge area exercise, it can be seen that the future planning of Devon's rural settlements continues to rely on the concentration of investment in housing, services and employment in selected centres and the use of these opportunities to maintain the standard of living in surrounding villages. Thus the Devon strategy represents a distinctive form of policy (seen elsewhere, for example in Cambridgeshire, Durham, Leicestershire and Warwickshire). The other major form of rural settlement policy in post-war Britain has used a greater degree of village classification, usually on the basis of either housing or service provision. For

example, the Development Plan for Somerset (Somerset County Council, 1958) outlined four categories of settlement:-

- A. Towns and main villages which act as local centres.
- B. Settlements which could in the future become main villages.
- C. Settlements which could serve as local centres for areas not now enjoying good facilities.
- D. Other settlements.

This policy in turn was modified to a three category system at the Development Plan Review stage (Somerset County Council, 1964). The classification type of policy has been widely used (for example in Cornwall, Cumbria and many of the Welsh counties).

It is apparent, then, that individual areas have produced differing policies, but that each is linked by the unifying theme of concentrating resources in selected centres and restricting growth elsewhere.* Table 1 summarises the policies and proposals of a sample of other counties and a number of policy issues and objectives arise from these individual counties. For example, the Surrey plan is dominated by need to control village growth within green belt areas, while in Essex, comparison may be made between planning in settlements within and beyond the green belt. On the other hand, the main villages of Shropshire and the service villages of North Yorkshire perform much the same function as Devon's key settlements (or selected local centres according to the new nomenclature). Of the examples listed in Table 1, only Dyfed has chosen a policy of dispersal of resources, and so the acid test in that area will be to assess whether adequate growth can be maintained with investment spread so thinly. An evaluation of the success of any of these rural settlement planning objectives may be attempted by the simple measurement of various criteria in a field area, a process illustrated by the case of Kingsbridge and its surrounding villages.

3. VILLAGE PLANNING IN KINGSBRIDGE DISTRICT

For convenience, the study area covers the 25 parishes which comprised the former Kingsbridge Rural District (Figure 3). Settlements included in this area represent the various influences of agriculture, recreation, tourism and urbanisation which together dominate rural life in Devon and many other counties. The main service centre is the key inland town of Kingsbridge although Salcombe (designated a coastal resort) and Dartmouth (to the east of the study area) exert considerable service magnetism. In addition, six key settlements, varying in size from Stokenham/Chillington (parish population of 1543 in 1971) to Loddiswell (parish population 683), were selected to meet the smaller scale needs of the rural communities. The success of this scheme of centralised investment may be evaluated by examining the distribution of certain fundamental criteria.

a) *Population*

One of the primary objectives of the Devon key settlement policy (and those of other rural counties) was to slow down and hopefully reverse the process of depopulation which was threatening the viability of community life in the countryside. Population data are freely available from Census county reports (O.P.C.S., 1971) and may be updated using electoral roll figures (bearing in mind

*Details of all county strategies and proposals are easily obtainable from published Development and Structure Plan material.

Table 1. *A sample of Structure Plan rural settlement policies*

DYFED COUNTY COUNCIL (1978)—2 main categories,

- (i) centres for residential development dependent upon adequate conditions of transport, amenity and public service provision (115 settlements),
- (ii) other settlements where the presumption will be in favour of infill residential development.

ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL (1978)—6 categories complicated by relationship with green belt policies,

In the Green Belt

- (i) primary centres where development to meet local needs will be limited to existing built up areas and white areas (18 settlements),
- (ii) secondary centres where local needs development will be limited to existing built up areas (24 settlements),
- (iii) other settlements where new buildings will only be permitted for essential agricultural purposes or if it can be demonstrated that there is no possible alternative location.

Beyond the Green Belt

- (i) primary centres where residential development planned because of existing land availability (23 settlements),
- (ii) villages where existing available land will only be used to meet the local needs of the community (22 settlements),
- (iii) other settlements where there will normally be no development unless to meet local need or to maintain the viability of village community life.

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL (1978)—3 main categories,

- (i) *market towns* act as major service centres where residential development to meet local housing needs will be permitted (9 major towns, 14 minor towns),
- (ii) *service villages* possessing a good range of services and facilities and acting as centres for the majority of new housing development in the rural areas (26 settlements, excluding a large area in the centre of the county where the identification of service villages is not seen as a strategic matter),
- (iii) other settlements where new housing will be limited to small-scale developments and infill sites.

SALOP COUNTY COUNCIL (1978)—3 main categories,

- (i) *main villages* will retain and strengthen their role as service, housing and employment centres (45 settlements),
- (ii) other settlements outside the green belt where infilling or small groups of houses are normally acceptable,
- (iii) other settlements within the green belt where new development will only be permitted to meet essential local needs.

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL (1978)—the problems of rural settlements in Surrey are still being studied and it has not been possible to make specific proposals at the Structure Plan stage. Two broad policies are applicable:-,

- (i) local planning authorities will maintain a green belt throughout the county outside the urban areas,
- (ii) within settlements within the green belt, local planning authorities will normally permit only development required to meet the proven needs of the locality.

that 25.7% of the 1971 population of Kingsbridge R.D. were 18 years old or under and therefore extrapolations from electoral figures should take account of that sector of the population who do not appear on the roll).

However, a major problem arises from the fact that population figures are recorded by the Census at *parish* level. Therefore when using population data from this source, settlement geographers and planners are hamstrung by the inability to

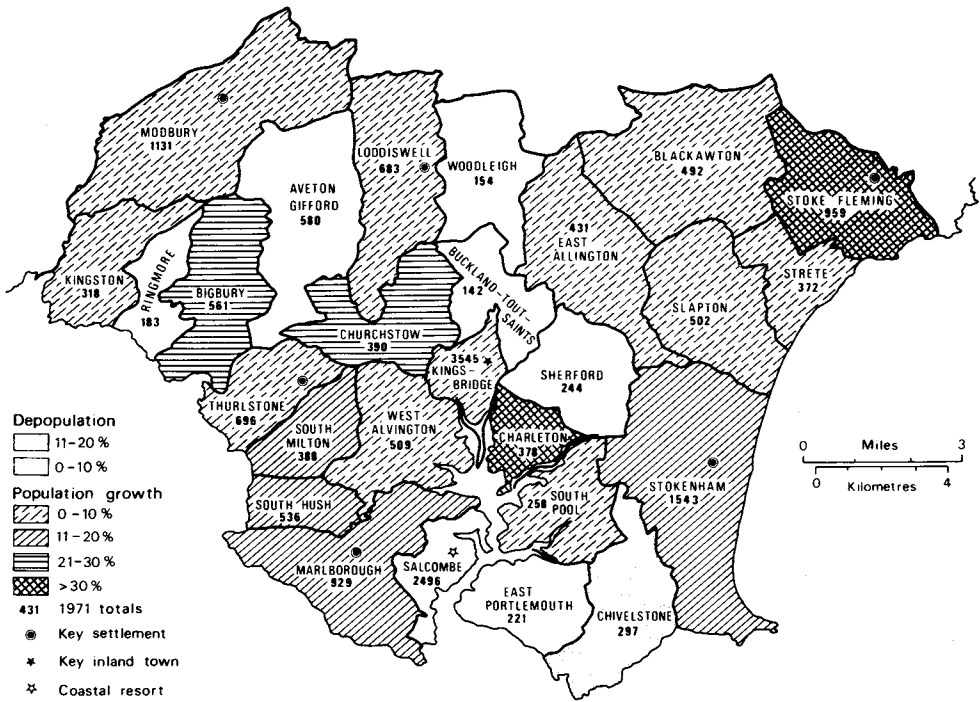


FIG. 3
Percentage population change, 1961-1971.

equate population sizes with individual rural settlements. Instead they are constrained to use a population figure which accounts for perhaps one major and two minor settlements as well as the scattered population living within hamlets and on scattered farms within the parish boundary. An idea of the problematic nature of this data source is revealed by Slapton parish which had a population of 502 in 1971. Research at Slapton Ley Field Centre suggests that the present summer-time population of Slapton village is 520. The winter-time population is difficult to estimate accurately as summer-cottage owners and holidaymakers return to their home areas but it is certainly much lower than that in summer. Thus we have three main problems: the last Census was in 1971 which means that parish population figures are out of date; parish populations are not the same as settlement populations; and settlement populations fluctuate at different times throughout the year. However, with no better data source which can readily be used, 1971 parish populations are used here as an *indication* of the relative groupings of population which are present in the Kingsbridge area. These data are by no means ideal, but are better than no population indicator at all.

Figure 3 shows percentage population change for the Kingsbridge area between the census dates of 1961 and 1971. At first glance the achievements of the planning policy in this context would appear to have been limited, with depopulation taking place in 7 parishes and a low growth rate of 10% or less in a further 10. However, 6 of the 7 depopulating parishes contain less than 250 people and are of a scale which would not of right support public transport or other community services, and so out-migration might be expected in this type of location (see the work of Leach,

1974, in Warwickshire). Perhaps a fairer reflection of the performance of the key settlement policy is to review the progress made by parishes containing the key settlements themselves, where a concentrated effort has been made to provide various facilities and opportunities. All six key settlement parishes exhibited population growth over this period with Marlborough (17.2%) Stokenham/Chillington (17.4%) and Stoke Fleming (40.4%) showing high rates of increase. This performance gives some credence to the use of centralisation policies in order to stem depopulation. It should also be noted that significant population increases occurred in the non-key settlement parishes of Bigbury, South Milton and South Huish and in Churchstow and Charleton which benefit from proximity to Kingsbridge.

Population movements represent the manifestation of rural trends and as such cannot be directly changed by planning policy. However, much of the population growth occurring in the Kingsbridge area has stemmed from retirement demand. The centres of population increase isolated above (be they key settlements or not) are all located in areas which have proved attractive to people wishing to retire in a beautiful rural area close to the coast. Planning policy can have an important effect on retirement demand, particularly through the regulation of the type of housing which is built in the area. These and other factors which are more directly influenced by the planning system should be examined before any realistic assessment of rural settlement policy may be attempted.

b) *Housing*

The intention of the key settlement policy in this sphere was broadly to concentrate housing in the key settlements and restrict building elsewhere to that which was required for local needs. In theory such a concentration of housing creates economies of scale both in the actual house building process and in the provision of public services such as education and sewerage where, for example, it is much easier to finance one big mains drainage system than many smaller ones. Therefore, it might be expected that the key settlements would have received a major proportion of new housing over the policy period, especially as the location of new private housing is controlled by the powers of planning permission and refusal, while the location of council housing is at the local authority's discretion (and again subject to planning permission regulations). Data on new and recent housing may be collected visually with a fair degree of accuracy, (a sample scheme classification is suggested in Table 2). Although the exact age of dwellings may have to be asked of the occupiers, the ownership of housing is usually visually apparent—with local authority housing indicated by similarity of external design, decoration and trimmings—and estimation of type, size and location are reasonably straightforward and again may be readily confirmed by a sample survey of a householder. Provided that interest is centred around recently built properties, dwelling classification is a viable visual exercise, and special purpose developments (for example old people's bungalows) can also be recognised. Alternatively, precise data may be obtained either from rating valuation sheets (available at local authority premises) or from planning permission statistics (see Penfold, 1974). The data presented here are based on the observations and experience of individual parish clerks and refers to the main settlement or settlements in each parish.

Figure 4 shows the distribution of new private housing between 1965 and 1975.

Table 2. Guidelines for housing classification

(a) Type of dwelling

- D — detached house
- SD — semi-detached house
- T — terraced house
- B — bungalow
- F — flat
- M — maisonette
- CH — house converted into flats

(b) Size of dwelling

- 1 — 1 bedroom
- 2 — 2 bedrooms
- 3 — 3 bedrooms
- 4 — 4 or more bedrooms

(c) Age of dwelling

- U — unfinished
- V — very recent (1976-80)
- R — recent (1971-75)

(d) Ownership of dwelling

- P — private
- LA — local authority
- HA — housing association

(e) Location of dwelling

- I — infilling of small site (up to 5 units) within settlement
- C — consolidation of larger site within settlement
- P — peripheral site at edge of settlement

Over the first five years of this period (Fig 4A) Thurlestone, Marlborough, Stokenham/Chillington and Stoke Fleming, of the key settlements, attracted housing growth which in the case of the last two named was of substantial proportions. It may well be that housing built during this period had received planning permission before the onset of the key settlement policy. This fact would not only explain the high rates of growth in some key settlements (outstanding planning permissions are often inherently taken into account in the selection process for key settlements so this new housing might be partially responsible for this designation in the first place), but would also excuse the prominent building rates in favoured non-key settlement retirement locations beside the Kingsbridge estuary.

Between 1971 and 1975 (Fig 4B) a clearer pattern of housebuilding emerges. All key settlements apart from Stoke Fleming (which had the highest rates in the previous quinquennium) display a reasonable increase in housing stock, with Stokenham/Chillington again being a forward location in this respect. However, several non-key settlements (notably Charleton, Strete and Blackawton), received similar rates of increase and indeed only 3 non-key settlements were allowed no new housing at all. Table 3 demonstrates that the locational distribution of local authority housing is similar to that of private housing. Three key settlements were given council housing between 1965 and 1970 but Modbury was the only key

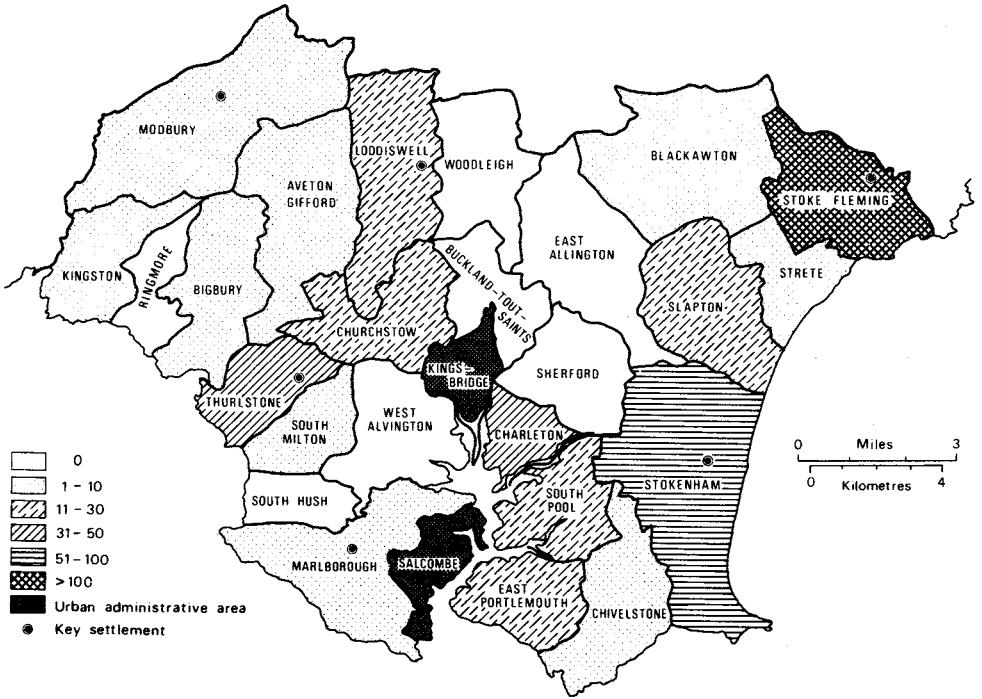


FIG. 4A.
New private Housing, 1965-1970.

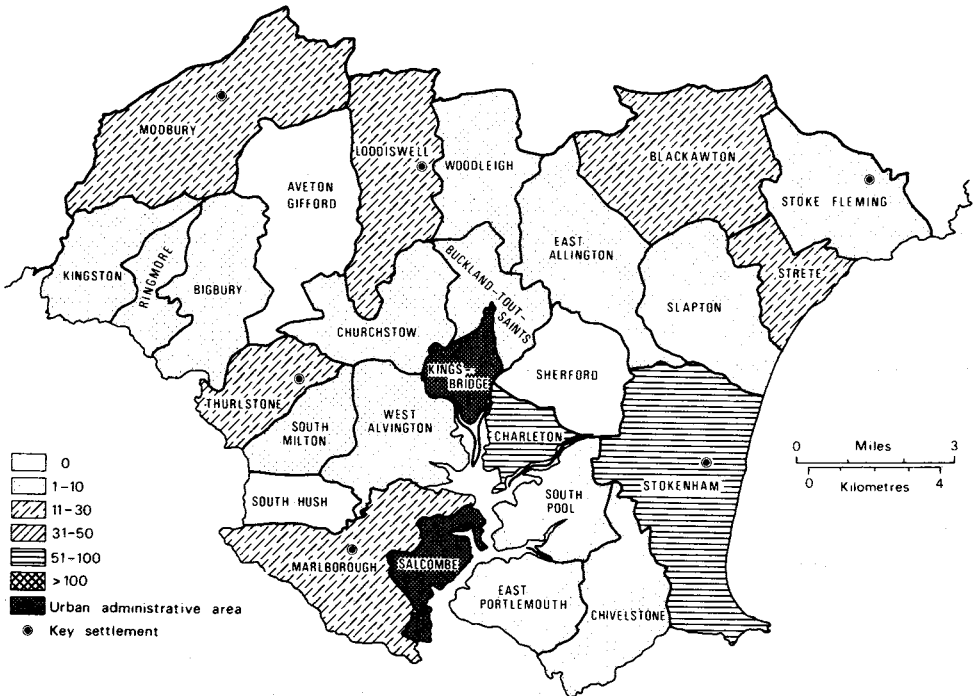


FIG. 4B.
New private housing, 1971-1975.

Table 3. *Centres of new council housing in the Kingsbridge area, 1965-75*

	1965-70	1971-75
Aveton Gifford	XX	X
Charleton	X	
Modbury*	X	X
South Milton	X	
Stoke Fleming		X
Stokenham/Chillington*	XX	
Thurlestone*	X	
West Alvington	X	

X 1-10 dwellings

XX 11-30 dwellings

*Key settlement

settlement location of new council housing during the subsequent period. Council housing was certainly allocated to non-key settlements during the policy period and there is no clear evidence that local authorities have specifically placed dwellings in key settlements at the expense of other villages.

Looking at these patterns we may tentatively conclude that some moderate success has been achieved in giving impetus to key settlement growth (particularly in the private sector) in that key settlements have accounted for a significant proportion of housing growth in the Kingsbridge area. However, the policy's impact on non-key settlements is less easy to substantiate. If the key settlement policy was designed to restrict growth in non-key settlements then this objective has not been achieved, especially in favoured retirement areas. If the emphasis of the policy was on encouraging growth in key settlements whilst allowing some housing development to ensure the continued livelihood of smaller non-key settlements, then the policy's success depends on the question of who occupies this new housing outside the selected centres. Indeed, these matters of new house ownership in turn raise the political question of how far growth in small villages should be restricted, if indeed there is an impetus for development in these locations. It may well be that if small-scale growth of this type is directed towards local need, it may provide substantial benefits to local communities without prejudicing the overall aims of a key settlement type of policy (Cloke, 1979). On the other hand if the new housing is of a type that is prohibitively expensive for prospective local buyers and as a consequence attracts affluent long-distance commuters, retired people or holiday-home seekers, then the rural settlement planning policy might be viewed as failing both in its encouragement of such growth in selected centres, and in its requirement to cater for the needs of *local* people in smaller rural settlements.

c) Services

The decline of rural services is not a short term phenomenon. Indeed the loss of vital village facilities has long been recognised (see Bracey, 1970) and is one of the factors which it was hoped the key settlement policy would combat. As a consequence, the occurrence of service losses in villages should not necessarily be directly attributed to the prevailing planning policy, although there has been much discussion on this point. One point of view (expressed, for example, by

McLaughlin, 1976) is that the concentration of public service investment in key settlements will result in a worsening of service losses in small villages. On the other hand, protagonists of the key settlement concept (see, for example, the discussion by Moseley, 1979) would argue that services will inevitably disappear from smaller settlements and that the maintenance of a certain level of facilities in key settlements will benefit all parts of the countryside.

The presence or absence of vital shops and services in villages is easily measured visually, although a useful historical perspective may be gained by questioning longstanding village residents about service levels in past time periods. Interest in this present exercise is focused on services in each village but an obvious extension of this is to trace the locations visited by local residents to use important services not provided in their own settlement, for example, the doctor and the chemist. A vital factor in this matter is the availability of public transport to these higher order destinations, and this transport element is often crucial in the interpretation of village planning evaluation data.

The Devon planning policy intended to create and maintain viable service centres in the key settlements, which would then be able to support not only their own indigenous populations but also those residing in outlying villages. Figure 5 shows the service levels in the Kingsbridge area key settlements. Generally, a very stable pattern is portrayed, with the standard of services being maintained rather than improved in these selected centres. These results are not surprising since it was those villages in the area which were already well serviced that were selected as key settlements in the first place. What is, perhaps, surprising is that essential services such as the doctor and a primary bus service (defined as four or more buses per day) are not universally available in these key settlements. In the case of doctors' surgeries, Malborough residents use facilities in neighbouring Salcombe, and Stoke Fleming residents likewise in Dartmouth, but as a general point the lack of a good bus service is likely to seriously curtail the use of a key settlement as a service centre. It is also noteworthy that although electricity and piped water have been provided to all key settlement dwellings by 1975, three such centres were without adequate mains drainage.

The service levels in non-key settlements are shown in Fig 5 which reveals a disturbing trend of decreasing opportunities in these smaller villages. Five primary schools, four general stores, four post offices, a doctor's surgery and two primary bus services have been lost from the area over this ten year period. These losses mirror the results of recent surveys in Wiltshire, Gloucestershire and other parts of Devon (Standing Conference of Rural Community Councils, 1978). The only gains to have been established are in basic facilities, such as electricity, mains water and mains drainage, which it could be argued should not be lacking in any area in this modern day and age. The full impact of these trends can be seen from Figure 6 which demonstrates the locational distribution of these losses and gains. When compared with the patterns of depopulation in Figure 3 it can be seen that most villages suffering out-migration problems have already lost most services and that the current services declines are occurring in other small villages such as Kingston and South Pool where moderate population growth occurred in the 1961-1971 inter-censal period. It could be that these decreases in service opportunities act as harbingers of future population declines in these and other areas (for example, Aveton Gifford and Blackawton).

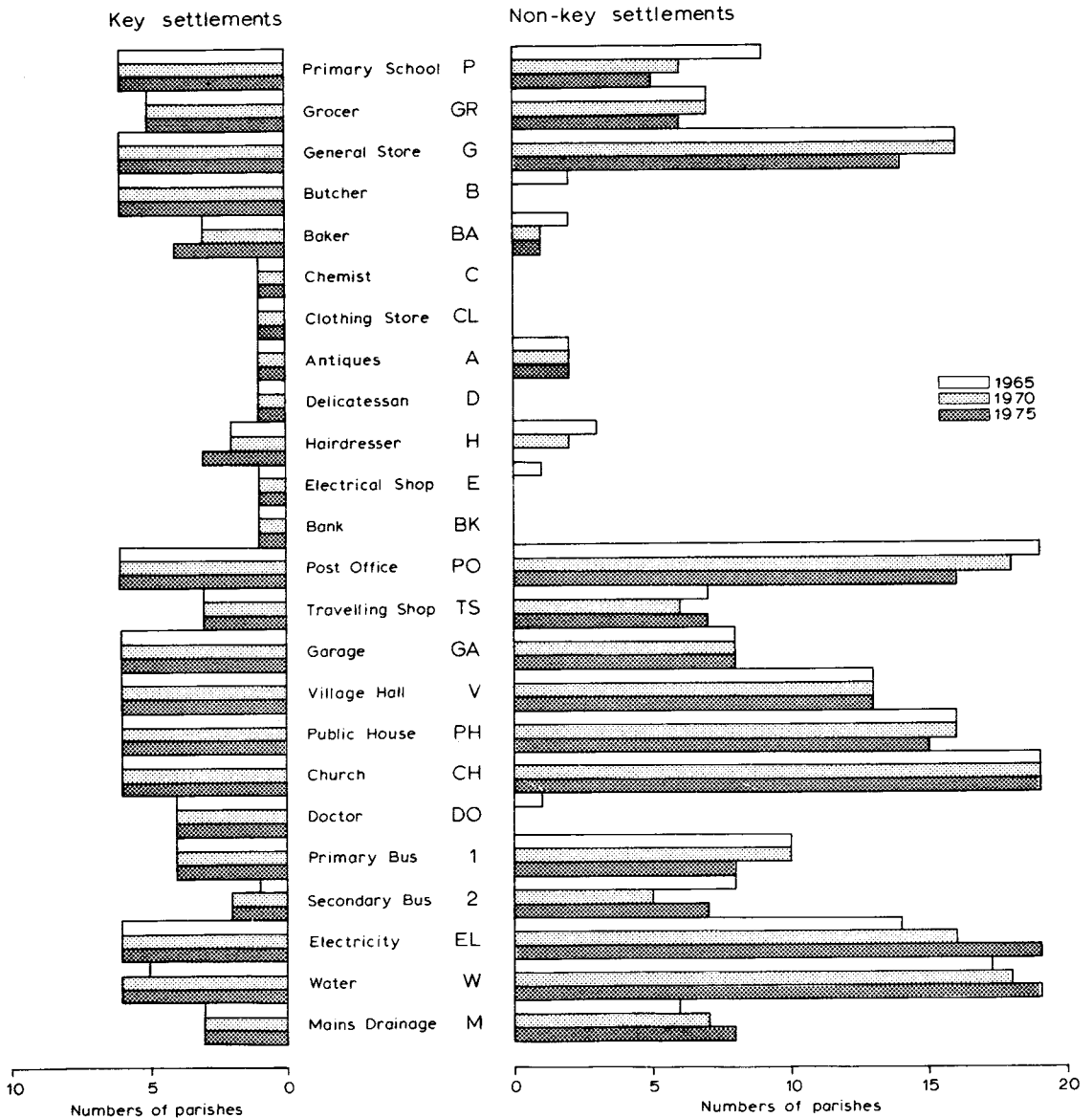


FIG. 5. Service provision, 1965-1975.

Thus, although the key settlement policy appears to have been successful in maintaining small scale service nodes at selected points in the area, the situation in other villages remains a serious one of ever decreasing opportunities. In many ways the planning authority can do little to arrest this decline in the services offered by small villages. Private sector services such as shops, public houses, privately-run bus services and so on are largely outside the influence of planners. If the entrepreneurs of these services decide, for one reason or another, to withdraw from small villages, their decision can in no way be negated by planning action. Those services within

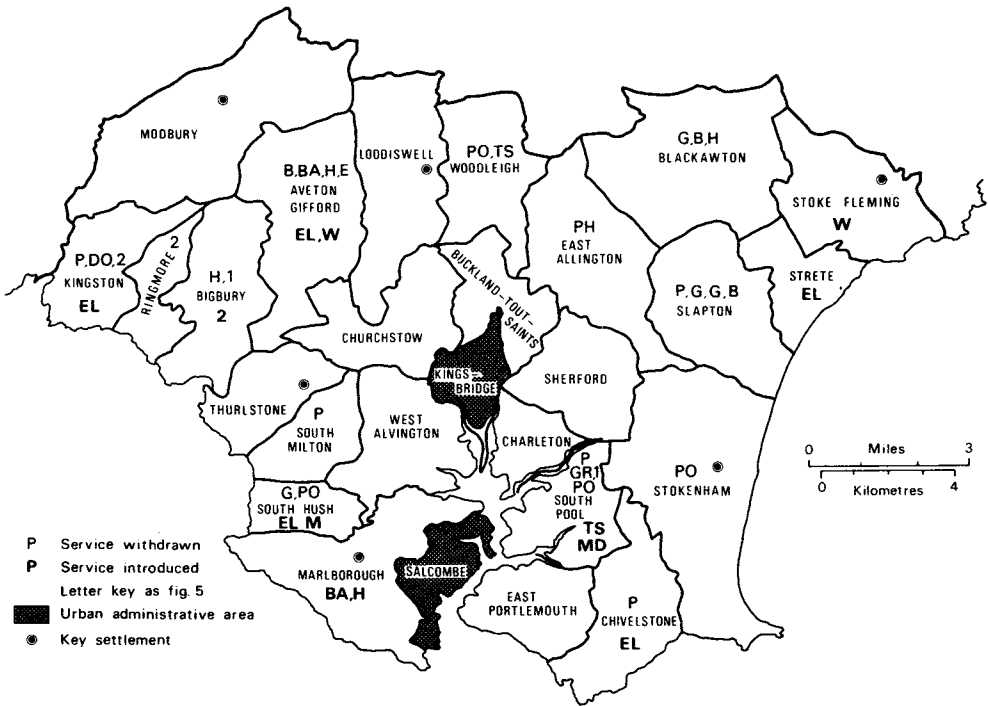


FIG. 6.
Service gains and losses, 1965-1975.

the public sector realm, for example education, public transport, electricity, water and (to some extent) health services are more amenable to influence by planning policies. The authorities or public committees which organise the allocation of these services will regularly consult with the planning authority so that some coordination of planning, education and transport policy may be achieved. However, it is still the case that rural settlement planners can, in effect, do little to promote the provision of social facilities in small villages. Their role tends to extend only to a holding operation against further service withdrawals.

d) Other Factors

Employment is a vital part of the life of any community especially in rural areas where a lack of jobs can be one of the primary causes of depopulation, particularly of the younger age groups. The Devon policy made provision for the attraction of new employment in key settlements but in essence was more reliant on the key inland towns and other large centres to provide sufficient jobs to maintain and even revive rural communities. Data on new employment are available from employment and planning offices, but if research is limited to methods of observation then some difficulties will be encountered as some small-scale growth in service sector employment will be hidden from view. However, the main area in which planning policy has directly influenced the provision of new jobs is in the attraction of new factory employment to key settlements, and this will be more easily observed. Of the six rural centres in the study area, only Modbury shows evidence of new factory jobs with 30-40 being provided in the later stages of this policy period. Elsewhere the incidence of increased employment opportunities has been limited to minor gains

in service employment, and it is evident that first Kingsbridge and then the more distant centres of Plymouth, Ivybridge, Totnes and Torbay constitute the basic workplaces of those rural residents not involved in agriculture or tourism. Consequently, the key settlement planning policy would appear to have had little impact on this sector of rural life. Indeed, with the current trends of rising unemployment and rationalisation of uneconomic small-scale factories (particularly branch factories) it would appear that the workplaces and work opportunities relevant to residents of the Kingsbridge area are becoming entrenched in the larger urban areas of South Devon leading to a definite shrinkage of localised employment opportunities in the rural areas. This trend might well promote further depopulation of "local" people from the Kingsbridge area and their replacement by more affluent sections of society who can afford longer journeys to work, and/or the high cost of the new large-scale or luxury housing which has tended to be developed in the area. This process has been called "gentrification" and has been widely recognised in rural Britain (Newby, 1979).

Another essential element in the assessment of rural settlement policy is the extent to which the conservation of particular villages is regarded as an important objective by the planners. The conservation goal may be paramount in some pressured rural areas, particularly those connected with green belt policies, but most rural areas contain settlements whose environmental quality would be impaired by further development. Nine parishes in the study area contain specially designated Conservation Areas (Table 4) and there would appear to be little coincidence between conservation status and any lack of significant housing development.

Table 4. *Kingsbridge parishes containing Conservation Areas*

	1965-70	1971-75
East Portlemouth	X	
Malborough		X
Modbury		X
Ringmore		
Sherford		
Slapton	X	
Stokenham	X	X
Thurlestone	X	X
Woodleigh		

X more than 10 dwellings built

However, the conservation objective in rural planning is a very strong one which often receives vociferous support from existing residents. Many parish clerks, when reporting the fact that no new houses had been built in their village, significantly added that this was the way the settlement ought to remain. These opinions need to be carefully balanced against the apparent need for new properties to house local people in rural areas. Certainly in parts of this study area, there tends to be hostility against new development rather than a welcome for it.

4. INTERPRETATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The collection of data such as those described for the Kingsbridge area, not only allows a specific assessment of the rural settlement policy in question (in this case the

key settlement policy), but also introduces many wider ranging questions about the relationship between planning and rural life which now affects all rural areas, in this, and most other developed countries.

a) *The Key Settlement Policy*

The twin planning aims and objectives expected of the key settlement policy may be summarised as:-

1. The concentration of residential and employment growth into selected centres so that the best economic pattern of service and infrastructure provision is brought about.
2. The use of these centralised facilities to improve or stabilise the opportunities for residents of small villages.

Evidence from the Kingsbridge area suggests that planning resources such as they are have been directed towards a partial achievement of the first objective, with little or no attention being devoted to the second. Population growth, some increase in the housing stock and the maintenance of existing service levels have been achieved in the selected key settlements, even though the attraction of new employment to these centres has met with little success. However, it would be erroneous to express a generalised view of key settlements as thriving communities with a secure future. Clearly planners have found it a difficult task to attract sufficient investment into these small rural centres so that they in turn can share the benefits of new opportunities with smaller outlying villages (Clope, 1977).

Research carried out in West Suffolk (Gilder and McLaughlin, 1978) suggests that the policy of concentrating growth in key settlements will damage the viability of smaller villages in the area where development is not so readily allowed. The evidence of service provision and population movement in the Kingsbridge area tends to support this conclusion, although it is apparent that some new dwellings have been built in non-key settlements, even if these are for tourism and/or retirement purposes. However, the ability of a key settlement to benefit small villages in its hinterland will ultimately depend on the transport links which are available to enable outlying residents to use the facilities and opportunities provided in the key settlement. Public transport in the study area (where available) tends to link villages with the major towns, rather than villages to key settlements. Therefore, it is not surprising that the planning policy can only be considered as partially successful in the achievement of its own objectives.

b) *Wider Rural Settlement Issues*

Several researchers (including Ash, 1976, and Hancock, 1976) have questioned whether it is socially, or indeed, politically, acceptable to prevent growth in some small villages in view of the hardships suffered by residents due to the disappearance of many local facilities which urban dwellers would automatically take for granted. As a result, several alternative planning schemes have been proposed, including the following:-

1. *The village unit.* (Venner, 1976; Peel and Sayer, 1973) This strategy suggests that services and facilities should be provided in each and every village, along with appropriate housing and employment.
2. *Village clusters.* (Department of the Environment, 1974) Clusters of villages represent a combined population sufficient for the attraction of central service

facilities and public and private investment. Such clusters would centre around established settlements in which service and employment growth would be attracted so as to serve the entire cluster.

3. *Functional interdependence.* (Martin, 1976; McLaughlin, 1976). In this case, service, employment and residential opportunities would be spread over a system of perhaps five or six villages. Once again, this scheme would generate a collective population threshold sufficient to support reasonable service levels, only in this case each village would contribute one function, for example housing or shops, to the group.

These planning schemes have been more fully discussed elsewhere (see Cloke, 1979) but attempts to superimpose these various planning problems onto any particular field area would form a suitable follow-up to the data collection exercises described above. What should be made clear, however, is that these schemes in reality only serve as *framework* policies, and the ability of planners, within these overall schemes, to locate new housing of the right type where it is needed; to attract new employment; to ensure that an adequate level of shops, services and facilities (including mobile services) is provided; and to set up transport links between settlements, will in the end dictate the success or failure of village planning in our rural areas.

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