

re-imagining garden cities for the 21st century

benefits and lessons in bringing forward
comprehensively planned new communities





Supported by



***Re-imagining Garden Cities for the 21st Century: Benefits and Lessons in Bringing forward
Comprehensively Planned New Communities***

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Foreword

Ebenezer Howard and the Garden City pioneers have left Britain with an impressive legacy. From the world-renowned Letchworth and Welwyn Garden Cities through to the countless places inspired by them, both in the UK and abroad – everything from Garden Suburbs through to the post-war New Towns programme.

Today, we still face the primary challenges confronted by Howard and his followers: meeting our housing shortage, generating jobs and creating beautiful and inclusive places. However, we have also the new challenges of globalised markets and the urgent need to adapt to and mitigate the impacts of climate change.

Although it is over 40 years since the last New Town was designated, the TCPA believes that new comprehensively planned sustainable communities have a powerful contribution to make to Britain's future. They deliver housing, but also create jobs. They provide the opportunity and the economies of scale to innovate and create truly high-quality places. New communities also offer a powerful prospect to put in place new governance structures that put people at the heart of developing new communities.

This report aims to bring together the pragmatic lessons of the Garden Cities and New Towns in taking forward new, large-scale communities. It seeks to examine these lessons in the context of the Government's planning reform agenda to give people greater power over the places in which they live, and in the context of the tough financial circumstances faced by both the public and private sectors.

We must find a way to move forward into a new era of building attractive, resilient and sustainable places. Where better to start this journey than to rediscover and re-imagine the high-quality, collaborative and pioneering spirit of the Garden Cities for the 21st century; exploring further public-private partnerships and new governance structures that connect people and planning. We hope that this report, supported by Land Securities, will mark the beginning of a resurgence in one of the most successful stories in Britain's history.

Lee Shostak
Chair of the TCPA Board

Executive Summary



Housing at Leitchworth Garden City – exemplar high-quality large-scale development

The UK has an unprecedented record in building Garden Cities and New Towns. Although it is now over 40 years since the last of our New Towns was designated, they continue to provide a wealth of experience upon which we can draw.

The Garden Cities demonstrated that where people came forward with a collaborative and co-operative approach, the result was high-quality, well designed places. Significant backing for the New Towns from central government enabled an unprecedented level of development, but left open questions about democratic accountability and the role of local people in their communities. What is clear is that we must learn from past experience and find new models, both for funding and to place communities at the heart of the development process.

Today's housing challenge is compounded by a financial crisis and an ageing population, as well as new global pressures from climate change and economic restructuring. As a result, it is important **to rediscover our planning heritage and re-imagine the Garden Cities for the 21st century – and in particular to rediscover the benefits of delivering attractive, sustainable, comprehensively planned new communities.**

Planning a new community from scratch provides a powerful means of delivering much needed housing in a holistic and comprehensive way, rather than through piecemeal development. Not only can a new community deliver more housing with much less environmental impact, it also presents a significant opportunity to place people at the heart of shaping their

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new village or town. By establishing community governance structures from the outset, we can ensure that local people are able to exercise genuine influence over what the new community will look like. Well planned new communities can also generate economic growth and create new local jobs, both through their delivery and by the creation of new business hubs.

The Government is *'creating the freedom and the incentives for those places that want to grow, to do so, and to reap the benefits, [providing] a reason to say yes'*.¹ Although the prospects for large-scale investment might generally appear bleak under current economic conditions, in places where local people have identified the need for more housing, comprehensively planned new communities could be a positive part of the solution, because:

- New, innovative financial models are emerging, including Government incentives and new financial mechanisms ranging from tax increment finance to local ownership of utility companies.
- There is renewed interest from the public and private sectors in comprehensively planned development, rather than a piecemeal approach that could damage environmental assets.
- There is a desire to spread the benefits and risks of development in public-private partnerships.
- The new Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) could make the case for new and expanded villages, towns and cities by linking housing to economic growth and jobs.

If the Government can give long-term backing to those developments that have local support, the certainty that this would offer can generate the confidence needed for funding and delivery.

This report identifies three key issues that must be addressed if the benefits of comprehensively planned new communities are to be realised:

- Adopting the most effective community governance structures.
- Getting the masterplan right.
- Getting the investment model right.

Local people should be at the heart of the process of deciding where our new communities are located and of developing a vision for their development, putting forward ideas on where the shops, offices or homes should go and what green spaces should be created and enhanced.² The issue of community governance has particular resonance for the Coalition Government's ambitions for localism – giving people the freedom to take responsibility, creating a new dynamism, and so helping to make better places.³

'The advantages of the most energetic and active town life, with all the beauty and delight of the country, may be secured in perfect combination'

Ebenezer Howard: *To-Morrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform*, 1898

This report draws together existing research and reflects on the opportunities for comprehensively planned new settlements in the new era of localism.⁴ It identifies some important paradigm shifts that have taken place around the need for a strong vision, the relationship between people and planning, the relative roles of the private and public sectors, and the creation of new communities. The report looks at the legacy of the Garden Cities and New Towns and whether they have managed to deliver successful, sustainable places that people continue to enjoy living and working in. In particular, it looks at Welwyn Garden City, Stevenage and Peterborough. Alongside the historic examples, the report also takes a 'snapshot' look at some contemporary developments, helping to distil the modern debate on bringing forward comprehensively planned new communities.

The lessons that the report draws are not new; but they need to be restated and brought together in today's new and radically changed political context, in which there has been a fundamental shift from the central and regional to the local and neighbourhood levels. Drawing on past experience will help to ensure that the lessons of how to plan attractive and resilient communities are not lost and that past failures are not repeated. Seeking to move on from the stigma that has sometimes been associated with new developments, the report calls for a recommitment to high quality and the rediscovery of the powerful sense of idealism and enthusiasm and the collaborative and pioneering spirit that characterised the Garden Cities. If comprehensively planned new communities are to be successful, this pioneering spirit must be recaptured, and the important connection between building high-quality homes and job creation must be rediscovered.

1 Decentralisation Minister Greg Clark, in 'Planning power from Town Hall and Whitehall to local people'. Press Notice. Department for Communities and Local Government, 6 Dec. 2010, <http://www.communities.gov.uk/news/corporate/1788684>

2 *Open Source Planning*. Green Paper No. 14. Conservative Policy, Feb. 2010. http://www.conservatives.com/news/news_stories/2010/02/~/_media/Files/Green%20Papers/planning-green-paper.ashx; and Localism Bill. House of Commons. TSO, Dec. 2010. <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmbills/126/11126part1.pdf>

3 Prime Minister David Cameron, in *The Observer*, 12 Sept. 2010

4 The bibliography in Appendix 1 in this report contains a summary of key research in this field

Key findings

Governance – people and planning

- Local authorities and their communities are at the heart of delivering new places. The opportunities for large-scale, high-quality and sustainable new places – and, crucially, the benefits that they can offer – need to be communicated to and better understood by councils and residents alike.
- Masterplanning for new communities should be as inclusive, participative and representative as possible, to ensure that plans are informed by local peoples' knowledge, concerns and aspirations. If engagement is to be meaningful, it must begin before the first draft masterplan is created, to ensure that local wishes are taken into account.
- If new communities are to be successful, they need strong political support and community leadership, with a clear vision and strong commitment.
- Creating and maintaining momentum around a new community is integral to its success. Development delivery vehicles must work closely with the community to promote themselves to potential residents, the surrounding communities and local businesses.

Vision and masterplan

- Experience shows that a strong vision of high quality and sustainability is essential in delivering places that will stand the test of time.
- A holistic, comprehensive masterplan is a fundamental requirement for a successful new community. The masterplan should act as a framework for development, rather than a blueprint, with the flexibility to adapt to change. Flexibility is needed to ensure that the masterplan acts as a touchstone for local people as they take forward their community. Adaptability is essential to the long-term resilience of places, as it is impossible to foresee every social, economic and environmental change.
- New planned communities must meet a full range of housing needs through a varied housing offer which includes high-quality social, affordable and market homes.
- The housing and jobs offer must be supported by a good local transport network, while acknowledging the need for and inevitability of wider commuting and movement.

Implementation

- Where local people have identified a need for large-scale new housing development in their area, central government should support that community and the relevant local authority (or authorities) through a long-term partnership approach. This partnership between central and local government should recognise the need for long-term certainty in order to secure the financial support and expertise of developers.
- Adequate long-term investment is vital to the success of a new community. The Garden Cities were undercapitalised from the start, which slowed progress. Capital investment, planning powers and co-ordination are pivotal factors in the delivery of comprehensively planned new communities.
- Any new comprehensively planned community needs a long-term, dedicated means of delivery, with a multi-disciplinary team. The team must share the common goal of bringing forward the new community in the most sustainable way, with a clear transition plan to local authority control and long-term asset management.
- The funding and delivery of infrastructure must be carefully co-ordinated, and the roles of the various agencies involved must be clearly defined.
- Infrastructure delivery should be planned and delivered in parallel with community development.

The need for detailed research

- The report endorses the findings of House of Commons Select Committee reports from 2002 and 2008^{5,6} that a comprehensive appraisal of the New Towns programme should fully assess its successes and failures. As well as providing lessons for today's new settlements, such analysis would be a positive step towards ensuring that the communities living in Garden Cities and New Towns are revitalised and renewed, identifying where better decisions can be made and what steps, if any, need to be taken to rejuvenate town centres and ensure that the towns' housing and employment base remain fit for purpose. Without this appraisal it will not be possible to fully develop an understanding of how to create the resilient, attractive and sustainable communities of the future.

5 *New Towns: Their Problems and Future*. HC 603. House of Commons Transport, Local Government and the Regions Committee, 19th Report, Session 2001-02. TSO, Jul. 2002. <http://www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk/pa/cm200102/cmselect/cmtlgr/603/60302.htm>

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

1

Setting the scene for new comprehensively planned communities

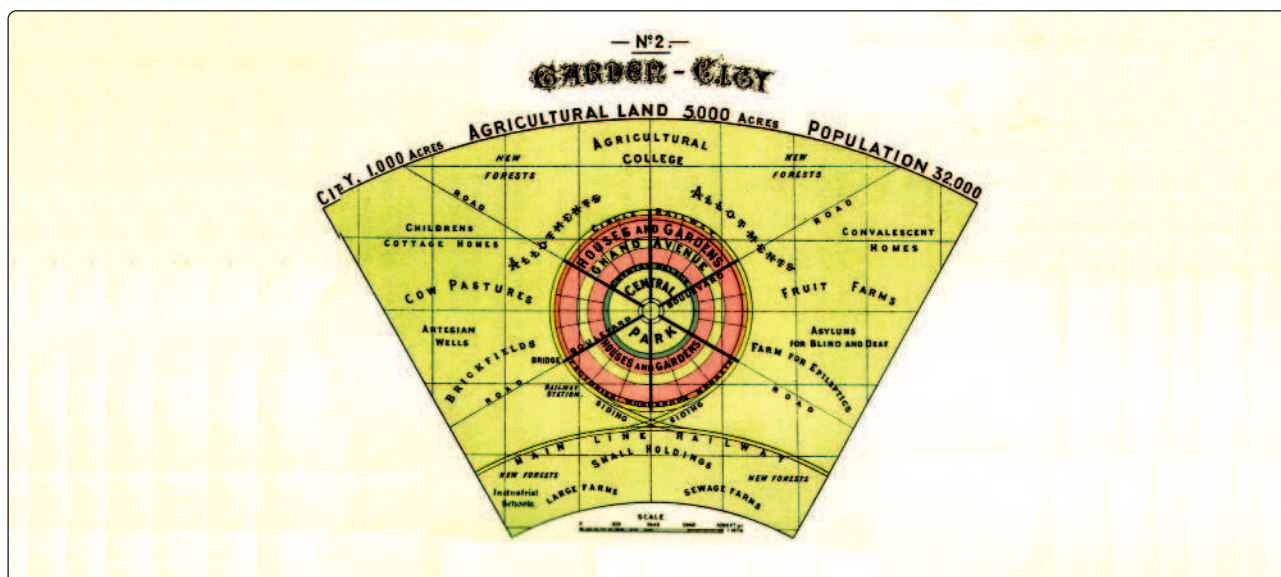


Diagram of the Garden City, taken from Ebenezer Howard's *To-morrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform*

The UK has been building comprehensively planned new communities for over 100 years. The Coalition Government's ambitions to radically devolve power to the local level and promote economic growth provide an opportunity to re-examine the role that new settlements can play in meeting housing need, promoting quality of life, and creating jobs.

1.1 The development of the Garden City and the New Towns programme

Some of the earliest examples of planned settlements are provided by early model industrial villages such as

Saltaire, Port Sunlight and Bournville. However, it was Ebenezer Howard's Garden Cities that marked the beginning of large-scale comprehensively planned new communities.⁷ In 1898 Howard set out details of a new form of settlement, the 'Garden City', in his book *To-Morrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform*. The ideas in the book were his answer not only to contemporary housing problems but also to other issues in late-Victorian society. The radical element of his book was not simply the importance he attached to good planning but the proposal that, once the initial building costs were paid off, the whole of the new community would share in its future wealth, with social and other facilities funded from income accrued. The book set out the mechanism by which this would be achieved. Moreover, Howard (unlike some of his fellow campaigners) was sceptical about central government involvement, putting

⁷ English Heritage's publication, *English Garden Cities: A Introduction* (Dec. 2010. <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/publications/english-garden-cities-introduction/>), sets out in detail the history of the Garden Cities movement and follows on from a TCPA Policy Advice Note, *Garden City Settlements* (Oct. 2008. <http://www.tcpa.org.uk/pages/garden-city-settlements.html>)



Ebenezer Howard, the inventor of the Garden City, bowed in the face of oratory

his trust instead in voluntary effort. His vision led to the founding of the TCPA (as the Garden City Association, established to promote the Garden City idea and to build the first demonstration model), and subsequently to the world's first Garden Cities at Letchworth and Welwyn.

Despite the progress made in the first two (and the only fully-fledged) Garden Cities in Britain,⁸ central government came to take on a much more defined role in the delivery of housing and new communities, leading to a very different pattern of provision in the rebuilding of Britain after the Second World War. The Barlow and Scott Reports and Sir Patrick Abercrombie's celebrated Greater London Plan of 1944 made the case for planned decentralisation of the population. This was then carried into legislation, with broad political support, in the 1946 New Towns Act and the Town and Country Planning Act of 1947. New Towns were wholly driven by central government, which provided the funding and also selected who would be responsible for the development of each settlement.

Over a period of some 30 years following the end of the Second World War, inspired by the Garden Cities, the nation built 32 new towns, providing homes for over 2 million people by the time they were completed.⁹ The very scale of the New Towns programme made it unthinkable at the time that private enterprise or voluntary organisations could have done the job.

It was not until the 1970s that the pendulum started to swing back again. Believing that it should devote a greater share of resources to the ailing inner cities, central government pulled back from direct engagement with New Towns, preferring to leave their future management to local authorities. However, the latter were not always well equipped to assume their

new responsibilities, and the record of New Towns since then is mixed.

The contemporary debate is fast-moving. The previous Labour Government placed a strong emphasis on public-private partnerships. In 2010 the new Coalition Government's Localism Bill set out a radical devolution of planning powers to the local level and legislation to abolish regional planning. If there is to be a new generation of comprehensively planned new communities, it is apparent that local authorities and community groups will have to, and should, play a larger part, working in partnership with private enterprise.

1.2 Learning the lessons – useful insights for today

This report examines the legacy of the Garden Cities and New Towns and considers whether they have proved to be successful, sustainable places. Alongside the historic examples, it also takes a 'snapshot' look at some contemporary developments, helping to distil the modern debate on bringing forward comprehensively planned new communities.

The insights presented in this report will be useful for policy-makers and practitioners interested in creative ways of meeting the challenges of delivering more employment opportunities, high-quality homes, and healthy, vibrant communities. The report draws on a rich vein of experience from earlier initiatives to support the case for comprehensively planned new communities.

In 2002 a House of Commons Committee published a report on New Towns which included a recommendation

⁸ Wythenshawe was intended as a third Garden City, but some essential Garden City qualities were lost in the race to provide overspill housing for nearby Manchester

⁹ A. Alexander: *Britain's New Towns: From Garden Cities to Sustainable Communities*. Routledge, 2009

that lessons be drawn for the future ‘from these huge planning experiments’.¹⁰ Professor David Lock, speaking for the TCPA, argued strongly that it was time for some serious research on the subject. However, the government response was only partial, and when a later Committee returned to the subject in 2008 it concluded that ‘there remains a need for the Government to conduct further research on the New Towns experience’. It went on to stress that there were ‘valuable lessons to be learnt from the New Towns programme in the context of current planning and development policy, in particular the ‘eco-towns’ programme’.¹¹



Early poster advertising the attractions of Welwyn Garden City

One of the most detailed appraisals of the New Towns has been the *Transferable Lessons from the New Towns* report, drawn up by Oxford Brookes University and published in July 2006.¹² However, yet further appraisal is needed, and this report recommends a full review of the UK’s Garden Cities and the post-war New Towns programme.

This report examines the varied experience of a small selection of Garden Cities and New Towns, alongside some contemporary examples of new community development. By establishing and bringing together meaningful lessons from past and present experience, it aims to assist in the successful delivery of future new communities. It explores three themes that are especially pertinent to the current opportunities for and challenges in delivering comprehensively planned new communities – governance, masterplanning, and implementation. These themes emerged from a literature review.¹³ A bibliography is included in this report as Appendix 1. Each theme includes specific questions which were explored during a series of project workshops and interviews:¹⁴

- **Theme 1: Governance – people and planning:** How were people and communities involved in the planning process? How can we engage people and encourage them to support new communities?
- **Theme 2: The masterplan and vision:** Was there a clear vision and common principles? How were plans taken forward? What can the examples tell us about the masterplanning process?
- **Theme 3: Implementation:** How – and how effectively – was infrastructure delivered? What were the mechanisms for ongoing maintenance? How do we fund and deliver comprehensively planned new communities today?

The themes are considered in Sections 2-4 of the report by examining the successes and failures of selected comprehensively planned new communities. Welwyn Garden City embodies some 90 years of planning experience. Stevenage and Peterborough offer insights into two different forms of New Town – one a self-standing community, and the other an extension of an existing city. There are no contemporary examples on the scale of the Garden Cities or New Towns in the UK, and so the modern illustrations are much more varied in approach in terms of funding, delivery and size. The report draws upon a number of illustrative examples in the early stages of development, including a mixture of urban extensions and new settlements. These examples include Lodge Hill in Medway, North Harlow, and Hampton in Peterborough. While this report focuses on lessons from the UK, it also draws upon the experience of Vauban, in Freiburg, Southern Germany where a new eco-neighbourhood has been developed.

¹⁰ *New Towns: Their Problems and Future*. HC 603. House of Commons Transport, Local Government and the Regions Committee, 19th Report, Session 2001-02. TSO, Jul. 2002. <http://www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk/pa/cm200102/cmselect/cmtlgr/603/60302.htm>

¹¹ *New Towns: Follow-Up*. HC 889. House of Commons Communities and Local Government Committee, Ninth Report, Session 2007-08. TSO, Jun. 2008. <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200708/cmselect/cmcomloc/889/889.pdf>

¹² *Transferable Lessons from the New Towns*. Department of Planning, Oxford Brookes University, for the Department for Communities and Local Government, Jul. 2006. <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/transferablelessons2>

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Three workshops were held in Welwyn Garden City, Stevenage, and Peterborough. A series of one-to-one interviews were also held. The discussions included local authority officers (planners, heritage professionals, and community and economic development workers), representatives from the former New Town Development Corporations (charged with the development of the New Towns), civic groups and regeneration groups

‘An element of economy which will simply be incalculable. This is to be found in the fact that the town is definitely planned, so that the whole question of municipal administration may be dealt with by one far-reaching scheme’

Ebenezer Howard: *To-Morrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform, 1898*

1.3 The benefits of comprehensively planned new communities

The case for comprehensively planned new communities can be made in two parts. First, new developments offer an important part of the solution to meeting the nation’s acute housing shortage.¹⁵ Second, well planned new communities provide the opportunity to create high-quality, sustainable places.

The UK’s housing shortage cannot be addressed exclusively on a plot-by-plot basis. An ambitious portfolio of development solutions are needed to meet the housing challenge. However, meeting the nation’s housing needs is about more than just delivering housing units: new developments must recognise the three pillars of sustainable development – economic, environmental and social. The achievement of high standards must be part of a holistic approach that considers how homes and communities can be made attractive places in which to live and work, socially inclusive and resilient to climate change.

1.4 A fresh perspective – localism, incentives and economic growth

The Coalition Government has set out, through the Localism Bill, to radically reform the planning system ‘by taking power away from officials and putting it into the hands of those who know most about their neighbourhood – local people themselves’.¹⁶ Alongside the Bill, the New Homes Bonus is intended to fulfil the Government’s Coalition Agreement commitment to provide local authorities with incentives to deliver housing growth.¹⁷ Having commenced in April 2011, the Bonus match-funds the additional Council Tax potential from increases in effective housing stock, with an additional amount for affordable homes, for six years after development.¹⁸ Through this incentive mechanism the Government aims to ensure that the economic benefits of housing growth are more visible to the local authorities and communities where growth takes place.

Comprehensively planned new communities can help to deliver another of the Government’s economic priorities – creating a fairer and more balanced economy through encouraging growth, as set out in the Local Growth White Paper¹⁹ and the Government’s *Plan for Growth*. The role of local areas in this rebalancing of economic growth is crucial, and well planned new communities could be a key driver in releasing the economic potential of an area. The unique opportunity that comprehensively planned new communities can offer should not be underestimated – not just to deliver much needed housing and embed the best housing that can be achieved in high-quality, sustainable development right from the outset, but also to reconnect people and planning and to create jobs through the delivery of development and the promotion of long-term business growth.

This report examines how, in the new era of localism combined with financial retrenchment, comprehensively planned new communities can be delivered.

15 A. Holmans, with C. Whitehead: *New and Novel Household Projections for England with a 2008 Base – Summary and Review*. Town & Country Planning Tomorrow Series Paper 11. TCPA, May 2011. <http://www.tcpa.org.uk/pages/new-and-novel-household-projections-for-england-with-a-2008-base.html>; and the Government’s most recent household formation projections, Household Projections, 2008 to 2033, England. Department for Communities and Local Government, 26 Nov. 2010. <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/statistics/pdf/1780763.pdf>

16 Decentralisation Minister Greg Clark, in ‘Planning power from Town Hall and Whitehall to local people’. Press Notice. Department for Communities and Local Government, 6 Dec. 2010. <http://www.communities.gov.uk/news/corporate/1788684>

17 G. Shapps: *New Homes Bonus*. Written Ministerial Statement. Department for Communities and Local Government, 17 Feb. 2011. <http://www.communities.gov.uk/statements/corporate/newhomesbonus>

18 The TCPA has identified a number of potentially unresolved questions around the implementation of the New Homes Bonus. These are set out in detail in *Policy Analysis of Housing and Planning Reform*. TCPA, supported by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, Mar. 2011. <http://www.tcpa.org.uk/pages/policy-analysis-of-housing-and-planning-reform.html>

19 *Local Growth: Realising Every Place’s Potential*. Cm 7961. Local Growth White Paper. Department for Business, Innovation and Skills. HM Government, Oct. 2010. <http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/biscore/economic-development/docs/cm7961-local-growth-white-paper.pdf>

2

Theme 1: The new settlements experience – governance

2.1 How were people and local communities involved in the planning process?

The early Garden Cities were led by small groups of entrepreneurial individuals in a collaborative and co-operative spirit, with a long-term vision to create a community with extensive voluntary and co-operative activities. Early residents of the Garden Cities and New Towns benefited from only limited amenities and infrastructure, but nevertheless created a sense of community and belonging in a way that echoes the Government's vision for a 'Big Society' today. Peterborough had a dedicated community development officer, and Welwyn Garden City encouraged a number of associations for sports and leisure pursuits. Stevenage had very popular amateur dramatics clubs as well as an arts centre.

A snap-shot of Welwyn Garden City

- Town in the Borough of Welwyn Hatfield, Hertfordshire.
- Population c. 42,000.
- Established in 1922, as the second Garden City (after Letchworth) and initially built with private capital. Later developed by the State as one of the first generation of post-1945 New Towns.

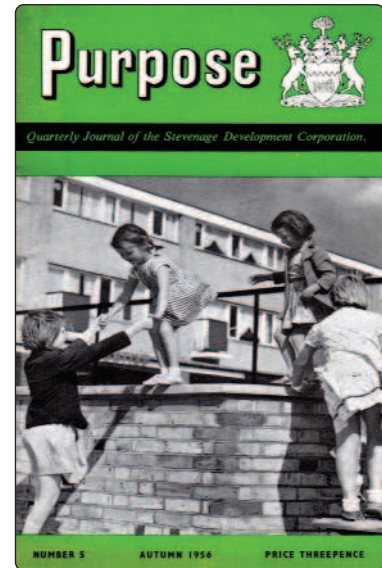
Although the early pioneers of the Garden Cities had strong community values, there were no formal consultation processes to engage residents. Before the publication of the Skeffington Report on public participation²⁰ in 1969 – produced in response to criticisms that the planning system was out of touch with people's lives, and outlining the importance of actively engaging people in planning and the early stages of masterplanning – there was a strong emphasis on community development, but engagement of people in and around development sites at the outset was variable. As a result, it is difficult to gauge the exact level of community involvement in the governance of the earlier New Towns, such as Stevenage. The attitude taken initially was that a community needed to be 'developed' rather than actively engaged.²¹ It was the Skeffington Report which showed how development could be preceded by meetings, debate and consultation. The sense of imposition felt by those in the locality led to severe hostility towards the initiative in Stevenage, and many on the Board of Stevenage's Development Corporation (which included senior military personnel) had little experience of public consultation. However, in 1948 an exhibition mounted in a shop window in the small existing settlement (now known as Stevenage 'Old Town') explained the proposed development plan;²² and from 1955 Stevenage Development Corporation produced and delivered to all residents a quarterly publication, *Purpose*, on the progress of development.

The formation of residents associations enabled local people to put pressure on the Development Corporation to tackle delays in getting infrastructure and amenities

20 A. Skeffington: *People and Planning*. Report of the Committee on Public Participation in Planning ('Skeffington Report'). HMSO, 1969

21 *Transferable Lessons from the New Towns*. Department of Planning, Oxford Brookes University, for the Department for Communities and Local Government, Jul. 2006, pp.39-46. <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/transferablelessons2>

22 E. Harwood: 'New Towns'. Unpublished research cited in an English Heritage Memorandum to the House of Commons Select Committee on Transport, Local Government and the Regions, 2002. <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200102/cmselect/cmtlgr/603/603m44.htm>



The pioneering spirit of the early residents of Welwyn Garden City fostered co-operation and community values, while Stevenage Development Corporation updated residents on the progress of the New Town through a quarterly publication, *Purpose*

delivered on time. Most of the 'New Town blues' experienced by early residents were the result of a lack of social networks rather than delays in infrastructure provision.²³ To address these problems, housing and public relations officers in Stevenage became community development officers. Lacking informal social events and networking opportunities at the outset, the town saw a big drive to create amateur dramatic and other social groups, just as there had been at Welwyn Garden City. It was, as much as anything, the will of the residents that made the town succeed, and to this day there still remains a strong New Town identity.²⁴

A snap-shot of Stevenage New Town

- A town and Borough in Hertfordshire.
- Population c. 80,000.
- Built on a largely greenfield site as one of the first generation of post-1945 New Towns. Handed over (apart from the residual land assets and industrial/business holdings) to the local authority after the end of central government / Development Corporation control.

New Town Development Corporations learnt from the experience at Stevenage. Peterborough was the first of the New Towns to demonstrate community consultation in a form that we might recognise today. In response to the Skeffington Report, Peterborough Development Corporation took the original masterplan

and created an interim version which it exhibited to the public in October 1969. The masterplan was viewed by over 3,000 people and was the subject over 500 written comments before being revised and submitted to the Minister. This was followed by a further exhibition and a public inquiry. In May 1971 the Minister finally confirmed the plan. This formalised commitment to public consultation was in direct contrast to the earlier experiences in Welwyn Garden City and Stevenage. However, as an expansion of an existing town, Peterborough had the added advantage of an existing community with which to consult.

The Garden Cities and New Towns worked hard at creating a sense of momentum around their development. In Welwyn, Howard was frequently seen out and about on the building sites, offering encouragement. The *Welwyn Garden City News* was delivered each Friday to every house. Welwyn Stores (owned by the development company) provided fresh local food with a narrow profit margin. Alongside community groups and arts associations, there was a Health Association, which organised an ambulance, a cottage hospital, and infant welfare and ante-natal classes. An Education Association provided social and educational events, starting the first school in a hut²⁵ and eventually running a free library.

The leadership and vision shown in Welwyn Garden City – and in Letchworth – were crucial. While there may have not been input from local people into the masterplan, the ultimate goal was to create a place that would cultivate voluntary and charitable activities, with individuals 'enjoying the fullest rights of free association and exhibiting the most varied forms of individual and co-operative work and endeavour'.²⁶

23 C. Ward: *New Town, Home Town: The Lessons of Experience*. Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 1993

24 A. Alexander: *Britain's New Towns: From Garden Cities to Sustainable Communities*. Routledge, 2009

25 M. de Soissons: *Welwyn Garden City: A Town Designed for Healthy Living*. Cambridge University Press, 1988

26 T. Hunt: *Building Jerusalem*. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2004, p.319

2.2 People and planning – exploring new models

The socio-political backdrop in which the Garden Cities and New Towns were brought forward was very different from that which pertains today. While their individual approaches were different (private initiatives versus a central government programme of housing growth), and acknowledging that there was local opposition to development, there was a broad consensus on the need to build more homes, particularly after the First and Second World Wars.

In contrast, and perhaps as a result of some badly planned and poor-quality building and fears of increased pressure on existing infrastructure, that kind of consensus for development no longer exists. However, there is still a housing shortfall in the UK, and it is imperative that the right kind of development happens in the right place in a way which is sensitive to the aspirations of local people. Open and honest communication of the benefits and impacts of new development is needed if communities' concerns are to be overcome. A fundamental way to gain support and ensure quality is to secure active engagement with local people from the beginning. Planning consent is part of a democratically accountable process, and development should be undertaken only with public support.

Professionals involved in planning a new community must also be encouraged to formulate their vision, to ensure that there is informed input on the kind of strategic issues with which local people may be less familiar. The challenge today is to reconcile the tension between actively involving local people and reflecting their wishes in any masterplan while also recognising the importance of a strong vision and the need to consider strategic issues and constraints. Ultimately, effective planning requires consensus-building and mediation to ensure that all voices are heard in the development process.

A snap-shot of Peterborough New Town

- **A cathedral city and unitary authority area in the East of England.**
- **Population c. 164,000.**
- **Developed under a Development Corporation as a 'New Town' extension to a large existing settlement and now the responsibility of the local authority.**

The Government's localism ambitions are about giving local people power over their communities and reconnecting them with the planning process. There must be much greater scope for input from the local

A snap-shot of North Harlow

- **Development at the proposal stage; intended to form an extension to Harlow, a first-generation New Town.**
- **Comprehensively planned for 10,000 new homes.**

Participative and representative democracy

Planning must be seen as part of wider project of invigorating local democracy; it cannot work in isolation. Representative democracy must remain the final arbiter of the outcome of decision-making as it provides the most accountable model available. Compared with participative democracy, it is less open to distortion by one narrow sectional interest. However, participative democracy should govern the process of decision-making. This implies a framework with clear opportunities to shape decisions at the earliest possible opportunity.

community on planning proposals right from the beginning, while recognising that local champions and the spirit of collaboration are important in achieving a long-term goal. Despite much progress in this area, for comprehensively planned new communities there remains the common problem of how to engage a community which does not yet exist in consultations on proposed development.

Identifying areas where there is local support for development is imperative. Those involved in bringing forward new development must work closely with communities in determining their vision for a place, initially with nearby residents and businesses and then eventually with new residents as they move in.

Contemporary examples illustrate how early and ongoing consultation has become integral to new development. The proposed extension of North Harlow encapsulates the contemporary debate around bringing forward comprehensively planned new communities in the face of low levels of public support. The site has a long history of proposed development, and the proposal is a private sector led initiative with two partners – Land Securities and Places for People. Box 1 outlines how the partnership has approached early engagement and future governance structures.

The Government has set out to rebuild people's trust in the planning system and give them greater power over

Box 1 North Harlow – establishing the communities' needs and aspirations

Although the North Harlow extension is not the first masterplanned proposal that a developer has put forward for the site, the Joint Venture Partnership (JVP) had to consider how it could begin from scratch in engaging with people on the benefits of growth – such as creating jobs and affordable housing – and undo any preconceptions left by previous proposals. The most important part of engaging with the surrounding communities has been to understand their priorities, ambitions and concerns for their local area before drafting a masterplan. The JVP used an independent company to mediate between the development group and the local community.

The engagement process also sought to identify the key factors influencing local people's views and fed this back into the masterplanning process:

- **Phase 1:** A survey questionnaire was sent to 14,000 addresses in and around Harlow and East Hertfordshire in September 2009 to establish how and where people access local services and facilities. It also asked them to rate these services.
- **Phase 2:** A series of drop-in exhibition sessions were held in Harlow and East Hertfordshire in October 2009, informed by the survey from phase 1. This provided an opportunity for local people to consider the implications of development and how they would choose to shape it.
- **Phase 3:** A series of face-to-face forums were held and a 'People's Panel' was created to represent a proxy community on the site.
- **Phase 4:** The first draft masterplan was introduced with a week-long exhibition offering local people the opportunity to comment and consider whether their wishes and concerns were being addressed.

In parallel to this process, newsletters have been issued by the JVP to promote a line of communication and to create a sense of identity for the proposed extension.



The masterplan for Lodge Hill, within the Medway area, is intended to evolve through discussion with the community, through involvement activities such as themed workshops and engagement with a local secondary school, as discussed in Section 3.1

the decisions that affect them through the Localism Bill. New communities offer a unique opportunity to embed the principles of active engagement and participation from the outset.

One model being explored by Land Securities is the use of 'Community Companies' for new large-scale developments. Figure 1 illustrates how, under a localist approach, the range of partners working as part of the Community Company for North Harlow would evolve as the development progressed. In the Community Company model, following site assembly the local planning authority (and parish, town or county councils where appropriate) and the local community would

have a stake in the Company, contributing to the masterplanning process and site preparation. The Community Company would then work with housebuilders before incorporating social infrastructure institutions, such as schools and hospitals. Once the development is complete, the Community Company could then be established as a Trust or similar body with an interest in the town's continuing progress, holding a number of community assets for the ongoing benefit of the town. The structure of how a Community Company might work is outlined in Figure 2.

The Community Company model aims to reconcile the need for clear financial and regulatory decision-making

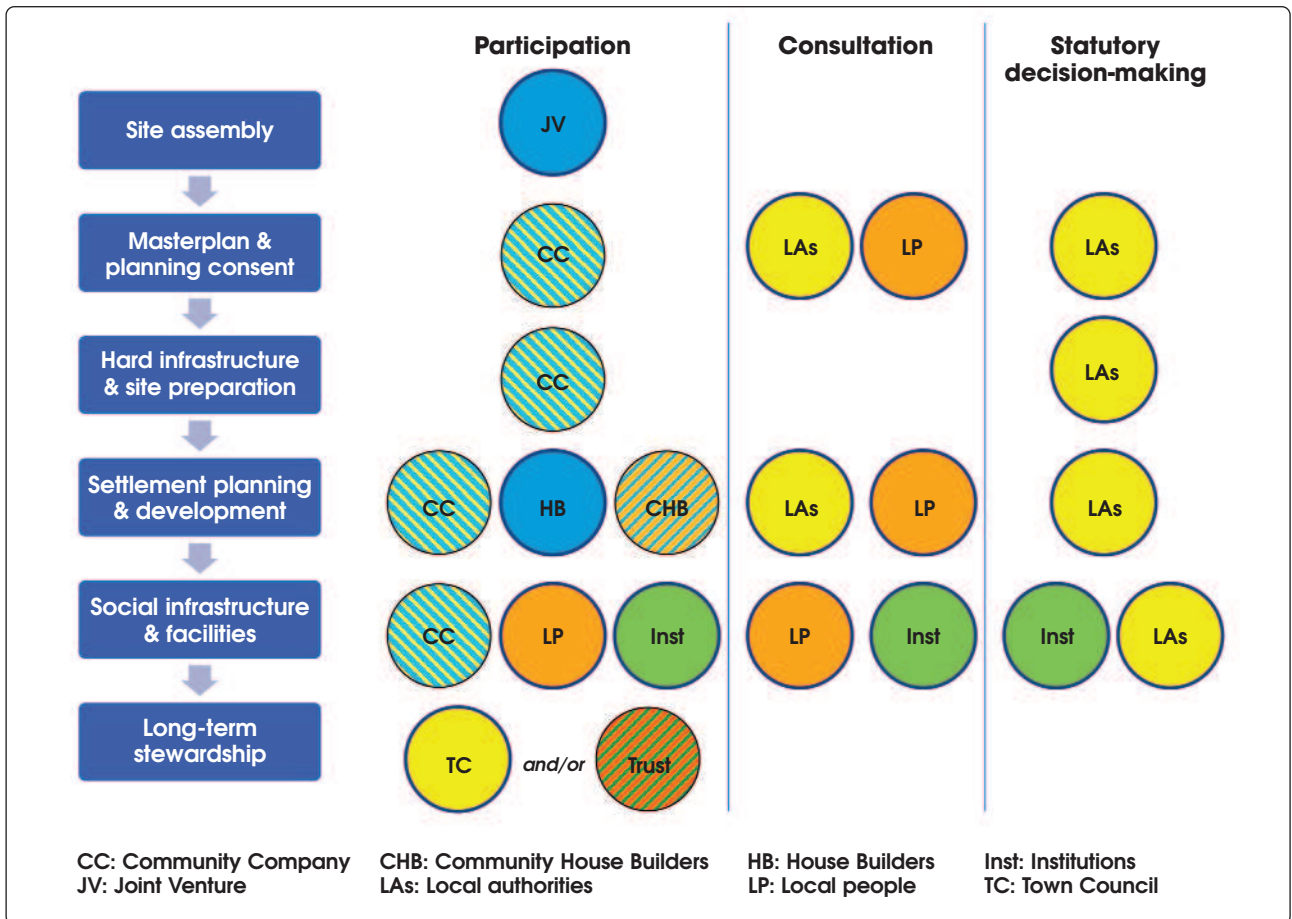


Figure 1 The localist approach

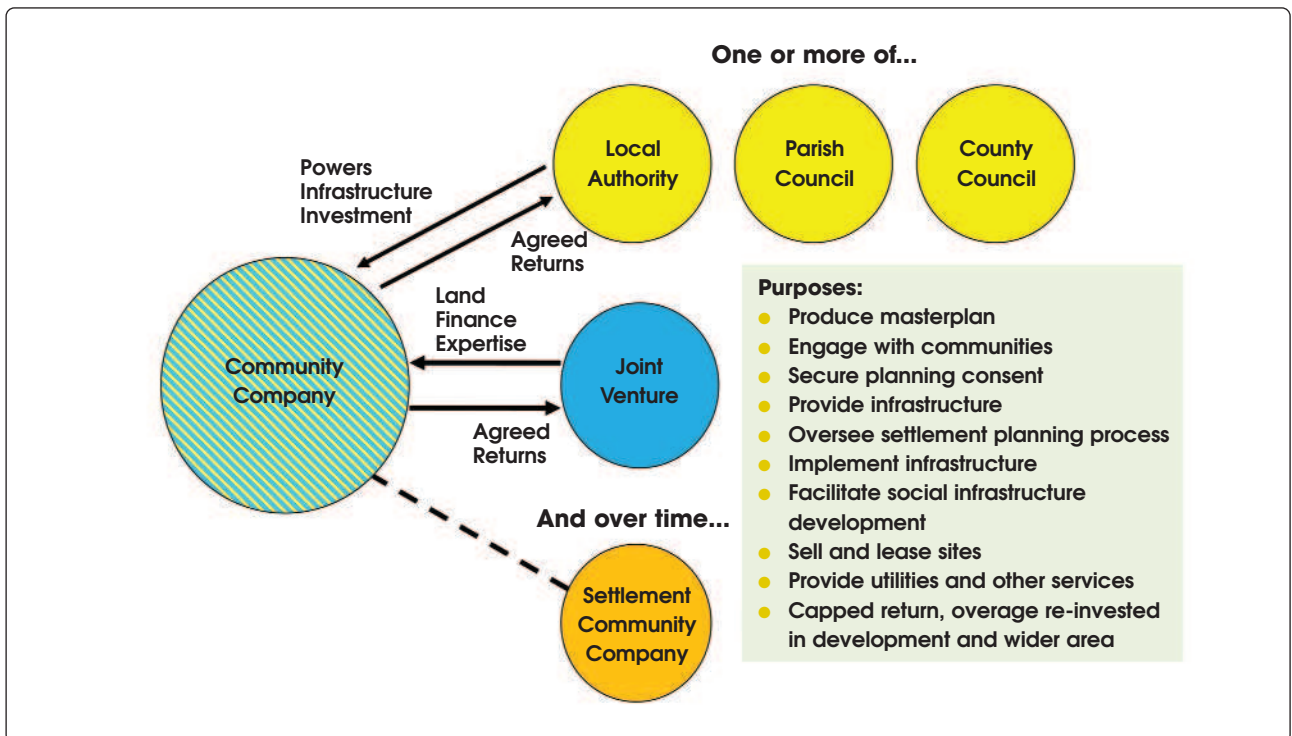


Figure 2 Suggested structure for a Community Company

while placing local people at the heart of new development. This approach seeks to capitalise on both the private sector's expertise and resources and the essential support of the local authorities, the surrounding local communities and, eventually, the new

residents. In both the short and long term, this structure would allow residents to become meaningfully involved in the planning and ongoing development of their community. The aim of creating a delivery vehicle that uses a partnership approach

‘Enjoying the fullest rights of free association and exhibiting the most varied forms of individual and co-operative work and endeavour’

Ebenezer Howard: *To-Morrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform*, 1898

between local people, local authorities and the private sector is to ensure that there is a shared interest in the success of the development and a long-term approach to the ongoing development of the site.

Figure 2 illustrates how the local authority partners in a Community Company would provide planning powers and infrastructure investment for agreed returns, while the delivery vehicle inputs land, finance and expertise, again for agreed returns on investment. If returns were capped, any surplus would be re-invested in the wider

area. Local people and institutions would have a stake in the process to ensure that their voices are heard in the shaping and development of the community. Social infrastructure bodies, working more closely with the development, would address some of the strain caused by pressure on services during the early stages of development. Eventually, the Community Company could become a Community Trust, holding community assets in perpetuity for local people.

In this model, however a site is brought forward – by a private developer and/or by a local authority – careful consideration must be given to representation from the local authority, the nearby community and eventual future residents. It must allow a strong partnership approach to develop, with a variety of different stakeholders engaged as the development progresses – local institutions (schools, hospitals), housebuilders, and so on. The principles of transparency and inclusiveness must be at the heart of this partnership.

This model has the potential to align more closely the public interest and the interests of the private sector partners. It also provides arrangements, through the Community Trust mechanism, for the long-term stewardship of the development after the delivery vehicle has fulfilled its purpose. Again, it is essential that resources, as well as power, are provided to make the Community Company a meaningful body.

3

Theme 2: The new settlements experience – the vision and masterplan



The proposal for a free-standing new community at Lodge Hill has made use of the site's heritage and topography

3.1 The principles and vision behind the masterplan

Comprehensively planning a new place, whether as a stand-alone village, a market town or an extension of an existing settlement, provides a unique opportunity to shape the physical form and social fabric of the community. Without falling into the trap of offering a rigid blueprint, the masterplan can provide a framework to guide a vision and create a sense of place.

The Garden Cities were underpinned by a famously strong vision, and the company that built Welwyn Garden City (Welwyn Garden City Ltd) worked to the ideals of the Garden Cities and Town Planning Association (later renamed the Town and Country Planning Association): *'A Garden City is a town designed for healthy living and industry; of a size that makes possible a full measure of social life, but not larger; surrounded by a rural belt; the whole of the land being in public ownership, or held in trust for the community.'*²⁷

27 M. de Soissons: *Welwyn Garden City: A Town Designed for Healthy Living*. Cambridge University Press, 1988

Early publicity for Welwyn made much of its Hertfordshire location and the quality of its housing, but also trumpeted benefits such as being able to walk to work in clean airy factories and offices without tedious and time-consuming journeys. There was an emphasis on social and demographic mix in the housing layouts, and the aim was to make a town small enough for everyone to be within walking distance of the centre in one direction and open countryside in the other. At a projected population of some 30,000, with a net density of 12 houses to the acre, it would be big enough to support a diverse economic base and various facilities. Howard's vision was expressed in a masterplan by Louis de Soissons, who was also the principal architect for Welwyn's housing. As a result, a strong design character ran throughout the development, which is still largely maintained today.

Central to the Garden Cities and later to the New Towns was the idea of self-containment, linking jobs and housing. They were not envisaged as commuter towns, and therefore the focus was on attracting companies through the prospect of cheaper running costs, better transport connections, modern office buildings, and happier workers.

The New Towns sought to build on the social ideals of the Garden Cities by providing a high quality of life with local access to work, amenities and green space and a social and demographic mix. The best of the New Towns also respected their existing topography and landscape, as in Harlow. Their vision tended to reflect the fashions of the time, such as the more modernist approach seen in Stevenage, rather than the Arts and Crafts inspired design of the Garden Cities. However, although inspired by Garden City principles, the New Towns did not follow them strictly or enjoy the design integrity of the Garden Cities, as detailed in Section 3.2.

A snap-shot of Lodge Hill

- **Proposal for around 5,000 new homes at Lodge Hill, Chattenden in Medway.**
- **Comprehensively planned new community proposed for a 780 acre site previously used for munitions manufacture and storage. Taken forward by Land Securities in partnership with the landowner, Defence Estates (MoD).**

Contemporary new communities have taken a much more varied approach to developing a vision and masterplan. The proposed new free-standing community at Lodge Hill in the Medway unitary authority area presents an interesting example of the challenges and opportunities in creating a vision. The

proposal has made use of the site's heritage and topography alongside aspirations identified through consultation with neighbouring communities.

Lodge Hill was formerly in secure military use, isolated from the surrounding area, and consequently many local people were unfamiliar with the site. Medway Council's approved Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) sets out a process of early and continual dialogue, which has helped contribute to the evolution of the vision and resultant masterplan for the development. In contrast to the Garden Cities and New Towns, the masterplan is intended to evolve with such engagement. Involvement activities, which have included public exhibitions, themed workshops and engagement with a local secondary school, have focused the masterplan on:

- **Green space:** Working closely with Natural England and recreational groups, nearly 50% of the site has been set aside for green infrastructure.
- **Landscape:** The existing landscape is to be a defining feature of Lodge Hill, and the masterplan aims to sympathetically reflect the local topography.
- **New homes:** Up to 5,000 new homes will be provided, including affordable housing and homes in a range of densities and sizes, but particularly high-quality family-sized homes, which were identified as being in low supply in the surrounding area.
- **Working and living:** There is a strong focus on job creation – for example how Lodge Hill can act as a catalyst for high-tech job creation through knowledge parks and other ventures.
- **Heritage:** The site's natural and built heritage as a military facility is maintained and enhanced, but links with surrounding smaller communities and the characteristics of Medway and Kent are recognised.
- **A 21st century transport solution:** Improving the public transport offer in the area has been key to the masterplan – in particular introducing a high-quality bus network.
- **Infrastructure:** Lodge Hill will not be a burden on the existing utilities infrastructure. It will be fully capable of meeting its own water, drainage, gas and electricity needs.

In Germany, Vauban – a comprehensively planned extension to the city of Freiburg housing around 5,000 people on a disused military site – provides another contemporary example of creating a vision for a masterplan.²⁸ Both the original proponents of the development at Vauban and the local authority wished to create an eco-friendly new community. An enabling masterplan established the standards to be met, and plot subdivision aimed at encouraging a variety of developers. This had to be interpreted and delivered piece by piece through a consensus-building process, bringing together a wide range of private and co-operative investors and integrating early settlers with

28 *The Freiburg Charter for Sustainable Urbanism*. Academy of Urbanism, 2011.
http://www.academyofurbanism.org.uk/images/aou_freiburg_charter_final_sml_screen_spreads.pdf

later incomers. This collaborative experiment produced unique results – a vibrant new community combining living, work and leisure with a strong sense of collective responsibility for public space and landscape. It also became car-free.

A snap-shot of Vauban

- A new neighbourhood in Freiburg, South West Germany, with an expected final population of around 5,500 in around 2,000 homes.
- Comprehensively planned new eco-neighbourhood on a 38 hectare former military site.

3.2 Translating the vision into a masterplan

The challenge facing masterplanners is to translate a vision of what makes a great place to live into a masterplan that encapsulates that vision without being too rigid or inflexible. In Welwyn Garden City, Howard's strong vision was translated by Louis de Soissons into a masterplan for high-quality attractive housing of varied tenure that from the beginning encouraged a social mix and ensured that there was a range of housing suitable for a diverse working population. Welwyn Garden City was planned roughly as a circle, divided into wards. Flexibility was built into the plan with approximate land allocations for various functions, and land was reserved for an agricultural belt (sourcing food from the local area was integral to Howard's vision). The public realm was also deemed to be of central importance to shaping place and creating civic pride. There was to be a large shopping complex at the centre, as well as smaller hubs of amenities for each ward. The combination of wards with their own centres, a town centre and the scale of the development allowed residents to access both amenities and the countryside easily.

Building on the use of wards in the Garden Cities, the New Towns extended the idea into larger neighbourhood units, with individual distinctive outline design briefs. Housing densities were generally low, as in Garden Cities. Green spaces were important features in the New Towns, although they were not always as well integrated as in the Garden Cities. In Stevenage, the architecture reflected the modernity which had become popular in the 1950s and 1960s, in the spirit of sweeping away the past. Stevenage pioneered the first

pedestrianised town centre and had a cycle network, but was less successful in integrating the original small settlement within the New Town.²⁹

Peterborough applied Howard's concept of the 'Social City' (in which new Garden Cities are sited in a cluster), with plans for five linked townships of 20,000-30,000 in population. The New Towns were planned on a much larger scale than the Garden Cities, and Peterborough had a population projection of up to 70,000 incomers in addition to the existing 81,000 residents.³⁰ While still favouring low densities, Peterborough wanted to disassociate itself from the image of a 'subtopia'³¹ that Stevenage had acquired. Nene Park, sited at the centre of the new development, was also central to the vision of a green and healthy city – the park was put into a Trust by the Development Corporation to protect it from development and maintain it in perpetuity for the local community. As a town extension, there was much greater focus on the new large linked townships compared with the emphasis on town centres in the Welwyn Garden City and Stevenage masterplans. However, the Development Corporation did build the Queensgate shopping centre, heavily influenced by US malls – although later criticised for turning its back on the river and being awkwardly placed for access from the railway station.

While the New Towns are often criticised for their brutalist architecture or for being spatially dispersed, many of the people who moved into them appreciated that they were places built with people's aspirations in mind, with family houses and private gardens.³² And the New Towns delivered relatively robust economic centres and high employment rates, and proved to be particularly attractive to high-tech employers. Even during economic decline in the 1970s, New Town employment continued to grow.³³

In terms of contemporary new communities, the neighbourhood of Vauban in Freiburg was planned as Europe's largest 'car-free' development. The historic centre of the city of Freiburg was pedestrianised in the 1970s, and a network of cycle routes was developed over the next couple of decades. The city has benefited from an integrated light rail and bus service, and Freiburg's cycle network has been achieved through a mixture of off-road cycle tracks, cycle lanes on carriageways, and traffic-calmed streets, with space for 1,000 bikes in a cycle park by the main train station.

At Lodge Hill the masterplan's exploration of knowledge parks, high-tech job creation and training opportunities reflects the key priority of developing a strong local employment base as well as supporting commuters.

29 A. Alexander: *Britain's New Towns: From Garden Cities to Sustainable Communities*. Routledge, 2009

30 T. Bendixson: *The Peterborough Effect: Reshaping a City*. Peterborough Development Corporation, 1988,

31 *Ibid.*

32 E. Harwood: 'New Towns'. Unpublished research cited in an English Heritage Memorandum to the House of Commons Select Committee on Transport, Local Government and the Regions, 2002. <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200102/cmselect/cmtlgr/603/603m44.htm>

33 R. Thomas: 'The economics of the New Towns revisited'. *Town & Country Planning*, 1996, 65, Nov., pp.305-308

The Lodge Hill developers believe in using local heritage and topography to create a strong vision and sense of character (also informed by the neighbouring communities' aspirations) which will link it to the surrounding area and enhance quality of place.

The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) has summarised the elements in making a successful place as follows:³⁴

- the quality of the buildings and spaces and their management;
- the way that these come together to create unique places;
- built form in relation to history, culture and landscape;
- the provision of services;
- the engagement of local people and users in defining and being involved in the process of change;
- the economic and financial realities; and
- the role of different agencies in delivering investment and change.

Modern approaches to masterplanning, mindful of the mixed success of the New Towns programme, face the constant challenge of how to embed high-quality, sustainable development right from the outset and engage local and surrounding communities in the process.

3.3 Adapting to change, and the challenges of the physical form

Given the length of time it takes for a comprehensively planned community to be brought forward, flexibility must be built into the masterplan as unforeseen circumstances are always likely to arise. An essential function of a masterplan is to provide a framework for development that will be delivered over time, incrementally, while retaining the quality of design principles and without lowering standards.

The first major challenge in delivering a masterplan lies in the unexpected changes that may occur during development – from lifestyle changes that make original concepts outdated, through to changes such as a major road having to be diverted along a different route, affecting the movement of traffic. Secondly, there is the need for adaptability in the built environment to cope with the requirements of changes in technology and lifestyle.

Despite its strong design principles, Welwyn Garden City appears to have provided a robust and flexible model for adapting to changes in people's lifestyles, such as increased use of the car. Of course, there are still

pressures from people wishing to extend their homes, create more parking spaces, or build in the spaces between their homes, but its internal and external space standards appear to have allowed Welwyn Garden City greater flexibility in adapting to new lifestyles, while maintaining design principles and quality.



Welwyn Garden City – flexibility in adapting to new lifestyles while maintaining design principles and quality

While perhaps not offering the same level of choice in housing, Stevenage and Peterborough also offered space standards and areas of low-density housing which (although frequently criticised by outsiders, particularly the media) residents enjoy to this day. Many people prefer to live in houses rather than flats, and the New Towns acknowledged this.

It was apparent from the workshops that the concept of neighbourhood units as a community focus has been broadly successful in Stevenage and Peterborough. While some have worked better than others, either through design quality or proximity to the town centre, they have been valuable, especially in Stevenage, in providing both amenities and community facilities.

The extensive green space in Garden Cities and New Towns, which was intended to improve their attractiveness and the quality of life they offered, now has the added benefit of serving as a valuable tool in climate change adaptation and mitigation. While Garden Cities are famous for integrating the built environment into the landscape, both Stevenage and Peterborough have a number of green spaces which are accessible to the local community. Peterborough in particular has Nene Park, which runs through the heart of the city. It is also pioneering a Green Grid strategy with partners across the city. It aims to define a vision, framework and action plan for the protection and enhancement of green space in terms of area, quality and accessibility.

³⁴ *Creating Successful Masterplans*. Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment, 2008, p.9. http://www.seco.org.uk/downloads/E-library/sustainable_communities/creating_successful_masterplans_cabe.pdf (Revised Edition published 2011)

The first New Towns, like Stevenage, were built to accommodate cycle use rather than cars. Peterborough, as a later New Town, took a different approach. While Stevenage needed to adapt to greater car usage (the 1963 Buchanan Report, *Traffic in Towns*, showed that car ownership doubled between 1947 and 1957; and by 1969 it had increased by as much again), later New Towns such as Peterborough were criticised for being overly reliant on the car. Stevenage's cycle network can now be seen as a potential opportunity for low-carbon travel.

The House of Commons Select Committee report, *New Towns: Their Problems and Future*, published in 2002, set out three challenges posed by the physical form of the New Towns: their transport infrastructure, their town centres, and housing and public realm.³⁵ Many of the transport problems relate to the towns' low densities and the segregation of land uses. Residents need to travel further than in other towns to reach amenities, and the viability of public transport is low.

Shopping centres, with their small units and walkways intended to separate pedestrians and cars, have made it difficult to change the use of buildings.

In terms of housing, there are two key issues which Stevenage and Peterborough need to address. The first is a lack of diversity in housing choice as a result of the Development Corporations building most of the housing, with limited owner-occupied housing delivered by the private sector. In Stevenage, most of the 'aspirational' housing is in the Old Town, which reinforces the division that has developed between the old and new parts of the town. It also weakens the socio-economic mix. High-volume Victorian housing, often built by smaller teams of builders, has lent itself very well to modification. New Town Development Corporations often ignored this model of semi-detached housing, and opted instead for lines of terraced housing with open space on either side, but with little capacity for extensions or loft conversions. A second issue has to do with the age of most of the housing stock and the built environment – as most of it was built around the same time, it also needs renewal and maintenance at the same time. This puts significant strain on local authority budgets and the general upkeep and look of the towns.

To address the issue of renewal, both Stevenage and Peterborough have looked to their town centres to act as the centrepiece of their regeneration plans. Many New Town centres are vulnerable to criticisms of 'mono architectural' appearance and of needing renewal and regeneration en masse. Stevenage's town centre regeneration strategy aims to integrate the shopping

'Each citizen may dwell in a region of pure air and be within a very few minutes walk of the country'

Ebenezer Howard: *To-Morrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform*, 1898

area more successfully and provide more high-quality shops.³⁶ Piecemeal developments and out-of-town shopping have also worked to undermine the town centre. Both Stevenage and Peterborough, while protective of their low housing density on the whole, have recognised a need for densification around their town centres to make them more economically prosperous and vibrant and to promote the night-time economy.

As a result of these sorts of challenges, contemporary examples of masterplanning, such as at Lodge Hill, have considered how to be flexible and allow for adaptation during the delivery programme (which can run for up to ten years) – and how to allow for renewal in later years. In contrast to the Louis de Soissons architectural design brief for Welwyn Garden City, the Lodge Hill masterplan does not seek to design every house or even every street at the outset, and instead focuses on the disposition of differing uses within the site – and, importantly, on the public realm strategy that will bind together a series of places that will take many years to complete.

Scenarios which can bring uncertainty include development occurring in phases that are not continuous, phases being developed and designed by different people, land ownership changing hands, a change in funding availability and requirements, and a change in economic conditions.

The experience of CABE's Design Review Committee in evaluating a large number of masterplan proposals suggests the following tests.³⁷ Does the masterplan:

- Achieve a sense of place and distinct local identity?
- Achieve something overarching – in the quality of the public realm/landscaping?
- Integrate with surroundings so that the area being developed and the surrounding area benefit from each other?

³⁵ *New Towns: Their Problems and Future*. HC 603. House of Commons Transport, Local Government and Regions Committee, 19th Report, Session 2001-2002. TSO, Jul. 2002. <http://www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk/pa/cm200102/cmselect/cmtlgr/603/60302.htm>

³⁶ *Stevenage Town Centre Regeneration Strategy. Final Report*. EDAAW/Donaldsons/Alan Baxter Associates, for Stevenage Borough Council and English Partnerships, 2002. <http://www.stevenage.gov.uk/planningandregeneration/regeneration/towncentreregenerationstrategy>

³⁷ *Creating Successful Masterplans*. Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment, 2008, p.84. http://www.seco.org.uk/downloads/E-library/sustainable_communities/creating_successful_masterplans_cabe.pdf (Revised Edition published 2011)

4

Theme 3: The new settlements experience – implementation

Large-scale new developments offer the most effective way of capturing the significant increase in land value accruing from the grant of planning permission, thereby minimising the burden on local and central government of funding infrastructure costs. From the private enterprise model of the Garden Cities and the centralist New Towns programme, through to the variety of models used today, getting the most out of this land value uplift for the building and ongoing costs of a new community is key. A new partnership approach between the public and private sectors is instrumental to achieving the high-quality communities of the future.

4.1 Models of funding

Before the First World War, the planning and building of homes was primarily delivered by private enterprise and charitable organisations. Welwyn Garden City's origins lie in Ebenezer Howard's successful bid for agricultural land at an auction sale in May 1919. A private development company, Welwyn Garden City Ltd, was formed in April 1920.³⁸ It was agreed that the company would keep the freehold of the land, selling only leasehold rights for housing and industrial development; that it would not grant long leases to retail shops and commercial premises; and that the architect had to retain overall design control of everything that was built.³⁹

Welwyn Garden City could have been developed under the 1921 Housing Act, with public loans and powers of compulsory purchase, but instead it was done under company law, with investment capital raised from

private, largely altruistic shareholders. The executive members of the company board and its secretary (some carrying experience from Letchworth), working with an exceptional professional team, laid the foundations over the following years.⁴⁰

Howard had originally intended that the Garden Cities would generate funds in perpetuity for successive generations of residents.⁴¹ This would have been possible through rising land values and rental income, but, in practice, commercial considerations largely ruled this out. In the case of Welwyn, in the early years, particularly through the depression of the 1920s and early 1930s, the town faced a financial shortfall. Given the demand for housing at the time, it was expected that 600-700 acres would be rapidly developed, which would have yielded a revenue of at least £35,000 and a value of £500,000, excluding the buildings and public services owned by the company. Investors disliked the idea of a limited dividend and, on floatation, the company did not raise the planned £250,000, but only £40,000 initially and £90,000 by the end of the year. As a result, the company directors had to seek further bank advances and mortgage loans, the interest on which had to be repaid before monies could be put into further development. The loans were personally guaranteed by the directors.⁴² The initial prospectus for Welwyn Garden City included provision for community participation in its direction and equity, but these increased financial liabilities led to the civic directors posts being abolished and share and debenture holders being given full equity, excluding the Garden City residents from any further interest in the company or its profits.

38 M. de Soissons: *Welwyn Garden City: A Town Designed for Healthy Living*. Cambridge University Press, 1988

39 *Ibid.*

40 *Ibid.*

41 M. Hebbert: 'The British Garden City: metamorphosis'. In S.V. Ward: *The Garden City: Past, Present and Future*. E & FN Spon, 1992, pp.165-186

42 *Ibid.*

The company board of directors found themselves impelled towards commercial property logic in order to dispose of serviced sites and recoup their huge site acquisition and infrastructure costs. However, they held out against long leases for retail and business, while extending them for residential sites. The company also moved away from using speculative builders by setting up its own building company. In this way it tried to balance the short-term speculative interest of the investment model against the long-term success of the development.

In contrast with the Garden Cities, the move to a centralised approach in the New Towns programme led to an unprecedented concentration of power and resources. This approach was a reflection of F.J. Osborn's vision – having witnessed at first hand the struggles of the Garden City companies, he argued that only with a strong government-backed programme could the level of finance and power be realised to deliver the amount of housing needed. The first New Towns, established at a time of relatively low and steady interest rates, performed well in financial terms. In 1956 the cost of New Town housing compared favourably with that of slum clearance in the cities.⁴³ Frank Schaffer noted in 1970 that the expenditure on New Towns 'bids fair to become one of the best investments ever made of the taxpayer's money'⁴⁴ – a conclusion also backed by Ray Thomas' assessment that 'the first generation new towns could well be regarded as Britain's most successful nationalised industry both in terms of profitability and in reducing inflation'.⁴⁵ The Development Corporations also helped to protect their developments from short-term changes in government policy.⁴⁶

A clear lesson of the New Town Development Corporation approach is that control over land is the most important factor in the delivery of new communities. The Development Corporations bought land through compulsory purchase at agricultural value, which enabled them to benefit from the returns of the developed land, with the monies raised by selling the land at a higher rate with planning permission being used to offset the cost of infrastructure delivery. Importantly, land ownership also allowed New Town Development Corporations to market land for specific purposes, and with clear development briefs consistent with the overall masterplan and vision. Development licences were then granted, with the freehold passing only when the desired development was completed to the agreed standards.

Ultimately, though, this type of heavy public sector investment became less popular, and development

moved back primarily into the private sector, or to partnerships between local and central government and the private sector. The partnership between Land Securities and the Ministry of Defence at Lodge Hill is one such example of a modern-day private sector led development, with the public sector providing the land. The development of Hampton, the fifth township in Peterborough, provides an example of another model, in which the landowner and developer are a single private company, O&H Properties, which is taking forward the development through a dedicated on-site team in a manner not entirely dissimilar to the Development Corporation approach.⁴⁷ In contrast to both of these examples, Vauban in Freiburg, Germany, inspired by the city's historic patterns of development, encouraged different developers, including self-build and co-housing groups, to develop individual plots.

A snap-shot of Hampton

- A residential-led mixed-use new community south of Peterborough.
- A comprehensively planned new community that will have been 25 years in the making once complete in 2016 and will provide up to 8,000 homes.

4.2 Exploring new models of funding

A critical issue for this scale of development is for the local authority or developer to take a long-term approach to making a return on their investment. Ownership of land facilitates forward-funding by underpinning borrowing to provide infrastructure, which can then be repaid when the land is sold for its full development value. A single private sector landowner may well use the land in a similar way, acting as a 'master developer'.

Even with unified or small partnerships of landowners acting together, there is still room for possible conflict between the public interest and private commercial objectives. The Garden Cities tried to overcome this tension by issuing limited dividends, and the New Towns attempted to remove it completely by using State funding. It is therefore important that local authorities (and their public sector partners) consider the use of any land in their ownership, and possible further acquisitions, at an early stage. They could work

43 'Financial showing of the New Towns'. *Town & Country Planning*, 1957, 25 (1), p.32

44 F. Schaffer: *The New Town Story*. McGibbon & Kee, 1970, p.228 (Reprinted by Palladin, 1972)

45 R. Thomas: 'The economics of the New Towns revisited'. *Town & Country Planning*, 1996, 65, Nov., pp.305-308

46 E. Harwood: 'New Towns'. Unpublished research cited in an English Heritage Memorandum to the House of Commons Select Committee on Transport, Local Government and the Regions, 2002. <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200102/cmselect/cmtlgr/603/603m44.htm>

47 H. Pugh: *Hampton: Taking the Long View*. RUDI (Resource for Urban Design Information) website, 2008. <http://www.rudi.net/node/19205>



Neighbourhood centre at Hampton, Peterborough

as partners with private owners in some form of joint venture, or they could replace them if circumstances were suitable.

Where unified land ownership is not with the local authority, alignment of the vision and the timescale for realising added value is of the utmost importance and must be addressed at the earliest possible stage – otherwise land ownership and planning will pull against each other, probably to the detriment of good delivery.

There may be merit in investigating whether some form of joint venture between the landowner and the local authority (or alternative public sector body) could help to achieve and maintain an effective alignment of vision and ongoing co-operation. There are also new opportunities arising from the Government's commitment to release surplus public land for the building of up to 100,000 homes.⁴⁸ This will be a cross-departmental initiative and offers the prospect of central government working with the private sector in partnership not just to deliver high-quality homes, but, by working through viability issues, to provide a meaningful proportion of decent social and affordable housing.

The ideal situation is a landowner with access to finance, and with a long-term approach to a return on

value realisation rather than short-term horizons for their involvement.⁴⁹ While such short-term aims may be for obvious and legitimate reasons such as shareholder attitudes or budget requirements, they need to be understood and dealt with early on for the long-term benefit of the new community.

There may be ways in which short-term speculative developers can be incorporated without potentially risking the delivery of a long-term vision, such as agreed buy-out terms when a certain milestone is achieved. Alternatively, public authorities may be able to put in place arrangements that help to de-risk development (regarding the delivery of key infrastructure, for example), in exchange for some concessions from landowners. But all such arrangements need to be addressed, in principle at least, at an early stage.

Given the ambition of localism and the constrained public purse, the Government favours community-led regeneration and growth rather than central programmes. The eco-towns programme, which started as a State-led initiative in 2008, is now being taken forward by local authorities. Rather than being driven from the centre, local authorities are now taking forward the eco-standards.

48 'Government plans release of public land to build 100,000 homes'. Press Notice. Department for Communities and Local Government, 8 Jun. 2011, <http://www.communities.gov.uk/news/newsroom/1917730>

49 J. Calcutt: *The Calcutt Review of Housebuilding Delivery*. Department for Communities and Local Government, 2007. <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/pdf/callcuttreview.pdf>

Box 2 New opportunities – incentivising communities for growth through the Community Infrastructure Levy and the New Homes Bonus

The current planning reform agenda offers two potential tools for funding the physical and social infrastructure costs of development and for encouraging communities to accept growth in their area.

The **Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)** enables local authorities to levy a charge on development which can be used to fund infrastructure. Although it came into being in April 2010, it is being reviewed with a view to making a number of changes, including allowing a meaningful proportion to be spent on the neighbourhood directly affected by the development and enabling community groups to inform decisions on how that money is spent. These changes would allow communities to directly benefit from new development and to fund ongoing infrastructure and community project costs.

The Department for Communities and Local Government has introduced the **New Homes Bonus (NHB)**, a new 'powerful, simple, transparent, predictable and flexible' incentives scheme to encourage and reward local authorities to deliver more new and sustainable housing. As set out in Section 1.4, the NHB will reward local authorities for every additional new housing unit built (net additions) by an amount equal to the national average for the Council Tax band, for a period of six years after completion. For example, the value of an additional Council Tax band D property would be about £1,439. An additional flat rate enhancement of £350 will be paid for each additional affordable home, which includes affordable rented homes and traveller sites in public ownership. The NHB will be paid in one annual allocation based on the previous year's Council Tax base form. A total of £200 million has been allocated for the NHB in 2011-12 and £250 million for subsequent years.

The NHB has the potential to act as a powerful driver for the delivery of comprehensively planned new communities in certain areas. However, there are questions over the effectiveness of the new incentive regime in promoting comprehensively planned communities:

- The NHB is likely to be a useful tool where there is a high demand. However, because it is not paid in relation to the allocation of housing units in the planning process, but on completion, there is a risk that financial imperatives could undermine high design standards.
- The money is paid retrospectively and to local authorities, and is not ring-fenced. This raises questions over who delivers the infrastructure and how it could help to meet upfront costs, and whether this would be sufficient for leveraging in finance at the beginning of the development process.
- The benefits and impacts of development can be felt beyond local authority boundaries. How can the NHB, paid directly to a single local authority, help to deal with these cross-boundary effects?

The NHB must be seen in the context of other financial instruments, such as planning obligations, Section 106 agreements, and CIL, so that funds can be pooled in an integrated manner to deliver community benefits and make the case for development. This requires a degree of co-ordination to make the most out of the funding pools available.

Other new opportunities for pooling funds to underpin development include:

- Changes to business rate retention which may allow local authorities to hold onto this revenue stream.
- Tax increment financing (TIF) – a public financing method which has been used as a subsidy for redevelopment and community improvement projects in many countries.
- Feed-in tariffs – where community renewable energy projects could provide a source of revenue from central government.
- MUSCOs (Multi-Utility Services Companies) and ESCOs (Energy Services Companies), which offer potential benefits to both the local authority and community, particularly if a percentage share is used for reinvestment in the area.
- Self-build – the Government is keen to encourage individuals who wish to build their own homes.
- Capital Asset Management Schemes – an opportunity to combine services into a multi-service centre and free up sites for residential purposes or act as the catalyst for a new community.
- Private rented sector – a very under-utilised part of the market, but one which is set to continue to grow. In the long term, it could present opportunities if it matures into a property investment asset class.

‘For the vastness of the task... represents, in fact, the very measure of its value to the community’

Ebenezer Howard: *To-Morrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform*, 1898

Additionally, the private sector is now usually expected to pay for infrastructure from increases in land value. Initial infrastructure costs can be very challenging, and the private sector requires certainty in committing to development in order to underpin investment.

Certainty is least available right at the beginning of development, when upfront infrastructure investment is most required. This is why local and central government support is so important to give the private sector the confidence to invest.

John Walker has argued that a new model for infrastructure investment is needed to tackle these challenges.⁵⁰ Using established routes, such as Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs), can be one way to give certainty and demonstrate viability, but there must be hard evidence of need and value for money. Funds can also be in the form of a loan rather than a grant, to be repaid from the land value after development. Using public funds for this would give private investors confidence and public authorities an opportunity for input over standards. Other sources of finance could be government agencies, such as the Homes and Communities Agency, local authority prudential borrowing, Local Housing Companies, or Local Asset-Backed Vehicles (see also Box 2).

There may also be an opportunity to use Community Bonds where the wider community feels that there is real benefit and connection to the development process. These take the form of Industrial and Provident Societies (IPSs), which must be registered with the Financial Services Authority. IPSs conduct industry, business or trade for the benefit of the community, or operate as co-operatives. Societies run for the benefit of the community provide services and facilities for people other than their members. Community Bonds allow individuals to invest in community projects (providing projects with affordable finance) while earning a guaranteed investment rate.

4.3 A new partnership paradigm – relationships between the public and private sectors

The long-term timescale of delivering new communities means that partnership working is crucial, regardless of whether it is a public or private sector led initiative. As well as coming together over land and finance issues, successful partnerships with a common goal are an aid to effective and efficient delivery, overcoming delays and frustrations that can threaten delivery and have adverse impacts on outcomes.

The Welwyn Garden City company recognised the importance of links with Welwyn Rural District Council, as well as the parish council, with a number of personnel sitting as members or on committees. When Welwyn Garden Urban District Council was created in 1927, once again directors and officers of Welwyn Garden City Ltd served on the Council.

During the formative stage of New Town building, the balance of opinion was in favour of the public sector driving forward the projects. Despite this, the New Town Development Corporations had a mixed relationship with central government, as a result of a lack of cross-government buy-in. There was also resentment from the private sector over not being included readily in development. While Lewis Silkin, Town and Country Planning Minister (1945-50), pressed ahead with the designation of Stevenage as the first New Town against local opposition, there was a general lack of interest in the project among his colleagues in central government. Without strong cross-departmental support, infrastructure delivery was slowed, just as it had been in Welwyn Garden City. In 1974 a House of Commons Select Committee highlighted that there was no guarantee that social facilities such as schools and hospitals would be delivered in the New Towns. The New Towns were treated in their bidding like any other area, with no preferential consideration for their growth and a lack of support from the New Towns Division in the then Department of the Environment.

The power held by Development Corporations would at times make a balance between the different bodies involved more difficult to achieve, and they rather dominated their local authority partners. It was intended, particularly in Peterborough, that there should be ‘no undue burden’ on the local authority. The city, which had a history of progressive local government,⁵¹ was very enthusiastic about the expansion, but Huntingdon and Peterborough County Council, as it was then known, was nervous about the costs and had concerns about boundaries and the villages affected. In

50 *Ensuring Eco-towns Are Delivered*. Eco-towns Delivery Worksheet. TCPA, 2010. <http://www.tcpa.org.uk/pages/delivery.html>

51 T. Bendixson: *The Peterborough Effect: Reshaping a City*. Peterborough Development Corporation, 1988

Box 3 Local Enterprise Partnerships – linking housing and jobs?

The new Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) may present a powerful opportunity to make the case for comprehensively planned new communities by connecting housing with economic growth. While LEPs may not have strategic planning powers, they can make the case for the housing to support economic growth, which, in turn, can influence the plans of the local community and decision-makers.

LEPs are to be business led, with a membership of local authority and business representatives. They are voluntary groupings who will come together to represent an area defined by economic geography. They are intended to provide clear vision and strategic leadership to drive sustainable, private-sector-led growth and job creation in their area, and they have the potential to consider transport, housing and planning as part of an integrated approach to growth and infrastructure delivery. They will be able to put together non-statutory plans to address some or all of these issues. As a result, an evolved LEP strategy could have a powerful role to play in making the link between housing growth in an area and promoting business growth and employment opportunities. However, as a voluntary grouping of authorities and business, it will be down to the individual LEP to decide which issues it wants to prioritise.

the long run, this type of tension between the local authorities and the Development Corporations became more acute, particularly when the social infrastructure (such as schools and hospitals) were left to local authorities and other bodies to finance. However, without the buy-in from councillors on Stevenage Council and Peterborough City Council, the difficulties would have been greater.

The role of political and civic leadership in tackling the challenges thrown up by development cannot be underestimated. It is important to be honest about the tension between individuals with drive and passion who help to see these projects through and the need for democratic accountability. Even where local people identify housing need or support a development, there is still a need for one or more committed individuals to lead the project through the ongoing challenges of delivery to realise a high-quality, sustainable vision, as in Welwyn Garden City. However, they and the delivery body must work together to create the space for the active and meaningful participation of local people.

Consideration must also be given to the handover of power from a delivery vehicle to the local authority or a Community Trust. The problem of the vacuum left after the Development Corporations were wound down has been well documented. It is essential to ensure that after the development is complete there is a body that not only represents the local communities' interests, but is also dedicated to the ongoing success and upkeep of the new community, backed up by financial resources and power.

Today, it is unlikely that a purely private or central government model would be replicated. The tensions that emerged between the different actors – whether a sense of imposition felt by local people and local

government, or tensions between the private and public sectors – suggest that stronger accountability, meaningful partnership working, and a shared, long-term interest must be established.

Accountability requires there to be roles for the local authority and the surrounding community, as well as eventually the new residents who move in. There will be a wide range of partners in the delivery process, and in each case the right type of relationship needs to be established, with either a formal role in the governance of the delivery vehicle or a clear line of communication and responsibilities.

4.4 Co-ordinating infrastructure delivery

New community development inevitably requires some upfront investment in infrastructure – how much will depend on whether it is a free-standing development. A regular challenge to planned new communities is getting the right level of infrastructure in place before new residents begin to move in, and minimising the strain on existing services in the area – which tends to be one of the strongest reasons people oppose new development in their area.

Timely infrastructure delivery is also important in influencing the way that people live – for example by ensuring that good public transport is in place. This can also have a knock-on effect on the employment opportunities in the area. The Local Transport Act 2008 gave local authorities significant new powers to influence the quality of bus services in their area. Development delivery vehicles need to work with local transport planners and providers to gear up services



Neighbourhood centre built at an early stage of Stevenage's development (but after the housing) – new development inevitably requires some upfront investment in infrastructure

that are in place from day one, and which can be escalated as residents move in and demand increases.

The sense of community that develops will also be hindered if people have to travel out for schooling, health care, restaurants, and sports and leisure activities. A programme of community and economic development must be underpinned by sufficient physical and social infrastructure. Getting a sufficient employment base to balance against the inevitable commuting is also very important. While there are limitations to how much can be achieved immediately, consideration of the timing of these components is fundamental to a community's success. Where possible, the developers or the delivery vehicle should work with those organisations that can help to bring forward the necessary infrastructure, such as the Environment Agency for water and flood management.

The New Town Development Corporations very effectively met the challenges of delivering housing, social infrastructure and employment, and they are still recalled favourably in Stevenage and Peterborough. Two of the Development Corporations' great strengths were their strong sense of momentum around a single goal and their interdisciplinary approach – which were particularly important in aligning community development alongside the delivery of physical infrastructure.

Given the number of different elements involved in creating a new community, there has to be clear ownership of the delivery process to ensure effective co-ordination and quality control. A dedicated delivery vehicle needs to be able to transcend electoral cycles and provide long-term leadership over 20 years, or however long it takes to complete its task. This can be

challenging for local-authority-led developments, as many private builders have short-term business models.

It is also extremely important to have champions for the development. Those responsible for the Garden Cities and New Towns worked hard to promote a positive image to both the general public and business, overcoming criticisms and indifference that could have been damaging.

One of the key reasons for the success of Welwyn Garden City was the business acumen of Welwyn Garden City Ltd chairman, Sir Theodore Chambers, who also set up a number of subsidiaries, including Welwyn Builders Ltd, to deliver the housing and initial amenities. Additionally, public utility companies were formed to take advantage of government loans under the 1919 Housing Act, and were actively involved in some of the first building. Howard saw scope for charitable involvement and proposed siting philanthropic institutions such as agricultural colleges, industrial schools and children's cottage homes in the surrounding agricultural belt.

Small middle-class housing was brought forward first as there was insufficient financial support to deliver working-class housing for weekly rent in the numbers required. Delivering the much needed working class houses to support industry was an ongoing struggle for the company. Appeals to local authorities and the Ministry of Health in the early days were not successful, and Welwyn Garden City Ltd had to take out further loans and issue additional debentures.⁵²

The company worked with the North Metropolitan Electric Supply Company and the Hatfield and Welwyn

52 M. de Soissons: *Welwyn Garden City: A Town Designed for Healthy Living*. Cambridge University Press, 1988

Gas Company to deliver electricity and gas. The company also incorporated Welwyn Stores to supply fresh food from the agricultural belt, as envisioned by Howard. Hertfordshire County Council purchased land to build the first elementary school.⁵³ The New Town Trust Ltd, which had wanted to build its own new community on co-operative lines, leased effectively the whole of the agricultural belt and set up a farming subsidiary as well as number of other operations, including a laundry.

In contrast to Welwyn Garden City, the New Town Development Corporations were heavily financed at the beginning and had the power to deliver the required infrastructure. In fact, one of the first things that Peterborough Development Corporation did was to build Soke Parkway, a 25-mile loop road around the city. This unique level of power and the long-term operational framework (15-20 years) allowed the work carried out by the Development Corporations to transcend the political terms of local elections, and also offered certainty to the private sector. The Development Corporations were extremely successful (especially in London) at promoting the New Towns as places in which to live and work. They lobbied hard to attract business through incentives, including reduced rents.

As in Welwyn Garden City, the New Towns tended to deliver the housing first, before shops and amenities, one neighbourhood at a time. It was felt easier to do this until populations had been reached that could support the services, while in France and Scandinavia town centres were typically built first.⁵⁴ Because Stevenage's neighbourhoods were larger than the Garden City wards, early residents complained of muddy, unfinished roads. Another drawback of building sequentially was demonstrated in Peterborough when the fifth and final township, Hampton, was not delivered after central government cut the funding.

Although it had been envisaged that the private sector would build much of the middle-class housing, very little was built in the first wave of New Towns. Almost the entire upfront costs of building, as well as of land development, fell to the Development Corporations, and thus to the Exchequer. New Town Development Corporations had either to build for sale themselves or offer large building plots for individually commissioned managerial housing; neither of these routes was particularly successful, and hence many New Towns came to be typified by monolithic tenure and design. This resulted in a lack of social mix and impacted the financing of New Town growth.⁵⁵ The private sector saw potential in the town centres, but so did the Treasury.

Those residential plots that were led by the private sector found development difficult at times within the strict restrictions imposed by the Development Corporation.⁵⁶

In August 1967 the Labour Government directed the New Town Development Corporations to deliver housing for the less affluent and ensure that at least half the new housing was for sale and built by the private sector. In 1968 another circular to the Development Corporations stated that sites could be sold without recouping land development costs, and that the private sector did not have to be subject to the same standards as the public sector in relation to space and heating. As a result, in later New Towns larger, owner-occupied housing was segregated from the rest of the town. By the 1970s, the New Towns were working more closely with the private sector.

Contemporary examples illustrate recognition of the need for a long-term partnership. At Hampton, O&H Properties works with David Lock Associates to deliver the common primary infrastructure, schools and open spaces and to ensure a high quality of development over time. The on-site team and a General Manager also act as port of call for new residents before the City Council takes over.

It is clear from historic as well as contemporary examples that a culture of partnership working across the public and private sectors is essential to the success and timely delivery of any new community.

4.5 Long-term management and assets

The ongoing upkeep of Welwyn Garden City and the New Towns has been perhaps one of the most controversial aspects of their development. Garden Cities and New Towns were in themselves 'profitable', but in neither case were they allowed to retain the surpluses that they generated over the years.

It had been assumed that when the building of the New Towns was complete, any surplus from this work would go to the local authority, which by changes in boundaries and local legislation usually had a contiguous holding to that of the Development Corporation. But 1959 saw the establishment of the Commission for New Towns, a government body that would take over the portfolios of the Development Corporations on their abolition. In 1976 new legislation ensured that housing would pass to the local authority,

53 M. de Soissons: *Welwyn Garden City: A Town Designed for Healthy Living*. Cambridge University Press, 1988

54 E. Harwood: 'New Towns'. Unpublished research cited in an English Heritage Memorandum to the House of Commons Select Committee on Transport, Local Government and the Regions, 2002. <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200102/cmselect/cmtlgr/603/603m44.htm>

55 M. Hebbert: 'The British Garden City: metamorphosis'. In S.V. Ward: *The Garden City: Past, Present and Future*. E & FN Spon, 1992, pp.165-186

56 *Ibid.*

‘Parks and gardens, orchards and woods, are being planted in the midst of the busy life of the people, so that they may be enjoyed in the fullest measure’

Ebenezer Howard: *To-Morrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform*, 1898

but not the industrial and business holdings. Industrial rents were of particular importance to the New Towns, as many Development Corporations (Harlow, for example) built and rented out industrial premises.

The high-quality green spaces in Welwyn Garden City have left it with a particular challenge in terms of maintenance costs, which normal local government finance for the public realm has struggled to meet. Significantly, one of the key contrasts between Welwyn and Letchworth, the first Garden City, was Welwyn’s later designation as a New Town. This meant that when the Commission for New Towns subsequently came to sell off New Town assets, Welwyn, like the other New Towns, lost out. On the other hand, many of Letchworth’s assets were saved in perpetuity for the local community, and a foundation was set up to administer them.

Following the Letchworth example, Stevenage attempted, by Private Bill, to establish a local successor body to hold remunerative property in trust for the local community, but its efforts were unsuccessful. Although the original 60-year loans that the Treasury made to the Development Corporations had all been repaid with interest, central government believed that the assets should largely go towards paying off the national debt.⁵⁷ By the end of the 1980s, virtually all assets had passed into the private sector – an exception being Nene park, which was put in trust for the local community by Peterborough Development Corporation. Compared with the backing and drive they had previously enjoyed, the New Towns struggled to maintain their momentum once the Development Corporations had been wound up, further compounding the failure to allow New Towns to receive the benefits of their growth.

The experience of the Garden Cities and New Towns has shown that serious thought must be given to the ongoing management of the community’s assets and public realm. Once development has taken place, will the public realm and community facilities be owned by the local authority, by a private company, or by a non-profit distributing company such as a local Trust? How will maintenance be carried out, and where will the necessary funds come from? Is there a wish to see social housing land held in perpetuity by a public-interest organisation? Each of these options has implications for the type of delivery arrangements that should be put in place and the type of arrangements needed with landowners.

Infrastructure, housing and other buildings in new developments, having been built at roughly the same time, tend to need refurbishment and renewal at the same time too, which has led to New Town local authorities being left with refurbishment bills higher than their annual budget. In the New Towns (and indeed in Welwyn too, after its initial private enterprise phase) the change from control by a dedicated Development Corporation to control by a combination of local authority, central government agencies and the private sector has often resulted in confusion in addressing these issues.⁵⁸

New facilities are not sustainable unless they have viable long-term management, backed up by effective sources of revenue. Questions that need to be addressed include:

- Will the landowner/‘master developer’ provide an endowment in the form of money or income-producing assets?
- Will a service charge be levied on all residents and businesses and be ring-fenced for local facilities and services?
- Could revenue from a MUSCO (Multi-Utility Services Company) or ESCO (Energy Services Company) be pledged to support maintenance?
- Will a local Trust own and manage local facilities? Who will form it, and when?

The Community Infrastructure Levy could provide a useful mechanism for securing the long-term maintenance of assets (see Box 2 on page 24). The proposed changes to CIL aim to ensure that neighbourhoods share the advantages of development by receiving a proportion of the funds councils raise from developers. Funds thus raised would be passed directly to the local neighbourhood so that community groups can spend the money locally on the facilities they want, either by contributing to larger projects funded by the council, or by funding smaller local projects like park improvements, playgrounds and cycle paths.

57 A. Alexander: *Britain’s New Towns: From Garden Cities to Sustainable Communities*. Routledge, 2009

58 *Ibid.*

5

Conclusion and recommendations



Welwyn Garden City – socially and economically, Garden Cities have been held up as a model of how to get planning right

5.1 The legacy of Garden Cities and New Towns

The long-term success of new communities can be judged by whether they have stood the test of time regarding social, economic and environmental sustainability. Garden Cities, the forerunners of the New Towns, aimed for self-sufficiency in food and electricity, something now linked with the wider goal of environmental sustainability. Socially and economically, the Garden Cities have been held up as a model of how to get planning right. New Towns have faced criticisms over their architecture as styles and tastes have changed, variously charged with having monolithic town

centres, and/or low-quality, diffuse housing. Some New Towns have fared better than others in maintaining a robust economic base. But how fair are these criticisms in light of changing social, political and economic factors? In assessing the criticism that has been directed at the New Towns, it must be recognised that many of their perceived failings are reflected in other communities too.

Comprehensively planned new communities provide an opportunity to test new ideas – particularly, today, in relation to climate change adaptation and mitigation and renewable energy sources. The Garden Cities and New Towns are the results of attempts to create healthy, attractive mixed communities with a self-sufficient

economy; and in many ways they were successful. The study workshops, while identifying challenges for the future, all resolutely confirmed a strong sense of pride and belonging, although this may not be the case across all new communities, or indeed among all residents.

However, even the New Town deficiencies can be seen as providing an opportunity to make better communities – for example by regenerating the town centre and building more homes for those who wish to live near the centre. Stevenage and Peterborough are both considering schemes to do this, as well as ways to create more ‘aspirational’ housing to support a skilled and professional workforce and encourage them to live within their towns and cities – something that is also a key requirement of any expansion of Harlow. Many of the New Towns are now in growth corridors, targeted for expansion and renewal.

The Garden Cities and New Towns were notable for their optimism, sense of community and growth when they were first built. However, the New Towns have often struggled in the vacuum left after their Development Corporation was wound up, with responsibility falling to a local authority charged with wider commitments. They have also faced other challenges, such as national economic change and changing design preferences. However, just as with other villages, towns and cities, their future success depends on how they respond to these changes and regenerate or adapt.

In the light of today’s challenges, particularly on tackling climate change, the New Towns and Garden Cities offer a great story of how radical projects have been undertaken to address social inequality, promote economic growth, and create well designed, attractive places. Although there have been unforeseen consequences which now must be addressed (particularly in the New Towns), some of their attributes currently seen as negative may soon become positive once again. For example, cycleways that suffer from a lack of natural surveillance and a perception of vulnerability to crime – and also require maintenance expenditure – can become an asset in promoting low-carbon travel. The pioneering spirit of the Garden Cities and New Towns makes them ideally suited to lead the way to more sustainable living. In fact, Peterborough has identified itself as an ‘eco-city’ and supports low-carbon industries setting up there.

5.2 Recommendations

The delivery of innovative, desirable and sustainable new communities requires additional thought and focus over and above ‘normal processes’, at every stage from the formulation of a vision and masterplan to the completion of a functioning community. It requires sustained commitment through periods that are much

longer than election cycles and the lifetimes of individual political administrations. People and companies who invest heavily in a new settlement cannot be expected to do so unless there is a common understanding that the project will be seen through to fruition. This confidence and long-term commitment is integral to an ability to create vibrant, resilient and attractive places in which to live.

The following recommendations and principles are based on pragmatic lessons distilled from past experience, while recognising that new development must be identified, or even brought forward, by local communities. The lessons are not new, but they need to be restated and brought together. They are presented within the backdrop of low levels of public support for growth and a need to fund and secure delivery through a public-private partnership approach.

Key findings

Governance – people and planning

- **Local authorities and their communities are at the heart of delivering new places. The opportunities for large-scale, high-quality and sustainable new places – and, crucially, the benefits that they can offer – need to be communicated to and better understood by councils and residents alike.**
- **Masterplanning for new communities should be as inclusive, participative and representative as possible, to ensure that plans are informed by local peoples’ knowledge, concerns and aspirations. If engagement is to be meaningful, it must begin before the first draft masterplan is created, to ensure that local wishes are taken into account.**

Good planning recognises the tension between local aspirations and the need to consider strategic issues. However, a fundamental problem in planning new settlements is how to involve a community that does not yet exist. Where neighbouring communities are directly affected by the development – or, in the case of an urban extension, where people live and work in the adjoining settlement – they must be engaged in the process. Ensuring that people are educated about the options presented to them and given meaningful say over the decisions that affect them must be at the heart of rebuilding public legitimacy for planning, and must be addressed from the outset in planning for development. This should be facilitated by impartial bodies who can explain the challenges and opportunities that growth presents. However, the Garden City example illustrates that high-quality outcomes depend on masterplanning professionals having strategic oversight on infrastructure and technical concerns, as well as a vision of what an attractive, well designed community looks like.

- **If new communities are to be successful, they need strong political support and community leadership, with a clear vision and strong commitment.**

Bottom-up community support for new settlements and town extensions should be fundamental to the legitimacy of development. There must also be a clear, high-quality vision which reflects local aspirations, and strong political and professional leadership is required to see a development through ongoing challenges. Leaders also have an essential role in communicating the benefits of new places to communities.

- **Creating and maintaining momentum around a new community is integral to its success. Development delivery vehicles must work closely with the community to promote themselves to potential residents, the surrounding communities and local businesses.**

Communication is key, and a long-term commitment must reinforce the image of the development itself. Public trust in public and private intervention is currently low. New schemes must seek to address this and create flagship examples to show what good development can achieve. Engagement and promotion should begin as early as possible to engender confidence and trust within the local area. Confidence and a positive image are central to the long-term success of a community. There should be an acknowledgement that it takes time for communities to develop, socially as well as physically, and assurance should be given that although there may be phases of difficulty along the way, they can be overcome.

Vision and the masterplan

- **Experience shows that a strong vision of high quality and sustainability is essential in delivering places that will stand the test of time.**
- **A holistic, comprehensive masterplan is a fundamental requirement for a successful new community. The masterplan should act as a framework for development, rather than a blueprint, with the flexibility to adapt to change. Flexibility is needed to ensure that the masterplan acts as a touchstone for local people as they take forward their community. Adaptability is essential to the long-term resilience of places, as it is impossible to foresee every social, economic and environmental change.**
- **New planned communities must meet a full range of housing needs through a varied housing offer which includes high-quality social, affordable and market homes.**

‘The end venture to now set before the people... that they should forthwith gird themselves to the task of building up clusters of beautiful home-towns’

Ebenezer Howard: *To-Morrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform*, 1898

The range of housing design and tenure, the economic base and the connectivity within and outside the development are inextricably interlinked in shaping the socio-economic demographics of any new development. The New Towns and Garden Cities were successful in attracting businesses to their developments, but there must be a diverse economic base to ensure greater resilience to changes in markets.

- **The housing and jobs offer must be supported by a good local transport network, while acknowledging the need for and inevitability of wider commuting and movement.**

Despite a historical emphasis on self-containment, the new communities which have performed best are those that have good external road and rail links. In addition, connectivity within the development is essential if the town centre is to be effective as the hub of the community. Self-containment must be re-imagined for the 21st century, with a view to delivering a balanced community which has a robust cultural and economic centre, but which is also linked to other town and city centres.

Implementation

- **Where local people have identified a need for large-scale new housing development in their area, central government should support that community and the relevant local authority (or authorities) through a long-term partnership approach. This partnership between central and local government should recognise the need for long-term certainty in order to secure the financial support and expertise of developers.**

Past experience demonstrates that a purely public sector or purely private delivery vehicle creates tensions and slows delivery. A joint approach between the public and private sectors engenders



The Garden Cities were examples of a collaborative and co-operative local approach to delivering high-quality, well designed places

trust and a united vision because it shares both the risks and benefits. It also creates room for political will and leadership to support and drive forward the development. The scale of the challenge requires power and resources to be brought together.

- **Adequate long-term investment is vital to the success of a new community. The Garden Cities were undercapitalised from the start, which slowed progress. Capital investment, planning powers and co-ordination are pivotal factors in the delivery of comprehensively planned new communities.**
- **Any new comprehensively planned community needs a long-term, dedicated means of delivery, with a multi-disciplinary team. The team must share the common goal of bringing forward the new community in the most sustainable way, with a clear transition plan to local authority control and long-term asset management.**

Local authority planning departments cannot be expected to bring forward development on this scale as an additional task on top of their everyday functions. Such developments require a long-term commitment which must be seen through regardless of electoral cycles and shifts in fortune – as political support may come and go, and economic conditions may worsen and recover.

The New Town examples demonstrate that a vacuum can too easily be left after the original delivery vehicle has been phased out. There should be recognition of the need not only to manage the transition of power to the local authority, but also to ensure that there are mechanisms in place to support the ongoing development of the new community. Non-commercial assets should be held in perpetuity for the community, with profits reinvested in the long-term well-being of the development, for example through a Community Trust.

- **The funding and delivery of infrastructure must be carefully co-ordinated, and the roles of the various agencies involved must be clearly defined.**

It is particularly important that new developments do not put excessive strain on the existing infrastructure, which can be a source of tension with neighbouring communities. There must be consultation and partnership with privately run utilities throughout the process to secure ‘buy-in’ and to establish agreements over the delivery of infrastructure. Similarly, new developments need co-ordinated input from various government departments – on health, education and transport, for example.

There will be a wide range of partners in the delivery process, and in each case the right type of relationship needs to be established, with either a formal role in the governance of the delivery vehicle or a clear line of communication and responsibilities.

- **Infrastructure delivery should be planned and delivered in parallel with community development.**

Both the Garden Cities and New Towns put resources into starting community associations and sports and leisure activities. The New Towns often appointed dedicated community development officers, and new communities have been proactive in assisting community groups, often with the appointment of community development workers (ideally, people from the local area). Community infrastructure must be delivered early and on time. It is essential that vital services such as health centres, schools and sports facilities are ready before the first residents move in.

The need for detailed research

- **This report endorses the findings of House of Commons Select Committee reports from 2002 and 2008^{59, 60} that a comprehensive appraisal of the New Towns programme should fully assess its successes and failures. As well as providing lessons for today's new settlements, such analysis would be a positive step towards ensuring that the communities living in Garden Cities and New Towns are revitalised and renewed, identifying where better decisions can be made and what steps, if any, need to be taken to rejuvenate town centres and ensure that the towns' housing and employment base remain fit for purpose. Without this appraisal it will not be possible to fully develop an understanding of how to create the resilient, attractive and sustainable communities of the future.**

5.3 Towards a rediscovery of our planning heritage – re-imagining Garden Cities for the 21st century

New communities offer a powerful opportunity to deliver much needed housing in a holistic and comprehensively planned way, rather than through piecemeal development. Not only can they deliver more housing with potentially less environmental impact, but they also present a significant opportunity to embed community governance structures, create jobs, and promote low-carbon living in high-quality, sustainable and inclusive places.

The Garden Cities were excellent examples of a collaborative and co-operative local approach to delivering high-quality, well designed places. The

significant backing of central government for the New Towns allowed an unprecedented level of development, but the approach taken raised serious questions about democratic accountability and the role of local people in their communities. We must learn from past experience and find new models of funding and models which place communities at the heart of the process. Where there is local support for new housing, public-private partnerships – in which government provides the planning powers and certainty and the private sector the investment – present an opportunity to rediscover our heritage in building attractive, sustainable new settlements and extensions.

New Government initiatives such as the Local Enterprise Partnerships and the New Homes Bonus may help in making the case for new and expanded settlements by connecting new housing with economic growth, job creation and local investment. The Government's fundamental shift from central and regional to local and neighbourhood requires us to reconnect with communities and convey to them the benefits of comprehensively planned new settlements. It also requires us to be sensitive to the growing numbers of people in housing need.

In looking ahead, we should at the same time recall our rich heritage of Garden Cities and New Towns. It is all too easy to overlook past successes and forget what we have achieved. A new generation of locally led, comprehensively planned communities is overdue. We must seek to replicate the collaborative spirit of the Garden Cities, through a radical culture change which enables communities, local authorities, developers and central government to work together to build villages, towns and cities for the future. We must forge a new relationship between people and planning and find ways to combine the best of what we have achieved in the past with answers to the modern challenge of creating sustainable, democratic communities which truly place local people at centre stage.

59 *New Towns: Their Problems and Future*. HC 603. House of Commons Transport, Local Government and the Regions Committee, 19th Report, Session 2001-02. TSO, Jul. 2002. <http://www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk/pa/cm200102/cmselect/cmtlgr/603/60302.htm>

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



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