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OVERVIEW OF THE ENGLISH NEW TOWNS

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Origins of the English New Towns

Most of the New Towns of Great Britain have been built in England - 21 out of a total of 33. Thus the development of New Towns in England is very closely linked with the development of New Towns nationally. The beginnings of the New Towns programme essentially date from the mid 1930s. For many years the privately developed Garden Cities of Letchworth and Welwyn had attracted government interest, but there was little sign of these demonstration projects being emulated by government itself. The first major step came with the 1935 Marley Committee, which was set up to examine the experience of the Garden Cities and to recommend whether direct intervention 'to extend the provision of such garden cities and satellite towns' was appropriate. The Marley Committee highlighted that,

“the dangers and evils, economic and social, which follow from haphazard, scattered and ribbon development can hardly be exaggerated . . . The present tendency to demand for general adoption high buildings and greater density of occupation in central areas is based upon existing concentrations and the absence of planning in the past, accentuated by the disordered and badly planned suburban development which has taken place in recent years.

. . . when a town reaches a certain size, which may vary within wide limits, continuous growth round the fringe may create evils that outweigh any advantages; at this stage in its growth any further outward development should take the form of complete planned units each having due provision for industry, residence, social services and recreation.”

(Ministry of Health, 1935, pp 25-6)

It is to be noted that the Marley Committee did not advocate New Towns as a means of permitting inner-city redevelopment by altering the land market, as had been propounded by the father of the Garden Cities Movement, Ebenezer Howard (Howard, 1898, Potter 1996). Rather, Marley's Committee saw New Towns as a physical planning alternative to suburban expansion, something Howard had not really considered, but was a pressing issue by this time, with suburban development around cities proceeding at a massive pace.

This concept of New Towns underwent a further change under the wartime Royal Commission on the Distribution of Industrial Population (the Barlow Report, 1940). This gave moderate support to the New Town idea, but it was the 1944 Abercrombie Greater London Plan that turned out to be the springboard for England's postwar New Towns programme. This addressed the suburbanization problem with a proposed green belt and ten overspill New Towns 20 to 30 miles (30 to 50 km) from Central London.

In 1946 the New Towns Act was passed by Parliament, and a committee under Lord Reith was appointed to aid 'the promotion of New Towns in furtherance of a policy of planned decentralization from congested urban areas; and in accordance therewith to suggest guiding principles in which such towns should be established and developed as self-contained and balanced communities for work and living' (Ministry of Town and Country Planning, 1946).

New Town Institutions and Purpose

In place of the private development company under which the Garden Cities had been built came the *New Town Development Corporation* with a government-appointed board to oversee the development of a New Town site. The work of each Corporation was funded by government loans and could compulsorily purchase land at existing use values, so rises in land values associated with development were captured by the development corporation - but any net profits were returned to the Exchequer.

Howard's central notion of New Towns being a means to phase in land reform was replaced by the New Towns being a tool to regionally redistribute population and employment. Indeed, this transition had occurred well before the New Towns Act of 1946. From the 1920s, proponents of Garden Cities and New Towns had emphasised their physical planning role with land reform being quietly dropped. However, the financial mechanism to capture land betterment values was still part of New Town development, but was by no means seen as a way to challenge the economic predominance of existing cities. It was simply seen as an effective part of the development process of the towns.

To a large extent times had simply changed and New Towns had become attractive to government for reasons other than those originally envisaged. One lesson of the New Towns is that they have proved to be a tool of urban policy that can achieve a number of key objectives. Over the ensuing 50 years they have been used not only as a tool of decentralising people and employment from cities, but as part of regional policy, as growth centres, for urban regeneration and to attract internationally mobile capital. Ebenezer Howard probably never realised how flexible and relevant his Garden City idea was to 20th century urban planning needs.

The central government control of the New Towns reflected the emergence, during the Second World War, of centralized organizations as a means of efficient policy implementation. This was a trend which was evident in all areas of state activities and was reinforced by strong local opposition by some existing residents of New Town sites: for example, when Lewis Silkin, Minister of Town and Country Planning, visited Stevenage in 1947, he was greeted with cries of 'Gestapo! Dictator! The tyres of his car were let down, sand put in the petrol tanks and the name boards at the station were replaced with ones marked 'Silkingrad'. Silkin's skilfully argued reply to his critics is recorded as: 'It is no good your jeering: it is going to be done!'

It could be argued that the New Towns programme would have been stunted from the beginning if development corporations had been democratically accountable to the existing local population. Stephen Holly (1983), an enthusiastic supporter of the centralised power of the development corporation, later pointed out, "It would not be possible to build a satisfactory town for over 70,000 people if the views of a much smaller number of existing residents were paramount." To a large extent this is true; special mechanisms do have to exist for projects where the regional or national interest needs to override NIMBYism.

The experience of the Garden Cities themselves showed that, for a large scale programme, the self-governing New Town model had severe limitations. Welwyn had to be bailed out by the government in the 1930s and Letchworth needed a special Act of Parliament in 1961 to stop it being taken over by asset-strippers. An entirely locally controlled model for New

Town development was too weak in relation to the capital needs and powerful land and property development forces. However, the strong central government control of New Town designation, administration, finance and profits went to the other extreme. Although the New Towns were well financed and had the necessary development powers and control, they left both the New Town councils and nearby city authorities with very little influence over New Town development. In a number of cases the development corporations worked closely with local authorities and community groups, but this was only at their discretion.

There was a mechanism for greater local representation in the development of New Towns via appointments to their Boards of members from the New Town local authorities and cities that the New Towns served. These appointments were made by the Secretary of State for the Environment, rather than them being posts the councils themselves had the right to fill with their own nominees. This was a vital flaw. The result was that these posts simply became political appointments, with members drawn from the ranks of the government's party rather than those of the party in control in the New Towns or cities themselves. Thus a mechanism that could have provided a means for New Town local authorities and nearby cities to have an effective voice in New Town development became simply another element of centralised control.

This exclusion of local government in the New Town programme contributed to a general indifference towards the New Towns that was eventually to become openly hostile. Outside London, few of the major cities cared for the regional planning concepts that the New Towns served. Many saw no requirement to restrict suburban sprawl. At best, most cities simply viewed New Towns as a convenient, government-funded, way of shortening housing waiting lists.

The major exception to this was London, which has always been crucial to the political acceptance of the New Towns. Totally hemmed in by adjacent built-up areas, the London County Council (LCC) welcomed the government's New Town initiative. Of the ten city overspill or 'satellite' New Towns designated in Britain as a whole from 1946 to 1955 eight were for London.

Table 1: England's Early New Towns

	DC designation & dissolution dates	Designated area (hectares)	POPULATION	
			Original	1991
LONDON RING:				
Basildon	1949-85	3,165	25,000	157,700
Bracknell	1949-82	1,337	5,149	51,340
Crawley	1947-62	2,396	9,100	87,200
Harlow	1947-80	2,558	4,500	73,500
Hatfield	1948-66	947	8,500	26,000
Hemel Hempstead	1947-62	2,391	21,000	79,040
Stevenage	1946-80	2,532	6,700	75,000
Welwyn Garden City	1948-66	1,747	18,500	40,500

REGIONAL (non-satellite) NEW TOWNS

Aycliffe	1947-88	1,254	60	24,700
Corby	1950-80	1,791	15,700	47,139
Peterlee	1948-88	1,205	200	22,220

No other satellite New Towns were designated for any other English city until the mid 1960s. Birmingham had no New Towns until 1964 (though it had constructed large overspill estates in the inter-war period), Liverpool 1964, Tyneside 1964 and Manchester 1968. No New Towns have ever been designated for the Yorkshire conurbations.

New Towns have been built for reasons other than city overspill. The first of these in England (indeed Britain as a whole) occurred early in the New Towns programme. Aycliffe (1947) and Corby (1950) were designed provide towns for existing employment areas; Peterlee (1948) was intended to provide an urban centre and alternative employment opportunities for a mining area.

In practice, the role of these New Towns altered greatly. With the decline of mining employment in Peterlee, the emphasis had to switch in the 1960s in order to attract employment. Corby faced a similar crisis with the decline in the 1970s, and eventual closure in 1980, of its steelworks. Corby too had to adapt, with attracting employment becoming a key goal. By the 1960s Aycliffe, too, had changed its purpose in order to attract employment to the region.

The Eclipse of the New Towns

In 1951 the Labour government proposed supplementing the New Towns Act in England with a Town Development Bill, enabling small country towns to be expanded by their own local authorities. These agreements were recognized by central government as qualifying for financial support (grants for public housing, social facilities, services, inducements to industry etc). In no way was central government to be directly involved with the choosing of a site, the planning or development of an Expanded Town. This was a matter for the 'exporting' city authority and its 'importing' country counterpart.

The 1952 Town Development Act had the distinction of being laid before Parliament by a Labour Government but being finally passed by a Conservative one. The Conservatives retained Labour's Bill, but for their own very different reasons. Rather than supplementing New Towns, they saw Expanded Towns as replacing them. Although the development powers of the Expanded Towns were considerably weaker than those possessed by the New Town development corporations, they drew very much upon New Town experience and the better examples could be considered closer to Howard's concept of a locally-controlled New Town than are the development corporation New Towns.

Most Expanded Towns were able to obtain land cheaply and, although estate management practice has varied greatly, in many cases the betterment value has been retained and used by the local authority for social facilities.

The structure of local political control and management stands in strong contrast with the 1946 New Towns Act and consequential has produced a wide variety of urban development, ranging from suburban expansion to satellite towns and rural growth centres.

City authorities like Walsall, Wolverhampton, Salford and Bristol in no way recognized a need to limit their city's growth and used the Town Development Act to extend their suburbs into neighbouring authorities' areas

Even though it had eight New Towns already, it was the London County Council (LCC) which largely exploited the Town Development Act. By the early 1960s the LCC had entered into agreements for the construction of over 60,000 rented houses in over twenty expansion agreements. Birmingham, with no New Towns, had by 1964 half a dozen agreements for 17,000 dwellings. Although some were purely suburban in nature, the expansions of Daventry and Droitwich were certainly in the New Town class, as was Liverpool's development of Winsford. Newcastle's Expanded Towns of Cramlington and Killingworth on 'greenfield' sites are the best examples of entirely New Towns built under the Town Development Act.

The Return of the New Towns

The early 1960s marked a resurgence in the legitimacy of planning. It was an era of rising birth rates and population projections. In 1965 the UK population was expected to rise by eighteen million by the year 2000 and such growth expectations were a major driving force behind the development of Regional Plans.

It was clear that the Town Development Act schemes would not cope with the scale of urban development that seemed necessary in the 1960s. The New Towns Act was therefore reinvoked, and the 1960s saw the designation of a further seventeen New Towns, largely to accommodate the population growth the Regional Plans anticipated would occur by the end of the century.

Table 2: England's 1960s New Towns

	DC designation & dissolution dates	Designated area (hectares)	POPULATION	
			Original	1991
Skelmersdale	1961-85	1,670	10,000	42,000
Redditch	1964-85	2,906	32,000	75,000
Runcorn	1964-89	2,930	28,500	64,200
Washington	1964-88	2,270	20,000	61,190
Milton Keynes	1967-92	8,900	40,000	143,100
Peterborough	1967-88	6,451	81,000	137,930
Northampton	1968-85	8,080	133,000	184,000
Warrington	1968-89	7,535	122,300	159,000
Telford	1968-91	7,790	70,000	120,500
Central Lancashire	1970-85	14,267	234,500	255,200

New Town Asset Control.

By the late 1950s, some of the earliest New Towns were approaching the end of their main development phase. It had always been intended that the development corporation would be a temporary institution, but it was clear that many important assets would remain in corporation ownership for long after its development function had ceased. What was to be done with these assets?

The 1946 New Towns Act envisaged that as the New Towns grew, the development corporation was expected to transfer its assets to the local authority. When the time came to do this, the then Conservative government was unwilling in practice to see this happen and, in 1959, established the *New Towns Commission*, another government-controlled body, to take over the assets of the English (and Welsh) New Towns. This situation changed again in the 1970s when central government was willing to transfer 'traditional' council functions to the New Town local authorities (such as public housing, leisure facilities, parks etc.) but not any industrial and commercial assets, which were retained by the New Towns Commission.

This policy was taken one stage further with the Conservative governments from 1979 onwards requiring New Towns and the New Towns Commission to sell into private ownership factories, offices and commercial premises as well as the freehold of sites. By the late 1980s and 90s, the zeal to keep even loss-making and community assets out of local authority control led to parks, museums and community halls passing to trusts and rented housing to housing associations.

Employment Generation and the relationship of the New Towns to the Cities

From their early years, a distinctive feature of the New Towns has been their success in attracting employment. Out of the the top ten areas for employment growth in the whole of Britain during 1961 -71, six were New Towns and the other four were Expanded Towns.

Table 3 Employment Growth in England's New Towns

	DC designation & dissolution dates	EMPLOYMENT Original 1992	
Aycliffe	1947-88	9,000	12,700
Basildon	1949-85	5,740	58,000
Bracknell	1949-82	179	27,400 (1985)
Central Lancashire	1970-85	123,000	140,900 (1985)
Corby	1950-80	9,037	23,965
Crawley	1947-62	2,140	63,610 (1983)
Harlow	1947-80	573	34,707
Hatfield	1948-66	3,100	11,900
Hemel Hempstead	1947-62	7,700	35,217 (1987)
Milton Keynes	1967-92	9,980	81,650
Northampton	1968-85	69,142	98,000
Peterborough	1967-88	50,300	77,358
Peterlee	1948-88	10	10,000
Redditch	1964-85	18,210	32,000 (1989)
Runcorn	1964-89	13,300	28,100 (1989)
Skelmersdale	1961-85	1,000	20,766 (1989)
Stevenage	1946-80	2,500	34,300 (1989)
Telford	1968-91	17,951	59,991 (1991)
Warrington	1968-89	60,700	NA
Washington	1964-85	7,500	18,877 (1987)
Welwyn Garden City	1948-66	11,200	20,800 (1989)

Source: Town and Country Planning and Author's survey conducted for the Association of District Councils and TCPA.

A key question in evaluating the growth of employment in the New Towns is how these jobs were generated. This opens up a crucial question as to the economic relationship between the New Towns and the cities. Has the growth of the New Towns been at the expense of existing cities? This question became an emotive issue from the 1970s and is still of relevance regarding policies for the New Towns today.

Regarding the sources of New Town employment, there are four possible (though not mutually exclusive) explanations:

- a) New town job generation was at the expense of the major cities;
- b) The cities were losing jobs anyway and had they not gone to the New Towns they would have gone to other decentralised settlements;
- c) The jobs in the cities were not moving elsewhere, but simply vanishing and new jobs were being created elsewhere, including the New Towns;
- c) The New Towns provided conditions unavailable in cities which generated more jobs and attracted international capital.

There is evidence that employment growth in New Towns is faster than elsewhere, with much of this net gain is due to the nature of New Town development itself. In particular the expertise built up in the New Towns to target and obtain international capital means they

have won many jobs for Britain that would have otherwise located elsewhere in Europe. Even Telford, not somewhere considered prime territory for overseas firms, had by 1992 138 overseas companies employing 17% of Telford's local workforce.

A number of New Towns collected information on the origins of employment. For example, the 1970's New Town of Milton Keynes did investigate the origins of the employment attracted there by the Development Corporation. Milton Keynes is perhaps a good example to take, because if any New Town development diverted employment from other areas, this would be it. The results of the Milton Keynes surveys suggest little by way of direct transfer of jobs from the cities or elsewhere in Britain. The 1981 Employment Survey indicated that, of the 27,250 jobs generated up to 1981, only 1,920 (or 7%) were direct transfers from London. In an earlier survey (MKDC, 1978), 21 % of the post-designation increase in employment was due to jobs being transferred from elsewhere in Britain. By the 1992 Employment Survey, this proportion was down to 16%.

18% of job growth to 1981 was due to the expansion of existing firms already in Milton Keynes before designation, 22% to the creation of new firms, 23% to service employment and 16% in jobs related to the construction of Milton Keynes itself.

These figures require careful interpretation, but it is significant that no counterargument was ever made to Milton Keynes' claim that the transfer of jobs from cities was an insignificant part of the town's growth in employment. However, it could not be claimed that all the service and all new jobs would not have been created if there had been no Milton Keynes. The people and employers would largely have been elsewhere; but would they have been in the major cities, in the suburbs or in other fringe towns? The latter seems more likely. The cities have largely lost jobs to the 'unplanned' settlements rather than the New Towns or the jobs have simply ceased to exist.

This is a crucial part of the wider question of the relationship between New Towns and the cities. David Hall, in his evidence to the City 2020 Inquiry (1994) emphasised that 'programmes for inner city regeneration on one hand and New Towns on the other should be complementary' and noted that the New Towns programme was originally designed as such, to relieve city overcrowding, development pressure on other towns and villages and provided 'virtually the only opportunity for the poor to live in a decent environment.'

But this complementary policy was never achieved. The New Towns grew in population and prosperity and the cities declined. Then, in 1976, the Minister for the Environment, Peter Shore, announced the curtailment of the New Towns programme. A total of over 450 000 was cut from the population targets of the six most recent New Towns and all other New Town expansion proposals were quashed.

Shore actually stressed his view that New Town employment growth was not at the expense of the cities. In a Manchester speech, he noted that "of the 140,000 people who moved from the conurbation of Merseyside between 1966 and 1971, only 11.4% moved to New Towns elsewhere in the region," and that the greatest cause of the loss of jobs in the cities was not because firms migrated, but because they died. (Shore, 1976).

Implicit in Shore's statement was the view that the blame for problems of the inner cities, particularly employment loss, cannot be laid at the door of the New Towns. It was basically due to a lack of effective state intervention to regenerate the cities. The contrasting success

of the New Towns further highlighted this policy failure. Ward (1993) is particularly scathing of the 1960s policies of inner city redevelopment which he considers to have destroyed thousands of jobs. He suggests that the New Towns provided a convenient political scapegoat for the failures of past inner city policies:

“The failure of inner city policy were all too evident, but through the psychological mechanism known as deflection, the blame was shifted from the central and city authorities to the New Towns. The idea spiralled up from the academic chat shows to actual policies of government departments, that the success of the New Towns had been gained at the expense of the urban poor”.

Overall, it would be far to simplistic to say that the New Towns success was either entirely at the expense of the cities or had no effect at all upon their economic prosperity. The period of major New Towns expansion (c 1960 - 1980) was one of major change in our urban society, when there were strong decentralisation pressures for both jobs and housing. There were inept inner city policies and the New Towns were well positioned to exploit the market trend.

Had the resources that were devoted to the New Towns been spent in the inner cities, it is questionable whether it would have helped much, as the comprehensive redevelopment policies of the time appear to have largely worsened the cities' plight. The idea that New Towns caused inner city problems appears to be no more than an urban myth. One, perhaps, that became attractive to those seeking a scapegoat for their own failures.

The End of the New Towns Programme

The inner cities issue was not the only factor behind the demise of New Towns as a policy instrument. A major factor contributing to the return to New Town designations in the 1960s was the anticipation of massive population growth. This was a major influence behind the many regional plans of the late 1960s and their associated New Town designations. By the late 1970s, rather than expecting a population increase of eighteen million by 2000 (as was believed in 1965) an increase of three million was the greatest expected. Between 1974 and 1978 the population of Britain actually declined by 78,000.

An expectation of stable or even declining population does not by itself obviate the need for New Towns. The New Town Act of 1946 and the designation of the first fourteen New Towns occurred at a time when there was an expectation of population stability. New Towns were anticipated to contribute to a population redistribution, but the later New Towns came to be associated with regional plans for major population growth.

As noted earlier, the attitude of most cities (except London) towards New Towns has always been one of neutrality or hostility - the latter becoming more evident as the economic and social success of the New Towns developed. However, the 1960s expectations of population growth led the cities to accept the need for New and Expanded Towns and some cities, like Birmingham, pressed the government to designate New Towns for them.

With the demise of population growth expectations in the early '70s, the cities increasingly viewed the New Towns as competitors. They feared the New Town's ability to attract

young, skilled workers and robbing cities of employment and rates income. To the cities, the successful New and Expanded Towns had become irksome

Government attitudes to New Towns

A major reason behind central government control of the New Towns programme was the recognition that there would be tensions and conflicts between the New Towns and both their surrounding local authorities and the cities. Government had control of the programme because there were wider regional and national goals to fulfil. Why therefore did government join the cities in claiming that reduced population growth was a sufficient reason to curtail the construction of all Britain's New Towns, whereas this had not been so in the past?

The answer to this lies in changing government views as to the purpose of the New Towns programme and a distinct lack of economic and financial understanding regarding the programme. As such, rather than being part of a linked policy for the regeneration of city regions, New Towns came to be treated in total isolation.

By the 1960s, New Towns had ceased to be viewed by government as having much to do with altering the nature of cities themselves - be it economic or physical. Although migration from cities featured in most 1960s New Towns plans, this was within the context of New Towns 'mopping up' excess population growth. This was their only rationale. They may have been called New Towns, but the concepts and goals they served had only tenuous links with the 1940s New Towns and none at all with Howard's New Town economic theories. This made the New Towns extremely vulnerable once population growth slackened, coupled with a resurgence of government awareness of the economic and social problems of the inner city.

New Town Finance

A further important element that helps to explain the change in government attitudes to the New Towns concerned their financing. In financial terms, the first generation New Towns performed excellently. In general, the satellite New Towns paid off their development costs and were into surplus within 20 years. The regional New Towns took 30 years or longer, with on average the first generation New Towns as a whole producing an 11% return after 30 years on the initial state investment (Thomas 1980 and Potter and Thomas, 1982).

The early New Towns grew up on a period of comparative austerity; rents in the New Towns in the 1950s were relatively high, but in a period of housing shortage people were willing to pay them. Social and educational amenities were also slow to come along. The penury of the 1940s and 1950s no doubt contributed in many other ways to the financial success of these towns. The situation in the 1960s was very different. The financial success of the early New Towns gave confidence to government that eventual financial success was assured. Spending on amenities of all kinds was permitted on a scale that would have been unthinkable in the 1950s. This was aided by the wildly optimistic expectation with regard to future economic growth that was a general feature of planning of this time.

These somewhat more ambitious New Town plans coincided with a period of high interest rates that revealed a serious flaw in the financing mechanism of New Town projects. At this time, all New Town Development Corporations had to borrow money from the Treasury on

60 year loans at a fixed interest rate for the period of the entire loan. The 1970s and 80s were a time when interest rates were very high and thus at the time when they needed to borrow most, the Development Corporation were forced into committing themselves to 60 year loans at very high interest rates. Under such circumstances, no private development company would have taken out a 60 year loan, but would have opted for a short-term loan and then refinanced its lending later when interest rates were lower. Treasury rules meant that the Development Corporations could not do this.

For more than a decade the Development Corporation lobbied for a change in the loan conditions. Eventually, in 1986, the Treasury permitted them to take out short term loans. By that time it was too late. The vast bulk of New Town development had been undertaken and the Development Corporations had run up enormous debts. In 1983, the Department of the Environment suspended payments of interest and capital on the loans taken out by the English and Welsh Development Corporations in order to provide time to restructure their finances. In 1986, as part of the reforms including permitting the use of short-term loans, £1,688 million of debt was extinguished, £249m further suspended leaving £949m to be repaid by the remaining four Development Corporations (Milton Keynes, Peterborough, Telford, Warrington and Runcorn).

Treasury inflexibility and complacency was behind much of the poor financial performance of the last generation of New Towns. A simple and appropriate reform was implemented far too late, and the taxpayer was left to pay a bill in excess of a billion pounds.

The 1960s New Towns pulled the whole New Towns programme into debt. Sorrensen (1993a and 1993b) estimates that, overall, the English and Welsh New Towns cost £7,618,000 billion to build and that the government is likely to recoup about 57% of this once all the existing assets have been sold, a net cost of £3.3 billion.

Even given this, an urban initiative that recouped two-thirds of its costs is a rarity. That it could have, given a more appropriate financial regime, come very close to break-even is remarkable.

However, by the mid 1970s the worsening condition of the British economy resulted in short-term economic measures becoming the order of the day. With the 1960s New Towns requiring heavy investment in basic infrastructure, returns to the Exchequer many years away (and failing to match development costs), the New Towns programme was looking vulnerable. Added to this was population stability, city hostility to New Towns and a heightened state awareness of the inner-city problem.

The curtailing and winding up on the New Towns programme was not entirely a political conspiracy to disguise the expensive failure of successive policies for the inner cities. New Towns had come to serve an increasingly restricted role and their previously well-structure financial basis had become eroded.

Despite the eventual curtailment and running down of the English New Town programme, it represents one of the most successful urban policies of post war Britain. Even given their accepted failings, the English New Towns have accommodated over a million people and have evolved into economically and socially successful communities. They remain a world-class model of best practice to students and practitioners of planning and urban studies - something that very few other areas of British urban, or other policies, can claim.

But today, the factors that led to the demise of the New Towns Programme have changed yet again. Rather than population stability, in the 1995 household projections, the government are forecasting a growth by 4.4 million households over the next 20 years (with most of this in England). We are now facing a situation not dissimilar to that which led to the designation of the last major wave of New Towns in the mid 1960s. Only time will tell whether the urban policy initiatives that have yet to emerge in response to this challenge will include anything as remotely successful as the New Towns.

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