

# Garden Cities – Why Not?

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# The International Garden Cities Institute

## About the Perspectives Series

This is the first in a series of Garden City Perspectives: in-depth research and policy papers being published under the auspices of the International Garden Cities Institute (IGCI). Through this series our intention is to open up opportunities for diverse viewpoints to be expressed about the history, contemporary practice and possible futures for Garden Cities - and planned settlements more generally where relevant. It is a chance to look at Garden Cities in depth with reference to the latest academic and policy perspectives across a range of themes - housing, place design, health, economics, accessibility, social and cultural aspects, governance and more.

Through our authors' arguments we intend that the *Perspectives* series helps to promote knowledge, increase understanding, generate conversations - and at times perhaps challenge assumptions - about what Garden Cities are or might be. On that basis we ask our authors not just to analyse what is happening now from their different perspectives, but to recommend what they think we might do to make planned settlements better in future. The views of authors in this series are solely their own and do not represent the official policy position of either the IGCI or its partner organisations. We hope you find this and subsequent papers informative, stimulating and thought provoking.

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## Introduction: a curious conundrum

Here is a conundrum. Garden Cities are almost universally seen as a good idea, but we seem to have difficulties creating any new ones. Why is this the case?

That question forms the basis of this paper.

We want to know what is preventing us from doing so? Why is it that we have not managed to build any real Garden Cities since Letchworth and Welwyn Garden Cities were established in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century? Although some new developments - badged as Garden Cities and Garden Towns - are in the pipeline, do they deliver the key elements that conform to and bolster the brand? Why is it that we seem to be unable to fund successfully, nor come to that, build and govern places that follow Garden City principles anymore? How can we work out what is stopping us from achieving these goals? And how can we overcome these impediments so that we can start building proper Garden Cities again?

So, in this paper, we ask: *Garden Cities – Why Not?*

## Some context

To understand this conundrum better we need to look back briefly at the 20<sup>th</sup> century history of planned settlements. It is an evolving story that presents a mixed picture of success and failure.

On the one hand, Letchworth Garden City and Welwyn Garden City are beacons of success in Garden City terms. They

draw a large number of UK and international visitors each year to study and explore what makes these places work so well today. These are not towns 'pickled in aspic'; rather, they function as thriving places where people continue to want to live and work and enjoy a range of social and physical amenities. Both Letchworth and Welwyn show that it is possible to learn from, rather than live in, the past. This success is not just characterised by the way they look – although many people favour the Arts and Crafts and neo-Georgian architecture with which these Garden Cities are associated. Indeed, they are a feature of the houses and public buildings in both these towns. Yet the key measure of their success is linked to how well they work - socially, economically and environmentally. Especially in the case of Letchworth, this is also about how the town is governed in such a way as to capture economic value which, in turn, is then used for the community's benefit.

On the other hand, it is fairly widely accepted that the New Town inheritors of the Garden City mantle in the post war years have failed to match the Garden City's promise, hinging on quality of life. Furthermore, they have demonstrated a markedly variable economic performance. For many years, the Mark One, Two and Three New Towns were judged to be more failures than successes in social and design terms, although not all concur with that view. Milton Keynes, in particular, is seen as something of a model for technical, spatial and economic innovation of which more below. Yet today many New Towns face greater challenges, as their housing and infrastructure wears out. What is more, their town centres are

plagued by myriad problems while their green landscapes are expensive to maintain and manage. To make matters worse, many of their houses are no longer fit for purpose - in energy as well as in other terms. Crucially, these symptoms of decline are occurring all at the same time.

## A renaissance in the idea of the Garden City

Recently there has been some challenge to what is a generally negative assessment. For some observers, the very economically successful Milton Keynes<sup>i</sup> remains a model for development, and as a recent article in *The Economist* notes, due to its super block grid layout it has plenty of land that could still be developed.<sup>ii</sup> It works well for those who like to live in a very low-density, car-based town. Perhaps unconsciously influenced by historical associations between technological progress and its modernist place shaping, national government and others see Milton Keynes as a good location for trying out 'smart city' ideas. These are concepts meant to offer technologically based solutions to various urban problems, thereby supporting a more vibrant economy.

It is worth noting that since the last phase of New Towns was completed there have been other, more recent attempts to build successful new settlements and meet housing shortages in a sustainable way. Prominent examples include the eco-towns of the early 2000s. However, these were judged not only a political failure, but also a failure by the communities affected. Significantly, hardly any of them have made it beyond the ideas stage, with

the exception of Northstowe in Cambridgeshire - rebranded as a 10,000 home 'Garden City' pilot project.<sup>iii</sup>

Against this rather mixed history the idea of Garden Cities has once again gained traction politically, as well as across the media and among the public. Unlike more recent examples of planned towns, Garden Cities have demonstrated very few negative connotations and associations. High profile initiatives, such as the 2014 Wolfson Economics Prize co-ordinated by Policy Exchange, a think tank based in London (which focused on how to build a successful contemporary Garden City), have helped raise their profile. What is more, the venerable Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA), which indeed started life in conjunction with Ebenezer Howard's vision, has continued to advocate developing Garden Cities and, in the process, offered very clear advice about how to do so.<sup>iv</sup>

In April 2014 the then Coalition government published a Prospectus inviting bids from councils for locally led new Garden Cities. In that document, the Government rightly argued that Garden Cities were far more than solely housing developments:

“Garden Cities provide a unique opportunity for local areas to prevent this [pressure on local services and infrastructure], by taking control of development, integrating planning to decide where best to locate developments and ensuring that public services, green spaces and amenities are hardwired into designs from the beginning. Development at a large scale creates the opportunity to secure real and important benefits:

attributes that people most value – such as quality design, gardens, accessible green space near homes, access to employment, and local amenities – can be designed in from the outset.”<sup>v</sup>

The *Prospectus* was confused on the question of scale. It noted that the Coalition government did not want to define Garden City scale – thus appearing to duck the issue - but argued for this crucial factor to be defined by local communities ‘according to their own vision’. Later in the document it said scale should be ‘ambitious’ and it expected proposals of 15,000 dwellings and above to be submitted. It also flagged up advice from the TCPA on principles for developing Garden Cities today. Currently there are some developments either branded as Garden Cities, or seen as similar in some essential qualities, which are in their planning or early development stages. These initiatives include Ebbsfleet in Kent, located on the site of a former chalk quarry; Bicester in Oxfordshire; and, arguably, at a more developed stage, Northstowe in Cambridgeshire, which was mentioned earlier in this paper, since it exhibits some qualities relevant to the concept of a Garden City. For local residents near Northstowe, it has been contended that the “long-awaited Northstowe development could be a Garden City in all but name as a new residents’ group pushes for it to be a beacon for better building.”<sup>vi</sup>

### What constitutes a Garden City?

More broadly, those responding to new Garden City proposals in the media, among politicians, policy

makers and in the community at large often demonstrate confusion about what constitutes a Garden City. What distinguishes them from other forms of planned settlement including New Towns? It is evident there is a good deal of muddle surrounding the public debate in the media, political and policy discussion about what constitutes a Garden City. Similarly, there is a largely unremarked slippage between the idea of building settlements, and producing what are merely dormitory housing developments that cannot, by definition, become whole cities or towns.

Paradoxically, other developments centering on the creation of new places in England, Wales and Scotland may actually offer more useful examples of how to make economically vibrant, environmentally advanced, socially successful new settlements from scratch, even though they do not define themselves as Garden Cities. A number of such examples are referenced in recent research from the University of Hertfordshire in the *Hertfordshire Guide to Growth – Five Years On*.<sup>vii</sup> From this select list of relevant developments already in existence or being built, Poundbury in Dorset stands out as a notable achievement.<sup>viii</sup> While located on the border of Dorchester, it can be reasonably placed in the ‘new settlement’ basket as it functions in a largely self-contained way. Despite generally hostile media coverage it is, in reality, proving to be extremely popular with both the new residents and businesses that have moved there.

Nevertheless, it is striking to see the level of antagonistic criticism from certain architects and some in the media who decry what

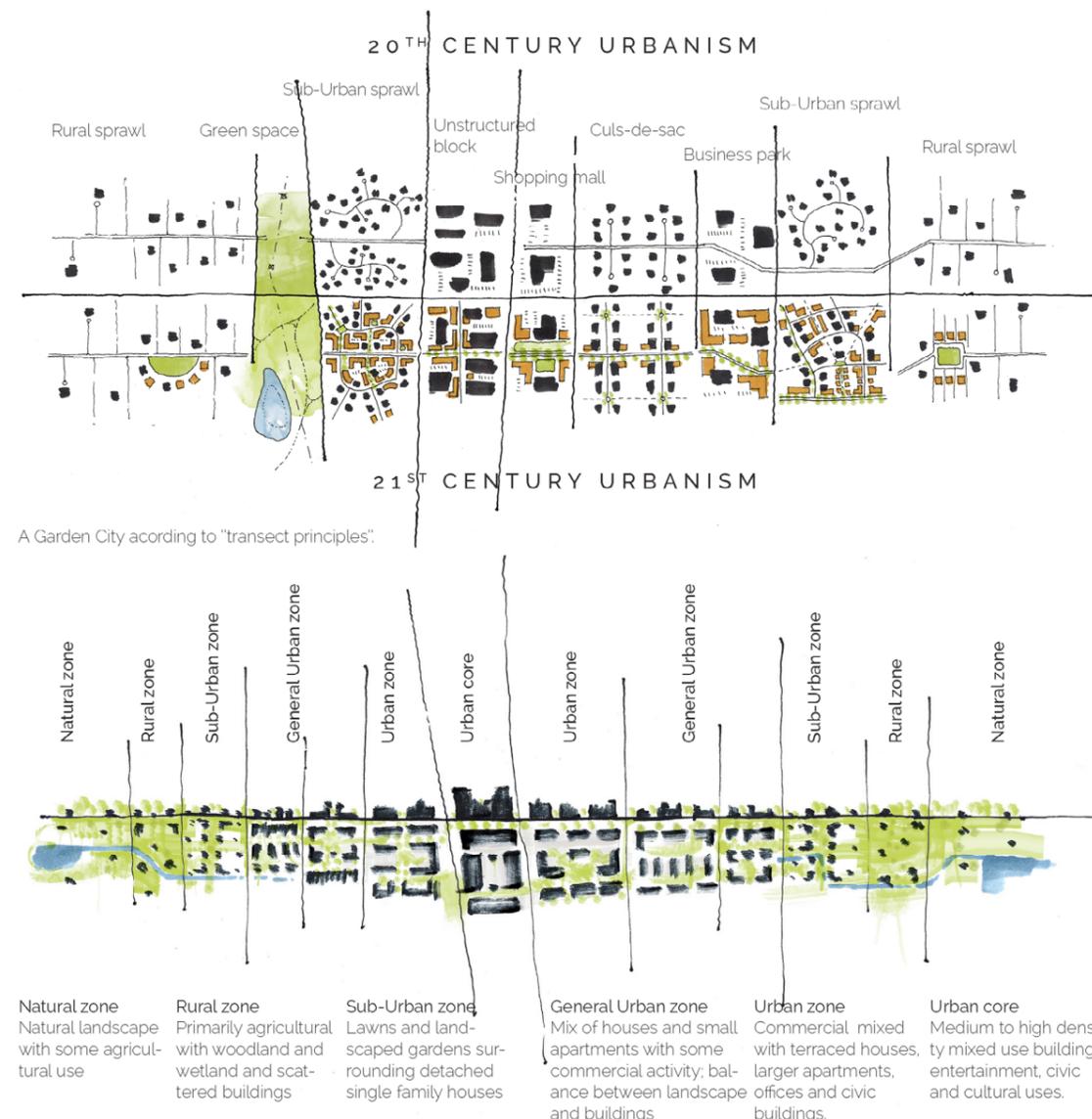
they term its pastiche traditional design and architecture, ignoring its well-founded claims to be based on time-tested design principles. The public appears to adopt a wholly different view<sup>ix</sup> In practice, Poundbury<sup>x</sup> has proved effective in spatial design, consultative and financial terms<sup>xi</sup> Poundbury's housing has not only been a commercial success but the urban extension boasts a very high level of affordable housing, at 35% of its total stock, managed by the Guinness Partnership<sup>xii</sup>. It also has a thriving economy, creating a substantial number of local jobs.<sup>xiii</sup>

The Scottish new settlement of Chapelton of Elsick<sup>xiv</sup>, south of

Aberdeen, which is currently being built, is also shaping up to be an excellent example of developing a whole new place, with jobs, services and facilities, transport links and good quality housing aimed across the economic spectrum. Its design, again like Poundbury, is largely traditional, with homes expressing local vernacular; walkable, connected streets; and human-scaled neighbourhoods around mixed-use centres. Coed Darcy in South Wales and Newquay in Cornwall similarly deserve a positive mention, and on a smaller scale, proposals for a new garden village by Gascoyne Cecil Estates, on the edge of Hatfield, are also in sympathy with a range of

Garden City principles. Likewise in Hertfordshire (which is, after all, the crucible of Garden Cities) there is political support for a new Garden City in North Herts – which has so far avoided becoming stuck in the treacle of arguments about the use of Green Belt for housing by proposing its location outside the Green Belt area.<sup>xv</sup> The paradox is that such places provide successful 21<sup>st</sup> century urbanism by invoking placemaking traditions sympathetic to Garden Cities: principles which were largely abandoned in the post war 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Figure 1: 20<sup>th</sup> century versus 21<sup>st</sup> century urbanism – the latter including Garden Cities: Diagram reproduced from Wolfson prize entry, Parham et al (2014) and drawn up by Pablo Fernandez



This urban-to-rural transect hierarchy has appropriate building and street types for each area along the continuum.

## Why not?

In England and in other parts of Britain the question remains whether Garden Cities can be built at all? Furthermore, despite a few 'Garden Cities' currently being given the go-ahead, can they be built on the necessary scale and with an appropriate land use mix? How many might be constructed given that the Policy Exchange think tank has called for 30 new towns to be built between now and 2035? Moreover, these communities need to be built in accessible locations where people can find employment and, crucially, where they want to live. This means decent infrastructural support with physical, social and recreational amenities. In other words, somewhere people need to be; somewhere which is appealing to live.

Very negative reactions to either proposed or new developments demonstrate clearly that Garden Cities need to be supported and championed by communities. This was a point strongly made in Parham, Downs, Murray and Fernandez's entry to the Wolfson Economics Prize 2014 where it was argued that "The advocacy of champions is a necessary basis for delivering any new Garden City, to help garner enthusiasm and support among communities, but this will not be enough. We advocate very transparent engagement processes that put communities at the centre of things, which start before any decisions have been made, and avoid any backroom deals being done that show people's views don't matter...popularity requires working with communities to decide if, where and how a city should be delivered. Starting this process early is both an ethical and

pragmatic strategy for increasing popularity and making sure the benefits outweigh the costs."<sup>xvi</sup> In this age of austerity, they must also be largely financed as private initiatives, as was the case in Howard's schemes for both Letchworth and Welwyn, and we look at this in more detail below.

## Garden Cities: some key questions

Let's run through each of these points in turn.

**1. Can Garden City-like settlements be built?** Yes, we built two and we have some successful new settlements that are currently being developed or built out. Examples such as Poundbury in Dorset; Newquay in Cornwall; and Chapelton of Elsick in Aberdeenshire (among others), suggest that both substantial extensions and whole settlements can indeed be built. Furthermore, this can be done in largely self-financing ways to produce places that are highly valued because they offer a broad range of housing options, a full range of infrastructure and services, and living and working environments that are extremely well designed as walkable, compact, mixed-use, diverse and attractive places. The health dimensions of these design and planning aspects should not be overlooked given the mooted public funding crisis that will result from unhealthy places in the UK. It is interesting to note that the recently announced 'Healthy New Towns' initiative funded through the NHS to design ten places that work to tackle obesity and dementia includes two of the new Garden

Cities (Bicester and Ebbsfleet).<sup>xvii</sup> Shaping a Garden City is seen as a very good fit with such health-driven approaches.

**2. Can new places be privately financed?** Understandably, following the financial crisis of the late noughties, the political agenda has been characterised by market driven imperatives to reduce governmental borrowing, bring down the deficit and pay off the National Debt. Consequently, governments of all political hues have tended to take the view that new communities, including Garden Cities, need to be privately-financed. Significantly, Ebenezer Howard envisioned this being the case in his original vision for the first Garden Cities. The examples discussed above have been developed by largely private means: direct funding, or more indirect underwriting by organisations including the Prince's Foundation for Building Community (one of the IGC's founding partners), and these have developed strategic land investment models to support the delivery of sustainable urbanism.<sup>xviii</sup> Crucially, no direct public funding has been required in any of the new settlements identified above, unlike the New Towns which were massively dependent on public financing for their establishment and development over many years.

We ask why so-called 'pension fund urbanism' cannot be more substantially deployed to help fund new Garden Cities given these represent long term, low risk investments? It can be argued that private financing might appear to be both a principle and a norm to which any new Garden

City development will need to conform. It was certainly a point emphasised in the previous Coalition Government's 2014 *Prospectus*, where the only form of public support listed as possible to support new Garden Cities was to broker deals with potential private sector funders, rather than offering direct financing inputs.

Nevertheless, in practice, government has played a crucial role. Proposals for Bicester<sup>ix</sup>, Ebbsfleet<sup>x</sup> and Northstowe<sup>xi</sup> (the last not defined as a Garden City but sharing a number of common principles), are all based on funding structures in which government is a direct financier of the scheme to a varying, but very considerable, extent. For example, it was reported by the local authority – Cherwell District Council – that, "Bicester is to receive a multi-million pound award to fund the delivery of 13,000 homes, 21,500 jobs and a new motorway junction after being awarded Garden Town status by the Government"<sup>xii</sup>. It may come as little surprise to note that a certain amount of spin was attached to this announcement: a considerable proportion of these houses were already in Cherwell District Council's Local Plan as part of the north-west Bicester eco-town.<sup>xiii</sup>

In late 2014, the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) reported on how these funding commitments, announced in the National Infrastructure Plan, were to be employed. RIBA observed: "The Government said a locally-led plan for a mix of public sector land and brownfield sites at Bicester will provide up to 13,000 homes. The investment here, which will include a new railway station to serve the enlarged town, comes on top of £100m to fund infrastructure and

land remediation at Ebbsfleet in Kent, the first of the Garden Cities that was announced earlier this year."<sup>xiv</sup> At Ebbsfleet, the BBC reported recently (November, 2015) that the Ebbsfleet Development Commission, set up by central government to plan and deliver the new Garden City, "has planning powers over the whole site: it has government funding, initially of £200m, to pay for major infrastructure and its job is to get the Garden City built as fast as possible".<sup>xv</sup>

It should be remembered that government already offers new developments – spanning a wide spectrum of housing types – valuable subsidies along with fiscal incentives (and disincentives) channelled through the tax system. Crucial to all developments is the public funding of infrastructure provision, including, most notably, roads [albeit this has more recently been balanced by contributions from the private sector through the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)].

All of these fiscal, regulatory and policy inputs help decide both the nature and spatial form of housing development and other property investment – retail, commercial and the like. Accordingly, statements referring to 'private development only' with respect to Garden Cities are misleading. The reality differs from the rhetoric.

**3. Can Garden Cities be built on the necessary scale and with an appropriate land use mix, in the numbers needed overall, and where required and wanted?** The small clutch of Garden Cities currently being planned or built fall some way short of meeting critical Garden City principles in relation to scale, mix and

location. Their original promoter, Ebenezer Howard, envisioned settlements of around 32,000 residents constituting a series of satellites around an existing main city (although one that Howard expected would reduce in size over time). Together, these communities would make up what he referred to as a 'social city', with most residents living, working and spending their recreational time within and around each Garden City settlement.

At the time of writing this paper only two new communities have been formally announced: far short of the scale required to meet pent-up housing (and place-development) need. However, at least in scale terms, both Bicester and Ebbsfleet go further than a mere dormitory town gesture. The former envisages a total of 13,000 housing units with new schools and other social facilities, bolstered by better transport infrastructure (a new motorway junction and improved rail services) supporting (potentially) up to 21,500 jobs. The latter is looking to build 15,000 new homes (although at the time of writing only 65 have so far been built<sup>xvi</sup>), with new commercial premises and community facilities, inspired by the 'sustainable urban eco-town' of Hammarby, a recently developed community adjoining Stockholm in Sweden.

Nevertheless, it remains to be seen whether they will, like the original Garden Cities, be planned and delivered as integrated places to both live and work. The Garden City brand has remained untainted in part because of the example of Letchworth and Welwyn Garden Cities; with the former managing to maintain its value capture model and governance structure, and the untiring efforts of the

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*"We advocate very transparent engagement processes that put communities at the centre of things..."*

TCPA, which has remained the Garden City's most wholehearted proponent and advocate<sup>xxxvii</sup>. It is therefore especially important not to squander the goodwill the brand generates by building ersatz versions – mere pale imitations of the originals or distorted versions sharing the name only.<sup>xxxviii</sup>

While these new initiatives are to be welcomed, in so far as they represent the first attempts in years to provide significant new housing within a 'whole place' approach, they fall a long way short of the number of new communities required to meet soaring housing demand, underpinned by changing patterns of household formation and population growth. It is telling to note that Wolfson Prize finalists took the view that we need not just one or two Garden Cities, but 30. As Policy Exchange, the organiser of the Prize points out, these new communities "each containing between 10,000 and 50,000 homes, should be built over the next 20 years if politicians are serious about solving Britain's housing crisis".<sup>xxxix</sup> Nigel Wilson, CEO of Legal & General PLC, Britain's largest shareholder, observes: "housing is the archetypal UK asset problem. We build 120,000 homes a year, but need twice the number. There needs to be revolutionary and disruptive change in how we build houses – with modern, modular construction to the fore<sup>xxxv</sup>".

Advances in modular and lean building approaches should certainly be in the mix (despite well-known difficulties in the past with system building) but these are not the only methods for 'scaling up' which are being advocated. As can be seen at Chapelton of Elsick and on a larger scale for development at Newquay in Cornwall, a pattern book and

building code based approach is employed to ensure quality and sustainability in domestic architecture while also supporting scaling up of house construction.<sup>xxxvi</sup> The pattern book and building code allows a considerable number of smaller house building firms (often otherwise locked out of the market) to produce good-quality, well-proportioned housing in sympathy with their location; in turn these can guide the rapid production of a substantial number of houses. This helps deal with the well recognised housing industry structural problem centring on large volume builders being unwilling or unable to change their building practices in an adept and responsive way.<sup>xxxvii</sup> It is often also extremely effective in improving environmental performance at the level of both the individual house and the materials supply chain.

**4. Can Garden Cities be built to make best use of existing infrastructure, land and other resources?** In theory, yes. In practice, the experience is more patchy. The locations of the planned new Garden Cities so far discussed are not the best, as is evidenced by the reluctance of housebuilders to commit to funding developments on these sites.

Understandably, given the scale of planning constraints in the UK, new Garden City settlements are being located at the most pragmatic locations, driven by site availability: Bicester is a town already anticipating substantial new housing numbers, while Ebbsfleet is located on a former chalk quarry site where decades of attempts to build a community have failed to win planning permission or funding from housebuilders deterred by the expense of building on what

is a difficult site. According to its critics, progress at Ebbsfleet remains erratic. Thus, the two new planned Garden Cities mentioned above are one-off developments in locational terms; as with the failed eco-towns, they are not necessarily in the right places to make best use of existing infrastructure, notably rail and road transport links and nodes. It is worth noting though that the Ebbsfleet development does have the opportunity to make much better use of the massive infrastructure investment constituted by the HS1 stop labelled by Sir Simon Jenkins as currently 'nothing but the ghostly stopping point on the high-speed line (HS1) from St Pancras to France'.<sup>xxxviii</sup> Other mooted investments in the new Garden City may also help improve its viability. Northstowe, another location discussed earlier, is on a former airbase judged as redundant to Britain's defence requirements. While Northstowe cannot be designated as a 'Garden City', proponents argue that it can reach similar standards of development quality, becoming a Garden City in all but name.<sup>xxxix</sup>

Ebbsfleet is an example of where new development should make better use of existing (extremely expensive) public transport infrastructure. Yet we fear that such pragmatic locational decisions are more often likely to make it difficult to be astute about using existing infrastructure most wisely – and to get past the assumption that car access (driverless or not) is really the only game in town. In the area of infrastructure – especially in relation to transport – it also reveals the problem of blinkered, business as usual thinking. It is fascinating to note that Ebenezer Howard presciently saw the need to achieve what is now fashionable

to call mode shift. This visionary designed-in electric rail to move both people and goods between the Garden City settlements, from the countryside and the conurbation to which they were connected. In contrast, today's Garden City proposals are in the main less enlightened: although there is discussion of public transport focus and new transport infrastructure, unlike Howard's famous diagram of the Garden City they tend to maintain the dominance of the 'smoke fiend' – today that is largely the motor vehicle.<sup>xxxv</sup>

**5. Can new Garden Cities be developed in ways that will be supported and championed by local communities including the capture of economic value for the residents?** Despite some vocal opposition, particularly in the (sceptical) national press (with the notable exception of *The Economist*), in our judgement Garden Cities are likely to achieve a far better level of acceptance than other schemes – especially new dormitory housing estates – not least because the Garden City vision is an idea many people continue to favour and support as a way of living a more contented life.

It is interesting that antagonism towards plans for Garden Cities, including the scheme at Bicester, seem to coalesce around practical problems which are perceived to be linked to an influx of new residents: too many cars, too much congestion, too much pressure on educational, health and other key local services and spaces.<sup>xxxvi</sup> Significantly, the concept itself is not generally dismissed out of hand. The high profile national bodies, institutional players and interest groups who might be expected to adopt a negative view

tend to be concerned about the potential for Garden City style settlements to blight the cherished Green Belt with "sub-standard, suburban housing".<sup>xxxvii</sup> This is hardly surprising given the Green Belt is undoubtedly the most iconic pillar of post war British planning<sup>xxxviii</sup> – and very deeply valued as a public good. For many defending the Green Belt against incursions by new settlement is a 'line in the sand'. Yet its physical form is far more extensive than originally envisaged, some of its land area is of questionable environmental value as currently configured, and, paradoxically, it is connected to sprawl. For example, commuting journeys across it in and out of London are related to environmental damage through air pollution as a recent study from the Oxford Transport Policy Unit demonstrates.<sup>xxxix</sup>

There are two areas where current Garden City proposals stumble dramatically. The first hinges on the Garden City value aimed at capturing economic wealth creation for the community's benefit. The second focuses on ignoring a governance model that sees Garden City government largely in the hands of town governors and Trustees who not only are predominantly drawn from – but also represent – the Garden City's own community. Most of us would agree with the previous Government's 2014 *Prospectus* which observed: "As complex projects with a life of many years, Garden Cities will need robust delivery arrangements" and this might take a number of different forms "from publicly led arm's length companies, public private partnership arrangements

such as joint venture companies, or, for the most demanding schemes, statutory bodies such as development corporations, as proposed for Ebbsfleet".<sup>xl</sup> Yet when it comes to tapping financial value for the benefit of new Garden Cities it remains curiously mute. But surely this reluctance to explore funding options is likely to dilute or even undercut any new development in terms of its ability to capture economic value for the town and help support long-term viability and stewardship?

One must not pretend it was all plain sailing for the Garden Cities of Letchworth and Welwyn – both towns struggled, particularly with respect to a suitable financial model which supported viable housing and other development. In the post war era, various powers were nationalised or siphoned off and, in the early 1960s, Letchworth had to fight off a move to privatise it. Yet governance arrangements as they were implemented in the Garden City model meant that the town's governors would control a number of assets, notably buildings, and land on which new development might occur. This became a distinctive aspect about Garden Cities and one where they stand out from conventional development. In the case of Welwyn, these governance arrangements, centred on generating local value, were discontinued by central government in the period between 1978-1983. In the case of Letchworth, after various attempts to dismantle it or take over the Land Trust aspect for private profit, an Act of Parliament was passed in 1995 that established an industrial and provident society – the

*For many, defending the Green Belt against incursions by new settlement is a 'line in the sand'.*

Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation. Today, this reinvests an annual sum of around £4 million into the town. This dividend is used for such tangible benefits as extra health services, facilities and resources for all the residents of the town and illustrates that local people can glean real benefits from an ambitious community development.

### So how do we deliver new Garden Cities now?

So much for problems and barriers; we now want to turn to areas we think may contribute to workable solutions. Some of these points are about money; some about land and planning; while others are about technology and place design.

As discussed above, both the previous Coalition and the present Conservative majority government have sought to shift away from the idea that Garden Cities will develop solely through private financial funding, although this was at the core of Ebenezer Howard's original conception through the First Garden City Ltd. For example, in his Spending Review and Autumn Statement delivered on November 25<sup>th</sup>, 2015, George Osborne committed to investing "over £300 million in delivering at Ebbsfleet the first Garden City in nearly a century."<sup>xli</sup> Accordingly, it seems fair to expect significant public funds to be used over the short to medium term to help pilot and kick-start a new wave of Garden Cities across the country where demand for places to live far outstrips available supply.

In this context, we believe it is crucial that H M Treasury, and other relevant departments within Whitehall, focus on

identifying the likely cost and future stream of revenue that can be realistically anticipated from providing appropriate support for a new round of Garden Cities. The success of the 20<sup>th</sup> century planned town of Milton Keynes, in terms of job creation, patents registered per 1,000 inhabitants and new business development, shines a guiding light on the potential benefits to be derived from such a policy initiative.

While arguing for government support in appropriate circumstances, it must also be recognised that private funding – most particularly from institutional sources of capital, namely pension funds, life insurance companies, sovereign wealth funds and others – are the key to meeting unmet housing (and wider place making) need in the south of England. They will also be critical in supplying the much-needed capital to re-energise the economies and often archaic infrastructure characterising northern conurbations, notably Manchester, Leeds, Liverpool and Sheffield. Publicly quoted companies like Legal & General have been at the forefront of the debate on how long term institutional capital can make a real contribution; indeed, this policy thrust is likely to be a major factor in the ongoing debate over the next decade with regard to how we – as a country – seek to fix the mounting housing crisis.

Clearly, there is still considerable scope to explore workable private financing models and opportunities, as was undertaken through the 2014 Wolfson Economics Prize. In the entry by Parham, Downs, Murray and Fernandez, the authors argued "existing budget allocations, tax regimes and more innovative financing models can be employed

to good effect to support a new Garden City, without undermining the need for restraint. Tapered tax relief to encourage a more long-term approach among developers, the possibility of reanimating Enterprise Zones, the use of CIL and other ways to develop multiplier effects from Garden City development are all part of the proposed mix...viability is further supported through appropriate governance and management approaches, a range of ownership models and diversity in housing types and densities."<sup>xlii</sup> Such an approach would be driven by "private sector players including landowners, investors, champions, and communities themselves, but makes best use of leverage available through taxation, and other financing and ownership instruments and models, to support viability over the short and longer-term."<sup>xliii</sup>

### Unshackling development capacity: overcoming the planning impasse

We believe there is plenty that can be done on the planning front.

Government should accelerate the review its own (and quasi-governmental organisations') land holdings to identify suitable sites for new Garden Cities. This would include the considerable amount of excess land held by the Ministry of Defence and a diverse range of executive and other public agencies. It is good to be able to report that the MOD has recently announced the sale of a dozen such sites.<sup>xliv</sup> It should be remembered that 'certain publically owned sites are already well served by road or railheads and arguably offer much of the baseline infrastructure required for establishing a Garden City.

<sup>xlv</sup> It makes sense to include as criteria locations close or easily linked to existing public transport infrastructure, hubs and interchanges. This might well mean former rail links could be reinstated or existing lines reconfigured. Indeed, this is beginning to happen in a move to ease congestion, revive certain neighbourhoods or develop new ones, as in the Croxley Rail Link near Watford where the Metropolitan Line is being re-routed and extended.<sup>xlvi</sup> The investment ploughed into London Overground's Eastern link similarly testifies to the benefits such funding can generate. It would be no exaggeration to claim that this investment has transformed the urban geography of Greater London. The year after the extended Overground opened in 2010, total peak passenger volumes had increased by a third on the east London route. According to Savills, the surveyors, the line has exerted a strong upward influence on property prices right along its route<sup>xlvii</sup>. The London region's Crossrail will demonstrate these impacts on an even bigger scale.

Given that government already makes massive infrastructure investments nationally, it is logical to argue that it should invest in Garden City locations, which Ministers regularly repeat they want to encourage. What is more, this should form part of the remit of the recently established National Infrastructure Commission. Relevant to this recommendation is the fact that it has called for submissions on national infrastructure challenges.<sup>xlviii</sup> Surely, this is one of them?

Another of the IGCI's founding partners, the TCPA, has been indefatigable in its efforts to

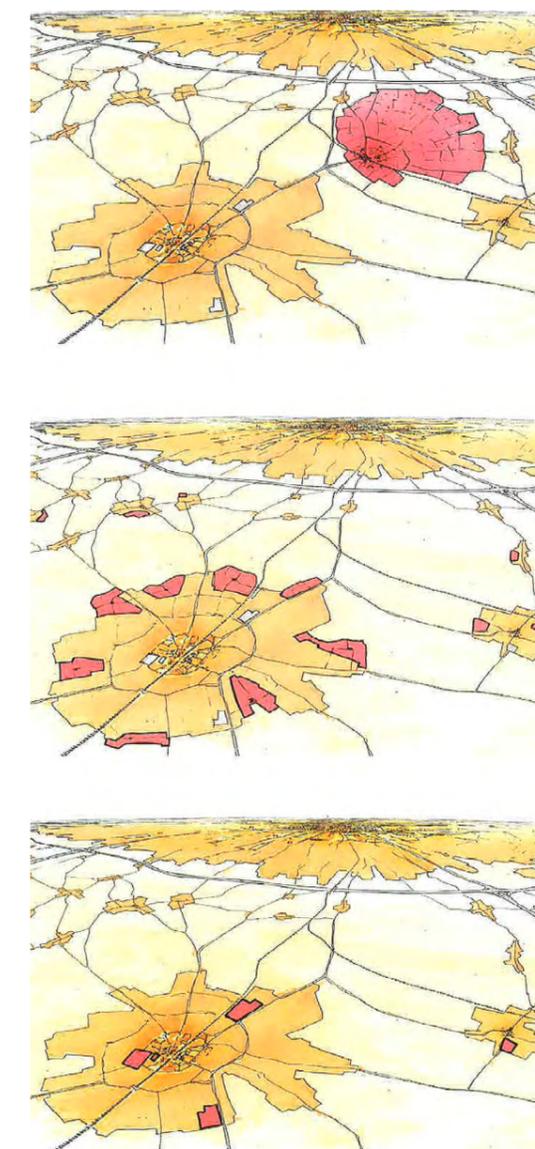
provide sensible and evidence-based advice on creating Garden Cities today. It therefore makes sense to make as much use as possible of the existing good guidance offered through various TCPA publications.<sup>xlix</sup> Similarly, the previously referenced 2014 Wolfson Economics Prize which set the question, *How would you deliver a new Garden City which is visionary, economically viable, and popular?*, elicited a large number of entries in which there is a great deal of useful material that goes to answering the questions this paper poses.<sup>l</sup> In the entry co-written by one of this paper's authors, for example, it was argued there is a need to both recognise and pursue new settlements conforming to Garden City principles in at least three forms (as shown in Figure 2):

- Stand-alone Garden Cities and villages
- Garden suburbs as urban extensions, and
- Garden suburb/city 'retrofits' of existing dysfunctional development ('sprawl repair')

These suggested urban forms owe a debt to some detailed work already done in Hertfordshire through the *Hertfordshire Guide to Growth* of 2008.<sup>li</sup> This was a county-wide strategic planning and design process, taking the form of a 'charrette' which centres on an intensive design based workshop. Those who took part in the *Guide to Growth* process looked in detail at the scenario of building a new stand-alone Garden City as well as developing garden villages and repairing problematic places by making them into new garden suburbs. They came to the conclusion that there was considerable scope in Hertfordshire

to build a stand-alone New Town or Garden City on the existing rail network which would accommodate most of the county's expected housing growth in the long term; to build numerous small, satellite garden villages and to extend current settlements at the edges in the form of such villages and garden suburbs<sup>lii</sup> as is now proposed for Stanborough Garden Village on the edge of Hatfield.<sup>liii</sup>

Figure 2: Three forms of new 'Garden City' conforming settlements. Diagram reproduced from Wolfson prize entry, Parham et al (2014) adapted from original source, *The Hertfordshire Guide to Growth* (2008), and drawn up by Pablo Fernandez



## The Northern Powerhouse initiative and Pink Planning

It should also be possible to tie-in a new round of Garden Cities to the Northern Powerhouse initiative. Looking back, the heritage of model industrial villages is an important backdrop to the development of the Garden City. It is an idea strongly associated with the North – just think of Port Sunlight on the Wirral and Saltaire in Yorkshire. More recently, garden suburbs have a proud tradition in northern England including Wavertree in Liverpool and Wythenshawe in Manchester. As noted above, part of the ‘palette’ of garden settlements in future might well be new garden suburbs as these offer “the opportunity to tap into existing infrastructure while providing walkable, mixed-use developments that reflect Garden City principles. It may be that in locations where a stand-alone Garden City is not the right option for political or other reasons, Garden Suburb inspired town extensions can offer significant advantages and provide meaningful numbers of new houses and economic opportunities.”<sup>lv</sup>

We advocate that new Garden Cities and garden suburbs should form part of the Northern Powerhouse vision, currently focused on Manchester and the Sheffield conurbations. In this context, it is highly significant that the Combined Greater Manchester Authority is currently reviewing its housing requirements as well as its Green Belt boundaries – the first such review in 30 years – as part of its Spatial Framework. This offers an opportunity for some really radical thinking, following in the footsteps of the creation of Wythenshawe in the interwar years

thanks to the generous bequest by Lord (Ernest) Simon, who was a Lord Mayor of Manchester and a former chair of the City’s Housing Committee.<sup>lv</sup>

Sheffield is Britain’s greenest conurbation, thanks to the extensive tree planting undertaken by our Victorian and Edwardian forebears. There seem to be a range of possibilities to develop or retrofit Garden Suburbs from dysfunctional existing areas as well as more ambitious plans for stand-alone Garden City or Cities. This is not just a case of wishful thinking; it understands the commercial reality. Large scale housing developers, such as Crest Nicholson, have said they plan to retrofit their existing housing schemes along Garden City principles.<sup>lvi</sup>

Planning for new Garden Cities could well connect to ‘pink’ planning ideas, as argued by one of the authors of this paper in a series of *Pointmakers* published by the Centre for Policy Studies<sup>lvii</sup>. The name “Pink Planning” derives from a deregulatory initiative, which was originally promoted in Detroit, Michigan, a city that has suffered more than most in terms of urban decay but whose central core is now reviving<sup>lviii</sup> What distinguishes Pink Zones is that they are designed to work from the community upward – not from the top down, as with the New Towns built in the 1940s to the 1960s. Pink Zones could provide a useful channel to sidestep the labyrinthine complexity of planning controls that have done so much to push up house prices in this country. As detailed by Boyfield and Greenberg they can bypass many planning regulations and improve design standards by employing a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) as the delivery mechanism.<sup>lix</sup>

As Keith Boyfield argued in a comment article (2 June 2015) for *The Yorkshire Post*, “Policy clearance will come from central government through a permission to apply, thereby encouraging investment in development schemes and offering an element of confidence to potential funders. The distinctive aspects of our recommended Pink Planning approach are threefold: firstly, incentives are offered for community cooperation, thereby reducing adversarial conflict; secondly, this approach rewards cooperative development with a streamlined procedure; and thirdly, it expands the range of developer’s contributions and involvement beyond infrastructure, to include employment growth and other factors that supply residents’ wider needs and make the developed communities good places to live and work”.<sup>lx</sup>

## The vexed issue of the Green Belt

We cannot avoid the issue of the Green Belt in any discussion focusing on Garden Cities. Nor should we fall into this trap: a rational assessment of the Green Belt as it has grown and expanded over the last half century is long overdue. Recently, there has been a considerable amount of debate in the built environment sector, as well as in the academic sphere, about whether the Green Belt requires a radical reassessment. What is more, a raft of proposals have been advanced, for example, in relation to London’s Green Belt.<sup>lxi</sup> Not least, a number of think tanks with close links to the current Government, such as Policy Exchange and the Adam Smith Institute, have also expounded on this controversial issue of the

future extent of the Green Belt. Most recently, Tom Papworth has written a briefing paper for the free market Adam Smith Institute with the catchy title of ‘A garden of one’s own’, which seeks “to demonstrate that there is ample land within the (London) Metropolitan Green Belt that would be suitable for development and could be built upon without undermining the overall purpose of Green Belt policy (as defined by the NPPF)<sup>lxii</sup>”.

Interest in a Green Belt review also comes from other sources and political perspectives. Shelter, the national homelessness charity, recently released a report arguing for a review of the Green Belt as part of work to tackle our housing crisis. As the report authors – the consultancy Quod – point out, “Parts of the Green Belt are of great value and must remain fully protected, but the designation does not imply beauty, public access or biodiversity – only a fifth of London’s Green Belt has an environmental status or is accessible to the public as green space<sup>lxiii</sup>”.

Writing recently in *The Guardian*, Rowan Moore surveys the diverse directions from which a Green Belt policy rethink is emerging and notes that while there is little confidence that new development in the Green Belt will make its use for housing worthwhile, even so: “this gap in trust has to be bridged. The costs of not doing so include housing that is more scarce and expensive than it need be, of worse quality, and more badly located, such that people have to make long commutes across Green Belts to their nearest cities.”<sup>lxiv</sup> The current reality, as Urbed’s David Rudlin puts it, “is that development is dribbling out in all the wrong places”. Meanwhile, pressure

on cities that try to grow within existing boundaries will eventually become intolerable. Consider, for example, that London used to be admired as a city of houses and gardens, yet existing back and front gardens are widely under threat and in new developments gardens have almost disappeared, which is directly attributable to the squeeze on space to which the city’s Green Belt is a significant contributor. We do not suggest all new housing needs to be low density in nature but we need a ‘polycentric’ and sprawl repaired structure (as in the Garden City) where substantial numbers of homes do have their own gardens. Other popular cities will face the same problem as London. For all these reasons, it is no longer good enough to insist that Green Belts must, at all costs, never change.”<sup>lxv</sup>

Even more significantly, a consultation paper issued by the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) in December 2015 has, for the first time in living memory, raised the possibility of building on the Green Belt. Indeed it poses the question, Should local communities have the opportunity to allocate sites for small-scale starter home developments in their Green Belt through neighbourhood plans? By way of briefing on this issue, the consultation paper states, “We consider that the current policy can hinder locally-led housing development and propose to amend national planning policy so that neighbourhood plans can allocate appropriate small-scale sites in the Green Belt specifically for starter homes, with neighbourhood areas having the discretion to determine the scope of a small-scale site. This will support local areas in giving affordable home ownership

opportunities to young people and young families by enabling a small level of development that is sympathetic to local concerns and is clearly supported by local people”<sup>lxvi</sup>.

In recent years, several sites were rejected for development on Green Belt land, although these locations could not be judged to be of any special quality. Furthermore, if left undeveloped, they represented a significant management challenge from an environmental perspective, i.e. they required substantial funding to reclaim contaminated land and/or avoid fly tipping. Nor should it be overlooked that the National Planning Policy Framework supports some changes to Green Belt boundaries in “exceptional circumstances”, as the recent case of a development proposed by Hunston Properties Ltd near St Albans clarified.<sup>lxvii</sup>

The clamour to review Green Belt boundaries does not come solely from opinion formers (such as journalists, public intellectuals, think tanks and academics) or housebuilders and other ‘usual suspects’; it also emanates from the local planning community. Some town planners such as Mike Kiely, former head of planning at Croydon Borough Council, believe local authorities urgently need to address Green Belt issues<sup>lxviii</sup> and a number of councils are already undertaking their own Green Belt boundary reviews.<sup>lxix</sup> The practical change – at least in theory – that seems likely from these kind of authority by authority reviews, and with the case law somewhat clearer due to the Hunston decision, is that at least some parts of the Green Belt would be able to be used for development where ‘exceptional circumstance’ can be proven.<sup>lxx</sup> Given the fact that, under the

current Local Plan regime, all local authorities must demonstrate a strategy for meeting future housing demand, a proportion of Green Belt will inevitably be affected, not least because large portions of the Home Counties are presently designated Green Belt. In short: houses must be built somewhere within the local authority's boundaries and that may well mean Green Belt land.

We believe this is an issue which transcends local authority boundaries. In some cases strategic sites with Green Belt implications will cross these boundaries and the 'Duty to Cooperate' reflects the need for local governments to work together on this challenge, as a recent Planning Advisory Service advice note points out.<sup>lxxi</sup> Moreover, in our view, the future of the Green Belt is a crucial topic of national scale and importance. Accordingly, it should be considered strategically at the national level, in ways that fully engage with communities rather than solely in a piecemeal and partial fashion. Through a national review of the purpose and current extent of the Green Belt we could help to create a rational basis for locational decisions about new development including Garden Cities, garden towns and garden villages. Such a review is long overdue (in the past they used to be referred to Royal Commissions, a policy tool now out of favour). Politicians' reluctance to address the issue because of perceived public opposition explains the delay, but this year's London Mayoral election has reflected a new willingness on the part of politicians to engage with this policy challenge, not least because so many voters are telling

candidates at the door that there is nowhere affordable for their grown-up children to live<sup>lxxii</sup>.

Fortunately, much of what we know about creating, and then governing and maintaining Garden Cities once built, is already in the public domain; the result of long-term practice, advocacy by the Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation, the TCPA and others and the analysis of past success by practitioners and academics. What is more, there is already a great deal of useful, relevant scholarship about the history of Garden Cities. The establishment of the new International Garden Cities Institute (IGCI) at Letchworth Garden City offers considerable scope and opportunity to explore in depth the potential contribution of Garden Cities, thereby influencing the quality of contemporary practice.<sup>lxxiii</sup> Through the IGCI we have the chance to examine and demonstrate what works well in UK and elsewhere. The good news is that politicians and policy makers are increasingly prepared to listen.

### Smart cities and how they link to the Garden City vision

Another area for Garden City consideration which we think has remained largely unexamined is the current preoccupation across government, think tanks, business and academia with the idea of so-called 'smart cities'.<sup>lxxiv</sup> This lively debate has tended to overlook or undercut the link with Garden Cities. The intense interest in smart cities is being reflected in substantial tranches of funding through the government's Innovation Agency (Innovate UK)

as well as from research councils, channelled into research which supports the so-called internet of things, disruptive technologies, future cities, and smart city-region research projects.<sup>lxxv</sup> This enthusiasm is also leading to projects like the Catapult programme and MK:Smart (co-funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England and the Open University), which aims to develop innovative smart city solutions to support economic growth.<sup>lxxvi</sup> However, as the Centre for Cities points out, as yet there is no consensus about what actually constitutes a smart city. What is more, the market for smart technologies suffers from a range of barriers – financial, technical and institutional.<sup>lxxvii</sup>

It is also erroneous to believe that there is an inherent disconnect between the resurgence in interest in Garden Cities and the smart cities agenda: they are in fact complementary, despite some efforts to see them as polar opposites or, at the very least, incompatible.<sup>lxxviii</sup> Garden Cities have always been 'smart': meeting various human needs in ways that still provide robust models for liveability that are of global interest. As we grapple with what actually constitutes a smart city, we have the chance to see how technological innovation can play out in all sorts of urban situations, including Garden Cities through their housing, services, infrastructure, mobility, economies, food systems and social lives and spaces. In other words, the Garden City might look traditional – with housing styles and green spaces people like – but it can be just as smart as the glass and steel architecture and movement systems that for some, at least, appear to symbolise or even

narrowly define technological progress and modernity.

This is exemplified by the winning 2014 Wolfson Prize entry which in fact embedded smart thinking at every stage of the proposed Garden City development, noting that "In a modern world where the economy is based on knowledge and technology rather than the manufacturing that supported the new towns, then the idea of a [Garden] city is something that we should be very interested in." For instance, Garden Cities can meld their approach to smart city techniques through financial support for community based health systems, which the value capture model we have discussed makes available to all residents. Specifically, this can be achieved by focusing on so-called universal design, which is particularly relevant for ageing populations. Furthermore, there is scope for a take up of environmental technologies from the individual dwelling to town-wide scale. Looking ahead to the future, we see this as an area where there is considerable range for developing technologically advanced Garden Cities. This is a research area we believe the NHS Healthy New Towns initiative should explore and which will be a focus for research through the International Garden Cities Institute.

### Conclusions

We started this paper by expounding a conundrum. If we were able to successfully build two Garden Cities a century ago, why can't we do so today? We know that Garden Cities as places encapsulate many values that people still crave in their living and working environments.

### *Self-evidently, money has a major role to play – both public and private.*

Especially in Letchworth's case, Ebenezer Howard's value capture model along with its democratic governance structure has continued to provide significant tangible economic and social benefits besides the much admired Garden City houses, streets and neighbourhoods.

Part of the 'why not' conundrum is about how we approached this challenge in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As a society, we tried to learn from Garden Cities when developing a vast range of new places to live in the post war era. Alas, we did not achieve this goal. While many new homes were built, we largely missed building them in an attractive and sustainable manner as a part of wider places that worked. As a result, the record of the New Towns built in the post war decades is erratic, in particular when it comes to living quality. While – unusually – among the New Towns, Milton Keynes is admired for a range of reasons (indeed, it is now a test bed for trying out smart city ideas), that kind of post war 'place-shaping' has brought with it a myriad of expensive-to-fix problems.

Furthermore, another part of the 'why not' conundrum hinges on the problems that currently beset life in contemporary Britain. Globally, we confront the challenge of nagging economic uncertainty, mounting government debt and consequent fiscal restraint. Meanwhile in the UK, we have an overheated south and a struggling north<sup>lxxix</sup>. In the south-east, in particular, we are experiencing a mammoth shortage of housing. While we know we need to provide many more good

quality, low carbon and affordable houses, these need to be in *places* where people can live and work, not merely soulless sprawling dormitory estates. Understandably, there is generally broad and understandable resistance to new development because it often makes places worse (albeit attitudes are changing, as reflected in the annual British Social Attitudes Survey (BSAS)<sup>lxxx</sup>.

Now that the idea – and increasingly Garden City inspired settlements themselves – are back on the political, economic and community agenda, we need to work out what will help us seize this opportunity most effectively. With all sorts of different interests in an unusually close alignment, this coalescence is a remarkable chance to develop new places to live and work. Garden Cities are not the only kinds of settlements that can make a contribution but we believe that making use of time-tested Garden City principles will help meet living requirements in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, whether economic, social or environmental. There are at least six objectives we need to fulfil to make this possible; we have looked at some of them at length in this paper.

Here are our conclusions on what needs to be done.

1. Self-evidently, money has a major role to play – both public and private. In contrast to the time when Ebenezer Howard made his original proposals, we can expect government to continue the post war tradition of directly financing and underwriting a new swath of Garden City type settlements. This

*Moreover, in our view, the future of the Green Belt is a crucial topic of national scale and importance.*

is to be welcomed. Clearly, the more adept government is in using the instruments at its disposal – including the tax system, planning, governance capacity, infrastructure support and the release of surplus land where appropriate – the better. Government can help, not hinder; making sure we try to develop in the right places with the right support. In the past, this was not always the case.

2. With respect to planning we are all for a Green Belt review. In the appraisal given in this paper we have demonstrated that there is support from a wide range of parties with respect to a reassessment of the much expanded Green Belt. Indeed, this is long overdue. It is conceivable that such a review simply reaffirms the current size and extent of the Green Belt, no matter how messy and poor quality it is in places. Political, i.e. voting considerations, will certainly play a crucial part in any such assessment, but there is a growing clamour to see radical change, not least from campaigning bodies such as the housing charity, Shelter<sup>xxxxi</sup>. However, we conclude that a reassessment of the iconic Green Belt will go ahead at a gathering pace, indeed, it is already being actively reassessed by many local authorities throughout England as a direct response to the need to adopt a new Local Plan. We contend that it is high time to produce a well-evidenced, considered national review which sets out why we have a Green Belt, how it is developed, what it encompasses now, and asks what we want from it? Crucially, this analysis must answer the question: why have a Green Belt in

the future?

3. We also think that the ideas encapsulated in Pink Planning should be considered for implementation. In this context, the obligation on local authorities to establish how many new homes should be built under the Local Plan will serve as a catalyst for the creation of new neighbourhoods and communities. The Pink Planning model, as set out by Boyfield and Greenberg, incorporating a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) as the delivery mechanism, provides the means to deliver ambitious new communities of between 500 to up to 25,000 individual homes. The policy go-ahead will need to come from central government, in order to give potential funders an element of confidence to come forward with viable schemes, but the onus is on a coalition of stakeholders, including sources of institutional capital, to initiate schemes.

4. The private sector has a pivotal role to play along with existing communities. Ebenezer Howard's original ideas and the way they were then designed and subsequently master-planned have proved an enduring success. As well as the various Garden Cities now in the pipeline, it is no surprise that two (or, if you count Northstowe, three) 'Garden City' type towns have been identified as part of the NHS funded Healthy New Towns initiative. Yet the same focus on the quality of place is necessary to ensure this new constellation of Garden Cities comply with their goals and make them acceptable to communities understandably wary of new

development. This is particularly the case since they have seen little in the recent past to inspire confidence. In this paper, we have pointed to real examples of place-making from Wales to Cornwall to Aberdeenshire that we think are very much in sympathy with Garden City principles. What is more, they show that enlightened landowners and developers can get on with the job of building new urban extensions, towns and villages of exceptional quality and livability. Furthermore, there is plenty of opportunity for developing variations on the Garden City model, depending on circumstances. Cities, towns, villages and reconfigured suburbs could all be part of the mix. Garden Cities can be created not just on Green Belt and Brownfield sites but also on existing areas of urban sprawl that cry out for a 'retrofit' transformation.

5. Too often when people refer to Garden City principles, they merely mean these towns were planned and designed according to a particular spatial model. Yet for us, equally important are the 'process' elements: the value capture model and the decentralised governance and management structure, exemplified in the case of Letchworth. Looking ahead, we see a new wave of Garden Cities as a welcome opportunity to explore the use of financing, governance, building and management instruments (notably Community Land Trusts) that emphasise Ebenezer Howard's egalitarian approach. This is not for any reasons of nostalgia but because, especially in the shorter term, they are likely to help with community engagement and support; and, in the longer term, they will help ensure that such communities are better places to live, as Letchworth

demonstrates.

6. The rising groundswell of interest in and support for Garden Cities should help to address long standing inertia surrounding the financing, design and supply of materials for new communities. Hitherto, in most cases we have been saddled with relatively low quality 'business as usual' places. People want something different. Encouragingly, some very large players in the housing finance and construction markets, such as Legal & General and Hermes, the BT pension asset manager, are showing interest in the Garden City movement. Particular landowner-developers and good masterplanners are also showing the way forward. In this context, the message to communicate confidently is that a broad spectrum of stakeholders all have a positive role in this reinvigorated initiative. These stakeholders include funders, notably financial institutions such as life insurance companies, pension providers and sovereign wealth funds; together with landowners and designers; as well as employers across the spectrum from small SMEs to major corporations. Materials suppliers, utility and infrastructure providers, masterplanners, housebuilders, professional advisers, housing associations, green technologists and last, but by no means least, representatives from leading charity and civil society organisations all have a valuable role to play as well. This is a timely opportunity to create a new constellation of attractive communities to house Britain's population. Unless action is taken soon we will face an unsustainable situation where younger people especially will find it difficult to find anywhere reasonable to rent, let alone buy,

locking a generation out of our 'home owning democracy'. Britain needs to get building again: the Garden City model offers a well proven and sustainable path to providing homes for people of all ages and backgrounds and, crucially, places where people can bring up a family and grow older healthily and happily.

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*Garden Cities can be created not just on Green Belt and Brownfield sites but also on existing areas of urban sprawl that cry out for a 'retrofit' transformation.*

## Endnotes

- i Milton Keynes tops the league table for a number of key signs of success, notably job creation and business start-ups, see Cities Outlook 2015, published by the Centre for Cities (update when 2016 volume is published later in January 2016) <http://www.centreforcities.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/15-01-09-Cities-Outlook-2015.pdf>
- ii As noted in a recent article in The Economist, August 3rd, 2013 <http://www.economist.com/news/britain/21582559-britains-new-towns-illustrate-value-cheap-land-and-good-infrastructure-paradise-lost>
- iii "A pilot project is already under way at Northstowe, a former RAF base in Cambridgeshire, with the capacity for 10,000 houses. That would make it the largest planned town since Milton Keynes." (Source: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-30287273>)
- iv See <http://www.tcpa.org.uk/pages/creating-garden-cities-and-suburbs-today-a-guide-for-councils.html>
- v Source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/locally-led-garden-cities-prospectus>
- vi Source: <http://www.cambridge-news.co.uk/Northstowe-garden-city-Government-guidelines-8216/story-22870015-detail/story.html>
- vii See Parham and Hulme (2014) [http://www.uh-sustainable.co.uk/docs/HertsGTG\\_5yearson\\_aw4\\_complete\\_highres.pdf](http://www.uh-sustainable.co.uk/docs/HertsGTG_5yearson_aw4_complete_highres.pdf)
- viii As noted in Parham, Downs, Murray and Fernandez's (2014: 17) Wolfson Prize entry: "To take the example of Poundbury this development is relatively small by the standards of a Garden City, with 2250 homes (a substantial proportion of which are social housing sprinkled through the development) and a population of around 4500-5000, but already is providing employment for some 1,660 people in 140 businesses." See <http://www.policyexchange.org.uk/wolfsonprize/item/wolfson-economics-prize-2014>
- ix Potts, J (2011) "Poundbury is home", Dorset Life <http://www.dorsetlife.co.uk/2011/01/poundbury-is-home/>
- x See, for example, <http://poundbury.org.uk/> and <http://duchyofcornwall.org/poundbury.html>
- xi Rudlin, D, & Falk, N. (2009). Sustainable Urban Neighbourhood: building the 21st century home. Routledge, and Lei, Y. (2014). Urban/village extension-design principles of new urbanism: the case studies of Poundbury and Upton (Doctoral dissertation, University of Nottingham).
- xii See <http://www.guinnesspartnership.com/find-a-home/developments/poundbury-dorset>
- xiii See Poundbury factsheet with data on the economy at <http://duchyofcornwall.org/poundbury.html>
- xiv Source: <http://chapeltonofelsick.com/>
- xv See [http://www.thecomet.net/news/mps\\_back\\_new\\_garden\\_city\\_as\\_alternative\\_to\\_council\\_s\\_north\\_herts\\_housing\\_blueprint\\_1\\_3936165](http://www.thecomet.net/news/mps_back_new_garden_city_as_alternative_to_council_s_north_herts_housing_blueprint_1_3936165)
- xvi Parham, Downs, Murray and Fernandez, (2014) Wolfson Prize entry <http://www.policyexchange.org.uk/wolfsonprize/item/wolfson-economics-prize-2014>
- xvii See <https://www.england.nhs.uk/ourwork/innovation/healthy-new-towns/>
- xviii See the Prince's Foundations report on such investment models at [http://www.princes-foundation.org/sites/default/files/slim\\_brochure\\_final2\\_lo-rez\\_1\\_0.pdf](http://www.princes-foundation.org/sites/default/files/slim_brochure_final2_lo-rez_1_0.pdf)
- xix Source: <http://www.24dash.com/news/housing/2015-06-10-Garden-Town-in-Bicester-gets-1-5m-feasibility-grant>
- xx Source: <http://www.ebbsfleetdc.org.uk>
- xxi Based on the site of the former RAF Oakington base and surrounding farmland, Northstowe will be a sustainable new development that is richly steeped in local history, giving it an identity that is entirely unique. Northstowe will have up to 10,000 new homes and an anticipated population of around 24,400 people which is around the same population as Huntingdon to the north, or Broadstairs in Kent (Source: <http://www.northstowe.com/vision>)
- xxii Source: <http://www.cherwell.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=10371>
- xxiii "The 13,000 homes will be delivered in two phases. The first phase will be in line with the Local Plan, which outlined the delivery of 10,000 new homes at the north west Bicester eco town, Graven Hill and south west Bicester between 2014 and 2031. The remaining 3,000 homes will then be built after the end of the Local Plan timeframe from 2031 onwards. However if new brownfield sites are identified in the future then this could result in the delivery of additional homes." (Source: <http://www.cherwell.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=10371>)
- xxiv Source: <https://www.architecture.com/RIBA/Contactus/NewsAndPress/Membernews/PracticeNews/2014/December2014/4December2014/Secondgardencityconfirmedinspendingplans.aspx>
- xxv Source: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-34680143> xxvi Source: 'Vision of garden city for 65,000 struggles to take root', The Guardian, 4 January 2016.
- xxvii Source: [http://www.tcpa.org.uk/data/files/Creating\\_Garden\\_Cities\\_and\\_Suburbs\\_Today\\_-\\_a\\_guide\\_for\\_councils.pdf](http://www.tcpa.org.uk/data/files/Creating_Garden_Cities_and_Suburbs_Today_-_a_guide_for_councils.pdf)
- xxviii This is an issue addressed in detail in Parham (2013) "Shaping sustainable urbanism: are garden cities the answer?" [http://uh-sustainable.co.uk/docs/Shaping\\_sustainable\\_urbanism.pdf](http://uh-sustainable.co.uk/docs/Shaping_sustainable_urbanism.pdf)
- xxix <http://www.policyexchange.org.uk/media-centre/press-releases/category/item/40-new-garden-cities-needed-to-meet-housing-demand-say-prize-finalists>
- xxx Source: 'We need to invest in assets for the long term, not shareholder gains', by Nigel Wilson, Daily Telegraph, 4 January 2016.
- xxxi See the Pattern Book produced by Adam Architecture for the Newquay Growth Area <http://www.adamarchitecture.com/projects/urbanism/newquay-pattern-book.htm> and [http://www.adamarchitecture.com/images/PDFs/Pattern\\_book-05.pdf](http://www.adamarchitecture.com/images/PDFs/Pattern_book-05.pdf)
- xxxii See a recent paper by Heffernan, E., Pan, W., Liang, X., & de Wilde, P. (2015). Zero carbon homes: Perceptions from the UK construction industry. Energy Policy, 79, 23-36 in which this inertia and resistance to changing construction methods is discussed. <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0301421515000063>

xxxiii <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/mar/17/ebbsfleet-garden-city-george-osborne-homes>

xxxiv See <http://www.cambridge-news.co.uk/Northstowe-garden-city-Government-guidelines-8216/story-22870015-detail/story.html>

xxxv "A campaign group claims no traffic infrastructure plans have been put in place ahead of a project to build 13,000 homes. They are due to be built in Bicester over the next 20 to 30 years, under the government's garden city plans. Bicester Traffic Action Group wants a new bridge to be built over a rail line in the town as part of its campaign." (Source: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-oxfordshire-32314389>)

xxxvi Source: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/bicester-garden-city-what-residents-think-about-plans-for-13000-new-homes-9897038.html>

xxxvii Source: <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2014/oct/01/britains-housing-crisis-are-gaden-cities-the-answer-ebbsfleet-kent-green-belt>

xxxviii For a discussion of the ramifications of UK greenbelt policy see, for example, Cheshire, P. C (2014), Building on Greenbelt land: so where?, SERC blog, 2014, <http://spatial-economics.blogspot.co.uk/2014/07/building-on-greenbelt-land-so-where.html>. And Cheshire, P. C, Nathan, M and Overman, H. G (2014), Urban Economics and Urban Policy: challenging conventional policy wisdom, Edward Elgar, 2014.

xxxix A recent report from Dr Caralampo Focas of the Oxford University Transport Studies Unit found that 'London beyond its Green Belt displays a trend common to many metropolises, that of sprawling and car-dependent developments...Car travel and associated greenhouse gas emissions per capita in London's outer region are more than double than the ones of its metropolitan area'. Transport Policy 46 (2016) pp: 82-91

xl Source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/locally-led-garden-cities-prospectus>

xli Source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/chancellor-george-osbornes-spending-review-and-autumn-statement-2015-speech>

xlii Parham, Downs, Murray and Fernandez, 2014: 4 (Source: <http://www.policyexchange.org.uk/images/WolfsonPrize2014/20140827%20parham%20wolfson%20prize%202014%20submission.pdf>)

xliii We noted: "Government might consider a form of tapered tax relief to encourage developers to increase the rate of house building and to retain a medium to long-term interest in the development by way of rental or shared equity schemes. Any initiative of this kind would push developers to reconsider their existing short-term, sales-based economic and financing model and focus upon sustaining value for the future. This might encourage greater consideration of design and construction quality while also engendering developments with a sense of place – something that is extremely important when it comes to ensuring popularity". (Parham et al, 2014: 17).

xliv <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/defence-minister-mark-lancaster-announces-release-of-mod-sites-for-development> xlv See Parham et al (2014)

xlvi See <http://www.croxleyrailink.com/latest-news.htm> and <https://tfl.gov.uk/travel-information/improvements-and-projects/metropolitan-line-extension>

xlvii See 'In the loop: How one railway line helped change the way Londoners commute', The Economist, Oct 5th 2013, <http://www.economist.com/news/britain/21587223-how-one-railway-line-helped-change-way-londoners-commute-loop>

xlviii See <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/national-infrastructure-commission>

xlix See, for example, [http://www.tcpa.org.uk/data/files/Creating\\_Garden\\_Cities\\_and\\_Suburbs\\_Today\\_-\\_a\\_guide\\_for\\_councils.pdf](http://www.tcpa.org.uk/data/files/Creating_Garden_Cities_and_Suburbs_Today_-_a_guide_for_councils.pdf) and <http://www.tcpa.org.uk/pages/garden-cities-re-imagining-garden-cities-for-the-21st-century-166.html>

l See, for example, the developed version of the winning entry <http://www.policyexchange.org.uk/images/WolfsonPrize2014/20140827%20rudlin%20stage%202.pdf> and the commended entry co-authored by one of the writers of this paper <http://www.policyexchange.org.uk/images/WolfsonPrize2014/20140827%20parham%20wolfson%20prize%202014%20submission.pdf>

li See [https://www.herts.ac.uk/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0020/10289/herts-charrette-guide-to-growth\\_02-12-2008.pdf](https://www.herts.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0020/10289/herts-charrette-guide-to-growth_02-12-2008.pdf)

lii The Hertfordshire Guide to Growth (2008: 24) document noted "A stand-alone garden city is the only type of Scenario which could accommodate the entirety of the housing allocation and the necessary amenities. The development would require a large, well-drained, relatively uninhabited area of Green Belt, with the potential for, or a pre-existing, railway station. There is at least one such site available in the County. While a New Town could not be realistically designed and constructed by the 2021 deadline of the current allocation, it could still provide the best ultimate solution for the continual allocations that will follow the present one. Indeed, a New Town of 100,000-140,000 dwellings could absorb the growth of Hertfordshire well into the mid-century.

liii See <http://www.gascoynececil.com/stanborough-hat1/>

liv Parham et al Wolfson Prize entry (2014: 12)

lv Parham et al Wolfson Prize entry (2014: 12)

lvi <http://www.planningresource.co.uk/article/1153712/crest-nicholson-to-embrace-garden-city-principles>

lvii See <http://www.cps.org.uk/publications/reports/pink-planning-diluting-the-red-tape/> and <http://www.cps.org.uk/publications/reports/a-suggestion-for-the-housing-and-planning-minister/>. See 'The Pink Zone; Why Detroit is the New Brooklyn', by Andres Duany, 30 January 2014, Fortune magazine.

lviii This is a point emphasized in the proposed Garden City developments suggested by Wei Yang & Partners and Peter Freeman in collaboration with Buro Happold Consulting Engineers, Shared Intelligence and Gardiner & Theobald.

lix In two studies [<http://www.cps.org.uk/publications/reports/pink-planning-diluting-the-red-tape/>] and <http://www.cps.org.uk/publications/reports/a-suggestion-for-the-housing-and-planning-minister/>], authors Keith Boyfield and Daniel Greenberg set out the case for 'Pink Zones' employing a special purpose vehicle (SPV) as a delivery mechanism.

lx See 'Think pink for the future of housing', by Keith Boyfield, 2 June 2015. <http://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/news/opinion/keith-boyfield-think-pink-for-the-future-of-housing-1-7288796>

lxi See, for example, a recent report The Green Belt: A Place for Londoners led by SERC at the London School of Economics that concluded "Land in the Green Belt

covers a range of uses and is of variable quality from beautiful parks to derelict buildings on wasteland. Accordingly, we propose that local planning authorities should be encouraged to review their Green Belt and consider how the land within it that is of poor environmental quality, of little or no public benefit and has good connectivity could be re-designated for high-quality, well-designed residential development that incorporates truly accessible public green space" <http://londonfirst.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Green-Belt-Report-February-2015.pdf>

lxii See 'A garden of one's own: suggestions for development in the metropolitan Green Belt', by Tom Papworth, January 2016, Adam Smith Institute; see also 'The Green Noose - an analysis of Green Belts and proposals for reform', by Tom Papworth, Adam Smith Institute, 2015.

lxiii When brownfield isn't enough', report by Quod and Shelter, February 2016, see [http://england.shelter.org.uk/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0003/1239330/2016\\_02\\_29\\_When\\_Brownfield\\_isnt\\_enough.pdf](http://england.shelter.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/1239330/2016_02_29_When_Brownfield_isnt_enough.pdf)

lxiv See <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2014/oct/19/is-it-time-to-rethink-the-green-belt>

lxv Source: <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2014/oct/19/is-it-time-to-rethink-the-green-belt>

lxvi See 'Consultation on proposed changes to national planning policy', DCLG, December 2015. [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/488276/151207\\_Consultation\\_document.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/488276/151207_Consultation_document.pdf), page 20.

lxvii This position was supported by a 2013 judgment in the Court of Appeal about a proposed development by Hunston Properties Ltd on the Green Belt near St Albans to the effect that 'Having identified the full objectively assessed [housing] needs figure the decision maker must then consider the impact of the other policies set out in the NPPF. The Green Belt policy is not an outright prohibition on development in the Green Belt. Rather it is a prohibition on inappropriate development in the absence of very special circumstances. It is entirely circular to argue that there are no very special circumstances based on objectively assessed but unfulfilled need that can justify development in the Green Belt by reference to a figure that has been arrived at under a revoked policy which was arrived at taking account of the need to avoid development in the Green Belt.' Quoted in PAS Advice Note Planning on The Doorstep (Source: <http://www.pas.gov.uk/documents/332612/1099309/Planning+on+Your+Doorstep+-+The+Big+Issues+Green+Belt.pdf/bb5fcd90-fa29-42a0-9dd9-82b27a43f72f>). This was rightly described by planning law commentator, Andrew Lainton, as something of a pyrrhic victory for Hunston and we are not sure they will have been assuaged by knowing the appeal outcome was judged among the top 10 planning decisions of 2013.

lxviii As noted at the 2015 National Planning Summit. See <http://www.planningresource.co.uk/article/1340059/national-planning-summit-question-green-belt-reviews-will-addressed>

lxix Examples of Green Belt boundary review at local authority level include Woking, Waverly, Runnymede, St Albans, Welwyn Hatfield, Guildford, Harpenden, Enfield, and Stevenage among others, while Sheffield City Region, and Buckinghamshire, represent examples of more sub-regional and county-based review approaches.

lxx <http://www.planningresource.co.uk/article/1335322/london-councils-should-carry-green-belt-reviews>

lxxi Planning on the Doorstep: The Big Issues – Green Belt (Brett, P, updated Feb 2015)

lxxii Note: one of the co-authors recently attended a briefing with a key member of one of the London Mayoral candidates' campaign team where the issue of Green Belt and housing need was acknowledged as the prime issue in the election contest.

lxxiii See <http://www.gardencitiesinstitute.com/>

lxxiv See, for example, the Government's HyperCat initiative <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/launch-of-smart-cities-initiative>; [http://www.telegraph.co.uk/sponsored/business/smart\\_cities/](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/sponsored/business/smart_cities/); <http://www.theguardian.com/cities/smart-cities> and [http://www.nesta.org.uk/search?search\\_api\\_views\\_fulltext=smart%20cities&gclid=COeJmc-Ou8kCFQITwwod33MI1g](http://www.nesta.org.uk/search?search_api_views_fulltext=smart%20cities&gclid=COeJmc-Ou8kCFQITwwod33MI1g)

lxxv See <http://www.telecomtechnews.com/news/2015/jul/14/uk-government-offers-10m-smart-city-project/>

lxxvi For information about the Catapult programme see <https://www.catapult.org.uk/>

lxxvii <http://www.centreforcities.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/14-05-29-Smart-Cities-briefing.pdf>

lxxviii See, for instance, arguments that Garden Cities are too low density to be made smart: <http://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/blog/garden-cities-smart-urban-regeneration-business-case>

lxxix See for example, 'Uneven growth: tackling City decline', by Andy Pike, Danny MacKinnon, Mike Coombes, Tony Champion, David Bradley, Andrew Cumbers, Liz Robson and Colin Wymer Joseph Rowntree Foundation, February 2016.

lxxx This shift in attitudes has been striking: whereas in 2010 the BSAS found that 46 per cent of respondents said they would oppose any new homes being built in their local area, this opposition had fallen to 21 per cent in 2014. Likewise, those supportive of the construction of new homes in their local area climbed from 28 per cent in 2010 to 56 per cent in 2014. Opposition even fell noticeably among those living in small cities and market towns – down from 34 to 22 per cent as well as those living in suburbs (32 to 22 per cent).

lxxxi 'When Brownfield isn't enough', Quod & Shelter, February 2016. Op cit.

## Author biographies

**Keith Boyfield** is an economist and author of more than 90 publications on public policy issues. He is a Fellow of think tanks the Centre for Policy Studies, the Institute of Economic Affairs, the Adam Smith Institute and the European Policy Forum, as well as the Kosciuszko Institute in Poland and the Euro-Gulf Information Centre in Rome. Keith has been an adviser to the European Commission and consultant to some of the world's largest companies and trade groups including Aon, the BBC, the British Private Equity & Venture Capital Association (BVCA), The Crown Estate, KPMG, Mott MacDonald Ltd, and Thomson Reuters plc.

He has contributed to *The Financial Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Times*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *City AM*, *The Yorkshire Post* and *La Razon* in Madrid. He is also a frequent commentator on a range of international broadcast channels including Al Jazeera, the BBC and Radio France Internationale (RFI).

With Daniel Greenberg, Keith co-authored *Pink Planning* (November 2014) and two subsequent reports: *A Suggestion for the Housing and Planning Minister* (May 2015) and *A Convergence of Interests* (May 2016), published by the Centre for Policy Studies. He also co-edited, with Graham Mather, *Britain's Unsolved Housing Dilemma* (2001). Keith is a founding partner of the International Garden Cities Institute ([www.gardencitiesinstitute.com](http://www.gardencitiesinstitute.com)). He was educated at the London School of Economics.

**Dr Susan Parham** is Head of Urbanism at the University of Hertfordshire and is the inaugural Academic Director of the new International Garden Cities Institute, as part of a research partnership between the University of Hertfordshire and the Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation. Through her Institute role, Susan is working with a range of founding partners, academics and others on a broad array of research into planned settlements: past, present and future. Susan previously worked for some years as a consultant urban policy analyst and rapporteur for the OECD Urban Affairs Division, was director for more than twelve years of a sustainability policy consultancy based in the UK and chaired the Council for European Urbanism for more than nine years. Susan was a Trustee and then Vice Chair of the board of the charity, Living Streets, for six years.

At the University of Hertfordshire, Susan leads research partnerships, teaches and supervises post graduate and doctoral students on urbanism, planning and heritage themes. Recent research includes the *Hertfordshire Guide to Growth – Five Years On* (with James Hulme), and *People, products and places: Exploring sustainable-living practices in masterplanned communities* (with Alasdair Jones and John McCormack). Susan also has a long-term focus on food, design and place. Her most recent book, *Food and Urbanism*, is published by Bloomsbury (2015) and she contributed a chapter, on food centred 'retrofitting' in a new town context, to the book *Future Directions for the European Shrinking City* (RTPI Library Series, 2016).

Susan originally trained as a political economist, has graduate qualifications in town planning and urban design and undertook her doctoral research at the London School of Economics' Cities Programme.

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