

Garden Cities Symposium

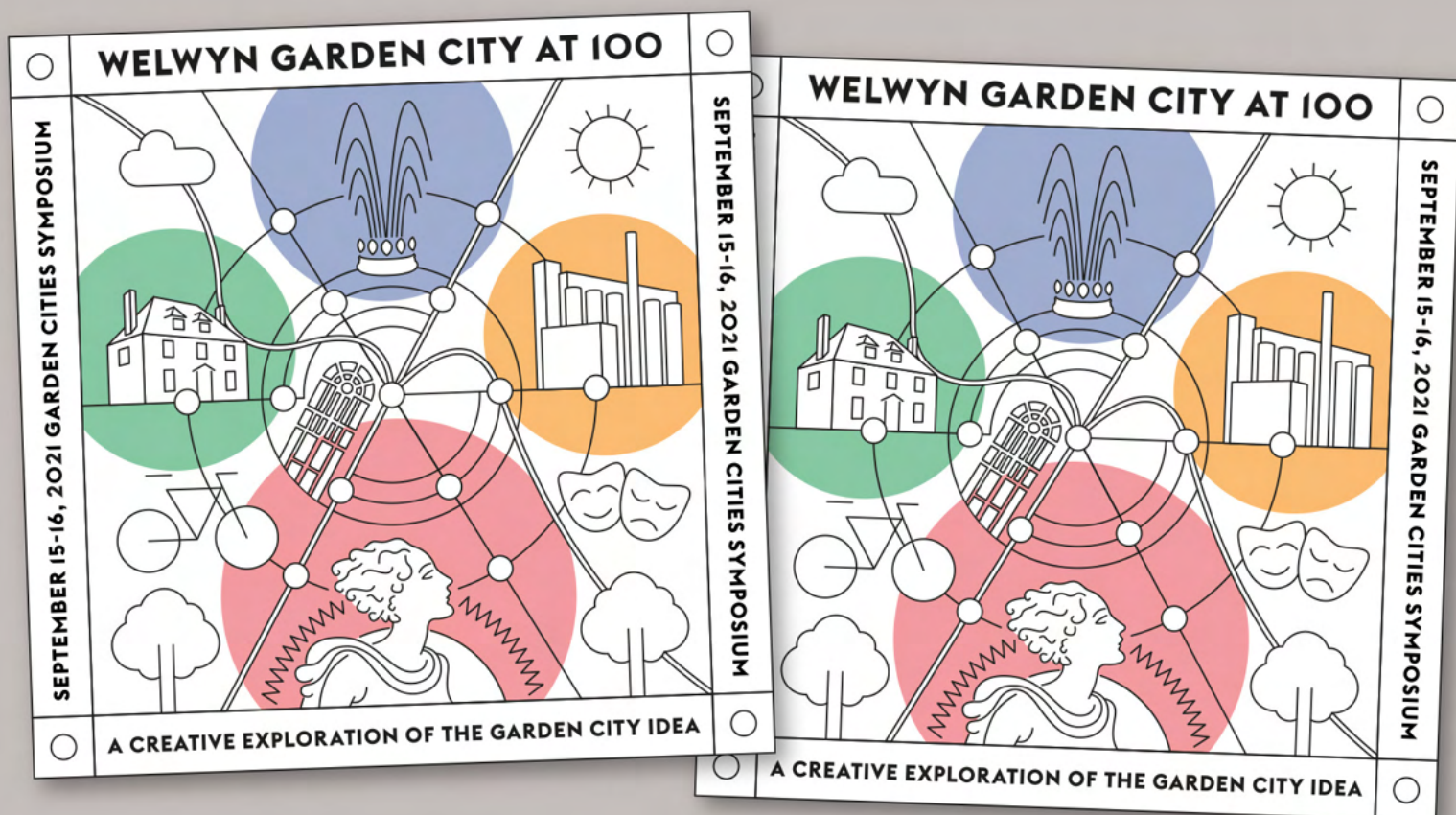
# CELEBRATING WELWYN GARDEN CITY AT 100



tcpa

Learning from the past, transforming the present, re-imagining the future

**A creative exploration of the Garden City idea**





# INTRODUCTION

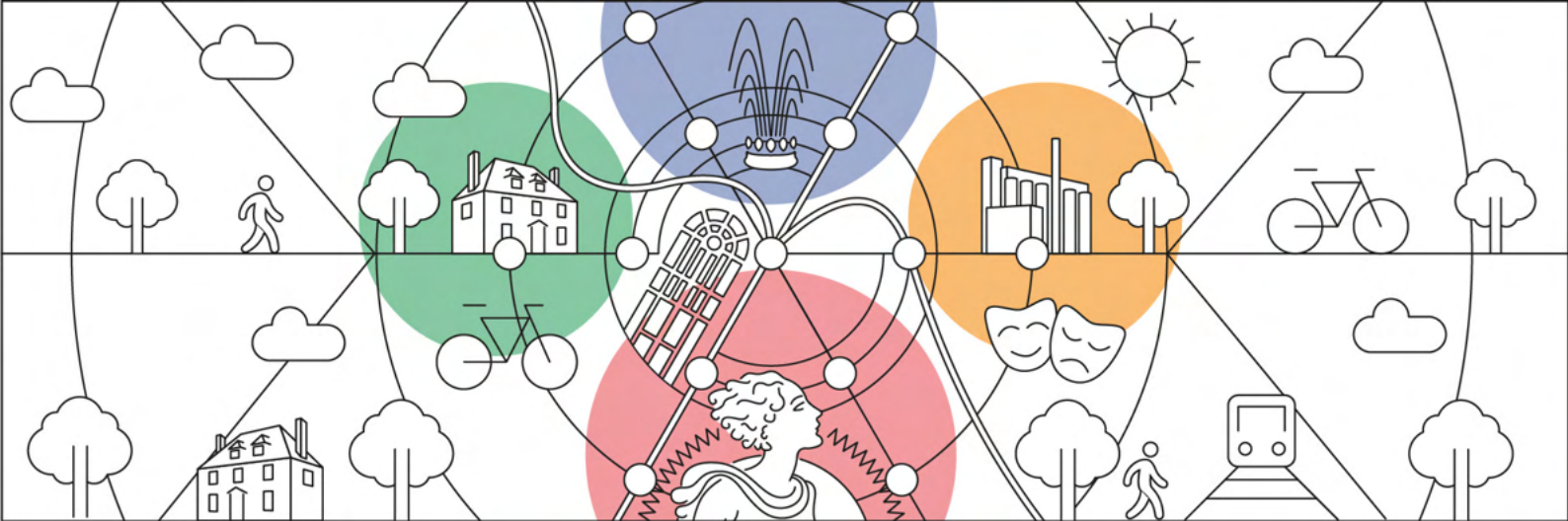
The enduring influence of Welwyn Garden City, and the Garden City Principles it sought to enshrine, is recognised internationally. Back in 2013, the TCPA took part in conversations with Welwyn residents about the best way to celebrate the centenary of Welwyn Garden City. There followed the establishment of the Welwyn Garden City Centenary Foundation and with the kind support of the Lady Margaret Paterson Osborn Trust, a programme of celebratory events, including a Garden Cities Symposium. The TCPA was appointed in 2019 to organise the event on behalf of the Foundation. Its aim was to bring together expert speakers and commentators from across the world to not only look back at lessons learned in the planning and delivery of the town, but to explore the Garden City idea and generate lively discussion and interventions designed to address the 21st century challenges of providing places where people want and can afford to live.

In 2019, we brought together an Editorial Board of experts and locals to discuss the programme of what was to be a series of events and celebrations in Welwyn Garden City. However, with 2020, the centenary year, coinciding with the Covid 19 pandemic, unfortunately these plans had to shift dramatically. Instead, in September 2021, having been delayed by a year, we held the Symposium as a hybrid event over two days.

While we were not able to hold the Symposium in 2020, a special edition of Town & Country Planning was published in September of that year to mark and celebrate the centenary. A number of contributors to the edition, and the themes they raised, were then involved in the event in 2021.

**The special edition of Town & Country Planning can be found [here](#).**



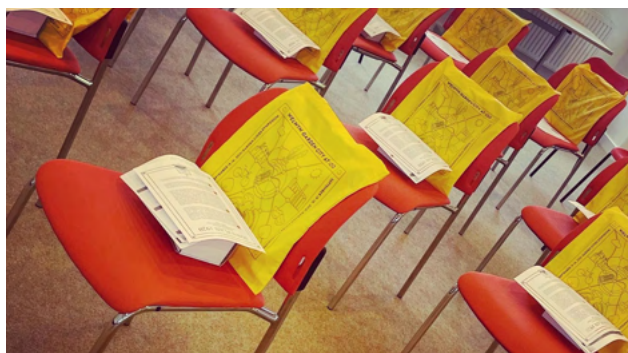


# PROGRAMME

As set out in the programme, day one was an online conference, which considered the legacy and the future of the Garden City and the countless places it inspired; what went right? What could have been done better? And, above all, how can we apply this practical experience both at home and abroad, against a context of population growth, the climate emergency and the need for sustainable living? This element of the symposium was also supported by Gascoyne Cecil Estates, and Tarmac.

Day two involved guided walking study tours of Welwyn Garden City to explore its design and architecture, as well as its cultural heritage, arts and social life. The study tours were supported by Saunders Architects, and the Welwyn Garden City Business Improvement District.

To provide an additional participatory element to the online symposium, and further legacy for the event, all delegates received celebratory gift boxes, carefully curated with limited edition centenary gifts – including an original Welwyn Garden City print, mug, tote bag, artistic activities and challenges to complete during the event, as well as special edition journal articles and souvenir guide.





# PROGRAMME

Plenary session 1: The Welwyn experiment – A century of innovation	
10:00	<b>WELCOME FROM THE CHAIR</b> <b>Fiona Howie</b> , Chief Executive, TCPA
10:05	<b>OFFICIAL WELCOMES</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Lord Salisbury</b></li> <li>• <b>Peter Waine</b>, Chairman, Welwyn Garden City Centenary Foundation</li> <li>• <b>Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP</b>, Member of Parliament for Welwyn Hatfield</li> </ul>
10:15	<b>THE WELWYN EXPERIMENT - A CENTURY OF INNOVATION</b> A newly commissioned film on the history and lessons from Welwyn Garden City and the wider Garden City movement.
10:30	<b>PANEL DISCUSSION</b> , including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>David Lock CBE</b>, Strategic Planning Adviser/Vice President, DLA/TCPA</li> <li>• <b>Dr Elain Harwood</b>, Architectural Historian, Historic England</li> <li>• <b>Dr Wei Yang</b>, President of the Royal Town Planning Institute FAcSS, FRTPI, MCIHT, AOU, RIBA Client Advisor</li> </ul>
11:15	<b>LESSONS FOR TOMORROW - GARDEN CITY PRINCIPLES FOR THE 21st CENTURY</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Katy Lock</b>, Director, Communities &amp; Project Delivery (FJ Osborn Fellow), TCPA</li> </ul>
11:30	<b>Q&amp;A</b>
11:45	<b>BREAK</b> - Opportunity for delegates to visit expo booths, networking and more!





12:15	THE CHALLENGES FOR NEW GARDEN CITIES - CONVERSATIONS			
	<b>Locating and consenting new Garden Cities</b>	<b>People, power and homes for all</b>	<b>Finance and stewardship</b>	<b>Climate resilient and healthy Garden Cities</b>
	Chair: <b>Mary Parsons</b> , Regeneration and Partnerships Director, Lovell; Chair, TCPA	Chair: <b>Leigh Johnson</b> , Head of Design & Master Development, Homes England; TCPA Trustee	Chair: <b>Katy Lock</b> , Director, Communities & Project Delivery (FJ Osborn Fellow), TCPA	Chair: <b>Julia Thrift</b> , Director, Healthier Place-making, TCPA
	Contributors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Catriona Riddell</b>, Director, Catriona Riddell &amp; Associates</li> <li>• <b>Mark Dickens</b>, Lead Officer - Spatial Planning, Liverpool City Region</li> <li>• <b>Bev Hindle</b>, Executive Director of the Oxford-Cambridge Arc Leadership Group</li> </ul>	Contributors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Naomi Luhde-Thompson</b>, Chief Executive Director, Rights: Community: Action</li> <li>• <b>Derek Hooper</b>, Equality &amp; Diversity Consultant</li> <li>• <b>Margaret Wilkinson</b>, Head of Planning for Real</li> </ul>	Contributors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Fionnuala Lennon</b>, Head of Garden Communities, Homes England</li> <li>• <b>David Ames</b>, Executive Director, Stewardship &amp; Development, Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation</li> <li>• <b>SallyAnne Logan</b>, Chilmington Community Management Organisation Project Manager, Ashford Borough Council</li> </ul>	Contributors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Hugh Ellis</b>, Director of Policy, TCPA</li> <li>• <b>Rachel Brisley</b>, Head of Climate Services, JBA Consulting; co-author of the Committee on Climate Change report UK Climate Risk</li> <li>• <b>Ann Forsyth</b>, Ruth and Frank Stanton Professor of Urban Planning, Harvard University</li> </ul>
13:15	BREAK - Opportunity for delegates to visit expo booths, networking and more!			



## Plenary session 2: A tomorrow for cities? The challenge and the choice

14:00	<b>WELCOME BACK FROM THE CHAIR</b> <b>Fiona Howie</b> , Chief Executive, TCPA
14:05	<b>PLANNING FOR PEOPLE</b> <b>Mitchell Silver</b> , Principal, McAdams; Former Commissioner, New York City Parks Department
14:20	<b>Q&amp;A</b>
14:25	<b>CHALLENGE FOR THE PANEL</b> <b>Fiona Howie</b> , Chief Executive, TCPA
14:30	<b>PROPOSITIONS FOR TOMORROW'S CITIES</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Ensuring a just transition to climate resilience - Katherine Greig</b>, Senior Transition Specialist, FloodRe</li> <li>• <b>Democracy and governance - who has power and what is the role of local people - Pam Warhurst CBE</b>, Founder and Chair, Incredible Edible Network</li> <li>• <b>Land and freedom - Guy Shrubsole</b>, Campaigner and author of Who Owns England?</li> </ul>
15:25	<b>CONCLUSIONS FROM THE CHAIR</b> <b>Fiona Howie</b> , Chief Executive, TCPA
15:30	<b>CLOSE</b>

## Guided Walking Study Tours of Welwyn Garden City

10:15	<p><b>ARRIVAL &amp; WELCOME REFRESHMENTS</b></p> <p>Focolare Centre For Unity, 69 Parkway, Welwyn Garden City, AL8 6JG</p> <p>Delegates will receive an exclusive tote bag to include a limited edition Charles Paine Four Seasons poster, maps, special edition journal articles and souvenir guide.</p> <p><b>Welcome from the Mayor of Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council, Councillor Peter Hebden</b></p>
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11:00	<b>TOUR SESSION 1: Led by Tony Skottowe, Welwyn Garden City Heritage Trust and Malcolm Day, Welwyn Garden City Society</b>
12:30	<b>RETURN TO FOCOLARE CENTRE FOR PACKED LUNCH &amp; REFRESHMENTS</b> Focolare Centre For Unity, 69 Parkway, Welwyn Garden City, AL8 6JG Networking and chance to view archive images
14:00	<b>TOUR SESSION 2: Led by Tony Skottowe, Welwyn Garden City Heritage Trust and Malcolm Day, Welwyn Garden City Society</b>
15:30	<b>TOURS CONCLUDE AT THE CORONATION FOUNTAIN</b> Parkway at the intersection with Howardsgate





# LEARNING FROM THE PAST, TRANSFORMING THE PRESENT, RE-IMAGINING THE FUTURE

The opening session of the Symposium was an opportunity for delegates to hear about the history of Welwyn Garden City and the Garden City ideals, as well as the uniquely practical vision and idea that Howard set out in his book, *Tomorrow: a peaceful path to real reform*, back in 1898.

Howard, who a year after publishing his book founded the TCPA, believed that there was a better way of delivering high-quality and equitable environments and the homes, jobs and social connections that people needed. He was also clear that the aim of his Garden City concept was to raise the standard of health and comfort of everyone in the city.

The Garden City experiment had a hugely important legacy. The morning session aimed, therefore, to highlight that as we face climate, housing, health and biodiversity crises, and economic challenges, the aspiration of raising the standard of everyone's health and comfort continues to be as relevant today as it ever was. It also provided an opportunity for delegates to explore the challenges facing the creation of new Garden Cities.

## **The Welwyn Experiment – A century of Innovation**

The short film *The Welwyn Experiment – A Century of Innovation*, which was commissioned specifically for the Symposium, provided a virtual orientation of Welwyn Garden City, its history and its role in the Garden City and New Towns story. The town's centenary statue of Howard, by the artist Ben-Twiston Davies, provides a backdrop for Dr Ursula Howard, great granddaughter of the Garden City inventor, outlining how Welwyn Garden City reflects Howard's ambition, moral philosophy and co-operative, mutualist and associationist way of working. We learn of the huge influence of Eliza-Anne ('Lizzie') Howard, who played a fundamental role in the Garden City project, being as she was a great orator, fundraiser and vociferous campaigner in her own right.

Architectural historian Dr Elain Harwood highlights the architectural story of Welwyn Garden City, with the appointment of Lois de Soissons in 1920 and departure from the Arts and Crafts style of Letchworth Garden City, to the classical, neo-Georgian and strongly European design of Welwyn Garden City, with its grand



boulevards and formal public spaces. Another key figure in the Garden City's story was Frederic J Osborn, who along with Margaret Osborn (a campaigner and Osborn's wife), lived and worked in the town from 1925. The film visits the home from which he led the campaign for a post-war New Towns programme. David Lock CBE, Strategic Planning Advisor and a TCPA Vice President, explains how the Osborn's were interested as much in building community as in place, taking an active role in the creative endeavours of what began as a community of strangers. We learn of the economic and financial development of the Garden City, its early challenges and, in the face of market challenge, the inability to fully realise Howard's vision for a financial system built on the leasehold model.

Moving from Welwyn Garden City's creation to the New Towns programme following the Second World War, the TCPA's Director of Communities and FJ Osborn Fellow, Katy Lock, explains how Second Garden City Limited had its own ambitions to grow the town. This ambition was overruled by Minister Lewis Silkin, who worried that a private sector company could not be trusted to work on behalf of the people. By then in fact, the Directors of Second Garden City Limited had already betrayed Howard's model by removing the requirement to reinvest funds for community benefit. Recognising the benefits of access to the powers and finance of the Welwyn-Hatfield Development Corporation, the film notes the biggest compromise in the Garden City model when the town became a New Town in 1948 was in terms of stewardship. In the premature wind-up of the Corporations, its economy became like any other town - it had fantastic assets but no resources to pay for their upkeep. Something Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council is only too aware of today.

Returning to the theme of land, ownership and management the film considers whether Welwyn Garden City would have benefited from the financial and management model currently in place in the first Garden City, Letchworth? While we will never know, Dr Wei Yang, President of the Royal Town Planning Institute, shares thoughts on lessons from the social and economic model of Welwyn Garden City, its embodiment of many modern models of sustainable development – from 20 minute neighbourhoods to living with nature and local food.

Welwyn Garden City resident and one of the TCPA's Vice Presidents, Graeme Bell OBE, reflects on lessons from Welwyn Garden City for today and how the Garden City approach came into sharp focus during the national lockdown as people appreciated their gardens and access to the countryside. Bell reflects on Howard's focus on wellbeing, even a century ago. Drawing on that, the film draws further lessons and concludes that, from the climate emergency to the need to live healthier lives, Welwyn Garden City and the Garden City Principles are as relevant today as they were then. Asking how Welwyn Garden City in its next century can be an exemplar for dealing with the challenges of today, the film shares poems from children at Applecroft School in Welwyn Garden City, which were written for the town's centenary.

The last word is given to Dr Ursula Howard, reflecting that *"If still true to his character, [Howard] would be campaigning, speaking about how to create a movement with deep social change in a peaceful fashion. He would see the task to be done, he would know the size of it, and he would get on with it."*

The film screening was followed by a discussion with three of its contributors, Dr Wei Yang, Dr Elaine Harwood and David Lock CBE. The debate drew on the lessons and Welwyn Garden City's story to outline the particular circumstances and ambition for creating places today. The specific challenges and opportunities when

undertaking the complex endeavour of creating a whole new community was a recurring theme. This included issues of designing for a community which is yet to live there, of creating the conditions of social and artistic life and buying into the community-building project. Relating this to planning and planning reform, how we seem to have lost the ambition as place-makers was discussed. It was suggested that planning should try and capture that ambition for creating better places and a shared endeavour. To achieve that, it was suggested that a spirit of collaboration and a shared vision using a town architect, were needed.



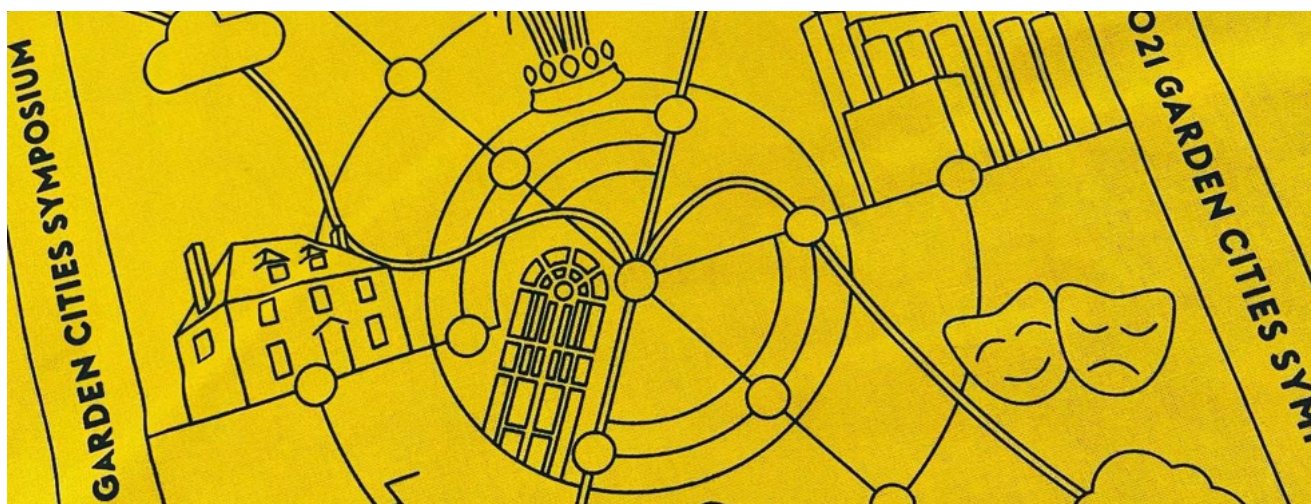
The panel agreed that current policy lacked the scale of ambition or leadership that the Garden Cities or New Towns projects demonstrated. And that many contemporary Garden City inspired projects are far from the model Howard would recognise. It was proposed that we need a national spatial plan and strategic approach to make it work - piecemeal sprawling development is a lifetime from the holistic flexible framework necessary to create successful places. In concluding, Dr Harwood shared her frustration that the Garden Cities focused too much on the family unit at the expense of other home arrangements, but felt there was much to learn from the social and artistic life of the Garden City. Dr Yang's key lesson from Welwyn Garden City was it being a town with a global vision – the original 20-minute neighbourhood and an approach that can help to solve global problems. David Lock CBE concluded by highlighting the importance of creating a strong but flexible framework in order to accommodate changing urban fabric and the nature of life and communities over time. And it was recognised that the people of Welwyn Garden City know they are part of something special, an approach not at the whim of the developer, but a place thought about and cared for in perpetuity.

**You can view a full version of the film *The Welwyn Experiment – a century of innovation* [here](#).**

### **Lessons for Tomorrow – Garden City Principles for the 21st century**

The next session moved to the contemporary debate around the Garden City idea. The TCPA's Director of Communities and FJ Osborn Fellow, Katy Lock, provided an overview of the Association's last decade of campaigning for a new generation of Garden Cities.





The case for new Garden Cities was set within the context of the many contemporary challenges that Howard and the Garden City pioneers would have recognised – from overcrowded homes to unhealthy living conditions and the need to renew existing towns and cities as well as build new ones. But also, with the context of the climate emergency and inequality and injustice, Lock set out how the Garden City approach to development can address these issues in a holistic way.

Drawing on the TCPA's ongoing research into the lessons from the Garden Cities and New Towns programme and beyond, Lock outlined the changes to the current planning and delivery model required to enable the delivery of new communities based on modern Garden City Principles. This included a national strategic approach to identifying need and location for new development, enabled by government and led by local authorities. It required a dedicated consent mechanism for new communities, including a modernised New Towns Act – with a commitment to the Garden City principles and enhancing requirements for public participation, addressing the climate emergency, and essentially long-term stewardship of place. It also required a lasting settlement on land values, viability and compulsory purchase.

Reflecting on the success of securing reference to Garden City Principles in National Policy and the momentum around the modern Garden City idea, Lock welcomed the application of modern Garden City principles by ambitious local authorities, but was upfront about the failure of government at all levels to truly embrace the ambition and integrity of the Garden City approach. Lock noted that for many people, the term Garden City is synonymous with bland places, urban sprawl or car dominated developments – highlighting that these were actually the antithesis of the Garden City idea. Addressing these myths, and taking people beyond a vision of tree-lined streets and nicely designed homes to the radical but practical model for creating healthy, sustainable inclusive and lively places was essential to realise the modern Garden City vision.

Lock concluded her contribution by introducing the Tomorrow:125 project – which aims to rediscover the roots of the Garden City idea to create a new framework for transforming the places we call home. And ended with a call to action, asking delegates to remember the pragmatism of Howard and the Garden City ideas, the practical idealists, which is something we need to capture today.

**You can read more about the Tomorrow 125 project in the final section of this report.**



# THE CHALLENGES FOR NEW GARDEN CITIES

Following the morning plenary session which looked back at lessons from the past, four parallel sessions were then held on different challenges for new Garden Cities.

## **Locating and consenting new Garden Cities**

This session was chaired by Mary Parsons, Regeneration and Partnerships Director, Lovell and the TCPA's Chair of Trustees, with contributions from Catriona Riddell, who is Director of Catriona Riddell & Associates; Mark Dickens, Lead Officer - Spatial Planning at Liverpool City Region; and Bev Hindle, Executive Director of the Oxford-Cambridge Arc Leadership Group.

Mary asked the speakers to outline their three biggest challenges for locating and consenting new Garden Cities based on their experiences, including in relation to the Oxford-Cambridge Arc, and whether we have to take a larger than local view to deliver new Garden Cities. There was also a discussion on the types of models needed to deliver them.

## **People, power and homes for all**

This session was chaired by Leigh Johnson, Head of Design and Master Development at Homes England, and also a TCPA Trustee. Contributors included Naomi Luhde-Thompson, Chief Executive Director at Rights: Community: Action; Derek Hooper, who is an Equality and Diversity Consultant; and Margaret Wilkinson, Head of Planning for Real.

They discussed the challenges around ensuring there is equality and diversity amongst the people who are engaged in the delivery of new places, and how to meaningfully involve them, ensuring all voices are heard. The session also discussed the difficulties of involving people in the governance of new places, which are yet to be built.

## **Finance and stewardship**

This session was chaired by the TCPA's Director of Communities and FJ Osborn Fellow, Katy Lock, with contributions from Fionnuala Lennon, Head of Garden Communities at Homes England; David Ames, Executive Director, Stewardship & Development, at Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation; and SallyAnne Logan, Chilmington Community Management Organisation Project Manager for Ashford Borough Council.





This session focused on the issue at the heart of the matter of delivering sustainable places - and a core lesson from the Garden Cities and New Towns – of long-term stewardship. It drew on lessons from the first Garden City, about additionality and communication, and the need for a diverse economic base. Lessons from the Government's Garden Communities programme were also explored, including the need to think upfront about stewardship and embed the right team, standards and finance from the outset. Sally-Anne Logan drew on her experience at Chilmington Green and outlined important lessons including securing stewardship as a corporate commitment, getting the right people with the right skills together and ensuring flexibility of approach. The session concluded that there is no one size fits all approach and that while it is complex, securing a commitment to stewardship at the earliest stages benefits everyone and is essential for the long-term sustainability of place.

### **Climate resilient and healthy Garden Cities**

This session was chaired by Julia Thrift, Director, Healthier Place-making at the TCPA, with contributions Hugh Ellis, Director of Policy at the TCPA; Rachel Brisley, Head of Climate Services at JBA Consulting and co-author of the Committee on Climate Change report, UK Climate Risk Independent Assessment; and Ann Forsyth, Ruth and Frank Stanton Professor of Urban Planning at Harvard University. Contributors highlighted that not only is there currently a shortage of housing in many places, this shortage will be exacerbated by climate change making some existing coastal settlements uninhabitable as sea levels rise. But, Prof Forsyth also pointed out, a very large number of new towns have been built around the world in the last century, but certainly not all of them could be described as healthy places to live. The importance of learning from past mistakes to maximise the potential health benefits of future new communities was therefore highlighted.

All participants therefore agreed that well designed green infrastructure has the potential to mitigate a wide range of climate impacts, as well as support good population health. The founders of the Garden City movement were creating places that responded to the poor living conditions of the late 19th century – but their emphasis on trees, green spaces and green belts is just as important for tackling the health and climate challenges of today.



# A TOMORROW FOR CITIES? THE CHALLENGES AND CHOICES

The afternoon session of the Symposium looked ahead – asking speakers to consider what the future challenges and choices would be for ‘tomorrows cities’.

## **Planning for people**

Mitchell Silver, Principal at McAdams and former Commissioner at the New York City Parks Department, kicked off proceedings. His inspiring talk focused on planning for people, and what this will mean if we want to meet the needs of current and future generations.

Silver emphasised the work already being done in New York City to make green and recreational spaces better equipped to meet the needs of all parts of the community. He suggested that past generations had been ‘consumers of goods’ – while new generations are ‘consumers of experiences’. Planners and those involved in shaping places need, therefore, to focus on building experiences. Essential parts of this will be reimagining the public realm, access to recreational amenities and equity, diversity and inclusion.

Silver gave the example of the NYC Parks: Framework for an Equitable Future and explained that while 81.5% of New Yorkers live within walking distance of a park – there is an issue of equity in relation to quality. While some parks have received over \$10m of investment over the last 20 years, 215 parks across the city have received minimal investment of less than \$250,000 over that time period. This understanding had informed the development of the Community Parks Initiative, which aimed to re-create 67 community parks through 136 smaller scale physical improvement projects. Design precedents were also developed for new parks – especially around making them multi-generational spaces.

The presentation also highlighted that the City Parks department had recognised that streets and sidewalks make up 26% of the city, while parks only 14%. Together, therefore, public realm makes up 40% of the city. While parks are important, there needed to be a more holistic and integrated approach to managing and maximising the public benefit of the public realm. The ‘Parks without borders’ programme had implemented a new design approach focusing on improving areas where parks and neighbourhoods meet.



As Silver highlighted, all of these issues and lessons strongly aligned with the Garden City Principles and must be considered in new and existing places. He concluded his presentation by urging planners and those involved in shaping places to be "guardians for present and future generations".

### **Propositions for tomorrow's cities**

The final session of the first day was a panel debate in response to a provocation which drew on Howard's quality of being a 'practical idealist'. It highlighted the continued relevance of the Garden City experiment and concept today, and highlighted three broad themes.

- The first theme was places designed for justice and the need for current and future cities to be more socially just.
- The second theme was the need for democratic places, where people's voices are at the heart of how places are organised, managed and regenerated.
- And the third theme was places with a mutualised economy, so that decisions are taken locally and profits can be returned for the benefit of the citizen.

The TCPA's Chief Executive, Fiona Howie, put to the panel that these ideas can help us prepare for the kind of future that is desperately needed. Panel members were, therefore, asked the following:

What do you believe is the top practical change that needs to be made if we are to achieve new and renewed cities in which everyone and the environment can thrive?

The first respondent was Katherine Greig, Head of Transition at Flood Re. Her suggested practical change was to require developers to consider and be accountable for the current and future cost of insurance. She argued this one solution would improve the quality of homes, work towards address social injustice, as well as align focus on minimising crime and risk of fire and flood by requiring them to consider all of the factors that currently drive insurance claims.

The second respondent was Pam Warhurst, cofounder of Incredible Edible Todmorden and chair of the Incredible Edible Network. Pam argued for a 'community right to grow' and the importance of community action. Pam suggested that if we are to give the Garden City model more traction today, there is a need to revisit the role of individuals in their decision making to give people more agency so people are, and feel, heard. Her 'big ask' was a right for people to use public realm to feed themselves and their neighbours. This, she argued, would empower local communities and, more generally, demonstrate a new social contract people citizens, local government and national government.

Guy Shrubsole, who is an environmental campaigner and author of *Who Owns England?*, which was published in 2019, was the third and final respondent. He set out a number of suggestions relating to how we treat land, including the need for information about who owns land, which is held by the Land Registry, to be freely available. Making this information free, rather than locked behind a paywall, would be beneficial to planners, local authority ecologists who might be informing local nature recovery strategies, and to the public as it would make it easier for them to participate in discussions about their local area and its future. His other practical ideas included a stronger 'community right to buy' in England, which would draw on the right in Scotland, to enable communities to buy assets of community value such as pubs, extending the right to roam and letting councils buy land cheaply again.



Throughout the discussion, and the afternoon session as a whole, there was a strong emphasis on community empowerment. With a clear consensus that things must not be done to people, but by people. It was agreed that the Garden City Principles remained as relevant as ever and that empowering people needs to be at the heart of all new and renewed communities.







# STUDY TOURS OF WELWYN GARDEN CITY

On the second day of the conference, two walking study tours took place in Welwyn Garden City, which explored the themes of 'Architecture' and 'Play and Arts'.

Attendees arrived at the Focolare Centre for the official welcomes from Fiona Howie and the Mayor of Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council, Councillor Peter Hebden. The study tours then took place, with half of the attendees attending each walk in the morning and then going on the other one in the afternoon.

## Study tour themes

**Tour A - Architecture:** The tour was led by Tony Skottowe from Welwyn Garden City Heritage Trust and explored the design principles, layout format and architecture of Welwyn Garden City. Delegates heard how the Louis de Soissons original masterplan from 1920 has remained remarkably intact, and how in most cases development of properties has stayed true to the original design. People were able to see the de Soissons and Kenyon designed grouping of houses, as well as the opportunity to view an Arts and Crafts house, and learn about the Daily Mail Model Village competition which took place in 1922.

**Tour B - Play and Arts:** This tour was led by Malcom Day from Welwyn Garden City Society and explored how the community of Welwyn Garden City has used leisure time during its 100-year history. An exhibition of the range of activities available set the scene before the walking tour started. During the tour there was a visit to The Barn Theatre and a chance to look at the opportunities for music, sports and horticulture. Delegates were also able to examine items of public art displayed in the town - works included Henry Moore, the new bronze statue of Ebenezer Howard and Ad Astra. The tour included very valuable contributions from Howard Cropp, who gave a summary of the Digswell Arts Trust, and Ben Twiston-Davies, who commented on the statues.



# FEEDBACK

We received positive feedback from delegates attending the Symposium, both from the online and in person days. Comments included "I learnt a lot and the two days gave great focus to the ideas and challenges that us practical idealists face". Also, "A big thank you to all at the TCPA for an enjoyable, stimulating and thought provoking couple of days. Never a dull moment but highlights for me were Mitchell Silver and Ben Twiston-Davies. Keep up the good work!"; "Really great couple of days, thanks."; "I thought the symposium was excellent"; and "The event was insightful and informative, well done."

The study tours received a lot of positive feedback from attendees both during and after the event. They were the first in-person event that the TCPA held since the start of the pandemic in March 2020 and attendees felt very positive about it. One of the local non-professional attendees highlighted that it was particularly rewarding to hear and meet people who have a vested interest in the whole subject of town planning, with all its associated challenges.

The success of the event is also reflected in the fact that one of the sponsors of the study tour, the Welwyn Garden City BID, wanted to make the study tour an annual event!

The TCPA were delighted that the Symposium could take place, albeit, a year later than planned and in a different format and are thankful to all those who took part in the event, and to the Lady Margaret Paterson Osborn Trust for making it happen.



# TOMORROW 125: A PRACTICAL PATH TO A HOPEFUL FUTURE?

The Tomorrow 125 project was highlighted at the Symposium - it aims to help us address the perpetual but urgent question of 'At a time of global crises - how are we going to live?' At a time when the climate crisis is impossible to ignore, and we cautiously feel our way into the new post-pandemic 'normal', does the Garden City idea offer insights into a new way to live in the 21st Century?

2023 will mark the 125th anniversary of the publication of *Tomorrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform*, a book which is much misunderstood but is also one of the world's most radical, practical and powerful attempts to understand how we can live in a fairer, healthier and more sustainable way. The Tomorrow 125 project is exploring how the Garden City approach can help us construct a pathway to a hopeful future based on a fairer society. In the run up to 2023, we will use a variety of projects, events and interventions to engage people with the Garden City idea and what it means today.

Ebenezer Howard's Garden City idea was a practical way of securing 'the good life' by creating living conditions in which everyone can thrive. It was a uniquely practical vision based on sharing the values created from developing places. It proved to be the most influential and enduring example of an alternative and sustainable way of living that the UK has ever produced. But, the term 'Garden City' has been much abused and devalued in recent years. Howard's hopeful ideas are rarely holistically applied and are often invisible to the communities who need change the most.

By addressing the myths and returning to the radical roots of the Garden City idea, the TCPA is asking whether we can learn how to construct a fairer, healthier and more sustainable future. The Tomorrow 125 project seeks to explore just this, and so the important discussions started at the Symposium will continue on.

More information about the project can be found at [www.tomorrow125.org.uk](http://www.tomorrow125.org.uk)



