new towns and garden cities

lessons for tomorrow

Stage 1:

An Introduction to the UK's New Towns and Garden Cities

creating garden cities and suburbs today

tcpa

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Town and Country Planning Association
17 Carlton House Terrace
London SW1Y 5AS
t: +44 (0)20 7930 8903
www.tcpa.org.uk

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new towns and garden cities lessons for tomorrow

Stage 1:
An Introduction to the UK's New Towns and Garden Cities

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Introduction

The locations and designation/founding dates of the 32 UK New Towns and the two Garden Cities

What typically comes to mind on hearing the words 'New Town'? Modernist housing estates? Bleak architecture? Roundabouts? There is no doubt that the New Towns are often the butt of jokes about the failures of modern urbanism (often made by people who have never visited a New Town, let alone lived or worked in one), but their story is an intriguing one: of anarchists, artists, visionaries, and the promise of a new beginning for millions of people.

Today – over 110 years since the first Garden City was started and almost 70 years since the first New Town was designated – what is the legacy of the Garden Cities and the New Towns? Letchworth Garden City is home to about 33,000 people. Welwyn Garden City was absorbed by the Government's post-war New Towns programme – a programme whose outcomes now, in 2014, provide homes for over 2.76 million people – or 4.3% of UK households. As a set of places, they also exhibit a range of urban successes and failures – including, as they do, both the fastest growing and most successful yet also some of the most deprived communities in the UK. As a new programme of Garden Cities and new towns in England looks increasingly likely (and as Scotland and Wales explore the opportunities for new communities to help meet their housing needs), it is important to learn the lessons – good and bad – from what has been done before. This publication is the first in a two-stage project looking at those lessons. It provides an overview of the Garden City and New Towns story and provides a snapshot of the state of these communities today.

1.1 What are Garden Cities and New Towns?

Garden Cities and New Towns are two distinctive but related models of planned settlement that have had a profound influence on planning and development in the UK and across the world. Inspired by radical utopianism, and driven by environmental and social concerns, Ebenezer Howard's invention of the Garden City in 1898, based on a vision of combining the 'advantages of the most energetic and active town life, with all the beauty and delight of the country'[1] in a high-quality sustainable community, was to revolutionise the way people thought about building towns and cities. Ultimately, the rather slow and fragile Garden City experiments led to the conclusion that government needed to take the lead in shaping the post-war programme of New Towns. The New Towns programme became a mould-breaking achievement in the history of large-scale planned development. The New Towns were essentially an evolution of the Garden City concept, upscaled in size of population and strategic economic purpose, and with very different methods of delivery, reflecting the specific political and social contexts in which they were developed.

1.1.1 What is a Garden City?

In 1921, the Garden Cities and Town Planning Association (formed as the Garden City Association and now the TCPA) defined a Garden City as 'a town designed for industry and healthy living; of a size that makes possible a full measure of social life, but not larger; surrounded by a permanent belt of rural land; the whole of the land being in public ownership or held in trust for the community'.[2]

Today, we would use different language to describe a Garden City, and would emphasise characteristics such as its affordable housing and resilience to climate change: it would be a manifestation of what is today called 'sustainable development'. The TCPA has identified the key elements that have made the Garden City model so successful, and has distilled them into a set of principles, articulated for a 21st century context (see Box 1).

The Garden City concept was invented by Ebenezer Howard, a shorthand writer and unlikely revolutionary, who in 1898 wrote the seminal book *To-morrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform*, in which he set out a blueprint for beautiful, healthy and co-operative new communities that was to 'transform the entire way we think about cities and the way we should plan them'.[3]

When Howard was writing, he was responding to the chronic overcrowding and polluted conditions of industrial cities, and the lack of jobs and increasing social isolation in the countryside (as further discussed in Section 2). He was also writing at a time when local government was strong – 'municipal enterprises' had taken control of water supply, drainage, energy and transport systems, for example – and when there was no comprehensive system for the control of land use or capture by the community of the rising value

Box 1

The Garden City principles

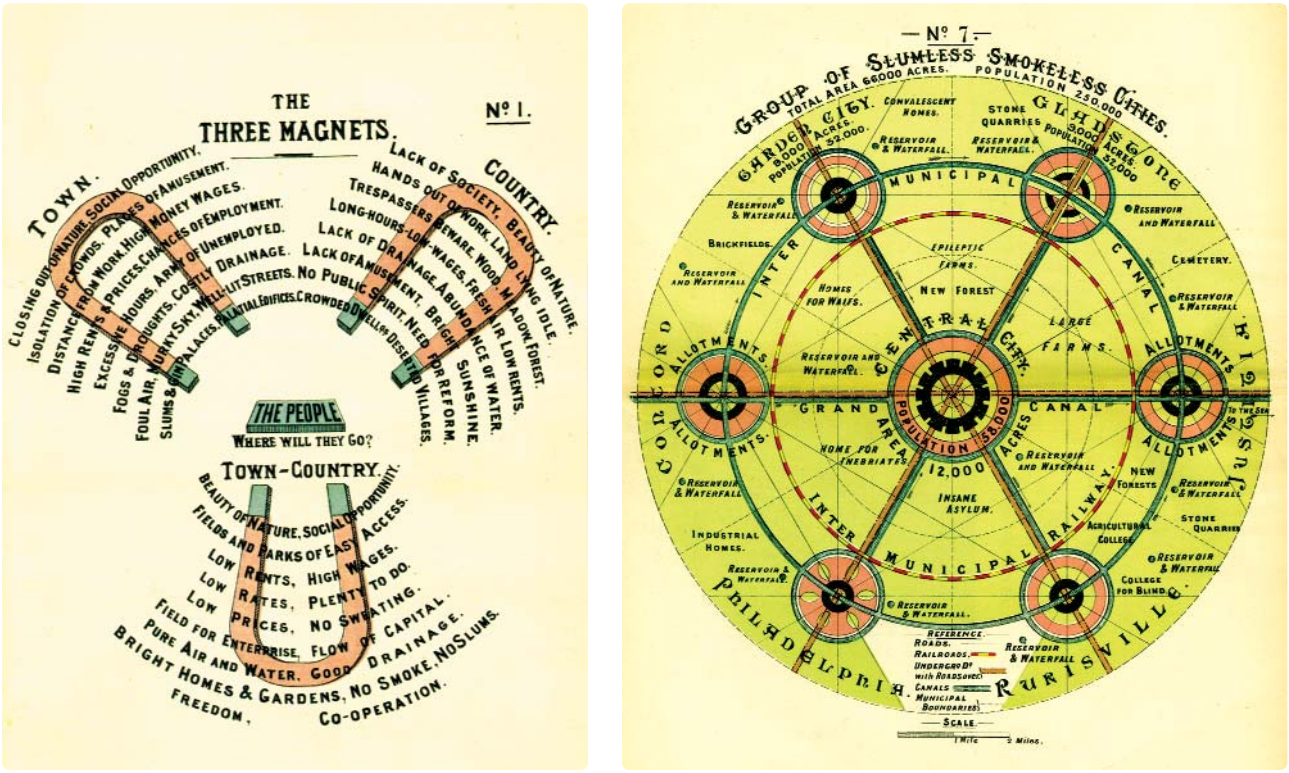
A Garden City is a holistically planned new settlement which enhances the natural environment and offers high-quality affordable housing and locally accessible work in beautiful, healthy and sociable communities. The Garden City principles are an indivisible and interlocking framework for their delivery, and include:

- **Land value capture for the benefit of the community.**
- **Strong vision, leadership and community engagement.**
- **Community ownership of land and long-term stewardship of assets.**
- **Mixed-tenure homes and housing types that are genuinely affordable.**
- **A wide range of local jobs in the Garden City within easy commuting distance of homes.**
- **Beautifully and imaginatively designed homes with gardens, combining the best of town and country to create healthy communities, including opportunities to grow food.**
- **Development that enhances the natural environment, providing a comprehensive green infrastructure network and net biodiversity gains and using zero-carbon and energy-positive technology to ensure climate resilience.**
- **Strong cultural, recreational and shopping facilities in walkable, vibrant, sociable neighbourhoods.**
- **Integrated and accessible transport systems, with walking, cycling and public transport designed to be the most attractive forms of local transport.**

1 E. Howard: *To-morrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform*. Swan Sonnenschein, 1898. Original edition reprinted, with commentary by Peter Hall, Dennis Hardy and Colin Ward, by Routledge, 2003 (available from the TCPA)

2 Formal definition adopted by the Garden Cities and Town Planning Association in 1919, and quoted by C.B. Purdom in C.B. Purdom, W.R. Lethaby, G.L. Pepler, T.G. Chambers, R. Unwin and R.L. Reiss: *Town Theory and Practice*. Benn Brothers, 1921

3 P. Hall and C. Ward: *Sociable Cities: The 21st-Century Reinvention of the Garden City*. Second Edition. Routledge, 2014, p.2



Ebenezer Howard's 'Three Magnets' and 'Social City' diagrams, from *To-morrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform*

of land that comes with the change from farmers' fields to factories or neighbourhoods.

Howard believed that by taking the best elements (or magnetic pulls) of the town (such as jobs, transport, social networks, and infrastructure) and the best elements of the countryside (such as space for agriculture, fresh air, and access to nature) and securing them 'in perfect combination' in a new place ('town-country') which provided high-quality affordable homes in well planned communities, it would be possible to achieve social justice and a better quality of life for all. Howard illustrated this vision in his famous 'Three Magnets' diagram (reproduced above).

Howard's idea was revolutionary, not just in the importance attached to good planning but in the inclusion within his model of practical ways of both paying for development and giving the community a permanent financial share in the place where they live (possibly sufficient, he thought, to provide pensions, healthcare and education, none of which were freely available at that time).

Under Ebenezer Howard's Garden City model, the land ownership (in today's terms, the freehold) of the entire development would be retained by a limited-profit, semi-philanthropic body similar to a community interest company or trust: income earned from capitalising on the increasing land values which result from development – known as 'betterment' – and from residential and commercial leaseholders (with uplift on reversion at the end of lease periods) would be used to repay the original development finance debts. As these debts were gradually paid off, and as land values rose, the money could be increasingly invested in community assets and services, building up what we might think of as the Garden City 'mini-welfare state'.

Howard did not envisage self-contained communities. He set out a vision for a Garden City that would reach an ideal population of around 32,000 people (applying today's average household size of 2.4 people, this figure would translate into somewhere between 10,000 and 15,000 homes). Once this planned limit had been reached, a new city would be started a short distance away, followed by another, and another, until a network of such places was created, with each city providing a range of jobs and services, but each connected to the others through excellent public transport, providing all the benefits of a much larger city but with each resident having easy access to the countryside. Howard called this network of connected settlements the 'Social City' (his diagram is also reproduced above).

The Garden City ideals were shaped by people who believed that there could be a better, more sustainable and more co-operative way of living, but the big achievement of the Garden City movement was to turn idealism into real practical progress.

Just a year after Howard's book was published; the Garden City Association (today, the Town and Country Planning Association) was founded, and by 1903 its companies had bought the land for the world's first Garden City at Letchworth. A movement was begun that led to many Garden Cities (and lesser developments inaccurately and cynically so branded) being developed throughout the world.

In 1919 the land was secretly bought for a second demonstration project – Welwyn Garden City – which happened to be not far away from Letchworth, in the same county of Hertfordshire, north of London's surrounding area of countryside.

1.1.2 The New Towns Programme

Following three decades of campaigning to promote the projects at Letchworth and Welwyn Garden Cities and faced with the need to rebuild Britain after the Second World War (see Section 2), the post-war Government was persuaded to embark on a programme of town building itself: the New Towns programme. The New Towns Act 1946 detailed how these large-scale new communities would be located and paid for, and how they would be planned and delivered by dedicated single-purpose, long-life organisations called Development Corporations, appointed by government. Details of the New Towns programme are set out in Section 2.

1.2 What is the relevance of Garden Cities and New Towns today?

Broad consensus that England is suffering from an acute housing shortage has now placed housing firmly on the political agenda. Over the past three years the TCPA has been leading a campaign for a new generation of Garden Cities as part of a portfolio of solutions to meet the nation's housing needs (see Section 5). This period has seen the leaders of the three main Westminster political parties announce their support for a new programme of Garden Cities in England (albeit sometimes using the words 'New Towns'). The Government has made reference to the principles of Garden Cities in the National Planning Policy Framework, and has invited bids for new 'locally-led Garden Cities'[4] while it explores how to bring forward the long-planned strategic growth area around Ebbsfleet International station in North Kent informed by the Garden City principles.[5] And the Labour Party's Housing Review,[6] led by Sir Michael Lyons, has recommended an immediate new programme of Garden Cities, stating that they should form part of the portfolio of solutions to the nation's housing shortage.

The role of large-scale development in meeting housing needs is also an issue for debate elsewhere in the UK, with the RICS Scottish Housing Commission recently recommending a programme of New Towns in Scotland,[7] and MPs in Wales discussing the role of new Garden Cities in dealing with housing needs in Cardiff.[8]

Meanwhile, further public interest in Garden Cities has been generated by the Wolfson Economics Prize 2014, which asked entrants 'How would you deliver a new Garden City which is visionary, economically viable, and popular?'.[9]

Any government delivering a new programme of Garden Cities faces challenges of: securing local support in the context of the promises of localism (which implies local control of planning matters); land acquisition when planning permissions are difficult and thus values high; securing long-term finance and investment; and reconciling the necessary speed of delivery with participative planning processes. In addition, it will be necessary to reassure people that a new programme of Garden Cities will not deflect attention from the need for regeneration and renewal in existing towns and cities, including the now ageing early New Towns themselves. Successive parliamentary Select Committees have noted that the original New Towns are no longer new, and today require huge new investment and redevelopment almost all at once. This is a consequence of many new places being developed in a short period, with no 'sinking fund' being established locally in the low-maintenance early years for the time when major work would be needed. In 2008 the Communities and Local Government Committee concluded that there was an 'urgent and pressing need' to identify steps to maintain the post-war New Towns as successful communities and good places in which to live.[10]

The New Towns programme was the most ambitious large-scale town-building programme ever undertaken in the UK and has been described as 'perhaps the greatest single creation of planned urbanism ever undertaken anywhere'.[11] Despite a different political and economic context today, there are two key areas of learning to be drawn from the New Towns programme:

- **lessons to inform current and future policy development** – for example identifying the need for large-scale new communities as part of the portfolio of planning solutions in an area; agreeing a site, role and broad size; creating an appropriate form of Development Corporation for modern times; securing 'patient funds' for long-term investment with manageable interest rates; delivering quality and sustainability; maintaining public support in both pre-existing local and incoming populations; and devising long-term stewardship arrangements; and

4 *Locally-led Garden Cities*. Department for Communities and Local Government, Apr. 2014. **https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/303324/20140414_Locally-led_Garden_Cities_final_signed.pdf**

5 'Local people at heart of growing Ebbsfleet Garden City'. Press Release. Department for Communities and Local Government, Aug. 2014. **https://www.gov.uk/government/news/local-people-at-heart-of-growing-ebbsfleet-garden-city**

6 *Mobilising across the Nation to Build the Homes Our Children Need*. Lyons Housing Review: Independent Review of Housing for the Labour Party. Oct 2014. **http://www.yourbritain.org.uk/agenda-2015/policy-review/the-lyons-housing-review**

7 *Building a Better Scotland. The RICS Scottish Housing Commission Report*. Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors. Jul. 2014. **https://www.rics.org/uk/about-rics/what-we-do/influencing-policy/influencing-activity/thought-leadership-papers/the-rics-scottish-housing-commission-report-building-a-better-scotland/**

8 M. Shipton: 'MP backs plan to build a garden city to the west of the city'. *WalesOnline*, 6 Jun. 2014. **https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/mp-backs-plan-build-garden-7225180**

9 See the Wolfson Economics Prize webpages 2014. **http://www.policyexchange.org.uk/component/zoo/item/wolfson-economics-prize**

10 *New Towns: Follow-Up*. HC 889. Ninth Report of Session 2007-08. House of Commons Communities and Local Government Committee. TSO, 2008, p.31. **https://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200708/cmselect/cmcomloc/889/889.pdf**

11 P. Hall and C. Ward: *Sociable Cities: The 21st-Century Reinvention of the Garden City*. Second Edition. Routledge, 2014, p.2

Box 2

What is the difference between a Garden City and a New Town?

The terms 'Garden City' and 'New Town' are often used interchangeably. However, a 'Garden City' is the much more radical and powerful of the two development models: it is distinguished from a 'New Town' by its smaller scale; by its relationship to the countryside and an integral agricultural belt; by its permanently defined built edges; by its collection and retention of rising land values for the benefit of the place and its people; and by its connectivity by excellent public transport to other towns nearby which, as a groups of towns (a 'Social City' in Howard's words), could offer more in terms of social and economic life than each town individually.

The New Towns typically had a target population of 80,000, compared with Howard's suggested 32,000 for Garden Cities, and often the New Town target grew very quickly to 100,000 or more. Later New Towns were larger still: Milton Keynes was initially planned for 250,000 people. The New Towns were also designed to be well connected, but the almost impossible objective of also being 'self-contained' in terms of employment and economic life was laid upon many of them. This was a reaction to the possibility of commuter towns or dormitory suburbs being developed, but, of course, every town has a daily flow of people in and out for various purposes, to the benefit of all, but planning skill is needed to keep the balance roughly right.

The Garden Cities and New Towns also differed in terms of the way they were delivered. The Garden Cities were delivered by private, limited-profit development companies with start-up funds at philanthropically low rates of interest; the New Towns by government using Development Corporations devised for the purpose, funded by Treasury loans repayable in due course with interest. The New Towns applied many of the principles of Garden Cities, such as land value capture (although 'the community' was now HM Treasury), comprehensive green infrastructure, a commitment to community development, an emphasis on arts and culture, and employment opportunities for all within easy reach of home. But the New Towns were developed at a larger scale and a faster speed that reflected the cultural, political and economic climate of post-war Britain.

Modern Garden Cities should be predicated on a fusion of the very high social and environmental standards of Gardens Cities and the highly effective delivery mechanisms of the post-war New Towns, combining the best of both approaches and drawing on the lessons of what has worked in the past and what has not. Scale depends on the site selected, and on the role to be played within the cluster of towns and villages that the new settlement joins.

- **the detailed reinvestment needs of the existing New Towns** – we must develop an understanding of what arrangements are needed from commencement in order to anticipate the eventual renewal requirements of new communities, and to ensure that a new programme of planned communities would not impose a burden on future generations.

As a new generation of Garden Cities should combine the high environmental and social standards of the Garden City movement with the delivery mechanisms of the New Towns movement, it is also necessary to explore in more detail what we can learn from the Garden Cities themselves about how to achieve today some of the more challenging aims of land value capture, community ownership of land, long-term stewardship, and participative governance.

1.3 About this study

To help inform the debate about a new programme of Garden Cities in Britain, and to respond to issues identified in successive House of Commons Select Committee reports, the TCPA is undertaking a research study to identify transferable lessons from the Garden Cities and the New Towns programme. The study seeks to address some of the identified research and knowledge gaps concerning – and to provide a greater understanding and in-depth analysis of – the New Towns programme. It also aims to develop a greater understanding of the issues faced by the UK's established Garden Cities and New Towns today, outlining ways forward to ensure that these communities are revitalised and renewed, especially in response to the need to rejuvenate town centres and ensure that the towns' housing and employment base remain fit for purpose.

This publication is the first output of the study. It provides an accessible introduction to the subject and a snapshot of the New Towns and Garden Cities today. Further details on the aims of the study can be found in Section 4.

2

Overview of the UK's Garden Cities and the New Towns programme

2.1 Why were the Garden Cities and New Towns built?

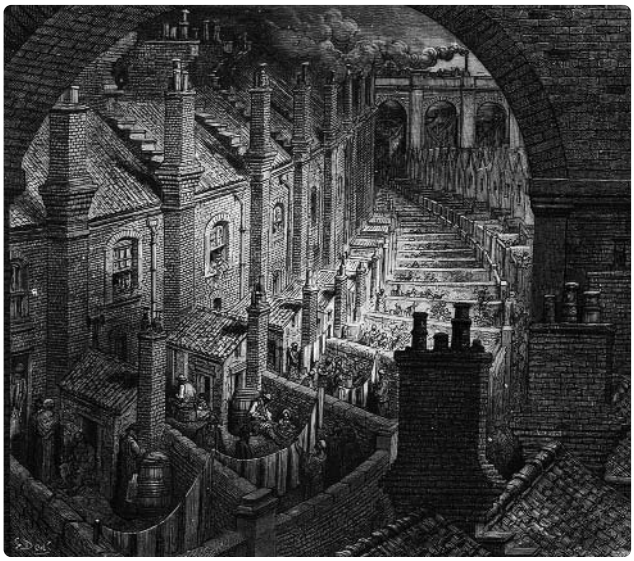
2.1.1 Radical beginnings

Over the course of the late 18th and early 19th centuries, the Industrial Revolution brought rapid and transformational change and rapid urbanisation to Britain. When Ebenezer Howard's *To-morrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform* was published in 1898, Britain's cities were suffering from unprecedented overcrowding and provided unhealthy living conditions, as rural populations flocked to the newly industrialised cities for employment. This flight to the cities, in turn, had a further detrimental impact on the already struggling agricultural communities left behind.

Howard was profoundly influenced by the co-operative movement, philanthropic industrialists and radical thinkers (artists, philosophers, philanthropists and activists) of his time, and by earlier experiments in forms of sociable and co-operative living. It was in this context that he invented (his word) the idea of the Garden City. His Garden City would combine the best features of the town (employment opportunities, transport networks, and social networks) and the best features of the country (fresh air, access to nature, and space to grow food), providing good-quality homes in well planned, healthy communities.

But Howard was a practical utopian and, recognising that finance for new Garden Cities would require investment from hard-nosed Victorian businessmen, his book included detailed financial calculations to show how a Garden City could be a sound form of investment if the longer view were taken, secured on the land and buildings, and provided that profits were kept relatively low (he suggested 5% as a cap).

A year after *To-morrow* was published, the Garden City Association (today known as the Town and Country Planning Association) was founded by Ebenezer Howard's supporters to promote his invention. There was no planning system in 1899. The Association's Garden City Pioneer Company was set up to find a site, and First



British Library

William Blanchard Jerrold's illustration of 19th century London slums, and the living environment of early development at Letchworth

Garden City Ltd was formed to build the first Garden City at Letchworth, from 1903 onwards. A second Garden City followed at Welwyn, from 1919. A movement was begun that captured national and international interest and resulted in many Garden Cities (and lesser developments inaccurately and cynically so branded) being developed throughout the world.

It was not a straight trajectory. Letchworth Garden City struggled to assemble enough low-interest loans for the start-up phase of capital works, and, although the outbreak of war in 1914 gave a boost to the local economy (the dust-cart building company, for example, switched over to making armoured vehicles), building materials and labour was in short supply. Yet after peace in 1918 the demand for new homes in the Garden City was intense. As servicemen returned from the horrors of war, the nation called for 'Homes fit for heroes'. Given the urgent need for substantial amounts of new housing, in 1918 the Tudor Walters Committee recommended a massive programme of subsidised cottage homes to be built by local authorities. The Government subsequently committed to expanded public housing programmes, many of which consisted of suburbs built by local authorities within their own boundaries, said to be 'on Garden City lines'; but many of these became no more than sprawling commuter suburbs. There were special programmes to provide smallholdings scattered in country areas, too. To the dismay of the Garden City movement, it seemed that Howard's Garden City vision '*would be lost for a generation*'.[12]

2.1.2 From Garden Cities to New Towns

'If you wait for the authorities to build new towns you will be older than Methuselah before they start. The only way to get anything done is to do it yourself.'
Ebenezer Howard to Frederic Osborn, quoted in
F.J. Osborn: *New Towns After the War.*
Second, Revised Edition. J.M. Dent & Sons, 1942. Preface

By the late 1930s, experience had led the Garden Cities and Town Planning Association to the view that progress on meeting housing needs (including progress on the two Garden Cities) was too slow, and that a strategic scheme should be mounted by government if the choice of home available to the people was to be widened in any significant way. Very influential evidence was given to a succession of government inquiries and commissions, most notably to the Barlow Commission on the geographical distribution of the industrial population. The argument that properly planned, large New Towns were needed, as well as slum clearance and urban renewal, was won.

Even during the most hazardous periods of the Second World War, planning for post-war reconstruction and housing proceeded. It was clear that the inter-war public housing programme had resulted in suburban sprawl and was not delivering homes at a fast enough rate. It was also clear that the pollution caused by patterns of industrial and housing development and traffic congestion were not only injurious to human health but were damaging the economic life of cities, not least London. In 1944 Patrick Abercrombie's Greater London Plan set out a strategy for the decentralisation of London's population that would become the basis for a national plan for housebuilding. The building of a ring of eight satellite towns around London would take place alongside the demolition of inner-city slum housing, which would be replaced by modern housing estates. There was discussion of radical initiatives to be taken when peace arrived.

2.1.3 Building a new society

'Our aim must be to combine in the new town the friendly spirit of the former slum with the vastly improved health conditions of the new estate, but it must be a broadened spirit, embracing all classes of society… We may well produce in the new towns a new type of citizen, a healthy, self-respecting dignified person with a sense of beauty, culture and civic pride.'
Lewis Silkin, Minister of Town and Country Planning, introducing the second reading of the New Towns Bill.
House of Commons Debates, 1946, Vol. 422, Col. 1091

The Second World War left the country with a severe housing shortage, not only as a result of bombing and overcrowding, but because six years of housebuilding had been lost.[13] Furthermore, as surviving servicemen returned home as heroes with high hopes for a better life, and as communities torn apart by war tried to rebuild themselves, the country experienced a baby boom, further driving the need for new homes. But it was not only physical and demographic changes that furthered a need for radical change: there was a recognition that post-war Britain deserved a new future.

The Labour Party's landslide victory of 1945 reflected that mood, and a programme of New Towns would be visible proof of the Government's pledge to build a new society on the ruins of the old.[14] In 1945 Lewis Silkin, the newly appointed Minister of Town and Country Planning appointed a New Towns Committee under the chairmanship of Sir John Reith, who had established the BBC (the British Broadcasting Corporation) before the war. Within a year the Committee had published three succinct but detailed and profoundly influential reports on how to deliver a programme of New Towns. The New Towns Act was passed even as the Committee's last report was being published. The Town and Country Planning Act (which introduced the planning system) was to follow a year later in 1947. Never before had Britain seen a government with such an ambitious programme of housebuilding designed to provide high-quality housing in well designed communities as part of a wider public programme addressing public health and social justice.

12 P. Hall and C. Ward: *Sociable Cities: The 21st-Century Reinvention of the Garden City*. Second Edition. Routledge, 2014, 2014, p.35
13 C. Ward: *New Town, Home Town*. Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 1993, p.34
14 A. Alexander: *Britain's New Towns: Garden Cities to Sustainable Communities*. Routledge, 2009, p.24

2.2 The New Towns programme in Scotland

Like the rest of the UK, housing conditions in Scotland after the Second World War were a major issue. Over-crowded slum dwellings were still present in Scottish cities. Between the two world wars there had been some slum clearance and new building programmes, but in many cases what had been built was not much better than what it had replaced. By the time the New Towns Act was passed, the population of Glasgow and the Clyde Valley region had reached such levels (36% of Scotland's population was concentrated in the region, with 22% living in Glasgow alone)[15] that in 1946 Patrick Abercrombie and Robert Matthew's Clyde Valley Regional Plan made provisions to depopulate Glasgow by half. Decentralisation would be achieved by expanding existing towns in the region, encouraging industrial growth in other parts of Scotland, and building New Towns. In response to the plan, East Kilbride was designated just a year later in 1947. Regional plans led to the designation of Glenrothes in 1948, Cumbernauld in 1955, Livingston in 1962, and Irvine in 1966.

Stonehouse was designated in 1963 but de-designated in 1974 following the publication of the West Central Scotland Plan, which prioritised the rebuilding of inner Glasgow. The New Towns were among the largest towns in Scotland and were later seen as important economic growth points for the country. This wider economic role is considered to be the reason that the Scottish New Town Development Corporations had a longer life than those in other parts of the UK. On the other hand, it must be acknowledged that the speed and relative success of the New Towns was not being matched by the performance of urban renewal, and it was this that stopped Stonehouse – the New Town had come to appear as a threat to regeneration.

2.3 The New Towns programme in Northern Ireland

As a result of a mix of complex historical, economic and political factors, a statutory system of town and country planning in Northern Ireland did not develop at the same speed as it did in Britain. Consequently, the New Towns concept did not materialise in Northern Ireland until the mid-1960s, when a plan for the Greater Belfast region (the Belfast Regional Survey and Plan, 1962 – the 'Matthew Report') recommended a new regional city of approximately 100,000 people to help address Belfast's acute housing issues. Rapid population increase in the latter half of the 19th century due to industrial growth, and the poor housebuilding performance of the Belfast Corporation between 1920 and 1940, had led to poor housing conditions, unregulated urban sprawl, and a shortage of housing land in Belfast itself, which, combined with unemployment in the mid-1950s, led the Government to intervene and centralise power, which had previously been focused at the local level.

The New Towns Act (Northern Ireland) was passed in 1965, empowering the Minister of Development to designate an area as a New Town and constitute a New Town Commission to carry out both development and municipal functions. Craigavon, designated in 1965 as Northern Ireland's first New Town, was to be the new regional city envisaged in the Matthew Report. The Matthew Report also called for seven other 'centres for development'. Among these were Antrim and Ballymena. A plan for Antrim was drawn up in 1965, and Antrim was designated under the New Towns Act a year later; a plan for Ballymena was drawn up in 1966, and designation followed in 1967. Due to their close geographic and socio-economic relationship they would be developed by a joint Development Corporation. The fourth and final New Town in Northern Ireland was Derry-Londonderry. The Matthew Report classified it as a 'key centre' and the 1965 Wilson Report as 'Ulster's second city'. It was physically peripheral and in need of investment – in 1967 unemployment was 20.1% (compared with 2.1% and 8.1% in Britain and Northern Ireland, respectively). An outline plan was developed and Derry-Londonderry was designated in 1969 under the New Towns (Amendment) Act 1968.[16]

2.4 The New Towns programme in Wales

Two New Towns were built in Wales under the New Towns Act: Cwmbran, designated in 1949 to provide housing for those working in industrial areas outside Cardiff (and aided, at start up, by relocation of the Royal Mint from London); and Newtown, designated in 1967 to try to restrain further depopulation of rural mid-Wales by encouraging economic growth and providing good housing and schools. Both of these New Towns were designated with a significantly smaller target population than those designated elsewhere in the UK. In the case of Newtown, size was determined by the scale of the problem that was being challenged; but in the case of Cwmbran the moderation of scale was in response to local anxiety that if the New Town was too large and successful it might hold back the regeneration of the former coalfield communities further up the Valleys, and draw too much from available public funding streams.[17]

Today, different planning systems operate in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. This provides both

15 D. Lyddon: *New Towns in Scotland*. Undated paper. Collected in *The New Towns Record*. Planning Exchange. Idox Information Service. **http://www.idoxgroup.com/knowledge-services/idox-information-service/the-new-towns-record.html**. See also 'Pathfinder pack on Scottish New Towns'. Webpage. Resources for Learning in Scotland. **http://rls.org.uk/database/record.php?usi=000-000-001-504-L**

16 M. Strong: *An Overview of New Towns in Northern Ireland*. 1995. Written for *The New Towns Record*. Planning Exchange. Idox Information Service. **http://www.idoxgroup.com/knowledge-services/idox-information-service/the-new-towns-record.html**

17 J. Russell: *An Overview of New Towns in Wales*. 1994. Written for *The New Towns Record*. Planning Exchange. Idox Information Service. **http://www.idoxgroup.com/knowledge-services/idox-information-service/the-new-towns-record.html**

challenges and opportunities in terms of the transferability of lessons. The three devolved nations have national spatial strategies of one kind or another,[18] whereas England currently has no 'larger than local' level of strategic spatial planning.

2.5 The Garden Cities – where, when and how were they built?

There are two Garden Cities in Britain: Letchworth Garden City (started, 1903) and Welwyn Garden City (started, 1919), both located in Hertfordshire. There are also numerous 'Garden Suburbs' in Britain (notably Hampstead, Brentham, and Well Hall). These are smaller developments, linked to existing urban areas, which apply some of the physical design principles of Garden Cities but were not able to follow some of the land ownership and governance principles of the Garden Cities. The influence of the Garden City and Garden Suburb architectural and urban design style is evident in smaller developments throughout Britain. The Garden Cities were financed initially by private investors accepting a fixed rate of return less than the ordinary market might have expected (such loans came to be called '5% philanthropy') and were delivered by private development companies, established by the Garden City Association (Garden Cities and Town Planning Association, by the time of Welwyn's founding) for that purpose.

2.5.1 Letchworth

First Garden City Ltd began construction of the world's first Garden City in 1903. Letchworth is internationally renowned for the high quality of its built environment and public realm, designed by Barry Parker and Raymond Unwin, which has stood the test of time and inspired developments around the world. But it is its delivery and governance that sets it apart. Central to First Garden City Ltd's ethos was a commitment to retain all surpluses in the Garden City estate, on behalf of the whole the town, once the start-up period was over. Income was to be obtained from the sale of leasehold property (to be re-let at current rents when leases expired) and from profits from various enterprises set up to the build the Garden City. In practice, because of the First World War and then the Great Depression in the late 1920s, and the need to borrow further funds at more commercial rates, the start-up phase was protracted and cash flow was weak. The Second World War further disrupted progress, and in the 1950s a speculative asset-stripping company acquired shares and forced the sale of freehold land.

An intense campaign to protect the pioneering purpose and established character of Letchworth Garden City was led by the local council, under the leadership of Town Clerk Horace Plinston, leading to an Act of Parliament (the Letchworth Garden City Act 1962) which transferred the assets, role and responsibilities of First Garden City Ltd to a public sector organisation – Letchworth Garden City Corporation. The speculative shareholder was paid off. The Leasehold Reform Act (which gave residential tenants the right to buy their freehold), and demands from commercial occupiers for freehold rather than leasehold property, continued to undermine the basic Garden City business plan.

A further Act of Parliament (the Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation Act 1995) wound up the Corporation, passing the then £56 million estate to Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation. The governance structure set up in 1995, which is still in place today, has significant community representation and ensures that the original objectives to reinvest profits back into the community have not been lost entirely. The Foundation today is driven by its charitable commitments to the community and, due to proactive asset and financial portfolio management, is able to invest around £3.5 million every year back into the community.

2.5.2 Welwyn Garden City

After the First World War Howard began work on a new Garden City project at Welwyn, this time with the involvement of the accountant Charles Purdom and Frederic Osborn, who had already been promoting Garden Cities with Howard and would become instrumental in the campaign for Garden Cities and ultimately the post-war New Towns programme. Having persuaded the then chairman of the Garden Cities and Town Planning Association to raise a £500 deposit, on 30 May 1919 Ebenezer Howard bought 1,453 acres of land at Welwyn for £51,000 'without the cash to pay for it'.[19]

Second Garden City Ltd was registered on 15 October 1919, and Welwyn Garden City was designed by the architect Louis de Soissons, who would be chief architect (all designs would pass by his desk) for the city until his death in 1962. The company had proposed 999-year leases at ground rents to be revised every 80 years, to retain Howard's 'rate-rent' principle. Unfortunately, following legal advice, the company directors (who were individually liable for up to £70,000), reverted to fixed rents. Instead of the community benefiting, the gains passed to those individuals who bought the housing. But the company retained the freehold, thus still making it possible to receive income from rents and capture some land value uplift and implement a scheme of management. The agricultural area was leased to a single company which supplied the new market of Welwyn Garden City. Initial building was slow, so the company set up its own subsidiary, Welwyn Builders and Joiners Ltd, who built the first houses designed by de Soissons. Houses were built to

18 *People, Places, Futures. Wales Spatial Plan 2008 Update*. Welsh Government, 2008. **http://wales.gov.uk/topics/planning/development-plans/wales-spatial-plan/?lang=en**; *Ambition, Opportunity, Place. Scotland's Third National Planning Framework*. Scottish Government, 2014. **http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Built-Environment/planning/National-Planning-Framework**; and *Building a Better Future: Regional Development Strategy (RDS 2035)*. Department for Regional Development, Northern Ireland, 2010. **http://www.drdni.gov.uk/index/rds2035.htm**

19 F.J. Osborn: *Genesis of Welwyn Garden City: Some Jubilee Memories*. TCPA, 1970, p.5

be affordable and for all sections of society. Factories had been attracted to Welwyn, but the economic depression made it even more challenging to attract smaller businesses. Its excellent rail links to London enabled many people to commute to the capital, again a departure from Howard's original idea. In 1948, following Patrick Abercrombie's 1944 Greater London Plan, Welwyn Garden City was designated a New Town. It is unique in that it is both a (privately funded) Garden City and a (publicly financed) New Town. This meant a loss of financial control for the Garden City companies, as receipts would be paid back to HM Treasury rather than being invested in the Garden City and its residents. One of Howard's fundamental principles was lost.

2.6 The New Towns – where, when and how were they built?

Thirty-two New Towns were designated in the United Kingdom between 1946 and 1970 (plus the subsequently abandoned Stonehouse). The programme was delivered in three phases of New Towns:

- 'Mark One', designated between 1946 and 1950;
- 'Mark Two', designated between 1961 and 1966; and
- 'Mark Three', designated between 1967 and 1970.

Of these 32 New Towns, 21 were in England, two in Wales, five in Scotland and four in Northern Ireland.

The 'Mark One' New Towns were those built in the immediate years after the 1946 New Towns Act was passed. Between 1946 and 1950 the Labour Government oversaw the designation of 14 of the 32 New Towns. Following the vision set out in Patrick Abercrombie's Greater London Plan, the first eight were in a ring around London. The others were in the English Midlands, at Corby; in the North East of England, at Aycliffe and Peterlee; in South Wales, at Cwmbran; and in Central Scotland, at East Kilbride and Glenrothes. The first New Towns experienced significant opposition, in no small part due to the fact that many of the locations around London and in the shire counties were in Conservative constituencies, reluctant to import thousands of working-class (Labour) voters.

In the 1950s the Conservative Government decided to halt the designation of New Towns (with the exception of Cumbernauld in Scotland in 1955) and instead focus on continued development using the Town Development Act 1952, which saw the planned expansion of existing smaller towns, through agreement between 'importing' and 'exporting' local authorities, with HM Treasury funding the basic infrastructure. Delivery under this programme was slow, and it was difficult to reach the necessary agreements between the authorities. Furthermore, the baby-boom of the 1960s signalled the need for large-scale action too, so the New Towns programme had to continue in its place.[20] Between 1961 and 1970, 17 more – the 'Mark Two' and 'Mark Three' New Towns – were started: three more for London (Milton Keynes, Northampton, and Peterborough), but this time further away from the capital; two for the Midlands (Redditch and Telford); four in the North West (Runcorn, Skelmersdale, Warrington, and Central Lancashire); one in the North East (Washington); one in Wales (Newtown); two in Scotland (Livingston and Irvine); and four in Northern Ireland (Craigavon, Antrim, Ballymena and Derry-Londonderry).[21]

2.6.1 Who, initially, lived in the New Towns?

When a New Town was designated, the objectives stated where the prospective residents would come from – usually overspill from larger cities. The New Town designations must be considered in their regional and sub-regional contexts (see the map on pages 14 and 15):

- 11 were designed to receive London overspill;
- 14 were designed to receive overspill from the great conurbations of West Midlands, Merseyside, Greater Manchester, Tyne and Wear, Greater Glasgow, and the Belfast region; and
- four were designed to aid regional regeneration of coalfield or heavy-industry areas.

Public information films, like *Charley in New Town* (1949), promoted the benefits of living in clean, healthy, sociable New Towns

20 Peter Hall notes that eventually the expanded towns programme did separately yield large-scale housing development, with some of the larger expansions of the 1960s – Basingstoke, Andover, Swindon and Wellingborough – being 'almost indistinguishable in scale or style' from the New Towns (P. Hall and C. Ward: *Sociable Cities: The 21st-Century Reinvention of the Garden City*. Second Edition. Routledge, 2014, p.48)

21 P. Hall and C. Ward: *Sociable Cities: The 21st-Century Reinvention of the Garden City*. Second Edition. Routledge, 2014, p.46

There were also three 'odd cases': Corby, in East Midlands, was designated to create a town around the nationalised steel plant; Glenrothes in Scotland for similar reasons in a new coalfield; and Newtown in mid-Wales to help restrain rural depopulation.[22]

The first generation of New Town newcomers were pioneers – attracted by the prospect of a fresh start with employment and spacious, affordable well built housing, surrounded by green space, in contrast to life in the inner cities. The pioneer life attracted younger people, and particularly families, to the New Towns. All of the New Towns were built in areas in which there were pre-existing communities (Peterborough was a significant historic city, Northampton a county town, and others contained a number of established and historic towns and villages). While the Development Corporations aimed to ensure that newcomers were well integrated, in some places there was tension between the existing and new communities.[23]

2.6.2 Delivering the New Towns

The New Towns Act 1946

The New Towns Act 1946, the legislation used to deliver the New Towns, was one element of a post-war planning settlement that also included the Town and Country Planning Act 1947. The success of the New Towns legislation was founded on a simple but powerful combination of site designation followed by the establishment of a New Town Development Corporation 'to do all that was necessary' to bring the town into being. The New Towns Act set out:

- the procedure for designating New Towns; and
- the structure and powers of Development Corporations.

How were the locations decided?

The need for a New Town, together with its location, was typically identified by regional or sub-regional studies undertaken by various agencies of central and local government. After public consultation, central government would designate the proposed boundary of the New Town, and a public inquiry would hear objections and other submissions. Patrick Abercrombie's Greater London Plan had already identified some potential locations or areas of search for the 'Mark One' New Towns, as had the various sub-regional plans in Scotland and later in Northern Ireland for sites for New Towns there. Sub-regional studies formed a basis for approving or discounting these locations. Others, such as Peterlee and (later) Milton Keynes, were voluntary proposals from the relevant county councils, keen to relieve development pressures in their areas.

How were the New Towns developed?

New Towns were built by public Development Corporations directly financed by HM Treasury loans. The powers and remit of New Town Development Corporations (NTDCs) were set out in the New Towns Act 1946. The Development Corporation was run by a Board appointed by the Minister, who then appointed the General Manager and key officers, who, in turn, built up the necessary complement of staff (in the years after the mid-1970s, staffing levels were reduced, and much work was out-sourced in response to central government policy). Annual budgets were agreed with the sponsoring central government department and HM Treasury, and the Board was required to report formally to the Minister, annually. These formal reports were published and laid before Parliament. Once a site had been designated, the Development Corporation acted as the real 'engine' of the New Towns approach. The success of the NTDCs was directly related to their ability to deploy the following core powers:

- the power to compulsory purchase land if it could not be bought by voluntary agreement;
- the power to buy land at current-use value (later, after the Myers legal ruling, some 'hope value' also had to be paid) and capture the betterment for HM Treasury (and thus, ultimately, the public);
- the power to borrow money (primarily from HM Treasury), repayable with interest;
- the power to prepare a masterplan which, after public inquiry and approval by the Minister, would be the statutory development plan;
- the power to grant or refuse planning permission for development within the New Town designated area (with certain small exceptions, although local 'partnership' agreements sometimes extended that range so long as they helped in the mission to deliver the New Town);
- the power to procure housing subsidised by central government grant and by other means, and to act as a housing association in the management of housing; and
- the power to do anything necessary for the development of the town, such as undertaking the delivery of utilities or entering into partnership working with other agencies, investing in social and community development, promoting local economic development, marketing the New Town overseas, etc.

Importantly, the interlocking nature of the plan-making and development management powers of NTDCs made them very effective instruments of delivery. The role of central government was clear, and responsibility for the design, ownership and consent for new development was held by a single public body, ultimately accountable to the Minister.

How were the New Towns paid for?

New Towns were financed by 60-year, fixed-rate loans from central government. Initially, Development Corporations were required to borrow only from HM Treasury. In the early stages, land was acquired by the Development Corporation at near existing-use values (which were, in the main, agricultural price levels, fixed at 1939 prices), which provided the New Towns with the financial as well as physical foundations for subsequent development. To obtain land at the best price, it had to be purchased well in advance of development.

22 P. Hall and C. Ward: *Sociable Cities: The 21st-Century Reinvention of the Garden City*. Second Edition. Routledge, 2014, p.47

23 *Transferable Lessons from the New Towns*. Department of Planning, Oxford Brookes University, for Department for Communities and Local Government, 2006, pp.41-42. http://www.futurecommunities.net/files/images/Transferable_lessons_from_new_towns_0.pdf

Homes and Communities Agency and Milton Keynes City Discovery Centre

The Development Corporations put significant effort into promoting inward investment for the New Towns through branding and place-marketing

Infrastructure also had to be installed in advance of population growth and demand, and thus before the increase in local income tax. New Town construction therefore required significant finance over a considerable period of time.

As the New Towns developed, the Development Corporations sold, as well as acquired, land. Land for schools and hospitals, for example, was sold to the relevant authorities. Open space was typically given with an endowment, either to the local authority or to some other not-for-profit body in perpetuity.

Initially, Development Corporations were able to provide material support to local authorities, often with cheap or free land. However, a change of rules in 1962 made it harder for Development Corporations to pass on the benefits of their advantageous terms to local authorities.

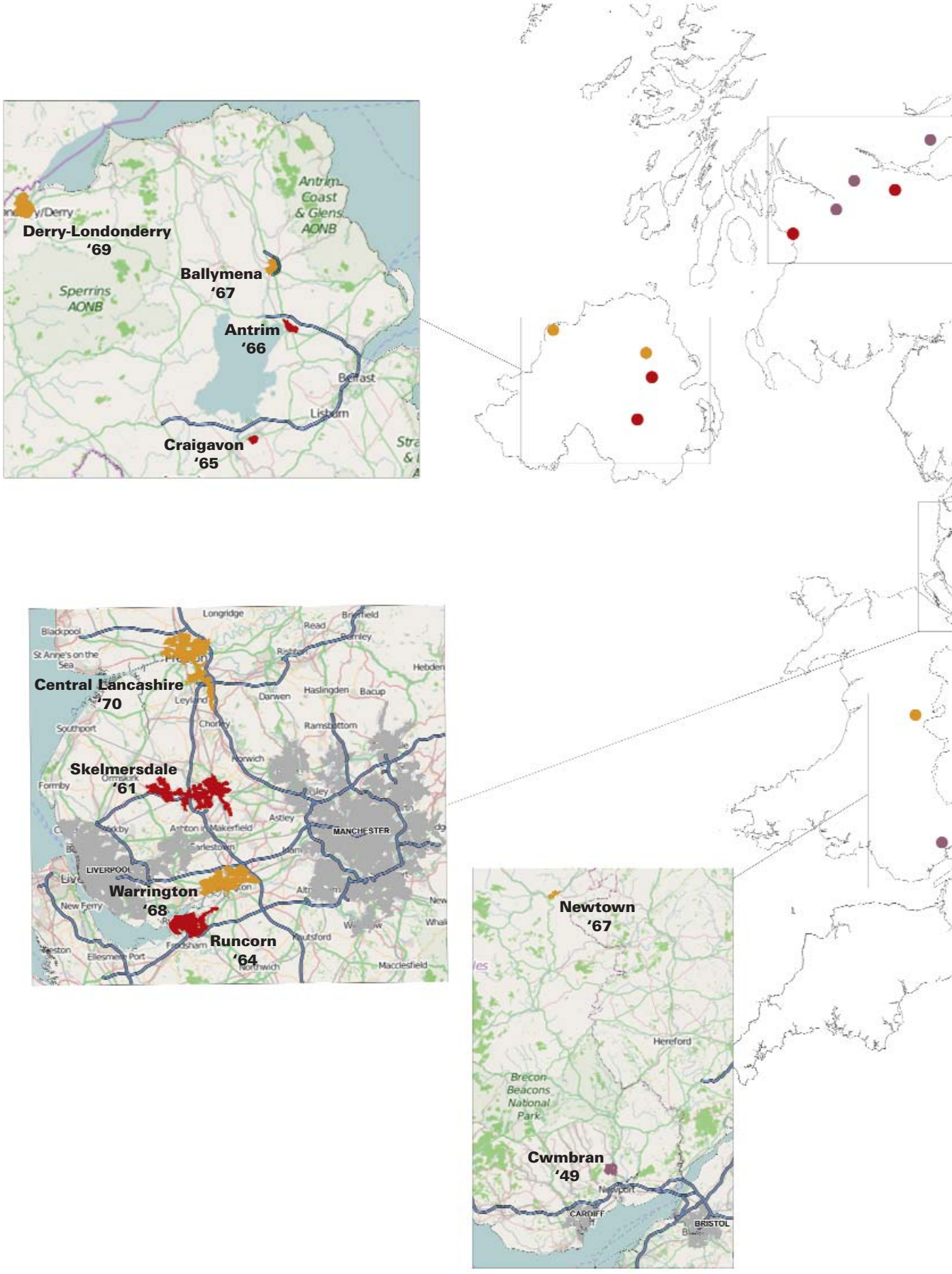
The financing of housing built for rent in the New Towns was operated in a way similar to that applying to local authorities, with central government providing subsidies to the Development Corporations for houses built for rent. In terms of revenue, New Town housing activities evolved over time, with central government's changing housing policy. Each of the New Towns built up very large housing revenue accounts, which, with inflation on the one hand and controls on rents on the other, required very large sums to be written off by central government.

In later years, revenue was raised by selling housing for owner-occupation through the 'Right to Buy' legislation, by selling land for housing for sale or self-build, and by disposing of land to housing associations to deliver housing for rent or shared ownership.

The first generation of New Towns proved so financially successful that they were net lenders to other public bodies. This was assisted by relatively low interest on the loans to the Development Corporations, set at a rate of 2% above Libor. The New Town of Harlow repaid all its loans within 15 years, for example, and started to produce a surplus for HM Treasury. However, the cost of borrowing was a major financial burden for the 'Mark Three' New Towns in the 1970s and 1980s, owing to national inflation of interest rates (up to 16%); and the forced sale of Development Corporation commercial assets (both mature and immature) from 1981 onwards removed income growth from this source. This limited the ability of the New Towns to reinvest in their renewal and upkeep.

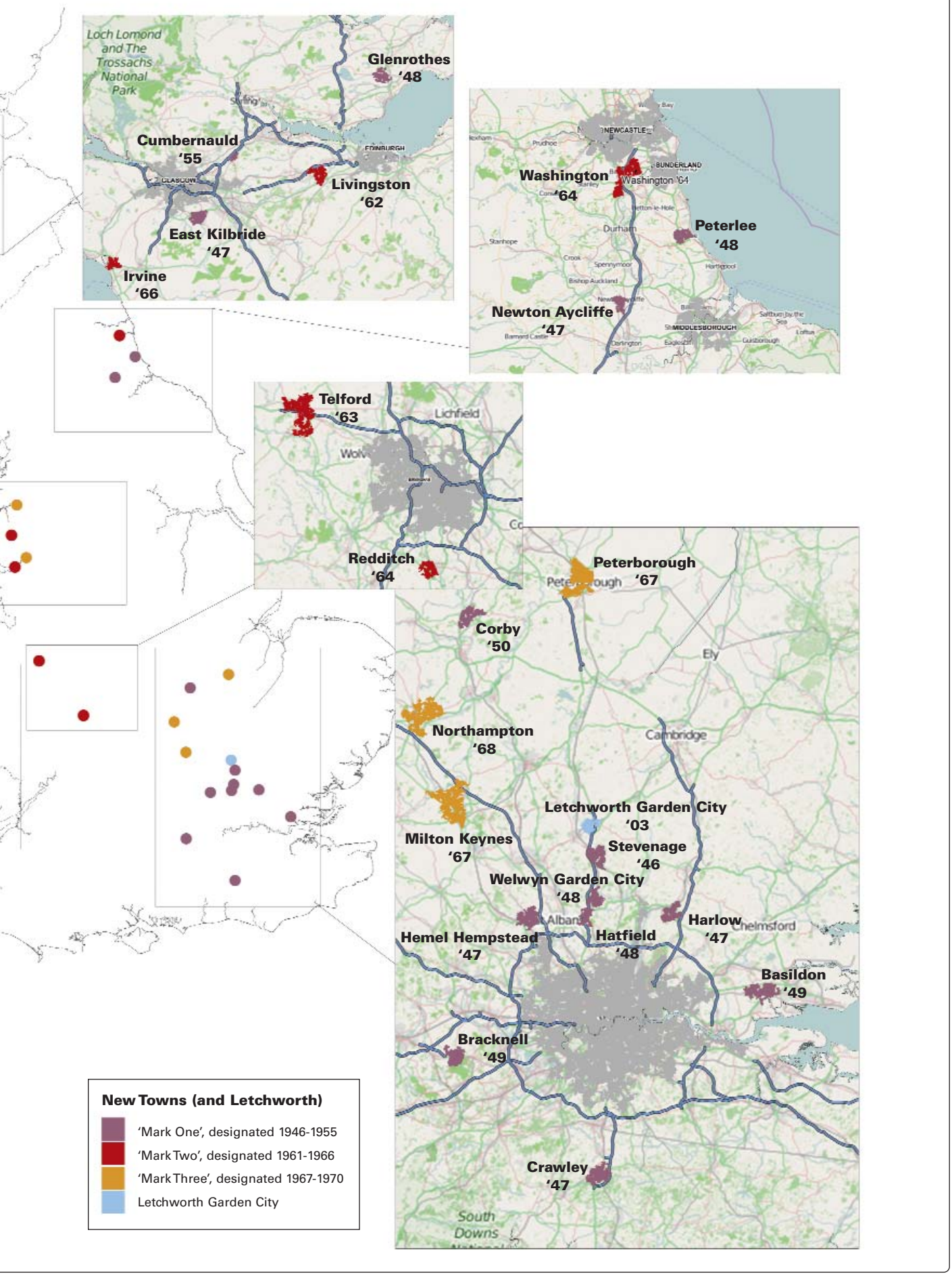
The total £4.75 billion loan made to the New Town Development Corporations by HM Treasury was repaid in early 1999 (assisted by the sale of sites). After that, by 2002, land sale receipts had generated round £600 million, of which £120 million was reinvested in the New Towns.[24] It is important to note that the NTDCs did not finance all aspects of the town's development. HM Treasury loans were supplemented by funds from the relevant existing public sector programmes in the area, refocused towards the New Town (to pay for key facilities such as schools, hospitals and some utilities such as water), and by attracting inward investment from the private sector.

24 Memorandum NT33, submitted by the Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions to the House of Commons Transport, Local Government and the Regions Committee, within *New Towns: Follow-Up*. HC 889. Ninth Report of Session 2007-08. House of Commons Communities and Local Government Committee. TSO, 2008.
http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200102/cmselect/cmtlgr/603/603m38.htm



All base maps © OpenStreetMap contributors

The locations and designation/founding dates of the 32 UK New Towns (and Letchworth Garden City) and their sub-regional context


Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park
Glenrothes '48
Cumbernauld '55
Livingston '62
East Kilbride '47
Irvine '66
Washington '64
Peterlee '48
Newton Aycliffe '47
Telford '63
Redditch '64
Peterborough '67
Corby '50
Northampton '68
Milton Keynes '67
Letchworth Garden City '03
Stevenage '46
Welwyn Garden City '48
Hemel Hempstead '47
Hatfield '48
Harlow '47
Basildon '49
Bracknell '49
Crawley '47
New Towns (and Letchworth)
'Mark One', designated 1946-1955
'Mark Two', designated 1961-1966
'Mark Three', designated 1967-1970
Letchworth Garden City

Central Milton Keynes, as envisaged by Helmut Jacoby for Milton Keynes Development Corporation in 1974, and today

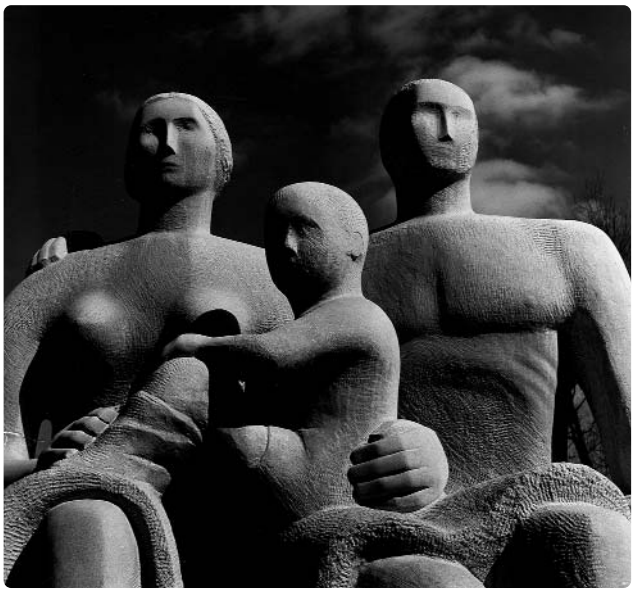
2.6.3 Designing the New Towns

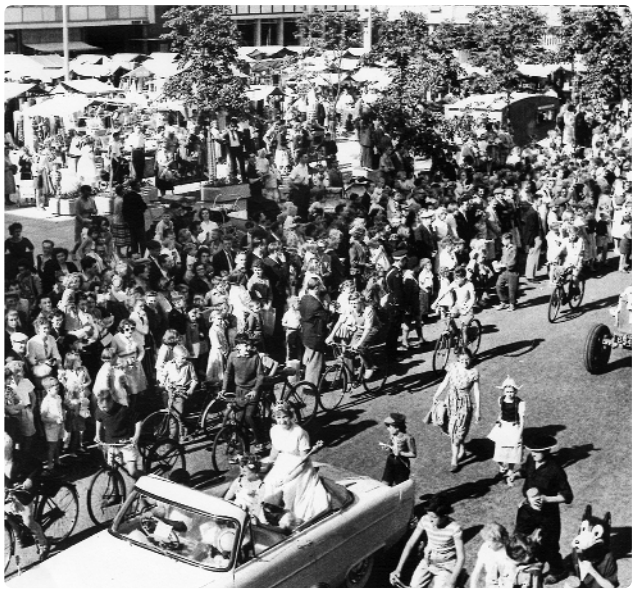
The role of the masterplan

Following the Garden City tradition, New Town development was to be guided by a masterplan that provided a broad framework for growth and confidence for investors, but which was flexible enough to allow for innovation and change over time. It was in the New Towns that the urban design principles of the Garden City pioneers would meet those of the Modernist movement. The comprehensive Reith Committee reports recommended guiding principles for design as well as delivery, such as achieving socially and economically balanced communities by relocating employment and providing a wide range of housing types and tenures. They also recommended specifics such as densities, but with the broader objectives of encouraging freedom in ideas and innovation, and avoiding uniformity.

As intended, the New Towns were designed and delivered with these principles of innovation, experimentation and social development in mind, and, with the support of HM Treasury, resources were made available to ensure that the best designers and skilled personnel were available to make it happen. Of course, design in the New Towns varies considerably from place to place and between different phases of the programme, reflecting the specific objectives of each New Town designation, and also social and economic changes and accumulated expertise, which changed over time. For example, early masterplanners were architects and engineers, used to designing blueprints and whole plans. By the time the later New Towns were designated it was clear that, instead, a framework around which the town would grow was needed. However, there are broad design characteristics that run as a common thread through all 32 New Towns:

- ***Neighbourhood units:*** Housing was to be developed in 'neighbourhood units', built around a primary school and other local facilities, creating a sense of community and allowing people to be within a short walk of key facilities. There were, however, some notable exceptions – for example Cumbernauld.
- ***Zoning of industrial and residential areas:*** First envisaged by the Garden City pioneers to separate housing from the polluting noise, smells and traffic of industry, housing and industrial areas were to be separated, but excellent pedestrian and transport links would allow people to walk to work or take public transport.
- ***Pedestrian-friendly town centres:*** Pedestrianised town centres and covered shopping malls in town centres (envisaged earlier by Ebenezer Howard and influenced by design in Sweden and the United States) would not only allow for a safe and pleasant environment for commercial activity, but would also emphasise the public space between buildings and the social life and positive environment that can be created.
- ***Ease of movement:*** Pedestrians and vehicles were to be separated into different networks – allowing people to move freely and safely from place to place, with underpasses and overpasses making it unnecessary to cross busy roads. This also allowed for rapid movement by public transport and private car. The natural layout to achieve this was a grid.
- ***Integrated green infrastructure network:*** The New Towns continued the Garden City tradition of combining town and country, using networks of green space throughout the masterplan – along transport corridors, to ease movement for pedestrians and cyclists and to separate transport from the neighbourhood units; through parks and 'green wedges', providing access to green space throughout the town, including formal and informal parks; and with neighbourhoods that were often at densities that allowed for green verges and front gardens, following the Garden City tradition and also influenced by urban development in the United States. Following the introduction of the concept in Patrick Abercrombie's Greater London Plan, and later the Clyde Valley Plan, the Reith Committee recommended a Green Belt around each of the New Towns – to prevent them from sprawling and to help realise Howard's vision of towns surrounded by a belt of





Public art – Henry Moore's 'Family Group' – and community cohesion-building at Harlow

open country for agriculture and access to countryside, as at Letchworth and Welwyn Garden Cities. But at designation, the requirement for an agricultural Green Belt was lost, and no New Town masterplan has a fixed perimeter of agricultural land – a big departure from Howard's idea, and a weakness.

- ***Innovative architecture and design:*** New Town design was influenced by both the Garden City and Modernist movements. Architects were encouraged to be innovative and use the latest materials, and the Development Corporations often employed artists to create public art and sometimes to design whole housing estates.

- ***Emphasis on social housing:*** The early New Towns were dominated by housing that the Development Corporation built and then rented out as landlords. Such housing was later transferred to local authorities or housing associations. The later New Towns had a more diverse housing mix, but still included a significant proportion of housing for social rent.

- ***Self-containment:*** The New Towns aimed to be as 'self-contained' as possible (to avoid the creation of commuter towns), in that sufficient homes and facilities were to be provided to enable new residents to work and live within the New Town. The approach taken included industrial strategies that, for several of the early New Towns, dictated that people could only move to the New Town if they were employed there. In practice, self-containment was a nearly impossible objective, as everywhere has a daily flow of people in and out for various purposes.

- ***Space for social and community development:*** Provision of space for social and community development included locating community facilities within a short walking distance of homes and using multi-functional spaces (a school doubling up as a community centre, for example). The Development Corporations also made a conscious effort to encourage participation in the arts as part of community development.

Creating 'balanced' communities

Reflecting the spirit of the Garden City movement, the purpose of the New Towns was not simply to provide homes and jobs, but to create socially balanced communities that integrated employment, homes and social life to provide opportunities for all. New development (and new residents) was also to be well integrated with pre-existing communities. This was more easily achieved in some places than others, reflecting local geography, the design of the masterplan in promoting physical integration, the effort invested in social development and community cohesion, and the complexity and challenges inherent in such an endeavour.

The New Towns needed to create a sense of belonging for newcomers, as well as an opportunity to participate in the development process. Many of the New Town Development Corporations put specific resources into social or community development, including employing officers with a specific role of welcoming new residents and assisting with integration and participation in development through activities such as publishing newsletters, organising community events, or establishing neighbourhood councils or community interest groups. Many funded community meeting places and accelerated the establishment of networking institutions such as mother and toddler groups, scout and guide troops, allotment societies, local history groups, music, dance and singing groups, urban and rural environmental education charities, faith groups, sports clubs, and local TV and radio stations. Often a local community office was set up to act as an information point for new residents.

The Development Corporations also took responsibility for building community facilities and social infrastructure early on in the town-building process. Such provision was located following the principles of walkable neighbourhoods, with social facilities sited close to homes and other facilities, with buildings often used for multiple uses. Culture and the arts were also key features of New Town development. Several of the New Towns employed artists in residence to design parts of the town, and public art was a key feature, providing a sense of place and a varied public realm.

Milton Keynes City Discovery Centre

Community and cultural events were important for promoting social cohesion, but were also useful for place-marketing, as in Milton Keynes' red balloon campaign

Bronze statue presented to the town by Stevenage Development Corporation to mark the completion of its work

Housing mix is another key element in creating communities. In the early years of the New Towns programme, before the private housebuilding market had faith that the New Town would actually be built, and when the primary purpose of the New Town was to accommodate people in need from nearby overcrowded cities, the Development Corporations built housing for rent, acting as landlord. This gave them control over letting and management policies (typically, a small proportion of stock was kept empty, so that incoming employers could re-locate their staff quickly). The dominant social rented profile of the early years shaped New Town communities markedly. With a degree of maturity, New Towns were able to attract developers of housing for sale, and when the first Thatcher Government ended the programme of building houses for rent, shared-ownership tenure was devised by the New Town movement to try to keep the social mix as wide as possible. Milton Keynes, for example, aimed for a 50-50 split between private homes for ownership and rental housing, and made a clear commitment to mixing housing types, tenure and occupational groups within its grid squares.[25] A lack of housing mix in some of the New Towns (for example a lack of provision for elderly people, or a lack of 'middle class' housing where socially rented housing dominated) prevented the development of truly integrated communities.[26] The early New Towns were also criticised for not attracting the elderly or ethnic minorities, and specific programmes were developed in later New Towns to answer these points.[27]

2.7 When did the New Towns programme end?

Designation under the New Towns programme came to an end in the late 1960s, and the programme lost political favour. Joining others such as the Conservative Leader of the Greater London Council Sir Horace Cutler, Labour Minister Peter Shore launched a major attack on the programme for draining the inner cities of their most vigorous young people (in fact, only some 17% of those leaving London had actually gone to New Towns) and for drawing off money that should be spent on regeneration (in fact, money directed to the New Towns was on loan, repayable with interest).

Whatever the part played by New Towns might have been, the Government turned its attention to the problems of the inner cities. The cities were haemorrhaging population and jobs, not least because of de-industrialisation.[28] Meanwhile, Northern Ireland's 'Troubles' (political unrest between the Irish Republican Army and the Unionists) were well under way. In 1978 the Inner Urban Areas Act was passed following consultants' reports to the Home Office on the problems of Inner London, Birmingham and Glasgow. The Act enabled the transfer of resources from the new and expanded towns programmes to urban regeneration. This had already been trialled in Scotland, where in 1974 Stonehouse New Town was abandoned and funds were effectively switched into a major regeneration programme, Glasgow Eastern Area Renewal (GEAR).[29] Jim Callaghan's Labour Government focused on partnership and programmes to assist the inner cities.

By the early 1980s, a wave of rioting in areas such as Brixton, in South London, and Liverpool's Toxteth forced the Conservative Government to take action. Margaret Thatcher's Government introduced Enterprise Zones and Urban Development Corporations which retained an emphasis on regenerating inner urban areas. But it was not just the 'pull back' from urban politicians that led to the end of the New Towns programme: there was also a 'push' from Conservative voters in the countryside who felt that the New Towns were (at that time) full of Labour voters.

25 M. Clapson: 'Suburban paradox? Planners' intentions and residents' preferences in two new towns of the 1960s: Reston, Virginia and Milton Keynes, England'. *Planning Perspectives*, 2002, Vol. 17 (2), pp.145-162

26 J. MacGuire: 'The elderly in a new town. A case study of Telford'. *Housing Review*, 1977, Vol. 26 (6), pp.132-136

27 *Ethnic Minorities and New or Expanding Towns*. Commission for Racial Equality, 1980

28 P. Hall and C. Ward: *Sociable Cities: The 21st-Century Reinvention of the Garden City*. Second Edition. Routledge, 2014, p.55

29 *Ibid.*, p.55

2.8 What happened to the Development Corporations?

The role of the Development Corporations once the New Towns reached maturity had been discussed by the Reith Committee in 1945, which suggested that when the New Towns matured the Development Corporations should be modified to include two elected residents and carry on in perpetuity. The Minister of Town and Country Planning, Lewis Silkin, did not agree with the proposition, and in presenting the 1946 New Towns Bill he said that the assets of mature towns (namely the land, property and financial resources of the Development Corporations) would be handed over to local authorities.[30]

By the 1950s, the 'Mark One' London New Towns were beginning to produce surpluses, and HM Treasury began to question the logic of passing these assets onto local authorities. Following a broad debate on the issue, the New Towns Act 1959 established a national agency to manage the assets of matured New Towns. Operating in England and Wales, the role of the government-controlled Commission for the New Towns (CNT) was to receive and manage the residual assets from the individual New Town Development Corporations so as to maintain and increase the value of the estate, and to pay proper regard to the purpose for which the town had been created and the welfare of people living and working there.

The first few Development Corporations were wound up in the 1960s – Crawley and Hemel Hempstead in 1962, and Hatfield and Welwyn Garden City in 1966. The CNT became the landlord for the land and property, including houses, a large proportion of which were social housing. Most of this property (shops, houses and industrial premises) produced rent, which the CNT transferred in annual payments to HM Treasury. Responsibilities for planning and roads were devolved to the relevant local authorities.

The story began to change in the 1980s, following the election of the first Thatcher Government, which wanted all the New Town Development Corporations to be wound up as soon as possible. The CNT was instructed to sell its existing portfolio of land and property and any further land or property it received from the remaining Development Corporations as they were wound up. Some of the industrial properties were sold to their occupiers, but many assets were auctioned to the highest private sector bidder. There was local frustration in the later New Towns which were still in their development phase, as the CNT now had little long-term interest in any New Town, and the money raised was taken by HM Treasury to be spent elsewhere.

Assets were also sold at immature values – the surrounding area was not yet developed, for example – to the disadvantage of the taxpayer. A significant proportion of these assets was in the form of socially rented homes. The Government wanted these homes to be sold to their tenants, or transferred to housing associations (Registered Social Landlords) where sales were not possible. However, when consulted, many of the tenants chose transfer to the local authority – whom they felt they could trust and would be more accountable – rather than to housing associations.

Between 1977 and 1996, all the remaining Development Corporations were wound up (by 1992 in England and by 1996 in Scotland), with local authorities receiving most of the liabilities but with an endowment (i.e. land/buildings that were expensive to run or maintain – classified as 'community-related assets') and the social housing as chosen by tenants.[31] The social housing became an issue as, nationally, the funds to maintain the housing stock were inadequate and maintenance was too onerous to be covered under standard local authority funding streams. Although many of the assets, including the social housing, were income-generating, many soon became liabilities as authorities struggled to finance their maintenance. There was also some irresponsible behaviour – where endowment money was spent to depress Council Tax levels, for example.

Any subsequent sales by local authorities of the assets they had received were subject to 'claw-back', under which the increase in the value from the sale of any of the liabilities for commercial purposes had to be given back to the CNT (or from 1999 to its successor body English Partnerships,[32] which combined the CNT and the Urban Regeneration Agency – in 2008 English Partnerships was subsumed into the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA),[33] which still operates today as England's national housing and regeneration agency).

Today, many of the New Towns are in need of renewal, and the lack of a sinking-fund set up during the many years in which the new infrastructure and property needed little maintenance has created a legacy of a great wave of necessary investment for which there are no special resources – the New Town assets continued to generate profits for the CNT/English Partnerships/HCA, but these were used by them for other programmes. The lack of a long-term stewardship strategy for the New Towns can be considered one of the major failures of the programme. Notable exceptions – such as in Milton Keynes, where an endowed Parks Trust and a Community Foundation were among not-for-profit local institutions set up receive and maintain in perpetuity some key assets – demonstrate the scale of the missed opportunity.

30 *Winding up the New Towns*. Written for *The New Towns Record*. Planning Exchange. Idox Information Service. **http://www.idoxgroup.com/knowledge-services/idox-information-service/the-new-towns-record.html**

31 *The New Towns: Their Problems and Future*. House of Commons Transport, Local Government and the Regions Committee. Nineteenth Report of Session 2001-02. TSO, 2002. **http://www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk/pa/cm200102/cmselect/cmtlgr/603/60302.htm**

32 *New Towns: Follow-Up*. HC 889. Ninth Report of Session 2007-08. House of Commons Communities and Local Government Committee. TSO, 2008. **http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200708/cmselect/cmcomloc/889/889.pdf**

33 The HCA is the national housing and regeneration agency for England. It combines the land and property expertise of English Partnerships, the Housing Corporation's track record of delivering affordable homes, and the Academy for Sustainable Communities' knowledge of creating and renewing high-quality places

2.9 Did Britain stop building planned new communities when the New Towns programme ended?

The role of planned new communities continued to be recognised after the New Towns programme ended, but the New Towns Act and therefore New Town Development Corporations have not been used since 1996. In England, New Ash Green in Kent and South Woodham Ferrers in Essex are notable examples among several attempts to make a small new town.

In 1983, the Volume Housebuilders Study Group (the ten largest housebuilding companies, which at that time built 60% of all new homes in the UK) joined forces as Consortium Developments to promote the development of new communities initiated and constructed by private enterprise. None of their schemes came to fruition, as they were not promoted through the plan-making process and provoked bitter opposition. The purists were quick to point out that they were not real new towns at all, but small, long-distance Garden Suburb style developments – dormitory communities lacking substantial sources of employment. In fact, they did propose a high degree of self-containment, and in size – around 25,000 population – were of Garden City scale, even if they did not propose community ownership of the site or subsequent values.

The role of new large-scale communities continued to be recognised in rounds of Regional Planning Guidance and later in Regional Spatial Strategies, where private developers and landowners promoted sites and smaller new communities. Notably, Regional Planning Guidance for East Anglia[34] identified the need for new communities beyond the Green Belt to accommodate a rapidly growing Cambridge sub-region, leading to the development of Cambourne, Longstanton-Oakington and later Northstowe, and more recently Alconbury Weald and Waterbeach.

Between 2001 and 2011 there were three major attempts to deliver large-scale housing growth. In 2003 the second Blair Government's Sustainable Communities Plan identified four major Growth Areas – Thames Gateway, Milton Keynes-South Midlands, Ashford, and the London-Stansted-Cambridge corridor – to be carried forward in the regional strategy process, to accommodate large amounts of housing and related development, including employment.

In addition, in 2006 the Growth Point initiative invited local authorities to propose additional housing (minimum 20%) beyond existing plans as part of a wider growth strategy in exchange for government help on infrastructure (particularly transport) and a modest grant to prepare infrastructure and community facilities.[35]

South Woodham Ferrers, one of a few notable examples of private sector led attempts to make a small new town

In 2007, as the international recession caused by the banking collapse hit, the Government launched the Eco-Towns programme, which invited bids for ten new communities of around 25,000 population each, to help reach a national target for England of 240,000 new homes per annum by 2016 and to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 80% below 1990 levels by 2050. The programme was accompanied by a Planning Policy Statement (PPS) which set out the high objectives to be met. The programme proved challenging because the Government overlooked the need for local support: bids were invited without a requirement for prior public engagement, which led to public and local authority resistance in all locations with the exception of Bicester (where the bid was actually a local authority proposal for a suburb to counter an eco-town proposed further west across the M40), Whitehill & Bordon (a former army camp owned by the Ministry of Defence), and the St Austell and China Clay Eco-communities (where there was no commercial promoter). Northstowe in Cambridgeshire was classified as an eco-town in a second wave of the Eco-town competition/programme.

Despite the Coalition Government seeking to distance itself from the programme, at the time of writing the Eco-Towns PPS has not yet been revoked, and four of the eco-towns are still being progressed in line with the high standards set out in the PPS. One of these, North West Bicester, began construction in January 2014.[36] The TCPA is working with these local authorities through its New Communities Group.

In 2010 the incoming Coalition Government sought new approaches to address the nation's housing needs in the context of a new localism agenda. The Housing Strategy published in 2011 indicated support for 'locally planned large scale development' – a first indication of interest in large-scale development as part of the solution to meeting the nation's housing needs. There followed three years of

34 *Regional Planning Guidance for East Anglia to 2016*. RPG6. Government Office for the East of England. Nov. 2000 **https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/public/ldf/coredocs/RD-NP-131.pdf**

35 H. Cleary: 'Garden Cities: What can we learn from eco-towns and growth points?'. *Planning*, 10 Feb. 2014. **http://www.planningresource.co.uk/article/1230136/garden-cities-learn-eco-towns-growth-points**

36 'Construction begins on the UK's first eco town'. Webpage. North West Bicester. **http://nwbicester.co.uk/2014/01/construction-begins-on-the-uks-first-eco-town/**

East Hampshire District Council

Whitehill & Bordon, designated as an 'eco-town', is today using regeneration to become 'Hampshire's Green Town'

increasing political momentum on the issue. In March 2012 the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister made speeches announcing that there would be a new programme of Garden Cities in Britain. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) published later that month stated: 'The supply of new homes can sometimes be best achieved through planning for larger scale development, such as new settlements or extensions to existing villages and towns that follow the principles of Garden Cities.'[37] On 14 April 2014, two years after the Prime Minister announced his support for a new wave of Garden Cities in Britain, the long-awaited *Locally-led Garden Cities: Prospectus* was issued by the Department for Communities and Local Government. It invited expressions of interest for proposals of at least 15,000 homes that demonstrate 'local support', 'scale', 'connectivity', 'robust delivery arrangements,' and 'commercial viability', favouring sites with a 'high proportion of brownfield land'.

Meanwhile, the role of large-scale development is being considered by some local authorities through the local plan process. The requirements for authorities to test all 'reasonable alternatives' to housing growth options means what can be a politically more challenging option at the local level – new communities – must be considered through the process. Where sites were already in planning, many became 'stuck' owing to political pressures or the financial pressures of the recession. Through the Large Sites Infrastructure Fund the Government has provided some financial capacity support to 'unstick' some of these sites.

As the 2015 general election approaches, housing is high on the political agenda, and the leaders of the three main Westminster parties have announced their support for a programme of new Garden Cities or new communities in Britain. The role of large-scale development in meeting UK housing needs is an issue for debate beyond England, with the RICS Scottish Housing Commission recently recommending a programme of New Towns in Scotland, and MPs in Wales discussing the role of new Garden Cities in dealing with housing needs in Cardiff.

2.10 A changed context for today – key considerations

Although there are significant lessons to be learnt from the Garden Cities and the New Towns programme, there have been major political, social, economic and environmental changes throughout the 20th and 21st centuries that alter the context for delivering new communities today, as summarised below:

- There is no nationally agreed method in England for estimating the number of new homes needed in any particular area – whether a housing market area, for example, or a local planning authority area – or the amount of land required for supporting land uses, including employment. This leaves the number of new homes required a matter of wasteful dispute.
- There is no official planning machinery or process in England that is larger than an individual local planning authority area, through which the contribution of any possible major planned communities can be discussed, their sites identified in broad terms, and their role and connectivity outlined.
- There is no method for looking further forward than about 15 years in making a statutory development plan – yet a new community could be a reservoir for a supply of development land for 20 or 30 years or much more. (In Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland there is a level of national spatial planning that allows for the consideration of these issues.)
- There is no explicit political consensus that much of the betterment arising from the grant of planning permission should be captured to pay for planned new urbanisation. All the parties agree on extracting a large amount of money by various methods, including legal agreements, levies and tariffs; but taking comprehensive control of land for development and using the value created for making a place is, today, not yet settled as a way forward.
- People are more mobile than in the past – car use is much higher, and the reach of public transport much lower, than when the New Towns were planned. People

37 *National Planning Policy Framework*. Department for Communities and Local Government, 2012, para. 52. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework—2

will change their jobs and their home towns more often and more easily, and inward investment is more volatile in where it is directed and for how long. All these issues affect the type of masterplan that is needed to provide a framework around which a town may grow.

- An individual's mobility and networks are far more fluid today than ever before. This affects everything from social interaction, movement patterns, work patterns, how our actions impact our daily life and the lives of others, and the extent to which places can or should be 'self-contained' in the way the New Towns and Garden Cities aimed to be.
- Local authority (or, for the New Towns, Development Corporation) housing for social rent dominated housing supply for the first half of the 20th century and was central to the New Towns delivery model. Today, housing provision is private sector dominated, and housing associations (which increasingly are simultaneously builders of houses for sale) will play a much larger role in the delivery of new communities, even from the start-up stages.
- The family unit, and the role of women in particular, has changed significantly since the 1950s and 60s. Many of the New Towns ran specific programmes to engage with women (who then were expected to be home-makers) and provide means of employment for them. When 'creating communities', we must consider the needs of the modern individual and family and think about who will be around to participate, and when.[38]
- The social and cultural context of society today is very different from that of the 1950s and 1960s. The New Towns programme was delivered in the context of a post-war spirit of collective effort and 'make do and mend'. Today, there is much more focus on the needs of the individual, materialism and consumption.[39]
- The New Towns themselves varied not only in geography, but in purpose and form.
- Today, a new programme of Garden Cities would be delivered in the context of localism and a plan-led system. Mere consultation must give way to active participation and deep engagement.
- We now face the challenges of climate change and operate within a globalised economy.
- There are different planning systems in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. This affects the way that new communities are planned, but also provides an opportunity for shared learning.
- There are severe constraints on public expenditure (and 'investment' in a new town seems to be regarded, still, as 'expenditure'), but there are vast resources of patient money from investors with pensions and life insurances to pay in 30 or 40 years' time, for whom long-term steady growth from a new town project secured on an asset base but with government commitment would be very attractive. A more imaginative approach to funding is needed.

2.11 Understanding the Garden Cities and New Towns – some observations

A number of key lessons have already been learnt about the New Towns programme and how it was delivered. These are set out in a number of literature reviews, notably *Transferable Lessons from the New Towns*[40] and *From New Towns to Growth Areas*.[41] *The New Towns Record*[42] also provides a valuable resource.

The broad lessons are summarised here and provide a framework for stage 2 of the TCPA's New Towns and Garden Cities study.

Site designation processes

- The two Garden City sites at Letchworth and Welwyn were opportunistic purchases of agricultural estates. The purpose of the purchases was kept secret to prevent adjoining landowners raising their expectations of value. There was no planning system at the time (1903 and 1919) and so no access to compulsory purchase, hence the need for subterfuge.
- The need for, and broad locations of, the New Towns were found through official regional studies (with notable exceptions such as Milton Keynes and Peterlee). Such studies identified the role, purpose and scale of the proposed development. The conclusion of the studies was a Draft Designation Order suggesting detailed boundaries, laid by the Minister and open to objection and inquiry under a Planning Inspector who reported back to the Minster. It was not uncommon for small boundary changes to be made in response to objections.
- The site designation process was fast – progressing from a recommendation in a study to a confirmed Designation Order typically in three years, or less.
- There was no compensation for landowners, householders and businesses inside the designated area.

Responsibilities for delivery and governance during the development phase

- The two Garden Cities were built by private development companies with philanthropic aims based on Ebenezer Howard's ideas. Both companies struggled to secure sufficient loans on favourable terms, and found market resistance from some commercial occupiers to lease-only terms – freeholds were demanded and had to be given, breaking one of pillars of Howard's business model.
- Letchworth fell prey to speculative asset strippers and had to be saved as a special place by an Act of Parliament; Welwyn Garden City was subsumed into Welwyn New Town.

38 *Transferable Lessons from the New Towns*. Department of Planning, Oxford Brookes University, for Department for Communities and Local Government, 2006, p.45. http://www.futurecommunities.net/files/images/Transferable_lessons_from_new_towns_0.pdf

39 *Ibid.*, p.45

40 *Ibid.*

41 J. Bennett: *From New Towns to Growth Areas: Learning from the Past*. Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR), 2005. http://www.ippr.org/publications/from-new-towns-to-growth-areaslearning-from-the-past

42 *The New Towns Record*. Planning Exchange. Idox Information Service. http://www.idoxgroup.com/knowledge-services/idox-information-service/the-new-towns-record.html

- In 1946, after considering evidence, the New Towns Committee concluded that building New Towns was beyond the ability of the private sector. The Letchworth experience, even prior to speculative interference, and the Welwyn experience formed part of the evidence, and the envisaged New Towns were to be much larger and delivery was needed more quickly.
- The New Towns Committee devised the New Town Development Corporation model for delivery, and this was immediately accepted by the Minister and embodied in the New Towns Act 1946.
- The New Town Development Corporations were established by the Minister at designation and the Chairman and Board were chosen by the Minister. Local suggestions were often accepted, including key figures from local government in the area (although these were not 'representatives' but personal appointments by the Minister). The Chairman and Board appointed the General Manager and key officials who, in turn, built up an appropriate full-time complement of staff.
- Funding was in the form of loans from HM Treasury, repayable with interest (2% over Libor). From the 1970s permission was given for some borrowing on the open market at more competitive rates.
- The establishment of core in-house staff capability for the duration helped to foster a culture of continuity, fast and focused decision-making, and dedicated town-building. In the 1980s out-sourcing was imposed and a smaller core remained (and the skills of being a client, buying services from consultants, had to be developed).
- Full-time staff typically lived in the town they were building, and, even if they lived outside the town, played an active part in its institutions and culture.

Site masterplanning processes

- The masterplans for the Garden Cities were procured by competition by the development companies.
- As companies, the Garden Cities had to file annual reports and accounts to shareholders.
- All development management powers were held by the Garden City companies as 'master developers', although municipal controls existed over such issues as public health, highways and building construction.
- The masterplans for the New Towns were procured by the Development Corporations from consultants selected by competition, and, when approved by the Minister after inquiry, were the equivalent of a statutory development plan for the designated area.
- Early development stages tended to be coarse-grained (large sites) to establish the new places, and a small number of design and construction failures occurred as a consequence of the desire for speed, coupled with the desire to be innovative and experimental and give young designers an opportunity.
- Sub-area development frameworks (the terms used varied for parts of the towns) and various forms of design guide for specific sites proved to be effective briefs for development procured by the New Town Development Corporations (and private development companies in the case of the Garden Cities), and later as supplements to marketing packs presented to the market.
- Almost all development management powers within the New Town designated area were vested in the New Town Development Corporation, although some chose to reach delegation agreements with local planning authorities.
- Annual reports from the New Town Development Corporations were presented to the Minister and then laid before Parliament.

Strategies for land acquisition

- The Garden City companies had to proceed by subterfuge or commercial negotiation.
- The New Town Development Corporations had access to compulsory purchase powers but mostly used the threat of compulsory purchase to assemble land by agreement.
- New Town compulsory purchase at 'existing-use' value was moderated by the Myers Case and others to include an element of 'hope value', which raised the price to some extent – but more significantly it delayed the process of acquisition.
- Land was typically kept in productive use until the last possible moment of construction, by renting it back to the farmers from whom it had been bought.

Public support, participation and long-term stewardship

- The Garden Cities were developed as pioneering experiments of world-wide interest, and the pioneer residents were enthusiastic supporters. A major feature of the early years was the publication of studies and commentaries on the progress of the experiment – there was a major commitment to helping people learn from what was happening in the young community.
- The daily reality of protracted construction programmes and sometimes delayed facilities led to some local dissatisfaction, and some pre-existing residents complained of being overwhelmed by the pace of change and loss of countryside, and there were some grumbles that the companies were not taking sufficient account of the newcomers as the planning of the town proceeded.
- The New Town Development Corporations had a less favourable reception, seen locally by many as an imposition of the heavy hand of the State, importing unappreciative city dwellers to the locality and generating a degree of jealousy as they appeared to have access to huge resources unavailable to other places.
- The emphasis on community development in the New Towns provided a specific means for engagement of pre-existing residents and newcomers in the development phase.
- There are indications that not enough was done to help the community and local institutions and political groups to prepare to take responsibility for running the town after the development phase.
- Some inventive institutional arrangements were made in the last few years of the New Towns programme to provide for the long-term stewardship of the green estate, community-related assets, community organisations and culture, but little was done to prepare the successor local authorities for the successive waves of major renewal that would be needed as a consequence of fast waves of building.

3

The UK's Garden Cities and New Towns today

Torfaen County Borough Council

Cwmbran from the air

The first New Town was designated nearly 70 years ago, and it has been over ten years since the last Development Corporation ceased operation and transferred its assets to the Commission for the New Towns. Many of these places would no longer consider themselves to be 'new' towns. While each of the New Towns has a different story, it is useful to understand what challenges the New Towns are facing today, and also to begin to understand the extent to which the legacy of New Town designation has influenced the way these places are planned for today.

3.1 Some key facts about the New Towns and Letchworth Garden City today

Fact sheets on each of the 32 New Towns are published as a separate Supplement to this report, prepared using data from the 2011 Census, an online survey of chief planning officers in the New Town local authorities, and information from New Town Local Plans and supporting documents. The fact sheets provide a snapshot of the key figures and issues being faced by the UK's New Towns today. Some of the information presented is used in this section, along with some broad statistics about the contribution that the New Towns have made to the United Kingdom.

3.1.1 Letchworth Garden City

Population

- 33,249 people – just over the 32,000 originally envisaged by Ebenezer Howard's Garden City model.

Housing

- 31% of households in Letchworth Garden City are in socially rented tenure – just under 13% higher than the UK average and 9.5% higher than the New Towns average.

Health

- Letchworth is broadly in line with UK and New Town averages with regards to health. 2% more residents declared themselves in 'good health' than the UK and New Towns averages (1% fewer declared 'very good health'), and 0.5-1% fewer declared 'bad'/'very bad health'.

Economy and employment

- 15,615 residents aged 16-74 are in employment (46.46% of the population).

Deprivation

- North Hertfordshire district ranks 283 out of 327 on the English Indices of Multiple Deprivation.

3.1.2 The New Towns

Population

- Britain's New Towns are home to 2,761,272 people:
  - 2,227,627 in England;
  - 268,702 in Scotland;
  - 205,051 in Northern Ireland;
  - 59,892 in Wales;
- Three of England's New Towns are Primary Urban Areas (Milton Keynes, Peterborough, and Northampton), which are defined to represent the largest towns in the UK. Peterborough and Milton Keynes had the fastest growing populations of any city between 2002 and 2012.[43]

Housing and health

- The 2.76 million New Town residents live in 1,150,226 households – 4.3% of the UK's 26.4 million households.
- New Towns provide approximately 5.5% of the UK's socially rented housing and 4.3% of the UK's owner-occupied housing. 23.0% of all households in UK New Towns are socially rented – 4.9% higher than the UK average.
- The average number of households in owner-occupation in the New Towns is 4.9% lower than the UK average. The percentage of privately rented homes in the New Towns is 3.4% lower than the UK average.
- The general health of New Towns residents (self-assessed) is broadly consistent with UK averages.

Economy and employment

- Travel-to-work statistics from the 2011 Census indicate that 45% of journeys to work in the New Towns are made by people driving a car or van – 6.5% higher than the UK average. 5% of journeys are made by passengers in cars or vans, compared with a UK average of 3.5%. Other modes (walking, cycling, and public transport) are broadly in line with UK averages.

Deprivation

- Deprivation statistics for New Towns in England and Wales (which relate to unemployment/lack of education/poor health and housing conditions) are in line with the averages for England and Wales (on average 0.2-0.3% worse than the UK average for deprivation in two, three or four of the deprivation categories listed).
- Of Scotland's 32 local (unitary) authorities, those which include Scotland's New Towns all feature at or above middle ranking for deprivation (1 = most deprived):
  - Cumbernauld: 5 (includes 10.5% of the 20% most deprived data zones in Scotland);
  - East Kilbride: 12
  - Glenrothes: 16
  - Irvine: 3
  - Livingston: 11
- Of 327 local authorities in Northern Ireland, those which include Northern Ireland's New Towns all feature at 20 or above for deprivation (1 = most deprived):
  - Antrim: 20
  - Ballymena: 11
  - Craigavon: 4
  - Derry-Londonderry: 3

3.2 Key planning and development issues in the New Towns

Chief planning officers in New Town areas were asked to identify the top three planning and development issues they were facing. No categories or prompts were provided; respondents were free to provide any response. For those New Towns where no survey was completed, the Local Plan and/or supporting documents were used to determine key development and planning issues. The key planning and development issues identified in the online surveys and in Local Plan documents can be summarised as follows.

3.2.1 Town centre regeneration

More than half of the survey respondents noted the need for regeneration of the town centre, and this was identified as an issue in all the Local Plans. Key issues in relation to town centre regeneration included revitalising the town centre and encouraging a night-time economy, and retail expansion and improving competitiveness. The structure of the town centre was noted by several respondents as being a key issue due to inflexibility and/or limited accessibility.

3.2.2 Estate renewal

The need for renewal of the housing stock was noted by nearly two-thirds of survey respondents as a primary issue. Usually, one or two specific estates were noted as problematic. Although the popularity of the 'Right to Buy' has left many New Towns with much lower levels of social housing than in previous decades (in Scotland this has been a particular issue – there is now too little social housing as a result of the 'Right to Buy'), there is still a higher than average level of housing stock that falls under the responsibility of the local authority. Much of the housing in the New Towns was built quickly, and the innovative approaches to design that were followed have often not stood the test of time.

In some New Towns the community facilities were not adequate and open spaces were not well planned, and they now are in need of renewal.

3.2.3 Accommodating housing growth

Housing land supply and the challenge of accommodating housing growth was the most commonly cited development issue in the planning officer surveys, and was also an issue in Local Plan evidence documents. In several cases, the tight administrative boundary was noted as an issue, with housing needs having to be accommodated in the Green Belt or in neighbouring authorities, which is an issue when the Duty to Co-operate is the only means of strategic planning.

43 *Cities Outlook 2014*. Centre for Cities, 2014. http://www.centreforcities.org/assets/files/2014/Cities_Outlook_2014.pdf

3.2.4 Employment and industry

Improving and protecting employment land and improving access to employment were also common issues raised in the survey responses and found in Local Plans. Retaining and building upon balanced employment as part of wider economic growth and competitiveness was also cited as a key issue.

3.2.5 Infrastructure (particularly transport)

Renewal and development of infrastructure and improving transport networks were common issues in the survey responses and Local Plans. In 2008 the Communities and Local Government Select Committee found that the segregation of uses and the low density of development in some of the New Towns had left residents needing to travel further to some services than in many towns and cities. While some services had been provided within walking distance at local centres, access to town centres relied heavily on the car – a situation exacerbated by inadequate bus services in many of the New Towns.

3.2.6 Other issues

Other issues included parking, the impact of the 'Right to Buy' on housing mix (in Scotland), and retrofitting estates to be low carbon.

3.3 The legacy of New Town designation and the Development Corporations

Chief planning officers were asked what influence the New Town masterplan has on the way the New Towns are planned for today; and what (if any) positive and negative legacies of the New Town designation were evident today.

Positive legacies

- ***Green infrastructure:*** The emphasis on green infrastructure that was a feature of the New Town masterplans remains an important element of the towns today. Green Belts have fulfilled one of their objectives of preventing sprawl.
- ***Transport networks:*** Despite a need for renewal in many New Towns, the planned transport networks were recognised as providing good accessibility and delaying the rise of congestion in many of the New Towns.
- ***Social mix:*** Although large proportions of social housing have brought their own problems in many of the New Towns, the planning teams recognised their positive role in providing affordable homes.
- ***Community development:*** Community development programmes established by the Development Corporations are still present in several of the New Towns, and many survey respondents noted that people like living in the New Towns, and remarked on a sense of civic pride.
- ***The role of artists/town architects is still prominent:*** There was a clear sense of pride in the role of design and designers in the New Towns, with recognition of their part in establishing local character and a sense of place.

Negative legacies

- ***Poor-quality materials and need for whole-estate renewal:*** In many places the building materials used have not stood the test of time, and where such materials were used across whole estates the need for whole-estate renewal has put a significant burden on local authorities.
- ***Lack of long-term management for green space and the public realm:*** Although green infrastructure was cited as a positive legacy for many of the New Towns, a lack of resources to manage them effectively was also noted.
- ***Restrictive boundaries limiting future growth:*** A particular problem was noted where local authority boundaries were drawn close to the New Town boundary (for example at Stevenage). Where the boundary is not tightly drawn, the Green Belts around all of the New Towns have prevented development at their edges, fulfilling one of the key New Town objectives. It is likely that such constraints on growth would not be an issue if a strategic planning system that promoted consideration of 'larger than local' housing needs were in place.
- ***Restrictive covenants on land:*** The ownership and control of some of the assets in the New Towns was noted as an issue – particularly where covenants imposed by the CNT or its successors have restricted the ability of the local authority to redevelop.

The New Towns and Garden Cities are among the UK's most successful and progressive communities. They also contain pockets of the most deprived communities in the UK. There are lessons to be learnt from the way that both the Garden Cities and the New Towns have been developed, and these will be explored further in stage 2 of the TCPA's New Towns and Garden Cities study. The Garden Cities enjoy strong legacies of high-quality environments, vibrant social life and, for Letchworth, a profitable economic model. The New Town approach has demonstrated the strength of the masterplan, the key role of community development, the role of mass public investment in urbanisation (repaid with interest), and speed of delivery; but today many New Towns clearly have specific reinvestment needs that must be addressed. As a new programme of housebuilding is looking increasingly likely, it is also necessary to learn more about why these reinvestment needs have come about, to avoid such issues re-occurring in the future.

3.4 Initial recommendations

- The Government should revisit the priorities set out in 2008 by the Communities and Local Government Select Committee to inform a new programme of Garden Cities or new communities.
- To complement the TCPA's study, the Department for Communities and Local Government should revisit its research priorities and commission in-depth analysis of the balancing agreements between the Commission for the New Towns and the New Town local authorities and the reinvestment needs of the New Towns today.

4

Next steps for the New Towns and Garden Cities study

Stage 2 of the New Towns and Garden Cities study will involve collecting new information about the New Towns and the Garden Cities through a selection of case studies, using signposts identified in this first-stage report as a framework. It will use case studies in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to explore the following.

Site designation and planning consent

It is likely that the identification and designation of sites for new communities will have to be undertaken in the context of localism, and within a democratic and plan-led system.

- ***What can the existing Garden Cities and New Towns tell us about the identification of sites for new communities, and about the role of all tiers of government, and the general public, in this process? What compromises were made to deliver the New Towns at speed, and what can we learn from this?***

Delivery and governance

Delivering new Garden Cities and new communities requires a dedicated delivery body. The Development Corporation model, as set out by the New Towns Act, is still fit for purpose, but requires modernisation.

- ***What can the existing Garden Cities and New Towns tell us about delivery bodies and how best to modernise the New Town Development Corporation model? What can we learn about governance arrangements in the early development stages, and in maturity?***

Finance and investment

A new programme of Garden Cities would require a combination of public and private sector (patient) investment.

- ***What can the Garden Cities and New Towns tell us about how new communities should be funded (including the role of the private sector), and how this finance should be managed as new communities are built out? What was the payback on HM Treasury's investment in the New Towns?***

A new programme of Garden Cities must sit alongside the regeneration of our existing towns and cities.

- ***Many of the existing towns and cities that are in need of regeneration are Garden Cities and New Towns themselves. What can these places tell us about how their development has contributed to their need for renewal (and their sub-regional role)?***

Long-term stewardship

The Garden City principles are the original manifestation of what today is known as 'sustainable development'. Many of these principles are already embedded in good practice in urban design, but some – land value capture for the benefit of the community, community ownership of land, long-term stewardship of assets, and participative governance – are not. A new programme of Garden Cities must apply all the principles.

- ***What can the existing New Towns and Garden Cities tell us about how development land and community assets should be held in the long term, and what organisations should be established to manage them?***

Public support and participation

There is likely to be some level of public opposition to new Garden Cities and new communities, which is a particular challenge to those involved in their delivery.

- ***What was the public response to the New Towns when they were developed, and to what extent has this changed over time? How do people feel about living in and around a settled New Town or Garden City, and what we can learn from this to inform future development?***

One of the key challenges in creating new communities today is planning for a community that does not yet exist. New Garden Cities must be developed with a process of meaningful public engagement from the outset.

- ***What can the existing Garden Cities and New Towns tell us about public engagement and creating a sense of community from the outset in new Garden Cities?***

5

Further information on Garden Cities and New Towns

Useful resources on Garden Cities and New Towns from the TCPA

The TCPA has produced a number of documents as part of its a re-invigorated campaign in support of a new generation of beautiful, inclusive and sustainable Garden Cities and Suburbs. The suite of documents listed below set out the practical actions needed to make 21st century Garden Cities and Suburbs a reality and provide detail and case studies on a wide range of key issues, including planning, investment, land assembly, delivery, and long-term stewardship.

- ***Five-Minute Fact Sheets. A Supplement to New Towns and Garden Cities – Lessons for Tomorrow***
  December 2014
  http://www.tcpa.org.uk/pages/garden-cities.html
- ***Garden Cities Myth-Buster: A Short Guide to Myths and Truths about Creating New Garden Cities***
  September 2014
  http://www.tcpa.org.uk/pages/garden-cities-myth-buster.html
- ***The Art of Building a Garden City – Garden City Standards for the 21st Century***
  July 2014
  http://www.tcpa.org.uk/pages/garden-cities-the-art-of-building-a-garden-city-garden-city-standards-for-the-21st-century-241.html
- ***New Towns Act 2015?***
  February 2014
  http://www.tcpa.org.uk/pages/new-towns-act-2015.html
- ***Built Today, Treasured Tomorrow – A Good Practice Guide to Long-Term Stewardship***
  January 2014
  http://www.tcpa.org.uk/pages/built-today-treasured-tomorrow.html
- ***How Good Can It Be? A Guide to Building Better Places***
  November 2013
  http://www.tcpa.org.uk/pages/gc-community-guide.html
- ***Creating Garden Cities and Suburbs Today: A Guide for Councils***
  March 2013
  http://www.tcpa.org.uk/pages/creating-garden-cities-and-suburbs-today-a-guide-for-councils.html

Museums and study centres with useful resources on Garden Cities and New Towns

- Cumbernauld Museum
  https://www.museumsgalleriesscotland.org.uk/member/cumbernauld-museum
- Garden City Collection
  http://www.gardencitycollection.com/home
- East Anglian Film Archive (Harlow)
  https://www.eafa.org.uk
- Heritage Foundation (Skelmersdale)
  https://www.skemheritage.org.uk/
- Hertfordshire Local Studies Centre (Hatfield, Hemel Hempstead, Letchworth Garden City, Stevenage, Welwyn Garden City)
  http://www.hertfordshiremuseums.org.uk/museum.php?id=40
- Historical Society (Craigavon)
  https://www.craigavonhistoricalsociety.org.uk/craigavon_history.html
- International Garden Cities Exhibition
  http://www.letchworth.com/heritage-foundation/about-us/driven-by-our-charitable-commitments/international-garden-cities-exhibition
- Lanarkshire Film Archive
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=00TLcX1UEx8
- Milton Keynes City Discovery Centre
  http://www.mkcdc.org.uk/
- Redditch Heritage
  https://www.redditchheritage.org.uk/ir-page26.html
- Stevenage Museum
  http://www.stevenage.gov.uk/about-stevenage/museum/
- Tyne & Wear Archives (Washington and Newton Aycliffe)
  http://www.twmuseums.org.uk/

The New Towns: Five-minute fact sheets

The TCPA has produced a set of 'Five-minute fact sheets' about each of the New Towns, using Census data, development plans, and online interviews with those in charge of planning and developing the New Towns today, supplemented by information from the *New Towns Record*. and other sources. These fact sheets are presented in a separate Appendix to this document, *The New Towns: Five-Minute Fact Sheets*.

The fact sheets are available from the TCPA website:
http://www.tcpa.org.uk/pages/garden-cities-259.html

Town and Country Planning Association
17 Carlton House Terrace
London SW1Y 5AS

+44 (0)20 7930 8903 tcpa@tcpa.org.uk www.tcpa.org.uk