

# **Creating sustainable communities with an intranet at Walbrook**

**A feasibility study**

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The Walbrook Group



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# **Sustainable communities research for the Walbrook Group**

## **Summary**

The aim of the research was to ascertain residents' perceptions of their community, and their desire for involvement in governance and developing more sustainable communities. An intranet and time banks would be key elements in achieving these outcomes.

The majority of residents interviewed (over 80%) were in favour of Walbrook developing an intranet with a view to aiding governance and helping to underpin sustainable communities. The idea of residents becoming actors who make things happen, rather than having decisions made for them, underpins sustainable communities. There are many benefits to sustainable communities, but as well as the need for trust, the responsibilities and time consuming nature of governance should be considered with the benefits.

Social capital is often mentioned in place of or in conjunction with sustainable communities. Social capital can be considered as the resources a community develops and invests to enable the community to be sustainable. An intranet and time banks should be considered as such resources.

## **Recommendations**

### **Sustainable communities**

As a result of the consultation day with Walbrook staff and residents there was a shared understanding that achieving sustainable communities is a developmental process.

### **An intranet**

An intranet could be part of this process and should be piloted in at least two estates with formative evaluation to inform and moderate as the pilot/s progress. The 'pen portraits' of the estates researched (Appendix 3) will help to identify the most appropriate areas as will the knowledge of Walbrook staff and residents. For example, Sinfin residents are very interested in an intranet, have a high level of IT skills, good access to the internet and a desire for a greater sense of community.

### **Time banks**

There are already two successful time banks in Walbrook estates and these and perhaps additional ones should be considered as part of the developmental process.

### **Community champions**

Community champions can be those who are active in their communities – the community development workers and caretakers should be included in this category. As one community development worker commented, "I thought an intranet would make us redundant, but I can see that it will help and support what we do, not replace us."

Community activists will be absolutely essential as an intranet needs people to breathe life into it and to keep it stimulating and interesting. An intranet is only as good as the people who actively participate, overcoming initial reservations/inertia (despite some 80% of residents in favour) will need to be a primary consideration.

### **IT champions**

Although there is considerable experience of using computers among those interviewed, there will be a need for training for many of those who want to be involved in the pilot/s. Harnessing the skills and experiences of residents who are very IT experienced (with appropriate training and checks) will start to include one section of residents in actively promoting social capital. It may

also be beneficial for the IT trainers' own personal development and may open up employment opportunities for them too.

### **Steering group**

A steering group should be set up to plan and guide the development of the intranet pilot/s. It should include someone with IT knowledge as well as members committed to and knowledgeable about sustainable communities, project development and management and evaluation.

### **Credit union**

Credit unions have not been discussed during this research or in consultations with Walbrook. However, Hartshorne residents mentioned how useful a fund would be for residents to use as an emergency loan for repairs and for instance, pooling resources for buying fencing which many residents would like. The two web sites below give detailed information on setting up a credit union. Again this would help to accrue social capital.

<http://www.abcul.org/page/index.cfm> <http://www.ukcu.co.uk/><sup>1</sup>

### **Residents' perceptions**

Though outside the scope of the research it is inevitable that interviews will throw up concerns which need to be addressed – perceptions are as powerful as reality when people seem to be unable to affect change. Powerlessness or the feeling of powerlessness is a strong demotivator and leaches trust.

It is not uncommon for communications to become muddled and for 'Chinese whispers' to change the intention and content of communications. However, the researcher encountered such a variety of misconceptions and versions of Walbrook's regulations for residents, that there is some concern that these may hinder the participation in an intranet pilot.

### **Research Method**

Two hundred residents were interviewed for this research in a cross section of Walbrook estates. The detailed research method is included in Appendix 1.

## **The Research Results**

### **Communities**

The majority of residents interviewed had a concept of community in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

There were varying levels of sophistication with regard to what community means, but only a minority referred to a community as *how things used to be*.

There was a widespread desire to develop sustainable communities.

There was considerable support for residents having more say in their communities with 55% choosing Scenario 3 and 35% Scenario 2.

All estates opted for involvement in governance.

An intranet was seen as a way to support and develop resident's involvement in governance.

### **Community activities and aspirations**

There are a number of community activists whose enthusiasm and leadership could be positively harnessed.

It is very important not to underestimate the capabilities, aspirations and ambitions of residents – many may not recognise their own capabilities and are quite used to others not doing so either.

Successes in effecting change (however small) is often all it takes for them to become community activists.

Time banks have the potential for drawing out the hidden skills and abilities of residents. Contributing IT training is one example - it would be a disservice to see time banks as *only* childminding, gardening or ironing service although these are valuable and make use of everyday skills.

Time banks were well received and the majority (63%) of residents would like to be involved.

There are very good caretakers/community development workers, but some estates are not as satisfied as others.

The need for play areas and community meeting places was consistently expressed across estates. These physical aspects of community are very important as they provide the normal aspects of a community which cannot be only virtual.

### **The Intranet**

The majority (over 80%) were enthusiastic about an intranet and wanted to be involved.

Interest in an intranet was independent of PC ownership, IT knowledge, age and employment status.

Developing an intranet is only a start – it needs a small team to breath life into the project to enable it to flourish.

Discussion forums need to be moderated – this is time consuming and a team of resident moderators would need to be trained.

Internet access varies between areas depending on local facilities. This will need to be considered if an intranet is to achieve inclusion rather than exclusion. There may be potential to support provision of computers and internet access in community centres which already exist.

Some people would need financial help with being online unless they have got cable.

Disability access must be taken into account.

If people were to be given computers this may be divisive, but PCs could be offered at a discounted price (reconditioned PCs for instance), which many residents would find helpful.

There were a number of residents with very good IT skills and knowledge. With training/development and the necessary checks these residents could become intranet 'champions'.

The level of internet knowledge among residents points to the need for a very well thought through intranet pilot of commercial quality – an intranet which used 'clip art type' graphics would have little credibility.

Residents would benefit from links with local schools and colleges (a two way process with residents providing students with information and support and residents accessing courses and/or course material); writing and telling stories, sharing experiences and providing a link with the outside world.

Walbrook should consider joining with a learning organisation to enable residents and their families to improve their formal education and training, while improving their employment opportunities.

An intranet and time banks in tandem would make it easier to manage the time bank 'bank accounts'; there is software to manage time banks.

The benefits of residents being able to report repairs online and use the intranet to deal with tenancy issues were recognised.

Walbrook staff would not receive emails personally re repairs and rent enquires – there is *customer relations software* which would enable residents to contact Walbrook with their emails receiving an automatic response; staff are then able to respond in a managed way to enquires.

There were some concerns about communication between residents and Walbrook.

## Creating Sustainable Communities with an intranet at Walbrook: an introduction

### Walbrook's vision:

"Our commitment is to effect change for good in the lives of individuals and communities."

### Creating sustainable communities with an intranet

The Walbrook Group in partnership with the Institute for Sustainable Development in Business carried out research to ascertain the views of and the potential benefits to Walbrook's residents and Walbrook of an intranet; (the details are in Appendix 1). Walbrook is a Registered Social Landlord (RSL), (formerly a housing association) with over 3,500 properties in Derbyshire and Staffordshire. <http://www.walbrook.org.uk><sup>ii</sup>

### Sustainable communities

Walbrook is seeking to promote sustainable communities among its residents. It wants to create communities where people want to live, where potential residents would choose to move to and current residents want to stay. Communities can be groups of common interest or experience as well as the traditional location-specific community.

The Institute for Sustainable Communities (Vermont, USA) outlines a sustainable community as one where members may be brought together by:

"common locality, common aspirations, common interests or problems or initiatives - but at heart, [are] a true community... in which difficulties, hopes, and challenges are shared. In a community that sustains itself, people face issues and seek solutions together, building on commonalities while accounting for each other's differences."

"Sustainable communities have a strong sense of place. They have a vision that is embraced and actively promoted by all of the key sectors of society. They are places that build on their assets and dare to be innovative. There is a pervasive volunteer spirit that is rewarded by concrete results. Partnerships between and among government, the business sector, and non-profit organizations are common. Public debate in these communities is engaging, inclusive, and constructive."

(<http://www.iscvt.org/ischome3.html>, 2004)<sup>iii</sup>

The elements of a sustainable community which promote social well-being can include:

- ◆ Adequate health services, safe and healthy housing, and high quality education for all members of the community
- ◆ Maintaining a place that is safe from crime and aggression
- ◆ Fostering a community spirit that creates a sense of belonging, a sense of place, and a sense of self-worth
- ◆ Stimulation of creative expression through the arts
- ◆ Protection and enhancement of public spaces and historic resources
- ◆ Adaptability to changing circumstances and conditions

### Social capital

While sustainable communities is a commonly used term, *social capital* is often mentioned too. Social capital was defined by Putnam (1997)<sup>iv</sup> as "the features of social life such as networks, norms, and social trust which facilitate co-ordination and co-operation for mutual benefit."

The 'capital' is the resources the community has; while the social refers to community co-operation, norms and social trust which mitigate against anti social behaviour (such as criminal activities, vandalism, graffiti and intimidation of individuals or groups). Personal, economic and cultural resources include educational achievement, health and consequently child development.

Social capital is the resources developed and invested in communities which help to make them sustainable.

### **Sustainable communities/social capital and economic and social development**

One assumption of this project is the social and economic status of residents, i.e. that they will not have a high standard of educational achievement and their employment status may be low skilled or unemployed. An intranet with access to the internet would enable adults to link to e-learning and develop IT literacy while children would benefit from linking to education programmes and the information available on the web. This can improve job prospects and social inclusion.

### **Governance**

Achieving sustainable communities needs the involvement of as many members as possible in decision-making which in itself helps to build community capacity. The Institute for Sustainable Communities refers to some of the elements of governance which should be present:

- ◆ Equal opportunity for all individuals to participate in and influence decisions that affect each of their lives
- ◆ Adequate access to public information
- ◆ An atmosphere of respect and tolerance for diverse viewpoints, beliefs, and values
- ◆ Encouraging individuals of all ages, gender, ethnicity, religions, and physical ability to take responsibility based upon a shared vision
- ◆ Political stability
- ◆ Not compromising the sustainability of other communities<sup>v</sup>

Walbrook wants to enable its communities to become more involved in the management of their estates, so that estates can be self-governing, with residents making the decisions which affect them and their community. This would not end Walbrook's responsibility for the communities; rather they would be working in partnership.

### **Using an intranet to achieve sustainable communities and governance**

*"The internet offers enormous potential for new channels for civic participation and dialogue ... new technologies could enable broader participation if they engage local people in issues of public concern" (Local Government Association.. 2000)<sup>vi</sup>.*

### **An intranet**

An intranet is a private network for communications and sharing of information within a single (widespread) organization. It uses technology similar to the internet, but its sites are only accessible to authorised users in the organisation. Users of an intranet can exchange email, send files, browse web pages, and connect to any other computer (telnet). Intranets can be used by any organisation which would like to exchange information internally. It is particularly useful when members of the group or organisation are dispersed; meaning conventional forms of contact and access to information are restricted.

Walbrook commissioned the research because it believed that an intranet could promote e-citizenship, sustainable communities and subsequently empowerment of its residents. In the residential sector, intranets are probably the most advanced in the private sector in the USA. There is a company, Resident Interactive, which has developed intranets for "hundreds of communities." <http://www.residentinteractive.com><sup>vii</sup>.

Some RSLs have already used intranets to aid governance, but “RSLs have been relatively conservative in their implementation of new technology and in perceiving and realising its potential” (Pearl 2002)<sup>viii</sup>. Walbrook accepts that enabling tenants to pay their rent, report repairs, communicate on tenancy issues with Walbrook and for Walbrook to convey information to residents electronically is important, but they are looking to the future.

*“(Perhaps) most importantly, ICT (Information and Communication Technology) opens up new opportunities to break the mould and deliver services in ways that address key management issues, such as tenant participation, community development, consumer satisfaction, cost effectiveness and Best Value” (Pearl 2002).*

Rather than introduce an intranet which would negate the ethos of governance, Walbrook decided to consult residents, hence this research project. Walbrook already has community development workers and caretakers on some estates who can ‘feel the pulse’ of estates by the physical signs, identify residents with problems and generally not only be Walbrook’s eyes and ears, but also a source of help and information to residents. However, it wants to take the next step, to introduce e-governance and to pilot a project to implement an intranet.

Prior to implementing a pilot intranet, Walbrook wanted to ascertain whether residents want to be involved. Engagement in action, rather than telling them they will be part of a pilot project. Benefits to residents of an intranet with access to the internet include:

- ◆ Holding online discussions about issues affecting their community, without the one with the loudest voice shouting everyone down
- ◆ Organising events for their estates
- ◆ Booking community facilities online
- ◆ Linking to the local schools and e-learning provision
- ◆ Linking to adult learning centres
- ◆ Developing knowledge of their environment through working on issues such as air quality and lobbying their Local Authority/MP for improvement
- ◆ Potential for linking the community to health centres

Online discussions of issues relevant to communities change the dynamics as being heard no longer depends on being in the right place at the right time, having the loudest voice, being articulate or perceived social status. The divide between people who are at work and so do not meet other residents and those who are at home all day is broken down when discussions are online and are independent of time, place and social characteristics. For example, those who cannot attend a daytime meeting due to work commitments or an evening meeting due to childcare commitments can still attend the discussions, perhaps going online after children are in bed. The agenda of a meeting can be advertised, or proposed by residents as a result of online discussions.

## The Pictorial Scenarios

To clarify whether residents would like more say in the way their estate is run, they were asked to choose what they would like their community to be like from three scenarios. (The bar along the bottom represents the transfer of control and responsibility between Walbrook and residents).

**Scenario 1 Walbrook initiating change and activities with some events organised by residents.**

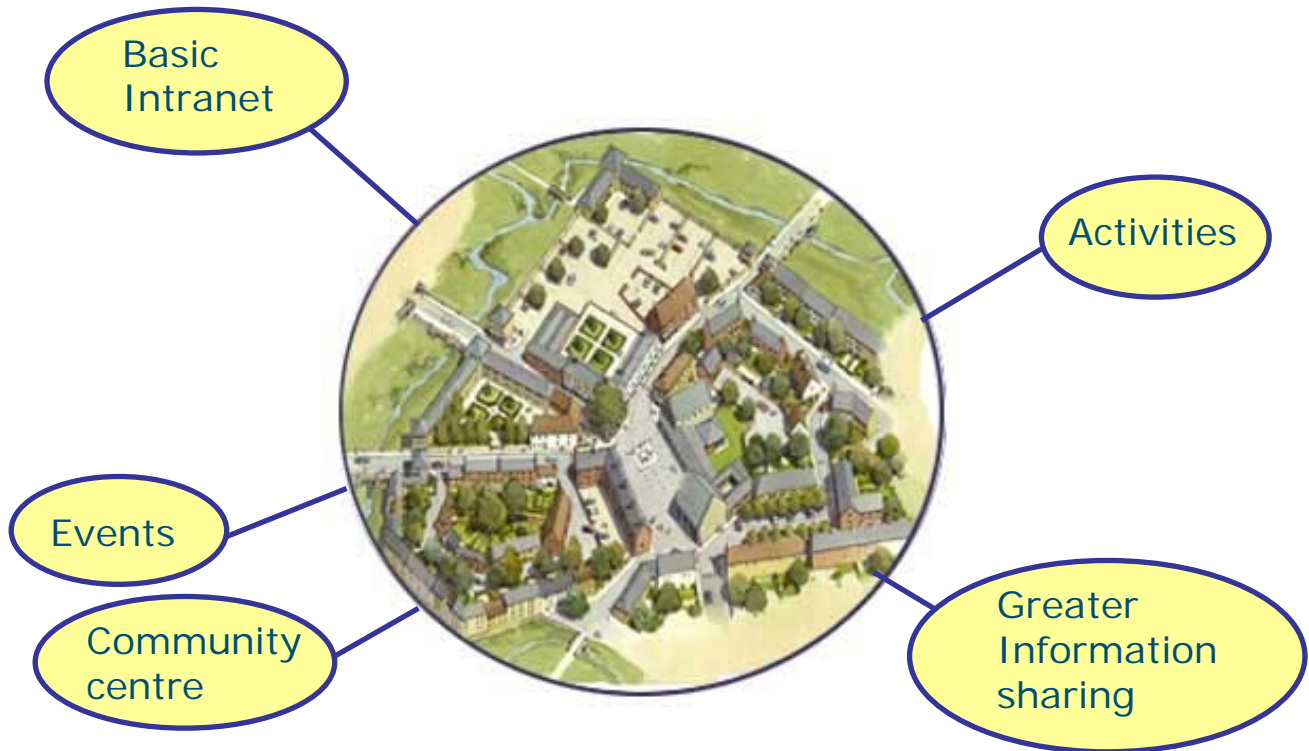


Self management and Governance



Responsibility and Accountability

Scenario 2 Residents more pro-active, meeting to discuss how they would like the estate to improve, also meeting with Walbrook to make decisions together. Beginning to manage the estate themselves, in consultation with Walbrook.

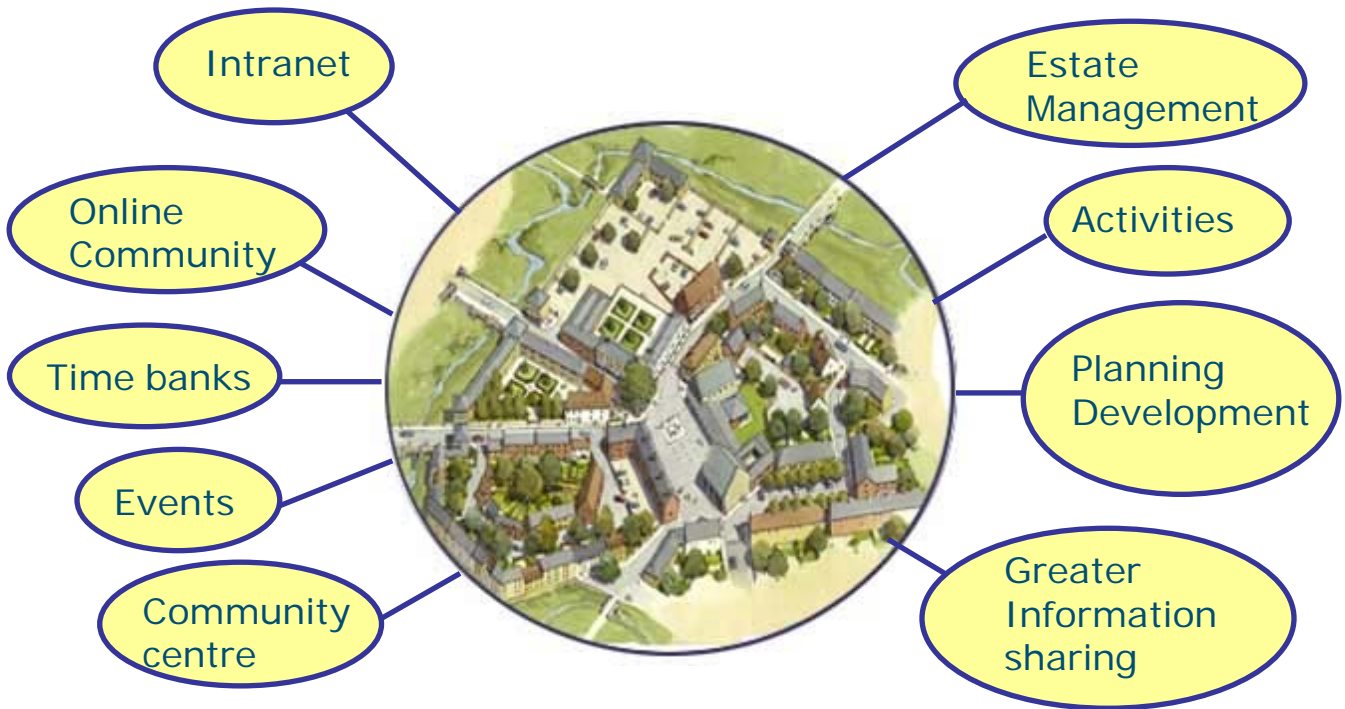


Self management and Governance



Responsibility and Accountability

**Scenario 3. An equal partnership between Walbrook and residents who manage their estates, initiate change and plan developments.**



**Self management and Governance**



Responsibility and Accountability

These scenarios (which were described by pen portraits, see Appendix 8), were readily understood by residents, in identifying both what their communities were like and how they would like them to be.

## **Time banks**

If an intranet could help to create a sustainable community, it would only be part of the process. Amongst other strategies, one practical means of building community capacity and sustainable communities is through a time bank. Time banks UK (<http://www.timebanks.co.uk/>)<sup>ix</sup> describe time banks as:

“A time bank is a way for people to come together and help each other. Participants 'deposit' their time in the bank by giving practical help and support to others and are able to 'withdraw' their time when they need something done themselves. Everyone's time is worth the same and a broker links people up and keeps records. People help each other with everything from making phone calls to sharing meals and giving lifts to the shop.”

In the context of this research, help could also include training in IT or help with paperwork. The credit earned can either be spent on services from other community members, or by buying something, for example transport or a PC, or by donating to an individual or a project in the community.

A time bank differs from LETS (Local Exchange Trading Systems) through the use of a broker to co-ordinate activities, the ability to convert credit into material goods rather than a service and by having a Benefits Disregard from the government.

Time banks are a way of realising everyone's potential. They can:

- ◆ Meet local needs
- ◆ Develop skills and resources in the community
- ◆ Build networks between people and organisations for wider community benefit
- ◆ Catalyse local community activities
- ◆ There are already to successful time banks on Walbrook estates

## **Consultation Day**

There were regular meetings with Walbrook and an interim report, which was congruent with the final results. The results were presented to a selection of Walbrook staff and residents in December 2004. Appendix 9 gives the agenda for the day and Appendix 10 gives a list of those attending, few of whom were familiar with the research. The day was designed to be fun and to encourage participation and feedback. The results were presented in the morning followed by a question and answer session, which particularly focused on the practical aspects of setting up an intranet. In the afternoon there were discussions in small groups regarding the outcome and plan of action following the research. These questions were asked:

- ◆ What do we want to happen?
- ◆ How can we make it happen?
- ◆ Where should it happen?
- ◆ How soon should it happen?

Each was discussed and answered using post-its for people to write down their ideas, then the ideas were organised and compared between the different groups. The results of these discussions are included in Appendix 11. The overall response was very positive. Those attending were surprised by the degree of interest in an intranet and keen to ensure progress towards one or several pilots of an intranet. There was also interest in starting a time bank. The overall aim being to create sustainable communities in Walbrook's estates.

## **Conclusion**

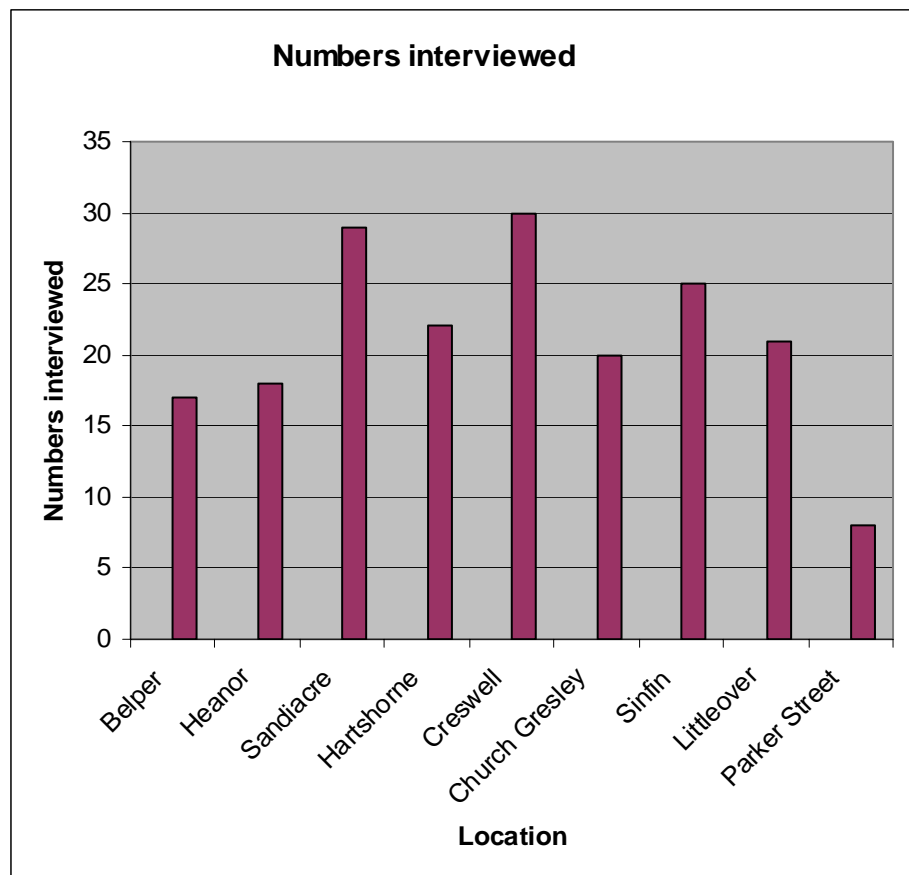
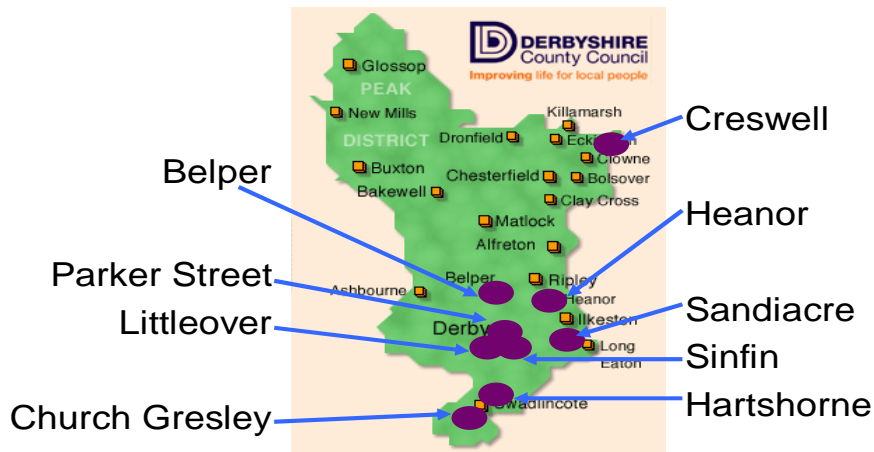
The research showed the majority of residents interviewed were eager for Walbrook to set up an intranet and for them to be involved. There was also widespread support for the idea of an intranet being part of a process of developing sustainable communities. The research itself was a consultation. When staff and residents were presented with the findings at the consultation day, there was again widespread agreement that Walbrook should pilot an intranet.

Such a positive outcome from this long consultation and the commitment of the Walbrook Management Team highlights the importance of taking a pilot intranet forward and of keeping staff and residents informed of progress.

The level of IT sophistication displayed by many residents' points to the need for a commercial quality website. It should be developed with residents, rather than top down as other RSLs' websites seem to be; these also seem to underrate their audience's media savvy/literacy.

## Appendix 1: The Research Method

Two hundred households participated in the research. The first 10 were interviewed in 2003 as part of a pilot and were all members of the Residents' Participation Committee. The main research was conducted during 2004, being completed at the beginning of November. Those interviewed were drawn from nine estates, three in Derby and the rest in east, north and south Derbyshire. Areas and numbers visited are shown below and the dates and streets visited in Appendix 4. Statistical results by area are given in Appendix 5. A short letter introducing the research and inviting participation was sent to households in an estate (Appendix 6). This was followed by the researcher door-knocking to make contact with residents and arrange a convenient time for an interview. Most interviews were conducted between 9am and 5pm, but usually at least one evening was used in each area to reach people who were unavailable in the daytime.



The approach was as informal as possible while preserving the integrity of the research. The resident was able to ask questions at any point. All questions were phrased in plain English. IT (Information Technology) terms were only used after being introduced and explained during demonstrations or when used by a resident. The questionnaire used is given in Appendix 7. The interview followed this pattern:

### **1. IT experience**

The residents were asked about their IT/ web experience and that of other household members. They were also asked if they had access to a computer and the internet.

### **2 Community and involvement**

Residents attitudes to and involvement in their community was then evaluated by asking:

- ◆ Do you take part in any activities which may not be connected to the estate (e.g. religious attendance, sporting activity, after school group, mother and toddler, luncheon club, voluntary organisation etc)<sup>1</sup>
- ◆ Do you feel your estate is a community?
- ◆ Do you take part in any community activities?
- ◆ Are there any barriers to your involvement at present (eg health, work, transport)?
- ◆ Have you ever been to a residents' meeting?

### **3 Scenarios**

As outlined in the main report, residents were asked to choose from three scenarios to show what they would like their community to be like and what level of involvement they would like to have in the way their estate is run.

The scenarios were given to residents in written form (Appendix 8) and are also shown as diagrams in the main report. By using these, we tried to ascertain the level of involvement residents would like in the decisions affecting them, whether action should be initiated by Walbrook staff or by residents and whether they would like to be more involved in the management of their estates.

To help explain issues such as having more say in the way the estate is run, the researcher sometimes provided examples of what other resident-led estates have achieved.

### **4 Hands-on intranet (website) experience**

The researcher then accessed two well structured community websites with suitable contents via a laptop. Control of the computer was handed over to the resident so they could visit the items of interest to them. If residents had not used a computer before they were given a basic introduction and guided to appropriate areas if they were having difficulties. The websites used were:

- [www.lqgroup.org.uk/data/resframe.html](http://www.lqgroup.org.uk/data/resframe.html) (a large RSL in London)
- [www.manzanitavillage.com/](http://www.manzanitavillage.com/) (a co-housing community in Arizona)

For each website residents were asked to rate the sites out of ten and give comments on:

- ◆ Ease of use
- ◆ Whether the information would be useful to them
- ◆ What they did not like about it
- ◆ What would improve it

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<sup>1</sup> This acknowledges that people may be members of a number of different communities, communities are not just geographical.

## **5 Clarifying interest**

At the end of the demonstration/hands on there was an informal chat which cleared up any queries and which would if necessary clear up any partially answered questions – sometimes people formulate an answer to an early question right at the end of an interview. This included:

- ◆ Would an intranet help to overcome any barriers?
- ◆ Would an intranet help to get people 'talking' together?
- ◆ Is there anything else which could be useful to include in an intranet?

and

- ◆ Would they want to use the intranet regularly, sometimes, never?
- ◆ If Walbrook were to run a pilot intranet would they like to be involved?
- ◆ Would it be useful to other family/household members?

## **6 Time banks**

The final part of the interview briefly outlined the idea of time banks and then asked residents whether they might be interested to take part in one if it was in their area, and what activities they might contribute or receive.

## Appendix 2: Overview of results from all areas visited

### Are the results representative of Walbrook residents?

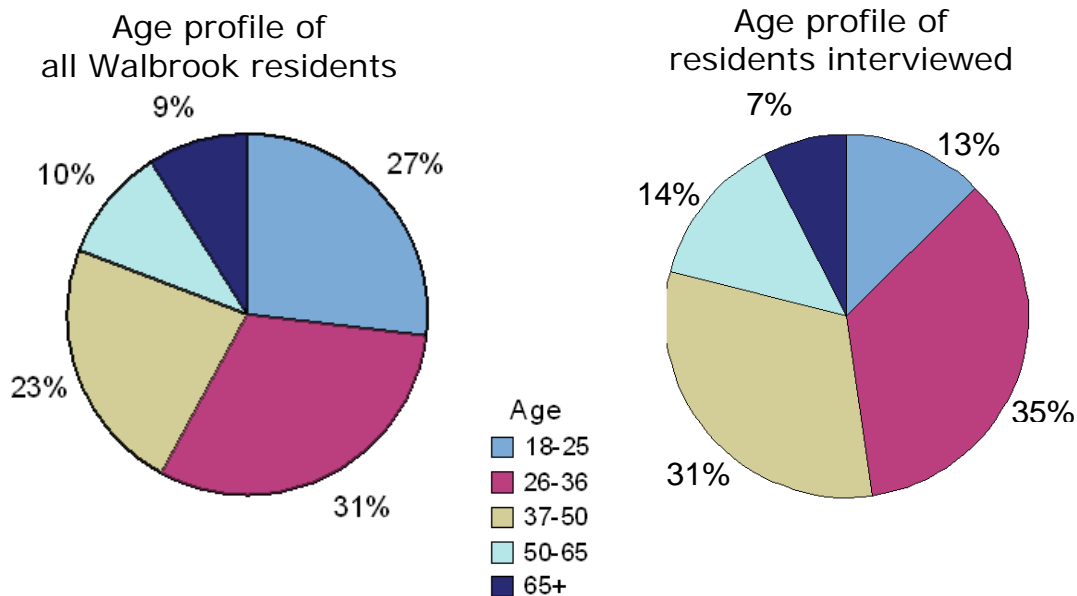
Those interviewed were strongly in favour of an intranet – over 80% would like to have one. There was a strong interest in a greater degree of self-governance (as indicated by the scenarios chosen) and time banks were popular with 63% in favour. Despite similarities in the principal findings (i.e. interest in an intranet, scenario choice and time banks), residents had a wide range of IT skills and internet access. While many were not in formal employment, including carers and retired people, those interviewed ranged from students, through to those working full time including shift work.

The variations in the main results did not relate to any particular factor. For example, the strongest interest in an intranet (over 90%) was in Heanor and Littleover. These areas had a similar age profile, but varied considerably in profiles for occupation, IT skills and computer ownership.

### Were those interviewed representative of Walbrook's residents?

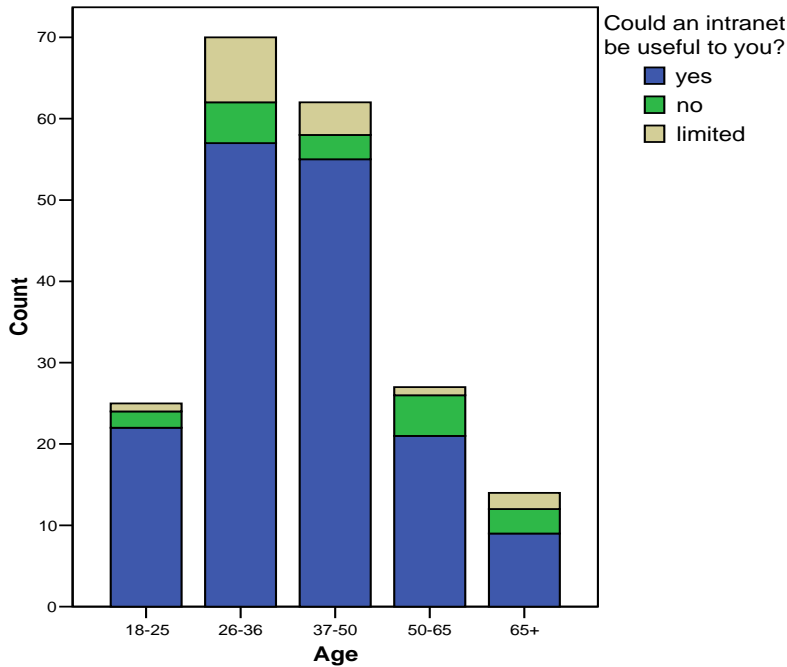
Are these results a true reflection of Walbrook residents' opinion? Two hundred is a statistically significant sample number, and the results give no doubt about the favourable response of Walbrook residents to the idea of an intranet. Figure 1 compares those interviewed with the entire population of Walbrook households by age and duration of residence.

Figure 1 – By age, were those interviewed representative of Walbrook residents?



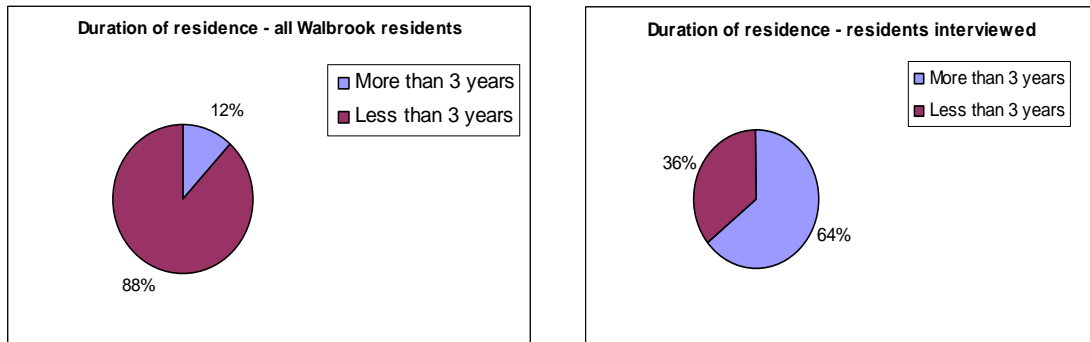
Residents aged 18-25 were under-represented while those aged 37-50 were over-represented. However, each age range had a mix of responses as shown in Figure 2, so this should not have had a significant effect on the overall results.

**Figure 2 – Response to an intranet, by age**

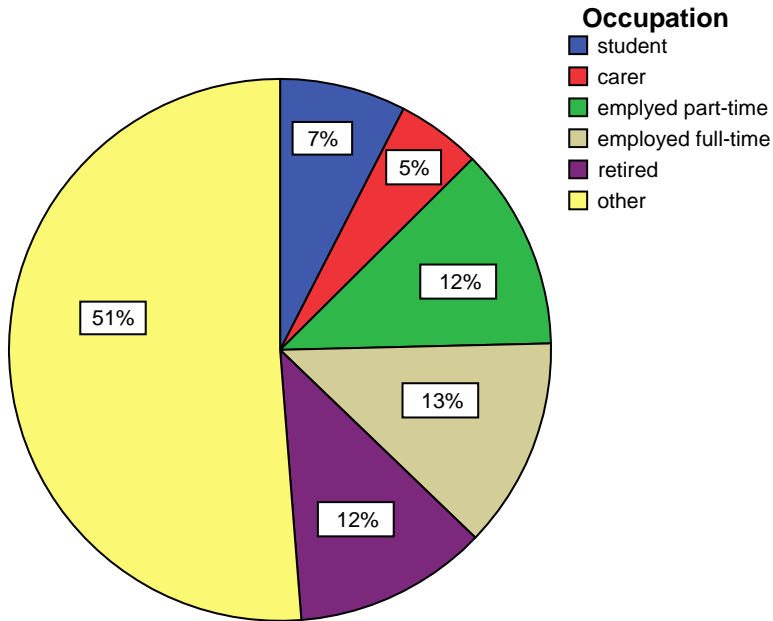


The majority of those interviewed had been with Walbrook for over three years. This is in contrast to the picture for all Walbrook residents where only 12% have been with Walbrook for more than three years. However, in the areas visited the average duration of residence for all residents (not just those interviewed) was higher than the Walbrook average with 51% being resident for over three years compared to the Walbrook average of 12%. Also, in this research residents were asked how long they had been with Walbrook altogether (not necessarily in the same area) so this may have increased the average duration of residence recorded.

**Figure 3 – By duration of residence, were those interviewed representative of Walbrook residents?**



**Figure 4 - Occupations of those interviewed**



Residents working full-time may have been under-represented, due to the time interviews took place. However, some full-time workers were interviewed in evenings or at a time when they were not shift-working. Parents of young children may also be under-represented since in some areas they were away mid-afternoon collecting children from school. However, they were reached in other areas when interviews were conducted during the school holidays (e.g. Creswell).

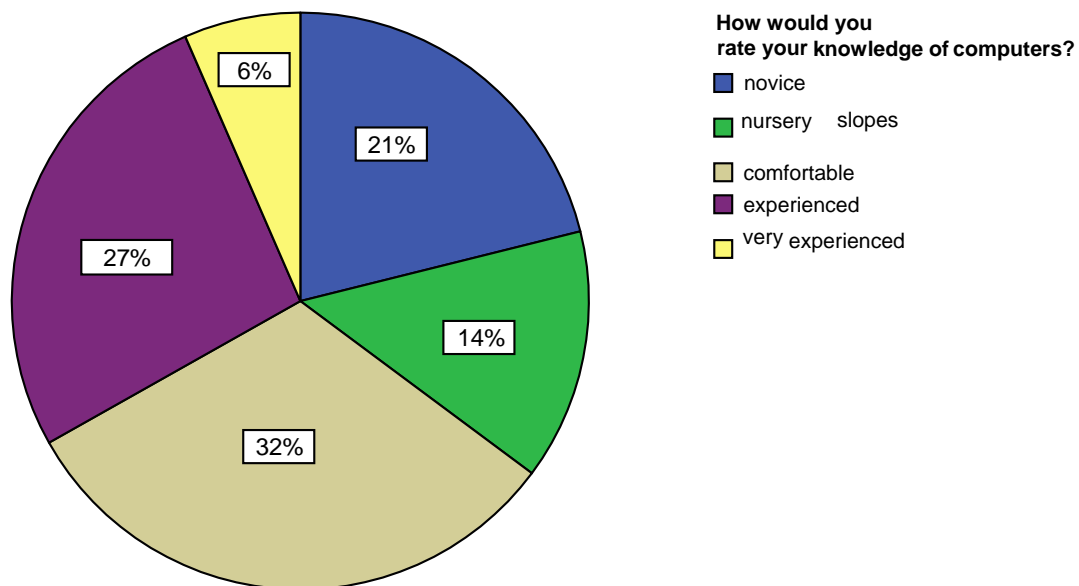
**Was it only those already involved in their community who participated?**

The response may be more positive than the opinion of all Walbrook residents as only those who were willing to take part were interviewed - they may have been more likely to include keen residents and those already involved in their community. In social research it is usually those who feel very strongly about a problem or those who would like to make positive changes who are willing to be interviewed. However, only 23% of those interviewed said they had been to any Walbrook meeting, either locally or one for all Walbrook residents.

## IT skills and access

Residents were asked about their IT skills, whether they owned a computer and whether they had access to the internet. Figure 5a shows the IT skills of those interviewed while figure 5b (p24) defines the categories used.

**Figure 5a - IT skills of all residents interviewed**



There was a wide range of IT skills among those interviewed. The vast majority had some experience of using a computer and many used them regularly. Sixty-five percent were at least comfortable with a computer, so they could use an intranet almost straight away, while almost all of those who were only 'nursery slopes' or 'novice' were able to use a website without too much difficulty. Thirteen people described themselves as very experienced including people who designed and ran websites. Some said they might be interested in being involved in the development and operation of a residents' intranet.

The researcher did not navigate the websites for residents (except when they were unable to do so for themselves). Residents were shown how to use the PC and the researcher only intervened if the PC crashed or the resident asked for help. Consequently even those who had not used a PC before were able to find their way around the websites. Of those who stated that computers "weren't for them" some had begun to see some of the possibilities by the end of the interview. Several of those who had never used a computer before said they had enjoyed it.

IT skills did not seem to be a major barrier to being able to use websites, but those who described themselves as "novice" or "nursery slopes" would need some support either from family, friends, a time bank volunteer, or through an IT course.

A handful of people were unable to use the websites themselves, due to visual impairment or a motor disability. Two of those with a visual impairment used computers and the internet regularly with the help of speech software. Design of an intranet suitable for use with such software should be considered and could achieve greater inclusion than is currently possible.

## Figure 5b – How would you rate your knowledge of IT?

Residents were asked to choose their level of IT skills from:

### **Novice**

- Never used a computer before
- Used once or twice briefly before

### **Nursery Slopes**

- Used a computer a few times
- Not confident, have some problems with moving around screen, eg mouse.
- Usually need help to get going. Often get stuck.
- Have had a go at 2 or 3 programmes etc, eg Word, email, games.

### **Comfortable**

- Can switch on and off
- Can create and save documents
- Can print
- Can email/ use web
- Can use a CD Rom

### **Experienced**

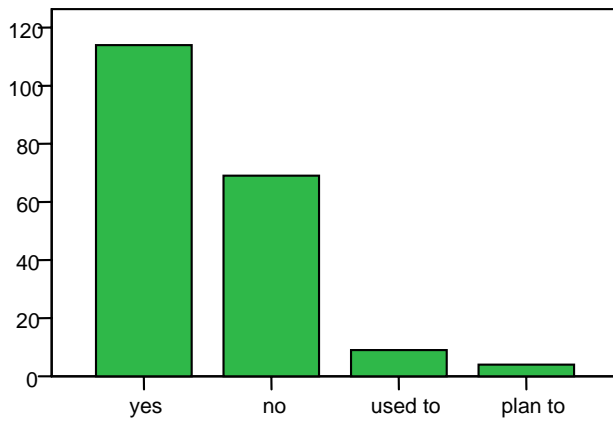
- Have used computers a lot
- Do/ could use computers in a job
- Can change settings, eg in Word, or screensaver etc.
- Confident with email, including attaching files
- Search on the internet
- Confident with Word, eg including tables, bullets, copy and pasting.
- Have used databases (eg Access) and spreadsheets (eg Excel).
- May have used a scanner, photo- editing.
- Can install a CD Rom/ software.

### **Very Experienced**

- Able to identify/ rectify hardware/ software problems
- Able to programme in one or more languages
- Understand what goes on "behind the front"
- Able to upgrade a PC.

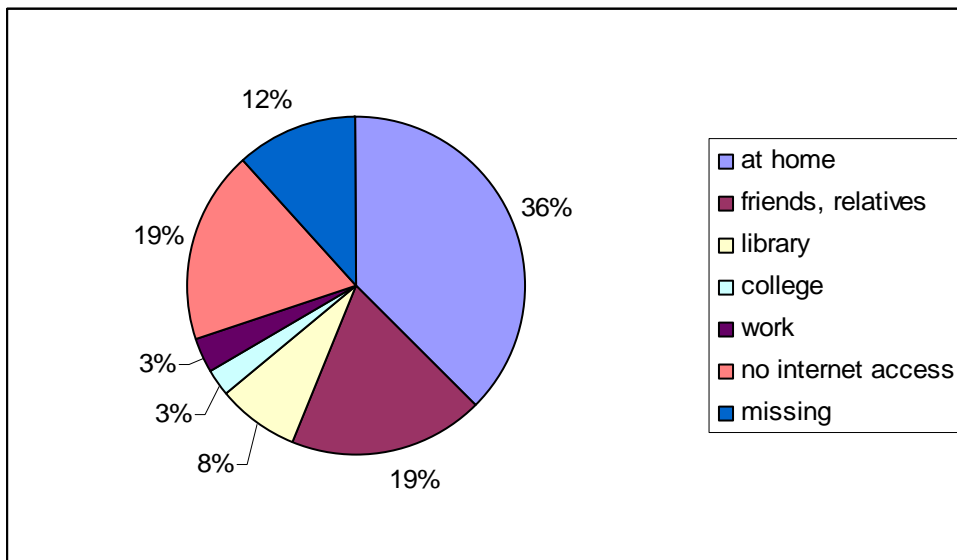
Over half those interviewed owned a computer, and over half had access to the internet either at home or through friends and relatives:

**Figure 6 - Do you own a computer?**



**Figure 7 - Where do you have access to the internet?**

(All areas except Belper, Heanor and the pilot study, where this question was not asked)



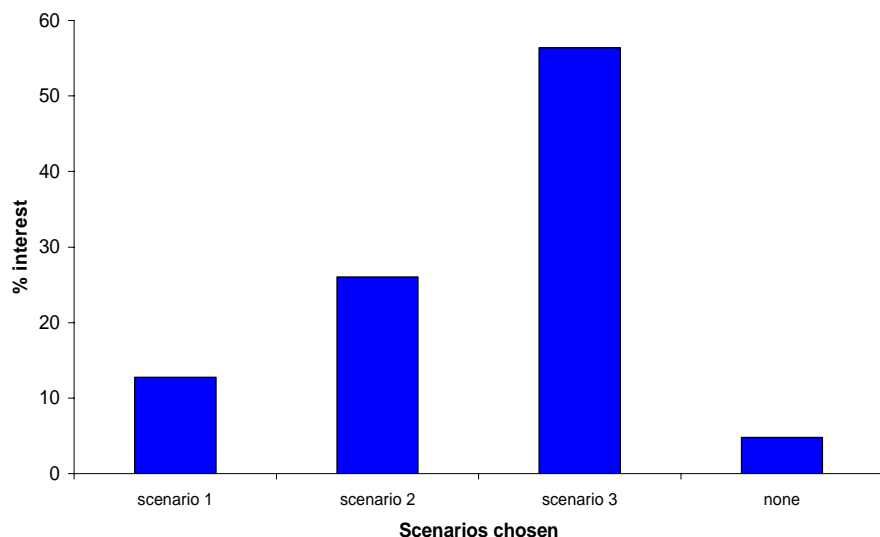
Sixteen percent of those asked had no internet access (those on the pilot and in Heanor and Belper were not asked). Although the number without access was small it represents those who would not be able to use a Walbrook intranet. Internet access will vary from area to area depending on local facilities, for example the distance to the local library. This will need to be considered if an intranet is to achieve inclusion rather than exclusion. There may be potential to support provision of computers and internet access in community centres which already exist.

## Sustainable communities

When asked what they would like their community to be like, and later when they saw other communities through websites, residents often expressed a desire for various elements of a sustainable community, for example a community centre and activities. A student in Creswell felt that “if we had a community house it would solve lots of problems – it would be neutral, people would know where to go, we could have a crèche for kids during meetings.” In Hartshorne someone working full-time suggested that “trips or meetings would let you meet people, currently the only times people talk to their neighbours are over something negative such as damage or noise.”

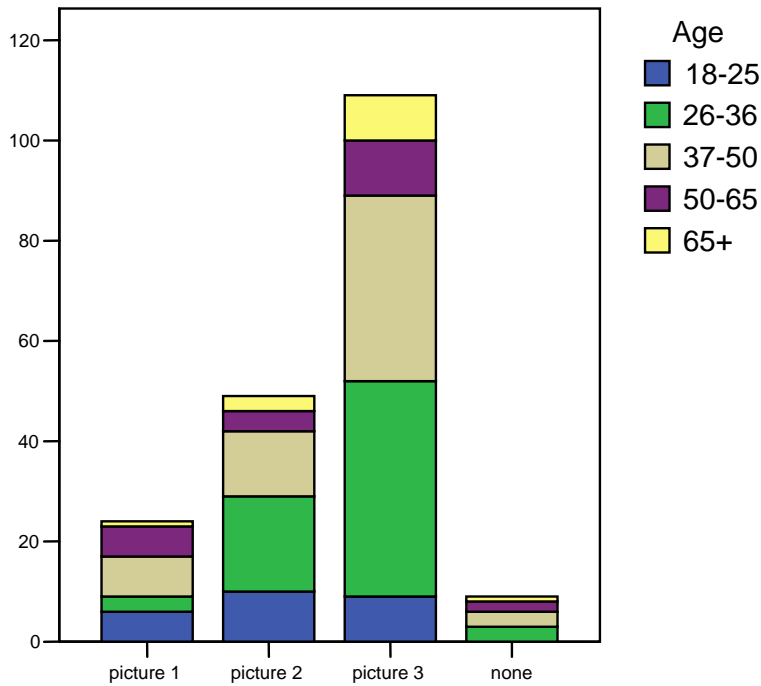
The response to the scenarios (outlined in the main report) did vary considerably (Figure 8a), but the majority – 55% - chose scenario 3 which gives residents the greatest degree of self-management and responsibility over the activities and changes in their estates. Scenario 3 was chosen by all but one estate and Scenario 2 was the second most popular. The results indicated that some people were happy for all ideas and action to be initiated from Walbrook in its role as landlord, but most wanted to have the opportunity to be more involved and have more of a say.

**Figure 8a** Total % interest in scenarios



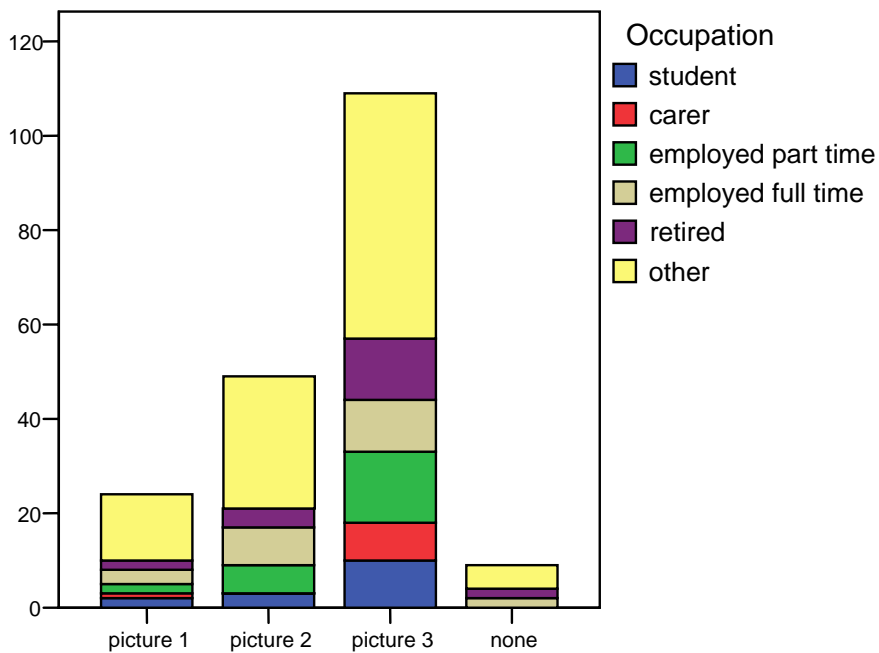
As Figure 8b indicates, scenario 3 was the most popular with each age range apart from 18-25 year olds whose opinion was quite evenly spread across the scenarios, with scenario 2 being the most popular for them, by a small margin.

**Figure 8b - What would you like your community to be like?  
Scenario choices by age.**



Scenario 3 was the most popular across all occupations, with students and carers being the group most certain about this option.

**Figure 8c - What would you like your community to be like?  
Scenario choices by occupation**



A few residents expressed the frustration that “currently something can be stopped by only one person.” But if their community became like scenario 3 many people would be involved in the decision-making so this problem should be overcome. One of the main aims of an intranet would be to enable more people both to know what’s going on and to be able to influence the action on any issue. The responses to the potential of an intranet are given in more detail in the next section, looking at the different estates visited.

The idea of a time bank introduced another means of creating sustainable communities. This was consistently popular in all areas, with between 60 and 80% of residents wanting to be involved. Although the proposal of an intranet had greater acceptance than time banks, a few of those who did not see the benefit of an intranet immediately saw the value of having a time bank, demonstrating their interest in a sustainable community developed through an alternative method.

## **Appendix 3: Profiles of areas visited**

### **Belper**

Belper was the first area visited for the main research and was near the edge of town, as part of an estate of mixed ownership as were most of the Walbrook properties visited. Applewood Close is a cul-de-sac split between Walbrook and another housing association and is quite small with just over 30 households. When considering the results it must be remembered that a relatively small number of people were interviewed here - 17 during the main research, with a further three interviewed during the pilot. So a direct comparison with larger areas is not realistic. However, the age and occupation profiles among residents were very similar to those for Heanor, with quite a large proportion in full or part-time employment. The range of ages interviewed was representative of the estate as a whole, but those resident for over three years were over represented.

#### **Social activities**

Applewood Close seemed to have many more social activities than other estates with a resident caretaker who has organised trips, street parties and a sunflower growing competition for children. The cul-de-sac layout with a lack of through-traffic makes events such as street parties possible and seems to help residents to get to know one another and to participate in activities.

There were drug problems on the estate - some residents said there was almost more sense of community at that time because the issues brought people together. But they are glad that the problem seems to have been resolved. Currently the division between the Walbrook houses and those of the other housing association on the other side of the road seems to be the biggest barrier to creating a sense of community. Belper was the only area visited which chose a moderate degree of self-governance (scenario 2) in preference to scenario 3.

#### **Play and community amenities**

There is a small play area nearby but no community centre. Residents hoped an undeveloped area nearby would be used for a community centre, but planning permission was given for a nursery. Residents were resigned to the financial reality of this decision and it is an illustration of the pressure on development sites to produce a good return on investment, rather than becoming a community amenity.

Residents were definitely interested in having a Walbrook intranet with over 80% in favour. A large proportion owned a computer – over 80%: IT skills were quite high, with one person describing himself as very experienced. The very first interview was with someone who had never used a computer before, but they enjoyed it by the end and could see a lot of potential in an intranet.

#### **Would an intranet help to build a community?**

People felt especially that an intranet could help with communication, for meetings and activities. Currently, according to one resident: “the information on meetings is very short notice, and the time of them might be too late for the last bus.” An intranet could be a means of deciding what time is best for a meeting and communicating that information in advance. Some suggested an intranet could take pressure off the caretaker since she would not need to be asked the same question several times if the answer was on the intranet. It could also help to “give ideas to other estates by seeing what happens elsewhere.”

#### **Time banks**

Residents were interested in having a time bank, over 60% were in favour, and most thought it could happen, but only if it was run properly.

## Heanor

Two areas were visited in Heanor: a small estate in Marpool on the edge of town and recently converted flats at Empire Court in the town centre. Fifteen people were interviewed at Marpool, where most of the houses are along one road – Huftons Drive - with a few properties around the corner on Homesfield Drive. At the end of Huftons Drive is some sheltered housing belonging to another housing association. There was a “responsible resident” on the estate at the time of the interviews.

Only three people were interviewed at Empire Court where there are one bedroom flats which had recently opened. There is no communal area and no caretaker so there was little sense of community so far.

Heanor had a large proportion of people in full or part-time employment among those interviewed. Not many 18-25 year olds were interviewed, but they were very keen on the idea of an intranet with one stating that “it would be good for young people”.

### Social activities

Residents at Marpool were undoubtedly keen to have more sense of community – several said they had helped with activities in the past and would be happy to help again, and 65% of residents chose scenario 3. There has been quite a variety of activities in the past, including a street party for the Jubilee, sunflower-growing and painting competitions for children and trips to a pantomime and Blackpool.

### Play and community amenities

There is no community hall or play area on the estate and there is nowhere for teenagers to meet, but there is a small wood next to the houses and a small play area on the other side of the wood. There is also a larger play area near a church on the other side of the main road which some residents said they had taken groups of children to. At Shipley Country Park on the edge of town there have been treasure hunts and games for children organised and some residents are keen to see these happen again. Other interests included having barbeques, garden competitions, another street party and maybe even organising a joint shopping trip to France.

### Would an intranet help to build a community?

Heanor residents saw a lot of potential in an intranet, with 90% thinking it could be useful to them. Many saw an intranet as an easier means of *communication* with Walbrook: “my words get muddled up on the phone”, “I would rather go on the internet, I can make people understand better and can do it in the evenings.”

It could provide much *more information* to residents: “I could learn more about Walbrook in one day (from a website) than in three years (by other means).” It could give a better picture of what’s going on than from a letter, and could improve attitudes to Walbrook: “it seems like Walbrook cares about residents, that they’re thinking of doing this.”

Others did think it could be a means of building a sustainable community by including many more people, enabling them to be involved through giving suggestions and meeting other people. Comments from these three people highlighted some benefits: “You don’t have to infringe on personal space when there is an intranet”, “a lot of people aren’t used to having a say” but “once a site’s running we would notice a difference straight away - more people would be included.” Those interviewed were also realistic about the commitment needed to make an intranet work: “it would only be as good as people make it”. This interest and understanding was not related to computer ownership since fewer than half the residents owned a computer, though IT skills were reasonable, with one resident being very experienced.

**Time banks**

The idea of a time bank was well received, with over 80% interested; some people who were “unemployed” were very willing to have the chance to do something useful and help the community during the day – they had many skills they would like to contribute, but at present had no means of finding out what opportunities there were and who would appreciate help.

## **Sandiacre**

This is quite a large estate of almost 50 properties, with a resident caretaker. It is on the edge of an area of council and housing association properties. There is a good number of Walbrook properties along one main street (Hart Avenue), with more on a cul-de-sac (Goodwin Close) including some bungalows. Twenty nine people were interviewed and as in other areas they covered a range of age groups.

### **Play and community amenities**

There are limited community facilities in the area with no community centre and no play area nearby. Residents have tried to get together for a play area at end of the street, but by the time their proposal was ready the funding scheme was no longer available, so they are now disillusioned and wary of trying anything again.

### **Social activities**

A few trips seem to have been organised in the past, but there doesn't seem to be much happening at the moment. People would like to see more for children to do – almost everyone mentioned this need, even if they didn't have children of their own.

### **Would an intranet help to build a community?**

Residents were interested in having a more sustainable, self-governing community with 65% choosing scenario 3. "People would take pride and feel more like it belongs to them if they were starting to manage the estate. Then they would be more ready to do things and be involved."

Sandiacre residents definitely thought an intranet could help to build a more sustainable community, with 76% in favour. An intranet would "make Walbrook more accessible and approachable" and "would help both tenants and Walbrook".

Residents realised it would "not just [be] about the housing association but getting to know people"; it could "make people feel less isolated". It could also be "good for spread out communities" and could "help to know what's going on in other areas. It would be especially good for elderly or disabled people." Many residents saw the potential of an intranet to release the potential for including everyone's opinion and achieving change, it could be a communication outlet which doesn't exist at the moment: "there are probably some great ideas in peoples heads which are not shared at moment."

Although there were quite a few computer 'novices' in Sandiacre there were also several people who were very experienced in IT, including people who could build PCs and someone who had run chatrooms and could set firewalls. One person said they would not use an intranet even if they had a computer, but it seemed this was because they were afraid of not using the correct spelling. This highlights the need for skills and self-confidence as well as technology.

### **Time bank**

A time bank could facilitate skill-sharing in IT use as well as meeting other needs. Someone suggested the option of help with decorating and moving furniture for new residents moving in. Sixty-five percent were interested in being involved in a time bank.

## **Hartshorne (Goseley)**

The Walbrook properties are a small part of the Goseley estate which is part housing association and part local authority. Currently people often only know those on the same terrace and do not know there are people with similar interests just opposite. The older local authority properties along Brookdale Road sometimes appear to have more of a community, although this area has also had its problems. Twenty-two residents were interviewed, most of whom were under 35 and were carers or not in employment.

### **Play and community amenities**

The estate has a community hall which other estates would like, but for a person visiting for the first time it appears to be an underused resource. The gates are locked and there is only a contact number to find out about events, rather than an events listing on the door. Residents interviewed were also unsure of what activities there were, but the Community Development Worker says that the centre is quite well used and is a valued resource. This illustrates the difficulties which a mixed-ownership community face, and how improved communication could bring major benefits.

There is also a recreation ground, but in common with many community parks, residents do not feel particularly safe using it. Many local authorities are now re-designing parks and recreation areas, often providing park wardens, so these valuable open spaces are being transformed. South Derbyshire District Council did a survey of how residents would like to use the park and it has various strategies for improvements in outdoor recreation and facilities outlined in the South Derbyshire Local Action Plan, its Corporate Plan 2004-2007 and other policies.

### **Social activities**

Residents were keen to have more activities which were appropriate to them at the community hall, for example daytime aerobics and activities for children, especially in the holidays. They felt this would help them to meet other people. "Trips/meetings would let you meet people, currently the only times people talk to their neighbours are over something negative such as damage or noise." But they were also realistic about the process of developing a sustainable community: "It would take a lot of years to get everyone involved."

### **Would an intranet help to build a community?**

With the physical meeting and recreation areas this is a potential intranet pilot area with a young population who are probably quite isolated and would value the communication potential of an intranet. However, the level of IT skills and internet access would need to be addressed if a pilot happened here. Although 46% of those interviewed owned a computer and a further 18% had done in the past, IT skills were fairly low with the majority being only "comfortable" and no-one describing themselves as "very experienced."

Internet access was also not particularly good – 32% had access in their homes but 40% had nowhere they thought they could access it. Could the internet be available in the community hall? Some residents suggested this.

Ideas for bringing the community together included having a fund for residents to use for emergencies such as loans for repairs, with funds being raised locally. Also resources could be pooled to buy fencing. Many did want to have more influence on decisions affecting them, especially those on the WATA (West Area Tenants' Association) committee who had been involved in changing the maintenance contract to local contractors and were keen to see further control over local decision-making. These desires for greater community involvement are reflected in the 50% who would like to see scenario 3 in their community. However, 27% chose scenario 1, preferring the initiative to come from Walbrook or not having confidence in other residents being involved in decision-making.

Despite the mixed response to sustainable communities and a lower level of IT skills and internet access, over 80% thought that an intranet could be useful to them. Many thought that it could help them to meet and bring together other people with similar interests – it could “open up the community” - and that it would be an easier way to communicate with Walbrook – “I’d prefer to email rather than phone, I can concentrate and be more serious if kids are not distracting me” (i.e. it can be done in my own time).

### **Time banks**

There was also a strong interest (68%) in having a time bank, provided that those participating were reliable. There was even someone who loved ironing!

## **Creswell**

The Walbrook properties are part of the Markland Estate on the edge of Creswell and are spread out along a road with a few small branches off. A terrace of family homes faces a terrace of bungalows with older and disabled residents. This helps to explain the greater spread of ages among those interviewed compared to other areas. The highest proportion and number of over 65s were interviewed here, while over 50% were aged 26-36. It is likely that more of the parents of young children were interviewed here as the area was visited during the summer holidays. The occupation profile was fairly similar to that of Hartshorne although with a greater number of retired people. The estate has a non-resident caretaker.

### **Play and community amenities**

The bungalows back onto an area of wasteland which will possibly be developed. Some of the issues in the area include safety on the roads with children playing out, and children playing on the grass in front of the bungalows. There appears to be quite a division between the residents of the terrace and the bungalows – the people in the bungalows feel excluded and it **seems** the residents' group MERA (Markland Estate Residents' Association) is composed of a few people from the terrace who don't necessarily consult others: "the families on other side of the street don't communicate with us, just with themselves" and "those running meetings don't involve us. We don't know what gets discussed. Not invited or consulted." On the other hand, the residents' group is frustrated that requirements for a constitution and code of conduct are preventing them from getting on and doing things. The view of an ex-Chairman of the group was that it "seems like Walbrook are throwing barriers in the way - we have to do it their way or they won't help."

### **Social activities**

Residents here have organised a wide range of activities including trips, bonfire night celebrations and a fun day for children. They have managed to attract some funding and have got a notice board after a long campaign. They have many more plans and dreams of a community house or portacabin and even a community shop since the area is far from a shop. While the researcher was there (in July and August) they were hoping to set up a toy bank with some of the funding.

Although there was a lot of interest in a greater degree of self-governance and in being part of a more sustainable community, residents were on the whole not sure about the level of self-governance in scenario 3, with preference being almost equally divided between scenarios 2 and 3. This divided opinion on the type community and governance was not obviously related to age or occupation.

### **Would an intranet help to build a community?**

Creswell was certainly interested in a Walbrook intranet, with over 70% thinking it could be useful to them. This was greater than the interest in a time bank or a self-governing community.

An intranet could be a means of involving people who are not part of the MERA and who currently feel they know nothing about the decisions being made and have no chance of raising their views. An intranet could help to overcome some of the negative views currently held, which have been outlined above: "It definitely would help to have a say and know what's going on."

IT skills varied, ranging from the two people who described themselves as very experienced, to six people who were computer novices, but four of these were over 65. Some considered that computers were only for younger people, but thought a relative could use an intranet on their behalf; others enjoyed using a computer as part of the interview.

At present about half of those interviewed owned a PC, and half had access to the internet either at home or through friends and family while 34% said they had no internet access.

**Time banks**

Over 60% of Creswell residents were interested in a time bank with several people in the terrace saying the skill-sharing already happens. However, as would be expected many people rely on friends and relatives and either have no need of or do not trust help from neighbours.

## Church Gresley

Almost 80% of the residents available here were interviewed – the highest proportion of any area visited during the research. This is a small self-contained estate of around thirty properties with no caretaker and no longer any tenant representative on WATA (West Area Tenants' Association). Most households have young families, and this was the area with the highest proportion of 18-25 year olds interviewed.

### Play and community amenities

There are several frustrations over the community in the estate, particularly over what children are allowed to do. In addition to a large playing field over the road there is a corner on the estate with a patch of grass and a bench. Apparently this corner used to have a play area which had been funded (at least in part) by residents. It is next to a house with an older couple who do not want to be disturbed by children playing. The play area was removed at some point, residents are unsure of the reason, but attribute it either to complaints from those nearby or an accident at another play area. This demonstrates the mixed messages that can arise from current communication channels.

More recently there have been issues with residents sitting outside their homes. The **understanding** the researcher received while in the area was that parents were told children could not play outside unless they were supervised, so adults would sit out to watch the children. Those doing so said it helped the sense of community and was easier than going round to each others' houses – "It felt like I wasn't the only person here when people were sitting out." However, there were complaints that this was intimidating. Residents were then told that they could no longer sit out (with a warning of eviction if they do), so this means their children could not play out either. Many emphasised the need for a communal area to help "create more sense of community."

### Social activities

There is a general frustration at the lack of community: "We tried to have BBQ but hardly anyone wanted to come - people aren't interested." This may be due to problems in the past and a lack of trust within the community, not helped by a high turnover of residents - only 45% of those interviewed had lived there for over three years, and the estate had the second highest turnover of all areas included in this research.

Some residents pointed out that with more sense of a community, for example through communal areas and activities, "people would be happier to stay." – in effect that the community would be more sustainable. One resident recognised that it "doesn't have to be Walbrook [initiating change], we could do things ourselves eg taking care of a play park." Many were keen to be more involved in the decision-making process, to feel that their views were listened to and to have improved communication between residents and Walbrook – 52% opted for scenario 3.

### Would an intranet help to build a community?

The response to the benefits of an intranet was overwhelmingly positive – 90% thought it could be useful – "it's a brilliant idea, not many people know how to find out [what is going on/ information from Walbrook]." They felt it would enable them to achieve change – it "could have a lot of potential, be more accessible and quicker, I can't see a downside to it. It would help to start things that could give good feedback to Walbrook." It could enable people to pool their ideas to bring suggestions to Walbrook, it could help by enabling consultation of residents. And it "might help Walbrook to seem that they're caring for residents."

Skill levels in IT were high in the estate which would help people to make immediate use of an intranet. Although no-one described themselves as "very experienced" over 50% were experienced in IT and 70% owned a computer. Forty five percent had internet access at home or through friends and relatives, but 30% said they did not know where they would access it. This would need to be addressed for an intranet to be inclusive as there is no community hall on or near the estate that would be an obvious base for internet access.

**Time bank**

The suggestion of having a time bank to help build the community was also popular with around 65% in favour.

## **Sinfin**

The estate in New Sinfin has quite an ethnically mixed population with several refugee families from the former Yugoslavia – two of these were included among the households interviewed. Several housing associations have properties on this estate, some of which are part-owned by residents. As in other areas, having “different housing associations makes it difficult to encourage community.”

There are around 50 Walbrook properties and a resident caretaker. The majority of properties are along one cul-de-sac – Siskin Drive - with the remainder on two other streets, one around the corner and the other (Wagtail Close) on the edge of the estate. Only two of the 25 people interviewed were from Wagtail Close. The estate has a relatively young population with no-one over 65 interviewed. There was quite a large proportion of students (16%) and carers (16%), and it seemed many of those not interviewed were working, at least part-time.

### **Play and community amenities**

There are many more facilities here than in other areas, with a small play area, a basketball court and the Scills Community Centre, on edge of the estate at the end of Swallowdale Road. This has an after school club, youth night, “Mums and toddlers” group and a church. But people still say they would like more for children to do in the area. There are no signposts to the Scills Centre and many people don’t know about it, so they may not be aware of the activities offered.

### **Would an intranet help to build a community?**

For several residents safety and security seemed to be a barrier to having any sense of community. “People keep to themselves because of the problems, they don't feel safe, they are wary of doing things together.” Another resident stated that “when I feel settled then I'm ready to get involved. We need to be secure before we start being a community.” Previously there have been problems with gangs and prostitutes.

Residents felt that they did not have clear information about decisions – “we're not well enough informed about decisions that affect us”, “there are lots of rumours about what's going to happen, e.g. new doors, but we're never sure.”

They also felt that they often do not have a chance to voice opinions: “we need to get a chance to voice our opinions – I went to committee meeting but was only allowed to listen, not to give opinions.” The desire to change this level of involvement is reflected in the fact that Sinfin had the strongest support for scenario 3 of all areas visited, with around 72% choosing it as their ideal for the estate. There was some understanding that creating a sustainable community has to be worked at – “it doesn't work when people are only interested in themselves.”

### **This (an intranet) would be brilliant**

Residents readily saw that an intranet could have significant potential. “This would be brilliant.” “A very good idea. It would definitely be used. People don't want to feel isolated.” It could address the current problems with communication and the ability to be involved.

“We would get higher community participation with this.” “Message boards and chat rooms can be very encouraging; by voicing opinion more can get done than staying alone.” “It would encourage people to find out things - currently it's just word of mouth.”

Most importantly, it could facilitate the creation of a sustainable community:

“I would use it more than I'd have thought, because it is about community and not just Walbrook.” “Communities don't have to be a physical community.” “It could make people more active.” “An intranet could encourage to make a family of residents.” “Through an intranet people can be less inhibited. It's a good way of introducing people to each other, knowing that the other person wants to talk, that you have something in common.”

Given these responses, it is not surprising that 84% of residents would like to have an intranet. But what about their ability to use one? Sinfin had the highest levels of IT skills and internet access of all areas visited during this research. One resident ran a website, 56% of those interviewed had internet access in their own homes and around 70% owned a computer.

This strong interest in an intranet combined with high skill levels, good access to the internet and a desire for more sense of a community all suggest that Sinfin could be a suitable area for a pilot of an intranet.

### **Time banks**

Some residents were familiar with the idea of time banks, mentioning a LETS system which seems to be running in on Shakespeare Street, Old Sinfin. Sixty eight percent were in favour of having a time bank, although 24% said they would not want one. This may be due to lack of trust and a sense of community. It might be worth investigating the activities in Old Sinfin further to see whether there might be opportunities to roll them out.

## **Littleover (Micklehaven)**

Twenty one people were interviewed in Littleover (or Mickelhaven) – a development on the south-western edge of Derby. The Walbrook properties are on one corner of a mixed estate of some privately owned and some rented properties. There is a playing field with swings etc along the road (Pendleside Way), and an area of new development nearby with shops, a pub, and a church which seems to organise some activities and have an annual fête. There is quite a mixed age-range of residents although few are over 65 and no-one of this age-group was interviewed.

Eighteen to twenty five year olds were under-represented among those interviewed (comprising only 5% of those interviewed as opposed to the 16% of all Walbrook tenants on the estate). This may have been due to the numbers of people either in full-time employment or study.

### **Play and community amenities**

There does not seem to be much sense of community in the area. There is no meeting place and seemingly not many activities for children nearby, other than those offered by the church. There was a desire for more sense of community in the area, but many people felt that some form of community centre (even just a temporary one during school holidays) and activities would be needed to achieve any progress – “We need somewhere to meet before the community can get going.” “A community hall would help things to happen.” “If there was a holiday club/street party parents would get involved too.”

Fifty seven percent chose scenario 3 illustrating the desire for more of a community, and wanting more of a stake in the community. A hall could also facilitate participation in the management of the estate in Littleover. Some people said meetings had failed in the past because they had been held at a location – Mickleover - which was hard to get to and where they were not welcomed.

Some people’s confidence in their potential to influence change was restricted by their concern over whether their views would be listened to: “People have been put off meetings because they go but nothing is done.” Communication between Walbrook and residents was a concern for many people.

### **Would an intranet help to build a community?**

This concern for a two-way commitment extended to Littleover’s response to the idea of an intranet. Of all the areas visited during this research, they were the most strongly in favour of an intranet, with 95% thinking it could be useful to them.

An intranet could enable everyone to be included rather than a just a few residents. One resident who was virtually house-bound due to a disability suggested that “for people like me who stay in all the time it would be much easier to know what's happening. An intranet would give everyone opportunity for input.” People might more effectively express their opinions: “The more information residents have the easier it is to sort things out. A very good idea. People are more likely to think and give views through this.” “Having a forum could help by allowing people to air their views.” Also there was some reassurance in the value of communities: “Community is worth investing in, it improves relations [between] tenants and the landlord. If we are informed we might be more patient!”

Those interviewed raised several requirements or limitations that would need to be addressed for an intranet to be effective. It would need to involve interaction with Walbrook through a two-way commitment; an intranet’s usefulness “depends on if Walbrook reads emails”, and “on whether Walbrook listens and takes action.” It would also need to be updated, be an alternative to, not a replacement for, other forms of community development - “I don't want Walbrook to rely on an intranet, we want to see staff” - and be accessible. One visually impaired resident who uses websites stated: “it must be easy to use or people would never use again.”

An intranet could help to build a community and make Walbrook seem more approachable and caring. In response to the website of another housing association one resident said: "having all that [website] makes it seem they must look after their tenants. It would bring people out, bring people together to be more friendly."

IT skill levels varied but the highest proportion of "very experienced" people were in Littleover. One of the "very experienced" was a computer engineer who had experience with the use of software for blind people. Fifty-seven percent owned a PC and 47% had internet access at home.

**Time bank**

Residents felt a time bank could also contribute to the sense of community, with four people saying that it could lead to a greater community spirit and 71% being in favour of the idea.

## **Parker Street**

This is an area of sheltered housing flats in Elm Park Court and Birchview Court, Derby. It is the longest established area visited in this research and the only block of flats other than Empire Court, Heanor. There is a resident warden. In the past it was mainly for elderly residents, but more recently residents with physical and mental disabilities have moved in, so the mix of residents has changed. Longer-term residents claim there is much less sense of community now due to this change. Only eight people were interviewed here as it was the last area visited in the research, so the results will not be particularly representative.

### **Community amenities**

There is a small lounge where there is a coffee morning and a fish supper once a week, but only about seven people attend these. Occasional trips out are organised, but these are becoming fewer as there is less interest and the residents organising them are now in their eighties.

There are some garden areas around the flats. Contractors are employed to maintain these but some residents also maintain bits for themselves. There have been some frustrations when contractors have removed plants which residents put in. Garden design and maintenance could be a good area for community engagement. A small water feature was created a few years ago, but the design was chosen by a previous warden rather than residents. The small number of people interviewed were certainly interested in greater self governance, with four choosing scenario 3 and three choosing scenario 2.

### **Would an intranet help to build a community?**

Four of those interviewed thought an intranet could be useful to them, two of these people were computer 'novices'. Altogether four were 'novice' and four 'comfortable' with a computer. To enable access to an intranet at Parker Street, it would help to have a computer in the lounge which had features suitable for those with disabilities such as speech software.

### **Time banks**

Only three out of the eight were interested in a time bank. Some doubted if there would be a good variety of skills, some who were skilled were not interested in sharing them, or people weren't sure if they could trust their neighbours. Some skill-sharing already happens.

## **The pilot**

Ten residents, who were members of the Residents' Participation Committee, were interviewed for the pilot. They tended to be older than the residents interviewed for the main research project and were already active residents. However, all but one were enthusiastic about the potential of an intranet. The only one who wasn't had changed jobs to avoid using a computer, but in retirement uses one on a regular basis as he is a keen photographer. He assumed that the other residents wouldn't want to use an intranet.

They were not asked about time banks and communities were discussed, but the scenarios were not used, rather residents were asked about what level of self management they would prefer.

The pilot not only enabled the questionnaire to be finalised, it also provided a strong indication that residents might be receptive to an intranet and that communities was not just a nice idea, but that it actually meant something to most people.

## Appendix 4: Areas, streets, dates and numbers visited

Area	Number interviewed	Dates visited 2004
<b>Belper</b>	17	February and early March
<b>Heanor</b>	18	March and April
<b>Sandiacre</b>	29	May, June and July
<b>Hartshorne (Goseley)</b>	22	Late June and early July
<b>Creswell</b>	30	Late July and early Aug
<b>Church Gresley</b>	20	September
<b>Sinfin</b>	25	Late Sept and early October
<b>Littleover (Micklehaven)</b>	21	Late October and early November
<b>Parker Street</b>	8	November

### Streets visited:

**BELPER** – Applewood Close

**HEANOR** – Huftons Drive, Homesfield Drive, Empire Court

**SANDIACRE** – Hart Avenue, Goodwin Close

#### **HARTSHORNE**

– Hartshill Road, The Cutting, Limestone Close, Brookdale Road

**CRESWELL** – Linden Road, Maple Drive, Hawthorne Avenue, Chestnut Drive

**CHURCH GRESLEY** – Bridge Close

**SINFIN** – Pintail Drive, Wagtail Close, Siskin Drive

**LITTLEOVER** – Micklecroft Gardens, Pendleside Way, Castleshaw Drive

**PARKER STREET** – Elm Park Court, Birchview Court

**PILOT (2003)** – EPHA House (Ilkeston), The Grove (Ripley),  
Applewood Close (Belper), Huftons Drive (Heanor), Top Farm Court (Kilburn)

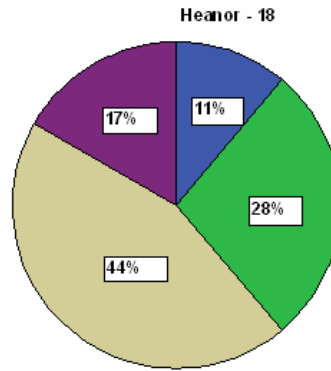
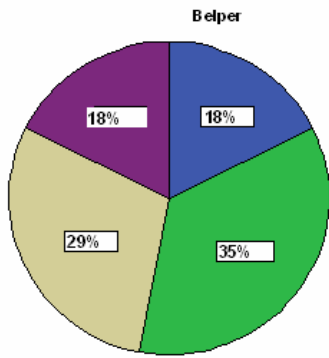
## Appendix 5: Statistical results (graphs) by area

<b>Result</b>	<b>Areas not included (if any)</b>	<b>Page number</b>
<b>Age</b>		47
<b>Occupation</b>		48
<b>IT skills</b>		49
<b>Internet access</b>	Belper, Heanor, the pilot	50
<b>PC ownership</b>		51
<b>Scenarios</b>	The pilot	52
<b>Intranet</b>		53
<b>Time banks</b>	The pilot	54

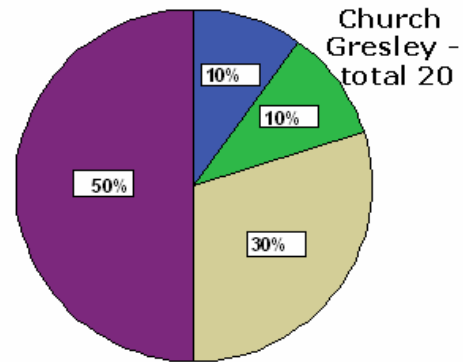
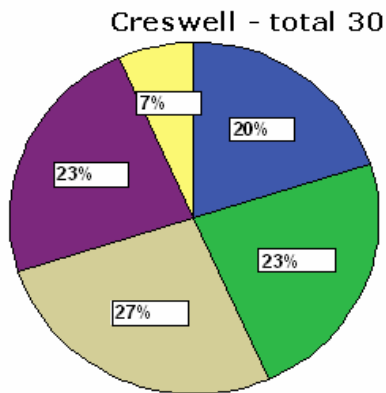
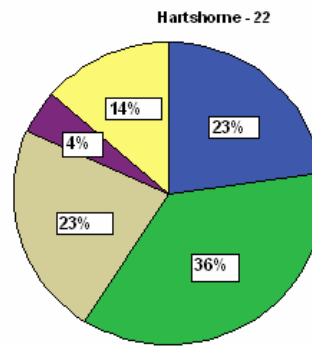
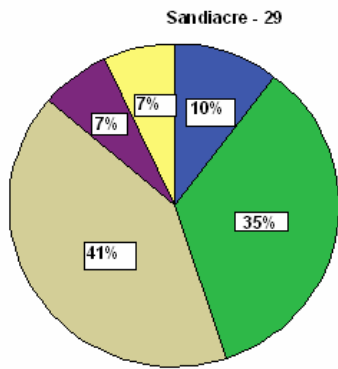
The results for any individual area are too small to be statistically significant, and comparison between areas is not realistic as different numbers were interviewed in each area. However, they give a picture of the trends.

Results for Parker Street and the pilot study are not included as very small numbers were interviewed in these groups.

# Ages

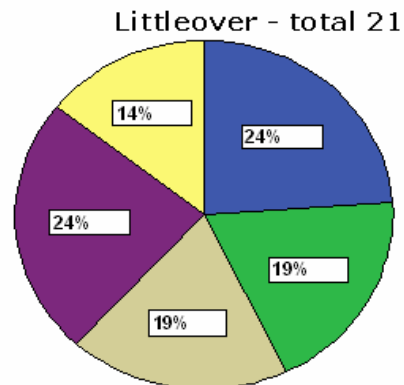
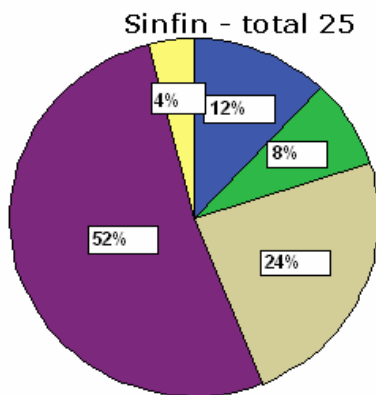


- Age
- 18-25
  - 26-36
  - 37-50
  - 50-65
  - 65+

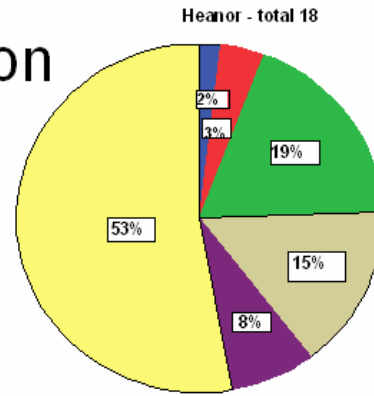
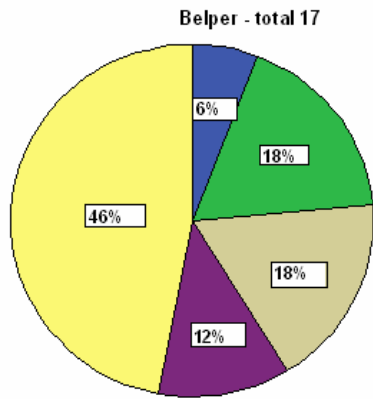


How would you rate your knowledge of IT?

- novice
- nursery slopes
- comfortable
- experienced
- very experienced

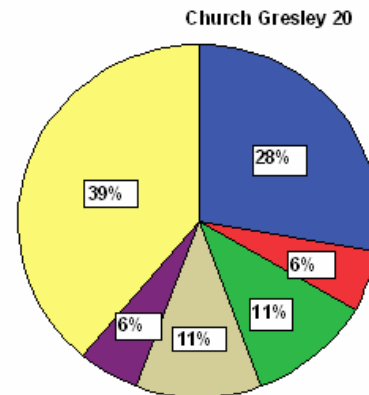
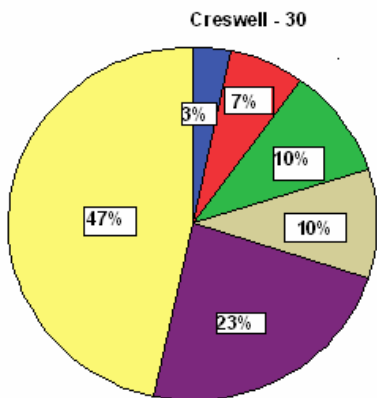
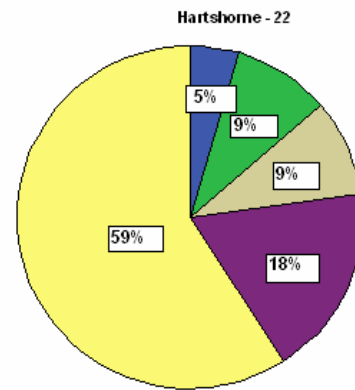
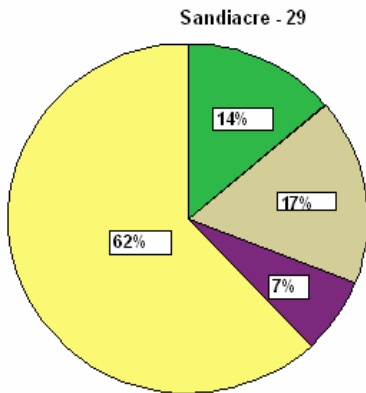


# Occupation



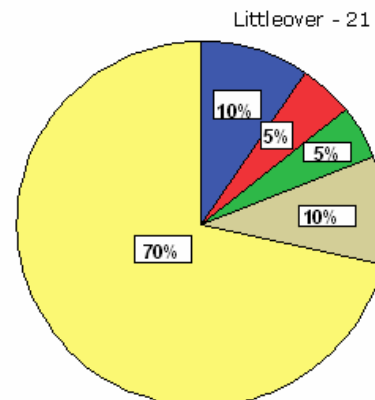
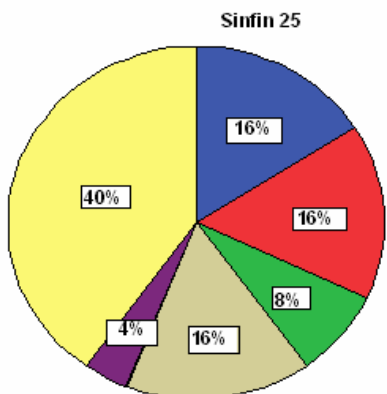
Occupation

- student
- carer
- employed pt
- employed ft
- retired
- other



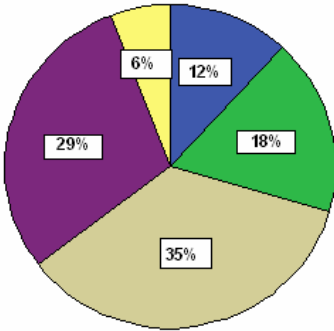
Occupation

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- carer
- employed pt
- employed ft
- retired
- other

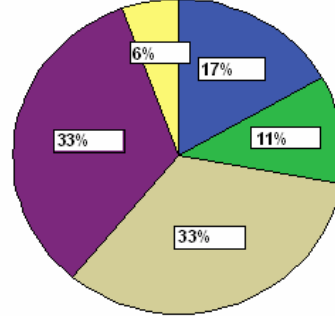


# IT skills

Belper - total 17



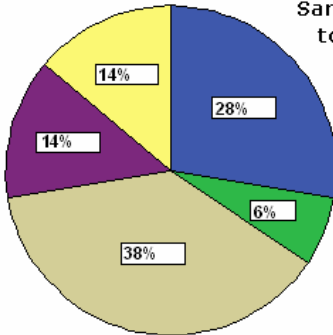
Heanor - total 18



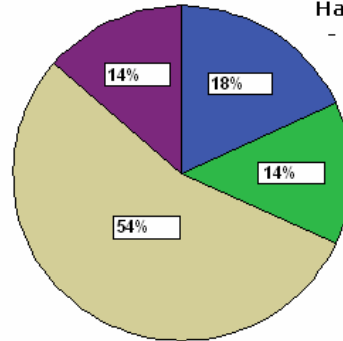
How would you rate your knowledge of IT?

- novice
- nursery slopes
- comfortable
- experienced
- very experienced

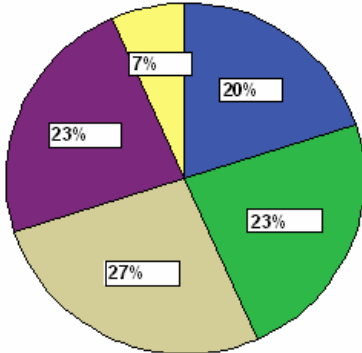
Sandiacre - total 29



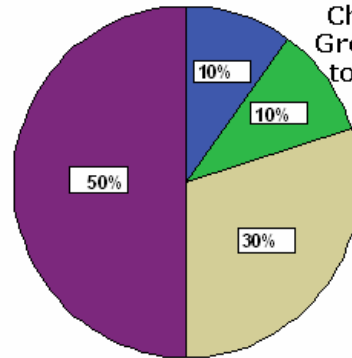
Hartshorne - total 22



Creswell - total 30



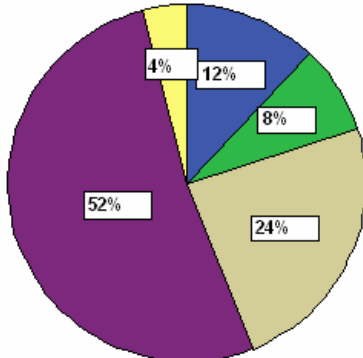
Church Gresley - total 20



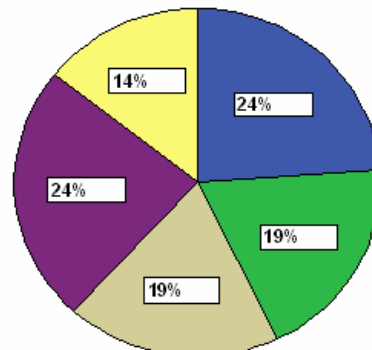
How would you rate your knowledge of IT?

- novice
- nursery slopes
- comfortable
- experienced
- very experienced

Sinfin - total 25

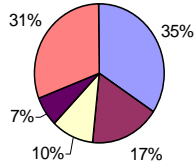


Littleover - total 21

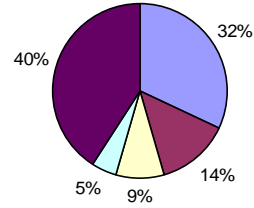


# Internet access

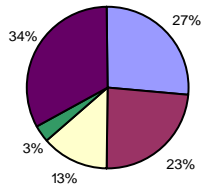
**Sandiacre internet access (29)**



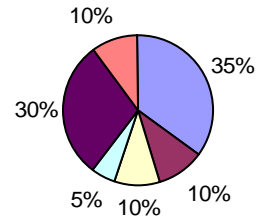
**Hartshorne internet access - 22**



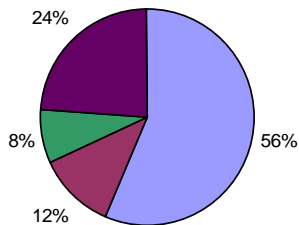
**Creswell internet access (30)**



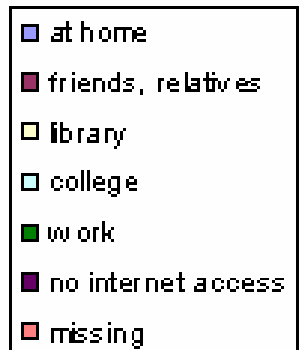
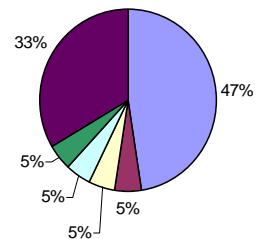
**Church Gresley internet access**



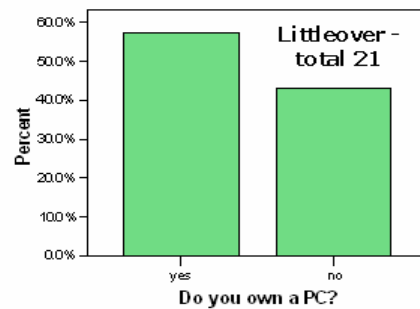
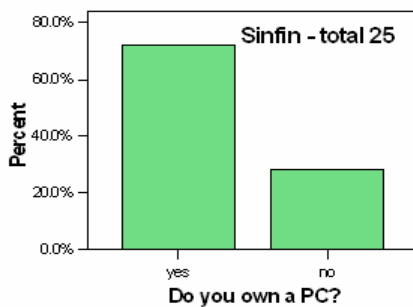
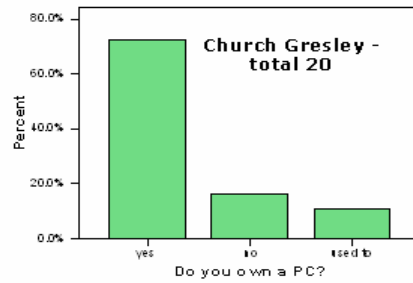
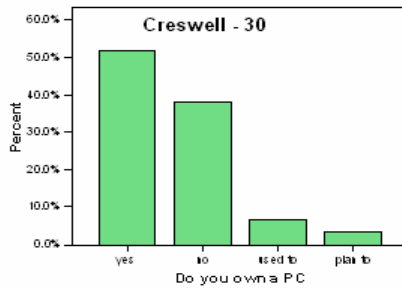
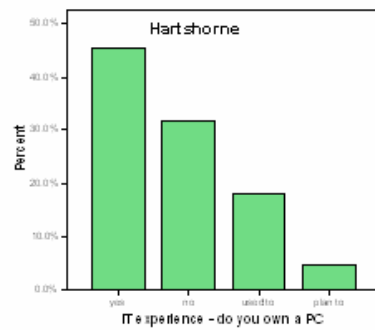
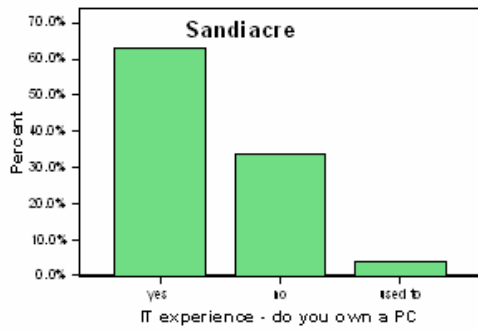
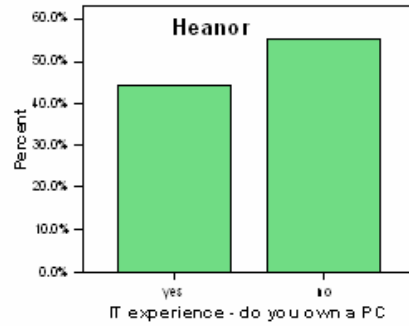
**Sinfin internet access (25)**



**Littleover internet access (21)**

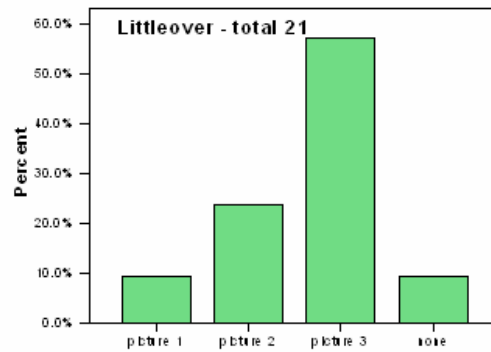
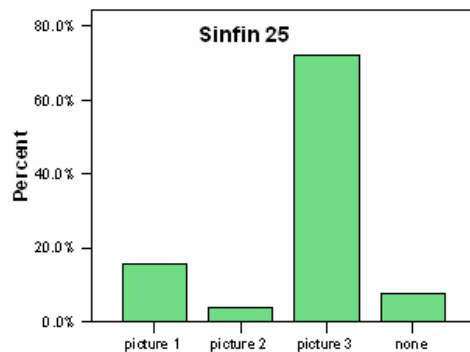
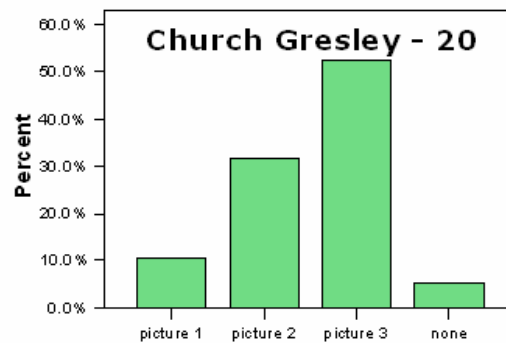
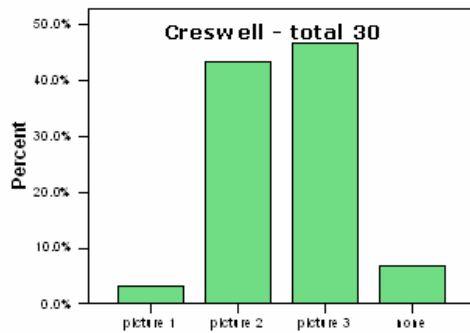
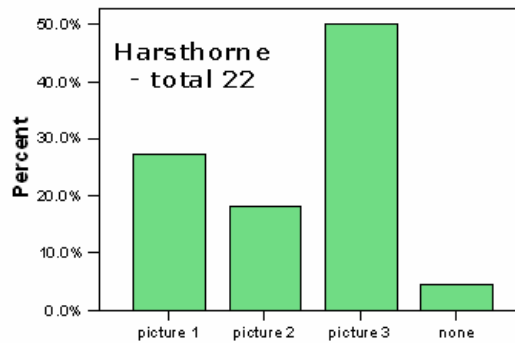
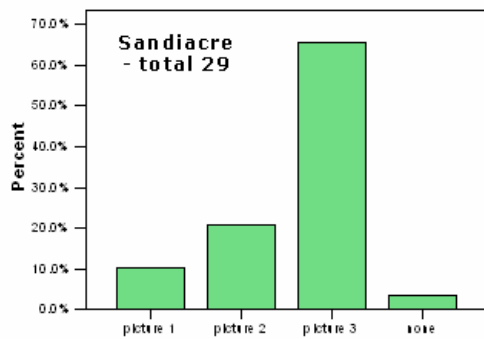
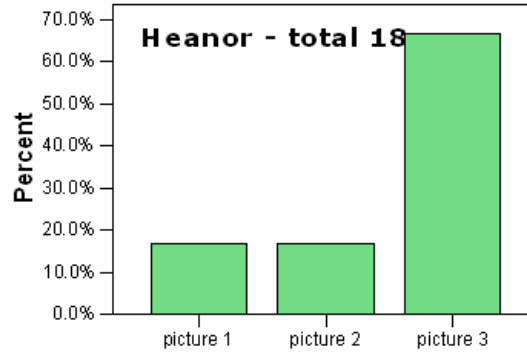
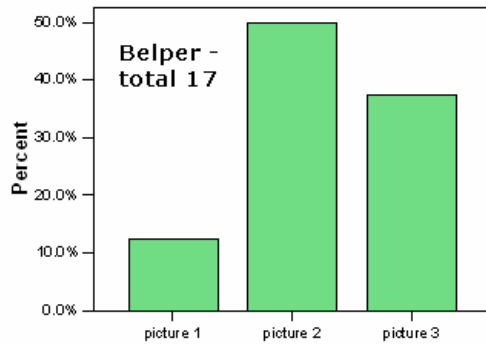


# PC ownership



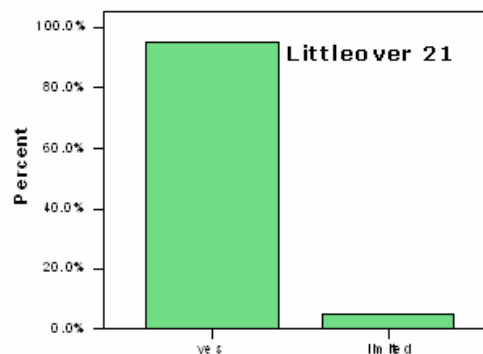
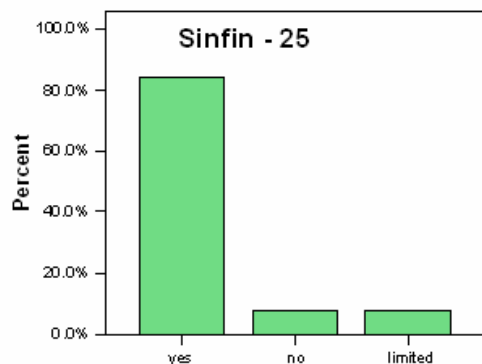
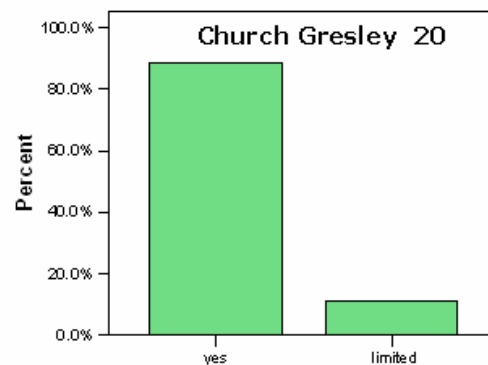
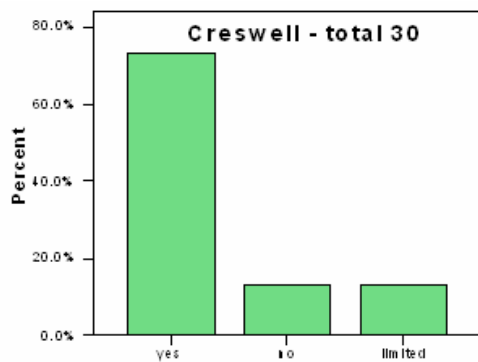
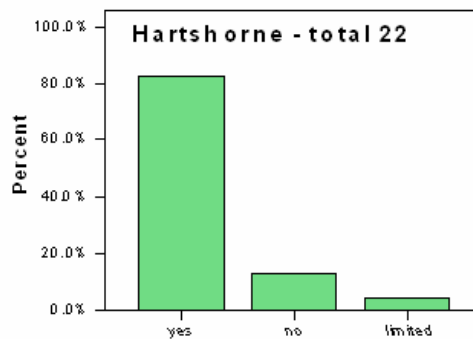
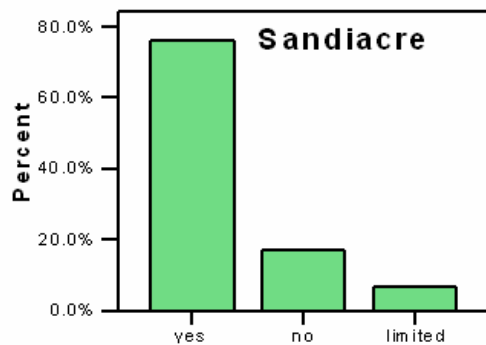
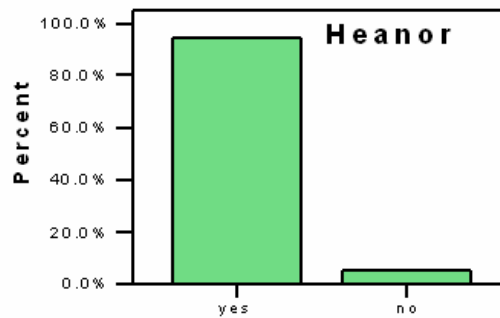
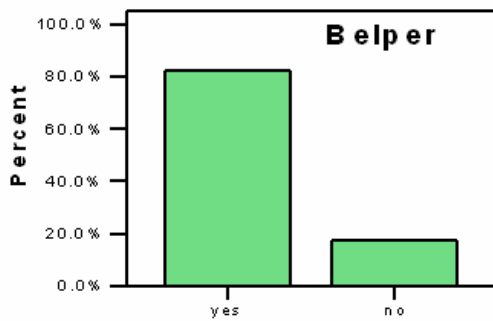
# Scenarios

How would you like your community to be?



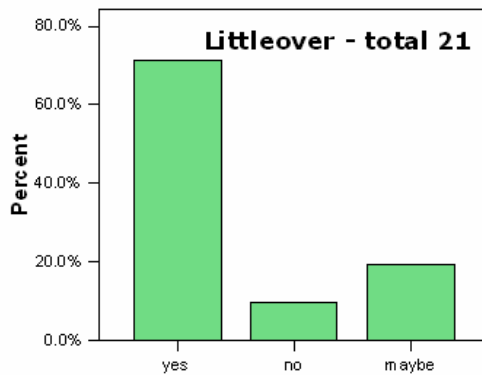
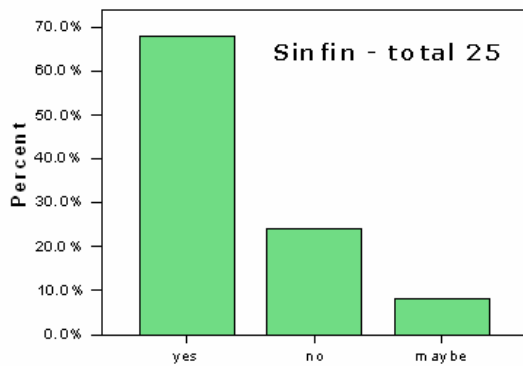
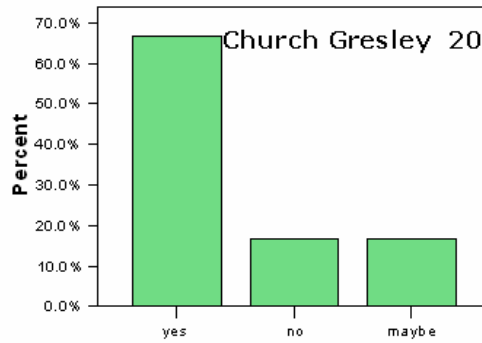
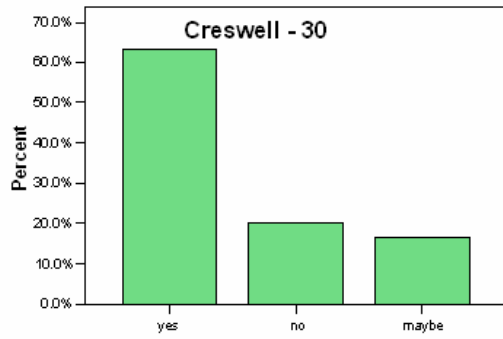
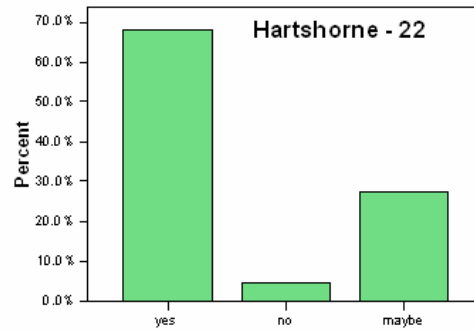
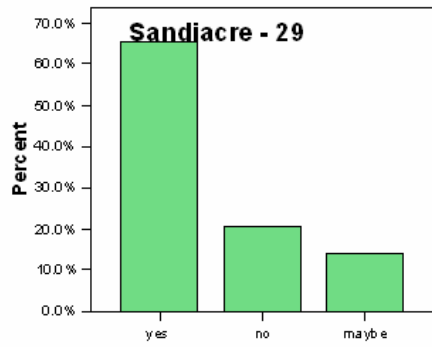
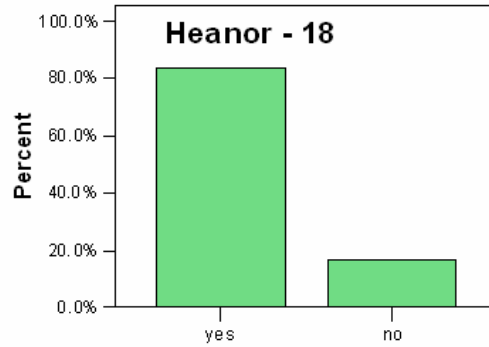
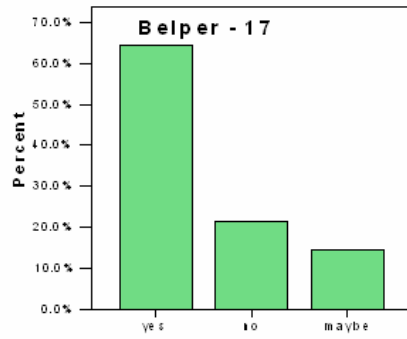
# Intranet interest

Could an intranet be useful to you?



# Time banks

Would you be interested to take part in a time bank?



## Appendix 6: Introductory letter

Ref: NT/Intranet

Date:

Survey Contact: Ruth Webster

*(Name)*

*(Address)*

Dear *(name)*

We are currently reviewing the services we offer to our residents and are doing a survey to look at the services we might provide in the future. In particular we would like to know what you think would help to support the community in your local area.

We have commissioned Nottingham Trent University to carry out the survey.

Ruth Webster from Nottingham Trent University will be in contact with you to arrange an appointment. We would like everyone to take part as we want to make sure that we hear everyone's views. If this is a problem please tell your warden or Ruth when she comes around. The interview should take between 30 and 60 minutes and will be arranged at a time to suit you.

Your views are important and we'll let you know the results as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely

*Andrew Dobby*

Andrew Dobby  
IT Systems Analyst

## Appendix 7: Questionnaire 2004

Questionnaire number	
Date	

### 1 Contact Details

- a) Name
- b) Address
- c) Tel No
- d) Length of residence                      >3 years      <3
- e) Age            18-25            26-36            37-50            50-65            65+
- f) School/college students in household? (i) Yes    No.            ii) Subject
- g) Your occupation:    ii) Details
- i) Student            Carer                      Employed PT            Employed FT            Retired            Other

### 2 IT Experience

- a) Do you own a PC?                      a) i) Internet Access? Home/Friends/Relative/Library/Work
- b) **If No**, do you own a: Video/ DVD player/ Mobile/ Ceefax/ Interactive TV
- c) Use a PC at work/college/training provider/library/home
- d) Done an IT course or have special experience or would need to learn?  
(where, how long, finished)
- e) How would you rate your experience/knowledge of computers?

- Novice
- Nursery slopes
- Comfortable
- Experienced
- Very experienced

- f) Do you use computers for

- Games
- CD Rom
- WP/  
email/web  
database/excel
- photo editing  
CD burner

- g) Children/student experience

### 3 Views of Community

a) We used to think of communities as ONLY being people who lived and worked in the same area. But there are also other kinds of communities (not just a place) that people belong to, eg:

- clubs, societies,
- churches, chapels,
- voluntary organisations

i) Do you take part in '**community**' activities like these?                      Yes      In past      Never

ii) What?

iii) What would you like to do?

b) i) What Walbrook **community** activities happen?

ii) ...have you gone to?

iii) What events would you like?

c) **Are you limited by**

- weather/dark nights
- transport
- caring responsibilities
- money
- health
- not knowing people very well/work/other?


d) Are you interested to be part of a community?

e) i) Would you **describe your estate** as a community?      Yes      No      Sometimes

ii) How would you **describe a community**?

- Know each other/ get on friendly
- Help each other out
- Doing things together
- Having community facilities

f) i) How would you describe your *community/estate* at the moment?    1      2      3      None

ii) Any things about your community which aren't included?

g) What would you like your community to be like?                      1      2      3      None

h) **Should residents work together** to develop their estates (with support from their HA)?  
       Yes      No      in theory      only with final say to Walbrook

j) Ever been to a Walbrook/ residents meeting?                      **Special role for committee?**

#### 4 Impressions of web sites

##### a) Web site 1 =

---

- i) Would you visit it again?
- ii) Why? Has it got anything you couldn't have on a letter?
- iii) Does it give a feel for the Housing Association trying to **create and support the community**?

**Pages visited:**

vi) Any comments about **design**? (eg colour, navigating, pictures, text size)

vii) Rating out of 10 =

##### b) Web site 2 =

---

- i) Would you visit it again?
- ii) Why? Has it got anything you couldn't have on a letter?
- iii) Does it give a feel for the Co-housing project trying to **create and support the community**?

**Pages visited:**

vi) Any comments about **design**? (eg colour, navigating, pictures, text size)

vii) Rating out of 10 =

## **5 Walbrook pilot intranet - uses.**

- Repair reporting
- Repair chasing
- Rent payment
- Rent balance
  
- Contacting Walbrook – getting right person / prefer phone
- Complaining

**Walbrook** could use an intranet to send **information** to residents

and it could also be used to circulate Agendas, Minutes and information from **meetings**.

- Would inform more than now
- Would help me contribute more than now

**b) people to hold discussions about the running of estate?**

.... Tower Blocks

c) + d)

- Help people **meet others** in their house/ street/ estate etc.
- Events
- **Mixing generations - schools link with senior citizens**
- Art, stories
- Photos
- Profiles
- **Newsletters:**

e) LOCAL - Some intranets/websites link people to **education**

f) More doctors are now working in **Healthy Living Centres** rather than just being in a surgery, eg Amber Valley, Chesterfield. Communities can **access information and advice, make suggestions** ....

h) **What else** would you like to see on an intranet?

- Moving house - homes available, locations

## 6 Join the Walbrook Pilot?

The web has lots of possibilities, but it is only people which make it work, without people there isn't any point to it. With the web and an intranet people can share their **stories and news**; they can **exchange views and discuss local issues** and really start to run their communities/estates and think about the changes they would like

a) Do you think an intranet could be **useful to you**? Yes Limited No

b) Thinking about the 2 websites we've seen and how an intranet could be used for residents and Walbrook **how often** do you think you would want to use it?

< Fortnightly Once a fortnight Once a week 2 or 3 times a week

c) Would you like to take part in a pilot project, ie a **trial run** giving comments at design stage?

c) i) Could you offer help towards intranet development or running? (eg blind access software knowledge, scanning images).

d) (**If you don't have** a PC) How would you like to access a PC ...

i) ... **pay** something for a computer?

ii) ...if the PC was **free**?

iii) ... use PC at a **friend**/ neighbour/ relative?

iv) ... use PC at **library**/ other?

v) What OTHER aspects would interest you if you had a PC (i and ii)?:

Use the web?

Learn about family histories?

WP

Other

e) i) Would it be useful to other family members?

ii) If **Yes**, what for?

## 7 Time Banks

Another way of meeting neighbours and supporting and developing a community is by having a time bank. This is where people offer their time and skills to help others. This lets them "earn" time for receiving help from other people. (*See separate sheet for activities*).

There are several time banks in the US, and some in the UK, including one in Chesterfield and 2 in Leicester.

They mean that no money needs to be exchanged. People don't always have to leave their house to offer a service. People can meet their neighbours and make new friends.

a) If Walbrook started a Time Bank, **would you be interested** to be involved?

b) What sort of services could you **offer**?

c) ..... would you like to **receive**?

## 8 Other community/ estate issues:

## 9 Quotes

## **Appendix 8: Scenario descriptions – written**

### **Scenario 1**

Walbrook look after and run our estate/community and make all the decisions about how it will be developed. The estate is well kept and the caretaker looks after the day to day things such as the grass and/or gardens. Walbrook should be involved in helping to organise and run activities which bring residents together. This is a friendly estate and it helps to create a feeling of a community rather than just being an estate. This benefits Walbrook because residents feel they have a stake in their community so look after it and don't want to see other residents cause problems.

### **Scenario 2**

Walbrook look after and run our estate and make all the decisions about how it will be developed. The estate is well kept and the caretaker looks after the day to day things such as the grass and/or gardens. This is a friendly estate and we organise community events. Usually it is the same people who do the organising, but more people are joining in. It brings people together, some single mothers with children and older people can be quite isolated and it helps to create a feeling of a community rather than just being an estate. This benefits Walbrook too because residents feel they have a stake in their community so look after it and don't want to see other residents cause problems.

### **Scenario 3**

Walbrook are our landlords and the caretaker looks after the day to day things such as the grass and/or gardens. Things are changing and Walbrook in consultation with residents makes decisions about the estate. Residents get together to talk about the estate, the improvements we would like to see and how this will benefit our community. We have regular meetings with Walbrook to discuss how our estate should develop and we are beginning to manage things ourselves. The caretaker has worked with our residents group for some time and we have made changes to the common areas and the look of the estate. This is a friendly estate and we organise community events too. At first it was the same people doing the organising, but more people are joining in now. Because we are starting to manage our estate ourselves it is bringing people together more and helps to create a feeling of a community. This benefits Walbrook too because residents feel they have a stake in their community.

## Appendix 9: Agenda for consultation day 1<sup>st</sup> December 2004

10.30	<b>Welcome</b>	Keith Melton and Andrew Lanning
10.35	<b>Background to the research</b>	Rosamund Aubrey
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Why we (Walbrook and the Institute) have carried out this research</li><li>○ Sustainable communities</li><li>○ Governance</li><li>○ Communication</li><li>○ Intranet</li><li>○ Timebanks</li></ul>	
10.50	<b>The results – what do they mean?</b>	Ruth Webster
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ How representative are the results?</li><li>○ Overview of results</li><li>○ Examples by area</li><li>○ Summary</li></ul>	
11.45	<b>An intranet</b>	Julian Baker
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ The benefits</li><li>○ Technical issues</li><li>○ Management</li><li>○ A communication tool</li></ul>	
12.15	<b>Any questions?</b>	
12.45	<b>Recommendations</b>	Rosamund Aubrey
1.00pm	Lunch	
1.45	<b>Discussions</b> in 2 groups:	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ What do we want to happen?</li><li>➤ How can we make it happen?</li><li>➤ Where should it happen?</li><li>➤ How soon should it happen?</li></ul>	<p><b>Group 1</b> facilitated by Rosamund Aubrey and Julian Baker</p> <p><b>Group 2</b> facilitated by Keith Melton and Ruth Webster</p>
2.45 – 3.30pm	<b>Feedback and the way forward</b>	Keith Melton
3.30pm	<b>Finish</b>	

## **Appendix 10: Consultation meeting attendees 1<sup>st</sup> December 2004**

### **From Walbrook:**

Andrew Lanning	Chief Executive
Graham Bennett	Business Development Director
Liz Dane	Community Development Manager
Jo McHugh	Community Development Worker
Janice Cartledge	Regional Service Manager (Housing)
Chris Foster	Regional Manager (Derby)
Alan Green	I.T. Network & Operations Manager
Gill Coupe	I.T. Systems Manager
Andrew Dobby	I.T. Systems Analyst
Audrey Chaplin	Housing Officer (West)
Michelle Walters	Service Delivery Manager
Vicky	Fundraiser
Eileen	Allocation support officer (Derby)
Mr & Mrs Thums	Walbrook Residents (East Area)
Mr M Bennett	Walbrook Resident (Derby Area)
Jean Lynch	Walbrook Resident (Derby Area)

### **From the Institute for Sustainable Development in Business, Nottingham Trent University:**

Keith Melton	Director,
Rosamund Aubrey	Senior Research Fellow
Ruth Webster	Research Assistant
Julian Baker	Administrator (Database and Web)

### **Unable to attend:**

Paul Bollington	Housing Services Director
Andrew Locke	Regional Manager (East & West)
Michelle Walters	Service Delivery Manager
Mr R Matthews	Walbrook Resident (West Area)

## Appendix 11: Consultation Feedback

These recommendations are primarily from the consultation day at the end of the research when Walbrook staff and residents responded to the questions:

- ◆ What do we want to happen?
- ◆ How can we make it happen?
- ◆ Where should it happen?
- ◆ How soon?

### What do we want to happen?

Those present were definite that, given the strongly favourable response from the interviews, Walbrook should pilot an intranet, with most wanting at least two pilots.

### How can we make it happen?

The action plan from the consultation day includes the need for a steering group which can plan the project and decide and organise:

- ◆ What to should happen, where and when
- ◆ Funding and resources
- ◆ Information and research
- ◆ Promotion

### Where should it happen?

A pilot should take place where the chances of success are high, for instance. areas or groups involved in a pilot to include one(s):

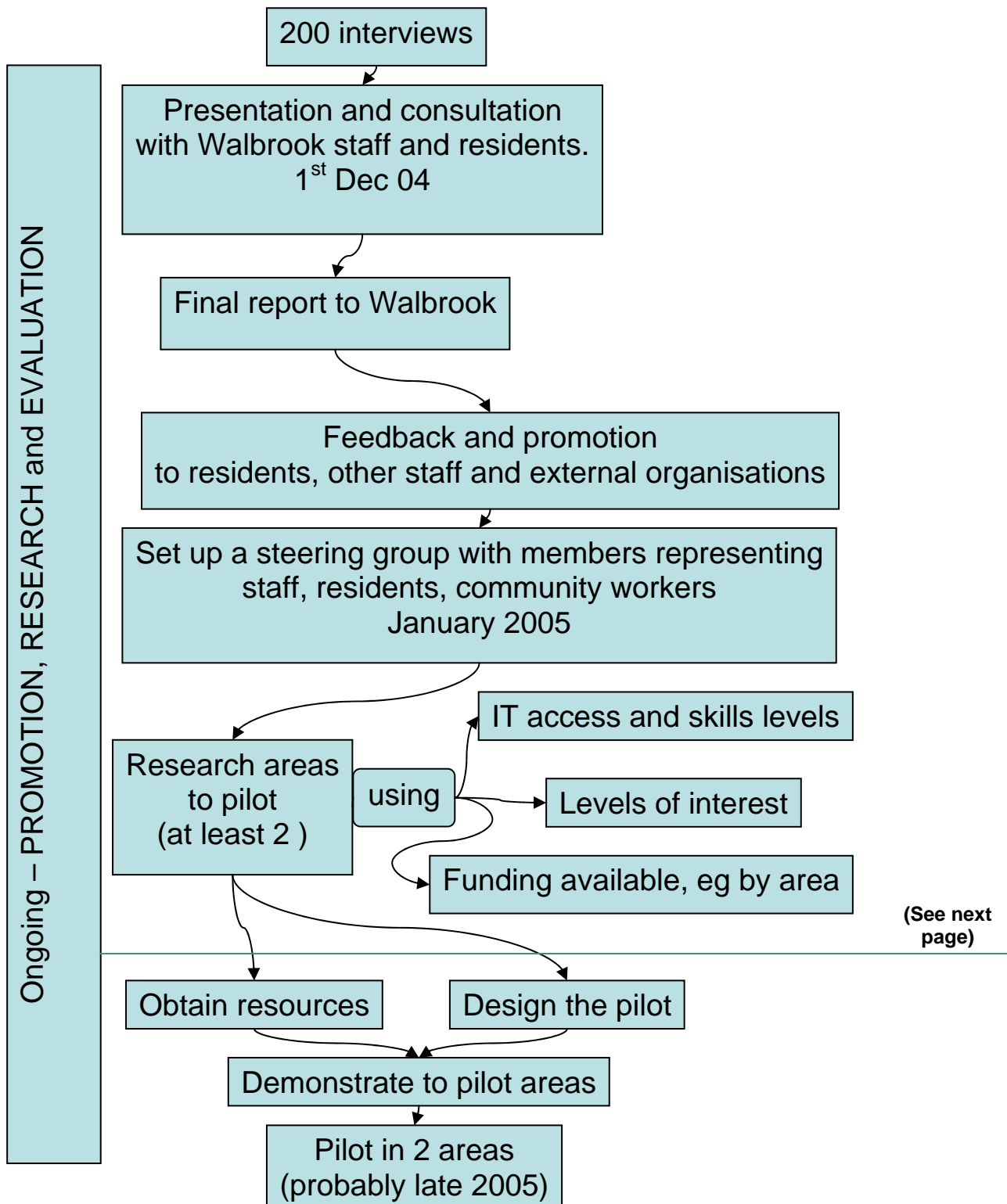
- ◆ with funding opportunities, eg regeneration areas
- ◆ with good access to and skills in IT, including the internet
- ◆ where there is strong interest (as highlighted during this research)
- ◆ using different types of estates, for example a Walbrook-only estate, an estate shared with another housing association and an area with dispersed properties ("pepper-pot")
- ◆ with different tenures, eg a hostel and estates with and without a caretaker
- ◆ both with and without residential groups
- ◆ from each of the 3 Walbrook areas – Derby, East and West
- ◆ which is isolated eg through limited communication

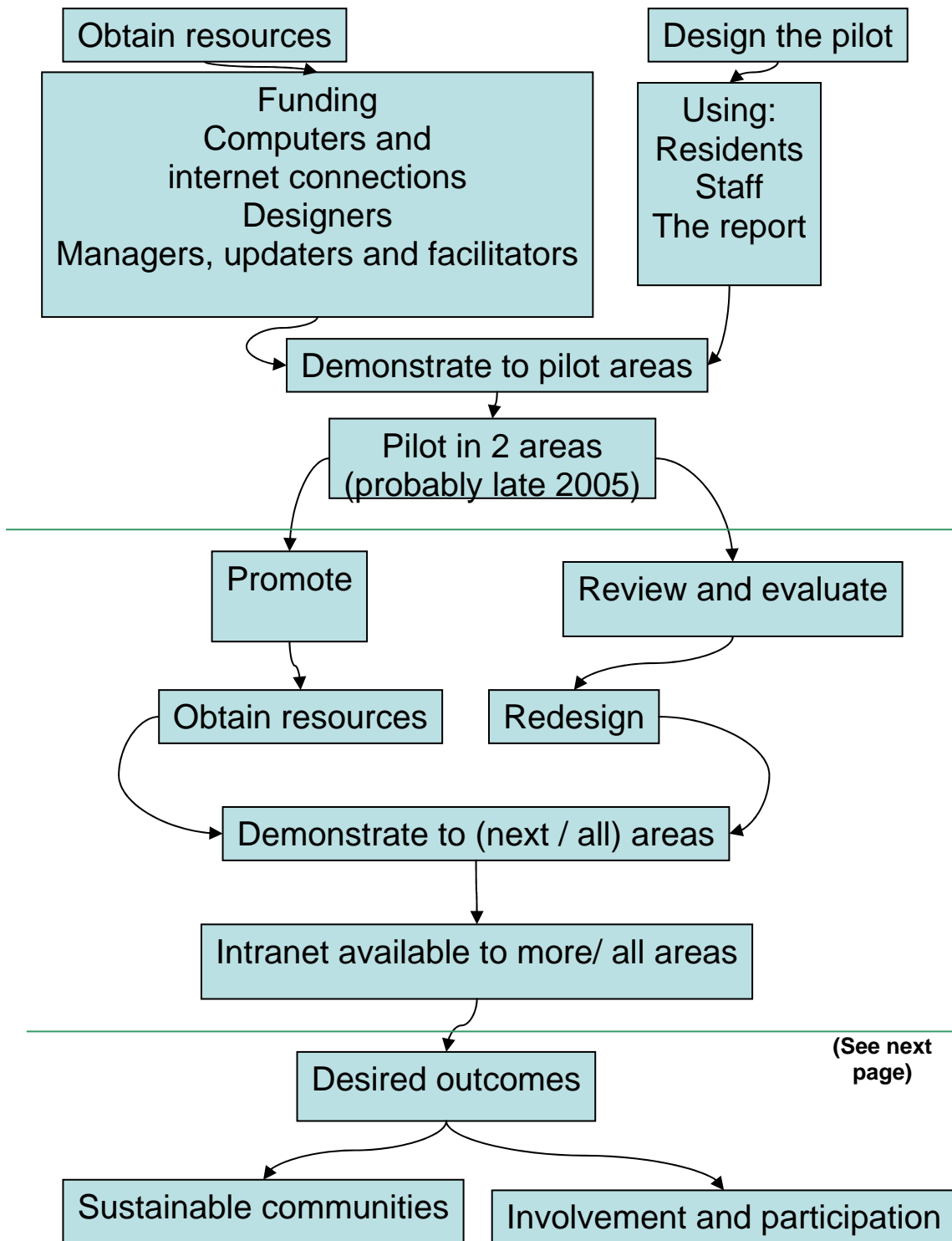
Specific areas raised included Normanton, Sinfin, Creswell and Derwent.

### How soon?

"As soon as practically possible." Starting with a steering group in January 2005, hoping to have pilots by the end of 2005, bearing in mind the research, development and resources required for a pilot.

## Appendix 12: The Timeline of Action







## Appendix 13: References and Contacts

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### References

- <sup>i</sup> <http://www.abcuk.org/page/index.cfm> <http://www.ukcu.co.uk/><sup>i</sup>
- <sup>ii</sup> <http://www.walbrook.org.uk><sup>ii</sup>
- <sup>iii</sup> <http://www.iscvt.org/ischome3.html>
- <sup>iv</sup> Putnam, R.D., 1993. The Prosperous Community: social capital and public life. *The American Prospect*. No13. Boston.
- <sup>v</sup> Institute for Sustainable Communities
- <sup>vi</sup> Local Government Association, 2000. Strategy and Finance Policy Review Group. London
- <sup>vii</sup> <http://www.residentinteractive.com>
- <sup>viii</sup> Pearl, M., 2002. Remote control. Housing associations and e-governance. Oxford Brookes University
- <sup>ix</sup> <http://www.timebanks.co.uk/>

### Contacts and related activities

#### Derwent time bank

(in New Deal for Communities area, including Selkirk Road)

17 St Marks Road,  
Derby,  
DE21 6AH  
01332 361423  
[Nasreen.akhtar@derwentcommunity.org](mailto:Nasreen.akhtar@derwentcommunity.org)

#### Community websites

Villages and local guides

<http://www.ukvillages.co.uk/ukvillages/ukvillageshome2.htm>

#### Visually impaired website development:

Derbyshire Association for the Blind Ltd (DAB)

65-69 Nottingham Rd,

Derby,

DE1 3QS

Tel/Fax: 01332 292 262

email: [vip@dab.org.uk](mailto:vip@dab.org.uk)

<http://www.dab.org.uk/index.htm>

#### Derby and Derbyshire strategies

South Derbyshire District Council's Corporate Plan 2004-2007

<http://www.south-derbys.gov.uk/CorporatePlans/>

South Derbyshire Local Action Plan

Derby city council Communities Strategy 2020 Vision (June 2003)

<http://www.derbyes.co.uk/img/pdfs/Strategysummary.pdf>