

Political ideology and housing supply: rethinking New Towns and the building of new communities in England

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Declaration

I, Helena Rivera, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Abstract

Throughout the twentieth century, England experienced a chronic problem of housing supply that persists to this day. In an attempt to manage it, philanthropists, policymakers and politicians have directed planning policies and legislation to build new planned communities: Howard's *town/country* magnet; New Labour's *sustainable* communities; and, the recent Coalition government's initiatives in delivering *locally-led* garden cities. Problematically, this results in planning being trapped between political ideology and problems of housing supply. To examine this tension, the New Towns programme provides an important example of how goal-driven planning policy was used during the period 1946-1976 to address housing supply. This research focuses on the first wave (mark 1) of New Towns built as 'balanced communities for working and living' (Reith, 1944) between 1946-1955 in Southeast England, to decentralise London's population and industry. Three critical lenses are employed to understand the development of mark 1 objectives: self-containment (Hall 1973, Ward 2004), newness vs. sameness (Clapson 2003) and governance (Aldridge 1979, Reade 1987). This research provides a different appraisal to the New Towns programme and makes a critical contribution to the meta-discourse of building new communities. A principal critique here is that the historiography of New Towns has been predominantly written by experts (academic and otherwise), providing a limited interpretation of the legacy of (living in) New Towns. To empirically rectify this, Sandercock's (2003) suggestion of a narrative-led approach is employed in investigating two mark 1 case studies: Harlow and Hemel Hempstead. Perspectives of original New Town pioneers as well as planners/officials working in development corporations and local authorities/councils have been collected and analysed for a hitherto undocumented experience of planning, building, managing and living in New Towns. It thus provides not only valuable scholarship on New Towns, but also reinforces their contemporary relevance to the continued pursuit of building new communities in England.

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Acronyms

AF	The Architecture Foundation
AHRC	Arts and Humanities Research Council
AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
AR	Action Research
BANANA	Build Absolutely Nothing Anywhere Near Anyone/Anything
CABE	Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment
CDA	Collaborative Doctorate Award
CLA	The Country Land and Business Association
CNT	Commission for the New Towns
DBC	Dacorum Borough Council
DC	Development Corporation
DCLG	Department for Communities and Local Government
DEFRA	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
DETR	Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions
DTLR	Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions
EP	English Partnerships
HBC	Harlow Borough Council
HC	House of Commons
HCA	Homes and Communities Agency
HHDC	Hemel Hempstead Development Corporation
HNTDC	Harlow New Town Development Corporation
IPPR	Institute for Policy and Public Research
IWM	Imperial War Museum
NHF	National Housing Federation
NIMBY	Not In My Backyard
NPPF	The National Planning Policy Framework
NT	New Town
NTDC	New Town Development Corporation
ODPM	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
PAR	Participatory Action Research
PR	Participatory Research
SC	Sustainable Community
TCP	Town and Country Planning
TCPA	Town and Country Planning Association

UCL	University College of London
UDC	Urban Development Corporations
UTF	Urban Task Force
UWP	Urban White Paper

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Chapter 1 Introduction

Britain has a nightmare, and its name is housing. At the heart of the nightmare is the sheer expense. The average house costs five times the average person's annual income, not far off record highs. And they're going up too. (The Independent, 2014).

Today England faces a housing crisis indebted to chronic problems of supply. The relentless media coverage on this subject portrays a grim and urgent reality whereby 'the shortfall in homes in the south of England will reach 160,000 in the next five years' (The Guardian, 2014). Members of the Country Land and Business Association (CLA), who own or manage around half the rural land in England and Wales, have validated this concern. They introduced a policy report on Tackling the Housing Crisis in England (2013) stating that housing supply in England was struggling to keep up with demand through a shortfall of 'more than 230,000 homes a year' (CLA, 2013: 5). An important distinction in the nature of the housing problem should be made because there are actually two *different* housing crises in operation. Overman (2012) of the London School of Economics (LSE) explains that the first is a long-term crisis concerning an overall shortage in housing provision, acting as a precursor to profound problems of affordability for the next generation. The second is a short-term problem due to the recession of 2007/2008, where construction in London fell by 19% to a staggering 47% in northwest England (Overman, 2012:3). He puts this into perspective by quantifying new housing built against the population growth. In the period between '2001- 2011 about 1.4 million new homes were built in England, while the population rose by just under four million' (*ibid.*). He concludes that England needs to build more housing, a very similar conclusion to that of Kate Barker in 2004 when she published the influential Review of Housing Supply (2004) commissioned by the Treasury of the New Labour government (1997-2010). According to the review, coined the Barker Report, policy makers had to promote a 'more flexible housing market' to reflect the macro-economy and to achieve a 'more equitable distribution of housing wealth' (Barker, 2004:1). The Barker Report (as early as 2004), identified the two different housing crises that Overman (2012) presents. Additionally, Barker (2004) concluded that housing supply could increase if planning was more flexible and capable of responding to market conditions. Without oversimplifying the breadth of her recommendations, Barker established that planning was 'a major impediment to adequate supply' (Gallent and Tewdwr-Jones, 2007:78) because the planning process was too bureaucratic; planning was not responsive enough to market demands; and that

planning had to make better use of land to promote, not restrict, growth (Barker, 2004). The idea that England's housing crisis is dependent on, and vulnerable to, the workings of the planning system does not mark a significant departure because, historically, managing housing supply is a manifest function of planning (Gallent and Tewdwr-Jones, 2007).

An illustration of this relationship can be found in the current Coalition government of Conservatives and Liberal Democrats who have acknowledged that there is a housing shortage and has promised to increase the supply of new homes in promoting locally-led garden cities (DCLG, 2014b). The political ideology underpinning the Coalition government is to make the planning system less complex and more accessible by devolving decision-making to local communities and local authorities in a bid to catalyse house building. A National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was introduced in 2012 to encourage a more local approach to planning and less of a top-down system they claim was inherited from New Labour:

Unlocking large-scale housing developments is critical to driving the supply of new homes in the medium to long term. They can offer a more strategic and thoughtful alternative to sequential development (or “sprawl”) around existing communities. Unlike the previous Government's Eco-Towns programme, this is a local solution, giving communities the power to choose sites, plans and designs for Garden Cities, not [*sic*] rather than Whitehall imposing what it thinks best for local people. (DCLG, 2014b: 3).

This reflects an idea that has been in constant repetition throughout twentieth century English history; that through new planned communities we can solve the chronic problems of housing supply. For example, in our ambition for locally-led garden cities, we could solve the housing crisis through a triangulation of factors. Firstly, by dealing with the structural issues of an increasing population and undersupply of housing provision (with its associated problems of affordability) by promoting house-building on a large scale. Secondly, by evoking a vision of utopia, or of an imaginary ‘Garden City’ as a typological aspiration. Thirdly, by reflecting the political ideology of the Coalition government by endorsing a new type of governance model led by local people under the term localism. This policy of locally-led garden cities is, in 2014, in process and would be too new for examination. But one does not have to go far to find another example. The previous New Labour government (1997-2010) had been a champion of Eco-Towns and Millennium Villages through a national strategy of building Sustainable Communities (SC). Its ambition to increase national housing provision as part of a Sustainable Communities Plan (ODPM, 2003a) was so significant to the planning

framework that Gallent and Tewdwr-Jones (2007) refer to its impact as creating a departure in planning from the pre-2004 system to a post-2004 system (*ibid.*). Despite the re-orientation of policy across various ministerial departments to support and implement the Sustainable Communities Plan (ODPM, 2003a; Imrie and Raco, 2003; Raco, 2007), the Coalition government of 2014 is attacking this strategy and introducing a different one of localism with an apparently opposite governance strategy: from top-down to local decision-making. This seems to contradict the idea that planning is a major impediment to adequate supply (Barker 2004). Instead, one should understand planning as being trapped between political ideology and problems of housing supply. Nevertheless, this dramatic change in political rhetoric over such a short space of time is worrying for a country trying to solve a chronic housing problem.

The sudden transference of planning policy to manage housing supply is neither new nor eventful in the history of planning (Cherry, 1996; Ward, 2004; Hall, 2002; Cullingworth and Nadin, 2006). Gallent and Tewdwr-Jones (2007: vii) explore housing provision as an 'evolving relationship' that has 'run parallel' with the evolution of planning in their book *Decent Homes for All* (2007). One can dispute that this relationship is more than a parallel one given that planning as a statutory profession was born in the Housing, Town Planning and Etc., Act 1909, both as a consequence of and response to the housing crisis of the Industrial Revolution. This is mainly because England has relied on the profession for over a century, one now matured into spatial planning to solve the chronic problems of supply through the stewardship of land licenses and orientation of policy to build new communities. These have adopted various guises: Industrial Villages (1850-1888), Garden Cities (1898), Homes Fit for Heroes (1919), New Towns (1946-1976), Millennium Communities (1997), Eco Towns (2003), and now coming full circle, locally-led Garden Cities (2014). Although the ideas behind these new communities differ profoundly, they are united by one key characteristic. Collectively they aim to increase housing supply by creating large-scale development areas underpinned by an ideal or aspiration specific to their time. In the case of Garden Cities, Howard was promoting the 'town and country magnet' (Howard, 1965); post-war New Towns aimed to create 'balanced communities for living and working' (Reith Committee, 1946c); Millennium Communities and Eco Towns were a way of delivering 'sustainable communities' (ODPM, 2003a); and current ideas of building locally-led garden cities attempt to invigorate 'localism' (DCLG, 2014b). But why has the orientation of policy consistently changed?

One view may be because new planned communities provide an important symbol. They are the evidence of how housing supply can be solved through political ideology, and planning is the vehicle to deliver this symbol. Problematically, this means planning is a highly politicised activity and at the ‘service’ of party politics which changes continuously (Wildavsky, 1973; Reade, 1987). A critical reading of planning was introduced by Aaron Wildavsky in 1973 with a paper called, ‘If Planning is Everything, Maybe it’s Nothing’. He presented a radical departure in planning thought by arguing that planning had taken on so many manifest functions that ‘the planner can no longer encompass its dimensions’ (Wildavsky, 1973: 127). Hidden within the breadth of its activity was a ‘latent function’ that served the purpose of ‘faith’ (*ibid.*:151). This is because political leaders look to planning as holy reason, analysis, rationality and policy justification. But also, and importantly, politicians use planning as a tactical tool (*ibid.*). Wildavsky later corrected his use of the term ‘faith’ to ‘bias’ (Wildavsky, 1982: 78) but his argument was established: as an intractable arm of the state, planning was defended for what it symbolises, not what it achieved. A natural deduction is therefore that in the pursuit of building new communities, planning policies consistently change for political realignment.

In response to Wildavsky (1973), Clawson and Hall (cited in Phelps, 2012: 4) points out it that is wrong to interpret planning as a ‘single, unified and clearly defined activity’ (4). Instead, they identify three types of planning: physical and economic; land-use and spatial; private and public-sector planning. Moreover, and importantly, the planning system receives problems of ‘*political choice* rather than technical solutions’ (Phelps, 2012: 4). The problem, Phelps establishes is not that planning has taken on too many manifest functions, but that planning is so politicised, it has led to a historic attitude of ‘muddling’ through initiatives (2012: 3):

Although ‘muddling-through’ has been held to be the norm in policy-making (Lindblom, 1959), curiously this muddling through has taken place in a context which-due to the adversarial nature of British politics- there has been quite remarkable and innovative, but often *see-saw*, policy *initiation* at the national level. (Cox, 1984).

The idea of muddling through policy initiatives while ascribing to political symbols is important. Phelps (2012) uses this concept to explain why policy initiation in England is both inconsistent and irregular. Other planning academics and theorists claim governments have historically committed themselves to what they call ‘ambitious’ or ‘ambiguous’ targets to increase house building (Gallent and Tewdwr-Jones, 2007: 3) as

‘empty or lofty abstractions’ (Edwards 2001: 14). On the other hand, planning historian Michael Hebbert and architectural historian Wolfgang Sonne (2006) use this ambiguity as a lens into the planning process. In *History Builds the Town* (Hebbert and Sonne, 2006), they question whether planners have employed symbols as historical references or ‘worn [them] more casually, as loose-fitting myths’ in their quest to build the twentieth century town (*ibid.*: 3). Their question is important. How do planners employ the past in policy formulation?

Hebbert and Sonne (2006) argue that while a historical awareness exists in architectural practice to affect design strategies, the use of history in town planning is less studied or applied. Their explanation is that planners see their professional role as part of a bigger narrative, whereby they take on the role of reformers diagnosing and delivering change. He associates this tendency with historicism and believes that the planning movement was closely associated with these ideas throughout the twentieth century. His critique is mirrored by Leonie Sandercock (2003) who claims that planning history lacks both diversity and critical perspective because it has no proper field of enquiry. According to her, a historian’s use of planning history is:

To chronicle the rise of the planning profession, its institutionalization, and its achievements ... employs a descriptive approach in which the rise of planning is presented as a heroic, progressive narrative, part of the rise in liberal democracy with its belief in progress through science and technology and faith that the ‘rational planning of ideal social orders’ can achieve equality liberty and justice. (Sandercock, 2003: 38).

This critique presents a problem for the planning profession because if mainstream history does not provide critical perspective on a normative practice, then the assumptions on which the profession operates are weakened and challenged. On the other hand Reade (1987) provides an equally critical review of the effects of the planning system in English Town and Country Planning but his theoretical stance is different. The reason why planning does not appear to learn from its past is because monitoring is practically impossible, a natural consequence of a profession pursuing ‘broad and extremely vague objectives’ of public policy (Reade, 1987: 93). Similarly, his critique extends to suggest planning offers no incentives for historical analysis. This is because public policy is constantly changing, as are party politics, and a lack of monitoring is a form of defence mechanism used by the planning professional.

A critique made by Reade (1987: 85) that further complicates the discourse of planning new communities puts society under the lens. Reade (*ibid.*) claims even if

policy objectives were not vague, ambiguous or lofty abstractions, they would ultimately face a ‘multiplicity of effects’ and ‘seamless web of interactions’ from society (*ibid.*: 85). In other words, because planning has no fixed end-state, monitoring the effects of planning policies, which are themselves in a process of continuous change, would be an impossible task. Critical political theorist Joanie Willett from the University of Exeter argues that this is a fundamental weakness in the way we have traditionally planned new communities, because it has been goal-driven or ‘top-down’ (Willett, 2011). Unless we understand and acknowledge that communities are actually complex systems subject to the unpredictability of non-linear time, then the discourse of how to plan future communities cannot be reconceptualised. This view was mirrored in the 1970s by community psychologist Donald Klein (1978: 178-181) who researched the psychology of the planned community in England as guidance for community psychologists and behavioural scientists in the United States. He suggested that the design of entire communities needed to be understood as large complex macro systems, determined by three main aspects: sense of location, power and choice. His overriding conclusion was that policy makers and professionals should reverse the question from asking ‘do new planned communities work for us?’ to, ‘would new planned communities work if our urban policy truly supported their development?’ (Klein, 1978:181). To answer Klein’s hypothetical question would, of course, require a review of past policies.

This reflects a personal concern that dominated this research from the outset. Using the term ‘communities’ as opposed to ‘neighbourhood’ or ‘place’ was not a gratuitous decision. Although Gallent and Tewdwr-Jones (2007) warn that the former involves people and is not decided by professionals, the latter is where spatial policy can and does exert influence (202). Nevertheless the relentless pursuit by government to tackle chronic problems of housing supply is repeatedly framed under the notion of creating ‘communities’ because planning has repeatedly been understood as having an outcome in social behaviour. This was a principal critique of Wildavsky (1973) when he referred to the bias of the profession. He concluded that because of a blind faith/bias in reasoning and analysis, planners oversimplified the ‘creative potential of social interactions’ (Wildavsky, 1982: 78). Social interactions are so volatile to change that no amount of reasoning, analysis or ‘mechanistic’ and ‘hierarchical’ (Willett, 2011:1) system can expect to understand them, thus implicitly questioning how they can expect to plan for such interactions. This is the basis of Willett’s (2011) attempt to use the theory of complexity to understand how (the unpredictability of) society interacts with

(the mechanistic and hierarchical) planning of new communities. According to her, whilst ‘good planning can *modify* culture’, it ‘cannot change it’ (Willett, 2011:5). This is why the lens with which we examine planned communities needs to be questioned, challenged or perhaps re-invented and where this thesis makes its most valuable contribution to knowledge. This is not to say that we should question the neighbourhood/place as opposed to the community. Doing so would provide a focused approach for examining planning as a normative practice in its assignation of land uses and preparation of development plans (Tewdwr-Jones, 2012). But this would discard the nuances implicit in the job of the planner: of how planning *adapts to structural changes in society* (population projects, changing households or the arrival of the car); how planning *affects local aspirations* (in what way people aspire to live and where they chose to raise a family) and how it *reflects party-politics* at a local scale (where political rhetoric is materialised as spatial policy). In other words, if we discuss the neighbourhood/place and omit community, we would certainly achieve clarity in how spatial policy affects physical change but we would narrow the wider debate of planning new communities.

At the outset of this Introduction I suggested there was a triangulation of factors evident in the locally-led Garden City: structural issues, typological aspirations and governance. In reality, these are three themes of continuity that can be used as a critical lens with which to understand and rethink how we plan new communities. These lenses focus on a specific aspect of the three types of planning identified by Phelps (2012) in response to Wildavsky’s critique (1973): physical and economic planning; land-use and spatial; private and public-sector planning (Clawson and Hall, cited in Phelps, 2012). Also discussed at the outset are the inherent problems with the sudden transfer of planning policy, as a consequence of dramatic change in party-politics. Wildavsky (1973) had warned that because planning objectives are arbitrary and dependent on political rhetoric, they are always changing and we will never learn from experience. This would explain why the ongoing attempt to increase housing supply through building new communities is constantly being re-invented through the use of symbols that are ambiguous (Gallent and Tewdwr-Jones, 2007), are lofty abstractions (Edwards, 2001) or are worn loosely (Hebbert and Sonne, 1996). It also suggests that Willett’s (2011) proposal to rethink how we plan new communities might require a reversal in the question, so it is ‘not about deciding what we want, but in learning to adapt what we already have’ (Willett, 2011:10).

1.1 Learning from other goal-driven policies

The Introduction to this research may have implied that policy initiation regarding new planned communities has simply ‘muddled through’ illustrating political rhetoric to no effect. This would be misleading. The New Towns programme 1946-1976, for example, is a formidable example of how a single planning policy can be interpreted, delivered and managed. In the aftermath of the Second World War, New Towns provided a template for both physical and social reconstruction of England. The planning ideology for New Towns was one of creating *balanced* communities (Reith Committee, 1946c). Through a national policy aimed to abate the housing crisis, there would be a redistribution of the population to a series of satellite towns strategically placed at a 20-mile radius from London. This was prepared as a Greater London Plan of 1944 by Patrick Abercrombie (Figure 1a). The purpose was to redistribute London’s population and industry into new satellite towns. The objective was to create new communities that would be self-sustaining and self-sufficient, both economically and physically, in what was coined *balance* (Clapp, 1971: 53-55).



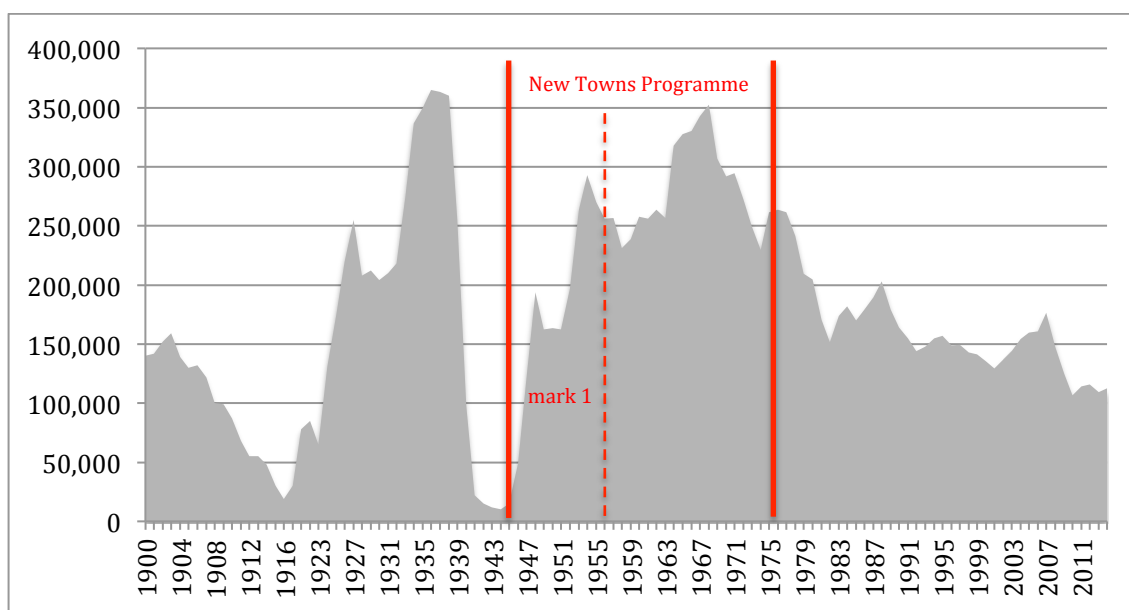
Figure 1-a: *Communities: Proposed extension of existing built-up areas and sites for new satellite*

© Source: Original map presented to the Minister of Town and Country Planning (Abercrombie, 1944)

The New Towns programme provides quantifiable evidence of how post-war housing supply was solved (tempered) through its vast house-building programme (Table 1). It is particularly visible in the first wave of New Towns built between 1946-1955, known as *mark 1* New Towns. Between 1946 and 1955, eight mark 1 New Towns were built around London. They increased the yearly housing completions from a record low of 10,000 in 1944 to 293,000 by 1954 (DCLG, 2014a):

Table 1: Overall house building in England 1900-2014

Source: Graph produced by researcher. Data from 1900-1946 from the Office for National Statistics (Hicks and Allen, 1999); and data from 1946-2014 from Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG, 2014a)



Accordingly, when current news coverage makes specific claims of past policies that were successful at increasing housing provision, one wonders if it is time for a serious review of the subject:

The country is in the grip of a housing shortage... For decades, successive governments have failed to build the homes we need. By 2008, the number of new homes being [*sic*] started had fallen to its lowest peacetime level since 1924 – and house building has barely recovered since then. (Shelter, 2014: 24 June 2014).

We're now building fewer houses than at any point since the Second World War. There are now 4.5 million people in housing need. (National Housing Federation, 2012: 23 May 2014).

These quotations suggest that house building was at its lowest level in 1924 but highest after the Second World War. In a twenty-year span, England increased its housing supply at a pace that has apparently been unsurpassed. It also reveals a glaring omission

in terms of the lack of reflection and assessment of past urban policy programmes, such as the very relevant New Towns Programme, in the formulation of new ones. Providing a new appraisal of the New Towns programme is the other significant contribution of this thesis.

This was specifically advised to the New Labour government in 2001 before they delivered the Sustainable Communities Plan (ODPM, 2003a). A committee appointed by the House of Commons for the former Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions (DTLR) to evaluate the New Towns and the final point of their evaluation reads:

It is very surprising that the New Town ‘experiment’ has never been evaluated. This evaluation should include more detailed reinvestment needs of the New Towns. An evaluation is urgently required which identifies both good practice and mistakes before any new major communities are considered. (DTLR, 2002a: paragraph 84, 603-1).

Interestingly the committee uses the term ‘evaluate’ as opposed to ‘monitoring’. It endorses Reade’s (1987) critique that because the planning profession is inevitably tied to political ideology (Cherry, 1996; Thornley, 1991; Reade, 1987), the monitoring of past planning policies is both impossible and unpopular (Reade, 1987).

A brief examination of the Sustainable Communities Plan (ODPM, 2003a) reveals clear similarities in its interpretation of *sustainable* with the New Towns interpretation of *balance*. Both of these terms allude to the political ideology underpinning their development, but remain conveniently abstract and ambiguous. The use of sustainable development has clear origins. It came to the forefront of political debate in the late eighties through the publication of the Brundtland Report, Our Common Future (1987). The report gave urgency to the topic, but left the definition wide enough for adoption by different sectors and for different reasons (Healey, 2006; Harvey, 2007; Raco, 2007; Imrie and Raco, 2007; Gallent and Tewdwr-Jones, 2007). It made an explicit link between the environment, the economy and the social aspects of sustainability, and established some type of benchmark for discussions on sustainable development at an international level (‘some’ is used carefully in this sentence). The overriding political concept of the report was sustainable development, and offered the now commonly cited definition:

Paths of progress, which meet the needs and aspirations of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. (Brundtland, 1987: item 49).

This is broad in its remit, one that the committee recognised. It stressed that sustainable development was neither a new concept for economic growth nor a new name for environmental management, but embraced a social and economic view. An elementary clarification, but an important one because it demonstrates the vagueness of the concept; testament as to why it became so popular in its adaptation and frequent application. While sustainable development carries the connotations of balance and fairness, it can (conveniently) mean many different things depending on how and by whom it is used (Healey, 2006; Raco, 2007).

The New Labour government of 1997-2010 made the concept of sustainable development its overriding policy objective (Raco, 2007; Imrie and Raco, 2007), and planning a key part of delivering the objective (Hall and Tewdwr-Jones, 2011). Government policy linked sustainable development across various ministerial departments, but specifically and emphatically tied it to an agenda of urban renaissance through a new spatial policy framework (Hall and Tewdwr-Jones, 2011; Raco, 2003, 2007; Imrie and Raco, 2007; Gullino *et al.*, 2007). What is unique is its focus on cities because it believed the Brundtland Report had not impacted England's inner city policies between 1987 and 1997. Before New Labour came to power, sustainable development was confined to an environmental concern with climate change. The focus of creating an urban renaissance by regenerating cities as part of a wider policy on sustainable development was, at the time of introduction, an innovative vision. However, Lees (cited in Imrie and Raco, 2007: 61-88) critiques the idea that this was a new concept and according to her, 'renaissance' was just another key word for an urban policy in planning applied since the post-war years in England:

In the post-war years it was 'reconstruction': in the 1960s and 1970s 'renewal' and 'redevelopment'; in the 1980s 'regeneration'; and in the 1990s 'renaissance'. (Lees 2003, cited in Imrie and Raco, 2007: 66).

According to Lees (2003), the uniqueness of the urban renaissance agenda is that it hinged most of its policies on the justification of delivering sustainable development. This led to a variety of academic discourses around the formal politics of government and decision-making versus the rhetoric of its discourse (Colenutt and Quinn, 2010; Allmendinger, 2006; Manzi, 2010). Similarities between the Sustainable Communities agenda and New Towns policy have been acknowledged in different ways; as a recontextualisation whereby balanced communities and sustainable communities are parts of the same meta-discourse (Raco, 2007); through urban studies (Alexander,

2009); through to the purpose of town planning and its relation to the wider economy (Hall and Tewdwr-Jones, 2011: 154-162). Nevertheless, readings on the significance of the post-war policy for contemporary emergent ideas are few and far between. The New Labour plan for Sustainable Communities (ODPM, 2003a) certainly does not acknowledge or evaluate the New Towns programme, despite it being a specific recommendation by the Committee. Nevertheless, whilst the Sustainable Communities Plan (*ibid.*) provides a specific example of goal-driven policy to build new communities, the developing locally-led garden cities also appear to be using a symbolic concept, one of *localism*, to orientate its planning policies. In light of this revelation, there is an incentive to rethink the New Towns programme and place it within a contemporary discourse of emergent ideas.

1.2 If planning doesn't learn from the past....

A personal interpretation is that New Towns are regarded as a rupture in English planning history. This could be a consequence of the particularly urgent post-war circumstances. It could also be that New Town policy formulation was underpinned by the emergence of the welfare state. Or, using the triangulation of factors established earlier, it could be a consequence of how the planning ideology under a welfare state interpreted structural, typological and political ideology issues in a bid to create the balanced community. In what way, and why, they came to be a rupture, is yet to be identified and is a key aspect of this thesis' contribution to knowledge. Clearly, politicians want to disassociate their policies from New Towns; housing reviews are hesitant to use the term New Town, as in the case with the Shelter and National Housing Federation extract presented previously; and the academic field drawing parallels between New Towns and emerging policies is limited. When Sir Peter Hall died, New Town champion and authoritative historian on the subject, The Economist newspaper wrote their weekly obituary dedicated to his memory (The Economist, 2014). Nevertheless they never mentioned New Towns. The Economist credits his involvement in analysis of post-war policy, without ever actually mentioning the 'dirty word' New Town because it is implicitly linked with Modernism and top-down planning (*ibid.*). Nevertheless, in another tribute to Sir Peter Hall, his enthusiasm for planning during the 1960s, at the height of Modernity is unmistakable:

I think we did good things. We built good places that withstood the test of time. No one talks about them because they're okay and so they're not a

problem. We tend to forget this and denigrate ourselves [...]. (Hall, cited in Phelps and Tewdwr-Jones, 2014: 1583).

One explanation for the absence of the dirty word may be that New Towns represent a moment of policy radicalism in the planning system, but the idea of Modernity provokes discomfort so they are not celebrated. Nevertheless the quantitative impact of New Towns in terms of increasing housing supply is evident.

Building on from Wildavsky's (1973) argument that planning faith/bias does not permit planners to review the past, and Reade's (1987) critique that monitoring is impossible, perhaps it is time to rethink how we build new communities in England. Linking these critiques to Sandercock's (2003) more recent analysis, a critical perspective could be added if we change the field of enquiry. What happens if we try to learn from the past not through planning history, or discursive policy analysis, but by revealing the stories and experiences of the non-experts, the non-planners? The English New Towns are unique in this sense because their original pioneers are still alive. The production of space in New Towns began with its first wave of settlers, coined 'pioneers'. This idea derives from Dolores Hayden (1995):

The production of space begins as soon as indigenous residents locate themselves in a particular landscape and begin the search for subsistence. The place may grow into a town, inhabited by a new wave of settlers. (*ibid.*: 20).

Although Hayden is referring to a natural process of growth and migration, the New Towns nonetheless migrated between 60,000-90,000 new settlers to its mark 1 towns. These pioneers that witnessed the 'place grow into a town' provide an invaluable opportunity for reviewing the past. Re-appraising the New Towns programme by highlighting the importance of the *pioneer* is another key contribution to knowledge made in this research. Hayden's (1995) critique is that urban planners, landscape architects and architects have not yet undertaken creative work in recording the 'history of struggle' with the 'poetics of occupying particular spaces' (13), and in continuation of this idea the New Town pioneers may provide a new lens to our field of enquiry. Although with no particular reference to New Town pioneers, Willet (2011) endorses this alternative claiming community understanding of their environment is unequivocal and their knowledge should be integrated to an adaptive strategy in future planning (Willett, 2011:10). Without oversimplifying we could ask: If planning does not learn from the past, what happens when planning learns from its pioneers? This is the type of clarity we receive:

You see the government doesn't want to use the [New Town] term because it is a toxic term in their minds so instead they use other phrases, like eco towns, but in effect they are still New Towns. People have a negative image of New Towns so they avoid the terms. (120117-05H).

This explanation was offered by David Devine, a pioneer of Harlow New Town. Devine is the sole archivist at the Harlow Museum and has lived in Harlow all of his life. He moved with his parents in 1947 who relocated to Harlow after the Second World War to start a family-run business. During the interview, Devine claimed he could clearly 'see the bark from the trees' (120117-05H). The incoming New Labour government could promote Eco Towns or Sustainable Communities but in his eyes it was simply the same policy using different terminology. His voice contributes a new testimony to the New Towns legacy that has not been officially recorded. Instead, New Towns are represented as unbalanced and unsustainable examples of new planned communities. This is identified as local residents know best, outsiders know better:

Despite the central role accorded to communities in urban policy discourse, the manner in which evaluation studies are commissioned and carried out tends to accord low priority to the role of local citizens in the evaluation process. (Wilks-Heegs, cited in Imrie and Raco, 2007: 214).

It presents an argument about how localities are understood by experts (policy evaluators, researchers, public officials) (Healey, 1998) and where the value of local knowledge is overlooked in policy formulation (Merridew, cited in Imrie and Raco, 2007:216). David Kynaston (2007) posed a similar question with reference to the post-war reconstruction policy in England in his book, 'Austerity Britain 1945-1950', and it is just as urgent to ask the same today:

How by 1945, at the apparent birth of a new world, did the 'activators'-politicians, planners, public intellectuals opinion formers – really see the future? And how did their vision of what lay ahead compare with that of 'ordinary people'? The overlaps and mismatches between these two sets of expectations would be fundamental to the playing out of the next three or more decades. (Kynaston, 2007: 22).

Implicit in this question is the notion that there is a mismatch between 'activators' and 'ordinary people'. Discerning this nuance has become both a personal preoccupation and a professional interest. It appears that in the pursuit of building new communities, we have employed the planning system to manage problems of housing supply, without a concerted effort to learn from the past by using and integrating localised experiences of past policies. It led me to pose the following research questions:

1.3 Research questions

(1) Given the ongoing crisis in housing provision, how can a renewed study of the New Towns Programme help rethink planning's challenges in building new communities today? This leads to two subsidiary questions:

- What is the contemporary legacy of the English New Town beyond the already established criticisms?
- In what ways does a study of a programme that was active between 1946 and 1976 explain a continuum and/or departure in the government's efforts to build new communities throughout the twentieth century?

(2) To what extent can we reconceptualise the New Towns discourse by incorporating local perspectives into the legacy of this 1946 policy? And as a result,

- If we accept that New Towns have been mainly documented through an expert-driven discourse (academic and practice) that has created a specific and limited understanding, what happens when we nuance its discourse using everyday voices to draw on its historical and contemporary experience?

1.4 Thesis structure and style

This thesis interprets planning as trapped between political ideology and the chronic problems of housing supply. Using two themes of continuity (political ideology and housing supply), I employ a triangulation of factors (structural issues, typological aspirations and political ideology) as critical lenses with which to rethink the English New Towns of 1946-1976. Its conceptual framework rests on the premise that housing has had chronic problems of supply, which to a large extent has determined the planning response. In its wider context this thesis also develops an analysis of the relationship between planning and the political ideology of building new communities. It interprets policy decisions using a combination of historical analysis (thick description) and community-focused empirical investigations (narrative enquiry). It provides an alternative conceptualisation and a counter-narrative to the established arguments that dominate the New Towns programme. In doing so, it shows how understanding the origins and development of planning through the lens of the New Town policy provides important insights into the specific initiative of building new planned communities.

Chapter 2 begins with a history of building new communities in England. It looks at the deeply rooted relationship that housing supply and political ideology have sustained throughout the twentieth century to offer a reinterpretation of how this has created a contested narrative. The key themes that emerge from this review is that firstly, early philanthropist experiments created a precursor to the planning of *self-containment* but their interests required housing to be controlled, not redistributed. Secondly, a theme that has been called *newness versus sameness* explores aspirational and typological issues of large housing developments. In this Chapter, it is represented through a period of suburbanisation where municipal housing programmes were promoted outside of the inner cities, leading to particular social aspirations (plus stereotypes) around state-built housing versus housing built by private developers. The third theme, discussed in the last section, is about *rescaling governance*: the relationship between planning policies and party politics as disputed and manifested and the scale of governance – should it be local, regional or national, and should it be enforced through bureaucratic organisations or through more accountable elected institutions?

Chapter 3 focuses on the New Towns programme to illustrate how a single (mega) planning policy is developed, delivered and managed. It offers a discursive analysis of how the New Towns programme was pitched not just as a housing issue within planning but a larger planning experiment of how to rebuild socio-economically in a post-war context. A thick description (Geertz, 1973; Denzin 1989; Ponterotto, 2006) is built using a combination of archival and secondary sources: historical propaganda and independent films; transcripts of political debates from the House of Commons; and ‘The New Towns Record 1946-2002’ by Burton and Hartly’s (2003). These sources are used as literary material because they illustrate how specific themes were conveyed to the public; themes such as social reconstruction through planning; architects and planners as experienced professionals; the importance of prefabricated and short-term housing supply; and how the state is equipped through a planned economy to shift its wartime production to a reconstruction programme. This review is structured around emerging themes from Chapter 2 but with a specific New Towns perspective. Firstly, it shows how self-containment becomes a paradigm for building the balanced community. Secondly, it considers the extent to which the master-planning and urban design of New Towns was influenced by the principles of Modernism to offset suburbanisation. Thirdly, the New Towns Development Corporation (NTDC) model is examined to investigate the struggle for power around different scales of governance.

Chapter 4 sets out research strategies for this thesis, consisting of a qualitative mixed-methods approach using multiple case studies. It explains the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) grant that funded this project and placed the researcher in a unique role because the grant is a Collaborate Doctorate Award (CDA) in partnership with The Architecture Foundation (AF) (AHRC, 2013). The Participatory Action Research (PAR) initially pursued as part of the collaboration between an academic and non-academic partner allowed the researcher to establish a strategy for accessing New Town pioneers and recording their local knowledge. This is a key contribution to knowledge in the field of urban policy formulation because there is currently no recorded evidence of the expertise that New Town residents can offer, and their generation is soon coming to an end. This was not without challenges and some of the issues faced are explored in this chapter.

A primary objective throughout this thesis is to interrogate the existing representation of the New Towns programme. To achieve this I asked two key questions: what are the specific stereotypes that have been created (and perpetuated) by experts regarding New Towns that have led to their popular characterisation as unbalanced communities, and what is the local perspective of these stereotypes? In Chapter 5, I address the first question by limiting the enquiry to experts and what I refer to as ‘helicopter specialists’ of the New Towns programme who do not live or work in a New Town but contribute to its legacy through academic writing, policy reports and professional advice in their role as planners and architects. The data collected is analysed as a selection of five thematic stereotypes.

To address the second line of enquiry about local perspectives, two separate case studies based in a mark 1 New Town follow. Chapters 6 and 7 are situated in Harlow and Hemel Hempstead, and the empirical research is limited largely to the collection of local voices. This includes original pioneers, existing local residents, local authority civil servants and original New Town designation material. By sustaining a discourse exclusively based on a bottom-up enquiry, these chapters provide an alternative framework for rethinking New Towns and generating important historical as well as contemporary reflections. They refer to another sub-question about the degree to which the New Towns programme is represented through a biased subjectivity. It exposes a host of new revelations regarding the issues we have forgotten that should be readdressed within the current discourse regarding building new communities.

In the conclusion of Chapter 8, I re-open the meta-discourse on building new communities in England by outlining a series of issues that have been forgotten but are worthy of being reassessed in a contemporary debate. The questions that emerged in this Introduction on goal-driven planning objectives using ambiguous symbols are discussed in parallel with a methodological discussion of how we can learn from the past. The contribution that this thesis makes to knowledge is discussed within the conclusion.

Chapter 2 Housing and Politics: A Contested Narrative between Supply and Ideology

When the British Coalition government took office in 2010, it declared its intentions to ‘plan a new generation of Garden Cities to help tackle the current housing crisis’ (Donnelly, 2012: 16 April 2012) while simultaneously ending its commitment to continue the Sustainable Communities Plan (ODPM, 2003a) pursued by the New Labour government between 1997 and 2010. It marked a dramatic reversal in policy and was illustrative of the new government’s desire for change. In reality, it promises to achieve its goals by changing the rhetoric of *how* to build new communities to that of *why*. This requires some clarification: the idea that planning new communities will resolve the chronic problem of housing supply is not new. Historically, it goes back to the emergence of town planning as a statutory activity through the Housing, Town Planning and Etc., Act 1909 when England faced an urgent crisis in housing provision at the beginning of the twentieth century. It appears we have come full circle in terms of using planning provisions to resolve the problems of housing supply. In fact, throughout the twentieth century, a deeply rooted and apparently symbiotic relationship between the housing supply and political ideology has developed. However, this Chapter questions whether this has been a mutually beneficial relationship because previous governments have made housing policy a principal objective through a series of pragmatic experiments (Bowley, 1947) and yet the problem of housing supply persists in 2014.

Conceptualising the relationship between housing supply and political ideology requires an understanding of two critical concepts. Firstly, what does planning purport to achieve? One characteristic of the UK planning system is that it is discretionary and not bound to any constitutional rights or responsibilities. Planning historian Cullingworth (2006: 1) introduces his seminal writing on Town and Country Planning in the UK by claiming that this allows for flexibility in interpretation and makes town planning a discretionary activity that can reflect the ‘political climate’ and the ‘character of the party in power’. In other words, a discretionary planning process offers flexibility not so much in the name of public interest, but for the benefit of party politics. This view is echoed by planning academic Tewdwr-Jones (2012: 231-232): ‘the architecture of the planning policy framework is so flexible that no one policy commitment is enduring, sacrosanct or even binding on the very planning agencies that are charged

politically with its design and operation'. According to Phelps (2012:15) the English planning system is usually compared with mainland Europe and the USA precisely through this idiosyncrasy. The 'degree of flexibility and the unusual degree of official and political discretion in planning decision-making' (*ibid.*:15) sets the planning system apart because it legitimises political objectives not as a statutory requirement, but in the way which decisions are made and interpreted.

But if town planning in England is an extension of politics and government objectives, the debate on what it purports to achieve (and who it serves in the process) is compromised, leading to the first identifiable contestation. At the same time, to interpret planning as an apolitical activity is misleading because an examination of the history and development of the planning system reveals that it is highly political. Cherry (1996) argues that since its birth, town planning has been a state activity providing an interventionist mechanism for urban regulation, and Reade (1987) furthers this critique by describing the activity as a legitimisation of the property development industry whose land-use operations are provided with an ideology by the planning profession (182). Ambrose's (1986) principal critique is that town planning grew out of a need for intervention to regulate land development, but it has historically been subject to intense political lobbying in what he describes, by the 1980s, as 'increasingly cynical and individualistic political climate' (vi). More recently, International Planning Studies editorial (Anonymous, 2008) took the argument further, not by arguing that planning is a political activity, but debating whether it was an activity of the political or 'progressive' left or beneficial to the interests of the 'right wing' (87). However, the promotion of the profession as an activity separate from politics is argued to be an attitude that suits the professionally orientated accounts of 'the introduction of statutory planning into England' (Reade, 1987: 41). For Reade (*ibid.*), this is either because they wanted to make their demands more politically acceptable or out of a genuine mistaken intellectual belief. In other words, to examine town planning history and discern the rhetoric of concurrent political ideology, for example in the pursuit of building new communities, helps to understand planning as an extension of government activity. As a consequence, this Chapter will continuously link planning policy ideas to the political party in power.

Although planning is highly politicised, there is also a practical core to the activity. In a special edition on planning and the state, the International Planning Studies Journal (2008) carefully reminds the reader that planning is, above all, an institution that

produces the license for land use (Anonymous, 2008: 96). It suggests planning challenges are founded within a wide political, cultural, economic and geographic context, which justifies its statutory activity. This leads to a second contestation that affects the relationship of planning and its relation to housing supply. In what way did the practical challenges of being in a housing crisis at the turn of the Industrial Revolution dictate the way in which town planning established its normative parameters? In other words, is planning proactive or simply reacting to concurrent issues? Or is planning, perhaps, trapped between political ideology and problems of housing supply?

The overall objective of this Chapter is to inform the primary research question that wants to ‘rethink planning’s challenges in building new communities today’ by understanding ‘the government’s efforts to build new communities throughout the twentieth century’. Three identifiable themes are crucial for this exploration because they represent both a practical and social purpose for different housing experiments, namely: the landed interest and its conflict with home-ownership; design and access issues around housing; and the governance or administration models for different experiments. The first section thus begins with the origins of town planning as it emerged under the influence of industrial philanthropists. They not only underpinned early planning ideas of new communities strictly around the notion of self-containment but also encouraged the cultural thinking that with home ownership came wealth redistribution. This proved crucial to the way planning regulations and acts were written. The second section explores how, as a result, the provision of interwar housing was reduced within planning to a suburbanisation discourse, with some crucially original initiatives such as the New Towns considered as little more than an extension of suburbia. The last section explores why the delivery of building new communities is so closely linked to ideological conflicts in governance, specifically to a continuous battle between local and central administration as government tries to understand its purpose and outreach with the housing problem. The conclusion discusses how this chapter has led to a historical realignment: town planning should be understood as an activity that emerged in reaction to problems of housing supply.

2.1 Self-containment: a concept groomed by the landed interest

The early period of urbanisation between 1850-1909 is characterised by uncoordinated private actions and has been used historically to justify the emergence of

town and country planning (Hall, 1973a, 2002; Reade, 1987; Unwin, 1918), a fact that is well documented by professional planners (Hall, 1973a; Cullingworth and Nadin, 2006), architectural historians (Tarn, 1973), social historians (Melling, 1980; Burnett, 1986; Kemeny, 1992) and academics (Ward, 2004; Malpass, 1986). The birth of planning in England is frequently regarded as a consequence of and reaction to industrialisation, due to the phenomenal shift that occurred in just fifty years from a country predominantly based on agricultural production with a rural demographic, to an urban and industrialised nation. Together, Hall (1973a), Cullingworth and Nadin (2006) demonstrate that with the onset of the industrial revolution, living conditions in England worsened as people fled from the countryside to cities in search of work. As a result, urban density increased at an alarming rate leading to rural depopulation and agricultural depression. Early Victorian reformers played a critical role in this period as they tried to deal with what they saw as a housing problem and their interpretation consequently led to specific types of planning interventions such as the Housing, Town Planning and Etc., Act 1909.

This section reflects on how the housing problem was construed by the Victorian reformers, otherwise called the ‘five per cent philanthropists’ who were in reality pseudo-philanthropic private organisations with localised interests (Tarn, 1973; Bowley, 1947; Gauldie, 1974). The section also reopens the established planning history discourse using key texts about housing the working class in early twentieth-century England. Following Reade (1987: 36), it is true that the majority of readings are theoretically centred on ‘concerns of artistic value, philanthropic gestures and or architectural advances’ and ‘misses the opportunity to understand the history of planning from its social and economic basis’, but this is a presumptuous conclusion of a field of work that is both broad in its remit and generous in its social history (Tarn, 1973; Gauldie, 1974; Daunton, 1984, 1990; Bowley, 1947). While Tarn (1973) offers an analysis of how social ideas manifested architecturally, he also moves beyond the aesthetic to contribute in detail about the role that voluntary societies played in housing the working class, while Gauldie (1974) provides an alternative social viewpoint through a detailed account of life for the poor in slum dwellings. According to her, ‘it was a failure not of purpose but of imagination which delayed housing reform’ because ‘Victorian writing reported but did not convey experience’ (*ibid.*:17). Daunton (1984) on the other hand undertakes an authoritative social and economic historical perspective as an established academic in the field of modern history, with particular focus on the effect that municipal housing had on the development of subsequent housing policy. It

is a book he edited about a selection of essays on housing for the working class (Daunton, 1990) that offers a different perspective on housing by comparing the English experience with that of Europe and America. Although Bowley (1947) was an economist who made an important contribution to the interwar housing policy, her appraisal of the background to housing policy offers an economic angle with a refreshing and alternative analysis.

2.1.1 (Negative) legislation: An urban problem of the undeserving poor

In the early twentieth century, before the advent of planning legislations, housing was considered a health issue, not a social problem. For Bowley (1947) this explains why early legislation was concerned with preventing and controlling unsanitary development but not necessarily about making positive change. The sudden urbanisation of this period is still evident today, almost 150 years later, in London's endless rows of densely built workers' houses known as 'two-up two-down' (with two rooms at ground level and two rooms at an upper level) that were densely built in the city due to the lack of cheap and efficient transportation serving the cities from rural England (Hall, 1973a). As the activity of commerce and industry in the city grew, it was followed by haphazard and unregulated growth in housing to provide residence for workers, mainly around the workplace (Burnett, 1986; Ward, 2004; Hall, 2002; Cullingworth and Nadin, 2006). Concentrated land values in the inner city were soaring and social and economic inequality grew as a symptom of urban poverty (Hall, 2002; Reade, 1987). The progressive worsening of living conditions led to a perceived public health issue (Malpass and Murie, 1999; Bowley, 1947; Gauldie, 1974), catalysing intellectual debate and activity. The ensuing discourse tried to establish how to deal with what was considered an urban problem of the 'undeserving poor', a distinction originally made in the Elizabethan Poor Law Act 1563 (Elton, 1953).

The realisation that overcrowding, slum dwellings and escalating urban poverty was a particularly urban problem is important in order to understand the way in which town planning was born. Political debates were not centred around the argument that there was a housing crisis, but instead questioned the appropriate role of state because, essentially slum dwellings were a problem of the undeserving poor (Chamberlain, 1885). Attacks upon the 'landed class' (driven by the Radical-Liberals) dominated political discourses in Victorian social and economic debates, and private landlordism was signalled as a key contributor to housing conditions (Saunders, 1990). This led to the

emergence of the Left, later to be known as the Liberal party, through a particularly significant discourse by Chamberlain (1885) that addressed the ‘housing of the poor in the towns’ and made a persuasive case for the state to interfere:

If the agricultural labourer is not strong enough to look after himself, to take the initiative in the social reforms prompted by a rational estimate of private interest, there is an organised body of politicians in this country who will at least do thus [*sic*] much for him. (Chamberlain, 1885: 13).

Chamberlain’s discourse was unique because it was a departure from the period of *laissez-faire* of 1825 to 1875 (Crouch, 1967) where the market was left to ‘reign supreme over most aspects of economic and social life’ (Ward, 2004: 12).

The state did not really have an effective system of local government throughout the nineteenth century, so as urbanisation became an evident problem ‘new institutions had to be established and new mechanisms developed’ (Malpass and Murie, 1999: 24), to deal with problems as they emerged (Local Government Act 1888). The power and interests of the landed class in England, are a critical precursor to the muddling through that Phelps (2012) argues is key to understand British planning. His view is that landed interests ‘have exerted important effects on the territorial arrangement, administration and politics of local government’ (*ibid.*:12). Various items of legislation were enacted from 1834 but cumulatively were deemed insufficient since the Acts were discretionary and only adoptive in measure. Furthermore, housing was not understood as a welfare need but rather as a problem perpetuating poverty and ill health, and one that had to be solved through restrictive or negative legislation (Table 2). Traditionally the legislation emerged from the Poor Law system that had been in place in England since 1563, whereby it was the duty of landowners to look after the poor, ill and elderly living within their parish (Elton, 1953). As the population grew, and poverty increased, this system became untenable and was revised with a Poor Amendment Act 1834 that reduced the burden on landowners to look after the poor.

Subsequent Acts that related to or affected housing provision are predominately concerned with managing the poor and their ‘slum dwelling’ conditions (Gauldie, 1974; Melling, 1980; Burnett, 1986; Malpass and Murie, 1999; Lund 2011). This either by reducing the number of habitants per dwelling (Nuisances Removal Act 1855); imposing building regulations (London Building Act 1894); allowing cottages within a parish to be demolished to reduce the tax liability on its landowners (Poor Law Amendment Act 1834); or allowing local authorities to force owners to demolish slum

dwelling with no obligation to rehouse tenants (Torrens Act 1865). Importantly, with the rising price of inner-city land, municipal housing schemes were ineffective (Cross Act 1875) and private landlordism continued to be a main source of housing provision. This led to a concerted problem of a private sector with invested interests in land, fuelling both speculation and landlordism.

Table 2: Key Legislation in England leading up to the Housing, Town Planning and Etc., Act 1909

Source: Adapted by researcher from various sources; references indicated where applicable

Legislation in England		
Act	Date	Key Points
Poor Law Act	1563	Distinguishes three types of poor people in England; critically , the term ‘undeserving poor’ emerges.
Poor Law Amendment Act	1834	Reduces the fiscal responsibility of landlords to look after the poor living within their parish, namely by introducing workhouses; critically , encourages the demolition of cottages within parishes to minimise immigration of settlers and reduce tax liability for landlords (Burnett, 1986: 37).
Public Health Act	1848	Creates a General Board of Health; critically , leads to government acceptance of responsibility for citizens’ health.
Labouring Classes Lodges Houses Act	1851	The local authority is allowed to provide housing; critically , Malpass and Murie (1999: 26) claim it was widely ignored
Nuisances Removal Act	1855	Makes overcrowding illegal; critically , introduces the terms ‘unfit for habitation’ used throughout House of Commons debates on housing legislation and in reference to slum dwellings.
Labouring Classes Dwelling Houses Act	1861	The local authority is allowed to borrow at cheap rates from the Public Works Loan Commissioners; critically , encourages semi-charitable organisations to tackle the housing problem and ‘counter the case for state intervention’ (Malpass and Murie, 1999: 29).
Artizans and Labourers Dwellings Act (known as the Torrens Act)	1868	Enables local authorities to embark on schemes of slum clearance; critically , while ‘it allow[s] local authorities to demolish homes unfit for habitation, it place[s] no obligation to rehouse the displaced tenants’ (Lund, 2011: 178).
Artizans and Labourers Dwellings Improvement Act (known as Cross Act)	1875	Permits local authorities to buy areas of slum dwellings and critically build within 10 years (Malpass and Murie, 1999: 26), or sell the land to ‘philanthropic ‘model dwelling’

Legislation in England		
Act	Date	Key Points
		housing associations' (Lund, 20011: 178).
Public Health Act	1875	Creates regulations for local authorities to adopt minimum water, drainage and sewage standards; <i>critically</i> , reinforces that managing urban areas is a matter of public health.
Local Government Act	1888	Creates County Boroughs with powers equal to and independent of County Councils; <i>critically</i> , creates the first seeds of dispute between urban /rural power and local /central governance.
Housing of the Working Classes Act	1890	Enables local authorities to provide housing for the working classes but <i>critically</i> , does not provide the facilities for local authorities to acquire land; it is only adoptive measure.
London Building Act	1894	Imposes uniformity of street architecture throughout London; <i>critically</i> , focuses on <i>preventing</i> hazards and dangerous structures.
Housing, Town Planning and Etc., Act (known as the 1909 Act)	1909	Provides increased facilities for local authorities to acquire land for housing purposes; <i>critically</i> , introduces three key shifts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Government has a role in town planning (ii) The Garden City is an ideological template, formalising the concept of self-containment (iii) Popular desire for homeownership is fuelled

In order to counter private landlordism, the political Left understood the need for state-sponsored housing (Saunders, 1990). However, this interest in state action continued to rely on housing experiments that were being developed by philanthropists and private landowners in order to formulate the first legislation on town planning. As Malpass and Murie (1999) point out, philanthropists had made attempts to tackle the housing problem precisely as a case against state intervention. This leaves an uncomfortable implication that the model on which the first housing legislation relied would have a very different outcome to its ideological expectation.

The Housing, Town Planning and Etc., Act 1909 was the first legislation addressing planning in England that provided local authorities with the power to control new housing schemes developed by private landowners. It is a well-documented aspect

of planning history, and its impact is largely contested (McDougall, 1979; Cherry, 1996; Cullingworth, 2004; Punter 2011; Booth and Huxley, 2012; Ward, 2004; Reade, 1987), an overview of which is subsequently provided. Instead of representing the Act as a turning point in history, it is frequently used to illustrate what was wrong with its philosophical underpinning and how town planning had an ill-fated beginning. McDougall (1979) for instance argues that the 1909 Act mainly affected the suburban layout of privately-owned developments and further enhanced the market-supportive role of town planning. A different reading of the Act and its consequences is that by encouraging a laissez-faire attitude through legislation, the state was condoning, albeit unknowingly, housing as an owner-occupied or privately rented asset. However, because the Act's key concerns over land taxation, land valuation and municipal control were watered down, any impact it could have had on both the profession and the housing policy development were minimal. Reade (1987) and McDougall (1979) claim this has been largely ignored by researchers and academics who offer a 'professionally orientated' account of statutory town planning with little interest in the social and economic context in which they were created. If this legislative milestone affected, in any way, early aspirations of owner-occupied homes, it has been relegated through planning and historical literature to the 1960s, when home ownership became a prevailing political discourse. As such, would it be fair to view the Act as a political manifestation of the 'landed interest' promoting home ownership? This is considered by Booth and Huxley (2012) to be both radical and misleading. They argue that the purpose of the Act was primarily to prevent suburban developments from becoming the dirty, unhealthy, cramped and unplanned mirrors of the inner city slums. Contrary to Cherry's (1996) professionally orientated reading of the Act, Booth and Huxley (2012) point out that when read within a contemporaneous debate, it is not about town planning at all, but primarily about housing. When looking at the structure, wording and parliamentary debates, the legislation is essentially about housing and its control; with town planning being regarded as a way of widening the debate on how to improve housing by extending the regulatory control around its surroundings. An example of this is evident from a parliamentary debate held in 1909 that argued that the Act would inadvertently, by creating houses that were 'fit for human habitation' (Burns, 1909: vol.3 cc.735) by the local authority, lead to a larger revolution of town planning:

What we want is to maintain that house in a condition fit for human habitation so long as human beings reside therein. Small though that point is, if vigorously enforced, which we believe under the machinery of this Bill

it will be... [will] create a revolution in the minor conditions of the house, especially in our large towns and cities (*ibid.*).

Further on in the parliamentary debates, an argument is upheld that back-to-back housing was the prime cause for a low average age at death amongst the working class, a high rate of infant mortality, and the main cause of infectious diseases, lung complaints and childhood death from diarrhoea (Burns, 1909: vol.3 cc.741).¹ These examples provide insights into the language and tone of the parliamentary debates that demonstrate that the 1909 Act was primarily concerned with housing. The same session reveals that within the House of Commons, previous Housing Acts were seen as a failure primarily because local authorities were not enforced to adopt the legislation:

All the Housing Acts which have been passed have been failures—most colossal and lamentable failures in connection with modern legislation. Housing Act after Housing Act has been passed through the House of Commons since 1885, but because there has been no power in the case of reluctant authorities to compel them to do their duty they have failed. We hope to have stronger powers in this new Bill. (Foster, 1909: vol.3 cc.751).

Although previous acts on housing existed, the 1909 Act was seen as a departure from previous legislation in that it widened the scope of the political debate on state intervention in housing provision by the inclusion of two new themes: land ownership and the appropriate role of government (Booth and Huxley, 2012). This clarification allows us to resolve existing contradictions in the literature. If the 1909 Act is viewed as an attempt to introduce a town planning system that presumed to increase wealth redistribution by (pro-actively) increasing housing supply and diminishing the lucrative prospect of landlordism then critical readings of the Act would be appropriate, because it achieved neither. However, if the 1909 Act is viewed largely as housing policy whose intent and sole purpose was to raise the building standards of housing and increase the outreach of the state in its provision, then the contradiction becomes less contentious. This reading would endorse the view that planning was, from the outset, trapped between political ideology and problems in housing supply.

However, McDougall (1979), Cherry (1996) and Reade (1987) present the 1909 Act as having little effect on housing, at least not the housing for the poor and working

¹ Extract from Parliamentary Debate: “I can only say that in one town where back-to-back houses prevail we have this very remarkable result: Whereas the average age at death of the gentlemen and the professional classes was 44, amongst the tradesmen it was 27, and amongst operative labourers and their families it was 19; that is, 44 as against 19. My medical advisers advise me that the back-to-back houses were responsible in the day of this report for a death-rate of 43 per 1,000 over the town as a whole, and an infant mortality of 570 per 1,000 of children under five years of age”.

class who could not afford to move into the relatively wealthier new suburbs. Since urban poverty had already been linked to bad living conditions and slum dwellings, it was housing for the working class that was desperately needed. Additionally, while the 1909 Act instigated house-building for the working class (by giving powers to the local councils to prepare planning schemes for undeveloped land) and did so as matter of a public health necessity (for example, it made back-to-back housing illegal), it unintentionally gave rise to a period of sustained suburban growth whilst not necessarily improving the inner city 'urban problem'. Inadvertently a very particular type of planning was born, modelled on previous housing gestures led by philanthropists but not on theoretical underpinnings to prevent a deepening housing crisis. Phelps (2012) argues the landed interests in England were extremely successful at controlling how policy developed because of its influence on 'social, political and economic' (*ibid.*:19) operations since the Industrial Revolution. Thus, housing policy remained a negative process about 'preventing or destroying unsanitary housing conditions rather than to create good conditions' (Bowley, 1947:3). Although housing provision expanded in this period, the practice was dominated by private landowners and builders, primarily building for and renting to a middle-class market. In this sense the 1909 Act did little to improve housing conditions. Perhaps the argument about the Act's impact on early aspirations of home ownership cannot be entirely dismissed because it did encourage middle-class housing in the new suburban developments as part of the 'landed interest' tradition. This notion is explored further in the next section but first the theme of self-containment needs to be examined briefly in order to establish its early roots.

2.1.2 Self-containment

As a consequence of early legislation being modelled on the little experience available, philanthropists and private interest groups were critical of the way which housing ideas developed. Entirely out of goodwill, private landowners were prepared to fund and design better quality housing and services for the use of their workers. These new communities became key planning experiments: Saltaire (1850), Bourneville (1879), and Port Sunlight (1888) (Table 3). The model communities are recorded as successful and sympathetic to local needs (Beevers, 1988; Burnett, 1986; Bowley, 1947; Tarn, 1973; Gauldie, 1974; Daunton, 1984, 1990), because they were built as new self-contained communities tied to an industry which made them easier to 'manage' since they were outside of the city, and therefore no longer tangled in the complexity of urban space as a 'process' within the city (Harvey, cited in Le Gates and Stout, 2007: 227-

232). Importantly, they made the first breaks in early class divisions by showing that working-class housing for 'the underserving poor' could be built at lower densities, in an organised and non-speculative manner (Ward, 2004). The communities were both popular and influential:

These represented a new vision of what industrial life might be like in a planned, controlled environment combining the advantages of town and country but set in an essentially rural environment... these were serious and highly influential attempts to offer an alternative to high-density tenement blocks and speculative by-law building in the cities, and to propagate the belief that housing which approached middle-class standards, was and should be, attainable by wage-earners. (Burnett, 1986: 181).

Nevertheless, the examples of Saltaire, Bourneville and Port Sunlight need to be approached with care. Although they demonstrated that working-class housing could be provided in well planned communities, they did little to influence other philanthropists or charitable organisations to build for the working class. Instead, Gauldie (1974) rejects the notion that these experiments have any value in the history of housing for the working class. She claims their significance is in how they 'educated public opinion' in the future of 'town planning development' (194).

Critically, these housing experiments provided practical examples for the developing notion of self-containment. However, they were essentially 'employer housing' tied to the visions and ideals, by-laws and rules of a few commercial industrialists predominantly interested in exerting a moral influence over the tenants. The models were thus generally authoritarian and paternalistic (Ward, 2004; Beevers, 1988; Jones, 1966) and the term 'manage' is increasingly used to describe what the experiments were about. An implication is that these new housing experiments were more concerned with *managing* housing to prevent its workers from living in slum dwelling conditions, and therefore in ill health, and less about *creating* new living conditions independent of industry and employment.

Voluntary societies also played an important role in housing provision by providing rental homes run by charitable organisations. These were small societies, such as The Peabody Donation Trust, the Guinness Trust and the Joseph Rowntree Memorial Fund that provided what Short (1982: 188) refers to as 'good housing at reasonable rents' but they largely provided inner city accommodation.² Early ideas of new

² Later, in 1970, the Conservative government would model Housing Associations (HA) on the example of these societies.

communities were thus inherently tied to housing around industrial production and employment that was removed from the city in a rural location. This influenced a very particular notion of self-containment: that landed interests could be addressed through urban containment (Phelps, 2012:20).

Table 3: Key housing experiments by philanthropists to create new communities influencing early notions of self-containment

Source: Adapted by researcher from Tarn (1973), Gauldie (1974) and Burnett (1986)

Philanthropist Housing Experiments		
Experiment	Date	Key Points
Saltaire by Sir Titus Salt	1850	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Size: 805 dwellings • Density: 40 dwellings per acre • Planning and design characteristics: Worked with a single architecture to build a model town with a variety of styles and decoration to avoid monotony' (Burnett 1986: 180) • Relation to company: Housing built specifically for the workers. Sir Titus Salt relocated his mill company from inner-city Bradford to the rural location of the Aire valley. <p>Critically the town was designed as a dense, inner-city neighbourhood and houses stratified according to class. It fulfilled the notion of self-containment by building a company town whereby the workers lived and worked within the same site, isolated from the larger city of Bradford.</p>
Bournville by George Cadbury	1879	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Size: 1,000 dwellings • Density: 6 dwellings per acre • Planning and design characteristics: Qualities of a suburban estate with no attempt to group housing or co-ordinate layout (as in Port Sunlight), but offering generous houses with private gardens • Relation to company: This was a housing experiment, intended to provide model housing for the working classes <p>Critically it never intended to be a town linked with the family firm, but after its initial success the Cadbury company was moved closer to Bourneville and a small percentage of the population worked in the company while others were able to work elsewhere. This would be a pertinent example of a more flexible model of self-containment.</p>
Port Sunlight by Viscount Leverhulme	1888	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Size: 720 dwellings • Density: 8 dwellings per acre • Planning and design characteristics: Various architects were employed to prevent 'tedious uniformity' (Tarn 1973: 158) • Relation to company: Housing built specifically for the workers.

Philanthropist Housing Experiments		
Experiment	Date	Key Points
		<p>Extra profit from the company was given to a housing fund under the notion of ‘prosperity sharing’ (Gauldie 1974:193)</p> <p>Critically it fulfilled the notion of self-containment by tying a single industry to the model community in an isolated location away from the city.</p>

In the absence of institutional provision, these experiments with the concept of industrial towns filled the void and influenced the direction of housing policy. They demonstrated that planning experiments were both possible and practical, and paved the way for a public acceptance of Ebenezer Howard’s utopian Garden City movement that became a critical precursor to planning. While for some the Garden City is a natural proposal that grew out of these experiments (Barton and Gilchrist, 2000; Burnett, 1986), for others, it is a reaction against the industrial towns (Jones, 1967; Ward 2004). Nevertheless, Ebenezer Howard’s 1898 vision, *To-morrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform* (later revised and reprinted as *Garden Cities of Tomorrow*) is a seminal work that anticipates most academic and historical appraisals of town and country planning because it presents a model that is all-encompassing in its planning characteristics and also has a strong economic and social agenda (Jones, 1967; Hall, 2002). Its economic aspect (represented spatially through self-containment) and the social agenda of land ownership (through community land trusts) are key aspects that helped to forge the path to future planning ideology.

If early notions of self-containment were founded practically on the examples of industrial villages, Howard provided its ideological basis. Through the concept of the Garden City, he proposed an alternative to the urban squalor of London by making a case for a style of living that was neither town nor country, but a ‘perfectly balanced town-and-country magnet’ (Howard, 1965). The Garden City, as it would be later coined, is a planning paradigm that is still referred to in the political, academic and historical discourses of planning. However, it marks a trend of ‘anti-urbanism’ throughout modern town planning as reformers and philanthropists ‘turn their backs on the cities and look for the solution to urban problems in terms of more traditional settlement forms, such as the small town or village’ (Barton and Gilchrist, 2000: 21). Key authors that support this argument claim that there was no scientific background to support Howard’s ‘intuitive beliefs and prejudices’ (Coleman, 1985: 7) in life away from the city as the ideal utopia; or they claim that overcrowding was an entirely

different matter from densely built-up land leading to a misguided promotion of sprawl and low-density (Jacobs, 1992: 206); or they claim that the fantasy of the countryside has produced little more than a ‘semi-suburbia’ (Sharp, cited in Hall, 2002: 83). On the other hand, to portray Ebenezer Howard as anti-urban would be too simplistic or even misleading. Hall (2002) claims Howard’s intention to move away from London was more to do with creating a new model that ‘joined in cooperation’ (312) the country and the town, rather than a complete rejection of inner-city lifestyle. It is precisely the ideas he instigated through the Garden City model that gave rise to the discourse of modern town planning (‘urbanism’) as development with an organised and non-speculative planning idea, supported by an innovative economic and social base. Howard’s proposal was as much about town planning, as it was a response to landlordism and the laissez-faire attitude of government (Hall, 2002). The appropriate role of government in town planning, a key theme of the 1909 Act as discussed previously, was clearly to provide a regulatory mechanism for the distribution of land use, now that Howard had provided an ideological template around which it could be modelled. A significant contribution of the Garden City proposal was that it placed collective interests over private interests, suggesting a departure for the purpose that planning *could* take.

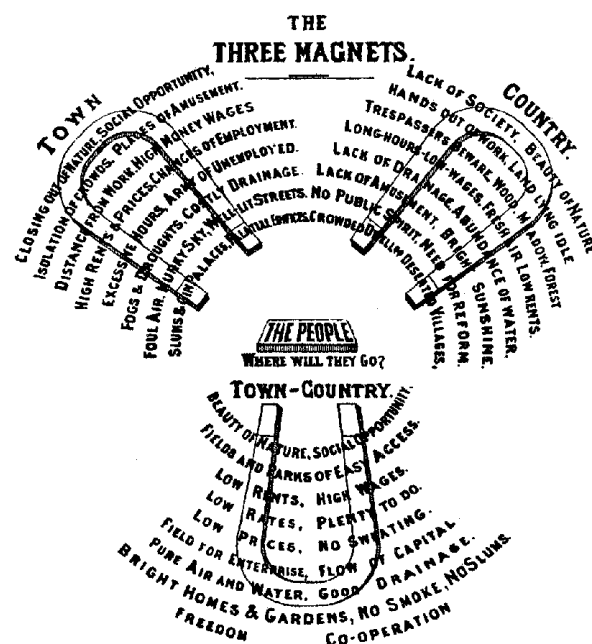


Figure 2-a: Illustration of the town and country alternative by Ebenezer Howard

Source: Howard, 1965

However, according to Howard, the Garden City could only work if it was self-contained as a physical, social and economic entity and part of a larger (regional) conglomeration of Garden Cities that would together form a Social City. As a precursor

to planning, its physical planning aim of creating a green belt (referred to by Howard as an agricultural belt) for a limited population of 32,000 inhabitants became important, with its social characteristics quickly forgotten. The Garden City was a utopian ideal not only because it formalised the concept of self-containment as a planning tool, but because it also provided a distinct and plausible solution to the existing social problems of class division between the landed class and workers. This was carefully laid out as an argument in favour of creating Community Land Trusts (CLT) to enable all revenue from the development of land to remain within the Garden City, being managed by its own citizens. The arguments over the benefits of self-containment seem to be similar to the housing experiments delivered by philanthropists, but delivered differently (Table 3). Whilst the philanthropists applied an anti-urban strategy of building new homes linked to a localised industry (thus mutually benefiting each other but also heavily reliant on the economic wellbeing of the particular industry), the Garden City proposed a new type of urbanism whereby self-containment was made possible because its residents had a financial stake in the revenue of the land. For Howard, the industry would come and go, but the land would provide the most important incentive and support to its residents. However, in planning terms, it was the philanthropist's anti-urban understanding of self-containment that became embedded in the development of town planning ideas. This is likely to have occurred because from the outset the 1909 Act was concerned with controlling the housing situation not with social reform. The Act favours the model of urbanism set by the philanthropists, as opposed to the Garden City. Cherry (1996), Reade (1987), McDougall (1979) and Ward (2004) contest the impact of the 1909 Act as having achieved relatively little for housing and town planning.

2.1.3 Home ownership and redistribution of wealth

Land ownership was another key theme of the 1909 Act that has attracted little attention in early twentieth century discourse. Whilst Howard's Community Land Trust concept was largely ignored as a basis for developing large housing experiments, it is worth acknowledging the extent to which it fuelled the desire for home ownership. His was ultimately a model that promoted workers to build their own homes either as 'building societies, co-operative societies, friendly societies' or with the help of 'trade unions' (Howard, 1965: 106-107). The idea that owner-occupation was a means of production for the working class, and not only a means of consumption, remained undeveloped in consequent planning legislation. Thus none of Howard's proposals around self-build homes, Community Land Trusts or self-governing municipalities were

encouraged or developed. This may be due to the political debates regarding class divisions that were taking place, as discussed earlier in the section, or the fact that the need to link housing to social policy was still undeveloped. Daunton (1990: 13) suggests that 'housing in the period 1850-1914 cannot be viewed simply as consumption by working-class families but property itself might be a source of income or production', which would support the argument that politically it was not in the 'landed class' interests to promote home ownership and thus the redistribution of wealth. His is amongst the few readings that link owner-occupation to the early twentieth century. What differentiates his view may be the way in which, through a series of essays, he contextualises the problem of housing in comparison to other European and American capitals. Other critical sources in the field (Bowley, 1947; Tarn, 1973; Gauldie, 1974; Daunton, 1984, 1990) frequently review from an English-only angle, and fail to see early seeds of home ownership aspirations that were markedly visible in England in comparison to other European countries. In his social history of housing Burnett (1986: 94-5) reveals that there were early efforts to create societies that would enable home ownership because it 'represented a dream, which very few realized, of escape from the landlord, of independence, respectability'. He argues they were never realised because essentially housing was a problem of the poor who could barely even manage their rent: 'The very poor were unprovided for because it would pay no one to do so, and because the day was yet far distant when their accommodation was to be thought of as any kind of public responsibility' (*ibid.*: 96).

In other words, if the aspiration of home ownership can be traced back to the beginning of the twentieth century, early political debates regarding class division would encourage the workers to live near their source of employment, but not facilitate access to land ownership. This is because while the political discourse was masked as a debate on housing, it was really about the landed class (land ownership), how to deal with poverty (slum dwellings) and whose responsibility it was to regulate and manage (role of the state).

The 1909 Act, which is a contested policy in planning literature, represented as a divergence between expectation and outcome (McDougall, 1979; Cherry, 1996; Ashworth, 1954; Ward, 2004), demonstrates how town planning became institutionalised as a profession and as an activity of the state, albeit far removed from the reformist principles that instigated its formulation (Ward, 2004). If its ideological underpinning was modelled on the philanthropists' understanding that workers needed

to live near their employment in good health and sanitary conditions, its practical outcome was legislation addressing the management of public health conditions through housing, and providing certain controls to address class divisions as a political struggle between the landed interests and the newly formed Liberals. When reconceptualised as such, the first housing legislation was not underpinned by a debate around what constitutes a housing crisis, but instead attempted to manage a problem of supply that had gone out of control.

Table 4: Key Reports and Housing Legislation 1919-1939 that led to suburbanisation

Source: Adapted by researcher from Malpass and Murie 1999, p.41

Reports and Legislation in England		
Act/ Report	Date	Key Points
Tudor Walters Committee	1918	Makes specific recommendations for the standard of housing and density of living; critically , supports the cottage aesthetic and made recommendations for municipal estates to be built on greenbelt sites at the edge of London's counties, fuelling suburbanisation.
Housing and Town Planning etc. Act (Addison Act)	1919	Introduces state subsidies for housing; critically , politically housing is seen as a national asset and the state replaces the role of the speculative builder (Act withdrawn in 1921).
Housing (Additional Powers) Act	1919	Provides subsidies for private builders to build working-class housing; critically encourages speculative building and suburbanisation but does not affect the inner-city slum dwellings.
RIBA ban on Architects	1920	Bans Architects from speculative practice; critically , housing is designed and built by unqualified professionals copying pattern books.
Housing Act (Chamberlain Act)	1923	Introduces new subsidies with no mandatory rate contribution; critically , further stimulates private builders (Act withdrawn in 1929).
Housing (Financial Provisions) Act (Wheatley Act)	1924	Introduces higher subsidies with a mandatory rate contribution; critically , housing is made available as a social service and an item of government expenditure (Act withdrawn in 1933).
Housing Act (Greenwood Act)	1930	Introduces a subsidy calculated according to the number of people rehoused through slum clearance; critically , gives local authorities a fiscal incentive for rehousing but forced them to set 'reasonable' rents through a rebate scheme.
Housing (Financial Provisions) Act	1932	Withdraws subsidies to private builders; critically , encourages local authorities to continue addressing slum dwellings by making 5-year slum clearance plans.

Reports and Legislation in England		
Act/ Report	Date	Key Points
Town and Country Planning Act	1932	Planning powers extends to all types of land, whether built-up or undeveloped; <i>critically</i> , there is a statutory expansion in the title from 'Town Planning' to 'Town <i>and Country</i> Planning'.
Rent and Mortgage Interest Restriction Act	1939	Re-introduces rent control to make housing more affordable; <i>critically</i> , leads to resistance between central government and local authorities, culminating in the in the question: Should the state subsidise tenants or housings? (Malpass and Murie, 1999: 51).

2.2 Newness versus sameness: suburbanisation and corporation suburbs

Clapson (2003) refers to the twentieth century as the suburban century. This can be attributed to the emergence of the 1909 Act that encouraged sprawl, and upon which subsequent Housing Acts were developed. Two parallel yet divergent trends emerged from the outset and they define how suburbanisation is examined herein. One is the sustained period of suburban growth that did not affect (or improve) the inner city urban problem because housing was predominantly provided by speculative builders for private rental or owner-occupation. Its parallel but contrasting trend is municipal-led housing, pursued by local authorities using new legislation that was introduced - such as the Housing and Town Planning Act (Addison Act) 1919, a series of Housing Acts from 1923 onwards, and Rent and Mortgage Restriction Act 1939 - in response to an ongoing housing crisis. The state-led housing experiments developed between 1909 and the 1940s, culminated in the post-war period in the very important New Towns Act of 1946. However, since New Towns were not inner city experiments and instead aimed at redistributing the population on a regional scale, a rather simplistic discourse emerged around their planning ideology being little more than extended suburbanisation to the detriment of this policy. While the latter concern is the basis for discussion in Chapter 3, this section will explore the trends that emerged in the period between 1909-1942 that underpin a very particular perspective in England enduring throughout the 1970s to 1990s: that suburbia produces too much newness in housing typology and sameness in housing tenure, therefore housing developments with these characteristics are inherently suburban.

2.2.1 Municipal housing estates and suburban urbanism

The process which brought about suburbia, known as suburbanisation (Mace, 2013:11), is commonly referred to as ‘suburban urbanism’, ‘suburbs’ or ‘suburbia’ (Clapson, 2003: 4). It has a particular place in representations of planning and urbanism, symbolising not only low-density living, but depicted differently by professionals (Richards, 1973), academics (Riesman, Denny and Glazer, 1960; Clapson, 2003) and historians (Burnett, 1986) as a particular state of mind. Housing provision expanded during the period 1909 to 1934 as a practice dominated by private landowners and builders primarily concerned with a middle-class market. By 1920 the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) had banned speculative architectural practice (Hall, 2002:71), so critically, suburban housing was designed by ‘unqualified assistants or from pattern books or magazines’ (*ibid.*). This may be one of the reasons why examples of classic architecture and town planning readings on suburbanisation are critical to the point of dismissive. Suburbanisation is accused of perpetuating social segregation by catering to a single-class (Mumford, 1942: 215); or for its function within the city that separates process from production (*ibid.*); as a social evil that promotes conformity of character (Riesman, Denny and Glazer, 1960); and for promoting a ‘restless and monotonous’ (Hall, 2002:78) aesthetic. The cumulative effect of these readings is that sameness becomes a key critique of suburbia; both as a social outcome (catering to a single-class market) and an aesthetic (of monotonous housing developments).

Instead of depicting suburbanisation as a singular phenomenon that can be generalised, Mace (2013) claims it has gained renewed academic interest in political, cultural, anthropological and economic fields (11). Surprisingly, while Mumford (1942, 1954, 1961) and Riesman’s (1961) critique of suburbia remains abstracted as an outside opinion, it is more of an intellectual dislike (Saunders, 1990: 54) than opinion founded on the experience of the suburbanites. According to Mace (2013) this trend is still apparent:

The suburbs appear particularly prone to being viewed and, implicitly or explicitly, judged from an external perspective (12).

Clapson (2003) offers a departure from this external perspective. He revisits suburbanisation through an extensive study between England and the United States titled *Suburban Century*. According to him, the characteristics of suburban urbanism can be identified as experiential, typological and class-based (Clapson, 2003: 51-78). The experiential characteristic of suburbia in England is what he refers to as ‘nuanced

anti-urbanism'. While it has anti-urban tendencies because people no longer want to live near their source of employment, or in the inner city, it is nuanced because they want fast and easy access to the inner city for both work and leisure. This is sustained in other readings of suburbanisation. Burnett (1986: 106), for example, describes how suburbanisation was a welcome respite from the inner city for the English middle-class:

Suburban life conjured up images, romantic, even idyllic, of a life remote from the physical ugliness and the moral snares of the city, a life of civilised simplicity and carefully contrived natural beauty which would combine the advantages of both urban and rural existence yet be distinctively different from both.

Through this romanticism, Burnett (1986) reveals the intensity with which English people craved a rural existence, one that would become an ideological planning aim in subsequent housing experiments. Whilst appreciating the functionality and commercial value of the city, living in the hinterland was both a class aspiration and a way of moving towards a higher morality by leaving the 'snares of the city' behind. But importantly suburbia was not completely removed from the city and was considered a 'practical solution to the problem of living out of the city without losing control of it' (Burnett 1986: 106). The aspiration is not dissimilar from MP John Burns Parliamentary speech rallying support of 1909 Act:

The object of the bill is to provide a domestic condition for the people in which their physical health, their morals, their character and their whole social condition can be improved... home healthy, the house beautiful, the town pleasant, the city beautiful and the suburb salubrious. (Burns, 1908: vol.188 cc.949).

An important departure in the portrayal of a 'nuanced' anti-urbanist claiming that expansion was as much opportunistic as practical is presented by Clapson (2003) and Ward (2004). While key town planning historians focus on physical expansion (the suburban sprawl) as a consequence of transport infrastructure (Hall, 1973; Ratcliffe, 1981; Cullingworth, 2006), Clapson (2003) and Ward (2004) emphasise its sweating opportunities. In contemporary terminology, sweating is recognised as land-banking and land speculation. Burnett (1986) too, identifies that '...for the men it [the attraction of suburban life] provided new opportunities of land speculation, for supplying building materials, fuel and food for new residents' (106). The commercial opportunities offered by land speculation, coupled with the availability of mortgages for the increasing white-collar middle classes (Burnett, 1986:252-253; Scott, 2008), resulted in an expansive suburban sprawl around London, dominated by the English middle-class.

In parallel to the suburban expansion facilitated by the 1909 Act, the state took bold steps towards identifying and establishing its role in housing provision (Bowley, 1947; Melling, 1980; Reade, 1987; Saunders, 1990; Kemeny, 1992; Cherry, 1996; Malpass and Murie, 1999; Malpass, 2000). Provisions for working-class housing continued as the state experimented with Housing Acts aimed at either slum clearance or de-crowding and between 1900 and 1914 provided 11,000 new rooms in inner-city London (Hall, 2002:51). Simultaneously, large new housing developments were built by the London County Council on greenfield sites at the edge of London's counties, culminating in 17,000 new rooms (*ibid.*). These schemes, referred to as 'housing estates', provide the first examples of comprehensive town planning or what Hall (2002:52) refers to as 'an extraordinarily high level of architecture and civic design'. Clapson (2003) differentiates these schemes whereby residents rented from the local authority as 'corporation suburbs' (4). A decisive failure of the scheme was that high commuting costs to these new estates meant that they eventually catered for a predominately middle-class market, while the working-class remained in inner-city housing.

The need to provide working-class housing to address the crisis was intensified by the outbreak of the First World War. While the War exacerbated the housing situation, it also provided a much needed opportunity for a programme of state-led housing because the process of conscription had provided clear evidence that the vast number of recruits rejected on medical grounds came from depressed urban areas (Pawley, 1971: 22; Ward, 2004).³ Hanley (2007) and Ward (2004) both argue that the vested interest displayed by the government to provide housing under the 1918 'Homes Fit For Heroes' scheme was really a deterrent to communism, and a way to deter national insecurity as 'Britain recognised it was losing its position of world dominance enjoyed throughout the nineteenth century' (Ward, 2004: 27). This wider argument for government action was made statutory through 1919 Addison Act, and is regarded as the defining legislation that gave the state a role in housing provision (Cullingworth, 2006; Pawley, 1971; Hall and Tewdwr-Jones, 2011). By accepting the principle of state subsidies for housing, for the first time in English history, local authorities were entrusted with building accommodation and renting it to working class people, effectively replacing the role of the speculative builder and the much detested private

³ Pawley claims that 2.5million school children were examined and two-thirds were physically defective.

landlordism discussed earlier in this chapter. It marks a decisive shift in political attitude: housing was suddenly seen as a national asset (Hanley, 2007), and by 1924 local authorities' duties were extended to make housing available as a social service and an item of government expenditure.

However, the physical aspects of these municipal housing estates were very much dependent on previous legislation, namely the 1909 Act and the Tudor Walters report of 1918, both of which encouraged, implicitly and explicitly, suburbanisation. The Tudor Walters Report had investigated which building construction methods were preferable to house the working-class and was published only a year before the Addison Act 1919. As a consequence of its physical recommendations, the report is partly responsible for fuelling the self-contained cottage ideal amongst English people in what Pawley (1971) suggests underlines a tension that would continue throughout the twentieth century between the conflict of styles; those who valued 'traditional housing', versus the 'advocates of revolutionary functionalism' (Pawley, 1971: 25). On the other hand, as a consequence of its recommendations for housing densities, local authorities were forced to build on greenbelt sites at the edge of their counties setting the housing estates apart from both the inner city and the suburban expansion by speculative builders. Critically, this demonstrates how the philanthropist's housing experiments were reproduced by local authorities as early as the 1920s and provides an indication of how self-containment evolved conceptually. Through these municipal estates the state recognised that mass housing could mobilise the population, but that it would need to be tied to the workplace (as with the philanthropist housing experiments) in order for de-crowding of the inner city to take place. Particular representations of this urbanism exist throughout readings of living in estates (Hanley, 2007), council housing (Ravetz, 2001), mass housing (Pawley, 1971) or utopian projects (Coleman, 1985).

The municipal housing projects contrasted suburban urbanism because they were predominantly dealing with an inner city crisis for a state-subsidised working-class population and the aesthetic they produced. In parallel, suburban urbanism was an abode for the owner-occupied or renting middle class that were fulfilling a typological aspiration of owning 'a house with a garden', a key characteristic of suburbanisation, with the semi-detached home being the preferred choice (Gauldie, 1974; Saunders, 1990; Clapson, 2003). Speculative builders understood this. Despite the RIBA ban on architects, private house-builders were able to provide the diversity and availability of choice that municipal housing couldn't, understating the newness of housing. Instead,

speculative builders provided housing with 'traditional styles' (Clapson, 2003:67) using tiny architectural variations that gave a mock-tudor effect or romanesque feeling (Jackson, cited in Hall, 2020:79). Gauldie (1974) emphasises that even the builders were baffled by the Englishman's preference for small individual houses versus the larger housing in municipal buildings (180). She attributes the preference for an emotional need of being an individual and 'king of one's castle' (Gauldie, 1974:180), while Saunders (1990:29-32) and Scott (2008) argue it is a legitimisation of the desire of the working-class population to be home-owners. The sense of individuality that a suburban house (albeit small) created simply could not be matched by the corporation suburbs which were generally more austere:

The less ornamented appearance of council houses, however, and the smaller range of housing styles, threw into sharp relief that fact that, because of lack of purchasing power, council tenants had less housing choice when compared with English owner-occupiers. (Clapson, 2003: 67).

This observation of early interwar housing highlights a significant social aspiration: suburban housing should be diverse and preferably traditional. Moreover, the extract suggests municipal housing became tainted during the suburbanisation period and suffered from too much sameness and newness when compared with the housing provided by private builders for 'owner-occupiers' (2003: 67). The observation provides the basis for a concerted critique of suburbia in both academic reviews and popular culture. Riesman, Denny and Glazer (1961) and Mumford's (1940) assessment that suburbia was no more than 'a terrain of aesthetic and physical abjection' (Archer, 2011: 23) justified the sociological argument that municipal housing estates in interwar years created suburban neurosis (Ward, 1993 cited in Alexander, 2009: 103), which in turn led to the victimisation of the suburban [lonely] man. Clapson (2003) makes a strong argument against this portrayal of the English public and insists there was a deeply rooted suburban aspiration, which was fuelled during the interwar years and made future relocation to the subsequent post-war New Towns not only possible but also desirable (Chapter 3). Suburbanisation, according to Gauldie (1974), Clapson (2003), Cherry (1996) and Hall (2002) had demonstrated that living in a small house with a garden was an attractive alternative from unsanitary slum dwellings of the inner city. Moreover, private landlordism could be avoided by acquiring a mortgage for home ownership or renting subsidised housing from the local authority.

2.2.2 A Remedy for the post-war

As a consequence of the 1919 government intervention, the state claimed to have built 1.1 million homes during this interwar period (see Table 1).⁴ However, overcrowding was still a concern and the planning response had apparently not satisfied the housing crisis. According to Pawley (1971), housing built under the Addison Act was so expensive because of the recommendations set out by the Tudor Walters report, that inner city homelessness and overcrowding continued and further exacerbated the problem of overpopulation in the London area.

On the other hand, Cullingworth and Nadin (2006) suggests the Addison Act was so successful at building houses that in this period of suburbanisation, through migration and natural population increase, London grew by 2 million inhabitants, creating ‘depressed areas’ around other industries (Cullingworth and Nadin, 2006:19). An argument at a different scale is that new regional disparities were created between depressed areas (the North, Wales and Scotland) where unemployment was high versus the more prosperous South and Midlands (Hall and Tewdwr-Jones, 2011). This gave rise to what Cherry (1996: 79) describes as ‘town-planning displaying a relevance to non-urban questions’ hence the 1932 statutory expansion in title from ‘Town Planning’ to ‘Town and Country Planning’.

The distinction in the expansion of title is important. Although the private suburbs grew alongside municipal housing estates, the ensuing regional disparities, suburban expansion and inner city housing problems provided impetus for further political action to widen the scope of town planning to deal with what was effectively an increasing housing crisis. In the period leading up to and during the Second World War, a series of Commissions underpinned the subsequent planning legislation, particularly the Town and Country Planning Act 1947. These acts are known as the *1947 system* or, a term coined in 1974, the era of *positive planning* (Table 5).

⁴ These included a 10-year exemption from local taxes; full capital allowances against national taxation; and exemption from rates on industrial and commercial property.

Table 5: Key Reports and Legislation leading up to the 1947 system, known as the ‘positive planning’ phase

Source: Adapted by researcher from Cullingworth and Nadin, 2006 pp.15-34; Hall and Tewdwr-Jones 2011, pp.56-77

Reports and Legislation in England		
Act/ Report	Date	Key Points
The Royal Commission on the Distribution of the Industrial Population (The Barlow Report)	1940	<p>Directly responsible for the creation of the complex post-war planning machine by catalysing a chain reaction of reports and legislation. Its contribution established that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) The national/regional distribution of industry was linked to the concentration of people within regions (ii) There is a social, economic and strategic disadvantage of concentration in single, large centres <p>Critically, calls for recommendations of remedial measures underpinning the positive planning era as one of ‘remedy’.</p>
Green Belt (London and Home Counties) Act	1938	<p>Allows for land around London to be acquired for protection as green belt by home counties. The LCC contributed up to 50% of the cost. Also allows landowners to enter a covenant for their land to be treated as green belt. Subsequent sale of green belt land requires permission from the Secretary of State; critically the 1947 Act did not address this Green Belt Act directly and remained at odds with the positive planning framework.</p>
Report of the Committee on Land Utilisation in Rural Areas (Scott Report)	1942	<p>Makes specific proposals and recommendations related to rural life giving preferential treatment for farming and the countryside by proposing nationalising the green belt statute critically, in the short term, the green belt policy protected new housing developments by providing access to the countryside and ensuring low-density housing development, in the long term it can be argued it:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (iii) Established the idea of planning fringe (iv) Was an important step towards planning the suburban environment (v) Increased the desirability of rural and semi-rural living (vi) Fuelled class politics by increasing the value of greenbelt land (vii) Provided a statutory argument for countryside NIMBY lobbyists
Final on Compensation and Betterment (Uthwatt Report)	1942	<p>Recommends that land be nationalised in order for its development. If planning was to become a tool by which industry is relocated, then land must coincide with a national framework irrespective of existing land</p>

Reports and Legislation in England		
Act/ Report	Date	Key Points
		values critically ; political ideology shifted as the state recognised it could use planning as a mechanism for physical reconstruction and economic betterment of the country, thus catalysing social reform.
Beveridge Report on Social Insurance and Allied Services (Beveridge Report)	1942	Underlines the post-war social policy. It is important in both its timing, as a reconstruction manifesto for the Second World War, and in need, as it set the tone for the state to shift from a reactive to a proactive agenda critically ; establishes there is an urgent need for 'social balance'. Underpins the social aspiration that New Towns were founded upon.
Greater London Plan	1944	Patrick Abercrombie's plan for a regional distribution of the population; critically identifies self-contained satellite towns as a regional spatial strategy See Figure 2-b and Figure 7-b.
Reith Reports on New Towns	1946	Made practical recommendations for implementing Abercrombie's Greater London Plan through the introduction of New Towns and ideologically addressed the Beveridge report by stating the towns were to be 'balanced communities for working and living'; critically establishes the social aspiration of new planned communities.
The Town and Country Planning Act	1947	All development becomes subject to planning permission. Planning powers are transferred from district councils to county councils who are responsible for preparing development plans. Development rights of land and their value become nationalised; critically establishes the spatial and governance strategy of new planned communities.
Distribution of Industry Acts	1947	A Board of Trade is formed to secure a 'proper distribution of industry'. It was given powers to attract factories and new industries to areas of new development; critical to the industrialisation that made self-containment possible.
National Parks and Access to the Countryside Acts	1947	Introduces the designation of national parks and area of outstanding natural beauty (AONB); critical to the management and protection of the countryside.
The New Towns Act	1947	New Towns to be developed by Development Corporations (DC) and financed by the Treasurer. Inspired ideologically by the Beveridge report and practically by the Reith Reports; critical to the redistribution of the population in an effort to build new homes and communities.
White Paper Land	1974	Positive planning surfaces as a term to refer to the 1947 system.

The syntax of key planning legislation is important. The Barlow Commission, for example, had the following terms of reference:

To inquire into the causes which have influenced the present geographical distribution of the industrial population of Great Britain and the probable direction of any change in that distribution in the future; to consider what social, economic, or strategical disadvantages arise from the concentration of industries or of the industrial population in large towns or in particular areas of the country; and to report what remedial measures if any should be taken in the national interest. (Barlow, 1940).

Upon review, it is clear that while an inquiry into the cause of the overpopulation in South East England was needed, the recommendations had to be about remedial measures.⁵ That is, the philosophical underpinning of what is now called positive planning, is founded upon recommendations of remedial action.

The Greater London Plan 1944 and the Reports on New Towns 1946 (Reith Committee, 1946a, 1946b, 1946c) are perhaps the most important recommendations made by the Barlow Report (Barlow, 1940). The Greater London Plan 1944 by Patrick Abercrombie defined how London could reduce its overall population with a redistribution of people and industry to new satellite towns just beyond the London green belt, and subsequently became a physical blueprint for the New Towns (Figure 2-b).⁶ This exemplifies the phase in urban planning where there is a ‘belief in a fixed end-state master-plan’ (Hall, 1973a: 106), and the same can be said for the way in which problems were interpreted, as having fixed-end solutions.

At the heart of the Greater London Plan was a massive policy of decentralisation of both population and industry (Cherry, 1996). Although not widely credited in historical readings of the Greater London Plan, the conceptual framework of Abercrombie is likely to have drawn inspiration from Howard’s Social City, where Howard proposed to decentralise London by envisaging smaller cities linked with high-speed rails in a fluid and dynamic exchange of industries. However, Abercrombie’s plan was primarily concerned with the location of new satellite towns within a distance from London that would enable decentralisation, containment and regional balance (Ward, 2004; Hall, 1973a,b). It differed from Howard’s Social City by introducing the notion of self-containment and tying the towns to a single industry. A critical reading of the Greater London Plan reveals Abercrombie was specifically preventing further

⁵ While post war planning policy has intellectual origins throughout the interwar years (see Cherry 1996: 72-79) it stems directly from The Royal Commission on the Distribution of the Industrial Population, known as the Barlow Commission, which significantly changed the political mentality and direction of the planning agenda in Britain (Cullingworth 2006, Ward 2004).

⁶ Patrick Abercrombie was amongst one of those who chaired A Royal Commission for the Distribution of the Industrial Population and was subsequently appointed by Lord Reith, then Minister for Works under the coalition government.

suburbanisation of London by dividing the regional area of London into four concentric rings: the inner urban ring, the suburban ring, the green belt ring and the outer country ring. In the Greater London Plan that Abercrombie referred to only as 'diagrammatic', the suburbs would be contained as a 'static area' within an 8 mile radius of Charing Cross in London:

This ring, with regard to population and industry, is to be regarded as a static zone, it is neither a reception area for decentralised persons, nor industry; nor does it, in general, require decentralisation, except for the pockets of overcrowding which exist in it, and some of these can be adjusted within the ring itself. Nor should it be allowed to increase in population. (Burton and Hartly 2003: Abercrombie on The Greater London Plan).

New Towns, on the other hand, would be located within a 20 mile radius of London in the outer country ring, preventing sprawl of either zones by placing a green belt in-between. This designation became the basis for land-use planning using a containment strategy in England, supported by the Scott Report on Rural land Use 1942 (Scott, 1942) that made green belts statute, and the Uthwatt Report on Compensation and Betterment 1942 (Uthwatt, 1942) that introduced Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) of land.

The impact of the containment strategy is described in different ways by academics. Gallent, Anderson and Bianconi attribute urban containment to the birth of the fringe (2006). According to them, the fringe foments two planning extremes, green belts and 'un-coordinated, splintered and fragmented planning' (2006:34). Ward (2004) understands the impact of containment as an important step towards planning the suburban environment by encouraging infilling and intensification of land uses (*ibid.*: 274). Cherry (1996) claims containment merely increased the desirability of rural and semi-rural living (*ibid.*: 201). Phelps (2012) interprets the impact of containment as the first pursuit of Modernity in the planning system. According to Phelps (*ibid.*) by distinguishing and dividing 'urbanity' from 'rurality', it was mimicking the process of 'purification' and 'translation' inherent of Modernism (*ibid.*:13). Lastly, Edwards (2000) critiques its impact by asserting it fuelled class politics by increasing the value of greenbelt land (*ibid.*: 599-608); and providing a statutory argument for countryside lobbyists. These lobbyists, sometimes under the smokescreen of being actors in the community (Hall, 1980), do not necessarily understand the necessity of development and adopt an attitude of 'not in my backyard' (NIMBY). Occasionally local opposition

can be so strong, it supports another trend of ‘build absolutely nothing anywhere near anyone/anything (BANANA) .

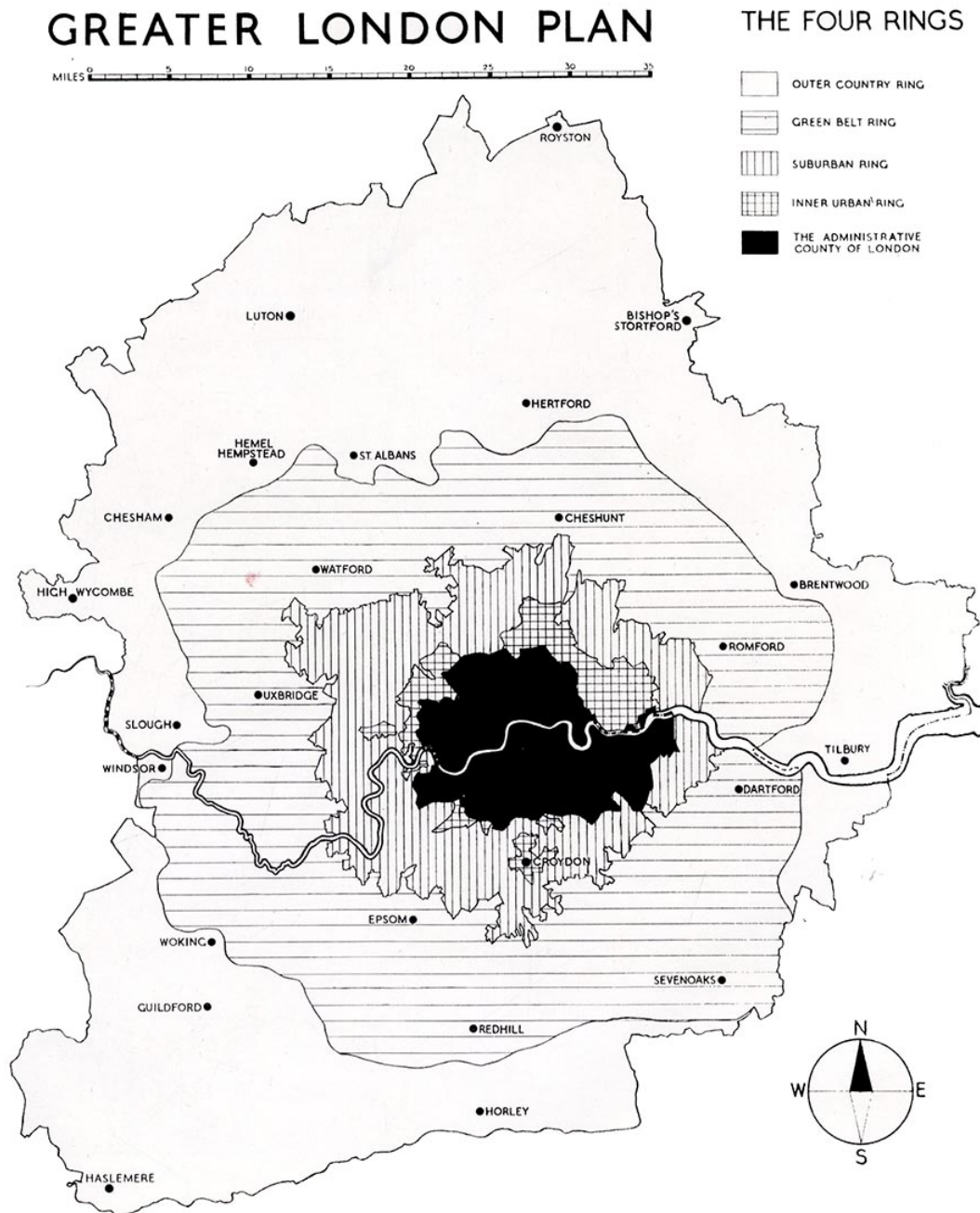


Figure 2-b: Abercrombie's Greater Plan for London, 1944

© Source: *The New Towns Record 1946-2002* (Burton and Hartly, 2003)

The containment policy sketched by Abercrombie was implemented using the model defined by the Reports on New Towns 1944-1946 (Reith Committee, 1946a, 1946b, 1946c), chaired by Lord Reith (Cullingworth, 1979; Aldridge, 1979; Ward, 2004; Hall, 1973a, 1973b). The diagrammatic plan was for the creation of model ‘satellite towns’ ranging between 30,000 and 50,000 in population, with newly relocated industry to

support them as self-contained economic and spatial models. Deeply embedded in this model was the belief that by using population projections regional balance could be achieved through a policy of decentralisation into self-contained communities (Burton and Hartly, 2003). In another sign of disapproval of the impact of inter-war suburbanisation, the New Towns model aimed to avoid a single-class town and instead focused its policy on achieving a balanced community. Ideologically, this could be achieved by using planning as a way of matching a home and job to new residents, securing both livelihood and housing (Schaffer, 1970; Burton and Hartly, 2003; Gibberd, Harvey and White, 1980). Nevertheless social indicators required to achieve balance were never made explicit, and readings of the report suggest it was more of an economic balance (of middle-ranking civil servants living next to the blue-collar working-class) and not an ethnic or demographic one.

Although the New Town model was clearly based on the Garden City, the structure of its land ownership, management and maintenance was a significant departure, both ideologically and financially, from Howard's vision. While the Garden City was to be a community cooperative, New Towns were structured to be managed, developed and owned by central government. The significance of this departure is studied further in Chapter 3, as are a few of the assumptions that arise from these reports, which in turn affect the way New Towns were planned, developed and managed.

Critically, the New Towns Act of 1946 and the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act catalysed a sustained period of state-led planning. This is known in England as the 'post-war planning era' and in terms of planning new communities, the period between 1946-1976 witnessed twenty-two New Towns in England alone, accommodating close to 1 million people (Schaffer, 1970). They illustrate an era where there was great public faith in the state as a vehicle for directing and protecting both employment and housing. Directing, because the New Towns Act was unequivocal in its industrial decentralisation policy where the state supported relocation of industries (through tax incentives and lowered rates) in order to provide jobs in the New Towns. Protecting, because the New Towns were expressly executed as places where new residents were offered both a job and a house and the state saw it as a national responsibility to protect the livelihood of its new residents. Thus, while the cultural aspiration of suburbanisation may have contributed to a massive public acceptance of the New Towns, they were ideologically very different. The New Town policy can be

understood as the moment in which planning caught up to the chronic problems of housing supply through a comprehensive, or positive, system.

As a term, 'positive planning' did not surface until the White Paper on Land of 1974 (Ward, 2004:177). The principle behind positive planning is that by affecting settlement patterns through the distribution of its population, the state can have a positive impact on the socio-economic structure of the country, as opposed to the *laissez-faire* attitude of leaving it to the will of the markets. It is associated with 'public sector-led planning' as an agent of positive change and social reform (Cherry, 1996; Burgess, 1993; Reade, 1987). Yiftachel (1998: 396) claims positive planning is so 'part and parcel of the reform and improvement of society' that it has led theorists and professionals to view planning uncritically. He establishes that planning has a 'dark side' and provides an 'important mechanism of oppression and control' (Yiftachel, 1998: 395) that has historically been overlooked. This reflects Sandercock's (2003) critique established in Chapter 1 that planning's *noir* side is a consequence of its history being written by planners themselves, usually as a description and celebration of its emergence (40). The critique of positive planning should not undermine the irrefutably progressive desire to provide wider social reform initiated by the Barlow Commission. In fact, it marks the philosophical basis of the 1947 Town and Country-Planning Act, referred to as the 1947 system (Hall, 1973) that made possible the creation of New Towns.

Although these were ideologically very different to the suburbanisation that had characterised London, New Towns have nonetheless been reduced to a simplistic discourse and simply regarded as another type of suburbia (Coleman, 1985; Richards, 1973; Hanley, 2007). How this discourse emerged is a planning conundrum because the 1947 system was far removed from a policy of suburbanisation. The 1947 system was a deeply political manifestation that embraced municipal housing projects as an urban paradigm on the scale of New Towns, as opposed to single housing blocks or corporation suburbs. A subtle investigation is offered by Clapson (2003: 72) in *The Suburban Aspiration* whereby he argues it was precisely the combination of a 'nuanced anti-urbanism, the suburban home and garden, and the suburban neighbourhood' that made New Town living socially desirable and politically acceptable.

2.3 Re-scaling governance: a discourse of building new communities

The post-war phase in planning history came about because of the need for physical reconstruction after the war. However, the delivery of such planning was only possible due to the political shift in attitude that this should be the responsibility of national government. The shift has been attributed to the influence of The Beveridge Committee on Social Insurance and Allied Services 1942, known as the Beveridge Report, which produced arguably the most important social policy of the twentieth century (John Jacobs, 1992; Kirby *et al.*, 2000; Wash, Stephens and Moore, 2000). For the first time, the government intervened to exercise control over England's healthcare providers and resulted in the Social Insurance and Allied Services (Beveridge, 1942), which was commissioned in 1941 by the wartime Prime Minister Winston Churchill to investigate social insurance and disclose the anomalies of the existing health insurance policy (John Jacobs, 1992). The result was a report that described the causes of social decline delineated into five categories: Want, Disease, Ignorance, Idleness, and Squalor.⁷ It described the appalling state of housing and recommended a new programme of house building and slum-clearance, in effect creating a social argument for the New Towns Act passed in 1946. Socially, Beveridge's Five Evil Giants captured a national mood and rationalized the public acceptance of the welfare state.⁸ Politically, The Beveridge Report (Beveridge, 1942) enabled the post-war building programme of the New Towns, England's largest ever programme for building new communities under what is commonly referred to as a paternalistic welfare state. From a planning perspective, the 1947 planning system developed a newfound belief that social outcomes could be achieved through planning, and thus came to be regarded as a *raison d'être* for the profession (Wildavsky, 1973; Yiftachel, 1998). But whilst the New Towns era is a remarkable moment in planning history dedicated to building new balanced towns for working and living, it was politically represented as a planning phenomenon that could only exist as a nationalised debate under a robust welfare state. Whilst

⁷ (1) **Want** described poverty and made direct recommendations on how to overcome this through a proposal of National Insurance; (2) **Disease** described ill health and suggested the establishment of a new health service, the NHS, that was established as a consequence; (3) **Ignorance** described poor education and suggested reform which came in 1944 as the Butler Education Act and created free non-fee-paying grammar schools; (4) **Idleness** described a nation with high levels of unemployment and suggested the state aim for full employment, obliged in May 1944, with the publication of a White Paper that committed government to the pursuit of full employment as the highest economic objective; and (5) **Squalor** that described the appalling state of housing and recommends a new programme of house-building and slum-clearance, in effect creating a social argument for the New Towns Act passed in 1946.

⁸ The Beveridge Report is discussed at length in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3 examines the period when New Towns policy was active (1946-1976), it can be said they were vulnerable to party-politics from their inception.

New Towns came under constant scrutiny with the rise of the Conservative Party, and were aggravated as the planning profession shifted through public policy into a negative and prescriptive mechanism that culminated in the 1970s with Margaret Thatcher's (1925-2013) rise to power. Her government questioned the very basis of the ideological argument for building new communities: why should government intervene in the creation and maintenance of communities? According to Thatcher, who was leader of the Conservative party from 1975-1990, 'there is no such thing as society' and it was not the role of the state to provide housing:

What is wrong with the deterioration? I think we have gone through a period when too many children and people have been given to understand "I have a problem, it is the Government's job to cope with it!" or "I have a problem, I will go and get a grant to cope with it!" "I am homeless, the Government must house me!" and so they are casting their problems on society and who is society? There is no such thing! There are individual men and women and there are families and no government can do anything except through people and people look to themselves first. (Thatcher, 1987: 3 February 2012).

This caption contains the infamous quote that has been repeatedly used as a by-line for the period when Margaret Thatcher became Prime Minister. It is reproduced here in its longer version because it epitomises the era of Conservative power in England between 1979 and 1997, which was significantly different from the preceding years of the welfare state, commonly referred to as the era of non-plan with substantial deregulation of planning (Banham *et al.*, 1969; Thornley, 1991).⁹ It marks a phase of property-led regeneration and market deregulation (Thornley, 1986) based on the political ideology of rolling back the state whilst shifting power towards the private developer (Punter, 1986). The Conservative years focused on the promotion of economic growth and competitiveness under which England witnessed a decisive shift to a neo-liberal agenda where the market, rather than the state, acted as the key planning instrument and put an end to the trend of public sector planning established as part of the post-war planning system (Atkinson and Moon, 1994). The agenda was heavily focused on job creation and economic growth while simultaneously shifting power towards the central

⁹ The Conservative party was in power between 1979-1997: led by Margaret Thatcher (1979-1990), followed by John Major (1990-1997).

government (Hall and Tewdwer-Jones, 2011; Lawless, 1981). Although it appears contradictory, the overriding philosophy introduced during Margaret Thatcher's period in office has been described as creating a local state (Cockburn, 1977), or as less state intervention at the local scale (borough, district, regional), but becoming more authoritarian for national unity and stability in central government (Thornley, 1991: 35-60).

Throughout the Conservative years when Margaret Thatcher was Prime Minister (1979-1990), the planning system in England was deeply challenged. Planning throughout this period benefits from ample academic coverage (Allmendinger and Thomas, 1998; Allmendinger, 2011; Thornley, 1991; Hardy, 1991; Reade, 1987; Ambrose, 1986; Banham *et al.*, 1969). According to Hardy, under Thatcher the essence of town planning was debated and even reshaped, along with the work of the Town and Country Planning Association. The anonymous Editorial of International Planning Studies in 2008 reflects on the spirit of this 'incoherent political reawakening':

I can't be the only person still around who recalls many eager conversations in the 1970s and 1980s about what kind of cities we could look forward to 'after the Revolution'...Whatever the outcome it would involve creating new kinds of public space which would provide an arena in which people engaged actively in shaping their destinies. Those debates seem to have faded away. And capitalism has delivered hideous and dysfunctional parodies of the giant apartment-mall-entertainment centre, the Romantic *urbes in rure*, and 'public spaces' that have no real public content. (Anonymous, 2008: 93, italics in original).

This was indeed a reawakening, but the extent to which it is 'incoherent' can be called into question. The process of reshaping, after all, seems to reflect a return to the pre-1947 planning system that had dominated housing distribution and land policies. If the period suggests an awakening, it is one that questions planning's role in the process of building new communities. Thornley (1991) argues that 'by interfering with the natural market process, sterile new places were built under vague notions of community interest' (106). Fittingly, Denham refers to the philanthropic models of planned environment that do not interfere with market interests:

Towns were built before tidy minds conceived 'town planning' supervised by 'town planners'. They were often more beautiful- and worthy of preservation- than towns or parts of towns 'planned' by officials and built by government: who shall compare parts of Bath or Lavenham with Council housing estates, New Towns, and the rest? (Walters *et al.*, 1974: xi, as cited in Thornley 1991: 106).

The implications of this disdain for town planning meant all but an erasure of the positive planning model of the 1947 system that was superseded by what Thornley (1991) refers to as a bargaining policy-orientated model of planning. This suggests a fundamental shift in the role that planning can have on building new communities as mutual negotiation between planners and private developers dominates the process. It encouraged the process of market-driven suburbanisation to emerge but undermined the positive planning approach to building new communities.

However, linking Thornley's (1991) model of planning to the points raised earlier on in the chapter, it could also be interpreted as a continuum in planning history not a 'fundamental shift'. Since planning has historically acted in response to a housing crisis, the discourse of rescaling governance has been a direct reflection of the socio-economic trend dominant in the concurrent political ideology, thus continuously shifting the model of planning. Following this logic, the first distinctive shift from the private efforts of the early years could be identified as the Housing, Town Planning and Etc., Act 1909, which attempted to make town planning a local government function (Ward, 2004: 29). Understanding the 1909 Act in this way allows us to explore why the idea of 'building new communities' is grounded as much in issues of governance, as on the physicality of the communities. By understanding planning's role as one of mutual negotiation, the ideology regarding the building of new communities would henceforth fluctuate depending on who planning is negotiating with.

2.4 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a historical review of the English town planning system and the socio-political ideology that led to the emergence of housing policy formulation. It does so by using the conceptual angle of, 'how could a history of planning in England be reimagined if it is examined through the lens of housing, which has had a chronic problem of supply?' This chapter has established that the birth of town planning as a statutory activity is a response to the housing crisis of the late nineteenth century. It examines how housing was historically a local issue dealt with by isolated groups and social reformers represented as the 'five per cent philanthropists' and in the absence of institutional provision it was their ideas and early experiments in housing typology that became a critical precursor to planning. Problematically, the first planning legislation (Housing, Town Planning and Etc., Act 1909) was not necessarily about positive change to create 'good conditions' or due to the recognition that there

was a housing crisis, but about prevention and control of development because housing was considered a health issue, not a social problem. This is because ideologically, the political discourse was masked as a debate on housing, whilst it was actually concerned with: the landed class (land ownership and landlordism), how to deal with poverty (the ‘undeserving poor’ and their slum dwellings), and whose responsibility it was to regulate and manage (establishing the role of the state). The first housing legislation was not centred on what constitutes a housing crisis, but instead tried to manage a situation that had become out of control. The early philanthropist experiments in housing created a precedent for planning: if new communities were tied into an industry, they would be easier to manage, which led to self-containment becoming a normative parameter for planning new communities. Because of their experiments, Howard’s Garden City model received wide political and public acceptance. While the physical aspects of his plans were (and still are in 2014) widely accepted, his social ideas about owner-occupation or home ownership as a means of wealth redistribution remained largely ignored because party politics and philanthropists’ interests required housing to be controlled but not redistributed. It was the ideology of the early philanthropists that formed the basis of the planning response, which suggests planning, from its inception, was supported by a failure in purpose.

This chapter discussed the period of suburbanisation and how ensuing planning legislation led to a very particular social aspiration around state-built housing versus housing built by private developers. As municipal housing programmes were facilitated, suburbanisation in England was a combination of both privately built housing that came in a diverse range of styles (traditional being the preference), and state-led housing experiments that tended to be monotonous with housing that appeared the same throughout. The differentiation between privately built housing and public-sector construction led to a simplified understanding that housing built with too much newness or sameness must be state-owned or a ‘corporation suburb’.

The New Towns policy was a planning response with a much wider remit than simply increasing housing supply. The programme led to a general belief that new communities could be built via a comprehensive planning policy and as town planning broadened its remit to town and country, it embarked on an era of positive planning. However, incessant efforts in planning were aimed at catching up to ‘remedy’ the chronic housing problems, as noted by the syntax of the terms set for the Barlow Commission (Barlow, 1940).

A different reading in this chapter understands the 1909 Act as legislation that encouraged suburban expansion at low density, prompted primarily by political and land interests focused on how to control surroundings (Booth and Huxley, 2012). It is an important link to how state-led housing experiments developed, because the basis of planning legislation was effectively about housing (1909 Act) but not in terms of dealing with a crisis, and instead in terms of how to control land ownership and who should manage this. The management of housing and regulation of town planning continued throughout the twentieth century as a discourse of central, regional, district or local governance whilst simultaneously being an urban versus rural dispute for power. Whilst housing was provided on a massive scale through the New Towns policy, which demonstrates that it was possible to deliver new communities using planning policy, it was because it was achieved through the welfare state that it became politically unpopular. A profound disdain for town planning has since meant all but an erasure of the positive planning model of the 1947 system. This meant that whilst there was still a shortage of housing supply, it could not be resolved with a planning model that resembled the positive planning approach of the 1947 system, because of its disputed tensions in identifying the role of the state and rescaling governance. The challenge of building new communities should be realigned to an understanding that the planning system is trapped. On the one hand it has historically responded to concurrent issues (of problems in housing supply) as opposed to pre-empting policy in an act of mitigation. On the other hand, this response is connected to party politics that have continuously disputed whether governance should be the responsibility of local or central government.

This chapter established that Abercrombie's Greater London Plan 1944 for decentralisation resulted in twenty-two New Towns in England alone, accommodating close to 1 million people (Schaffer, 1970). Furthermore, its containment strategy is still relevant in contemporary designation of land use in England in 2014 (Gallent, Anderson and Bianconi, 2006:34). Nevertheless government policy from 1970 onwards appears to place the New Towns experiment as a rupture in planning history's meta-discourse of building new communities. What happened in the period between 1946 and 1976 that made subsequent party-politics hostile to New Towns? Chapter 3 picks up on this unresolved debate.

Chapter 3 The New Towns Experiment

The achievements of the '45 Labour government have largely been written out of our history. From near economic collapse we took leading industries into public ownership and established the Welfare State. Generosity, mutual support and co-operation were the watch-words of the age. It is time to remember the determination of those who were intent on building a better future. (Loach, 2013: 9 March 2013).

Film director Ken Loach made this statement in March 2013 to coincide with the release of his documentary, *The Spirit of '45*. Finally the subject of this research was being broadcast nationally in what felt like a personal confirmation that England was at a critical crossroads in its housing policy debate. However, the documentary was heavily criticised by most national reviews. The Guardian newspaper disregarded it as political propaganda (The Guardian, 2013); the Daily Mail claimed it was Marxist fantasy (The Daily Mail, 2013), and The Telegraph reviewed it as a film of fiction rather than a documentary (The Telegraph, 2013). The Independent (2013) presented a more nuanced appraisal warning the audience that political propaganda does not reveal the wider story.

Interestingly, while housing is a recurring theme throughout the documentary, New Towns receive little mention. What better opportunity than this, to make the historical link between the ideology of creating new communities in 1945 and the fact that it is mirrored by the contemporary discourse in 2013, and bring that link to the attention of a wider audience. This is evidence enough that the history of housing in England has been grossly misrepresented. The New Towns programme was being denied a historical evaluation yet again, in light of a contemporary discourse not limited to the academic field of planning and urban geography, but also within popular culture. Consequently, the subsidiary question posed in this research becomes even more urgent: What is the contemporary legacy of the English New Town beyond the already established criticisms?

This thesis evaluates how planning has become trapped in a contested narrative between political ideology and chronic problems in housing supply. In order to do so, it employs three critical lenses with which to rethink the English New Towns of 1946-1976 to provide important insights into the meta-discourse of building new communities in England. This is because the New Towns programme is a specific planning policy that was used successfully to combat the post-war housing crisis.

Importantly, its remit went far beyond dealing with the housing crisis as a matter of increasing provision; deeply embedded in its ideology was the ambition for post-war social reconstruction. Despite previous and subsequent attempts throughout the twentieth century to build new communities, the New Towns Programme is usually seen as a rupture in planning history and not a continuum.

These key themes, raised in Chapter 2, are: self-containment, newness versus sameness and governance. Examining the New Towns period through these thematic lenses is important because it departs from existing New Town readings that are either chronological or misleadingly linear. Firstly, this chapter considers the planning paradigm created by embedding social policy within the remit of a technical profession under the aspiration of building a balanced community. This lens is crucial in the analysis of New Towns because creating balance was seen as a central means for achieving self-containment, but its foundation was largely contested. Secondly, the theme of newness and sameness is explored by focusing on New Town design and the ideology underpinning a fixed-end master-plan under the positive planning system. This departs from existing New Town readings because it reveals how New Town design was promoting typological diversity as well as diversity of tenure. Whilst this angle permits a brief exploration of why New Towns are considered a type of suburban urbanism, it also highlights the lack of bi-partisan consensus over housing tenure.

Finally, the third theme of governance explores the remit of a planned economy, which enables a greater understanding of the governance structure of New Towns. Chapter 2 revealed that New Towns were understood as viable solutions under a nationalised welfare-state. For specificity, this chapter will explore the New Town Development Corporations, which were the administrative vehicles for New Town delivery conferred through the New Towns Act of 1946, and may provide a critical link to resolve this debate. Lastly, the conclusion summarises key findings on the contemporary legacy of the New Towns today, and in preparation for the empirical research addresses the original research question: In what ways does a study of a programme that was active between 1946 and 1976 explain a continuum and/or departure in the government's efforts to build new communities throughout the twentieth century?

At a score of places in Britain a quiet revolution has taken place. From Glenrothes in the north to Crawley in the south, fifteen new towns have been built in less than twenty years... For close on a million people it has meant a new life, new opportunities for themselves and their children and

the privilege of taking part in one of the greatest experiments of our time. By the end of this century, according to one estimate, one out of every seven people in Britain will be living in a new town. (Schaffer, 1970: xiii).

This extract is the introduction to *The New Town Story*, written by Frank Schaffer, a former officer at the Ministry for Housing and Local Government and Secretary of The Commissions for New Towns. In its foreword, Lord Silkin suggests it should be compulsory reading for anyone interested in the development of New Towns. As is noticeable from this early appraisal of New Town history, this was an opportunity not short of a 'revolution', and those involved in the preparation, development or management of the programme felt 'privileged' to be rewriting history with such a great 'experiment'. This tone is not limited to Schaffer; it is a consistent feature of early New Town literature (Schaffer, 1970; Osborn and Whittick 1969, 1977; Clapp, 1971). However, as a story published in 1970, there is an element of hindsight that confers a very linear narrative. Scholars have engaged with Schaffer's enthusiasm and imagination (Cherry, 1996), but are weary that it is a partisan view from 'a civil servant that has been closely connected with New Towns policies since the war years' (Heraud, 1972:186-187). As Heraud (1972) comments, he provided one of the first English comprehensive analyses of how New Towns were built (more successfully than his attempt to explain its historical or philosophical underpinnings), which placed his book as one of the official New Town histories.

However, *The New Town Story* (Schaffer 1970) was not met without criticism. Aldridge, author of the 1979 *British New Towns: A Programme without a Policy*, dismisses Schaffer's story on account of being a 'bland' history. Cullingworth (2006) disregards it altogether in his seminal volume on *Town and Country Planning in the UK*. One reflection would indicate Schaffer's (1970) account was disregarded because he was too embedded in the process of New Towns, evident from the outset of the book where he thanks 'my colleagues the General Managers of twenty-six development corporations' (1970: v), and provides a foreword written by Lord Silkin himself. This would be a clear example of what Sandercock (2003) critiques as 'planning presented in as a heroic, progressive narrative' (38) that lacks critical perspective.

The structure of the book is neatly organised as a Stages of Work diagram, not unlike the planning ideology that spurred the design of early New Town master-plans.¹⁰ Frederic Osborn, the author of ‘New Towns after the War’, laid the conceptual foundations as early as 1918 that whilst housing was still in crisis, the First World War would provide an ideal opportunity to deal with the housing issue as a broader reconstruction policy. He republished the book in 1942 emphasising that the idea was still valid and even more pressing after the Second World War: this time as a reconstruction to include industry, encourage the distribution of population and promote the erasure of the segregated class system. Osborn’s (1942) ideological belief was that the comprehensive planning system was a science, and that with New Towns government could instigate a ‘more imaginative and scientific policy of re-planning that has ever been attempted’ (20). The image of a planner’s briefcase with a portable model for a New Town is indicative of how planning was seen as a utilitarian science; an act of precision and craft that could be repeated in different locations using the same design elements.

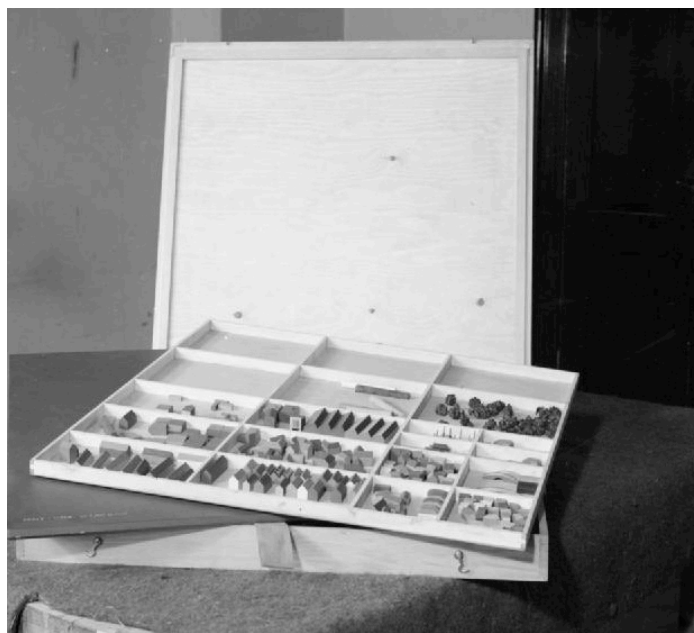


Figure 3-a: A Portable Model for the Planning of a New Town, 1945

© Source: Ministry of Town and Country Planning, IWM ((MOW) T 6327)

This type of planning has been referred to as ‘physicalism’ by Batty and Marshall (2009) because it represents an idea that city growth was ‘evil’, where growth needs to be contained through top-down planning approaches (553):

¹⁰ (1) Vision, (2) Foundations, (3) Powers, (4) Designation, (5) Corporation, (6) Plan, (7) Land, (8) Homes, (9) Jobs, (10) Shops, (11) Services, (12) Leisure, (13) People, (14) Money, (15) Commission, (16) Achievement, (17) Future

The assumptions which underpinned early town planning were based on a superficial, immediate, largely non-scientific view of human decision-making born of a science or rather ideology that did not yet acknowledge or even attempt to understand the mechanisms that might link spatial form to social process. (*ibid.*).

This view coincides with Willett's (2011) critique on top-down planning but fails to engage with the spirit of what planners were trying to achieve in their physicalist approach. A more balanced appraisal of the New Towns experiment is provided by Cullingworth (1970), Cullingworth and Nadin (2006) and Hall (1973a, 1973b, 1994, 2002) consistently and repeatedly referenced by other scholars and regarded as the official historians of this period. They rewrite the representation by broadening the analysis to include other aspects of planning history; how New Towns developed the containment policy in England (Hall, 1973a, 1973b, 2002); in what way they epitomise the purpose of planning were it given a role in social reconstruction (Cullingworth, 1970); how a single policy is developed from an accumulation of post-war reports dealing with a national crisis (Hall and Tewdwr-Jones, 2011: 55-77; Cullingworth and Nadin, 1960); and New Towns as utopia, a New Jerusalem (Power and Houghton, 2007). A counterbalance is provided by other prominent scholars in the field of urban planning (Ambrose, 1986; Cherry, 1996) and geography (Coleman 1985). But this discourse in no way topples the perception of New Towns that explicitly critiques England's post-war reconstruction policy and implicitly portrays New Towns as a symbol of this failure, as established by popular literature (Hanley, 2007; Mass Observation, 2009; Kynaston, 2007).

While these sources are key to the arguments regarding New Towns, this chapter supplements the existing literature with texts that are critical of planning. The reason for doing so is because the New Towns experiment is an explicit consequence of the emergence and development of the positive planning model that has systematically been eroded since positive planning emerged in 1947. At the expense of oversimplifying a complex planning discourse, one can argue that to be supportive of the New Towns experiment is to be supportive of the role and purpose of positive planning. Or, as Vigar *et al.* (2000: 5-6) suggest, planning became a tool of Modernity which emerged from the policies of the welfare state.

Another way in which this chapter departs from established New Towns literature is based on the understanding that planning (its purpose and outreach) changed significantly from the beginning of the New Town period (1946) to its end

(1976). This occurred as a consequence of both party-politics, in its pursuit to modify the purpose of planning according to the political ideology, but also and significantly, as popular opinion changed. While the empirical chapters of this thesis will focus specifically on localised perspectives, this historical review of the New Towns experiment uses extracts of films made between 1945 and 1966, published by the Ministry of Information (MoI) and independent British documentary filmmakers, to illustrate and underline the tone present upon the emergence of the positive planning system: a tone that was both confident and persuasive that social reconstruction could be achieved via planning. These extracts are used sparingly throughout, but they supplement the existing knowledge on English New Towns by providing an alternative view of how the post-war consensus for reconstruction was created. They provide a richly layered contextualisation that helps to understand the intention of the policies and the aspirations of the public in what is methodologically a ‘thick description’ (Geertz, 1973; Denzin, 1989; Ponterotto, 2006; see 4.2.7 for further discussion). The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) was set up as a public corporation in 1927, serendipitously established by Reith himself, and delivered possibly the most influential news coverage through the medium of its radio broadcasts.¹¹ Print media in the form of newspapers, pamphlets and tabloids also played a role, with their graphic displays of a new and good life. The use of media, particularly films, helped shift the public and political discourse from one of utopia to a reality of planning, by specifically indicating to the public that they had a choice, and a voice, and that they should trust architects and planners because ‘they were experts in the field’ (Worker-and-War-Front-Magazine, 1944). The production of short films before and during the war mainly stemmed from two different sources: on the one hand, government plans were promoted through propaganda films produced by the Ministry of Information (MOI).¹² On the other hand, when the MOI was formed at the outbreak of the war, none of the members of the

¹¹ John Reith (1889-1971) was the founder of the BBC. He was its first general manager when it was set up as the British Broadcasting Company in 1922; and he was its first director general when it became a public corporation in 1927. He created both the templates for public service broadcasting in Britain; and for the arms-length public corporations that were to follow, especially after World War Two. Reith fought off the politicians' attempts to influence the BBC, while offering the British people programmes to educate, inform and entertain” (BBC 2011, excerpt from website).

¹² In principle most films were either commissioned or supported by the Ministry of Information (MOI). This Ministry was established briefly during the end of the First World War and again the day after Britain's declaration of war in 1939. It was responsible for publicity and propaganda in the Second World War. Ministry's functions were threefold: news and press censorship; home publicity; and overseas publicity in Allied and neutral countries (National Archives, 2011) and the material produced for the Reconstruction of Britain is the output of the Home Publicity Division. The National Archives' describes the work of the home publicity as:

“The Home Publicity Division (HPD) undertook three types of campaigns, those requested by other government departments, specific regional campaigns, and those it initiated itself. Before undertaking a campaign, the MOI would ensure that propaganda was not being used as a substitute for other activities, including legislation.” (National Archives, 2011).

British Documentary Film Movement were recruited (Chapman, 2010:24). While MOI films were thus deployed for propaganda and promotion of the reconstruction effort, the BFI claims it was the documentary films that played a critical role in ‘promoting a public discourse around the questions of war aims and social reconstruction’ (Chapman, 2010: 30). Furthermore, Kynaston (2007: 39) claims 75 per cent of working-class English people saw the end of the war as an opportunity to realign social values, and it was this spirit that underpinned both political policies and public approval.

The MOI films brings forth dominant themes in official New Towns literature. The post-war period offered a second chance to get things right, an opportunity that had been missed after the Great War, despite Osborn already having established a blueprint for managing the housing crisis. The Ministry of Works was capable, in both material availability and in modernised processes, of taking on the challenge of rebuilding the country. There were talented and experienced experts in the field, so the public could and should trust their capabilities in the delivery of the rebuilding programme. Lastly, the post-war period needed to be seen as an opportunity. It was not about housing, but about creating better places to live, work, and play. There is a significant argument here that the New Towns programme was pitched not just as a housing issue within planning, but was presented as a large experiment whereby society could rebuild its socio-economic values. Creating a balanced community became the emblem of this argument and is discussed in the following section.

3.1 Self-containment and the paradigm of building a ‘balanced community’

New Town literature has historically focused on questioning the intention of creating ‘balance’ by emphasising its connection with ‘self-containment’ (Champion, Clegg and Davies, 1977; Clapp, 1971). Problematically, they are part and parcel of the same ideological pursuit achievable as a planning aim, and are difficult to separate. This can be identified through two different readings that will be explored: on the one hand, the terms of balance were not fully explored by the Reith Committee in 1946 (Reith Committee, 1946c), because of what has been criticised as a rushed consensus on adopting a post-war plan (Aldridge, 1979; Homer, 2000). On the other hand, while self-containment as a strategy was developed through the Greater London Plan 1944 (Abercrombie, 1944) to prevent further sprawl and suburbanisation, balance was interpreted as *social* balance. However, in the absence of a thorough definition of balance, how should this be interpreted?

To consider the general questions of the establishment, development organization and administration that will arise in 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 on which such Towns should be established and developed as self-contained and balanced communities for living and working. (Reith Committee, 1946c: 2).

The Reith Committee was unequivocal, as the extract reveals, stating that through a policy of decentralisation of industry, working and living would coexist in harmony, in a way not dissimilar to that envisioned by the early ‘five-per cent philanthropists’ discussed in Chapter 2. In its recommendations, the Reith Committee concentrated on the mixing of social classes as the end-all to achieving a diverse social structure and, therefore, balance (Reith Committee, 1946c; Homer, 2000). According to Homer (2000) and Aldridge (1979), a very significant element in the development of New Towns was adopted as a result of cost and time-related pressures, and is identified as a principle fault of the Reith Committee, resulting in recommendations that were more preoccupied with the ‘how’ rather than the ‘why’ of the New Towns (Aldridge, 1979:105-108).

Aldridge (1979) suggests that ‘balance’ in the report was about class balance, with the aim of preventing a homogenous single-class town and achieving a diversity of both income group and status. Schaffer (1970), on the other hand, offers the institutional view, and rarely questions the terms of how balance was being interpreted or how it would eventually be monitored. However, Aldridge (1979) emphasises that the intention of breaking social class boundaries was not founded in any statistical analysis or quantitative research, and was limited to a narrow understanding of the English demographic. For example, there was no representation of minority groups ‘like the single-parent family, the unemployed, the handicapped, the elderly and black and brown immigrants’, illustrating the conservative nature of the committee’s terms (Aldridge, 1979:106). There was, however, a collective mood that had been captured by The Beveridge Report in 1942 proposing a change in direction of social policy that was in stark contrast to the ‘humiliating poverty’ and ‘long depression of the thirties’ (John Jacobs, 1992: 142). Although The Beveridge Report only dealt with direct recommendations on ‘Want’ (Beveridge, 1942: 7), it set the parameters by which the other remaining issues need to be tackled and in doing so paved the way for the classic

welfare state.¹³ The report is a long document with 300 pages. It had a utopian promise of providing social security from ‘cradle to the grave’ in a simple scheme that made it highly popular (Bryson and British Sociological Association, 1992; Kirby *et al.*, 2000; Gladstone, 1996b; Johnson and De Souza, 2008; Jones and Murie, 2006). The report was different from others that preceded it because of what it symbolised and promised: that a social change was at the forefront of government priorities. Its popularity was such that the Report is argued to have become a political propaganda weapon, with both major parties committing their party to its introduction (Beers, 2009), and provides a useful insight into the popular unease about the lack of social balance in society. Dawn Guard, a film prepared and released by the Ministry of Information (MOI) in 1941, can give further contextualisation with regards to the popular mood and demonstrates how aware government was of the widespread unrest of pre-war society. The film uses the two protagonists, a knowledgeable soldier and an ambitious cadet, to encourage a solution through a physical post-war reconstruction, for unemployment, poor living conditions and slum dwellings. Accordingly, this could be through new balanced towns where ‘class divisions do not matter and everyone is employed’ (Figure 3-b):

¹³ For dealing with poverty (‘Want’), Beveridge established a detailed scheme of comprehensive social insurance through The Family Allowances Act 1945, The National Insurance Act 1946 and the National Assistance Act 1948.



This is a short film that shows two guards on patrol discussing the destruction, misery and fear of the war and questioning its purpose. The older guard reminisces about the liberties they took for granted before the war. The younger guard is less eager to be nostalgic and instead urges his comrade to be positive and hope for a better future. With wisdom, the older guard stresses that they cannot stop 'when the job's finished' because they did that in Great War of 1914-1917 and it did not get them anywhere. This time around, they need to use the impetus of fighting to mend all that is wrong with society and seize the post-war as second chance to get things right. A call for new housing through new communities is made when the guard reminisces about all the aspects of pre-war society that needed to be fixed, mainly unemployment and living conditions. It moves into idyllic scenery of country lanes, children playing in open fields, and a low-rise housing block screened by mature trees.

Figure 3-b: The Dawn Guard by Ministry of Information

© Source: Imperial War Museum, UKY 268 IWM (Boulting, 1941)

Both The Beveridge Report and this film indicate the popular sentiment in terms of what constitutes a balanced community and how a post-war physical reconstruction could address the inequality. But how, or why, did the Reith Committee decide that

balance and self-containment were interrelated? Despite this contentious aim, there is limited practical and legislative debate in 1945 around the discourse. There are also few contemporary academic reviews on the subject. Reade (1987) argues that following on from the Barlow Report, the government sought a more geographically even spread of activity, posing questions of spatial class segregation: is social welfare enhanced with migrations of profit-seeking capital or by seeking a more even spread of economic activity? (Reade, 1987). In *New Towns and Urban Policy* by James Clapp (1971), he claims that balance and self-containment have become synonyms in the pursuit of building new communities because one ideal cannot exist without the other. His argument is set apart from New Town literature because it indicates a multivariate understanding of the implicit nature of balance and its relationship to self-containment. Clapp suggests that while self-containment was a planning ideal to prevent further suburbanisation and sprawl, it relied on a series of internal relationships that could maintain its containment rate: social, physical, economic and aspirational (Table 6). Critically, the significance of relating self-containment to a notion of social balance created an implicit distinction between New Towns and Suburbanisation:

New Towns are composed of a variety of land uses related to the traditional functions of the city, and that this balance between land uses both necessitates and makes possible communities which are socially balanced. (Clapp, 1971: 55-56).

In practical terms, the first wave of New Towns (mark 1) were located an average of 20 miles from London within Abercrombie's outer ring; far enough to make commuting impossible but close enough for a regional re-balancing through the decentralisation of London (Figure 2-b). Planning thus became the critical tool that would enable the ideology of creating social balance sustain itself with a spatial strategy of self-containment.

Table 6: Terms of balanced community and its relationship to self-containment

Source: Produced by researcher and adapted from Clapp, 1971, pp.53-57

Balance and Self-Containment		
Terms of balance	Planning aim	How this term affects self-containment
Social composition	Mixing classes through housing tenure and typology	By achieving a diverse social structure, the town would not become a single-class ghetto.
Physical composition	Using fixed-end master-plans to support different	By establishing; residential, commercial, industrial, recreation and educational

Balance and Self-Containment		
Terms of balance	Planning aim	How this term affects self-containment
	land uses	facilities this would prevent dormitory suburbs and residential satellites.
Economic activities	Designating commercial and industrial zones	To prevent other towns becoming other centres of employment and to support a diversified labour market.
Urban/ rural aspiration	Establishing green belt and wedges	The green belt would prevent sprawl to maintain self-containment; the wedges would provide flexibility for future growth and expansion.

Initially, population targets determined the scale of the New Town, but it also relied on the industrial economy, therefore the targets changed throughout the succession of New Towns.¹⁴ Aldridge (1979) explains that as New Towns grew, so did the understanding of what the minimum population could be to sustain acceptable standards of urban life. Significant structural changes in society also affected the understanding of self-containment. Car ownership, for example, was a significant structural development in England between 1950 and 1960 as it grew from 4.0 million to 8.5 million, and that figure doubled again by the end of 1980 to 19 million (Cullingworth and Nadin, 2006: 396). This sudden rise in car ownership had a decisive effect on people's habits and their homes, and the mark 1 New Towns were not planned to support this level of access to cars. Its impact was unforeseen. The New Oxford History of England Seeking a Role 1951-1970 (Harrison, 2009) addresses this dramatic change and says 'no revolution in attitudes and conduct after 1951 surpasses that stemming from the private ownership of cars' (136). A change important not only in itself, but for the 'minor revolutions' associated with it, such as the disappearance of pedestrian habits ('trading, talking playing and entertaining'), the rise of road deaths and increased noise levels in and around communities. Most importantly, the arrival of the car changed the way people lived and worked:

All these shifts in communications [that occurred as a consequence to the car] seemed to shrink the UK. It became difficult to imagine society where it had been normal to spend a lifetime in one place, when people had to rely on local resources for food and building materials, and when only the very rich travelled to London, let alone overseas. (Harrison, 2009: 145).

¹⁴ Mark 1 New Towns had a recommended optimum size of 20,000- 60,000 (Reith 1945).

The structural changes of population, car ownership and the labour market in England (discussed in section 3.3 of this Chapter) permits the history of New Towns to be divided into organised and traceable marks and exemplifies the shifting visions that underpinned the planning ideology of the New Town programme (Figure 3-c).

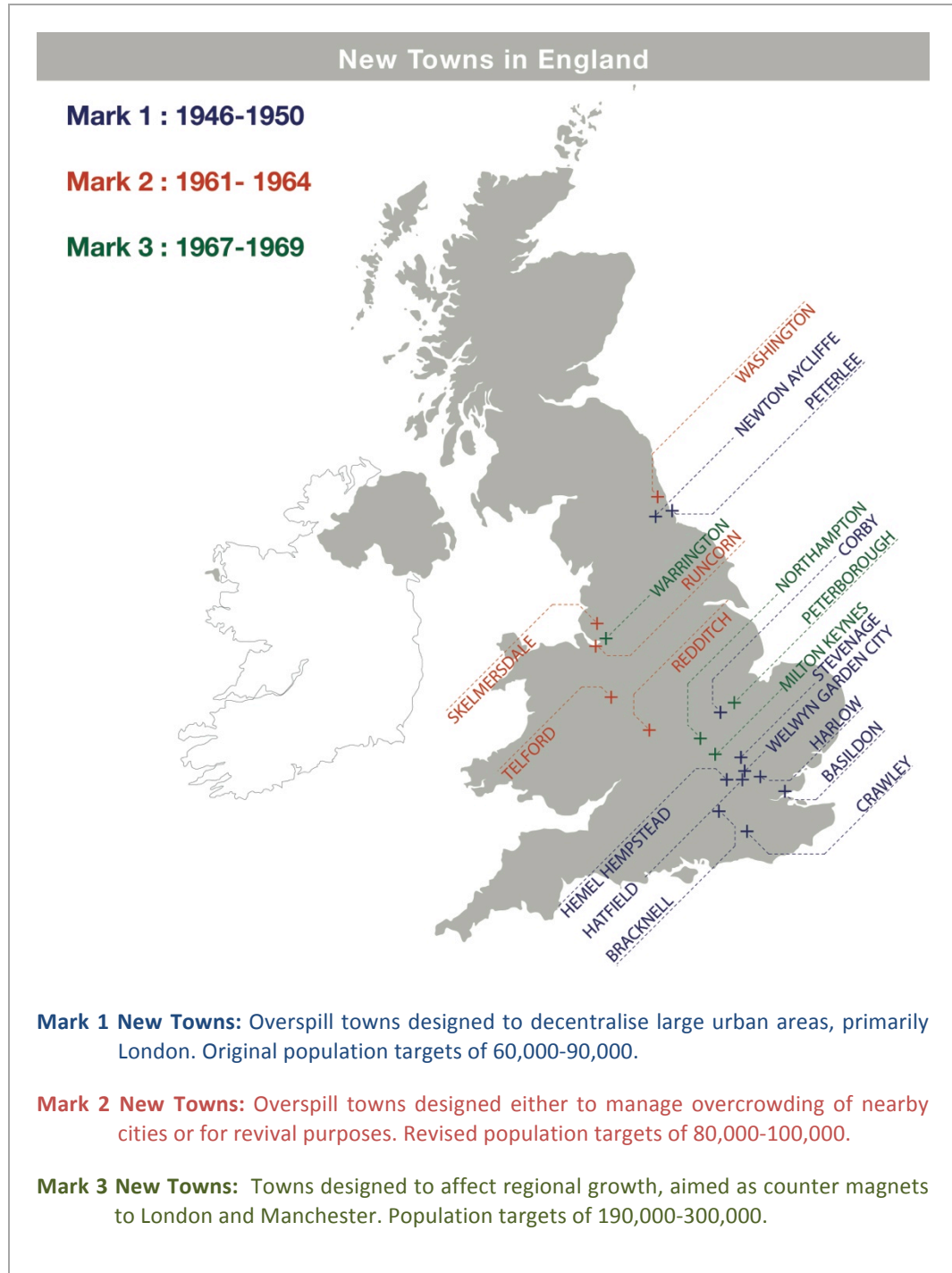


Figure 3-c: English New Towns represented in their three phases 'marks' of designation

Source: Map produced by Author using data from Schaffer, 1970: pp.261-286

However, by seeking to redistribute both capital and social class invariably, the New Towns undermined a series of fragile notions: social classes will inevitably separate

themselves because of environmental inequality. This is attributed both to taste (in how people like to live) and status competition (in where people desire to live). Reade (1987: 93), in making a direct reference to the planning terms of the New Towns policy, argues that the planning system itself is at the heart of social segregation in England because of its ‘very broad and extremely vague objectives’ that cannot be understood by ‘either politicians or the public’. He argues that the ambition of wide-ranging planning aims through a ‘flexible’ system is counter-productive.

Another critique is that the notion of creating balanced communities implies a level of social engineering on the one hand – a paternalistic approach to state planning – while on the other hand it creates a questionable precedent under a democratic state because people were targeted in terms of class, in terms of whether they were appropriate for the New Towns. Herein lies a difficulty. In the act of relocation residents were offered both a home and a job, on a voluntary basis through an Industrial Selection Scheme (Schaffer, 1970). In the case of mark 1 New Towns, this ensured the new population was financially self-supporting as there was an explicit link between homes and jobs (Table 6). Whether residents chose to relocate because of the promise of a new home or job is a question open to empirical research. Early New Towns literature does not offer a distinction, and ‘home and job’ go hand-in-hand in descriptions about relocation efforts (Aldridge, 1979; Schaffer, 1970). In fact peer literature is limited with regards to relocation and how it occurred in the New Towns. Gough, Eisenschitz, and McCulloch argue in ‘Spaces of Exclusion’ (2006) that by selecting skilled workers, the New Towns invariably favoured the ‘respectable poor’ and separated them from the ‘rough poor’ (Gough, Eisenschitz, and McCulloch, 2006: 37). They argue that New Towns have created even more spatial separation and that classes have not mixed. The context of their argument is that suburbanisation (as discussed in Chapter 2) characterised by low density housing and greenery — understood as components of environmental determinism — does not overcome poverty. According to their discourse, state intervention actually reinforces the class divisions, and in the case of New Towns, the following pattern emerged due to the development of large areas of council housing:

The poor could not afford the housing costs of the suburbs nor the costs and time of commuting, and thus remained in their old areas. In consequence by the 1960s inner city areas were poor. (Gough, Eisenschitz, and McCulloch, 2006: 115).

An overview of Gough, Eisenschitz, and McCulloch, (2006) together with Reade (1987) widens the discourse regarding class segregation and social balance. Without the Reith

Committee having identified the terms of a balance, it undermined the complexity of communities and, possibly, jeopardised the self-containment strategy. Their overview also widens the discussion on positive planning. In the absence of a thorough definition of balance, how was the ‘lofty abstraction’ (Edwards, 2001) facilitated through planning?

One detailed explanation is offered by Cullingworth (1970), claiming that social planning was critical in the delivery of balanced communities. According to him, mark 1 New Towns represent the moment planners were given the ideological role in society to develop planning policy, within a jurisdiction of social reconstruction. Reade (1987: 39), on the other hand, argues that Garden Cities and the New Towns programme are ‘conveniently’ embedded into the history of planning although in reality they have less to do with planning (in the terms of regulating and planning of land use) and more to do with development. This is an important reading that may explain why New Towns were modelled on the planning aspect of the Garden City, but not on the principle of redistribution of wealth. The reason is an aspirational one, he claims, because the ideology of the New Towns is what planners would be doing — and should be doing — if they were given such a role in society. Cullingworth (1970) disagrees and according to him, the particularity of New Towns is that they represent a time when planning was regarded as a type of social development that could not be separated from planning outcomes. In 1967 he chaired a committee, the outcome of which was a publication called *The Needs of New Communities* (Ministry of Housing, 1967). It concluded that problems around ‘large housing estates’ and ‘the periphery of big cities’ (*ibid.*: 211) originated in the 1960s once New Town planning had been abandoned. In an argument he prepared for the *Gerontologist Journal*, Cullingworth explains why New Towns went far beyond the remit of providing housing and were essentially about social planning.

Uniquely, Cullingworth (1970) stresses the importance that Social Relations Officers played in the New Towns to ensure that the physical blueprint of the town was matched to a ‘social development plan and programme’ (211). However, Cullingworth’s endorsement of Social Relations Officers does not dominate the arguments in favour of post-war reconstruction. Instead, a persuasive rhetoric was that architects and planners were the right professionals to deliver social policy. The film *Worker and War-Front* depicts these professionals as those best equipped to make change happen. In the top still of Figure 3-d, the narrator presents a robust argument in favour of building new planned and landscaped towns, expressing excitement that

‘skilled, expert planners are already doing it’. In the bottom still, a model of a New Town is being admired by a wide ‘balanced’ cross-section of society; men and women of the workforces; children; businessmen; housewives and newly married couples.



“Behind this model are the brains and experience of the planners and architects who know that it can become reality. Who know that if given the chance can wipe out what is bad of the past, preserve the best, and build cities everywhere worthy of our children.”

Figure 3-d: Model City, by the Ministry of Information

© Source: Imperial War Museum UK 812 IWM (*Worker and War-Front* magazine, 1944)

The official view that social balance could be achieved via top-down planning mechanisms was not without controversy and local opposition. A well-organised and informed source of scepticism came from the Mass Observation (M-O) (Mass Observation, 2009a, 2009b, 2009c).¹⁵ According to the M-O, the officials were not only out of touch, but making assumptions leading to a discrepancy between ‘what leaders think people want and what they actually do want’ (Mass Observation, 2009a: 32). The

¹⁵ The Mass Observationists began as an experiment in 1937 and continued throughout the war. The function of the (M-O) was ‘to get written down the unwritten laws and to make the invisible forces visible’. The organisation orchestrated a remarkable feat in collective action and public participation. It began as a one-day experiment where thirty people that did not know each other – and who lived and worked in different parts of the country – volunteered to write in plain language, without commentary and interpretations a description of their day. Simultaneously, another dozen people funded by philanthropists and entrepreneurs went ‘undercover’ to record life in an anonymous industrial town for one year.

overwhelming social research produced by the M-O could have been embraced by the Reith Committee when setting the terms of reference for New Towns (Reith Committee, 1946c). Its absence reinforces the criticism that welfare state planning was too preoccupied with the use of administrators' expertise and bureaucratic procedures to realise a social policy that reflected popular need. An important example of their argument is offered by Tom Harrison, founder of the M-O:

...Plans are being made about the future of Britain, and these are often being made as if the prejudices and habits of ordinary people can be ignored; publication might serve some constructive purpose in reminding the planners, in their valuable work, of one of the habits they most often ignore. I say this with some feeling myself, as since the war my family have lived at Letchworth Garden City, one of the key towns of the planning movement, and one of the few places in England where no pub is allowed: this book could not have been written at all if Worktown [the anonymous case study] had been Letchworth. (Mass Observation, 2009c: 9).

This extract ratifies Willett's (2011) recent critique that communities planned with a set of social objectives will be subjected to unintended consequences by the nature of their complexity. She advocates planners to 'find some kind of resonance with how people within a particular culture choose to live their lives' (5). In this sense, Willett's critique coincides with the subsequent policy shift that removed social objectives from the New Towns policy. In the early 1950s, as political opinion recognised that the country was entering a period of imminent wealth and post-industrial age (Levin, 1976), the planning framework was less about social harmony within the town, and more about designing a master-plan that was flexible and could adapt to growth and expanding demand (Levin, 1976). However, Edwards (2001) claims this was one of the great barriers that prevented Milton Keynes (a mark 3 New Town) from developing as it was originally planned: too much flexibility left a master-plan vulnerable, and was 'a dangerous nostrum in planning' that needed to be 'deployed selectively' (Edwards, 2001: 95). His is the verdict on a town designated in 1962 under a very different political mandate to the mark 1 towns of the 1940s that were designed with a fixed-end master-plan from the outset.

3.2 Newness and sameness: aiming for diversity in tenure and typology

As argued previously, the New Towns policy was not pitched just as a housing issue within planning but was presented as a large experiment whereby society could rebuild its socio-economic values. Increasing housing supply was nonetheless the

overriding policy objective; to both support the redistributed population, and break down social segregation between the landed class, the working-class, and the rising middle-class of blue-collar workers (or as defined by the Reith Committee, from ‘managers to unskilled labourers’) (Schaffer, 1970: 102). As noted in Table 6 in terms of balance and its relationship to self-containment, the optimum social composition could be achieved by providing housing that was diverse in both tenure and typology. The physical composition of New Towns was thus critical, prompting a reliance on the new-found faith in the architect, the planner, and their ability to prepare a master-plan. This would explain why New Towns are portrayed ideologically as being a consequence of Modernity and also hostages to a rigid fixed-end master-plan making them incapable of assimilating to change (Coleman, 1985; Jane Jacobs, 1992; Pawley, 1971). To claim the urban design of the New Towns was spatially influenced by the principles of Modernism is to take a narrow view of the experiment that places, through the Reith Reports and their subsequent delivery, as much emphasis on diversification of housing tenure as it did on typology (Reith Committee, 1946a, 1946b, 1946c). Two distinctive spatial themes dominate both early and contemporary housing literature on New Towns: the Radburn layout, and the neighbourhood unit. A theme less explored is the aspect of tenure and its relationship to home ownership as a wider social objective. Before beginning this discussion on tenure, the principles underpinning the wider planning objective of the neighbourhood unit and the Radburn layout need to be established.

3.2.1 The Radburn layout and the neighbourhood unit

Adopting a neighbourhood unit throughout New Towns came directly from the specific recommendations of the Dudley Report, *Design on Dwellings* 1944. The committee chaired by Lord Dudley offered very precise recommendations on spatial distribution, optimum room sizes, architectural variety and the choice of building materials. The committee recommended that a neighbourhood designed with a mix of developments would ‘avoid both the harshness of the tenement blocks and anomie of the cottage estates’ (Bullock, 2002: 158), and in providing architectural diversity and social variety, the aim of social balance would be addressed.¹⁶ Literature in the field

¹⁶ This idea is rooted in Howards Garden City where housing was to be clustered in wards, and every resident was within a walking distance (600 yards) of the ‘magnificent’ town centre (Howard 1898). While the idea of distributing residential areas as planned groups was first introduced to England by Howard, it was developed as a specific typology by American planner Clarence Perry who is generally accepted to have authored the idea of a neighbourhood unit based around the required population that can support a primary [elementary] school.

portrays the neighbourhood unit as one of the most important factors leading to the decline of the New Towns as they became characterised as suburban. A decisive critique came from the highly exposed *The Architectural Review*, in 1953 when its editor Richards wrote on 'failure of the new towns':

New towns are not towns at all but mere suburbs and the new town neighbourhoods differ but little from the pre-war garden suburb housing estate. (Richards, 1953: 29).

In principle, the neighbourhood idea was an innovative departure from previous trends in urban design and sought to mitigate sprawl by containing residents within a defined neighbourhood limit. Its introduction as a planning concept is attributed to Clarence Perry (1872-1944), an American planner. The neighbourhood unit is criticised for creating physical exclusion because by separating the neighbourhoods, residents were usually forced to take fast moving transport around the town. It is also heavily criticised for promoting a physical determinism, claiming it had less to do with physical design and more with achieving social outcomes (Lawhon, 2009). Perry, a social reformer, may not have disagreed because his implicit aim behind the design strategy was to strengthen family and community life, which was deteriorating in the modern world (Adams *et al.*, 1949). Thus, at the height of Modernity the neighbourhood unit sought to reverse a trend that Giddens (1990: 114-120) establishes as a key aspect of personal relations in Modernism: the communal character of trust and personal relations that becomes lost through the 'impersonality of modern social life' (115). This unquestionably supports Gough, Eisenschitz, and McCulloch's (2006) criticism that New Towns led to social exclusion, because in the act of predetermining the social outcomes of an area, the local residents ended up being of a similar race and income group. As the population grew, so would the demographic. Nevertheless Schaffer (1970) defends the overall adoption of the neighbourhood unit claiming it was learning from the experience of pre-war municipal housing that had simply reinforced commuting and class segregation (102-103). To prevent this in New Towns, and re-enforce self-containment, the neighbourhood unit would be multi-functional; providing commercial, leisure and cultural space in the form of local centres as well as mixed tenure in its housing stock.

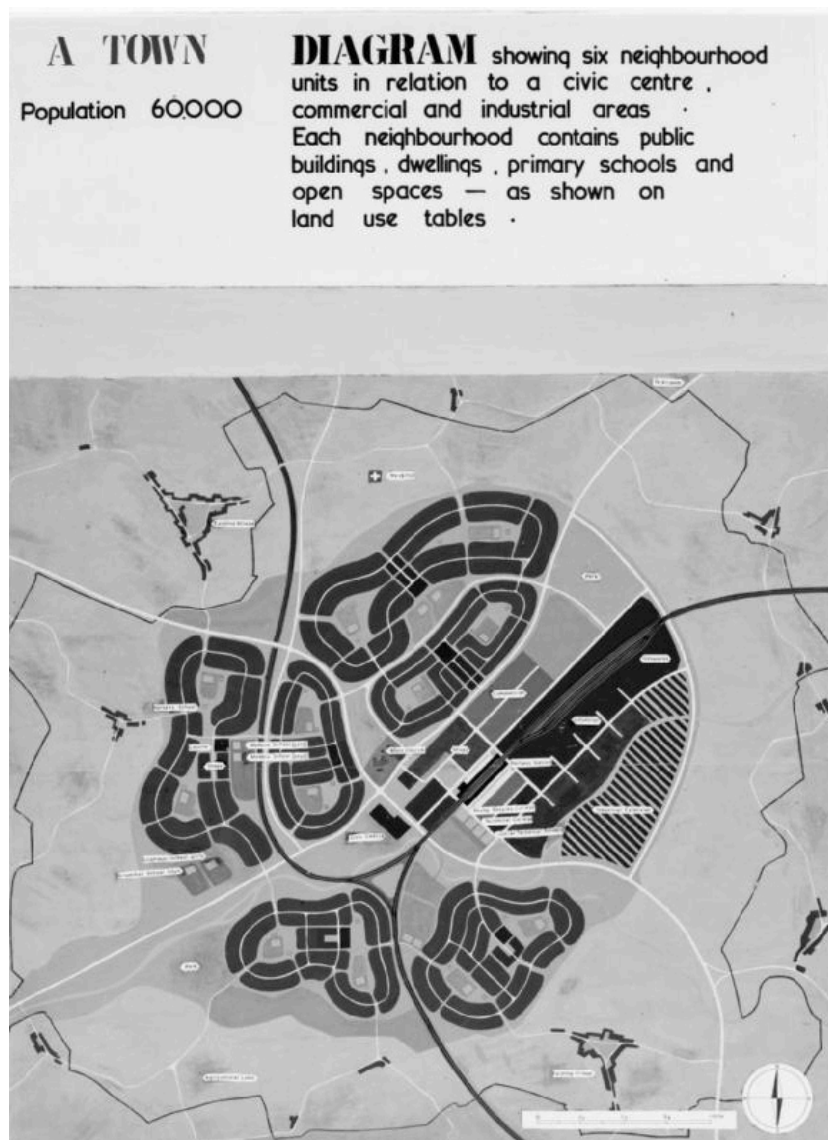


Figure 3-e: A typical New Town using principles of the neighbourhood unit, 1944 by Ministry of Town and Country Planning

© Source: BFI 2010 IWM ((MOW) T 44323)

In contemporary terminology the neighbourhood unit introduced mixed-use in planning. It pioneered residential dwellings above commercial spaces (Figure 3-f) and provided public spaces at the heart of the unit where the community could congregate. The proposal drew inspiration from Howard's ideal of marrying the town with the country. In theory, social barriers would be overcome because within the neighbourhood unit, predetermined housing tenures would be available: larger houses for outright purchase next to state-owned rental properties for families (in the form of small-homes) and child-free couples (in higher-density housing blocks). Using population projections and estimates of industrial relocation, each New Town master-plan specified the percentage of private versus state-owned housing per neighbourhood unit.



Figure 3-f: Prentice Place neighbourhood centre, Harlow 1956

© Source: Harlow Library Archive

In effect, the neighbourhood unit acted as a self-contained unit within a self-contained town. At the scale of individual houses, this containment was further reinforced through the widespread adoption of the Radburn layout.¹⁷ The Radburn layout was promoted as a means of integrating the residents and providing an environment that, although compact, catered for the English aspiration of living in small houses with gardens. It was also recommended by the Dudley Report, *Design on Dwellings* 1944. The Radburn layout is the principal argument used to characterise New Towns as nothing more than suburban urbanism, but this planning typology was designed to mitigate suburbanisation. Its primary function was to segregate pedestrians from traffic and stimulate local interaction (Schaffer, 1970) in an attempt to create neighbourliness and alleviate the malady of ‘lonely individuals’ that Gauldie (1974) together with Riesman, Denny and Glazer (1961) accuse suburbia of perpetuating. New Towns champions, such as Osborn (1969: 208) had supported the Radburn layout and described in *New Towns: The Answer to Megalopolis* ‘an effect that gives the impression of a happy accident’ through the irregular patches of lawns and houses and random trees but in reality is the ‘result of careful artistry’. Safe interaction amongst neighbours (children in particular) was the driving principle behind adopting the layout (Figure 3-g). Nevertheless, the careful artistry that Osborn (1969) promoted was only achievable through the implementation of a fixed-end master-plan. A counter argument to the Radburn layout is that it works until you reach the target population ‘then various things kind of ran out

¹⁷ The idea behind a Radburn layout was to separate pedestrian movement from vehicle traffic, and in doing so, creating a two-tier circulation. The rear and servicing side of a property catered for vehicle access and busy roads but the front of the house placed its bedrooms and living room facing a network of green paths that connected the main entrance of all residential houses.

of space' (120130-06G). What is evident from an urban perspective is that it makes organic growth, at an incremental pace, very difficult. This has ratified critics of the Radburn layout who claim that it was an inflexible planning model incapable of adaptation to structural changes in society. An example of this critique is that because pedestrians were separated from roads for reasons of leisure and safety, and a comfortable road pattern was provided for individual car owners, the road network ended up catering for a fast-moving, mass-owning automobile population (Edwards, 2001). New Towns thus became stigmatised by the public and press as towns built around the car.



Figure 3-g: Radburn layout on Lower Meadow, Harlow 1969

© Source: Harlow Library Archive

A reading of Atkinson and Moon (1994) presents a challenge to the conventional criticism that the rigidity of New Town planning meant they were not capable of assimilating structural change and reversing planning trends such as the Radburn layout. They suggest that the Buchanan Report of 1963 promoted free flowing traffic in towns and specifically used the Radburn layout to illustrate how it could be achieved. Tewdwr-Jones (2012) mirrors this sentiment. He claims that although evidence was available of how planning and land use trends were changing with the new motorway network, it was a political decision of national interests over local concerns that compelled governments to continue promoting road expansion. Their combined critique suggests it was the rebirth of the English economy in the 1950s, and the Conservative government (1951-1964) that promoted the Radburn layout and overrode local concerns.



This is a promotional film commissioned by the Harlow Development Corporation. The top image shows public rental housing built by the Corporation as a highly planned and well-built provision, in stark contrast to pre-war slum dwellings from where most pioneers relocated. The middle image shows the Radburn layout in use by a group of unsupervised schoolchildren playing football far from the dangers of 'the street'. The bottom image shows the road and bicycle network that joined neighbourhood units, which were separated by vast swathes of greenery.

Figure 3-h: Faces of Harlow, sponsored by Harlow Development Corporation

© Source: BFI 2010 (Knight, 1964)

The period from 1951 onwards makes unexpected appearances in New Town literature. Whilst planning history portrays Conservative Thatcherism (1979-1990) a key debilitating period for the New Town legacy, as discussed in Chapter 2 (section 2.2.2), it is in fact the emergence of the Conservative party in 1951 that marks a critical departure in the New Towns experiment. Whilst the neighbourhood unit and the Radburn layout had been fundamental planning typologies under the positive planning system to achieve social balance, they relied on a predetermined master-plan and careful

distribution of tenure. With house building a Conservative government pledge, both private and council house building boomed in the fifties (Cullingworth, 2004); however, the drive was more about targets and less about planned communities. Hanley (2007: 102) recalls the shift in the approach to council house construction between 1940s and 1960s as she contrasts the ‘cream rendering and pointy roofed terraces’ built from 1945 onwards to the ‘brutalism of the high-rise completed in 1959’ pursued by Macmillan and his successors. According to her, council housing went from being ‘the crowning glory of the new welfare state to mass-produced barracks’ between 1945 and 1964 (Hanley, 2007:102). This political shift may be problematic because it implies the mark 1 New Towns were effectively not allowed to run their course. Housing had, at the outset, been a matter of short-term and long-term measures:

Every town should have in its Architect’s department a group of town planners... Building science is advancing so rapidly that we have no right to build for a thousand years... A house should be regarded as permanent for about thirty years and should then be replaced by an up-to-date one... For the good of the community, private interests must be subordinated to public ones. (Donald Gibson, cited in Kynaston 2007: 36).

This address to the Royal Society of Arts in 1940 demonstrates how utopian planning experiments were regarded as the answer to a difficult crisis. The first wave of New Towns (mark 1) housing is thus characterised by short-term solutions to solve the immediate post-war housing shortage of 1945 to 1946. It relied on prefabricated homes with a limited lifespan, usually of 10 years. Using new construction methods of industrial production and modern materials, the wartime factories provided a quick turnaround for the post-war housing crisis but this was a deliberately short-term policy:

The housing problem looks like it will be solved when it gets to mass production of the Churchill House. (Warwark News, 1944).

The film *Churchill’s House*, prepared for a wide audience, clearly shows housing as an emergency provision (Figure 3-i). Nonetheless these short-term solutions have become emblematic of mark 1 housing and dominate non-academic discussions of early New Town housing (Hanley, 2007; Kynaston, 2007; Grindrod, 2013) that has led to a portrayal of all post-war housing as ‘concrete monstrosities’ (Grindrod, 2013: 15).



This news clip is about Mrs Churchill visiting a factory-built steel house, 500,000 of which were made for returning soldiers after the war, 'The houses are intended to last 10 years, by which time there will be brick houses for everybody. Using steel, aluminium and plywood, these houses could be mass-built in the war factories, and housewives would even love them'.

Figure 3-i: Warwark News, 1944 by Ministry of Supply

© Source: Imperial War Museum SI5 47 IWM

Other longer-term measures for housing provision relied heavily on public housing. Short (1982) presents a critical angle that suggests that the Labour government of 1945-1951 was building this model more circumstantially, and not as directly based on a socialist ideology. According to him, there was no real commitment or belief that public housing was the way to provide a 'better society', but it was a reactionary measure

‘conditioned by circumstances: few supplies, the need to get housing produced quickly and the weight of popular opinion’ (Short, 1982: 55). Although Short’s reading differs from the scholarly view that public housing was a means of achieving social reconstruction (Reade, 1987; Cherry, 1996) it provides an alternative perspective that explains why the public aspect of New Town housing was susceptible to party politics. In other words, if there was no real commitment to public housing as a way of achieving a ‘balanced community’ then it was clearly vulnerable as subsequent policies encouraged the private sector to take over house building.

Tenure, in this case, becomes important, if not fundamental, to the design of housing, and is highly visible from the distinct stages of party in power. An instrumental aspect of public housing built under the Labour government in this era came from the recommendations set out by the Dudley Report, *Design on Dwellings* 1944. This had been commissioned by the Ministry of Health and was enacted as policy with a level of detail often criticised for being top-heavy and going against the experience of inter-war housing (Bullock, 2002; Cherry, 1996). The report emphasised that dwellings should match the population’s aspiration of living in 3-bedroom homes and encouraged both the Radburn layout and the neighbourhood unit to prevent residential areas from becoming large inter-war housing estates, or corporation suburbs. It set very high standards for the quality of early New Town housing but, critically, relied on a comprehensive planning system for its implementation.

Typology changed dramatically in favour of high-rise buildings and higher densities when the Conservatives were in power from 1951 to 64. Harold Macmillan, the Minister of Housing, changed the name of the Planning Ministry from ‘Local Planning and Government’ to ‘Housing and Local Government’, and focused all his policies on the manifesto pledge of delivering ‘300,000 units per year’:¹⁸

Housing is the first of the social services. It is also one of the keys to increased productivity. Work, family life, health and education are all undermined by overcrowded homes. Therefore a Conservative and Unionist Government will give housing a priority second only to national defence. Our target remains 300,000 houses a year. There should be no reduction in the number of houses and flats built to let but more freedom must be given to the private builder. In a property-owning democracy, the more people who own their homes the better. (Churchill, 1951: 05 July 2014).

¹⁸ In 1950, under the Labour Government 203,000 homes were built, meaning Macmillan’s pledge was an ambitious task.

What this extract demonstrates is the Conservative Party's belief that, indeed, housing was a social service; but unlike its political counterpart, it was the responsibility of the individual to acquire it and not that of the state to deliver. Accordingly, the private sector was encouraged to participate in house building and this is the moment that should be identified as the most debilitating to the New Towns Programme because it 'reflected the political primacy of housing and the poor support of planning' (Cullingworth and Nadin, 2006: 24).

3.3 Re-scaling governance: an examination of New Town Development

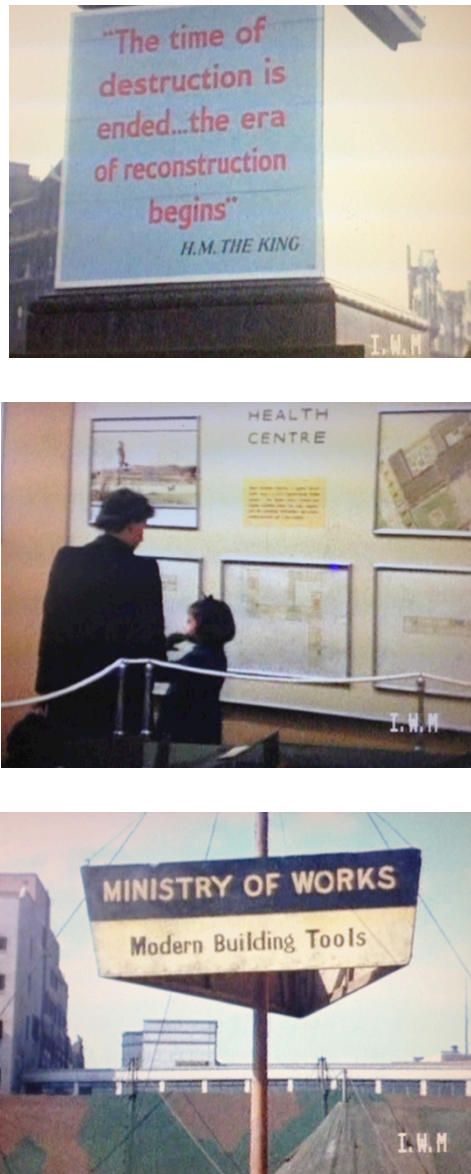
Corporations

The New Towns experiment can be read as an economic argument for redistributing the industrial structure of the country. Wartime policy had led government to understand the practicality of a structured economy (Ward, 2004), and under these conditions the depressed and unemployed areas became a 'powerful national asset' as new factories were built to aid the production of war (Cullingworth and Nadin, 2006: 21). This wartime structure also reinforced the Committee's objective for New Towns to be designed as balanced communities for working and living (Reith Committee, 1946c). While the particular nature of a balanced community was addressed earlier in this chapter, this section focuses on the remit that enables a town's function with regards to 'working and living': the planned economy through a centralised administration.

One of the more emblematic ideological shifts that occurs with the New Towns programme is the nationalisation of powers, and an enlarged state. The war had shown what could be achieved with a centralised authority, and the need for reconstruction was so dire that government intervention was seen as inevitable. Cherry's (1996) historical review of town planning in England represents the outreach of the state as monumental in this period, primarily because it took huge strides in the public sector arena. The state was using its wartime industry to mobilise reconstruction efforts and this is indicative of how, as a consequence, the face of planning fundamentally changed.¹⁹ The silent film summarised in Figure 3-j indicates that as a response to the public's urgent needs, the

¹⁹ This film is about the reconstruction of the Blitzed city Coventry. Although not a specific New Town, it underwent a reconstruction due to its destruction in parallel to the New Towns programme and is being used to illustrate propaganda of the outreach of the state, more than of a particular town.

state had set up ministries equipped to deal with the task at hand, and planning was to be the portal for its facilitation.



This is a silent film of two minutes the source of which is unknown. There is no information available regarding who made the film or where it was screened but it shows an exhibition held in Coventry in 1945 called 'Coventry of the Future'. It is a silent film but the message is clear. The top still shows Nelson's Column in Trafalgar Square, covered at the base with hoarding and a large message from H.M. The King: 'The time of destruction is ended... the era of reconstruction begins'. The middle still shows a mother and daughter engaging in plans for a new health centre. The bottom still gives the message that the Ministry of Works is both capable and ready to assume the task of reconstruction.

Figure 3-j: Without Title, estimated date 1944-1945

© Source: Imperial War Museum MGH4354 (Director unknown)

Planning throughout the 1947 period is represented as a bureaucratic intervention of the welfare state that became too involved in the day-to-day life of its citizens (Bryson

1992). Critically, between 1945 and 1951, Keynesian principles were applied to ‘nudge’ the economy in the right direction:

The objective of Keynesian state intervention was neither large-scale public ownership of industry nor the planned direction of economic development. Rather it was the intermittent use of expansionary fiscal measures and investment by the public sector in infrastructural schemes so that occasional counter-cyclical nudges might be applied when the economy failed to provide full employment. (Cherry, 1996:134).

Cherry offers the example of employment problems and states that they were not about ‘production capacity’ but a ‘maldistribution of demands’. Although Cherry does not make the direct link in his analysis, this position is illustrated by the acceptance of Abercrombie’s master-plan to redistribute London’s population into self-contained towns, and the introduction of the 1947 positive planning system.

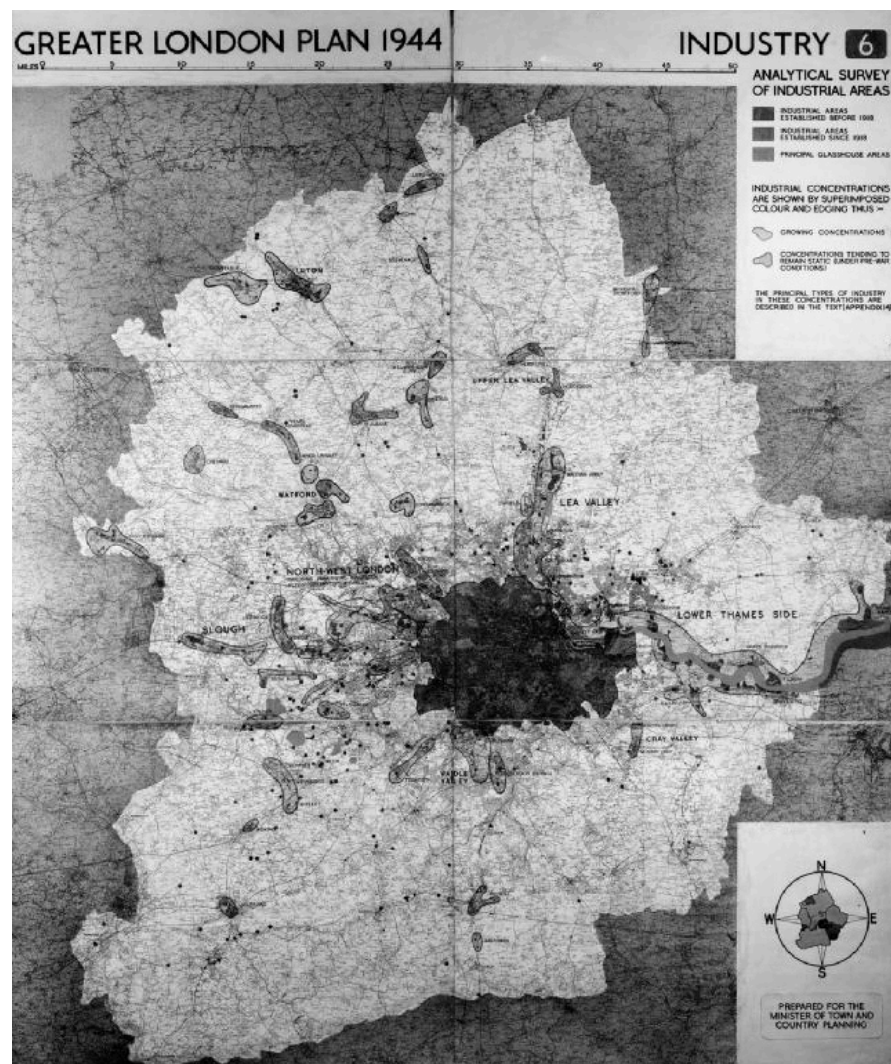


Figure 3-k: Abercrombie’s Greater London Plan on Industrial Relocation

© Source: BFI 2010 IWM ((MOW) T 6224) (Abercrombie, 1944)

Although the 1947 positive planning system was decisive in facilitating the planned economy (by nationalising land assets and capturing the development value) it was also highly contentious. The reasoning and impact of land nationalisation during this era is still the subject of much academic debate. On the one hand, Hall and Tewdwr-Jones (2011) reject Cherry's (1996) stance that nationalisation was an ideological objective to enlarge the state or promote socialist policies, while Reade (1987) argues that the 1947 system bypassed the market altogether because in its idealised version, it involved abolishing the market of the land. Even though the 1947 Act kept the market in abeyance, it did not allow it to flourish. This presents a contradiction because there are two opposing factors at work: the 'market' and the 'plan' (Reade, 1987:21-22). However, Ward (2004) takes a more historical approach and claims that 'property and development interests had been the traditional opponents of a more interventionist planning system' (Ward, 2004: 77), visible as early as the landed interest debates, which were reviewed in Chapter 2.

The planned economy was challenged in 1951 when Labour had a reduced majority in parliament and the 1950s consensus came in (Reade, 1987: 53). Planning as a profession shifted into a non-political activity, and the private sector was allowed to participate in New Towns development (Ward, 2005: 330; Cherry 1996: 133). In a wider examination of welfare and the state, Bryson (1992) suggests that this is a mixed-economy model to 'redress the balance of power between capital and labour' (Bryson and British Sociological Association, 1992) by returning publicly-owned industries and assets to the private market, and exposing them to the rigours of market-based competition. Ward (2004) is amongst the few scholars to notice the shift from a planned economy into a mixed economy as a 'receding' of state intervention, but still very much part of the post-war reconstruction period. According to Ward, it was not until the 1970s that a significant policy shift occurred. Other scholars, such as Reade (1987), portray the 1950s consensus as a different political phase, as a defining marker where the planned economy ended and liberal monetarism took over. This distinction is critical to New Towns legacy because it demonstrates the ability (or inability) of the New Towns policy to assimilate changes in the wider economy and therefore the required degree of state intervention. Before assessing how a receding planned economy impacted New Town development, it is necessary to look at their governance structure.

3.3.1 The New Towns Act 1946

An Act to provide for the creation of new towns by means of development corporations, and for purposes connected therewith [1st August 1946]. (New Towns Act 1946: CH 68).

The New Towns Act 1946 provides the legislative framework for the designation, deliverance, and management of New Towns. The Act, explained in Chapter 2 as being a critical aspect of the 1947 positive planning system, dealt specifically and uniquely with Development Corporations (DC) as new entities with very particular powers. While the DC could build houses, transport infrastructure and larger building operations (such as sewage and electricity) and importantly could ‘acquire, hold manage and dispose of land’ (New Towns Act 1946: 2), they were neither a local nor a central government agency. They were expected to operate alongside local authorities and its elected members, but were responsible to Lord Silkin, then Minister of Town and Country Planning. However, a Development Corporation was not a crown body, and its members of staff were not civil servants. Schaffer refers to their semi-independence as something they ‘zealously guard[ed]’ (Schaffer, 1979:37), because although their projects needed ministerial approval, the administration of DCs was independent. Lord Reith had assigned a motto for the Development Corporation: ‘Majora, Pulchriora, Uboriora’, meaning ‘Greater, More Beautiful, With More Scope’ (Burton and Hartly, 2003: Hemel Hempstead Master plan 1949); suggesting he imagined the Development Corporations would be both independent and powerful new bodies.

On the other hand, Aldridge’s (1979) critique highlights that there is paradox of powers. She claims that there is a deep misunderstanding that Development Corporations were ‘omnipotent’ (Aldridge, 1979:39), when in reality they had limited powers, leading to a contradiction that strongly affected the New Towns outcome. The Development Corporations acted as a housing association ‘within the means of the Housing Act 1936’ (New Towns Act 1946, CH68: 8) and would signify that any change in its structure would affect the housing pattern in New Towns. However, the DCs were portrayed as agencies with a much wider remit. Short (1982) argues that in 1970, when the Conservative government returned to power, they dissolved the Development Corporations in favour of Housing Associations (HA) because public housing was ‘an assault on the ethics of a free market’ (Short, 1982:188) and a ‘third arm’ of housing was necessary that could be a ‘sandwich between owner-occupation and local authority housing’ (Short, 1982:189). The transition from Development Corporation to Housing

Association marks what Gallent and Tewdwr-Jones (2007: 60) refer to as ‘a state withdrawal from public housing provision to a public sector enabling rhetoric’ that characterises the latter day New Labour manifesto. Critically, this is an important shift in the story of housing provision as far as the NTs are concerned and hence it is important to identify why the Development Corporation as a governance model was disabled in the subsequent scheme of things.

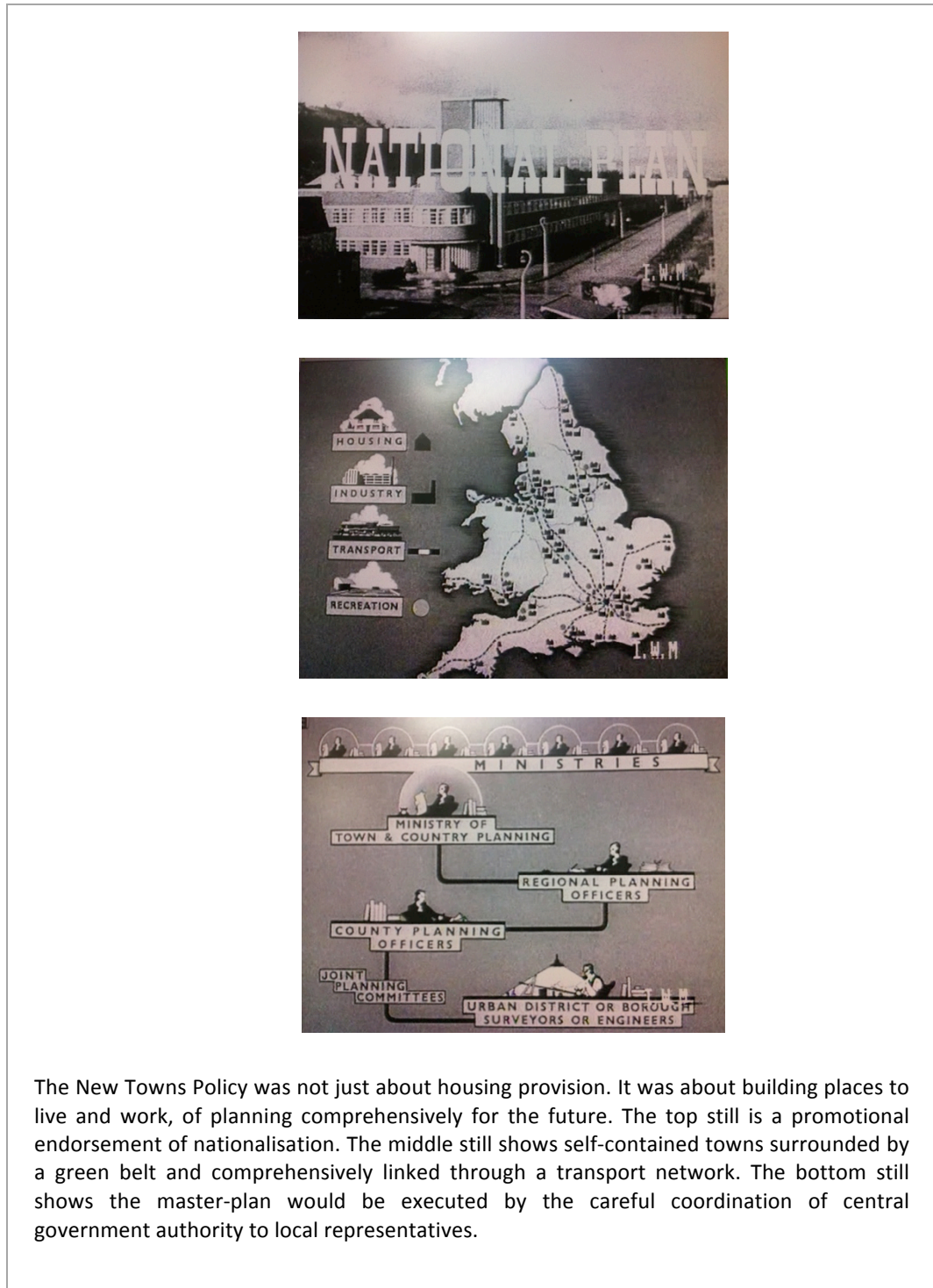


Figure 3-1: Rebuilding Britain through Town and Country Planning, 1946 by War Office Production

© Source: Imperial War Museum UKY 748 IWM (ABCA Magazine, 1946)

It is easy for the public to misunderstand the DC and their powers because the nationalisation strategy was highly complex in the tiers of planning control. The Town and Country Planning film prepared by the War Office Production in 1946 knew it had to explain to the public both the physical master-plan for England as well as its proposed administrative structure (Figure 3-1). Establishing Development Corporations for the realisation of New Towns was not a new concept, although their designated powers departed significantly from previous examples, most notably Howard's Garden City Trusts. Osborn and Howard had explained this precedent in a joint publication of *New Towns After the War* (1942) referring to themselves as the 'New Townsmen'. Herein, Osborn anticipated that New Towns could only be realised through a national effort with state support, but warned it would be a delicate balance of 'central arrangement and local autonomy'. In fact, he devoted a chapter of his publication to this title and explained how land would have to be compulsorily acquired. Importantly, the land would be leased back to the local authority (Osborn, 1942: 51-57). His was the culmination of many years working side by side with Howard, and building an argument, both in theory and in practice, for new industrial towns. The Development Corporation was a radical departure from this recommendation because the land bought through compulsory purchase powers would remain in under the ownership of the Development Corporation, therefore essentially under state control. This paradox, much in line with Aldridge's (1979) criticism, illustrates the struggle for power between local and central authority that dominated New Town procurement over the next thirty years.

Why was such a critical shift made? One interpretation could be that the success of the wartime dispersal of industry and control of industrial location demonstrate the practicality of the Barlow Report's recommendation, and perhaps placed undue faith in committee recommendations. New Towns literature frequently mentions the speed with which decisions were made and policy enacted — particularly with reference to the Reith Committee (Hall and Tewdwr-Jones, 2011; Cullingworth and Nadin, 2006; Thornley, 1994; Cherry, 1996), not to mention the 'elite approach' that resulted from a partnership between government and expert administrators that essentially framed the Welfare State (Thornley, 1991: 14). Hastiness in adopting a post-war strategy is supported by a cursory glance at the timeline in which the New Towns Final Report was produced. Lord Reith was appointed in October 1945 and delivered their First Report after ten weeks (Reith Committee, 1946a). On July 1946, only 10 months after the Reith Committee had been appointed, the Final Report (Reith Committee, 1946c) was

produced and The New Towns Act 1946 received royal assent on November 11, 1946 (Schaffer, 1970:18).

The New Towns programme was also funded in a particular way. Different aspects of the New Town infrastructure and provisions came from state funding through various departments, from the Department for Transport, or the Ministry of Housing, or local taxation. Tewdwr-Jones (2012: 120331-03S) refers to this as ‘government through consensus’ and reflects how it made the New Towns programme vulnerable to any changes in government between different ministries:

Although it was a national programme, the government was very nervous about being accused of social engineering so the mechanisms they used to deliver [the] New Towns programme was not so authoritarian as people made out, because actually they wanted to build a consensus of negotiation of all the bits fitting together. And there was a vision from the start anyway, but the way it was done wasn’t so top-down as people imagined.

Since the Development Corporations were not entirely independent and were instead accountable to Whitehall, they were susceptible to any changes where national interests overrode local concerns. They relied heavily on the legislative framework established through the 1947 system and became a highly contested political embodiment of the welfare state. In terms of governance the Development Corporations illustrate England’s particularity of the ‘parliamentary sovereignty’ (Cole and John, Cited in Phelps, 2012: 11) whereby central government overrides local government:

[the] legal and constitutional power and legitimacy of central government devalues local government and legitimates central intervention in the powers, functions and decisions of local government. (*ibid.*)

The sovereignty of Development Corporations is yet to be tested empirically. Nevertheless the literature review represents these as a contentious agency never fully supported by the Conservative government. In 1959, the Conservative government established a different central authority to administer the housing stock of all New Towns jointly: this became the Commission for New Towns (CNT).²⁰ One political rationale offered by Reade (1987) was that the Conservative government did not agree with semi-independent agencies acting as landlords over such a large electorate (Reade,

²⁰ In 1999, the Commission for New Towns merged with the Urban Regeneration Agency and together they created English Partnerships (EP). In 2008, English Partnerships became part of the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA), which still functions in 2014 as the ‘national housing and regeneration agency for England’ (National Archives 2010).

1987: 87). On the other hand, Alexander (2009) claims that it was precisely the profitability of autarchy, or self-control, that became visible in the late 1950s throughout the New Towns, that instigated a change in the management structure: ‘As the inherent profitability of Howard’s model became apparent towards the end of the 1950s, the New Towns Development Corporations were drawn inexorably closer to central government seeking to capture the benefits’ (Alexander, 2009:137). The New Towns would eventually become goldmines for the Treasury: it is estimated that between 1999 and 2001 English Partnerships invested £120 million in New Towns and raised approximately £600 million in capital receipts (DTLR, 2002a: 25). This is a unique departure from existing New Town literature that tends to portray New Towns as an expensive socialist experiment funded by the taxpayer, a view that is likely to have originated in the 1960s when the planned economy was challenged as stagflation and urban social crisis was on the rise. State intervention was to blame because of its preference for regulating markets and public spending (Anonymous, 2008). This is when Ward’s (2004) earlier interpretation of state intervention and the planned economy becomes critical. If the 1950s can be understood as a continuum of state intervention, albeit with a narrower planned economy and more emphasis on the mixed economy, then the Development Corporations should have a place in history as an agency capable of working with the public and private sector. In other words, it is unjust to portray the Development Corporation as a symbol of the inflexible arm of the paternalistic or nanny-state welfare system.

It may be difficult to accept that Development Corporations were merely victims of unjust representation because they were short-lived governance solutions. A wider question may be: What was the socio-political context that debilitated the Development Corporations? One reading could be down to their link to housing, which is often overlooked. As discussed previously, they were essentially housing associations that had built and retained ownership of their housing. In 1976, an International Monetary Fund (IMF) loan demanded heavy cuts from Labour on public expenditure and called ‘for the involvement of private capital’ to reduce the national deficit (Edwards, 2001; Sandbrook, 2012). As a result, public housing came under attack.²¹ The loan also marked a symbolic moment because it was seen as a bailout and evidence that the

²¹ In 1976, there was a great oil crisis that devalued the Sterling Pound and the Labour government was forced to ask for a large loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

economy needed to be restructured from the manufacturing industry to a service-based market economy (Atkinson and Moon, 1994; Thornley, 1991). The economic trend of de-industrialisation (1970-1980) greatly affected the New Towns. Self-containment was impossible to enforce or control as factories began to close down and citizens acquired a newly found mobility through car ownership. This is a critical turning point because self-containment was a fundamental pillar to the working of a New Town, and even more so to the mark 1 generation. While Howard's 'Social City' was a cluster of Garden Cities grouped closely together to allow freedom of movement between each, the mark 1 New Towns were in fact widely dispersed around London and could not be interdependent. In 'The Containment of Urban England', Hall (1973a) notes that Howard's proposal would have been capable of supporting big city facilities and creating alternative centres capable of competing with Birmingham or London. By contrast, the New Towns' viability and economic strength was very much limited to the self-contained model with a localised industry.

As Labour was forced out of Parliament by Margaret Thatcher pledging to roll back the state, the post-war consensus of the welfare state officially ended. The political catchphrase of the 1980s became 'popular capitalism' used as a term to incorporate more people directly with the workings of a capitalist enterprise (Hardy, 1991b). This became the argument and the political justification for promoting home ownership and transferring council homes to sitting tenants through the Right-to-Buy scheme. Although a national initiative, the New Towns were particularly affected because they had such large quantities of council homes. The Right-to-Buy policy marked a transition from housing supplied by the state to one acquired through the market (Dodson, 2007: 74). In terms of land ownership, the Thatcher incentives of popular capitalism were irreversible. While there had been an emphasis during the 1940s and through the 1960s on providing services and accommodation administered by the Development Corporations, the 1970s and 1980s suddenly witnessed a surge of speculative development, particularly in housing (Burton and Hartly, 2003: Provision of Housing Management). The Development Corporations transferred their stock to the Commission for New Towns (CNT) and were dissolved as agencies on the premise that they were too powerful (Reade, 1987). Nevertheless the Conservative government set up very similar agencies, Urban Development Corporations (UDC), to manage the Enterprise Zones (EZ) set up to encourage development in inner-city areas (Thornley, 1991:165-166). A key Conservative criticism of the New Towns had been their inability to alleviate inner-city pressures, but the political argument that Development

Corporations were not functioning is contradicted by the inner city urban policies that replicated their structure. What this signals is that the premise was less a failure of planning and more an ideological desire to shift policies from the outer belt to the inner city.

The period is effectively the end of the New Towns programme, because in 1976 Peter Shore, the Secretary of State under Environment for the Labour party, refused to support the designation of Stonehouse New Town in Scotland (Alexander, 2009:50). Thirty years after the 1947 system was founded, underpinning the model of a planned economy through state intervention, the post-war settlement ended under a neo-liberal agenda and a diminished state, in what is coined as the post-Barlow philosophy of town planning (Smith, 1978).

The last New Town to be designated in England was Milton Keynes in 1967. The New Towns Act of 1946, however, was never abolished and can be appealed to at any given time for the designation of a New Town. There has been no attempt since 1973 to use this legislative mechanism for the development of new communities, a fact that appears incongruous in the face of contemporary debate surrounding the current housing need and the lack of substantiated evidence proving that New Towns are in any way flawed. Understanding this rationale is one of the main focus points of the empirical research.

3.4 Conclusion

Nested within the larger historiography of ‘housing versus planning’ reviewed in Chapter 2, this chapter has focused on the New Towns programme to illustrate how a single spatial planning policy is developed, delivered and managed. It offers a discursive analysis of how the New Towns programme was pitched not just as a housing issue within planning but a larger planning experiment about how to rebuild socio-economically in a post-war context. A key finding is that 1951 marked a decisive shift in the New Towns strategy. This year marks a departure from early Labour policies as England enters a phase of Conservative politics characterised by scepticism of the planning profession. In the 1950s a significant departure was made, in principal, from the ideal of social reconstruction. This is key because New Towns legacy traditionally portrays Margaret Thatcher’s entry into politics (1979) as the defining moment for its decline. This misrepresentation will be one of the questions posed throughout the empirical research.

The first section examines how the New Towns programme embraced its own abstraction of aspiring to be a 'balanced community'. There is a planning paradigm based on a reconstruction policy that is technical in its remit (constrained by the limitations of the planning profession) but founded upon principles of social policy, such as the social planning exposed by Cullingworth (1970). The act of reinforcing self-containment required an interventionist process of matching a home to a job, and class divisions were actually repeated in wider housing allocation processes. The discussion of building for a 'balanced community' highlighted that although the 'state' had local voices available to them (for example through the work for the Mass Observation movement), it did not apply their research in the early aspects of the programme. Its absence reinforces the criticism that welfare state planning was too preoccupied with using bureaucratic procedures and expert administrators to realise a social policy that reflected popular need. This is contradictory because the policy aspiration was aiming for 'social balance'. The question here is: who was the 'community' being built for: politicians or citizens? And what were the terms of reference used to define 'balance'? This was the opening question to this section and consequently demonstrates the lack of existing literature that documents the experience of New Town pioneers. Moreover, the Mass Observation recordings (2009a, 2009b, 2009c) are omitted from existing New Town history, and were discovered in this research by reading the popular non-academic writings of Kynaston (2007, 2009, 2013).

Planning as part of the 1947 system produced a scientific 'fixed-end' approach to urbanity so rigid that it was incapable of absorbing structural change as society progressed. This is the common allegory that New Town housing, the Radburn layout and neighbourhood planning appear to share. On the one hand, New Towns are consistently represented as low density, land-hungry urban models (Alexander, 2009; Hanley, 2007). This may explain why they have been characterised as corporation suburbs. Nevertheless, a closer examination of the planning ideology underpinning the neighbourhood unit and the Radburn layout demonstrate that they were designed to offset the suburban maladies caused by the inter-war municipal housing estates. One identifiable problem of the comprehensive planning system of 1947 was its reliance on a fixed-end master-plan. Promoting specific design solutions, as the Dudley Report on Dwellings 1944 promoted the neighbourhood unit and Radburn layout, raises the question: What happens when structural changes in society break down and change planning ideology?

This section provides an alternative reading of New Town literature by exploring how a diversity of housing was sought through both typology and tenure, as part of the ambition for social reconstruction and creating social balance. The continuous party-political battle between public housing stock and private sector delivery had a large impact on the quality of housing stock and on the public perception of what 'social housing' means. This makes a key contribution to the historical understanding of New Towns. Instead of looking at the (apparent) failures in New Town urban design and working backwards to its origins, the question is reversed. What were the planners trying to achieve at the outset (in 1945), and how did subsequent structural changes in society – such as the minor revolution of mass car-ownership modify this vision? In other words, how was the urban design intention affected by structural changes in society? Similarly, the continuous shift in housing tenure reflecting party-politics was incorporated in the New Town as a modification or extension of the original plans, but did not prevent the delivery of housing. Ostensibly this can be interpreted as an endorsement that New Towns were actually flexible models that are capable of assimilating institutional, political and social change.

The last section on the New Towns governance established that New Towns are portrayed and represented as part of the welfare system and a spatial planning strategy highly dependent on the nationalisation of the powers of an enlarged state. Planning throughout this period is represented as a bureaucratic intervention of the welfare system that became too involved in the day-to-day life of its citizens (Bryson, 1992). Differences exist over the reasoning behind land nationalisation. One field of academics claim it was written by uninterested land experts (Hall and Tewdwr-Jones, 2011), and others insist that it was driven by an ideological objective of enlarging the state or promoting socialist policies (Cherry, 1996). Critically, the period between 1945 and 1951 was one where Keynesian principles were applied to 'nudge' the economy. However, the planned economy presents a problem between 'market' and 'plan' in what Ward (2004) calls a contradiction of two opposing factors. If the market hadn't been planned out as it was in early New Towns, the policy would not have been as vulnerable to the rigours of market-based competition from 1951 onwards. This chapter also establishes a serial misrepresentation of the Development Corporations and the extent of their powers. Practically, they were large housing corporations with additional powers over commercial premises and the compulsory purchase of land. They were not omnipotent agencies staffed by civil servants, but had to operate in parallel to the local planning system and its locally elected authorities, whilst simultaneously being

constrained by central government plans. This chapter finds that they were capable of governing even with a narrower planned economy and more emphasis on the mixed economy. As the New Town Development Corporations were dissolved a similar agency was created to deal with London inner-city urban policy: Urban Development Corporations (UDC). The emergence of UDCs suggests that as administrative and governance agencies, the New Town Development Corporations were not so much planning failures but perhaps victims of ideological party-politics. Consequently, they should have a place in history as an agency capable of working with the public and private sector. In other words, it is unjust to portray them as a symbol of the inflexible arm of the nanny-state welfare system. Development Corporations are thus illustrative of the struggle for power between local and central authority that was discussed in Chapter 2 as a key embodiment of why the highly politicised profession (that is both discretionary and flexible in its remit) has not been capable of addressing the challenge of building new communities without relying on 'lofty abstractions'.

While this chapter has gone to some length in demonstrating the misrepresentation of New Towns in established literature, it still remains unclear as to the degree of this misrepresentation. However, as discussed in the introduction to this thesis, current government findings acknowledge there is a lack of evidence in the form of 'real-life' stories and user experience in the New Towns (DCLG 2006d; Alexander 2009). In addition, if a wider representation did exist, how would residents, or rather New Town pioneers, reflect on the conclusions of its legacy? These are key questions that will be addressed in the empirical research.

Chapter 4 Methodology

In 2006, I applied to be the sole researcher for a project established to commemorate the 50 year anniversary of British New Towns. The Architecture Foundation (AF) was planning a year-long schedule of seminars, conferences, competitions and activities to address the anniversary in light of the (then) existing housing crisis and the excitement regarding sustainable communities policies that were emerging from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM). Together with the Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture (FADA) of Kingston University, both academic and non-academic institutions created a partnership and applied for a Collaborative Doctorate Award (CDA) to the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC).

Collaborative Doctoral Awards (CDAs) are intended to encourage and develop collaboration between Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and non-academic organisations and businesses. (AHRC, 2013: 12 May 2014).

As a non-profit independent agency, The Architecture Foundation seeks to ‘bring together the public and professionals to cultivate new ideas and talent, stimulate discussion, and improve the quality of the built environment’ (Architecture Foundation: accessed online).²² With experience in curating events, live projects and education programmes, The Architecture Foundation was in a strong position to fulfil the AHRC requisite that ‘it is important that the collaboration brings more to the student than enhanced access to an archive of collection, and that they are afforded real opportunities to develop career enhancing skills in addition to an academic qualification’ (AHRC 2014: 12 May 2014). A researcher was thus sought to aid the AF in constructing, researching and recording the project.

The scope of this CDA was a live project directed by the Principal Researcher (myself) and sponsored by The Architecture Foundation to carry out an International Design Charette in an existing New Town.²³ The objective was to redevelop a

²² The Architecture Foundation website describes their role as: “Established in 1991 as the UK’s first independent architecture centre, The Architecture Foundation has organised hundreds of design initiatives, events, exhibitions and education programmes in public venues across Britain and internationally. The Architecture Foundation is a registered charity, with a Board of Trustees composed of individuals from a wide cross-section of interests and professions including architecture, art, business, policy, media, engineering and law. The AF is proud to be an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation” (The Architecture Foundation 2014: 09 July 2014).

²³ Establishing the terms and conditions of the collaborataive relationship was initially slow because all parties were new to the scheme and the remit of the partnership was unclear. After a year of embedded work at The Architecture Foundation, where I spent three days per week working in the organisation, The Architecture Foundation had a significant change in leadership and management. Rowan Moore (2002-2008) left in 2008 and Sarah Ichioka (2008- current) replaced his role as Director. As a consequence, the scope of this CDA was reconsidered and focused into a single project.

neighbourhood unit into an exemplary new sustainable community through a series of resident-led workshops and resident-led observations. Through active participation with the local residents, the intention was to develop a design brief based primarily on local needs followed by a professional response in the format of an AF-led design charrette.²⁴ The purpose of the project was to test whether a change in procurement methods within the architecture and planning profession could generate a more localised and responsive design for the out-dated housing stock and building facilities in the New Town. The specific requirements for the Principal Researcher were twofold: First, to find a New Town local authority that would be willing to work on a live project using a real New Town neighbourhood, an approach with strategic characteristics of Participatory Action Research (PAR). Second, once this neighbourhood was established, to direct and participate in the workshops in order to establish a framework of community needs.

I transferred from Kingston University to University College of London (UCL) in November 2010 which implied a disciplinary shift. While this thesis began within the arts and design faculty in Kingston University (FADA), the methodological enquires evolved dramatically as I transferred to the Bartlett School of Planning. Despite the various detours undertaken throughout this research, what remains clear is that the objectives of the Collaborative Doctorate Award (CDA) are about supporting and encouraging Participatory Action Research (PAR), the focus of which will be considered further in this chapter.

As stated in the introduction to this thesis, the objective of this research is to understand how throughout history England has relied on planning and its policies of building new communities, to solve the chronic problems of housing provision. To achieve this, an understanding of planning history is needed in order to rethink contemporary policy. Three key critiques affected the research questions and methodology of this thesis. In the first instance, Sandercock's (2003) preoccupation that planning has no 'proper field of inquiry' (*ibid.*:38) lending to a professionally orientated account of the emergence and ideology of the profession and its outcomes. Secondly, Hayden's (1995) reflection that urban planners, landscape architects and architects have not yet undertaken creative work in recording the 'history of struggle' with the 'poetics of occupying particular spaces' (*ibid.*:13). She turns her reflection to a poignant

²⁴ For the full proposal by The Architecture Foundation and a copy of the Memorandum of Agreement between The Architecture Foundation and Dacorum Local Authority, please see Appendix A.

question asking how this recorded experience would reach scholars and professionals if it had been evaluated. Thirdly, the more recent critique made by Willett (2011) that community understanding of their environment is unequivocal and their knowledge should be integrated to an adaptive strategy in future planning (*ibid.*:10) taking into account their complexity and non-linear trajectory of experience. Together these critiques underpinned both a personal interest and a professional preoccupation over the lack of local voices and historical evaluation in New Towns planning history and influenced the two main research questions:

- (1) Given the ongoing debate around sustainable communities, how can a renewed study of the New Towns Programme help rethink planning's challenges in building new communities today?
- (2) To what extent can we reconceptualise the New Towns discourse by incorporating local perspectives into the legacy of this 1946 policy?

The primary research question called for a mixed methods approach because it required reading and evaluating the origins of planning ideology to understand contemporary policy and contribute knowledge to the continuing housing crisis. While a discourse analysis can lead to an understanding of the policy formulation for housing provision, it provides a limited insight. It reveals the 'ideological discourses used by actors within organisations to promote specific policy agendas that are commensurate with their interests' (Marston, cited in Keith Jacobs, 2006: 42), for example, in Parliamentary discussion of 'the underserving poor'. However, a discourse analysis was not sufficient to capture the complexity of the different policy processes that informed the different themes. Thus, while discourse analysis and historical evaluation can be a useful method for understanding policy documents, it is not necessarily the most revealing when reading historical archival material. Acknowledging the existing limits of New Town literature and its interpretation by experts was another challenge of the preliminary literature review. First-hand material about the New Towns consisted predominantly of documents, statistical surveys and annual reports, which were compiled by the Development Corporations and would offer a traditional quantitative approach to analysis where hard facts and figures inform the subject-matter. By surveying this data, obvious trends and correlations emerged (Denscombe, 2007). For example, that home ownership was almost double in Hemel Hempstead of that in Harlow before the Right-to-Buy policy was introduced (Table 8 and Table 9 in Chapter 7). Or, that the Development Corporations became a pawn of government ideology in the discourse regarding rescaling governance. Also, that factory relocation was

generally assessed in parallel to housing provision data. While these trends suggested there were significant emergent themes, such quantitative data could not provide deeper, interpretative information around the issues. Keeping this in mind, empirical material was collected from various sources: policy documents; archives, structured one-to-one interviews and informal group discussions, design charrettes, and collaboration with a non-academic organisation.

4.1 Participatory Action Research (PAR)

The objective of the CDA project with The Architecture Foundation was to redevelop a mark 1 neighbourhood into an exemplary new sustainable community through a series of community workshops and resident-led observations (Khanlou and Peter, 2005; Cahill, 2007; Gaventa and Cornwall, 2001). This was based on the assumption that mark 1 New Town typologies (1946-1951) had similarities with the proposed Sustainable Community strategy (2003) but were being ignored. In fact, as discussed in the introduction to this thesis, New Towns were portrayed as the antithesis to a sustainable community, despite their apparent similarity. In order to make the project both viable and critical, I interpreted the CDA as Participatory Action Research (PAR).

4.1.1 Ideological comparisons: Action Research and Participation Research

Participatory Action Research (PAR) is a combination of both action research (AR) and participation research (PR). Khanlou and Peter (2005) provide a critical framework for understanding and considering the ethical implications of PAR and distinguishing between AR and PAR methodologies:

PAR can be viewed as a way of ‘bringing participation into action research’.
(Elvin and Levin, cited in Khanlou and Peter, 2005: 2234).

This definition suggests that to understand PAR, the ideology of both AR and PR need to be differentiated, especially because PAR is an emergent methodology with limited theory. In other words to understand PAR it is necessary to compare the ideologies of AR and PR and to draw on the generous scholarly research.

In the first instance, Participation Research (PR) was first introduced by Budd Hall in 1981. For him, a democratisation of research was necessary after working in developing countries using traditional research techniques with highly trained

researchers and marginalized or oppressed focus groups. Budd Hall (1985) claims this process resulted in ‘a kind of detached work [that] created major distortions and misconceptions about the nature of the people who had actual, not hypothetical needs’ (Budd Hall, 1985: 291). Budd Hall’s critique concluded that this type of research was embedded with three characteristics:

It [PR] is at the same time an approach of social investigation, an educational process, and a means of taking action. (*ibid.*: 298).

This triangulation resulted in a new understanding of the relationship between power and knowledge. Gaventa and Cornwall (2001: 70-81) stress that a strategy of participation is about challenging power inequities in the production of knowledge because PR has more ‘emancipatory roots’ predominately used by ‘adult educators and community organizers’ (Khanlou and Peter, 2005: 2334-2335). In the second instance, Action Research (AR) has earlier origins that can be traced to the work of Kurt Lewin in 1946. He developed AR to deal with problems of the Northern hemisphere, such as poverty, fascism, anti-Semitism and minority issues (Khanlou and Peter, 2005: 2234), so it has less of an emancipatory value and more emphasis on generating new knowledge through action to create development change. In contemporary applications, researchers come from clinical practice and community development in what are generally hands-on and small-scale projects geared towards developing closer ties between social theory and real-world social problems:

Action research is essentially practical and applied. It is driven by the need to solve practical, real-world problems. It operates on the premise, as Kurt Lewin put it, that “Research that produces nothing but books will not suffice”. (Lewin, cited in Denscombe, 2007: 123).

While the ideology of both AR and PR emphasise the importance of useful knowledge and value developmental change, the difference is in their epistemological belief of how these values can be achieved. Above all, the outcomes of a PAR methodology should be focused on action and developing new knowledge with emancipatory results for the community. Their difference has also been explained as the ‘politics of the research process itself’ by Kindon, Pain and Kesby (2007:11). Whilst AR will engage with participants, it does so to broaden knowledge and reform but not to ‘break the monopoly on who holds knowledge and for whom social research should be undertaken’ (*ibid.*) in the way PAR is committed to.

PAR as emancipation was a decisive characteristic that supported the use of this methodology for the AF project. The objective of the project required active participation with a selection of local residents to develop a design brief emancipated through the use of bottom-up enquiry. Theoretically, the local community could provide better and more critical insights into how their New Town neighbourhood could improve, which is one of the underlying epistemological assumptions of a PAR framework (Cahill, 2007:327). It also seemed to be a valid methodology for empirically addressing Hayden's (1995) critique of how theory and practice need firmer links in urban design (12). The purpose of reversing the procurement method within the architecture and planning profession was to see if the result could empower the community. A traditional regeneration process means that an agency (usually an architecture or planning company) is offered a site by the landowner and it prepares a design brief, which is then open for public consultation. The affected local community is not necessarily empowered to make critical decisions about the brief itself, but is consulted on what has already been agreed. This makes the consultation process a cursory activity that can be viewed merely as a box-ticking exercise as opposed to a structural decisive factor. The PAR project designed in collaboration with the AF was specifically about revealing the development of New Town planning by giving a voice to the pioneers that have been excluded from revealing their very particular experience (Kendon, Pain and Kesby, 2007:9). However, a PAR methodology carries certain risks. Before assessing its implications and ethical considerations, a brief description of the procedure involved in selecting PAR participants for the CDA project is necessary.

Firstly, twenty-two New Town local authorities were approached to establish signs of interest but initial meetings with local authorities were held with only four of them: Skelmersdale, Northampton, Harlow and Hemel Hempstead. Feedback regarding the low level of interest from the New Town authorities returned and most demonstrated generally the same reasoning: councils were afraid to raise the expectations of its local citizens with empty promises. A design charrette for the redevelopment of a neighbourhood could be interpreted as a pledge for urban betterment. Dacorum Local Authority (the borough council for Hemel Hempstead, referred to as the 'Council') was both enthusiastic and interested in the challenge. The key contact was the Manager for Regeneration (100426-02HH) in Hemel Hempstead. She was enthusiastic about the project because there were visible and urgent concerns within the Housing and Regeneration team about neighbourhood decay, and these could potentially be resolved by addressing the issues as a design challenge. Four priority sites were already

identified in different neighbourhoods and Hemel Hempstead was prepared to knock down existing building facilities to enable a new scheme designed through a design charrette.

From the outset, it was evident that Hemel was less interested in the PAR aspect of the project which proved to be an initial constraint. This was overcome when the research team argued that participation was fundamentally about challenging community consultation as both a planning process and a way of developing ideas for the urban environment. If the local residents wanted to knock something down, it would be accommodated in the brief, but the request had to come from their critical understanding of the site (Khanlou and Peter, 2005; Cahill, 2007; Kindon, Pain and Kesby, 2007; Bradbury and Reason, 2001). From a methodological perspective, I had to convince the Council that the local community should be regarded as practitioners in the process and would be given an active role in the development of their brief (Denscombe, 2007).

At this stage, the non-academic partner (AF) proved crucial because it insisted the research team prepare a memorandum that would be shared between all parties. This was a way of securing that the PAR principles of autonomy were upheld, and that the wishes of the local community would be protected regardless of the outcome:

Ultimately participatory research is about respecting and understanding the people with and for whom researchers work. It is about developing a realization that local people are knowledgeable and that they, together with researchers, can work towards analyses and solutions. It involves recognizing the rights of those whom research concerns, enabling people to set their own agenda for research and development and so giving them ownership over the process. (Cornwall and Jewkes, cited in Khanlou and Peter 2004: 2337).

Although this was not a setback, it showed that the Council was not truly convinced that local residents were both knowledgeable and capable of setting their own agenda for regeneration. This is precisely the argument Budd Hall (1981) made when he argued that participatory research was both important and necessary in the production of knowledge. Gaventa and Cornwall (2001: 70-81) discuss the basis of his argument: participatory research calls into question the relationship between power and knowledge, and a strategy of participatory knowledge can challenge power inequities. One of their viewpoints is that if research declares knowledge of 'experts' more valid than that of

‘lay people’, then the process of knowledge production contributes to a ‘mobilization of bias’ which is problematic for studies based on political policy (*ibid.*).

The theoretical examination of power and its implications for the production of knowledge that Gaventa and Cornwall (2001) make reinforces two important methodological questions in this thesis. On the one hand, it was critical to continue the collaborative project on the principle that a PAR methodology could be used throughout. On the other hand, it was important that the empirical investigation of this research provided a distinct chapter on expert knowledge (Chapter 5) and another on local knowledge (Chapters 6 and 7). Two two-hour community consultation workshops were held in February 2009: one in the morning and one in the evening, to provide a fair opportunity of resident participation (Cahill, 2007) and reach out to a wider demographic. Informal discussions were held in the community crèche where young non-working mothers were available; the morning workshops benefitted senior citizens and the evening workshop catered for working citizens. The workshops were informal and all participants sat around a table. Stories were told of how everyone had arrived in their neighbourhood (many original pioneers attended the morning session) and how they had witnessed the evolution of the neighbourhood. Discussion was led by prompts prepared by the Lead Researcher to ensure that the basic questions were addressed (see the Appendix G workshop prompts).

The project as envisaged between The Architecture Foundation and Dacorum Borough Council quickly collapsed after two initial workshops due to many contributing factors. The partnership structure became very complex and bureaucratic for a CDA because the non-academic partner had to produce results quicker than the academic research period allowed for. This was aggravated by the expectations of the Council who entered the partnership with different objectives to those previously discussed. In this respect the outcome validates Cerf’s (2011) claim that academic and non-academic researchers cannot be co-researchers because ‘they both stick to their respective social and professional worlds’ (Cerf, 2011:417). Nevertheless this does not question the validity of PAR as a scientific research method because in this instance, I had chosen to interpret a pre-existing CDA project as Participatory Action Research (PAR). Had I made a wrong methodological decision? At this stage, it is worth reflecting that once the CDA project was finished, returning to the literature on PAR produced by academics (Cerf, 2011; Cahill, 2007; Khanlou and Peter, 2004; Kindon, Pain and Kesby, 2007; Bradbury and Reason, 2001) highlighted that the methodology

was more complex than what had been established in the terms of the collaborative agreement. It is highly likely that a more rigorous distinction between AR versus PR and PAR from the outset may have withstood the weight of the complex arrangement between Dacorum Borough Council, The Architecture Foundation and Kingston University.

One concern in having interpreted the CDA as a PAR methodology concerns ethics and how to protect the participating community. Local residents who took part in the workshops had high hopes for the project and its demise was undoubtedly disappointing. This highlights why other New Town local authorities were initially cautious and sceptical in their potential agreement to a PAR project of regeneration. However, Cornwall and Jewkes (1995) suggest active participation of local residents as part of the research is fundamental to the rights of a democratic society. They argue that raising community expectations should be about managing the expectations but not preventing them.

Using the material gathered from a CDA PAR project raises complex methodological questions in terms of its validity, reliability and transferable use. Firstly, do the problems encountered in PAR make the empirical research for this doctorate inaccurate and/or weak? Community consultation was used as data collected as part of a focus group, and it became obvious that for rigorous analysis of the data, an iterative process would be needed by moving back and forth between the data collected and the analysis of the material (Petty, Thomson and Stew, 2012). This was an indication that in order to achieve an accurate and rigorous methodology, the approach may have to change and broaden into a case-study format. Secondly, did the premise of the PAR influence the nature and reliability of the data collected? The workshops were held as an open discussion in an unstructured format because it was a resident-led process. The nature of the problems recorded may have been skewed towards conversations regarding regeneration of the neighbourhood town centre and less about housing because that was the predefined site offered by the local authority. However, the material gathered remains valid because it was collected in real-life scenarios and is relevant to the people it was concerned with, being neither speculative nor ungrounded (Denscombe 2003).

Concerns regarding consistency and objectivity might have had an adverse effect on the reliability of the material. To counterbalance, once the CDA project collapsed, additional site visits and structured interviews were conducted and Hemel Hempstead

became a case study. Lastly, should the empirical material collected in Hemel Hempstead, without the terms of the CDA project, be used as a case study? As rightly feared by the Council, there is danger in promising to deliver a project and raise participant expectations (Khanlou and Peter, 2004; Cerf, 2011; Bradbury and Reason, 2001). Residents who donated their time to the workshops and interviews were hopeful for improvements to their neighbourhood, resulting in an openness and generosity in their dialogue. For a lead researcher there is an uncomfortable sense of guilt that the residents may have had raised expectations by a project that did not materialise. This is undoubtedly a dangerous aspect of a project involving participation because by becoming so involved in the process, the lead researcher invariably has an added responsibility of managing participant expectations and becoming personally attached to the local stories.

Since this thesis uses a qualitative mixed methods approach, the data collected as part of the CDA could be extrapolated as part of a case study approach. The benefit of doing so is that in a case study approach, a wider range of data would be collected. This counters what Cornwall argues is PAR's main setback. She claims the participatory process does not allow the primary researcher to move beyond 'voices and versions of the vocal few' (Cornwall, 2003: 1325). Although Cornwall is specifically referring to gender-awareness in participatory research, her argument is relevant for a wide demographic-awareness of the New Towns. This became clear whilst organising the CDA workshops.

A downside of using the CDA project as a case study is that Hemel was identified through a process of 'them selecting us' and not vice versa. In a case study approach, the site is chosen based on its relevance to the 'practical problems or theoretical issues' being researched (Denscome, 2007: 40) and not by the site that is willing to work with the researcher. However, in a grounded theory methodology the researcher generates a theory to explain a social process for analysis and conceptual abstraction (Petty, Thomson and Stew, 2012: 378-379). Hemel Hempstead fulfilled the requirements as one of London's outer ring mark 1 New Towns that was on the edge of the designated 2003 Growth Areas, a main prerequisite for this thesis. Henceforth Hemel Hempstead became a case study. The outcome of the CDA project and its PAR workshops was used as case study material and subsequent visits to Hemel Hempstead were made to gather additional data. Upon transferring to UCL, it became evident that a second case study would be required to complement the empirical investigation, not for

a compare and contrast analysis, but to understand the varying narrative that emerges from two communities planned under the same ideology facing the same national housing crisis.

4.2 New Town mark 1 case studies:

A case study approach to this research strategy was adopted immediately after the PAR memorandum between The Architecture Foundation and Dacorum Borough was dissolved. This decision was influenced by the fact that case study research offers a qualitative mixed methods approach. A characteristic of case study research is:

It aims to understand what is distinctive of a case being defined as ‘specific, a complex functioning thing’ (Stake 1995), whether it be a person, a clinic, a classroom, an institution, a programme, a policy, a process or a system (Simons 2009). (Petty, Thomson and Stew, 2012: 379).

As a consequence of the PAR project, a vast amount of real-life material grounded in a site-specific New Town community became available. By using Hemel to understand a mark 1 New Town, one can ‘provide an explanation’ to the ‘complexity and subtlety of real life situations’, which is what Denscombe (2007: 38) ascribes as the strength of this methodological technique. However, dealing with a single case (Hemel) would have generated limited results if generalisations were to be drawn for a wider discussion, and a binary unit of analysis was thus required. This was part of establishing the boundaries of the case study research, not for a comparative analysis, but for a parallel narrative of two New Towns built under similar conditions in what Yin (2003) refers to as a ‘literal replication’ (Yin, 2003: 47).

The logic of a multiple-case design in this instance is that by selecting two similar cases they would be expected to predict a similar result. Whilst Hemel Hempstead had emerged as the most relevant case study because it was one of London’s outer ring mark 1 New Towns that was on the edge of the designated 2003 Growth Areas (ODPM, 2003c), Harlow New Town was identified as a suitable second case study. This process of identification began by mapping the sample area of relevant New Towns that would be suitable for a binary analysis:



Figure 4-a: Location of New Towns in England, with the relevant case studies (mark 1) shown within the red ring

Source: Map drawn by researcher

Conducting research using two case studies meant that New Towns could be investigated from a localised perspective at a micro level whilst adopting a longitudinal approach to the study that allowed the research to cut across contemporary issues and challenges (Arabindoo, 2012: 130201-14S). This technique revealed nuances that could contribute to the established historiography of New Towns, which was clearly lacking from the preliminary literature review. Flyvbjerg's (2006: 222) writings on the five key misunderstandings of case study research show that not only can you draw valid generalisations from a single case but that 'human learning' is based on 'context-dependent knowledge'. According to Flyvbjerg, the phenomenological difference

between knowledge that is *context-independent* from *context-dependent* is what can mark the difference between ‘being a beginner to being an expert’ (*ibid.*).

Case study research relies on ‘qualitative data and interpretive methods rather than quantitative data and statistical procedures’ (Denscombe, 2007: 46). By virtue of the secondary research question of this thesis and its quest to incorporate localised narratives to the New Towns historiography, a qualitative and interpretative approach was fundamental. So too, was the adoption of a Ryle’s philosophical explanation of how we generate intellectual work. He coined the idea that qualitative research required a ‘thick description’ that ‘involved ascribing intentionality to one’s subject...by understanding and absorbing the context of the situation and behaviour’ (Ryle 1949, cited in Ponterotto, 2006: 539). Thick description was further developed into a methodological framework by Geertz (1973) and is used for managing secondary sources in this research (see 4.2.7).

The following section introduces the two chosen case studies and discusses the method for data collection and analysis.

4.2.1 Defining the case studies

Fieldwork began with a series of exploratory visits to various types of new communities both in the UK and in Europe where exemplary eco-towns were being highlighted throughout policy documents of the Sustainable Community Plan (ODPM 2003a). Exploratory visits generated mainly visual material (photographs, sketches and community brochures or announcements) and acted as a phenomenological introduction to the experience of towns and neighbourhoods at different scales built under different typologies. An attempt was made to set aside my own views and experience the towns objectively, a technique referred to as bracketing (Petty, Thomson and Stew, 2012: 379) but these visits were aimed at being exploratory only, and to claim that bracketing was achieved would be misleading. For the same reason, an extensive analysis of these visits was not made because they served more as a means to identify the case studies than to act as material sources for analysis. A list of these exploratory visits can be seen in the Appendix B.

The next stage of fieldwork included formal visits to New Towns around England within the remit of the PAR discussed previously. This stage identified Hemel Hempstead as a well-suited mark 1 New Town case study. In the process of identifying

Hemel Hempstead, visits made to meet local authorities followed by guided tours through different New Towns, usually by car. Material gathered in these visits was mainly visual and textual. They included local authority publications, policy guidelines, local area plans and maps. A series of individual visits were made to the remaining mark 1 New Towns around the London ring. These were informal, self-guided and unstructured. A full list of the New Town visits can be seen in the Appendix C, with a differentiation of whether it was a local authority meeting as part of the PAR project, or an individual and self-guided visit.

Harlow New Town emerged as a second relevant and interesting case study. Like Hemel, it was designated as a mark 1 New Town and was within the Growth Area of London-Stanstead-Cambridge-Peterborough (LSCP), identified under the Sustainable Communities Plan (ODPM 2003a, 2003c). Unlike Hemel, upon designation Harlow had a much smaller existing population, although both New Towns had the same projected population:

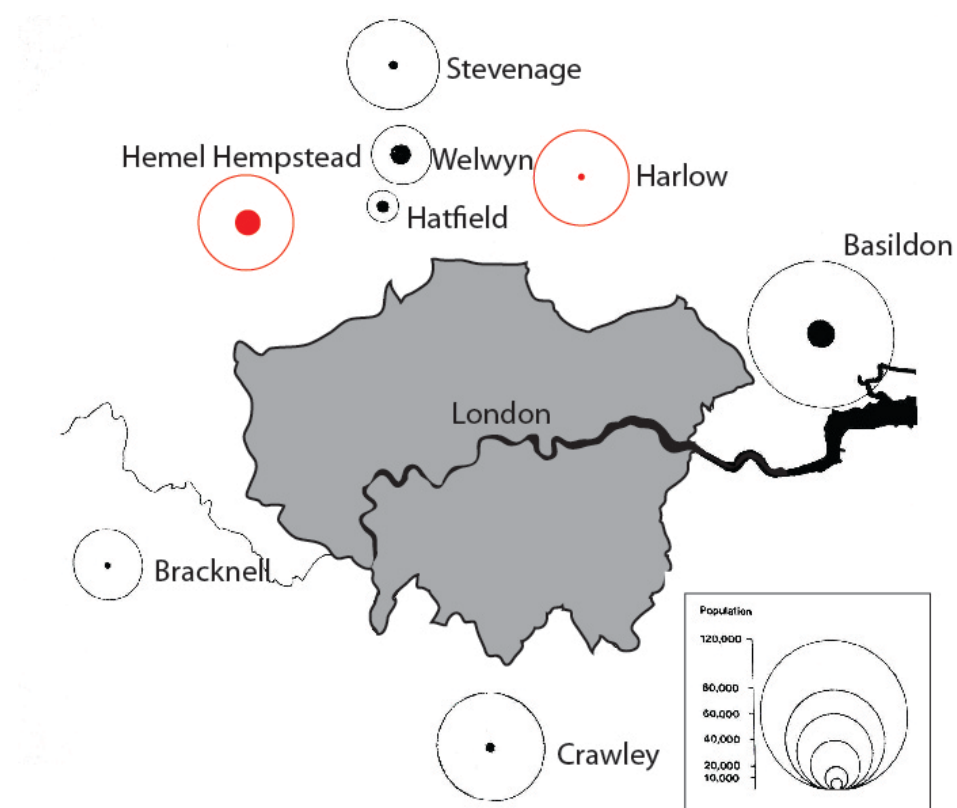


Figure 4-b: Population targets of mark 1 New Towns

Source: Gibberd, Harvey and White 1980, p. 6

The main difference between the two case studies was that in 1946, Harlow New Town was expected to grow to fourteen times its original size, whereas Hemel Hempstead was only anticipated to expand by four times its original size.

4.2.2 Hemel Hempstead

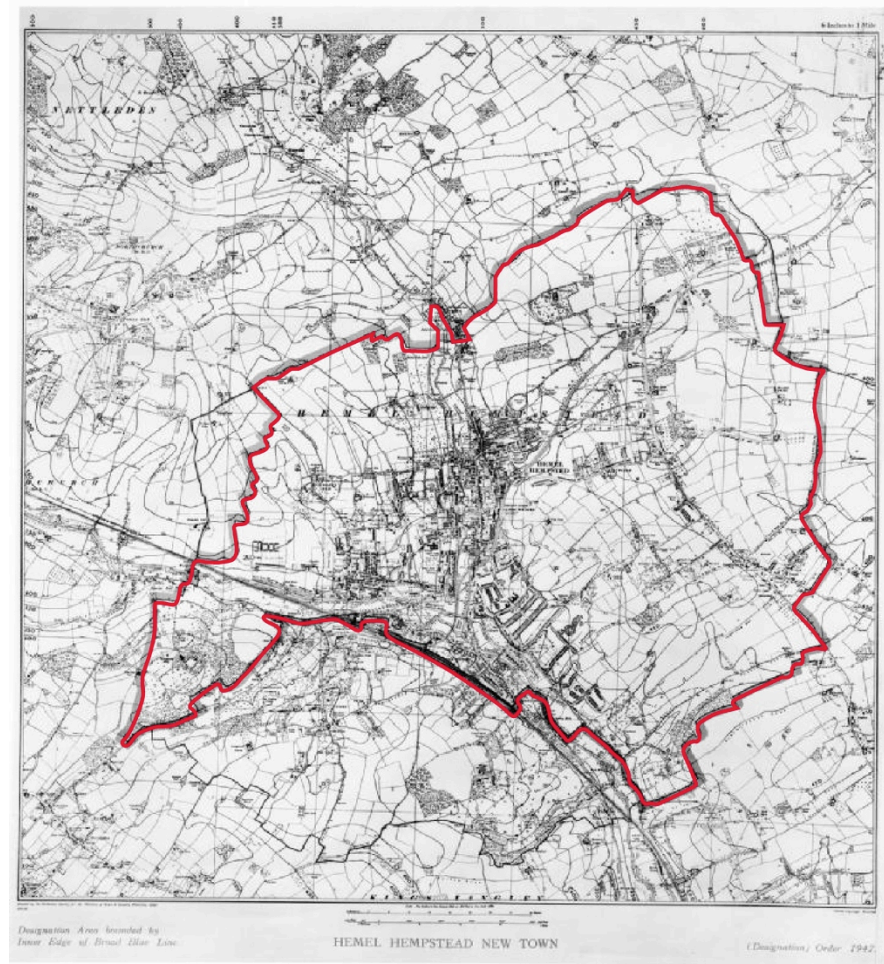


Figure 4-c: Designation site for Hemel Hempstead New Town

© Source: Imperial war Museum, IWM ((MOW) T 9908) | Boundary line drawn by researcher

This is a mark 1 New Town designated in 1947 currently within the remit of Dacorum Borough Council. Its large pre-existing population makes it the less radical of the mark 1 New Towns, and provides an interesting perspective on how expansion may be an alternative to establishing a completely new community. Hemel Hempstead is nestled within the rural Hertfordshire countryside in the Gade Valley. It is a 20 minute train ride from London, but 61 per cent of residents live and work in Hemel Hempstead or the surrounding villages (DBC, 2005). The original master-plan was designed by Sir Geoffrey Jellicoe (1990-1996) but was overridden by the County Council and an alternative plan was formulated by the Hemel Hempstead Development Corporation (HHDC) in 1949. In Hemel, 81% of its pioneers were builders from London (Heraud, 1966: 11) who were offered a home and job in exchange for manual labour to build the New Town.

4.2.3 Harlow

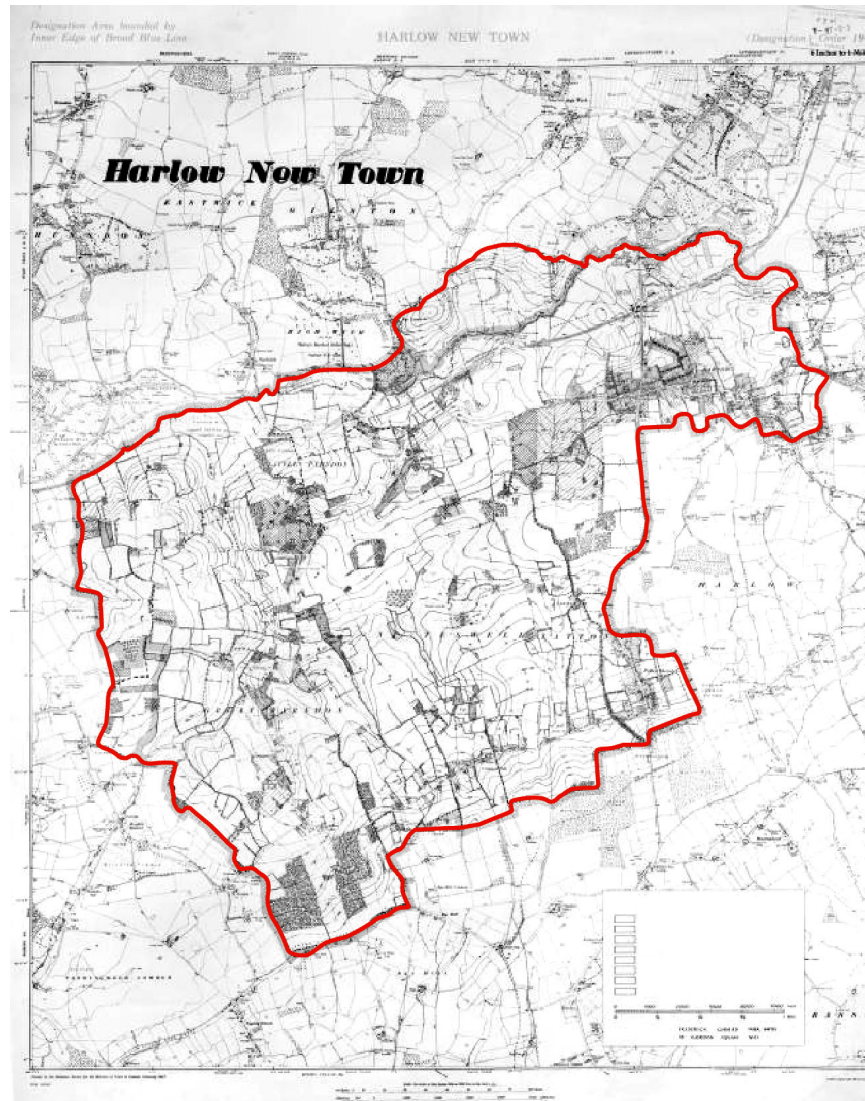


Figure 4-d: Designation site for Harlow New Town

Source: © IWM ((MOW) T 9907) | Boundary line drawn by researcher

This was the first designated New Town in 1946 and its master-plan was prepared by Frederick Gibberd (1908-1984) who remained the principal Architect and Planner of the Harlow Development Corporation (HDC) from 1946 to its dissolution in 1980 (Gibberd, Harvey and White, 1980). Harlow's pioneers were mainly residents from London's East End with a strong Mosleyite tradition. Located on the Stort Valley, Harlow is within the Essex County bordering East Hertfordshire. Harlow provides strong case study material of how a completely new community emerged as a consequence of the New Towns Act of 1946. Harlow Council provided initial contact with a residents association called MAZE. The association represents three housing areas that belong to the Priority Estates project (initiated under the Conservative Government of Margaret Thatcher) formed to regenerate housing areas in decline. The majority of MAZE residents are Harlow pioneers and provide a long-term perspective

on the development of the town as well as very personal narratives. Their view on living in Harlow was passionate and persuasive, and offered a much more specific insight into the New Towns typology.

4.2.4 Primary sources: interviews

It was crucial to understand both the early days of the New Towns (1940s-1950s) as well as contemporary challenges. Although this represents a fifty-year history, a narrative developed by exploring the arrival of pioneers to the New Town followed by impressions on its formative years: what was the New Towns programme trying to achieve and how was it experienced by its residents? Most importantly, the case study was principally concerned with revealing local issues and moving beyond generalisations:

The local is also the site of obvious power struggles and conflicts, some minor and others not so, where fear and suspicion of the other is played out in everyday encounters on the street, in the park or shopping centre. It is the place where local government is mandated to manage the use of space by different groups, many of whom have contrasting needs, desires and hopes. (Thompson, 2006: 21).

In using case studies to reveal local voices, this research addresses what Imrie and Raco (2003) call the ‘policy paradox’ where ‘local residents know best, outsiders know better’ (Imrie and Raco, 2003: 214-217). They claim that despite New Labour’s emphasis on community engagement and promoting community leadership, a paradoxically low level role has been accorded to them through policy evaluation processes. This was discussed briefly in the introductory chapter as a key characteristic of the Sustainable Communities strategy, where the ‘sustainable citizen’ plays a fundamental role (Mulgan 1998; Levitas 1998; Raco 2007; Imrie and Raco, 2003). In this respect the case studies served to reinforce the need for engaging local residents, both for policy formulation and programme evaluation. The workshops conducted in both Harlow New Town and Hemel Hempstead revealed that the pioneers had never been questioned, interviewed or participated in any kind of New Towns research. This made recording their concerns and anecdotes all the more urgent and relevant.

Contacts within Hemel Hempstead and Harlow New Town local authorities helped to negotiate access. This was a useful way of gaining the residents’ trust since they had previous experience with the Council representatives. The physical boundaries of the case studies were easily identified because of the New Towns feature of self-

containment. The Modernist New Town typology had very defined characteristics that consisted of six layers: commercial, industrial, residential, road networks, educational and open spaces. These layers were thematic sections in the original 1946 New Town master-plan, and they also became the areas of resource allocation to Development Corporations throughout the New Towns development. Understanding these provided a key starting point for the case study data collection because they acted as thematic variables that could be used between the two case studies (Petty, Thomson and Stew, 2012: 379).

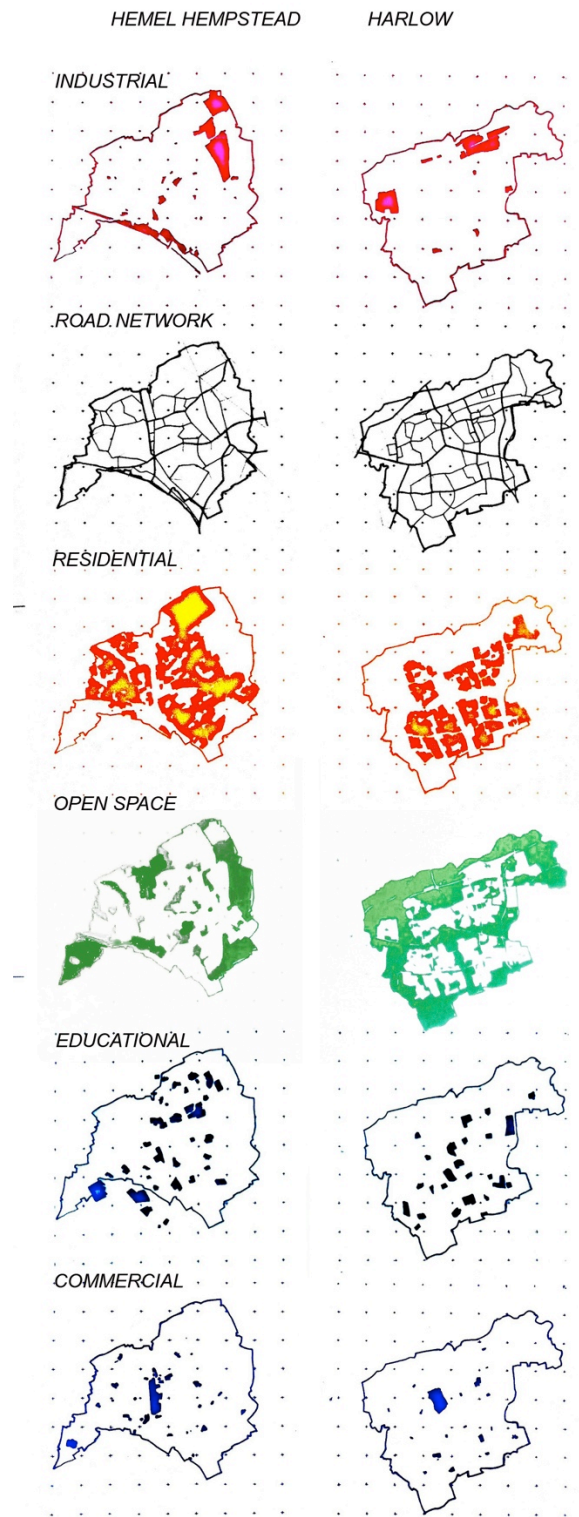


Figure 4-e: Hemel Hempstead and Harlow represented through key New Town layers, 1963

© Source: Museum of Harlow Archives

Predefined New Town layers also helped develop prompts for the interviewing of local residents. It was clear that a series of important ‘load-bearing questions’ had to be discussed with the interviewees as a way of establishing some initial parameters. These questions were critical, especially for informal group discussion and to encourage ‘good

thinking because it prompts more than a descriptive account' of living in the New Towns (Cousin, 2005:423-424):

- (1) What is different/the same about shopping in the local neighbourhood as opposed to the town centre shopping area? (Commercial);
- (2) What was made possible by your relocation to the New Town and why? In what way did your family's main source of employment change throughout the New Town development? (Industrial);
- (3) Tell me about where you live: is it a house or a flat? Did the New Town provide a good quality home? And how did this differ from where you relocated? (Residential);
- (4) How is mobility (walking, cycling, public transport, private car) different in New Town neighbourhoods? (Road networks);
- (5) What type of teaching, learning and adult education has been made available in the New Town as the industry has changed? (Educational);
- (6) In what way are recreation, safety, leisure and lifestyle choices enhanced or deterred with the vast amount of parks and open spaces in the New Town? (Open spaces).

In both Harlow and Hemel Hempstead, a neighbourhood unit was used as a focus because it represented both self-containment as an ideology and as a planning principle. Interview techniques varied and consisted of one-to-one or one-to-many (as in the case of the community workshops developed under PAR). Interviews were further classified ranging from highly structured to informal group consultation. Adopting a variety of techniques provided breadth (Yin, 2003, 2011; Denscombe, 2007) and a 'thick description' (Cousin, 2005: 424; Geertz, 1973; Ponterotto, 2006) of the case studies. The interview referencing system employed was highly specific and relied on a code being generated next to an interview type. Both of these systems can be understood in the following diagram:

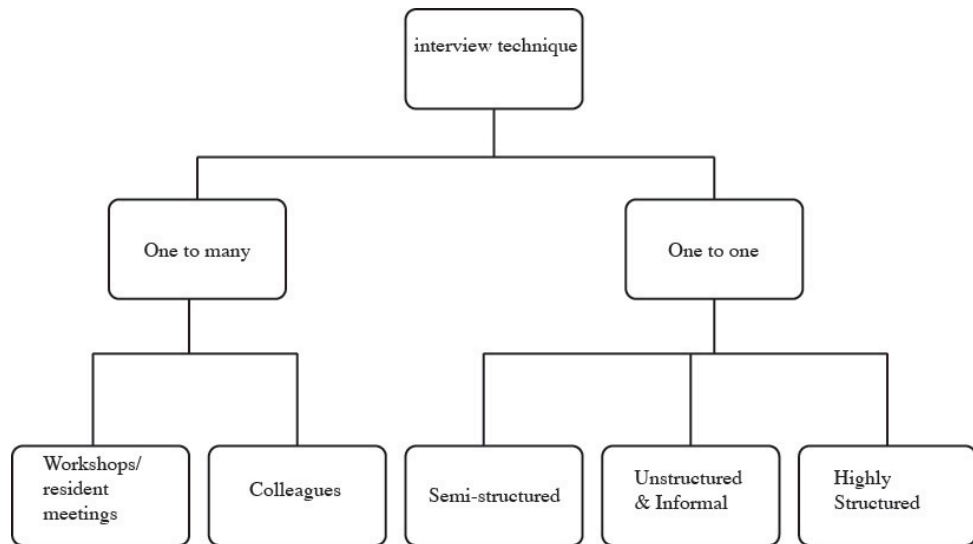


Figure 4-f: Diagram of interview hierarchy

Source: Produced by researcher

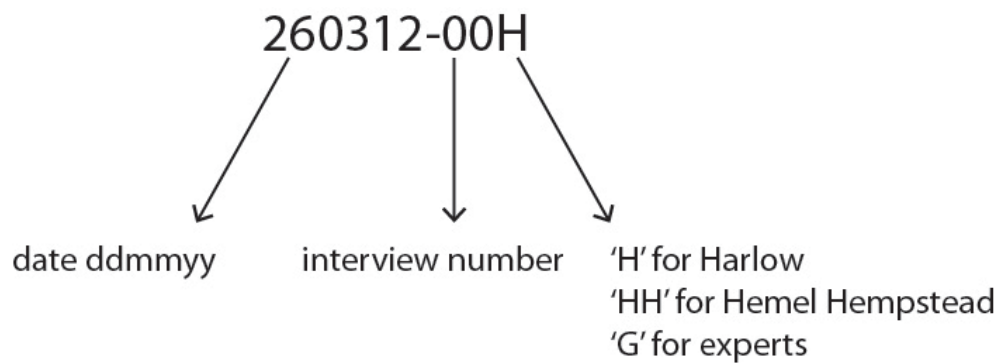


Figure 4-g: Diagram of Interview Reference

Source: Produced by researcher

4.2.5 Local voices

Structured interviews were conducted within a 12 month period between 2010 and 2011 and differentiated between two groups: local voices and experts. For local voices, interviewees were limited to residents or civil servants in the case study town. In order to classify as an appropriate local voice, a protocol was established wherein the subject had to answer 'yes' to one of the following questions:

- Have you ever lived in the (said) New Town?
- Have you ever worked in the (said) New Town?
- Were you or one of your parents an original New Town pioneer that voluntarily relocated to the (said) New Town?

Three types of groups emerged under the local voices: residents, local authority officials and professionals. A total of seventeen (17) people were interviewed in Hemel Hempstead, and twenty-one (21) in Harlow. The majority of interviews were recorded and transcribed, and a full schedule of these 'local voice' interviews is available in the Appendices (Appendix D, Appendix E, Appendix F). The key question that steered the direction of the conversation in the interviews with local voices was:

To what extent do local perceptions differ from or confirm existing literature/expert stereotypes on New Towns? And if it differs, in what way?

This was a gentle process, one of revealing the nuances of the New Towns narrative, illustrated by small-scale examples and specific personal anecdotes. For every interview conducted and every anecdote revealed, a record was also made of the year in which it took place, in order to piece together a chronology of events. Some of the pioneers have lived in the New Towns for over 40 years and could very skilfully jump in their narrative from their arrival in 1952 to the hardships they faced during the mid-1980s.

4.2.6 Expert voices

To balance the knowledge of lay people, Gaventa and Cornwall (2001:71) advise that there must be a declared knowledge of experts. A second series of interviews were conducted to establish the expert knowledge and for this, any of the following questions had to be answered as 'yes':

- (1) Have you ever taught or published about New Town history within the academic field of planning or urban geography?
- (2) Have you ever been commissioned to develop or bid in New Town project or expansion scheme?
- (3) Have you or your institution been involved in the preparation or analysis of New Town or Sustainable Communities (2003) policy?
- (4) Do you have an official academic or non-academic relationship to this doctorate research?

Having satisfied any of the aforementioned prerequisites, three main groups of experts emerged: planning academics, urban geography historians, professionals (architect/planner), government representatives and third-party policy enablers. As a collective they share the characteristic that they are central actors in the political process of New Towns policy or are contemporary academics who have shaped its theoretical

framework. This includes academics from Oxford Brookes University, the London School of Economics (LSE) and University College of London (UCL). A representative of the government Homes and Community Agency (HCA) offers the perspective of a government body whose function can be traced back to the Development Corporations (DC). There is a group of specialists who have directly influenced government policy by leading special panels: firstly that of the Urban Task Force (UTF) and secondly within the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR). Another category of expert voices comes in the form of an independent advisor for the former Centre for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE). Lastly, planners and architects make up the practitioners expert group, three of whom were interviewed and wished to remain anonymous.

In total, 11 key experts were interviewed in semi-structured individual interviews that lasted between 60-80 minutes. For the expert interviews, a formal plan was prepared in advance and used throughout to guide the conversation in case it stalled, available in the Appendix H. Yin (2003) and Denscombe (2007) suggest that data collection should follow a formal plan, but the researcher needs to be prepared to deviate from this during the interview. In this sense, the plan was more of an interview guide that served as an orientation device to keep the conversation within the key areas of study: it was used as a project-specific protocol. The experts were being both generous and responsive in offering their time, and to avoid extending the interview beyond 60 minutes, the guide proved a useful tool. It separated the conversation into two parts: a 'what has happened' to reveal legacy aspects, and 'moving forward' to reveal opportunities and constraints of the legacy. The thematic discussion fell within the areas of policy, housing and community. There were key primary questions that needed to be addressed under each theme, and prompts for each question to maintain flow in the discussion (Sandercock, 2003). For example, primary questions were specific and aimed to obtain precise analysis that would counter or uphold previously read literature. Yin (2003) declares that there is a protocol for the general orientation of questions because they fall within a hierarchy of five levels. In Yin's explanation, there is a hierarchy where questions at level one and two deal specifically with the researcher's primary and secondary research question, whilst the lower levels of four and five are normative questions acting as prompts (Yin, 2003: 73-76). The prompts, on the other hand, were softer and more personal questions, aimed at negotiating access to the detailed stories of New Town life experiences that Petty, Thomson and Stew (2012) describe as a narrative research methodology. These lower level questions, although less

important in Yin's hierarchy of question protocol, yielded the most interesting data with biographical stories and family histories that illustrated New Town life in a more practical and realistic way.

4.2.7 Document sources: moving image, parliament transcripts and The New Towns Record 1946-2002 (Burton and Hartly, 2003)

The case study approach was selected over other research methodologies because it encourages the use of multiple methods and enabled a qualitative thick description to emerge. Professor Clifford Geertz developed the anthropological use of the term 'thick description' in 'The Interpretation of Cultures' (1973). Geertz suggests 'the essential task of theory building here is not to codify abstract regularities but to make thick description possible, not to generalize across cases but to generalize within them' (1977: 26). Thick description is understood as the richly detailed context that gives an understanding to the meaning and intention of cultural fieldwork. It allows the researcher to move beyond the analytical and theoretical patterns of its fieldwork and was explained by Denzin (1989: 83, as cited in Ponterrotto, 2006):

A thick description...does more than record what a person is doing. It goes beyond mere fact and surface appearances. It presents detail, context, emotion, and the webs of social relationships that join persons to one another. Thick description evokes emotionality and self-feelings. It inserts history into experience. It establishes the significance of an experience, or the sequence of events, for the person or persons in question. In thick description, the voices, feeling, actions, and meanings of interacting individuals are heard.

In this research, primary material relied on focus groups and interviews, which provided data regarding the theoretical and analytical patterns of the case studies. A thick description emerged using a range of secondary source material. These additional sources have been valuable throughout the research and facilitated the longitudinal approach necessary to cut across contemporary issues and challenges.

One source that adds thick description and supplements work available in the preliminary review is moving image. Films have been included as valid literary material because they contextualise the post-war epoch in ways that traditional material struggles to convey. Films convey tone, texture and intention of the filmmaker whilst portraying assumptions of public aspirations. The footage featuring English New Towns provided raw, first-hand illustrative material that put the project 'in the context of other research which is the main purpose of literature reviews' (Turabian, 2007: 32) and is used

considerably throughout Chapter 3 to build a thick description of the New Towns Experiment.

Scoping the films and making decisions about which to use throughout the research was a twofold process. The first stage required a general scan of the video footage available, produced predominately by the now defunct Ministry of Information (MOI). The MOI had been used as a state vehicle to present New Towns to the people in a jargon-free (albeit highly promotional) language. These videos were available in the The National Archives held in Kew Garden and The Imperial War Museum. MOI was not the only producer of video material. A series of film directors were also making short videos and documentaries that show the unofficial and public response to the English reconstruction efforts. These films depict a higher degree of nuances, such as the NIMBYISM of New Town development in the countryside; anger at Compulsory Purchase Orders on family land; and general apathy to government-sponsored reconstruction plans. A wide range of these films is made available by the British Film Institute as a box-set collection of British Documentary Movement shorts from between 1930 and 1977 called the 'Land of Promise: 1930-1950', and, 'Shadows of Progress: 1951-1977'.²⁵ Further films were available at New Town local archives. This search was restricted to the two case studies: Hemel Hempstead and Harlow New Town.

There was open access to view this material but no way of reproducing its images or obtaining its script. This led to the second stage of the scoping process, which required dividing the material thematically. Footage that was relevant to the three underpinning analytical themes (structural issues, typological aspirations and political ideology) was categorised for use as part of the literature review. Footage that was specific to either Harlow or Hemel Hempstead was separated and categorised as part of the case study analysis. Once the films were categorised, notes were taken on each one with a transcription of the relevant scene/dialogue. Screenshots of key scenes were recorded and a small 'film file' reproduced for personal use. Throughout the analysis stage and subsequent writing up of the thesis, the film files were critical for enabling a historical and situational interpretative thick description of each theme (Denzin, 1989). Moving image integrates the meaning of what happened and why it happened in a 'natural language of persuasion' that 'involves both a sequence of events and the

²⁵ The film directors compiled within the British Film Institute box-set collection, 'Land of Promise: 1930-1950, and, 'Shadows of Progress: 1951-1977' are: Bishop, 1947; Chapman, 2010; Elton and Anstey, 1935; Grierson and Bond, 1937; Jackson, 1942; Jennings, 1948; Jennings and McAllister, 1942; Mander, 1948; Monck, 1946; Rotha, 1964.

interpretation of their meaning’ (Sandercock, 2003: 194) and therefore made a logical contribution to this research.

Since November 23, 1803, the official parliamentary debates from the House of Commons and House of Lords have been recorded and stored. These belong to a parliamentary system called ‘Hansard’ and both its current (2014) and historic debates have been digitised (<http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/>) for public use. The transcripts of these debates proved fundamental to the construction of key arguments throughout this research because it allows one to identify what different Members of Parliament (MP) were supporting, down to the day. These have been presented with reference to their MP throughout the thesis.²⁶ However, the debates in parliament were searched for by date to make connections between the process of policies and particular media coverage; historical appraisals of key debates versus the transcribed and untampered version, and added ambience to discursive analysis of issues through the insertion of [laughter], [clapping] or [chuckle] in the transcription. Hansard provided a further source of material that contextualises the research and builds the thick description described by Geertz (1973) and Denzin (1989).

Critically, Hansard provides a bar-graph function illustrating the quantity of debates over time. So, for example, one could make a specific search for debates relating to ‘housing’ or ‘New Towns’ and visualise how often the theme was debated in parliament:

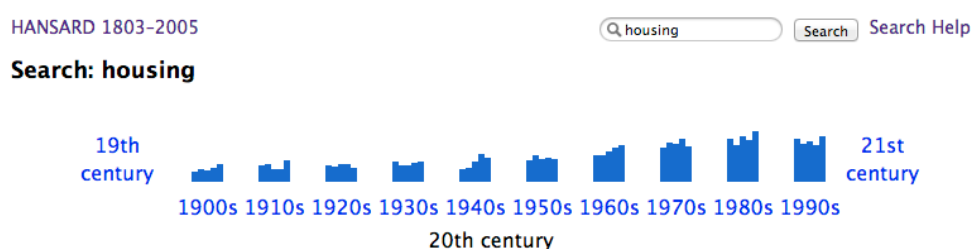


Figure 4-h: Availability of House of Commons debates regarding ‘housing’

Source: Hansard Parliament archive <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com>

²⁶ The selection of debates used throughout this thesis are: Braine, 1951; Burns, 1909; Foster, 1909; Hare, 1943; Lindgren, 1951; Mitchison, 1956; Molson, 1946; Powell, 1956; Royds, 1919; Silkin, 1946, 1957; Walters, 1919.

Search: new towns

Search for speeches by: [Mr Charles Townsend](#), [Mr Cyril Townsend](#), [Mr Frederick Townsend](#), [Mr John Townsend](#), [Sir Horace Townsend-Farquhar](#)



Figure 4-i: Availability of House of Commons debates regarding 'New Towns'

Source: Hansard Parliament archive <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com>

The bar graph conveys an important quantitative visualisation of political discourse. The graphs classify as continuous data, which can be significant to a researcher because it separates data into implicit categories (Denscombe, 2007: 255-256). Visualising the intensity of debates regarding New Towns or housing provided an additional mechanism to validate or repudiate the theoretical and historical framework established in Chapters 2 and 3. For example, Figure 4-h illustrates that housing has received a high-level of debate since the 19th century, with a very visible peak in the late 1960s. This peak coincides with the period in which the New Town programme was stalled and no further towns designated. This was evidence that the New Towns were seen by the Conservative party, first and foremost, as a housing issue disguised within the wider debate regarding new communities.

Lastly, a paramount source in the construction of thick description was 'The New Towns Record 1946-2002', created to commemorate the fifty-year anniversary. This was commissioned by the Commission for New Towns (CNT) and edited by Anthony Burton OBE and Joyce Hartly (Burton and Hartly, 2003). It offers 'a comprehensive electronic library of plans, articles, surveys, interviews, books, pictures and specially commissioned reports on the UK's thirty-three New Town Development Corporations' (*ibid.*). Although slightly clunky to use as a piece of software, the electronic library was an invaluable central source for any New Towns-related query.

A strength of the New Towns record is that most of the material is in its original format, and has not been edited or interpreted. For example, the New Town master-plans and designation order material has been transcribed fully. This is invaluable because most of the archival material was dispersed throughout local libraries and with twenty-two New Towns, accessing all of them would have been a formidable task. A deficiency is that being an official record, the majority of documents and interviews

come from government sources. This means the selection of data sometimes carried a political rhetoric that needed to be approached with caution.

Searches through 'The New Towns Record 1946-2002' (Burton and Hartly, 2003) were organised thematically. Once the two case-studies were identified, the Hemel Hempstead and Harlow New Town chapters were the focus and a scan subsequently followed in the following order: (1) Interviews (2) Designation order material (3) Master-plans and (4) Annual Report, with a focus on the housing data. Information that was no longer available, such as interviews with planners and officials, was the most valuable addition the collection made to the case studies.

4.3 Connecting data to the research question

The findings in both case studies were surprising and different to what I had expected because whilst Hemel endorsed most expert stereotypes, Harlow revealed a much more nuanced reading, and in combination these led to an advanced understanding of the New Towns reality. The process of data analysis became complicated as the rich complexity of each case study challenged my 'preconceived views, assumptions, concepts and hypothesis' (Flyvbjerg, 2006: 235). Analysing the empirical findings of the expert interviews was equally important. Knowing what material to reject was difficult but became an important process in defining the boundaries and limits of this research.

4.3.1 Interviews

The PAR workshops in Hemel Hempstead undertaken as part of The Architecture Foundation project were recorded on large sheets of paper as the group discussion progressed. From the perspective of a professional architect conducting a PAR project, the discussion was not very forthcoming dealing with minor issues such as inappropriate street lighting or a burned bench in the park that was never replaced. As a researcher, on the other hand, these details were both fascinating and critical to building a layered understanding of the case study.

One-to-one structured interviews that took place in local action group workshops in Harlow were transcribed. The transcription made it easier to establish trends and patterns within the dominant themes. Nevertheless, both interviews and local action group workshops were important to establish actual physical reactions otherwise

impossible to ascertain through literature. One government official — who wished to remain anonymous — was defensive of the questions although he had published reports under a previous government that supported the line of enquiry. How should I interpret this? Either the official changed his mind over the course of five years, or his ideological stance was aligned to the new Coalition government in a way that prevented a candid discussion. On another occasion an interview with Stephen Ward, an academic from Oxford Brookes University, became overwhelmingly emotional when discussing the New Towns programme. This led to an extended session of out-of-circulation film material (Figure 7-a). How does one convey this excitement in a rigorous academic work? If a researcher recognises that a planning movement (such as the New Towns) is being denied a fair evaluation by avoiding these references to post-war euphoria, how can it be overcome in the data analysis?

Such unexpected reactions during interviews with experts are a hazard associated with a qualitative mixed methods approach. Cousin (2005) suggests this is where a researcher can draw valid generalisations to create new and emerging meaning, an activity he describes as similar to the grounded theory technique:

...In the first instance researchers try to see what the data are telling them rather than asking those data to yield responses required by the issues or hypothesis that guided their collection. (Cousin, 2005: 426).

On the other hand, Denscombe (2007) warns that during interviews the personal identity of the interviewer can have an effect on the interviewees. In relation to the government official, he may have felt embarrassed or defensive because I was asking why his current ideas contradicted previous policy documents he had published. Yin (2003) provides an alternative understanding of this particular interview. He suggests that the government official (who was pressed for time and unenthusiastic about the line of enquiry) was a type of focused interview because it lasted only 45 minutes (the shortest interview conducted) and I ‘followed a certain set of questions derived from the case study protocol’ with little allowance for an exploration of new themes (*ibid.*: 91).

In contrast to the focused interview, Stephen Ward, who became very excited about the subject, should be considered more as an informant as opposed to a respondent (Yin, 2003: 91). This interview lasted two hours and Ward offered new insights that served as further lines of enquiry as well as suggesting other potential interviewees. He was important to the development of the research because his writings on planning history and New Towns had been critical throughout the literature review

and interviewing him permitted a very specific dialogue in relation to his writings. He also encouraged and promoted my line of enquiry insisting that it was a valuable contribution to New Town history.

4.4 Telling the story: writing up

There is a false binary in our heads that separates planning documents, social scientific research and theorizing from story-telling, rather than allowing us to appreciate the ways in which each of these employs a story. (Sandercock, 2003: 182).

Writing up the doctorate research into an academic thesis has been one of the most challenging aspects of the PhD process. As a professional trained in architecture, I am accustomed to justifying innovation and ideas through drawings and diagrams. Language is a persuasive and descriptive mechanism with which an individual can embellish a proposal or publicly defend a project against a panel. The thesis inverts this process; text is used as the primary means of justification with tools, diagrams, photographs or drawings becoming subsidiary. In architecture practice, theories are contested through experimentation in design followed by user experience. In academia, theories remain a philosophical construct contested through critical analysis and methodological rigour. For this reason, collaboration with The Architecture Foundation (and its subsequent PAR project) was very appealing, because the PhD would be project-based in collaboration with a real organisation and with the intent of making practical changes in the real world.

Being an architect also affected the way in which the thesis was written, as a narrative-led inquiry. For this purpose, discovering Leonie Sandercock (2003) was a breakthrough because she provided the structure for using storytelling in planning. By ‘story’ she refers to Eckstein’s (2003) definition of ‘verbal expressions that narrate the unfolding of events in some passage of time and some particular location’ (Sandercock, 2003: 182). Importantly, she justifies the story not as a soft and uncritical approach to research but as an alternative that will make for better planning practitioners. This is because ‘stories can also sometimes provide a far richer understanding of the human condition, and thus of the urban condition, than traditional social science’ (*ibid.*). A counter-argument to story in planning is that ‘no one true story of the past can be told’ because there exist only constructions of it and ‘the content of the story depends on one’s purpose in telling it’ (Throgmorton, cited in Sandercock 2003: 195). The challenge for the researcher is thus allowing the case study to be conducted with as

much fluidity and objectivity so as not to bias the narrative, or as Throgmorton (*ibid.*) says for ‘the purpose of telling it’ to outweigh the findings.

In this, I adopted a two-stage process: firstly, writing the case study findings in a storytelling manner with interpretive meaning, but avoiding theoretical reflections. The second stage involved cross-referencing the early literature review chapters and making theoretical connections with the empirical story by linking minor anecdotes from local residents to larger theory or mainstream New Town history. This was a very refreshing and intuitive way of telling the story. Later, I discovered this was a key element of case-study research, and Flyvbjerg’s (2006: 241) last point in his five-key misunderstandings:

It is correct that summarizing case studies is often difficult, especially as concerns case process. It is less correct as regards case outcomes. The problems in summarizing case studies, however, are due more often to the properties of the reality studied than to the case study as a research method. Often it is not desirable to summarize and generalize case studies. Good studies should be read as narratives in their entirety.

A general summary of the case studies was avoided by allowing that each town dictate its own discourse. A parallel but significantly different narrative thus emerged. Their key themes and contested issues were entirely different but stemmed from the same ideological New Towns discourse. This parallel was perhaps more informative at the time of drawing generalisations about the New Towns movement because it provided unbiased interpretations of each New Town. However, as Yin (2003) warns, the logic behind literal replication of multiple case study scenarios is that the narrative may either replicate or contradict the original proposition. For this reason, a strong conceptual framework is recommended in order to test and revise the parallel narrative. Following Yin’s (2003) suggestion, the opening chapters of this thesis sought to establish a theoretical framework that planning has been, historically, a reactive mechanism to the chronic problems of housing supply, dominated by three key issues:

- (1) Self-containment (Structural issues)
- (2) Newness and sameness (Typological aspirations)
- (3) Rescaling governance (Political ideology)

Having established these key issues, they became critical in the process of writing up. The case studies needed to be treated as individual stories but with enough similarities in structure for parallel narratives to emerge. Although a simple chronological approach

was adopted during the classification of case study results, they were re-organised in the writing up stage under the three thematic issues. The chronological approach followed throughout the enquiry was:

- (1) The arrival of pioneers
- (2) The development of the New Town
- (3) How residents interpret its legacy today
- (4) Issues around moving forward

Even though both case studies were explored around these four stages of growth, very different stories emerged. Once the empirical research had been written, the thesis was structured using Sandercock's (2003) explanation of how stories work:

Table 7: Structuring this thesis as a story in relation to key properties of stories in planning

Source: Sandercock 2003, pp. 183-185

Writing up this thesis as a story		
Key properties of a story	Key sections of this thesis	Description of narrative device
First: Temporal Framework	Literature Review 1: The contested narrative	Sequential or temporal framework involves a ticking clock to provide dramatic tension. Q: If we tell the story of England's housing crisis throughout the twentieth century as a contested narrative between planning and housing, can this lead to a new critique of building new settlements?
Second: Explanation	Literature Review 2: The New Towns experiment	There is an element of explanation or coherence, rather than a catalogue of one thing after another. Q: (1) Discover what the official New Town story is. How has it been represented historically? (2) Can the New Town story be re-told thematically using the key discourses that emerge in Literature review. Namely: self-containment; governance and; Modernism.
Third: Generalisability	Empirical Chapters: Case-studies: revealing local voices and expert views	There is potential for generalisability, for seeing the universal in the particular. Q: Can we expose the generalisations made by experts about New Towns and offset/confirm these through nuances revealed in the case studies through local voices?
Fourth: Expected Framework	Conclusion Part 1: Data Analysis	There is the presence of recognized, generic conventions that relate to an expected framework, structure and protagonists. Q: What are the key New Town issues that have been forgotten but can inform the way we view new

Writing up this thesis as a story		
Key properties of a story	Key sections of this thesis	Description of narrative device
		settlements today?
Fifth: Tension	Conclusion Part 2: Linking to research questions	Moral tension is essential to a good story. Q: Rigorous discussion around research question offset by personal views on this thesis, its contribution to knowledge and new areas of study.

Understanding the thesis as a story affected the entire structure of the research. The use of an organogram for management of ideas (Appendix I: Version 1.0- Version 5.0) became a critical tool that underwent many adaptations and while the case studies remained the only constant throughout the organograms, the interpretation and verification of each significantly altered both the conclusions and literature review for the thesis.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter on methodology shows that the research undertaken adopts a qualitative mixed methods approach, using case studies as the main tool for its empirical findings. It reviews the combination of methods used to address the research questions set out in the Introduction: primary sources; secondary sources; analysis of existing data; mixing quantitative and qualitative research of survey work that other people have undertaken; and discursive analysis of government-produced policy material. This mixed methods approach means the research has addressed issues from various angles verified through a variety of sources.

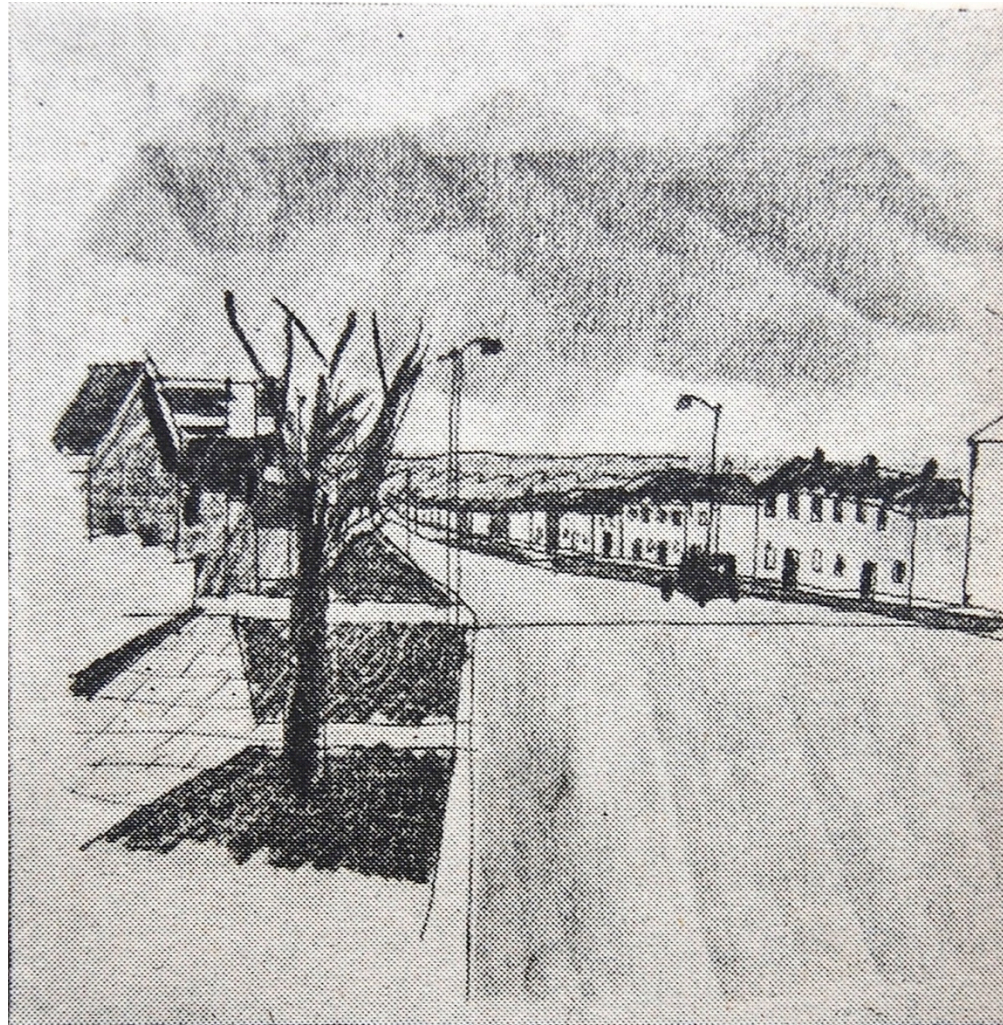
I touched lightly upon the key aspects of the collaborative doctorate arrangement (AHRC, 2013) and discussed the key issues that have had an impact on the methodological decisions made. I have taken the opportunity to draw out the positive aspects of the collaborative research and use them as an added layer to the mixed methods approach.

A key contribution is the re-conceptualisation of New Town policy, which draws on previously unrelated sources: bottom-up enquiry with New Town residents; unearthing archival propaganda material from the (now defunct) Ministry of

Information; structured interviews with current local authorities and New Town residents and repositioning historical material within a contemporary reading.

Lastly, this chapter has explained why re-writing planning history through the use of storytelling was the most appropriate approach for this thesis. If this style has generated questions about the rigours of this research, then the discussion sustained herein about the literature review, PAR, case studies, and data analysis will show that a protocol was followed to confirm both reliability and validity of the methodology applied.

Chapter 5 The Expert View



... and with it the magic fades as the dream houses multiply to the horizon. AAAA... OOOO... What has happened?

Figure 5-a: Drawing by Gordon Cullen on the Prairie Planning of New Towns (Cullen, 1953)

© Source: Ian Waites, 2012

In 1953, the Architectural Review (AR) published a damning verdict written by J. M. Richards, 'The Failure of the New Towns' (Richards, 1953), where G. Cullen declared the towns as victims of 'prairie planning' (Cullen, 1953). The article was significant as an example of influential bad press that dogged the fate of New Towns. It became a reference point for subsequent literature on New Towns because it offered the first professional opinion (Aldridge, 1970; Alexander, 2009; Kynaston, 2007; Schaffer, 1979) on the progress of New Towns; written by Richards who was a key figure, acting as editor for The Architectural Review, for The Architect's Journal and for a time, as architectural correspondent for The Times (Kynaston, 2007). Given that the first wave of towns were designated in 1946, issuing a verdict of failure in 1953 is possibly a bit premature.



Figure 5-b: Collage drawing by Gordon Cullen on 'Failure of the New Towns' (Richards, 1953)

© Source: Ian Waites, 2012

If architects and planners were instrumental in preparing the plans for England's post-war reconstruction programme, the media and political representation in its early years held the key to issuing a verdict of success or failure. Kynaston (2007: 47) suggests that 'planners as dictators' is simply a caricature because development is less determined by planners, and more so by politicians; or, as Reade (1987) and Ambrose (1986) assert, by the market. Similarly, the premise of the secondary research question to this thesis is that New Towns have been mainly documented through an expert-driven discourse (academic and practice) that has created a specific and limited understanding (Schaffer, 1970; Osborn and Whittick, 1969, 1977; Osborn, 1942; Aldridge, 1979). The

discourse has been written in a way that can be categorised within three fields of criticism. Firstly, Aldridge (1979) claims planning under the welfare state was too preoccupied with bureaucratic procedure and expert administrators to realise an adequately defined social policy of ‘a balanced community’ (see discussion in section 3.1). Secondly, Richards (1953) led criticism that New Towns planning ideology overly relied on the vanguard Modernist movement to provide mass housing (see discussion in section 3.2) in a move that has been described as ‘naïve’ (Opher and Bird, 1980:1) and one of ‘mass-produced barracks’ (Hanley, 2007:103) or ‘concrete monstrosities’ (Grindrod, 2013: 17). Lastly, New Towns are portrayed as a failed experiment of an enlarged state under a nationalised economy (see discussion in section 3.3), an argument led by Reade (1987) and sustained by Levin (1976) and Cherry (1996).

Balanced appraisals do exist, but for a programme of this scale and importance in policy direction, they are few and far between (Hall, 2002; Ward 2006, 2012; Hardy, 1991a, 1991b). In 1981 Fred Lloyd Roche (Opher and Bird, 1980: Foreword), who was the General Manager of the Milton Keynes Corporation, assessed this as a trend that began in 1976 whereby the ‘tide of political opinion turned against the New Towns’. He suggested it would be short-lived once the role of new communities within a regional planning framework was once again acknowledged as both useful and necessary. A more recent discourse has linked the New Towns programme with New Labour’s Sustainable Community Plan (ODPM 2003a) and its growth areas, linking both policies by virtue of their scale and their underlying need to aid the housing crisis (Bennett, 2005; Alexander, 2009; DTLR, 2002). There is little recorded and published evidence accounting for the New Town experience from a localised, pioneer perspective and this has proven problematic for the mobilisation of criticism regarding the bias in the programme (discussed in section 4.1). While the empirical analysis that follows in the next two chapters will use the case studies as an opportunity to record this localised perspective, this chapter will focus on the expert voices and how their discourse has created some very specific, often negative, stereotypes about New Towns.

The first half of this chapter focuses on the bad press, particularly on the degree to which debates held in Parliament and media representations created specific stereotypes about New Towns as a statist project that was doomed to fail because of its policy of nationalisation. The year 1951 was an important departure for the future trajectory of New Towns as the Conservative Party took office from Atlee’s years leading the Labour Party. There was a flurry of debate in the House of Commons

because New Towns affected policy across various different ministries. Simultaneously, the experiment received a disproportionate amount of press, most of it critical. A primary objective for this section is to establish to what degree debate within the House of Commons generated the material for the critical press. Subsequently, it questions the extent to which this decade influenced the academic discourse that emerged in the sixties and seventies. The second half of this chapter focuses on the characterisation of New Towns as communities doomed for failure in their ideological pursuit of balance. The characterisation has been thematically classified as belonging to five stereotypes and each is discussed in a separate section. Presenting the data in such a way permits a deconstruction of balance as a lofty abstraction into six clear example-based observations that will assist the evaluation of the subsequent case studies.

5.1 Bad press for a statist project

Nationalisation, as a key ideology underpinning the New Towns programme, is questioned decidedly throughout ministerial hearings in the early 1950s as an ongoing battle between the Conservative and Labour parties. The Conservative Party discourse focuses on the outreach of the state and the level to which private enterprise should be allowed to participate in New Town developments, critically undermining the Labour initiative. Conservative ministers consistently tried to dispel the myth that a centralised authority was needed, by questioning the role of the Development Corporations (DC) and the legislative mechanisms available to them and by claiming they were omnipotent (Aldridge, 1979:39). This can be established in a debate against the Town and Country Planning Act 1947 that allowed Development Corporations to purchase property and land at less than the full market value:

I have here a letter which was published in the 'Daily Telegraph' of 16th June, 1950, from a leading surveyor in the Hemel Hempstead new town, and this is what he said: Values of owner-occupied houses within the designated area are fast diminishing, due to the unfair basis of compensation prescribed in the Town and Country Planning Act, and the understandably cautious attitude of building societies in granting loans on property... (Braine, 1951: vol. 487 cc2312).

The Conservative minister Bernard Braine justified legislative action as the only means to reverse this 'oppressive' and 'unjust' law because, 'the law itself must be an agent of justice' (Lindgren, 1951: vol.487 cc2312). The Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) was a mechanism conferred through the 1947 Act. It is indeed portrayed as, if not unjust,

definitely radical, and created a very specific stereotype discussed later in this chapter. An interesting aspect of this debate is that a newspaper article was used as proof, revealing the degree to which media and policy were influencing one another.

Throughout the early 1950s, media representations around New Towns focused on the statist project with references to ‘the government mind is such’ and ‘total failure of Whitehall’ as failing to deliver the promised infrastructure in Harlow (Figure 5-c). Simultaneously, government is accused of trying to ‘build a community’ (Figure 5-d) by focusing too much on the material aspect of construction (housing and infrastructure) and not enough on fostering ‘local patriotism’ and ‘social activities’ (Editorial, 1953d).²⁷ This demonstrates that from its very early days, New Towns were criticised on the basis of two opposing and contradictory arguments: they were not being built fast enough whilst simultaneously being built so fast that a community spirit was not being fostered. This became a key argument in the 1970s for dissolving the Development Corporations and transferring their powers to the Commission for New Towns (CNT).

The Conservative argument against Development Corporations presents some contradictions. In 1956 the Labour Party had accused the Conservative government of allowing private developers to partner with the DCs (Mitchison, 1956: vol. 560 cc159). The Conservative government responded to this parliamentary debate acknowledging that DCs had been framed with enough elasticity so as to allow third parties to partner at the local level. The DCs were in fact acting like ‘prudent estate managers’ by allowing private enterprise to develop the New Towns because they were spreading the risks of the development (Powell, 1956: vol.560 cc167). This is an interesting revelation because the academic discourse frequently represents the New Town model as an inflexible template, incapable of partnering with the private sector. The argument, led by the Conservative Party, was that the economic stagflation and urban crisis of the 1960s could have been averted if nationalisation and its government agencies had fewer central decision-making powers, and the Development Corporation was the archetypal manifestation of such powers.

²⁷ The news articles embedded in this discussion (Figure 5-c and Figure 5-d) refer specifically to Harlow but are included in this chapter on ‘The Expert View’ because they illustrate the wider question of how media representation influenced parliamentary debates.

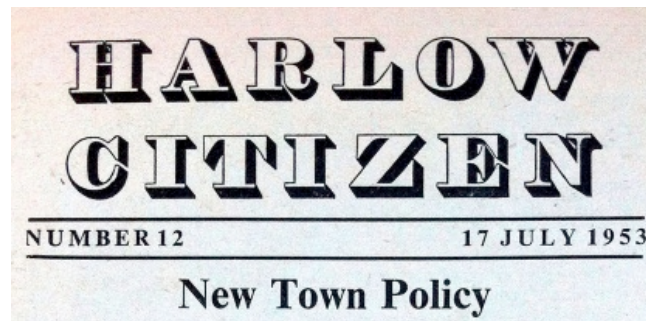


Figure 5-c: Newspaper editorial criticises Whitehall for New Town delivery

Source: Harlow Citizen, 17 July 1953 (Harlow Citizen, 1953e)

However, debates reveal the contrary. Private developers had quickly seen the unexploited potential of New Towns, where in the place of agricultural land dotted with sleepy villages new semi-urban areas with populations up to 60,000 people had to be built rapidly (and, importantly, most of the local residents would be in full employment). Although the New Towns development was to occur through the DCs, the manner in which the town was to be developed was open for partnership with private developers, local authorities and other organisations. In 1956, there was a debate arguing the extent to which private developers should be allowed to procure the New Towns. Between 1946 and 1956, two million new homes had been built and 500,000 of those by private builders (Mitchison, 1956: vol.560 c155). In terms of commercial development, private builders were also capitalising on the betterment value created by the New Towns, much to Labour's disapproval:

What is happening in the centre of many of the new towns is that the whole centre is being let off, I understand, for quite a long term of years, to private companies—prosperous companies, no doubt—who as a matter of business then let it off to shopkeepers and the like. They get some part of the result in annual profit, and if the lease is of any length they will get some part of the general improvement of values in that new town. (Mitchison, 1956: vol. 560 cc155).

As a consequence, this representation of state-led procurement portrayed the profession as top-down and dictatorial. This is illustrated in the Harlow Citizen newspaper articles, and in academic discourse, as planning having absorbed too many functions (Kynaston, 2007; Reade, 1987; Cherry, 1996; Cullingworth and Nadin, 2006). It is only recently,

emerging from the academic discourse of the 1990s, that government through consensus became recognised as a critical aspect of positive planning, confirming Tewdwr-Jones' (2012:120331-03S) analysis that the New Towns programme was not as authoritarian as it was publicly depicted.

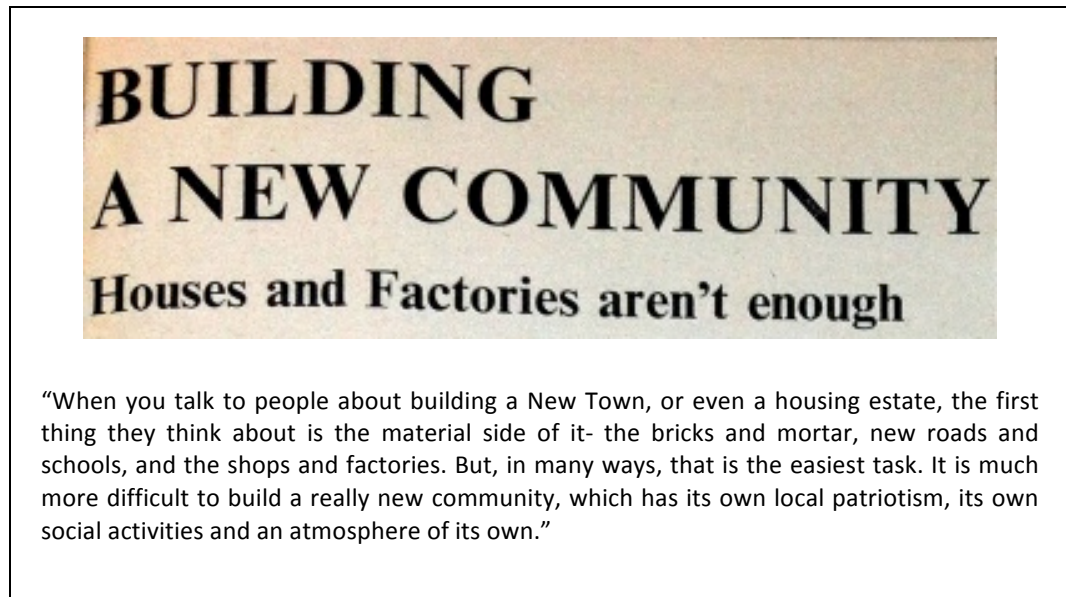


Figure 5-d: Journalist MacKenzie claims you can't build a community just by providing houses and factories

Source: Harlow Citizen, 15 May 1953 (MacKenzie, 1953)

Further on in the debate, the ideological disparity between political parties in terms of housing and its capacity to act as a redistributor of wealth becomes clear. Labour argued that the New Towns were not being respected for what they were conceived to be, 'a housing community, a social community and a social adventure', because the Development Corporations were 'regarding the growth of the New Town as a matter of somewhat enlarged development' (Silkin, 1957: vol.206 c410-444). A pillar of the welfare state assumes housing should be considered a social service because the private sector had been shown to make a very limited contribution due to the conflicting interests in the landlord-tenant relation, as discussed in Chapter 2. Nevertheless, the Conservative government had been allowing a significant amount of housing to be developed by private builders, and this fundamental pillar was destabilising the process of wealth redistribution:

We regard housing as one of these social services and that, I believe, was the view some time ago, has been increasingly the view, but is at the moment a view abhorrent to the benevolent opinions of Her Majesty's Government. (Mitchison, 1956: vol.560 cc158).

Labour's argument was that by relying on private builders to do the government's job, housing was being provided for those who could afford it, and not necessarily for those in housing need. This highlights how New Towns began to shift from a state-led initiative in building post-war communities to one of home-ownership. Saunders (1990) claims owner-occupation has always been a characteristic of the British population because of the popular natural desire to be homeowners. Interestingly the academic debates around home ownership in the late 1950s and 1960s focused on ownership as individual emancipation, and avoided the important revelation made in this debate that New Towns housing was being built to aid a housing crisis and not stimulate landlordism.

These debates reveal that there is an inherent misunderstanding or intentional misrepresentation within the Conservative government as to the benefits of a nationalised planning system, which it claims is incapable of partnering with the private sector to increase housing supply. The evaluation in Chapter 2 on how the New Towns programme emerged as a post-war solution perceived to be a viable programme mainly under a robust welfare-state, reinforces the party-political claim (see discussion in section 2.3). However the evaluation of HC debates above would suggest that housing was being delivered throughout the 1950s in partnership with the private sector, and was causing disagreement between the parties. It suggests an interpretation that the programme was not necessarily vulnerable to operating within a modified planning system, but that party-politics prevented the programme from continuing more as a matter of ideology than a matter of capability in delivering the programme.

5.2 The challenge of building balanced communities

It's no accident that the New Towns policy came around at the same time of the creation of welfare state. It was the same kind of view in the post-war period where you get someone important to have a review – in the case of the Welfare State it was Beveridge and in the case of the New Towns Policy it was Lord Reith - and then you ask them to do a review, they come up with some recommendations and the government just goes ahead and implements them. And there was a lot of faith in that model and that's what people expected to happen. (120126-04G).

The tone in which 'that model' is referred to in the quotation is illustrative of the suspicion that has grown around the New Town project. The interviewee (120126-04G) emphasised that since New Towns were state-led, they provide an illustration of how an authoritarian government relies on a single review to implement a massive

development policy. On the one hand, this endorses earlier arguments that the New Towns strategy was adopted too quickly. The expert quoted above is currently a policy advisor to the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA). He sees a direct correlation between the welfare state and the New Towns policy, with a tacit acknowledgment that since one is in decline (the welfare state), the other should also be set to rest (the New Towns). From the outset of the interview, this advisor was dismissive of the New Towns programme, justifying its demise with the statement that ‘people’s aspirations quickly evolved and they became fed up with central government telling them what colour my front door has to be’ (120126-04G). According to this same narrative, the local authorities grew tired of having little control over the development process, and as a consequence of having little or no input over the development of their localities, then ‘it is difficult for the new communities to assimilate localised changes in attitude and lifestyles’ (120126-04G). The current political view has clearly stereotyped New Towns as a failed statist project, not to be repeated. On the other hand, an academic expert measures his verdict more carefully, pointing out that despite this being a highly centralised state project, its capacity to evolve over its thirty-year period is evident in the different phases of the New Towns:

I think there was a sense that the model had its day and it was very much a product of 1940s statist kind of planning. At least that’s the way it was perceived. Although in practice I think it was much more elastic and did evolve over time and I think in ways that were remarkably flexible. I think that for good or real it was bracketed in a somehow statist kind of way. (120221-10G).

The idea that New Towns represent a statist approach to planning has undoubtedly been the most negative assessment and characterisation of this policy. Few acknowledge that since the programme spanned nearly thirty years, it cannot represent a single state ideology. Its elasticity is evident by virtue of its own historiography: this is a programme that has assimilated change in the market, in the government, in lifestyle and architectural tastes. Nevertheless important New Town critiques such as Willett’s (2011) present the New Town model as a ‘very linear model of development’ (2011: 6) and one that does not provide an adaptive framework for responding to the complexity of communities.

5.2.1 A case of New Town Blues or suburban dystopia?

A result of the Architectural Review’s 1953 article was the emergence of New Town Blues (NTB) as a concept. This is defined as ‘a name created by the national

press and given to the initial depression experienced many new residents who had left family and friends to move to a new home environment' (Burton and Hartly, 2003: Glossary). It is a term that experts and literature rely on to describe the emotional side of the New Towns experience. Whether this was a genuine medical or physiological condition is difficult to ascertain, and the concept is one that was tested amongst residents in the case studies in order to understand if the phrase was used inside New Towns by the pioneers, or whether it was applied mainly by visiting sociologists and journalists. The New Towns story collection explains:

'New Town Blues' as a sweeping contagion which cast a permanent blight on new towns was a figment of the fertile imagination of the press. Of course some people could not cope with new towns. The rest, as social surveys and emigration data make clear, were positive about their new lives and exceptionally unlikely to move. (Burton and Hartly, 2003: New Town Blues).

The notion of NTB as an exaggerated media invention was not supported in the interviews with experts, and instead a range of arguments was used to justify the term. Firstly, the cause of NTB was attributed to social consequences that loneliness and anxiety felt by migration led to a certain type of depression. Secondly, the physical characteristic that New Towns were new, without infrastructure or amenities made them difficult and isolated places to live in. Thirdly, the economic model meant New Towns were built with a gender-biased employment structure, with a male-dominated workplace forcing women to be housebound and unemployed. These reasons perpetuated a stereotype, particularly with reference to the early days of New Towns, and portrayed them as isolating, depressive, and angst-ridden places to live in.

There is also the suggestion that the creation of the term New Town Blues illustrates nothing more than a general desire (in some factions, such as the media) to stigmatise new developments. Ward (cited in Alexander 2009: 101) explains that the phenomenon is not particularly new, and that municipal housing estates in the interwar years had previously created a similar effect: 'suburban neurosis'. This reveals a dialectic between blues and neurosis that lends itself to a pathological understanding of New Towns and suburbia, not dissimilar from Lewis Mumford's own assessment in 1961, where he condemned suburbanites as leading effectively meaningless lives:

[Suburbia is a] multitude of uniform, unidentifiable houses, lined up inflexibly, at uniform distances, on uniform roads, in a treeless communal waste, inhabited by people of the same class, the same income, the same age group, witnessing the same television performances, eating the same

tasteless prefabricated foods, from the same freezers... (Mumford, 1961: 486).

This assessment of suburbia as a terrain of aesthetic and psychic abjection (Riesman and Glazer, 1960; Mumford, 1961; see discussion in section 3.2) is illustrative of the characteristics that underpinned the critical view: architectural uniformity and demographic homogeneity. It coincides with the earlier assessment that since New Towns were not inner city experiments and instead aimed at redistributing the population on a regional scale, a rather simplistic discourse emerged around their urbanism being little more than extended suburban urbanism. The physical characterisation was further justified, as pioneers were leaving their New Towns in search for work outside of their self-contained town structure. This change in scenario has more to do with the arrival of the automobile in the 1960s and is less a reflection of New Town Blues, as is commonly portrayed. There was admittedly a dispersal of pioneers during the 1960s once car ownership became a reality, offsetting the in-built problems of New Towns and their inadequate public transport system as discussed in Chapter 3. The long-term impact of the arrival of the automobile deeply affected the self-containment aspect of New Towns. Residents could suddenly choose to look for employment outside of their industrial zone, possibly at other New Towns or even in London. Ward reflects on the significant link between self-containment and mobility:

Within [the New Town], the better you did, the more you wanted to move out but also –importantly - people started to get cars and they could live a more dissociated life from the ideal of self-containment because society became more mobile. So if you have a nice job, people don't contain themselves and live in the New Town. "I've done better in life, I want to get away from the New Town". If you think about what self-containment means... [chuckle] ...it tends to mean that you weren't necessarily ever going to have a high wage. Because if you contain yourself to living and working in one place and you are only searching for work over a wide area... you know once you start to make routes and motorways to all these towns that take you to the M25 and beyond and people get cars, their aspirations change and they recognise that if you search for work over a larger area you are potentially going to get a higher wage. (120221-10G).

Ward's assessment of the aspirational value of breaking away from the self-containment model establishes that departure from the New Town became a status signifier. This is an important clarification in the process of New Towns being characterised as suburban developments, or victims of the New Town Blues. Nonetheless, the arrival of the car eventually resulted in New Towns developing a 'commuter-town' characteristic. Nevertheless, this was one of the principal community maladies suffered by the suburban

developments at the early turn of the century, against which Howard was reacting. The Garden City vision aimed for communities with an active community and a sustained local economy. This, Howard noted, could not be achieved if communities were merely commuter suburbs. Ward argues that the anomaly is because New Towns were modelled on the Garden City created by Howard, but executed as statist project more as a way of managing the metropolitan area as opposed to creating the social city, as Howard had intended (120221-10G). Howard had very clearly expressed a larger vision for his Garden Cities as interconnected nodes making a regional 'social city' and the connection was made explicit in his diagrams. However, self-containment was never part of the Garden City ideal, and the notion was actually introduced in the London plan by Abercrombie as a way to manage London's growing population.

5.2.2 Design driven stereotypes of New Towns as mostly Modernist projects

Experts also created a critique solely around the architectural legacy of the New Town project, which has proven problematic. Richards became a key figure in the debate surrounding the experiment, with particular emphasis on their Modernist values. The Architectural Review had been a vociferous advocate of Modernism and critical to the New Towns programme, an appraisal clearly defined by Ernő Goldfinger in an Architectural Review column in 1942:

...the problem of the size of cities is treated again and again with an unrealistic and sentimental bias. The tendency to industrial concentration is brushed aside as one of the evil consequences of modern ways and it should be treated as one of the basic ways of efficient production... All the authors seem to be smitten by a kind of agrophobia and a tendency to animize at the same time. The small, the child-like, seems to haunt them, they transpose their feelings for persons to geographical units (Goldfinger, cited in Kynaston, 2007: 33).

The dialectic in this appraisal is that key Modernist figures were scornful of the New Town programme, for it was too sentimental and justified an 'axiomatic one-sided argument for the Garden City movement' (Kynaston, 2007: 33). This creates a difficult premise for New Towns because while the pure Modernists harbour disdain for the programme, and monopolise the professional media coverage through Richards's vast influence, traditionalists find the programme too modern.

From a design and planning perspective, New Towns are completely unique. They offered professionals of the 1940s and 1950s a tabula rasa on which to test ideas that were supposedly vanguard and contemporary. On the one hand, the motivation

driving planners, architects and engineers was to use the opportunity of master-planning as a way of breaking down the social divide through a rearrangement of the traditional urbanism. On the other hand, there was a very prominent influence of Modernism that embraced clean lines and utopian design, from the house through to the commercial and industrial facilities. In an interview with one architect, it became apparent that this was portrayed as a barrier to successful design because it had the added burden of needing to be built quickly:

The original design was almost too radical and grand from the outset. There was not space for organic growth... the New Towns were built in one go, condensing in 5 to 10 years what previously is a slow and organic process. This means there is no feedback mechanism of what is needed at community level and what is being designed and planned above... repetition of ideas is a problem. Cities take hundreds of years to evolve organically and you can't have one idea replicated (housing, density, class-income) over an entire master-plan. (120116-01G).

While a city like Brasilia, built predominantly by Oscar Niemeyer, has received much coverage and analysis in debates regarding Modernism, mark 1 New Towns are rarely made reference to in this literature. But in terms of offering a Modernist test bed, New Towns should really be at the forefront of the architectural and planning discourse. Etherton talked about his years studying in the Architectural Association during the 1950s, and how Modernism was deeply embedded in the pedagogic process:²⁸

There had been some radical multi-storey housing proposals for Crawley [New Town] and this is when the Roehampton Estate [in London] was being planned, and that was all AA [Architectural Association] people and as students it was a much more attractive example of housing to look at. (120130-06G).

However, Etherton believes that the New Towns were actually pared down versions of Modernist ideals, because although high-rise towers were proposed in Crawley, 'in the end they opted for a much more conservative model of terrace houses with a front and back garden'. He suggests the planners and architects felt that this type of housing was a less startling way of enticing people to come and live in a new place, and a way of distinguishing the New Towns from London, which were considered 'salubrious' (120130-06G). This reflects media representations discussed earlier arising from the Modernist frontrunners.

²⁸ Both Frederick Gibberd (Harlow master-plan) and Sir Geoffrey Jellicoe (Hemel Hempstead master-plan) taught at the Architectural Association (AA), and Jellicoe was principal of the school.

Despite Etherton's claims that the New Town was a conservative model within the contemporary architectural debates, there was actually a significant level of innovation through the New Towns, so much so that interviewees repeatedly stated 'too much innovation' as one of its downfalls. This variety in experimentation has led inexorably to some very successful examples of architecture and planning techniques and other less successful ones. As the 'failures' received press coverage and theoretical analysis, an overall impression amongst experts emerged that New Towns were actually monotonous and lacking in diversity (120116-01G). It could be argued that too much innovation was detrimental to its own legacy and has fuelled particular stereotypes about failures in Modernism. This discrepancy may explain the architect's analysis (120116-01G) that appears contradictory: while lacking diversity on the one hand, the programme was too ambitious on the other.

The design ideology of New Towns has thus been characterised as lacking in diversity and representative of specific aspects of Modernism that failed. This is emphasised by the same expert, who is an architect and urban planner working in London with a commission to present a bid for expansion in Harlow. He was passionate that 'designing a town in one go' is seen as a barrier to 'successful urban evolution' (120116-01G). Nonetheless while he was comfortable making this claim, his practice had recently submitted a master-plan to design Harlow North. Ironically, while it was wrong to procure a town like this in the 1950s, it seems appropriate to procure a New Town extension in the same fashion sixty years later. His reflection is that while New Towns were based on different principles, the design proposal submitted by his practice was taking into account all of the aspects of the contemporary planning ideology of place-making in sustainable communities. This argument reflects the concerns stated in the Introduction (see discussion 1.1) that if an unbiased evaluation of the New Town programme does not take place, the future of new communities is likely to fail.

When asked during the interview how his practice's design would address the New Town design failures of Harlow, a sales pitch of place-making was made:

Something happened in the 20th and 21st century in housing and communities. It seems as if good design has been forgotten. The important thing is really place making... designing to create real spaces to live in. Outdoor streets and squares where, if it rains it rains and if it shines it shines. The key is really place making and it's a black art... there is no golden rule for this, but if I had to prioritize intuitively how I start a place making exercise it would be:

1. Avoid the ghetto (monoculture)
2. Slow movement, without boundaries
3. Make things happen outside and if inside make the space accessible
4. Mixed-use, mixed-use, mixed-use
5. Allow for children's facilities and senior citizens
6. Create a social hub, a social destination (120116-01G).

This large quotation has been included for a very particular reason. While these key place-making elements are the basis for the contemporary understanding of a sustainable community as per the Sustainable Communities Plan 2003 (ODPM, 2003c), they are essentially elements of New Town design ideology that has led to their representation as unbalanced and unsustainable communities. In refusing to acknowledge the variety of experiments that occurred within the mark 1 New Towns, along with the diversity of architects involved in its design process, New Towns architecture is portrayed as a failed Modernist project. It could be argued that it collapsed by virtue of its design intent; too much innovation and a strong fixation on creating a balanced community.

5.2.3 New Towns are nothing more than large council estates

One of the problems about the New Towns, and they were good in their time, and we need to remember we are talking of an idea that came nearly 100 years ago... one of the bad things about new towns, especially post-war New Towns, are they are all single-class. It was taking a poor estate in the slums and throwing them into New Towns. (120531-09G).

When Sir Richard Rogers (120531-09G) — leader of the Urban Task Force and former advisor to the Mayor of London — claims that New Towns are 'all single-class' with 'poor people from the London slums', there is clearly a misrepresentation of who the New Towns were built for (a balanced community) and how they were populated (through a process of industrial decentralisation). The stereotype that New Towns are nothing more than large and unmanageable housing estates has been a key premise for the demise of its policy (120126-04G). One explanation may be related to the characterisation that New Towns are a manifestation of suburban urbanism, and this has been traditionally considered 'one-dimensional in terms of social class' (Mace 2013: 58). Another explanation may be the architectural discourse supported particularly by

an anti-Modernist lobby that blames the poor state of contemporary housing on post-war system-built experiments and temporary accommodation that became permanent.

The architectural merit of New Town housing is seldom associated with their legacy, and when the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) made a visit to Harlow as part of the CABE panel to investigate New Towns, one representative (120208-08G) said the group was very impressed.²⁹ Harlow was especially recognised, throughout the four visits, as having a high quality of design and planning with some ‘amazing architectural properties’. Its degradation due to lack of maintenance, however, was its pitfall:

I really appreciated the initial strength in each case of the master-plan and the concept and ... the high quality of the original implementation ... I suppose the only criticism is that in Harlow the quite idyllic little neighbourhoods that were built in a pretty self-contained and planned way divided from each other by lovely swathes of green represented through the green wedges, have got quite tatty. But it is not to criticise the original as it was built, it's just that over time they haven't been maintained. (120208-08G).

Maintenance is a key element in the discourse on the residual local authority housing of the 1950s-1960s. The academic interviewees repeatedly supported the notion that the Right-to-Buy differentiated the housing stock in a way where the ‘good stock’ was sold off, and the ‘bad stock’ remained in the ownership of the council (120126-05G, 120124-03G, 120221-10G). This had a devastating impact on New Towns, because they eventually became unmanageable large ‘housing estates’. This stigma is further perpetuated by the common belief, not only that New Towns are large housing estates, but that housing estates are bad. Hanley describes this in her, ‘Estates’ biography (2007):

In newspapers and on television, every reference to a council estate is prefixed with the word ‘tough’, as though bare-knuckle boxing is the leisure activity of choice for every British person who doesn't own their home. It does its stigmatizing work as intended. Estates are dangerous, they imply: don't visit them, and whatever you do, work as hard as you can so you don't have to live on them. All the people that live on estates are failures, and failure is not only contagious but morally repugnant. (Hanley, 2007: 14-15).

²⁹ CABE merged with the Design Council in 2011.

This change in attitude was created and supported particularly by the political debate around home ownership. The Conservative government of the 1970s fervently persevered with its agenda of creating a home-owning nation by portraying council housing as being housing for the poor, immobile and uneducated sector of society. Even today, key interviewees representing government agencies emphasised that New Towns did not work because they were large housing estates ‘born out of the welfare project’ (120126-04G). Given the opportunity, it was preferable to become a home owner than rent state-owned housing where a central authority controlled even the ‘colour of my front door’:

I think there was increasing aspiration for people to own their own home and an increase of availability of that as an option because of the wider availability of mortgages. (120126-04G).

On the one hand, this meant that the councils lost their good-quality housing. But on the other hand, most of the people who were left in council housing could not afford to purchase (even below market value) so it undermined the social mix of council housing, leading the experts to claim that the idea of a ‘balanced community’ was a weak notion in the first place:

One argument is that as people progressed, they wanted to better themselves and housing was a way of manifesting this, ‘people don’t actually want to be living next to other income brackets, such as managers next to factory workers, so the notion of creating a balanced community is probably frail. (120124-02G).

The long-term consequence is that home ownership has become a widely accepted means to accumulate wealth and uphold civic responsibility. This was sustained during an interview with an architect and town planner:

One of the best side effects of the Thatcher years was that in providing the Right-to-Buy the ‘ghettos’ of housing were broken up and the mix began. It was, of course not intentional, but the continuous cycle of state-owned property within a state-owned community, within a state-helped group of people means that people don’t take responsibility and pride as they do when they have paid 200K for their flat. So the mixed-use is actually a very important turning point in New Town housing. (120116-01G).

This popular belief is contested by academic analysis that the Right-to-Buy (generally, not specifically in New Towns) created even further class divisions (120124-03G) or residualisation. Importantly, this class division only deepened the stigma created by

1970s political debates and sustained by experts, of New Towns being unmanageable housing estates.

5.2.4 Working-class Labour in the Conservative belt? Tipping the electoral balance

A stigmatisation of New Towns that is less often discussed is how working-class estates were created in a Conservative green belt zone, making them socio-politically unsustainable. Linked to this theme is a planning discussion of the green belt policy and how experts feel it is a smokescreen for developer-driven land-banking. On the one hand this affected self-containment and should be discussed within this context. However, after conducting expert interviews the green belt policy became even more significant and became a key component in the relationship between planning policy and English class structures. While green belt was designated around mark 1 New Towns as a way of controlling their growth and ensuring self-containment, its conceptual design was inspired by Howard's original vision of an agricultural belt for the Garden City. Residents would have access to the agricultural belt for leisurely pursuits and for a farming industry that would provide for the Garden City. The green belt envisaged by Abercrombie in the Greater London Plan (Abercrombie, 1944) was much more of a control mechanism to stop the dispersal of London's population, not as state-owned but as state-controlled land.

The green belt was introduced by the Conservative government in the mid-1950s, at exactly the same time the party was changing housing subsidies to emphasise high-rise buildings and trying to densify the inner cities to avoid the need for more New Towns. Ward claims this is no coincidence, and the green belt is a deeply political issue:

One of the central appeals to it [green belt policy] was that the Conservative county lobby, which is partly agricultural and overwhelming conservative in most places — and also the people that have been able to afford the places in the small towns and villages — don't want their areas changed and the green belt policy helped them. (120221-10G).

This view implies that on the one hand, the green belt foments NIMBYism, while on the other, it is securing a Conservative voting population. When Ward was asked in the formal interview whether the green belt was a Conservative ploy to save constituencies, he did not dismiss the interpretation outright.

A few specialists suggest that the aversion to the New Town style came more out of a feeling of NIMBYism by the surrounding villages, than from the New Towners themselves. The HCA advisor, for example, loosely implies this:

I think there are some issues which are not unique to New Towns necessarily because they are common to some examples of public housing in general built in 60s-70s, about the architectural experimentalism that didn't always work out. And I think there is also a perception about the uniformity and aspects of the urban planning that — for people who live in towns that have grown up more organically over a long period of time— maybe they are a bit sniffy about. (120126-04G).

According to Ward, New Towns were built in Conservative county constituencies that did not want either a Labour-voting population in their countryside or an 'eyesore' to their quaint village lifestyle. New Towns were dramatically built in rural areas that were mainly Conservative. However, their architectural manifestations had inner city qualities that led to local resentment from the outset (120221-10G). This also led to an important revelation that the architectural legacy of New Towns generated a much wider problem than its misrepresentation as suburbia. The New Towns embodied a certain aesthetic that challenged English class values: the countryside was supposed to be a place of quaint cottages supported by a Conservative-voting population, while state-sponsored housing schemes belonged in the city, together with its Labour-voting population. This was a critical disclosure that was difficult to assess because the interviewees never stated it directly. Hall (2002) had highlighted this as a fear of the 'democratisation of the countryside' (84):

The lower middle-class and working-class invasion of an area that had hitherto been the preserve of an aristocratic and upper-middle class elite. (King, cited in Hall, 2002: *ibid.*).

An analysis firstly initiated by the CAGE representative, but subsequently reoccurring throughout most interviews, was the long-term effect of building an entire settlement from 'scratch' (120208-08G). For the residents it was a difficult way to create strong community links because there was little shared history. In terms of the architecture and design, the 'new place' weathered simultaneously leaving little opportunity for historical variation and making the majority of the town appear to be one and the same. This is most un-British and makes it a significant problem: aesthetically, New Towns were a strong departure from Howard's British cottage in the Garden City. The CAGE representative expresses this concern below:

I think it [the negative image of new towns] comes from the kind of ‘all built at one time’ syndrome that is so not English picturesque. We are in a country where there is a huge love for little villages growing incrementally, market towns that have developed slowly over centuries. And this is very foreign to us all. To have suddenly, all in one era, a town built at once is very un-English. (120208-08G).

The ‘love for little villages’ that Fraser refers to is important. New Towns were neither quaint nor modest, and they would not attract a Conservative-voting middle-class population. The policy objective of reviving inner cities in the early 1980s furthered the expert assessment that New Towns had actually not benefitted the large cities enough to justify their vast expense and administrative framework. Lawless devotes an entire chapter in his 1981 book ‘Britain’s Inner Cities’ to addressing the question ‘Who benefitted from New Towns anyway?’ and quotes ‘rigorous evaluation’ by Herauld (1966), Thomas (1969) and Roderick (1971). He argues that decentralisation into New Towns did not benefit inner city areas of housing stress despite evidence that city residents were willing to move out (Lawless, 1981: 222). Instead, decentralisation benefitted suburban local authorities that were already close to the New Towns. It also attracted the workers of ‘expansive, capital-intensive’ (Lawless, 1981: 223) employment found in suburban locations rather than the inner city. His most emphatic point is that New Towns could have made a larger contribution to aid the economically deprived inner cities if the London local authorities had not been so reluctant to promote the scheme.

Despite Lawless’ argument that New Towns did not contribute as much as they could have to inner city areas of stress, Lawless acknowledges that its policy of decentralisation has in due time contributed to the dispersal of the urban disadvantaged. This discourse reveals an untold account of the New Town narrative that suggest a Labour-voting working-class presence on the outer edge of London’s green belt was too uncomfortable for the Conservative belt, encouraging both NIMBYism and disdain for the policy.

5.2.5 Land-banking over Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPO)

Although this research has been specifically unpacking the discourse around mark 1 New Towns, with focus on London’s outer ring, there is an important stereotype created around Milton Keynes that has affected the wider New Towns narrative. Despite Milton Keynes being the only mark 3 New Town (designated in 1967), it has dominated New Towns theory. Until the 1970s, the main role of house builders was destined to be

that of contractors; but after the 1970s, volume house builders took a lead role in both housing provision and land speculation. As a consequence, experts tend to see New Towns as something that merely aided and abetted house builders. This stereotype is difficult to contest, because the deregulation of planning controls witnessed in the 1980s coupled with a buoyant new market of home owning citizens (previously the affluent working-class rental market (Ward, 2005) resulted in a strengthened market for volume house builders. The most evident impact is that volume house builders are now the main suppliers of new housing.³⁰ This has resulted in the Southeast being subject to serial land-banking (Gallent, Anderson and Bianconi, 2006; Edwards, 2000). Lord Richard Rogers conceded that in England issues around housing and land were inseparable and that it caused significant problems when the Urban Task Force was preparing 'Towards an Urban Renaissance':

Housing is the most difficult type of building in Britain. That's because it's in the hands of volume builders which are property developers... they are the biggest firms in Britain and build millions of houses. But they really have very little interest in the housing- it is only a short term interest. They buy pieces of land. They wait for planning permission. They bank land and at certain points they dribble it out! They dribble it out because they want to push their prices up. And then they have to move real quickly: there is such a demand you can sell anything, and then they sell quickly and they have no interests in follow-ups. (120531-09G).

The experts interviewed consistently identified land-banking as the primary reason for the overwhelmingly undersupply of housing since the 1980s, and why supply has been notoriously difficult to kick-start. What is less evident in New Towns historiography is that land-banking was not such a profitable model for house builders previous to the 1970s because of the Community Land Act (1975) and Development Land Tax (1976). This legislative move had 'depressed' the land market, making it less advantageous for builders to accumulate large land-banks (Ward, 2005). It is an important clarification because while mark 1 New Towns were not as lucrative, volume house builders developing mark 3 models relied on the 'financial asset' of land-banks that had become 'raw material for their core business' (Ward, 2005: 335).

³⁰ These are sometimes acting as Housing Associations and at other times as developers for the private market, but usually providing for both simultaneously.

However, the way in which Milton Keynes was procured was significantly different from the pre-1980s system of mark 1 New Towns.³¹ Given the demand for housing, a particular type of development model was adopted where the Development Corporation acted as a primary agent but projects were delivered through public-private partnerships. Although there are certain stereotypes around mark 1 New Towns being state-led projects as suggested earlier, there was substantial involvement and partnering with private developers. However, the Development Corporation was responsible for the master-plan, acting as the lead client in the procurement process while house builders were mainly contractors. This differs from the Milton Keynes model in which the Development Corporation dissolved its powers and private developers undertook a lead role.

During an interview with a Strategic Planner and Regeneration Manager for English Partnerships (EP) and the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA), a development of Northstowe in Cambridgeshire was used as an example of a town recently developed in which the land was owned by EP. This, he stressed, was a positive model, because you had one development moving forward from the outset and a certain amount of work could be done by a leading partner, before handing the project over to the private developer. In the case of Northstowe, this involved preparing the master-plan and its related works of flood defence, general drainage issues and transport networks. He argued that this model was really about facilitating and kick-starting projects. It was critical, because a government agency leading the project would have long-term interests in the project:

So you had a situation where you had a government agency leading the development and setting the scene and getting it all set up before the developer moved in which I think as an agency we saw being very positive. And throughout the process with Northstowe we were continuously stressing the fact that we were only there to help get the project going. (120124-02G).

When asked about the model and what conflicts could potentially arise by having a state-owned developer procuring works and initiating large-scale projects, he replied:

In this case we own half of the land [in Northstowe]. So we fund it in terms of owning the land and putting in the services. But in terms of building the

³¹ Again, this points to the difficulties in all New Towns being labelled as one and the same. Just in terms of procurement, Mark 1 and Mark 3 new Towns differ significantly.

housing, that is still down to private sector house builders and in terms of the affordable housing that would be down to registered social housing landlords and registered providers of affordable housing. And some of their funding comes from the government in what was the housing corporation. So if you like we have the role of setting the scene. (120124-02G).

Interestingly, in discussion about Northstowe, references and examples were constantly made regarding Milton Keynes. The HCA interviewee reflected on this because since EP had dissolved into the HCA, many of its practitioners had worked on Milton Keynes. There were constant references to the New Towns ideology, and a portfolio of active New Town landholdings, but the references were exclusively in terms of Milton Keynes, not with any mark 1 New Towns:

People generally deal with what they know and what they experience. In Northstowe we found that practitioners in EP were used to the Milton Keynes model, so we would quite often use examples from Milton Keynes in a positive sense... However, the local planners and local members in South Cambridgeshire were referring to their experience of new communities which was Camborne... a 1980s and 1990s new settlement largely private sector led with many problems. But at EP we would generally refer to Milton Keynes rather than to earlier new towns. (120124-02G).

The HCA officer is careful to distinguish between Milton Keynes and earlier models. However, he accepts that in practice one applies knowledge from experience, rather than from theory, implying that mark 1 New Towns were simply too 'old' to be used as practical examples. The stereotype created around New Towns is thus a generalised one that should relate exclusively to post-1970s development. Expert accounts of the New Town programme have not made a clear enough distinction in separating the marks from a fiscal and partnership discourse. It appears that the contemporary legacy of land-banking and the volume house builders' control over the housing market is a result of the changes in policy that occurred throughout the 1970s and 1980s.

Adding to the argument about contemporary practices of land-banking, the HCA expert effectively supported the 1947 system of land acquisition where the state is conferred development rights through compulsory purchase in the name of 'positive planning' (Reade 1987). He does not mention Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPO) directly, but his argument is fully supportive of what the CPO process achieves:

In terms of procuring new communities the government acting as leader is the best. The wider question is how do you bring forward development in existing communities where we wouldn't have the landholding... where most of the land around existing communities would be auctioned by private

existing house builders. There are huge advantages to having one landowner. But how you get the land in the first place is a wider question. (120124-02G).

This avoidance of any reference to CPO is presumably intentional. Development Corporations had the power to purchase land through a simplified form of CPO that was crucial to enable the delivery of New Towns (Aldridge, 1979). Land nationalisation is the last remaining strategy that has been created around New Towns because it represents a planning system of radical origins. The term ‘radical’ is repeatedly used in New Towns literature (Reade, 1987: 28; Hall and Tewdwr-Jones, 2011: 71; Cullingworth and Nadin, 2006: 195) as shorthand for the Town and Country Planning Act of 1947. While it is portrayed as positive planning because it clearly had the capacity to modify the national settlement pattern, its implications were too ‘radical’ because it effectively destroyed the land market and made the state its sole trader (Reade, 1987). Thus, in relation to New Towns, CPO as a planning choice has been portrayed as undesirable and socially unsustainable because of the ambiguity in compensation rates and betterment value of the land purchase (Ambrose, 1986:59-63).

However, the experts interviewed contested this perception because it was used to facilitate municipal land-banking, on which development through public-private partnerships could occur. There were also repeated suggestions that the current planning system would benefit from this approach:

Back then government had the courage to say: ‘look we’re going to build a new town right here’. They had to deal with loads of issues to avoid certain boundaries and aristocratic estates. I don’t think government has the courage to do that anymore [laugh]. (120221-10G).

But of course, CPO was *not* straightforward because ascertaining the developmental value at which the land should be bought was complex and fraught with changes. This was also a very difficult experience for the people whose land was lost. A retired architect told the story of his grandfather’s parcel of land that was bought from him by force, in order to build Crawley New Town (Figure 5-e). Despite enduring a legal battle, the land was lost and his family believes the process led to his grandfather’s downfall and eventual death in the mid-1960s.

[Inside my family, New Towns were regarded with] tremendous hostility because everybody knew that what had been planned required the Compulsory Purchase of land in order to build certain key aspects of the towns so everyone knew that Compulsory Purchase would be applied if the New Town Corporations required land. And this actually happened to my grandfather who had a small building and decorating business, which he had started up himself, and by that time he would have already moved into one of two houses that he had built. One of which he had either sold, or let, and the other identical to the other which was his house. It was at the road end of the site where he had all the workshops. And that site was acquired by the council for building because it was close to what then would be the New Town centre. This dragged on for a very long time, and I think he was very angry to fight this himself, and obviously he didn't have a great deal of money, and in those days the legal systems that were required to fight your cause and avoid having your land and your house destroyed, and being paid something for it was a difficult thing to do. In the event it was my mother who took that on, and of course they failed. By then my grandfather became ill — it was already the late 1960s — and he died in 1964 so the family law is that you can't build them. And I think that's fairly accurate because he was a slightly sensitive and nervous person who had quite conservative views. He had fought in the First World War and he felt he had done his duty by the country and he thought the idea of taking somebody's land and business from them was something completely unthinkable. I, on the other hand, at that time, was a teenager away at school being influenced by all sorts of current socialist ideas. And in my head the New Towns were a very good idea. So in one way I found myself outwardly being able to argue why it was necessary to do this this [compulsorily purchase] to build the New Town and, of course, subconsciously taking on the anxieties of the family, and of course that was never resolved... I mean I was a teenager ... so that was a curiosity.

On balance my argument must've been about the old saying that you can't make an omelette without breaking an egg. And I think that's what my argument would've been, of course at the back of all of that I must've known this was upsetting the family in what turned out to be a fatal way.

Figure 5-e: Grandson of a New Town pioneer remembers how his family land was bought using Compulsory Purchase Orders to build Crawley

Source: Interview by researcher (120130-06G)

A scan of CPO headlines in 2013 reveals the public outrage when such orders are made. Nonetheless, if CPO was used more frequently to enable large housing developments, as it is currently used to purchase empty homes, it is worth asking if land-banking would continue to be such a lucrative business. However, when questioned, a policy advisor to the current government did not see how CPO would offset the effects of land-banking by volume house builders and instead claimed CPO was not possible because:

The New Towns depends, really, on national government. It needs to identify what they see as a suitable location for development and designate land for that purpose in a particular locality. Then [government relies on] purchasing that land at present use value and using its uplift in value as a means of delivering the infrastructure necessarily to support a settlement. Now, if you have an overriding policy objective that localities themselves need to take responsibilities for growth and development, then you can't really use the New Towns model in that way. (120126-04G).

The stereotype created around CPO is closely related to the belief that New Towns are part of an unreasonable public programme borne out of a statist ideology. Despite experts claiming during the formal one-to-one interviews that there are benefits to nationalised development rights and in using CPO (to a controlled extent) as part of a 'positive planning' system, this view is not reflected publicly. It is as if CPO has not only become typified as the villainous evil twin to the welfare state, but it is portrayed, with a peculiarly English dimension, as a socially unsustainable planning choice to be avoided at all costs in planning new communities.

5.3 Conclusion

This Chapter uses a selection of key experts and helicopter specialists who were instrumental in writing and disseminating a specific understanding of the New Towns programme to unpack the stereotypes that were constructed around New Towns which have (as a result) contributed to their so called decline. This Chapter also questions whether certain issues are due to a biased misrepresentation of the New Towns narrative, and if an alternative perspective is available. In the first half of this chapter, I made the connection between the political debates and the media coverage that the New Towns received in the early 1950s. These show that New Towns representation was both unreliable and biased, by sheer virtue of the programme having such high expectations in the eye of 'ordinary people'. By comparing the media coverage of 1953 with the contemporaneous debates occurring in the House of Commons, it becomes evident that the discourse around New Towns (and their verdict) was influenced more by public opinion than a calculated measurement of how they delivered the goals set out by the Reith Committee. Three dominant themes emerged in the discourse between both politicians and the media and consequently influenced the academic discourse around New Towns. Firstly, the political aim of nationalisation led to a negative portrayal of the planning profession as top-down (mainly because it assumed too many functions) and the Town and Country Planning Act 1947 was represented as unfair and unjust towards the private sector. Secondly, the ongoing Modernist debate led by Richards portrayed New Towns as axiomatic arguments for the Garden City model (Richards, 1953). Thirdly, the political dialectic regarding redistribution of wealth was manifested around the housing debate, because 'the home' acts as a status signifier for both individual and community values, especially when owned by the state and not by private builders. By revealing the debates with reference to these ideological discourses, it becomes evident that there are some factual errors in the New Towns narrative, and

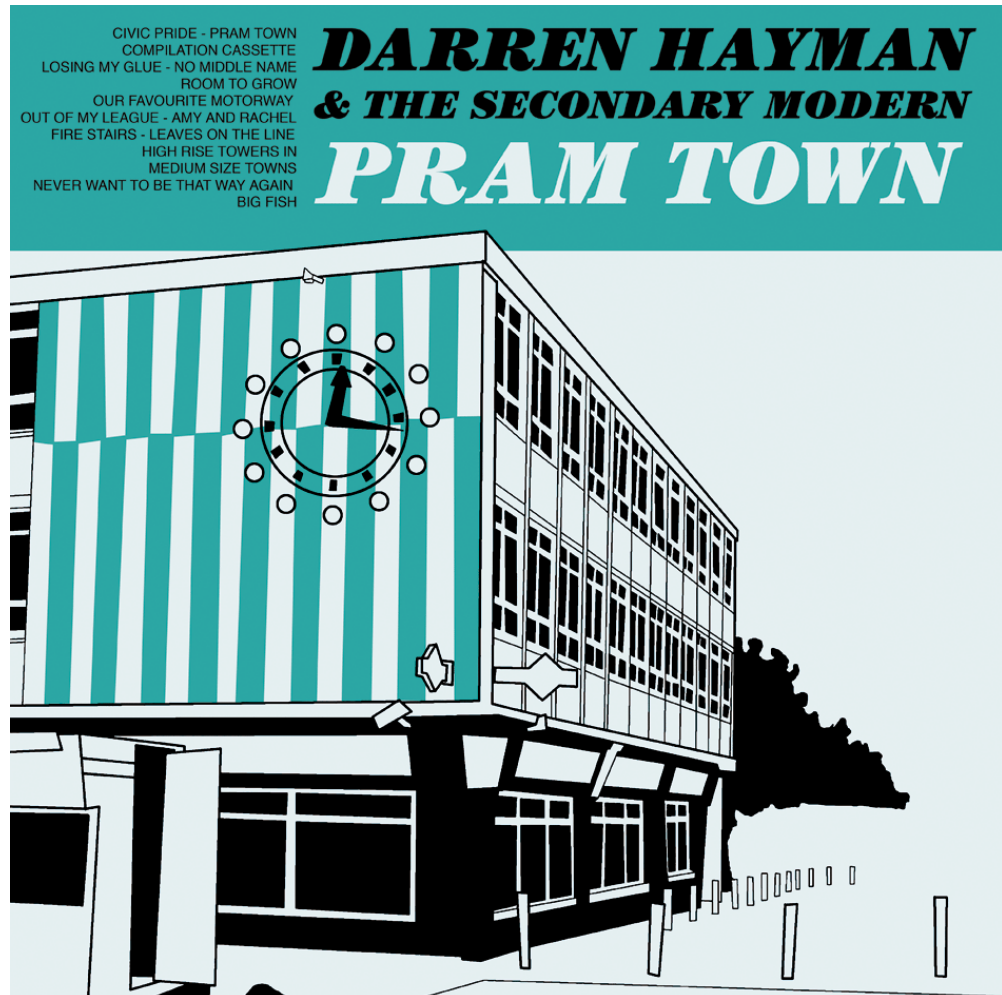
that these were deliberate misrepresentations; subsequent governments did not want to be seen to promote a statist project, or be seen to embrace a policy carrying the burden of negative press. This tension influenced the New Town debates in the years to come and have shaped the academic discourse around New Town ideology, as discussed previously in Chapter 3.

The second half of the chapter groups together the identified stereotypes that collectively give New Towns a negative image and which portray them as unbalanced communities. Firstly the New Towns Blues and suburban neurosis provide an identifiable stereotype that lends to a pathological understanding of New Towns and suburbia. This is contested, as we are given to understand that the automobile emancipated pioneers from the self-containment model and allowed them to look for work elsewhere. Departing the New Town became a status signifier of progression; not, as is represented, that emigration occurred because New Towns were terrains of aesthetic and psychic abjection (Riesman, Denny and Glazer, 1960; Mumford, 1961). A profound change in attitude occurred in the 1970s that was supported by the political debate around home ownership and that portrayed council housing as being housing for the poor, the immobile and the uneducated sector of society. The Right-to-Buy policy that followed divided council housing stock, creating a large administrative and maintenance burden on local authorities and further deepening class divisions that perpetuated the stigma of New Towns as unmanageable housing estates. A stigmatisation of New Towns discussed less often is how working-class estates were created in a Conservative green belt zone making them socially unsustainable, because the Conservative county constituencies did not want either a Labour-voting population in their countryside, or an 'eyesore' to blight their quaint village lifestyle. Another identifiable stereotype is that experts tend to think New Towns merely aided and abetted house builders. While the changes in planning policy that occurred throughout the 1970s and 1980s greatly changed the course of the New Towns programme, expert accounts have not made a clear enough distinction in separating the marks, and the legacy of Milton Keynes is represented as a typical New Town example when in fact it is atypical. The stereotype regarding Compulsory Purchase Orders is related to the belief that New Towns are part of a radical public programme of statist ideology. Despite experts claiming during their formal one-to-one interviews that there are benefits in the nationalisation of development rights and using CPO to a controlled extent as part of a 'positive planning' system, this view is not reflected publicly. It is as

if CPO has not only become typified as the villainous evil twin to the welfare state, but it is also portrayed as a socially unsustainable planning choice to be avoided at all costs.

While this chapter exposes the official view, and seems to portray New Towns as unbalanced communities built on the premise of a failed statist policy, it does not accept these views as fact. On the contrary, the issues revealed in the material of the 1950s debates and the academic discourse, in parallel with the more contemporary analysis, raise a series of questions that can only be answered by the pioneers of the mark 1 New Towns. In the following two chapters, this localised, bottom-up perspective will contribute an alternative narrative.

Chapter 6 Local Voices: Harlow New Town



Much of Harlow's elegance has survived; some of it is even listed. These buildings were designed by the cream of British architecture who worked on the world famous Festival of Britain along the South Bank. I remain in love with the clarity and bravery of their plan even if time has proven that towns should grow and evolve and not be designed from the floor up.... I'm attracted to visionaries like Frank Gibberd, who designed much of Harlow, although perhaps people's homes are not always the best place for experimentation and innovation. The new towns grew to become sterile abodes, often poorly manufactured, and forgetting to provide little beyond accommodation and amenities. The town lacked a soul, particularly for the newly invented teenager of the 1950s... The music that came out of the New Towns reflected the boredom and frustration that teenagers felt living there.

Figure 6-a: Interview with Darren Hayman, musician and frontman for Ex-Hefner

© Source: Darren Hayman, interviewed by *The Stool Pigeon* on February 2009

This master-plan has been devised by Mr Gibberd for a town to be built in rural Essex. It is presented fully, with ample exposition of the problems by which he was confronted and how he proposes to solve them.

Some who read these pages at this time may feel almost as if they have wandered into fairyland, that it is too good to be true, that such things can have no relation to the present bleak and troubled days. The truth is rather that what is sketched here is a practical and urgent task, practical because it is not unreasonable to hope that it will eventually give its due return as a business enterprise as well as in human values, and urgent because of the contribution it makes to solving the disastrous neglected problem of making London the city it ought to be. As Lord Latham has said, "The fate of London in the post-war years will be one of the signs by which posterity will judge us, and it is right that they should judge us.

Foreword to Harlow Master-plan by Sir Ernest Gowers, Chairman of Harlow Development Corporation (Gibberd, 1949).

Harlow New Town was one of the first four New Towns, together with Stevenage, Hemel Hempstead and Crawley, specifically aimed at easing the housing problems of London and the overspill from its decentralisation of both population and industry.³² As Minister of Town and Country Planning under the post-war Labour government, Lewis Silkin proclaimed its designation order in 1947 for a new community of 60,000 to be built in an existing village of Essex with a population of 4,500. The location for Harlow was selected based on the criteria set by the Greater London Plan of 1944, particularly noted for its rural characteristics. The qualities of the landscape and of its fertile agricultural land are key opening statements in the literature and archival documents about Harlow. Frederick Gibberd's master-plan opens with a description that 'the area is a rural one of exceptionally beautiful character' (Gibberd, 1952: II Existing Features) and it goes on to explain that the pattern of new development has evolved from the existing development to ensure it has charm and individuality. The master-plan for Harlow prepared by Gibberd was recognised at the time for its uniqueness in design and its preservation of the country atmosphere through the introduction of 'green wedges', which were inserted between the urban neighbourhoods and the town centre (Gibberd, 1952: III). Nevertheless, despite these master-plan efforts, Harlow New Town slipped quickly into what Hayman refers to in his interview as sterile abodes that were poorly manufactured. According to him, 'the town lacked a soul' (Hayman, 2009: 05 June 2012).

³² These are unlike the mark I New Towns designated in the Midlands to provide new housing, and Skelmersdale or Runcorn which were designated to provide alternative employment in declining industrial locations.

The primary objective of this chapter is to address the research question set out in the introduction to this thesis: To what extent can we reconceptualise the New Towns discourse by incorporating local perspectives into the legacy of this 1946 policy?' Len White, former social development officer at Harlow Development Corporation, was a keynote speaker at the Conference on the Future of New Towns in 1980 and opened his speech with some words about planning and people. His appraisal of the New Towns legacy is supportive, with patriotic undertones:

I came to Harlow in 1951, attracted by the idea of New Towns as a better alternative than the housing estates on which I had lived, worked and written. I was also attracted by the originality of the late Sir Frederick Gibberd's master-plan with its neighbourhoods, green wedges and surrounding countryside. The town was an integral part of Abercrombie's Plans for London and Greater London which envisaged a large movement of people from overcrowded London and the creation of entirely new communities mainly on Greenfield sites beyond the Green Belt. (White, 1980:18 July 1980).

In a similar conference some years later, this time to mark Harlow's fortieth anniversary, the Director of the Town and Country Planning Association, David Hall, opened with a similar congratulatory keynote address followed by a reminder of the inherited legacy and responsibility bequeathed to Harlow residents:

My first task in this keynote address is to extend very warm and sincere congratulations to Harlow on achieving the 40th anniversary of its designation as a New Town. I think it represents a major achievement in town planning, and I believe it represents probably the purest example of a first generation New Town in this country with the clarity of expression of the neighbourhood idea within the town plan as a whole, and the beautiful integration of urban form with the natural environment and landscape. It does enormous credit to the master-planner of the New Town, Sir Frederick Gibberd, and his colleagues who have been responsible for the building of Harlow during its first 40 years. It thus represents an awesome responsibility for their successors. (David Hall, 1987: 15 December 1987).

Both of these extracts are celebrating a legacy that contradicts the expert voices heard in the previous chapter that portray New Towns as unbalanced community. Does this validate the expectation that a story of local voices versus expert views will be one of jingoism versus scepticism? One objective in this case study is to reveal the nuances of this legacy, and to examine to what extent Harlow has absorbed the responsibility referred to by David Hall. This relates to the supporting research question:

If we accept that New Towns have been mainly documented through an expert-driven discourse (academic and practice) that has created a specific

and limited understanding, what happens when we nuance its discourse using everyday local voices to draw on its historical and contemporary experience?

In order to address this objective, this chapter investigates the evolution of Harlow New Town from its designation in 1947 to its current condition in 2013, primarily through a narrative enquiry led by resident perspectives. It explores micro issues that characterise the development of Harlow New Town within the bigger New Towns policy, by listening to, recording and analysing local voices. This includes past or current residents of Harlow, as well as past or current employees of the local authority: including the previous Harlow County Council, the Harlow Development Corporation and the existing Harlow Borough Council (HBC). A second objective of this chapter is to confront the specific stereotypes discussed in the expert views put forward in Chapter 5. In the process of doing so, new issues are revealed that aid the discourse in respect of building sustainable new communities.

A simple chronological approach was adopted during the classification of case study results, but its narration in this chapter is divided into four thematic discussions.³³ The first section discusses structural issues and is called ‘Self-containment: tipping the balance’. This discussion reveals issues that became apparent during Harlow’s developmental years that destabilised the New Towns project and were consequences of self-containment, at both the local and regional scale, as established conceptually in Chapter 2. The second section focuses on issues of design and access and has been called ‘Newness and sameness: where suburbia meets the inner city’. This is because the principle argument against Modernity is that it suffers from too much newness due to innovation, and sameness through its repetition. The third thematic section on political ideology is illustrated through a discussion of local versus central decision-making, using examples of the landlord-tenant relationship and it is called, ‘Rescaling governance: who is my landlord?’. In the last section on growth and expansion the legacy of Harlow is discussed. The section called, ‘When the future arrives’, addresses how the three lenses of self-containment, suburbanisation, and governance are affecting the contemporary development of this mark 1 New Town. The concluding section borrows Hayman’s (2009) analogy whereby Harlow can be likened to a sexy old aunt.

³³ Chapter 4 explains the methodology supporting this technique of data classification. However, the four chronological events that dominated the interviews are: (1) The arrival of pioneers; (2) The development of the New Town; (3) How residents interpret its legacy today; (4) Issues around moving forward.

The conclusion specifically addresses the stereotypes highlighted in chapter 5 and relates them to the localised perspectives revealed in this case study.

6.1.1 The 1947 Master-plan for Harlow New Town

Frederick Gibberd designed the original master-plan for Harlow New Town in 1949, as well as its revised and implemented version of 1952. It consists of fourteen 'comparatively small and compact [neighbourhood] units, each with its own primary school and sub-shopping centre, any part being within easy walking distance of any other. The limited size of these units would give a greater sense of neighbourliness and cohesion than the more usual neighbourhood areas of from 10,000 to 12,000 people' (Gibberd, 1952: VI). Gibberd's recorded documents and interview, documenting his aspirations for Harlow, continuously return to a few dominant themes: (1) achieving a high density of living; (2) achieving variety in housing; and (3) blurring the social divide through design. To increase density Gibberd designed the neighbourhoods around the existing topography, preserving common land and woodlands between residential blocks through the insertion of wedges. In the master-plan this strategy is very clear:

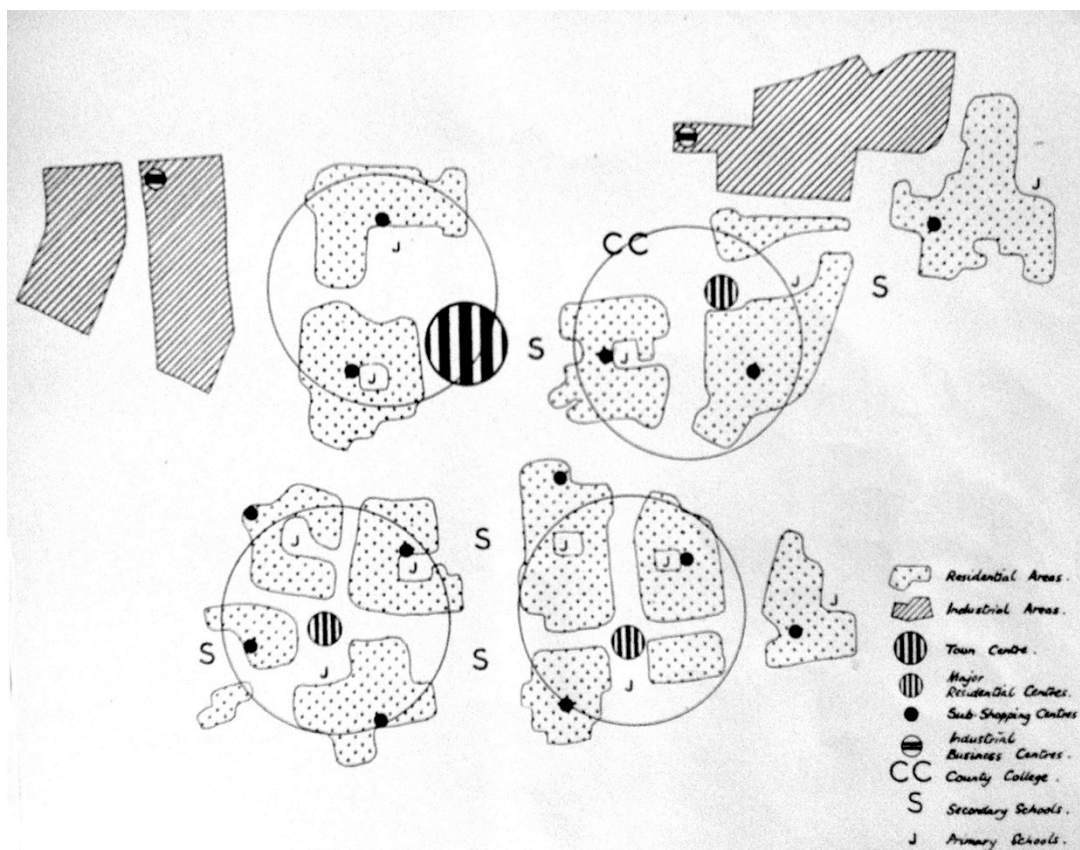


Figure 6-b: Harlow master-plan 1952 by Frederick Gibberd, Residential Zones

© Source: The Museum of Harlow

It was envisaged that a different architect would design each neighbourhood. In order to achieve variety and diversity, which was a principle aim of the master-plan, the Harlow Development Corporation (HDC) set a series of guidelines:

1. The principles of separate housing areas [should be] easily recognisable
2. A division in design work between staff architects and architects in private practice to help different areas achieve individuality
3. Net densities averaging approximately 15 dwellings or 50 persons to the acre (4ha)
4. A balanced development of houses of different standards
5. A balanced division of houses for sale and to rent
6. A code of sizes, related to the number of 'bed spaces' provided
7. A balance of division, overall, between houses and flats

(Gibberd, Harvey and White, 1980: 17-51).

While the aspiration of blurring the social divide stems from the ambition to create a balanced community, the tacit relation between this goal and how it is manifested as a design solution is not very explicit in New Towns literature, but it is implied in the dominant use of the Radburn layout, with self-contained neighbourhoods and avant-garde architectural design to the houses. The suggestion is that neighbourliness could be promoted (some would argue enforced) by living within a unit of a fixed density and scale (the neighbourhood); and that social divisions of income-groups would disappear if homes were built in equal measures of ambition and innovation. Although new housing would be owned by the Development Corporation and rented as social housing, Gibberd said there was a profound willingness for Harlow not to become just another standard public sector development, because the New Towns stood for a new way of living. According to him, this new way was justification in its own right to ignore popular taste and let the architects lead the way forward, because when asked what type of dwelling they wanted, people would revert to traditional symbols such as a house with 'a pitched roof, a bay window, a porch and approached through a private garden' (Gibberd, Harvey and White, 1980: 104):

The standard of architectural design is always some 15 to 20 years ahead of public taste. So the Board, while accepting that they must meet social demands [for a garden and pitched roofs], believed that the architectural qualities should be determined by architects and not popular taste. They decided to back their architects against subjective opinions — and back

them they have always done, even if individual members sometimes agreed with criticism. The consequence has been that the design steadily advanced over the years and in doing so led popular taste.

From a planning perspective, the design of Harlow is regarded as an archetypal manifestation of the New Town experiment (Grindrod, 2013; Alexander, 2009) and a reflection of Gibberd's original intention. What remains unclear is whether popular taste has indeed 'steadily advanced' over the years in the way Gibberd proclaims.

6.2 Self-containment: tipping the balance

The Reith Committee in a phrase of masterly compression defined the social objectives of the New Towns. They were to be "self contained and balanced communities for work and living". (How far has Harlow achieved this idealistic concept?) The newly appointed development corporation could only plan in a vacuum. They could not know what kind of people would come. There had been no census since 1931 and they had only the inadequate "Willesden Survey of movers" on which to go. What kind of people did come? (White, 1980: 18 July 1980).

In Harlow, a large number of pioneers came from the poorest communities of the East End in London, an area with high social and physical deprivation and with a strong fascist tradition. This had a long-term effect on the development of the New Town and may account, in part, for the current problems of social deprivation.³⁴ Harlow's pioneers came from Dagenham where Oswald Mosley, founder of the British Union of Fascists, had led the march known as The Battle of Cable Street. This community marked by extreme fascist ideology is the same that was transferred into Harlow, a New Town built on a socialist ideology. A key interviewee, Ines Newman, who worked in Harlow council between 1988 and 1991, declared that the contrast was visible, imminent and real. According to her, it was clear that the pioneers arrived at the New Town and decentralised their Dagenham traditions as well:

So you had this very strong sort of ex-communists, ex-trade union, ex-left element in Harlow and then you also had the Mosleyites who had also come from the East End of course and people in Harlow knew exactly whom each one was. (140212-13H).

³⁴ Harlow is within the 10 per cent most deprived wards in the East of England; the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) is measured by compiling indices on income, employment, health, education, housing and access (EEDA 2003).

In the case of Harlow it was as if the battle for Cable Street, with its racist and uneducated Mosleyite assumptions, was brought into the streets of newly developed Harlow:

One of the first things I did was take my son — then eight [years old] — to a holiday play scheme in Harlow where there was a very nice adventure holiday play scheme by the canal and after the first day he said he had never seen anything so racist as a nine year old anywhere. (140212-13H).

This links to the expert voices who argued that it was difficult to build a new settlement from scratch since there was little shared or collective history (120208-08G). What the expert critique does not foresee is the impact of relocating an entire community with a shared history into a different location. This coincides with Ward's assessment that the green belt was not only a way of containing the town but also of the inner-city qualities that had suddenly been 'dumped-down' in conservative-voting rural villages (120221-10G). It suggests that from the outset, the New Town would have been characterised as place for Labour-voting inner-city citizens more akin to the stigmatisation described by Hanley (2007:14-15) that is endured when living on a housing estate.

However, the notion of creating a balanced community may sound utopian in retrospect, but it was very real in the post-war era. New settlers were offered a job and a house with a garden; they had guaranteed access to health, education, leisure and culture facilities provided by the Development Corporation. With the prospect of a new and secure life, why would the cycle of social deprivation not end? And with all the attempts to establish balance, why did the deprivation continue to prevail? Newman claims that social deprivation cannot be understood as a current trend in Harlow. Social deprivation was visible from the beginning. Moving entire communities from one area to another essentially uproots the socio-economic patterns and culture of that community as well. According to her, Harlow historically maintained 'over 60 per cent of council housing which wasn't like any other council' (140212-13H). Despite all efforts to better the living conditions for the poor East End community through the process of decentralisation, the pioneers were uneducated people who had traditionally left school at the age of 14 and gone straight into jobs based on manual labour.³⁵ This argument reveals an important distinction in terms of how the idea of a balanced community was off to a precarious start. While most of the pioneers did not have very

³⁵ In Harlow, the East End pioneers had mainly worked in the London Docks or the Tate and Lyle factory.

high levels of education and came from areas of extreme ideology in inner city London, they were transferred into a middle-class rural area unconnected from London. From the outset there were tensions amongst the original Harlow residents and its neighbouring villages. According to Newman, Harlow was a two-class society from its very inception. There were two kinds of jobs in Harlow: jobs that required high-tech skills and the manual labour jobs. The decentralised communities ended up with the more manual jobs and living on Development Corporation housing, while the high-tech jobs were taken by more skilled workers who chose to live outside of the New Town, within the leafy Hertfordshire countryside:

The absolute level of the social infrastructure massively improved. I mean there is no doubt about it. They had fantastic healthcare, good housing, nice open spaces, it wasn't even disastrous transport, and I think it takes a few generations for those sort of things to change... and there was still probably an attitude of 'as you did better' you move out of Harlow. Amongst the council some of them were very impressive — some of them lived in Harlow... they were committed to it [the New Town experiment] but there was a very strong Harlow nationalism in a way! (140212-13H).

Embedded in her declaration is an important argument that once people 'did well', they sought to move out and escape the New Town. In a sense, departing Harlow became a status signifier that social progression had been made and that you no longer needed to be looked after by the state. It further ratifies Ward's assessment in Chapter 5 that there was an aspirational value attached to breaking away from the self-containment model. Initially, families applied to move into Harlow because it was catering for the whole family lifestyle. Early newspaper articles, such as *Harlow Citizen* 1953 (see Figure 6-c) boasted about the policy as a 'great social experiment' because it catered to entire families and provided a child-friendly town (Editorial, 1953a). An explicit term of the Reith Committee had anticipated that its social objectives could be achieved by creating 'self-contained and balanced communities for work and living' (Reith Committee, 1946c: 2). However, this ideal begins to break apart when we learn that the settlers aspired to leave the town once they were doing well. This is described by Malpass (2010: 221) as the residualisation of social housing, where the New Town was founded on the basis that council housing was a 'a tenure for the social mainstream' but was quickly surpassed with the belief that social renting was a symbol of failure, and 'moving out' was part of the new social settlement.

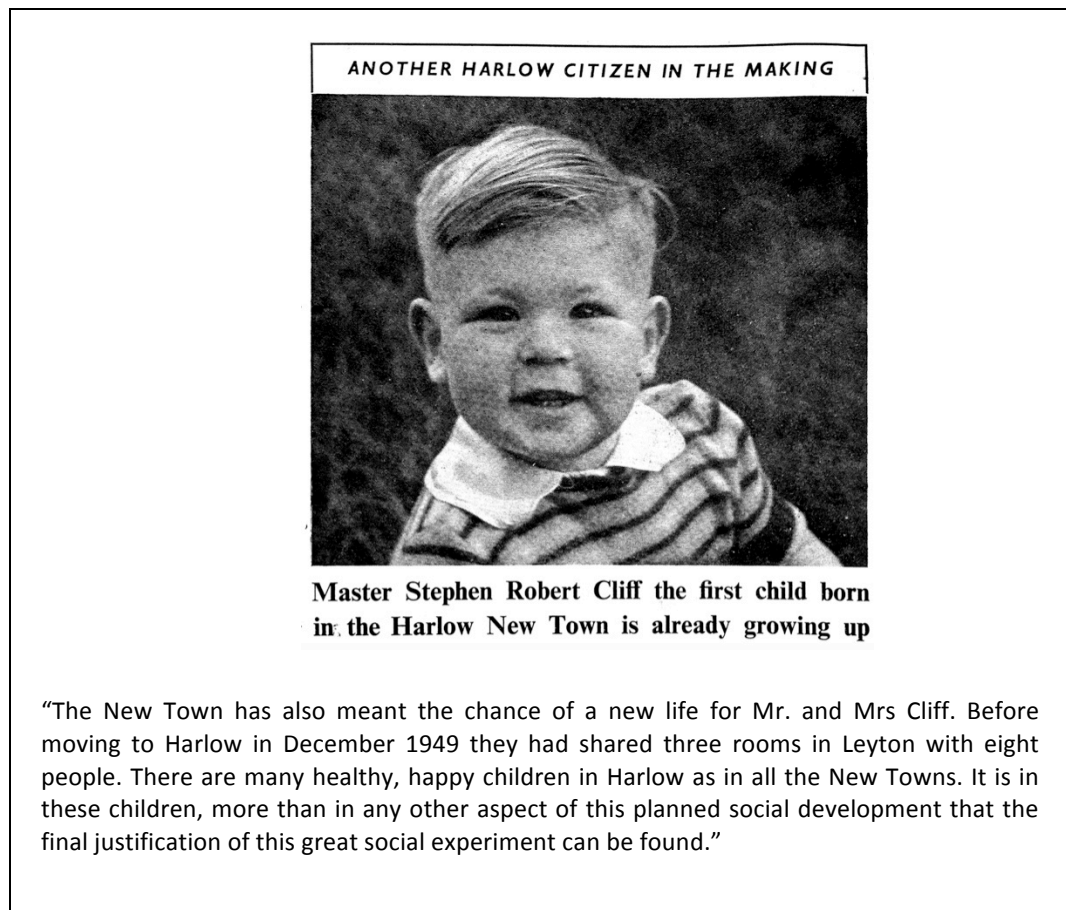


Figure 6-c: A local newspaper celebrates the first new-born in Harlow

© Source: *Harlow Citizen*, 15 May 1953 (*Harlow Citizen*, 1953a)

This noted desire to leave Harlow New Town reveals tenuous links with the growing cultural aspiration for home ownership that predates the 1960s and 1970s (specifically, the Right-to-Buy policy of 1979). In Chapter 2, home ownership was related to the landed interest discourse of the late twentieth century. Here it was argued that the 1909 Act encouraged middle-class housing in the new suburban developments as part of the landed interest tradition. In contrast, state-sponsored housing schemes were responding, not to a housing crisis, but to insanitary conditions of the undeserving poor. In other words, from as early as the 1909 Act, public housing was provided to remedy a social problem, whereas owner-occupied housing existed in suburban developments and catered for the middle class. While during the 1960s and 1970s home ownership as a concept was completely reinvented with political promotion to sell off council stock through the Right-to-Buy policy, it seems from local narratives that residents arrived at the New Town with a much earlier expectation of owner-occupation as a benchmark for success. One interviewee claims this aspiration was supported financially as a consequence of how housing finance was structured. As early as the 1950s, there was interest relief on mortgages 'so it was always financially cheaper to buy a house than it

was to rent it ...because you had tax relief on the interests paid on your mortgage' (140212-13H). A local resident remembers his mother's lifelong obsession with buying a home. According to him, this was the first thing she aspired to once she married in 1952. According to the interviewee this was different in Harlow because when New Towns were first conceived most people rented their home, so housing was intentionally designed to be rental only, with variations within its rental stock to ensure a social mix of housing.

It was actually quite difficult to buy property in the New Towns because central government policy wasn't about selling that much and instead tried to keep a 'social mix' of housing. So when people wanted to make that step onto the social climb, they weren't able to do so in Harlow and instead started looking for places outside of Harlow. So ambitious and hard-working families started moving out and leaving Harlow... they moved out to the villages surrounding so that has led to a lot of commuting out of Harlow. (120117-01H).

This argument suggests New Towns policy had the reverse effect than its original intention. By trying to force social mix, households had to look elsewhere when their social status changed. This is supported by data that shows Harlow's capital workplace income in Harlow is higher than the national average while the capital household income is lower than average (120117-03H). In other words, 'a lot of well-off people come and work in Harlow to make their money but don't live here and a lot of less well-off people have to leave Harlow to make their money and find work' (120117-03H). This is a critical flaw within the New Town structure that undoubtedly affected internal development of the town, and deepened any pre-existing hostilities with the neighbouring villages that were already wary of Harlow New Town. In Chapter 5 it was understood that the automobile emancipated pioneers from the self-containment model and allowed them to look for work elsewhere as departing the New Town became a status signifier of progression. This contradicted the representation that emigration occurred because New Towns were terrains of aesthetic and psychic abjection (Riesman Denny and Glazer, 1961; Mumford, 1961) as discussed in Chapter 2. Adding to the complexity of this argument, an additional perspective is that migration appears to have occurred as local residents sought home ownership in suburban developments. This would endorse Saunders' (1990) claim that home ownership is deeply ingrained in a British suburban aspiration. By understanding that local attitudes view suburbia as a development of aspirational value instead of 'terrains of aesthetic and psychic abjections', the expert's view appears precarious.

6.2.1 Suburbia or New Town? The complexity of self-containment

I was told that people sometimes don't admit that they come from Harlow or Essex. They say they're from the Hertfordshire border. Perhaps Harlow is too ordinary for them. But it didn't used to be ordinary; it used to be the future. (Hayman, 2009: 05 June 2012).

Hayman's quotation here provides a decisive angle on the contemporary legacy of Harlow. Hall's keynote speech delivered in 1987 foresaw an 'awesome responsibility for its successors' to continue the New Towns experiment, but suddenly by 2009 it appears that citizens do not even admit they come from Harlow. Recognition of Harlow as a unique town with a particular history is not visible in the younger generation. At the local schools, there is no space in the curriculum to assess Harlow's heritage. According to a Harlow Secondary School teacher, there is citizenship within the curriculum that would provide a valuable platform for studying local history, but 'that has been quite pushed away to one side in schools'. Students have a very limited knowledge of the New Town's history and those who show some awareness have learned it at home (120117-02H). When the MAZE residents group was asked whether they felt responsible (or even interested) in passing on the New Town's history, they conceded that this was no longer relevant.³⁶ The generation who moved from London to Harlow is diminishing in numbers and those that remain have 'reached a certain age and the information about the New Town is not handed down. It's just a town for us, and this is where we live' (260312-10H). The archivist at the Museum of Harlow is perhaps the most active champion of the New Town and complained that within the council he is consistently asked to play down the New Town references:

You see a lot of comments I have received from senior people in the council, where I have worked for twenty-four years is, 'Oh you can't keep banging on about the New Town... it's not new at all anymore!' and to that I have to answer, 'Excuse me you can keep going on about the New Town forever. Because they are a planning concept, regardless how many years have passed! (120117-05H).

To a large extent it can be argued that the pioneers and the second generation have appropriated their town, and have created such strong community links that they no longer feel the need to associate their community as part of a collective process. 'It's just a town for us, and this is where we live' appears simple, but when probed, residents

³⁶ MAZE, the residents group with whom empirical enquiry was carried out, is introduced in the methodology in Chapter 4 (see 4.2 Harlow).

clarify that it isn't the town they refer to, but their neighbourhood. The dialectic of belonging to the larger town versus a smaller neighbourhood unit is important in the way the New Town is now perceived to the younger generation. While it appears that the ideology of self-containment as a planning aim at a neighbourhood level left residents very active within their neighbourhood, it seems the town itself became almost redundant.

Clarence Perry had envisaged that this tight bond would develop by planning neighbourhood units and, as discussed in Chapter 3, the implicit aim behind the design strategy was to strengthen family and community life (Perry, 1913). However, throughout discussions with residents, it became evident that the feeling of being exceedingly localised was not only related to the planning typology of the neighbourhood unit as the experts and key literature on New Towns might expect. Residents claim it was more a consequence of the tight relationship between employer and resident, labelled paternalistic or 'communised' (260312-05H). This relationship only became explicit in a dialogue regarding a set of photographs taken in the 1970s (Figure 6c), which captured the community spirit of the early days.³⁷ 'I've lived here since God knows when and we've always had a strong community spirit... remember these carnivals?' (260312-06H). The residents group became agitated and excited when showing pictures of their festivals that were hosted by the company and complained that the community spirit 'died' as these events stopped:



Figure 6-d: A fancy dress party in the neighbourhood hall, Harlow 1975

Source: Private collection of a MAZE resident

³⁷ During the MAZE workshop with residents who had brought a variety of old photographs.



Figure 6-e: A carnival parade organised by the employers of Harlow industrial zone, 1967

Source: Private collection of a MAZE resident

You see years ago it used to be the big factories that had the floats but they were communised so had to do away with it! Yeah! Now they just put a link on Ebay to bring in a private company. (260312-05H).

The unintentional outcome is that as pioneers decentralised from London into Harlow, their connection to the New Town was built and strengthened more through the employer, than through the town itself. This is a direct nod to Cullingworth's criticism in the 1970s that New Towns went far beyond the remit of providing housing and were essentially about social planning.

The Harlow narrative provides a clear illustration of why the programme became debilitated when the planners' role in social planning was removed (Cullingworth, 1970: 210-211). By linking employment with housing (as a primary objective of the self-containment model) a temporary dependency was created that would have to be adapted as employment structures changed. Harlow residents concede that when their employer changed, or as they became unemployed, they were also left without their New Town host, and some even used the expression 'father figure'. According to the local voices, this marked the moment that the community spirit died.

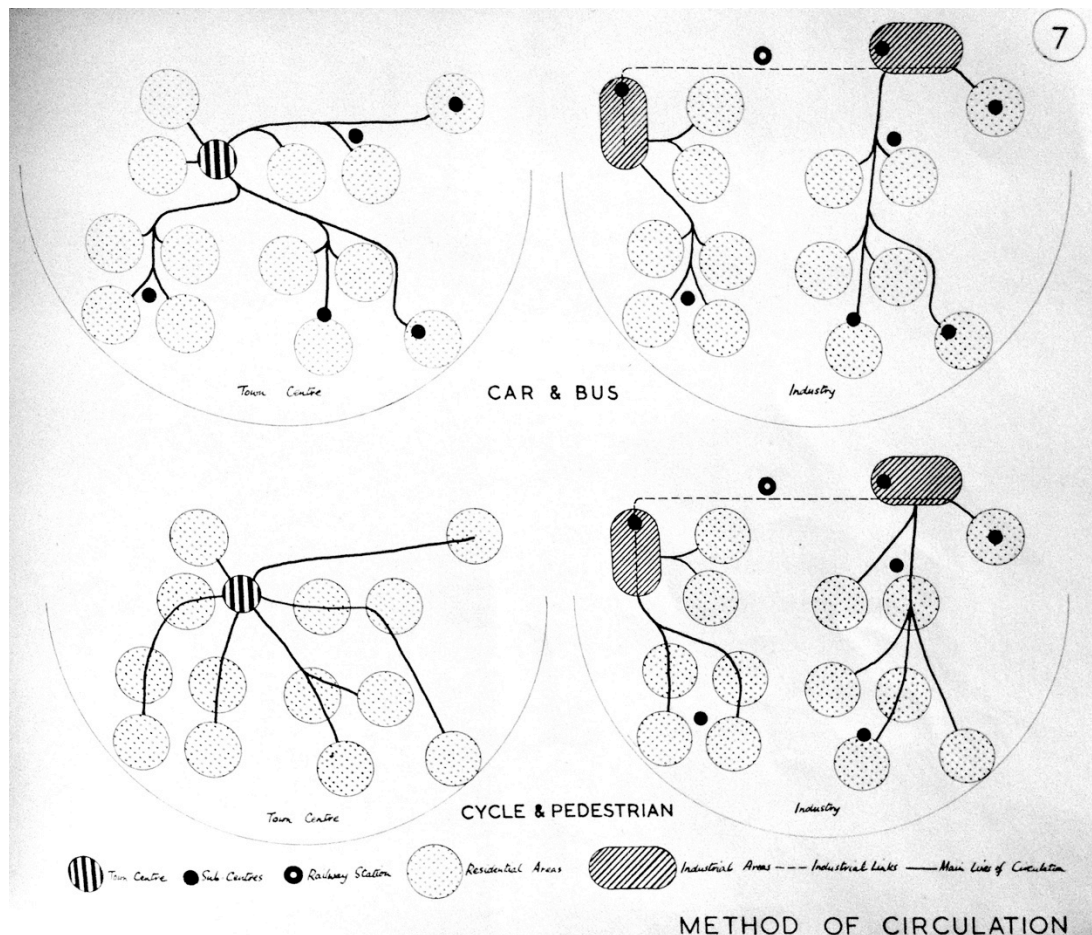


Figure 6-f: Harlow master-plan 1952 by Frederick Gibberd, Method of Circulation

© Source: The Museum of Harlow

Although the town was never planned with the car in mind, as the industry changed, so did people's patterns of movement.³⁸ Conveniently, the car offered a very popular way of breaking away from the self-containment model. The high degree of internal self-containment is visible from the master-plan diagram on method of circulation produced by Gibberd in 1952 (Figure 6e). 'Internal' is used carefully because the transport infrastructure designed by Gibberd predicated movement within the New Town boundaries, without making regional links. Car and bus routes are planned on one layer, while pedestrians and cyclists are on another. The anticipated movement is one directional, travelling either from neighbourhood units to the town centre or to the industrial zone. Newman, for example, commuted by car from London to Harlow because it was so difficult to use public transport. 'If you went in the rush hour in the right direction it wasn't too bad but if you did reverse commuting like I was doing, where I occasionally stayed late for an evening meeting, it was actually impossible'

³⁸ The personal automobile only became widespread in the 1960s.

(140212-13H). According to Newman, if the mark 1 New Towns had been well connected, there would have been a very different outcome in economic opportunities across the region. For the residents who did not have access to a car or who did not find work elsewhere as the manufacturing industry declined, they became stuck in their self-contained town, contributing to the feeling that Harlow is a stationary and dormant town, a prerequisite for the perpetuation of the suburban pathological urbanism.

There isn't a particularly big transient community in Harlow. People moved out of London, moved here and the population has grown. But within those [original] communities there is not a huge influx of people and huge outflux. It is quite a stationary town. (120117-03H).

It should be noted that Harlow was not fully delivered as Gibberd envisaged in the master-plan. Transport and infrastructure works were not realised, making external connections within the region and to London substantially out-dated. This was expressed as a growing concern in Chapter 5 by the Harlow Citizen (MacKenzie, 1953a) and was attributed to the typical failings of a statist programme. Accordingly, Whitehall could not deliver the promised infrastructure apart from housing and, in doing so, was treating the New Town project as a mere housing estate (see discussion in section 5.1).

An earlier discussion sustained in Chapter 3 on the governance structure of the Development Corporations highlighted that the New Town works were funded by different ministries in what Tewdwr-Jones (2012: 120331-03S) labels government through consensus. This made the programme vulnerable to any changes in government because different ministries managed different funding. It is likely this same argument of political consensus affected the vulnerability of the model as the economy changed:

The idea was good to start with because it was a self-contained town. You had to work here to live here so we would be self-supporting. But the way of the world it spread and as everyone travels out to jobs and it couldn't stay as it was intended. (260312-10H).

In Harlow, the concept of self-containment has thus become synonymous with 'unconnected and static', suggesting it represents the hallmark of a bye-gone era, out of touch with current lifestyles. This perception has been critical to its development because it carries the legacy of a town that was part of a socialist experiment and has become stigmatised as low-income and stagnant. A member of the local authority believes that Harlow will grow within the next thirty years but it will not be internal growth 'because Harlow doesn't have anywhere to expand' (120117-04H). Instead, he

claims, all new growth will be along its periphery and according to him the new residents 'won't label themselves as Harlow people'. When probed on the matter, he answered that:

It is because of the perception of Harlow. Historical perceptions of what people think of people from Harlow. (120117-04H).

The outcome of self-containment as identified herein poses an immediate question in terms of the way Harlow developed. Why did people have to travel out for jobs if the New Town was designed to provide both a house and a job?

Unemployment was a serious reality as manufacturing jobs declined in the 1970s and 1980s, replaced by high-tech jobs for which the population was not skilled or suited. When interviewed between 2009 and 2010, the legacy of a community enduring mass unemployment became apparent. Mono-skilled workers were trying to catch up to the changing economic model, but it was proving difficult. The original Harlow workforce was put together to work in factories and manufacturing and had little training or alternative skills:

At one point there were a lot of factories and production work in the town but they've cut down. And two of the biggest employers in town, one is GlaxoSmithKline, and a lot of the work they require is very skilled, very specialised and our skills as a town aren't there. The young people aren't achieving the basic skills in literacy and they will not be able to get a job in the jobs that are now in our town. (260312-10H).

Critically, Newman explains that New Towns were essentially part of a planned economy, also referred to as managed economy (see discussion 3.3: A planned economy). In the case of Harlow, preparing for a balanced community by selecting a mono-skilled workforce has hampered its growth as a competitive town and has marginalised its society. A critical issue discussed at length by Newman who worked as Economic Development Officer from 1988-1999 was that New Town industrial zones supported company plants, but not their headquarters, and this had a profound impact on the local decision-making (or lack of) process:³⁹

It made it very difficult to work with [these companies] in any sorts of ways because the managers would change very frequently. If they were doing

³⁹ Companies in London were limited in the permissions for manufacturing units when the New Towns were set up so they would have set up a manufacturing factory in Harlow or another New Town but they would not have set up their Headquarters there.

well they were sucked out and taken to more important plants somewhere else... (140212-13H).

Again, the argument here suggests that New Towns were used as a way to achieve social status but were the means of progression and not its end. They appear to have served their purpose of blurring the social divide by providing opportunities for growth, employment and professional success, but once the status had been achieved its residents were eager to move on. There was another important consequence to the industrial plant model that hampered Harlow's ability to innovate its industry as the economy changed:

...It also meant the plant could close and there was no local decision-making involved in that and it made it very limited in its industrial structure. It just did one process, it didn't have the ability to change and innovate and grow because it was just part of that. And that was true of a lot of stuff in the Southeast so part of our argument was through the clustering was to bring more local decision-making. (140212-13H).

An alternative to the structural model of the managed economy would have been to break up the industrial aspect of the New Towns in the South East. Newman directed the South East Economic Development Strategy (SEEDS) group from Harlow, and she revealed the internal debates that took place within the council and the South East region as a whole during the late 1980s to deal with the de-industrialisation of the economy. A model that was championed by SEEDS as a viable way forward was development through clustering (Cutler, Newman, and Hazel Ward: 1994). An American economist, Michael Porter, initially argued this as a means to achieve success in local economies, by bringing together specialist clusters of industry into one area. Newman believed that the South East was an ideal region for clustering because you 'could get the areas around London to work together on these clusters and sort of bring together networks of industries and people working on the same industrial sector in order to enable them to innovate and grow' (140212-13H).

A counter argument to the clustering economy promoted by SEEDS, which was put forward to Newman during the interview, was that clustering could suffer in the same way as the New Town industrial sites if a single industry collapsed. The success, she claimed, was in clustering not just in one industry. As a small sample, SEEDS had researched clustering the financial sector and defence sector 'but there are a wide variety of sectors the region could have worked with and if they clustered to work as networks, they could grow and innovate, whereas if they worked in individual

companies they would become stifled’ as the New Towns model shows. According to Newman, the main barrier to shifting from a plant model to one of clustering was that New Towns had to break down their existing barriers, but this was controversial and problematic within the council:

One of the fights that I had as an Economic Development Officer in Harlow was a continual fight about whether Harlow should grow or not because it was very small. And Stevenage and Crawley both grew quite considerably... Harlow hit 70,000 when I was there and surrounded by greenbelt was very resistant to that green belt being broken up in any way so it was a problem. (140212-13H).

This interview with Newman was critical in linking how self-containment as a social concept was weakened by its reliance on the planned economy. It also reinforces the idea of the impact that green belt designation can have on the development of new communities. Whether this impact underpins self-containment in a positive way (by preventing sprawl) or with negative consequences (by hampering growth and therefore economic diversification) will be evaluated further in this chapter on the discussion of growth and expansion (see discussion 6.4). Momentarily, it is necessary to focus on smaller, micro issues of life in the New Town.

6.3 Newness and sameness: where suburbia meets the inner-city

In the previous chapter, experts maintained that New Town architecture and design was largely the product of a Modernist failure, due to its resemblance to a suburban dystopia whilst simultaneously appearing to be large housing estates. This creates a typological inconsistency that needs to be resolved.

In his address at the Conference on the Future of New Towns in 1980 Len White made a clear distinction that he chose to work in Harlow because ‘the idea of New Towns’ appeared to be ‘a better alternative than the housing estates on which I had lived, worked and written’ (White, 1980). Although he is clearly differentiating the two, by virtue of his narrative, he is also equating their similarity. As a social development officer for the Harlow Development Corporation, White would have had an institutional understanding of the intention and political ideology behind the project. But do the local voices differentiate the two?



Harlow

Posted on: December 18th, 2004 by admin 18 Comments

Like 58

Tweet 3

+1 0

On speaking of the brassy actress Jean Harlow, Margot Asquith said: "The 'T' is silent, as in 'Harlow'". Just about says it all for a town whose only contribution to satire is to name one of its shittiest pubs...wait for it...hold those ribs...get ready with the defibrillator paddles...the Jean Harlow....with a silent T.

Where are the chav hangouts? f**king everywhere.

With a forces background, I have lived in many places...even military transit camps converted (just) from ex WW2 POW camps. I have also been to the third world...so I can speak with authority when I say that Harlow is the nastiest, meanest, scummiest place I have ever had the misfortune to inhabit.

I work hard for a living...around my house appears to be a 5 mile exclusion zone of other employed people...scattered within it, like the remains of some post nuclear holocaustic sci-fi movie are a bizarre array of concrete bunkers inhabited by what appear at first sight to be Morlocks. As the incredulous camera zooms in...wait...no...they are almost human...those grey lumps are...HOUSES???....

Figure 6-g: Harlow makes the Top 10 ChavTowns of the UK

Source: Extract the internet forum: www.chavtown.co.uk on 18 December 18 2004 (Anonymous, 2004)

This extract showing the opinion of a local resident in Harlow lends credence to the expert view through its vehement dislike of the architecture, which is referred to as 'a bizarre array of concrete bunkers'. Aside from its dislike of the housing (referred to as 'grey lumps') the post also reveals the resident's feelings about Harlow: nasty, mean and seemingly low density. With 18 comments and 58 'likes' on Facebook, the posting is not indicative of an overwhelming majority, but it does offer a flavour of the attitudes surrounding the New Town. The resident claims to have a forces background, and to have 'lived in many places' which indicates the author is older than 18 years. However, it is unjust to illustrate this thematic discussion in the language and attitude of the ChavTowns post. Despite attempting to contact the author via the internet to no avail, its position was discussed with the MAZE residents and they do not display such distaste for their town. From the local interviews conducted, not a single resident would have chosen a life outside of Harlow. The older generation, especially, feel a great sense

of pride and satisfaction in the town they have grown up with. This paradox may be explained because pioneers, especially, are the most supportive and sympathetic to the New Town experiment, whereas outsiders tend to be the most critical.

6.3.1 A suburban-esque typology

Gibberd's strong architectural conviction has created a clear divide between (favourable) views from the local resident, and (reactionary) views from the outsider. At a local level, the recorded observations were overwhelmingly in favour of the master-plan and its achievements, praising its strong direction and comprehensive planning that 'embraces all aspects of a resident's needs' (120117-05H). One interviewee, son of a pioneer, pointed out that Harlow's strength lay in Gibberd's involvement throughout the project and should be an argument for 'why that sort of strength in direction is needed in any sort of big new development' (120117-05H). He thinks that the landscape and architectural framework had a strong vision and has been adaptable to change. This resident also praised the neighbourhood unit system because, as someone who has lived in three different neighbourhoods, he believes 'they took into account all necessary infrastructure of a person's life' by providing corner shops, a local school, a church, a meeting hall, leisure area, sports area, play area and 'all within my own little neighbourhood' (120117-05H). Another local resident moved to Harlow in 2004 and concedes that her interest in Harlow has been 'inherited' from her architect husband. She finds the housing 'interesting' and states that 'a lot of effort was made when developing the designs'. She observes that people in Harlow do not know their town very well because 'they are still engrained in their own little area [neighbourhood]' (120117-02H). Once again, this comment suggests the neighbourhood unit led to a self-contained type of attitude at a very local scale, possibly on the verge of isolation. The Harlow resident concedes that her opinion is not representative of the average observer because her husband is an architect so he points things out to her that she would otherwise not notice. In her own words, she 'looks at it from an eye that is slightly more educated to the people that live here' (120117-02H). The previous interviewee could also be claimed as 'unrepresentative' because although he was born and raised in Harlow, his interest in local history has led him to be the sole archivist and historian at the Harlow Museum of History.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, both interviewees endorse the planning

⁴⁰ Due to cuts in the local authority budget, this museum was closed by Harlow Council in 2012 but David Devine remains in the museum looking after the archive.

typology of the neighbourhood unit, providing an alternative view to the idea that self-containment was mainly triggered through the employer-tenant relationship. However, by the time both residents were working in Harlow, the social planning arm within the Development Corporation was no longer operating.

A more representative group of voices has been recorded at MAZE, the residents association for three estates that have been earmarked 'Priority Estates'. According to the Borough Council (HBC, 2002), Harlow is within the East of England's 10 per cent most deprived wards. To combat social deprivation, the Council has been linking its 'housing in need' through a programme called the Priority Estates.⁴¹ Susan is Priority Estates Officer in the Regeneration and Enterprise team while Arthur is the Regeneration Project Delivery Manager for Harlow Borough Council, and both were generous in the time they offered this research.⁴² Susan made it possible to access MAZE meetings and speak privately to the residents, most of who have lived in Harlow for over twenty years, and the majority of which were first or second generation pioneers.

One of the outcomes of the neighbourhood unit in Harlow is that it worked so efficiently at providing at a local level that people tend not to understand their town as a whole and instead experience it through fragments in scale: the housing unit, the neighbourhood unit, the town centre unit. This fragmentation has led to a general misunderstanding of Harlow as an integrated town (physically) and as a balanced community (socially). This view has already been supported previously in relation to how the self-containment both affected and was affected by the managed economy. But how did it affect the balanced aspect of the town?

Perhaps the Harlow system works too well in so far as people know the neighbourhood where they live in and don't know many other places. And that is very true, people tend to know the area where they live and the town centre for shops and services and unless you know family in another neighbourhood you wouldn't really go there because you have no need to go there. That means people don't know other parts of the town even though it's relatively small. (120117-05H).

⁴¹ As part of the Priority Estate programme of Harlow Council, New Town Housing in Ayletts Field, Copshal Close and The Briars will be demolished for redevelopment. As part of the process — which is England's largest estate renovation programme — MAZE was set up to have resident consultation in place.

⁴² To protect their anonymity, their names have been changed but details of the interview are to be found in the Appendix.

The argument is that the neighbourhood unit worked well for the local community, but perhaps not for the larger town. MAZE residents remember their neighbourhood fondly, as a place where families could grow in safe surroundings and within a tight-knit community, advocating the planning typology worked well for families with children.



Figure 6-h: A fancy dress party held in the streets of the New Town neighbourhood

Source: Private collection of a MAZE resident

MAZE residents group proudly displayed pictures of the early days in Harlow when it was a child-friendly place, and claim the lack of cars combined with abundant pedestrian areas were ‘wonderful for letting the kids run about’ (120117-05H), making a direct reference to the Radburn layout. When confronted with the stereotype identified by experts that this layout was considered a failure of New Town planning, there was a general consensus amongst the locals that the bad image of New Towns was largely an outsider’s view and instigated by the media:

Aah — there is this huge variety of people who live in Harlow and you will find some people who are quite passionate about Harlow and where they live and love their houses ... I find the image tends to be an exterior view of Harlow. People that live in them are actually quite proud (120117-01H).

The negative image came later. In my early years [as a pioneer] I never felt it. But that negative image actually came from the outside of town, from the media the press and television. Radio! People in Harlow, generally speaking, are very proud of Harlow as a New Town. (120117-05H).

The notion of ‘the exterior view of Harlow’ was continuously re-asserted throughout the interviews. Residents were careful to distinguish that how they experienced their town, as place to be proud of, is very different from the image projected by the outsiders. Their collective construct was a representation of suburbia

but without the cynicism or air of indifference attached to the expert anecdotes. If Harlow is to be represented as a cluster of suburban developments, the locals were not bothered. In their eyes, what is important is that the neighbourhood unit worked well for family and community life.

Having established that the function of the neighbourhood unit is ideologically similar to the function of suburbia, as established in Chapter 3, the paradox of why these units are interpreted as large council estates remains unsolved. One assessment by a local resident suggests that this derives from the innovative design of the neighbourhood unit, because it prevents outsiders from seeing the town as they may see a traditional town. He explains this argument after having suffered the illusion himself. He moved to Harlow in 2008 from another village in Hertfordshire because he had a deep appreciation for the original New Towns. He suggests its negative image is a question of ignorance and the inability to see:

I think that people associate New Town housing with council housing. And it isn't fair, although it is true because it was council housing, effectively. Uhm but I think that if one generalises hugely, the British people are not terribly visually literate [laugh] and so you get people who say, 'Harlow... it's just concrete'. And so you challenge that and you say 'where is all the concrete then?' because my impression of going through Harlow before you came was actually driving through green spaces and not being able to see very much at all... (120117-01H).

This quotation resonates with the Hanley's (2007) view in Chapter 5 that New Town stigma is perpetuated by the common belief that housing estates are inherently bad. According to her argument, the stigma is that housing 'estates are dangerous' and the 'people that live on them are failures' (Hanley, 2007: 14). This may explain why outsiders struggle with 'seeing' as implied in the quotation: because if they were willing to take the housing areas at face value, an outsider might realise they are indeed housing estates, but very well designed housing estates of great architectural merit.

Another resident provided a different assessment that coincided with the overwhelming media representation of New Towns in the early 1950s. According to him, 'all eyes and ears' were watching Harlow because it was going through a process of such distinct innovation and experimentation and the media was keen to make assumptions and offer generalised impressions (120117-05H). Not only does this interpretation confirm the allegations of bad press, which was established in Chapter 5, but resident objections can also be traced to the 1950s. When Richards wrote 'The

Failure of the New Towns' in the Architectural Review (Richards, 1953) a local resident responded to the press with a complaint about the article (see Figure 6-i), asking how Harlow could have failed when it wasn't even a town yet:

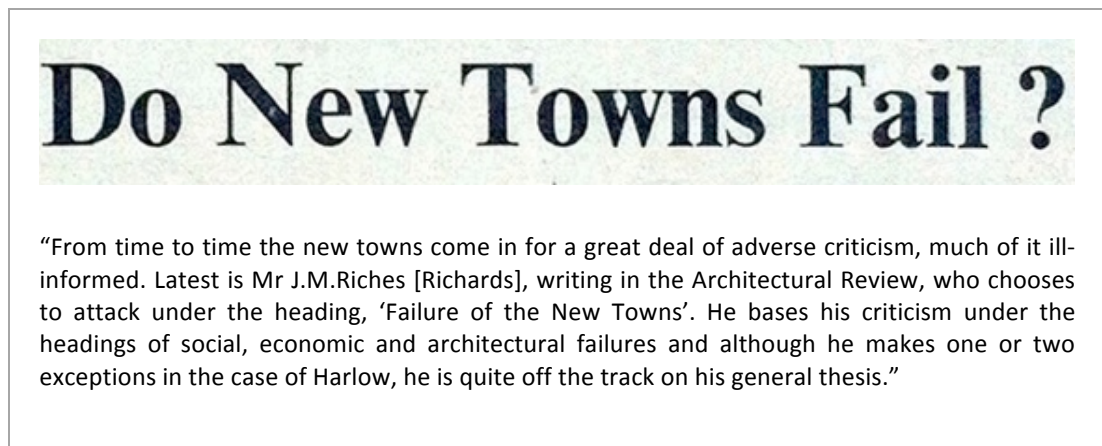


Figure 6-i: A local resident responds to the Architectural Review's attack on New Towns

© Source: Harlow Citizen, 1953b

As part of the same response, the resident added that 'If Mr. Riches cares to come to Harlow, he will see a real town in the making, where a [sic] on the whole prosperous people are rapidly welding themselves into a community' (Editorial, 1953b). Both residents (in 1953 and 2012) reflect that Harlow receives disproportionate media coverage, and their view is illustrative of the early and contemporary public support felt within Harlow New Town. Nevertheless, the early coining of the term 'prairie planning' had already been used to describe the planning ideology of the neighbourhood unit and the Radburn layout leading to the early (premature?) stereotype that these were unfortunate planning choices. Significantly, the local residents acknowledge that the neighbourhood unit is what makes them special. It is a key design feature that residents love and admire about their town. Although it may heighten the sensation that New Towns are large housing estates, it should not be indicative of failure because local residents are very supportive of this feature.

6.3.2 Innovation in housing

It would be an oversimplification to suggest that all the local voices made one harmony of support. Resident dissatisfaction became much more nuanced throughout discussions regarding specific housing issues. This would explain why references to Harlow are usually accompanied by a remark on its housing. It is as if the town itself has become synonymous with housing, particularly bad housing said to resemble 'a bizarre array of concrete bunkers' (ChavTowns, 2004: 10 November 2011).

The housing in Harlow can be divided into two groups. Classified in one group is the architectural experimentation promoted by Gibberd in his original master-plan that made a specific request for diversity in design. This has resulted in vast variations in housing design and little visual uniformity, more akin to housing of an inner-city than the image of suburbia (120117-01H). Some residents value this diversity, whilst others express a nonchalance about the resulting aesthetics. One resident made the observation that whilst the neighbourhood unit appeared to foster a homogenous residential area, this was quickly overridden when ‘strangely you go into the housing areas and if you look closely every house type is different!’ (120117-01H).

Classified within the other housing group is a more contentious housing type that was meant to be temporary but was never replaced. One example that dominated the conversation with MAZE residents was a residential unit called the Dorran Bungalow, which has been so controversial it is due for demolition. These bungalows were part of a program in the 1950s to supply 300,000 housing units nationally, built as temporary dwellings with a lifespan of ten to fifteen years. On the one hand, it was intended to provide fast and efficient housing within the town; while on the other, re-directing manufacturing skills and capabilities learnt from the efficient delivery of armaments into the production of prefabricated homes (Harris, 2010). The production was efficient, but the materials available at the time were limited and not all have aged appropriately.



Figure 6-j: An aerial view of the Dorran Bungalows

© Source: Google Maps 2013

These bungalows were built with a 15-year timespan and were refurbished in the 1980s to increase their longevity but have been a defective housing type for the last 20

years, officially (120117-03H). The Dorran bungalows have been challenging from a social perspective because of their very particular and innovative layout. Built in the style of miniature Roman villas, they each have an interior courtyard, with all of its windows looking onto this private space. Seen on a plan, the arrangement works for the home owner because it creates a sense of privacy and brings the garden into the home. In practice, the social effect is both aggressive and dangerous, because the homes do *not* have windows looking into communal spaces, and therefore the neighbourhoods become clusters of dark alleys. A selection of comments from the inhabitants reflects these issues:



Figure 6-k: A street view of the Dorran Bungalows

Source: Photograph taken by researcher

My ideal home would be this bungalow where I could see out into the next-door garden. I can't see nothing from here! (260312-08H).

The windows all look out into an interior courtyard you see! There are no windows onto the street. (260312-11H).

The only neighbour we see is the neighbour opposite — only through the front door and how often do you see people coming in their house? So people are breaking into the bungalows all the time. (260312-06H).

Susan, the Priority Estates Officer in the Regeneration and Enterprise team, echoed the resident's opinions adding that the Dorran bungalows were detrimental to community spirit. As an example, a bungalow purchased by the council three months prior to the interview in December 2011 had been broken into and vandalised on two separate occasions. 'Nobody heard anything... so if that goes on... imagine! Nobody hears because they are very, very private!' (120117-03H). She concedes that temporary

housing has, in the long run, had a detrimental effect on the overall housing stock because it reduced the overall quality of the housing stock (120117-03H). The Regeneration Project Delivery Manager for Harlow Council emphasises that they were temporary housing stock that was cheap and effective and could be built quickly. Although the context of post-war reconstruction required experimentation with different building types, and the New Towns presented an ideal site for these experiments, he believes that there was an overwhelming focus on the immediate needs of the people without considering the future demands of the housing (120117-04H). His contextualisation echoes the critique in Chapter 2 that planning is an activity perpetually responding to the housing crisis, and does not always provide long-term solutions for the benefit of new towns and communities. It also suggests that this second housing group has dominated the New Town legacy and media coverage, and was discussed in Chapter 2 as part of the assumption that Modernism was a victim of the circumstantial necessity of providing fast, short-lived and temporary housing.

In an attempt to resolve the contradiction exposed at the outset of this section with regards to the ChavTowns post (Anonymous, 2004), the discussion herein unravels into a narrative best described as: where suburbia meets the inner city. On the one hand, qualities of suburbia manifest themselves in the form of the neighbourhood unit that appears to promote sprawl and isolation. This is unresolved when one examines the specificity of housing and street design that has an inner-city kind of experimentation and housing variety. This dichotomy has led to the creation of two stereotypes of New Towns; as a suburban dystopia, and the idea that they are large housing estates. In reality, it is a hybrid of both, and resonates with Clapson's (2003) representation of nuanced urbanism. More specifically, this appears to give a contemporary meaning to the early suburban municipal housing that Clapson terms 'corporation suburbs' (*ibid.*).

6.4 Rescaling governance: Who is my landlord?

The Harlow Development Corporation (DC) was created in 1949 within the local authority area of Epping Rural Council. This administrative arrangement created tensions from the outset, and by 1953 a Harlow Urban District (HUD) was approved by the Essex Local Government Committee because, as the Harlow Citizen published, 'the town badly needs the unification that only its local authority can provide' (Harlow Citizen, 1953c). The same article questioned whether the HUD would be political and how the political parties would 'be lined up' (*ibid.*). It claimed that Harlow was facing

urgent problems and an independent local authority would be the best way to ‘tackle the urgent problems’ (*ibid.*). The initial tensions were managed primarily within the relationship between Ben Hyde Harvey, the General Manager of Harlow Development Corporation from 1955 to 1973, and the town clerk for the Harlow Urban District, because they ‘got on very well together’ (Burton and Hartly, 2003: Interview with Harvey):

What we agreed straight away was that we were going to have a difficult task. He knew that his masters [at the HUD] were going to be difficult. If the Development Corporation proposed it then they would object and he would ring me up and say "your letter about so and so, look will you write ..." then he would tell me how to write and he could push that through. We got on pretty well as a result of that. He's still alive and still living in Harlow. (*ibid.*).

The difficulty between Harlow Urban District and the Development Corporation was one of party-politics. While there was an elected Conservative local authority, it was expected to co-operate with an unelected agency responsible only to a Labour-run central government. Newman recalls how this Labour-controlled New Town became isolated from its neighbouring Conservative villages: ‘So you had this isolated and inward looking feel to the town, which was quite strong and powerful’ (120117-03H). The implications of this administrative framework were not only political but also financial.

While the Development Corporation was responsible for building houses and factories, the public infrastructure to support the new community had to be provided by the County, namely education, health and transport services. There was a tax implication in this structure because local taxes went to the County Council, while the Development Corporation had to sustain itself like a business with the proceeds from the rents of its residential and commercial spaces. Similarly, the County could override decisions made by the Development Corporation if delivery was the County’s financial obligation. A local resident (also an architect), claims Harlow’s notoriously bad traffic problems are indebted to a County Council decision that changed the position of the M11 motorway from the route in the original master-plan (120117-01H). This minor but significant issue had long-term repercussions because it affected the industrial zone designed to be easily accessible from the M11. It is a good example of a planning decision which was determined by party-politics creating a series of escalating repercussions for the local economy and community.

Another repercussion was that the complexity of the administrative model created confusion for its residents. Archival records dating to 1953 show how the role of the Development Corporation had to be explained, owing to a ‘great deal of misunderstanding’ (MacKenzie, 1953b). The article provides a simplified suggestion that Development Corporations should be regarded as ‘the main landlord in the New Town...with limited powers’ (*ibid.*).

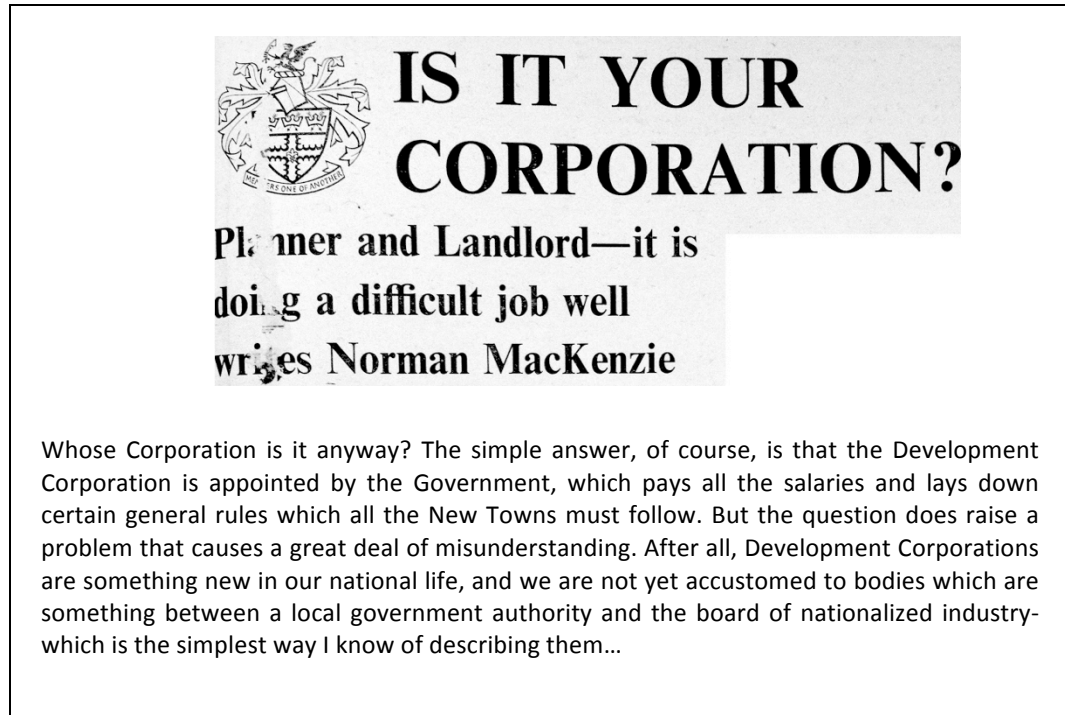


Figure 6-1: The local newspaper explains the role and remit of Harlow Development Corporation

© Source: Harlow Citizen, 8 May 1953 (MacKenzie, 1953b)

This clarification stating that the Development Corporation is a large landlord may explain why New Towns are regarded as large housing estates. It would also explain why, as a landlord with a mandate in social planning as well as physical reconstruction, they became critical in providing balance within the new community. Happy, gentle, nostalgic memories of the Development Corporation have been recorded by the handful and illustrate how the Development Corporation was key in building community spirit. The social development officer, Len White, was particularly important for the arrival of pioneers. In Chapter 2, Cullingworth's (1970) public endorsement of Social Relations Officers surfaced as a distinctive facilitator of social planning. Nevertheless, literary and academic coverage for the Development Corporation focus more on the Development Corporation's role as an administrative vehicle but less on its purpose as the enablers of social policy. As Cullingworth (*ibid.*) explained, post-war reconstruction was framed as a social experiment to be carried out through planning and architecture, but a 'social

plan and programme' was indispensable. His unique endorsement of the indispensable service that Social Relations Officers provides is ratified through anecdotes of local voices:

I came to Harlow when I was five. My father moved to Harlow when they offered him a good deal to move out and set up his business there. My father was looking for a small factory unit and the Harlow Development Corporation had built these units specifically for start-ups. Until then it was in a shared garden. My father had the unit there in Harlow for 40 years and the Corp always looked after him. (120117-05H).

This created a fragile interdependence on the local authority-tenant relationship when in fact it was a landlord-tenant relationship. Inevitably, this has led to a sense of disillusionment in the development of New Town governance.

The Development Corporation transferred its housing and assets to the Harlow District Council in 1978. Two years later, these were transferred to the Commission for the New Towns (CNT) and the Development Corporation was dissolved. Critically, housing remained under the ownership of Harlow Council, and the local residents naturally assumed that the Council would supplant the role once provided by the Development Corporation. MAZE residents were saddened that the Council had failed to keep up with the 'protection' once offered by the Development Corporation. Susan and Arthur from Harlow Council conceded that this was a difficult issue to deal with. The tone residents had become accustomed to was very nurturing and paternalistic, such as: 'Oh come here and live with us — if you work in a New Town you can go home for your lunch... you'll have an allotment just down the road' (120117-03H). For example, the Development Corporation kept an allotment in an area called Demonstration Gardens 'so that people could see how to work on their garden' (120117-04H). This attitude created a dependency on the state; to provide for families as a part of a life-long cycle, and the belief that housing would be an inter-generational entitlement. Susan explained that 'whereas perhaps in other areas people would expect to get a good education, find work, get a mortgage, buy privately — but we have a bit of a battle where people almost expect that they will get a council house property' (120117-03H).

The fact that the Development Corporation was dissolved in 1980 coincided with the introduction of the Right-to-Buy policy. This has resulted in local voices equating the arrival of Harlow Council with the growth in home ownership:

At one time, if you had a nuisance neighbour, you went and reported him. Now you don't know who to go to or be in contact with, because everyone is a private landlord. (260312-10H).

What I think no-one was able to imagine would happen with the Right-to-Buy is that you get someone that buys but then [they] sell and you get an unscrupulous landlord who sublets and turns the property into multi-occupancy. And you see the plasterboard going in to make a 2-bedroom house into a four-bedroom house! And it's acceptable [under building regulations and planning]. But these multi-occupancy, the people renting from them, Polish and the like, they are not stable, they come in and out. (260312-09H).

Embedded in these statements is the argument that tenants lost the sense that there was accountability when their community no longer had a common landlord. In the first quotation, a dependency on the Development Corporation is revealed that confirms that residents relied on it heavily to attend to their problems, including (in this instance) troublesome neighbours. The second quotation reveals attitudes towards new migrants, as if their balanced community was threatened by the prospect of widening its social mix. With the history of fascism amongst the early pioneers, these undertones of xenophobia illustrate that social balance was never fully achieved:

You see these different people coming in have lots of little things different to us. So it's fragmented the town and we don't have the unity we once had in the past. Before we was all moving along together in our council property, there was a few private areas and we knew of those and it was kept low and so was accepted. But now you've got a terrace block with three properties rented and the other three private and then you've got this multi-occupancy with, no offence, but lots of Polish, and it's disruptive! We've now lost the unity we had years ago. (260312-10H).

This attitude widens the theory of social exclusion from a phenomenon where to be dependent on public services is to be identified as one of the excluded (Malpass 2010), to a new type of hierarchy (in this case racial) prompting further exclusion of those who are entitled to enter the public service dependency. In other words, social exclusion is not only about the New Town neighbourhoods being stigmatised, but the residents of these neighbourhoods creating their own stigmas regarding who should and should not enter.

6.4.1 The Right-to-Buy

Residents consistently refer to the Right-to-Buy policy as a critical turning point. According to MAZE residents, the fact that public sector housing entered the private

market contradicted the purpose of having a Council, and further reiterates how the Development Corporation created an expectation in its future residents that they were a local authority (that provided both a home and a job), when in fact they were a large landlord (that allocated housing to pioneers once they had local employment secured). This has led to a specific and endemic attitude amongst pioneers that connects housing (entitlement) with livelihood (and employment). This nuance unfolded as MAZE residents, mostly New Town pioneers, expressed their disappointment:

The Right-to-Buy has been one of the worst things that has happened to us because we have children and grandchildren that have no chance of getting a council property. Even the social housing that is being built from the housing association is limited numbers now because obviously they want private finance to come in as well and certainly in Harlow the amount of council properties is shrinking year on year. I think it's one of the worst things that was ever done by any government. (260312-08H).

This particular quotation contrasts with earlier arguments that home ownership was a collective aspiration since before the Right-to-Buy policy. It can be explained as a consequence of the particular bond created between the pioneer and the Development Corporation, but it does not explain at what point public housing became stigmatised.

A critical effect of the Right-to-Buy is that good quality housing stock was sold and the Council became guardian to the defective housing, with little access to good quality homes. Susan expresses this as the residualisation of housing stock. This made neighbourhoods difficult to maintain because large housing blocks were 'pepper-potted' with private ownership:

The sale of housing below cost to existing tenants got rid of all the best of stuff... Oh [the Right-to-Buy] is a very serious issue. It residualised the whole of council housing so most of the people who are left in council housing are low income that can't afford to buy... [council housing] becomes for people who are unemployed, who have quite complex issues and problems, so then the housing gets associated with something we don't want to be involved in... with a stigma basically. (140212-13H).

As part of the same discussion, Susan claimed that the Council became responsible for the poor quality housing stock (such as the Dorran Bungalows) and very low-income families, leading to the stigma referred to in the quotation. Concurrently, the Council's responsibility shifted from looking after a socially mixed community, to being responsible for the most vulnerable and weak members of society:

Actually Council housing didn't have a stigma until the 1980s really. It was considered something that most people who were [on] low income wanted... but you didn't have to be poor. That's the main difference, nowadays you have to be poor to live in council housing! (140212-13H).

This example clarifies a series of misunderstandings. It illustrates that stigma towards New Town housing originated in the 1980s as the housing stock became residualised, hence it is predominantly referred to as low-quality, temporary housing that is now defective. It also explains Hanley's (2007) analysis in Chapter 5 that 'housing estates are bad' (Hanley 2007: 14), as the residualisation of housing stock also created a differentiation of classes.

For those council tenants who did not purchase their home and remained in public sector housing, their landlord changed from the 'caring' Development Corporation to the 'profit-driven' Housing Association (HA) supported by the Council (260312-08H). The stock transfer to Housing Associations (HA) in Harlow has been met with unanimous disapproval from its local residents: 'Oh Housing Associations are horrible' (260312-06H). According to the MAZE residents, the Council 'loves' housing associations because 'they have to do [fewer] repairs, [they have] less responsibility and they just get the council tax and are happy with it' (260312-06H). The disdain for Housing Associations is in part due to their large management structure, and the low-quality housing they build, incomparable in size and design standards to original New Town housing. The residents complained that their Housing Associations, a total of three of them, are always invited to the tenant meetings but never show up:

They don't seem to integrate with the council or their tenants at all. They all get invited [to residents meetings], they all get a newsletter but they don't come. (260312-05H).

You can tell the difference in landlord straight away. Think they are box houses. You see the standards are different now. They are horrible now, tacky-tacky housing. They are tiny because there isn't the regulations now. (260312-09H).

These comments demonstrate that tenants distinguish between the design standards of housing built by the Council and driven by social objectives in opposition to the newer developer-driven housing projects that reveal the worst aspects of Private-Public-Partnerships (PPP). They also expressed frustration that with Housing Associations there was 'no-one to complain to when the light bulb broke' (260312-10H). Newman claims that if the Housing Associations were smaller organisations, this feeling of

unaccountability would have been avoided. Tenants had a close relationship to their landlord in that it supported a large aspect of their lifestyle, and the abrupt transfer to large, faceless organisations came as a shock.

The landlord-tenant relationship discussed in this section draws on the important discourse sustained in Chapter 2 of political ideology as a key agent in housing provision. The Development Corporation, through its Social Relations Officer, provided a successful governance structure to deliver the social policy which was an original New Town objective. Nevertheless, the Conservative political ideology that ‘public housing was an assault on the ethics of a free market society’ (Short, 1982:189) prompted the support of Housing Association management that, according to local residents, has been detrimental. However, it was under Labour that the 1974 Housing Act was enforced, showing that Labour has never been particularly committed to a programme of public housing based on socialist ideology either, and instead built its post-war public housing as a reactionary measure to the circumstances. The large presence of Housing Associations after the 1980s has possibly fuelled the stereotype discussed in Chapter 5 of New Towns merely aiding house builders. It also underlines that New Town historiography needs to be identified as taking a non-linear, more nuanced, trajectory because the impact of urban policies fundamentally changed the direction of the original New Towns ambition.

6.5 When the future arrives

In 1997 the East of England Regional Development Authority (EEDA) was formed to produce the East of England Plan under New Labour (1997-2010). Therein, Harlow became part of a London-Stansted-Cambridge-Peterborough Growth Area and a specific growth point was identified to deliver up to 20,000 new homes by 2021. Although the Plan could not enforce specific district targets, Harlow Council had already recognised an urgent need for increased housing provision to support the growing information sector that was developing locally as a viable (and expandable) source of employment (140212-13H). Taking into account the preceding empirical discussion, what contemporary assessment can be made of how self-containment, newness and sameness, and a rescaling of governance, influence the legacy of Harlow?

As envisaged through the designated Growth Area, Harlow is in a strategic location for business and enterprise with a proximity to London and an established industrial area designed as part of the New Town typology. Despite national economic

shifts, and employment difficulties endured by Harlow residents, the industrial sites have maintained a 'good' occupancy rate since the 1950s (Harlow Enterprise Zone, 2014). Today, they cater for a different sector that has developed around the fibre optics and innovation industry. As a consequence Harlow has become a designated Enterprise Zone (there are a total of 24 zones across England) that aims to provide 'employment opportunities for local residents' (*ibid.*). The legacy of the previous self-containment model implies that existing Harlow residents are generally 'under-qualified' or 'have a skills shortage' to meet current demands (260312-10H). As Newman suggested previously, in order for the self-containment model to work, enterprise cannot depend on a single industry and will have to diversify or work in regional clusters. Currently, the self-containment legacy presents two major impediments for the Enterprise Zone, which are housing provision and transport infrastructure.

6.5.1 Expanding the green belt

Building new homes in Harlow has been problematic as a consequence of local opposition from neighbouring villages that oppose the expansion and modification of the Green Belt that currently contains the New Town. This area, referred to as North Harlow, has been subject to numerous proposals. The land was originally owned by Ropemaker Properties Limited who 'lobbied very hard' to have the site designated as an area for housing growth (120117-04H). Upon designation, it sold the site to the joint venture Land Security and Places for People, making the Harlow North Joint Venture Partnership (HNJV), visibly demonstrating the practice of land-banking by volume house builders. Nevertheless, regional opposition led by a Stop Harlow North group has made development impossible.



Figure 6-m: Proposed changes to Green Belt boundary to accommodate new homes in North Harlow

© Source: Gilston Park Estate 2014

The opposition to North Harlow (still active in 2014) is a regional one, because the site is within the East Hertfordshire district. Harlow Council is careful to make the distinction ‘North Harlow isn’t actually Harlow. It’s East Herts’ (120117-04H). The summary of a community engagement event with local residents, held by HNJV, was that there were ‘objections to the principle of development’ and it was recorded as ‘undemocratic, unsustainable and unnecessarily damaging the existing landscape and character of the area’ (HNJV, 2010). Concerns revealed by the Stop Harlow North campaign signal a profound type of opposition that widens the scope of NIMBYism to a regional discourse. Their claim is that North Harlow will become an unsustainable dormitory town because the HNJV site is not as an extension to Harlow, but a New Town, sharing a train station at its periphery but otherwise unconnected. As neighbours of a self-contained town, the residents have already witnessed the effects of decentralising a London-based population to a New Town. This argument is strengthened by virtue of the housing proposal for North Harlow, which is a reflection of the New Town planning typology.

According to the North Harlow website, Gilston Park Estate is being branded as six new villages, each separated by green space with local facilities in each village to cater for ‘young families or couples’ in an effort to create ‘real communities’ not ‘identikit housing’ (Figure 6-n). In light of the New Town legacy, the proposal for

Gilston Park Estate is analogous to proposing six new neighbourhood units (Gilston Park Estate, 2014a).

Six new villages



Our vision for Gilston Park Estate



The Gilston Park Estate site is within East Herts District Council with a small part in Harlow District Council, crossing the River Stort.

We are proposing a series of villages built around Gilston Park, each one separated by green space, providing up to 10,000 of the homes needed locally.

Each village will have its own centre and distinctive character, with all homes designed to the highest standards of quality and environmental efficiency.

Places for People want to create new communities that will offer local young couples, families and first time buyers a range of options to buy, rent or a combination of both.

We also plan to provide homes for older people from the local area who want to be near to their families, close to their grandchildren, their GP and their friends.

Places for People want to create real communities; not row after row of identikit housing.

Figure 6-n: Proposed new villages at Gilston Park Estate in North Harlow

© Source: Gilston Park Estate 2014 (accessed online)

In light of the New Town legacy that has led to a suburban-esque sprawl as a consequence of the land use required to sustain the neighbourhood unit, expanding the Green Belt designation is understandably controversial. Despite North Harlow's claims that it will create 'real communities', local residents have a sophisticated understanding that distinguishes past planning ideology with contemporary processes.

6.5.2 Growing into Harlow's wedges

Another option for growth is to build new housing inside the green wedges, intensifying the overall density of the town as was proposed in an amended master-plan of 1974 (Figure 6-o):

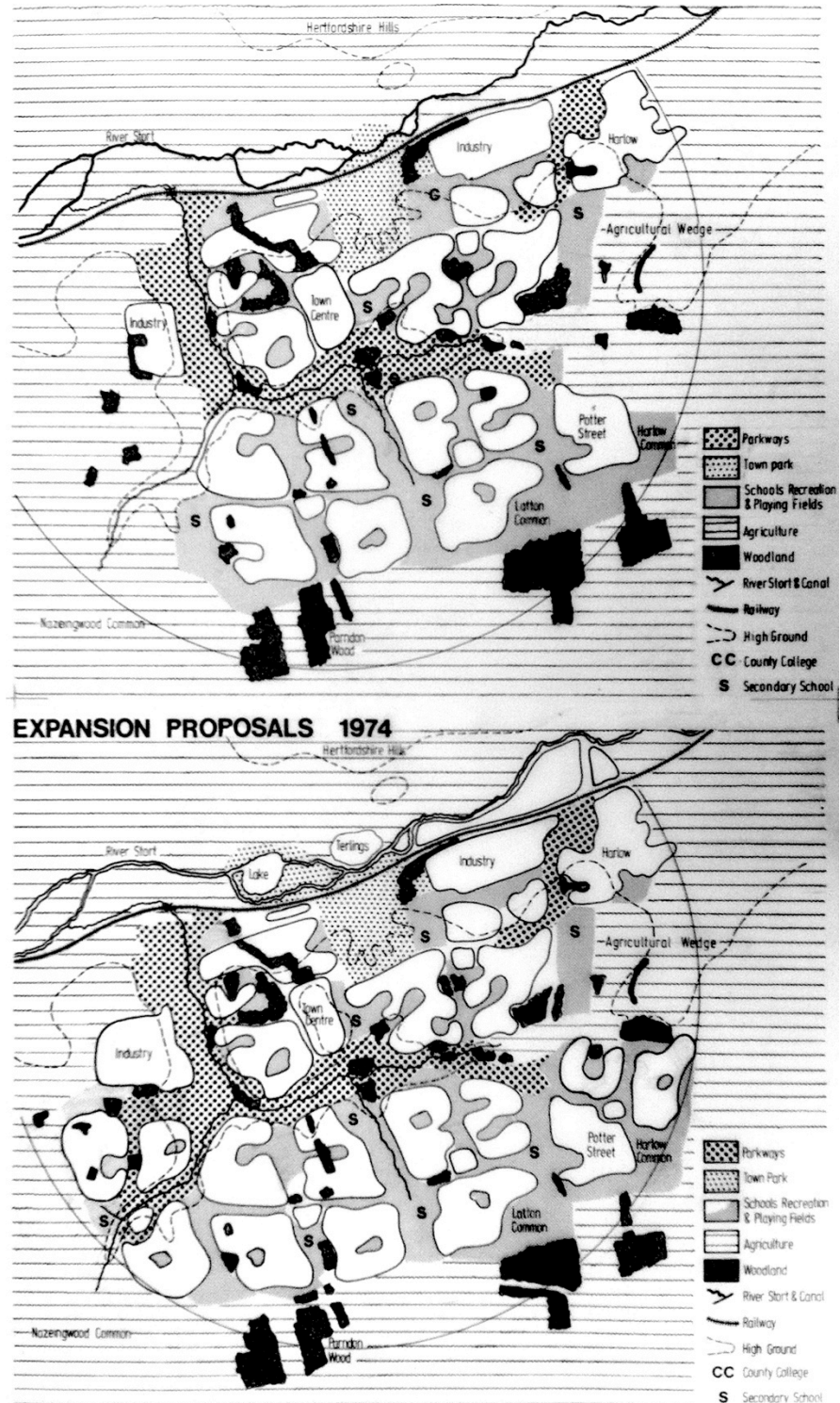


Figure 6-o: Proposed expansion of Harlow master-plan prepared in 1974

© Source: The Museum of Harlow

The Council claims that Gibberd's original master-plan allocated expansion areas as green wedges between neighbourhoods, to prevent growth beyond the green belt and increase its self-containment. Expansion proposals for Harlow updated in 1974 show that growth is integrated into the original Master-plan by dispersing new housing clusters around the periphery, and the wedges were considered flexible zones. However, national planning has become very protective of the green wedges and they are considered sacrosanct (120117-03H). 'Unless government came along and said, 'Sorry you have to build houses and to do it you will have to get rid of the green wedges' they will never allow it' (120117-04H). The difficulty for the Council is that Harlow can only compete on a regional level (and thus survive at a local level) if it is able to expand and build new homes. Internal growth has been impossible because the green wedges are now protected and similarly 'growth at the fringes is equally difficult because land has been bought by private developers who will not release it' (120117-04H). This argument by the Council illustrates, once again, the damaging effect that land-banking by private developers and house builders is having on New Town growth. It is in stark contrast to Development Corporation powers that allowed them to purchase land using Compulsory Purchase Orders:

Although we don't have a lot of land it looks like we have a lot because when you drive around you see green and green, but people don't realise there is a housing estate just behind those trees, because of the clever designing. We have been at meetings to try to get the green wedges, or green fingers released and it's impossible. (120117-03H).

The Council officers timidly conceded that Stop Harlow North's argument against expansion was strong. They believe that housing targets could be achieved by upgrading the infrastructure and building into the existing Harlow New Town either through densification or by building into the green wedges. The benefit, according to them, is that Harlow would 'begin to break away from the self-contained model that has prevented its growth' and kick-start the cluster economy promoted by Newman.

An argument that arises from this section and that is critical in understanding the way in which Harlow New Town has developed, is the way in which the master-plan has been interpreted biblically. There is little allowance for change or modification from the original plans laid out by Gibberd. But in the Foreword to the Chairman of Harlow Development Corporation, Sir Ernest Gowers made a direct call for the plan to be a framework, not a strict plan:

The first is to emphasise that the plan is, as the name denotes, a Master-plan. It is not a plan of the town. It is a plan of the framework to which it is proposed the town should conform. Within it there is room for wide variety of treatment, for much consultation, for many ideas, for young and imaginative brains to have their chance. This is only the beginning. (Gibberd, 1949: 4-5).

In this quote Gowers alludes to the master-plan being flexible but the contemporary challenge faced by Harlow Borough Council is that this flexibility disappeared once the wedges became sacrosanct. Edwards (2010) claims this was one of the great barriers that prevented Milton Keynes (a mark 3 New Town) from developing as it was originally planned: too much flexibility left a master-plan vulnerable, and was ‘a dangerous nostrum in planning’ that needed to be ‘deployed selectively’ (Edwards 2010: 95). It is a planning conundrum documented by Gallent, Andersson and Bianconi (2006) that establish wedges are intended to serve as ‘management tools’ (171) to promote development in fringe areas with some flexibility. They even suggest the wedge is seen by central government as a better alternative for local authorities to manage growth and could be used instead of green belt policies. A clear problem is that by promoting development in Harlow’s green wedges, the town may become susceptible to ‘urban sprawl’ (*ibid.*:172). The ongoing legacy of Harlow, one could argue, will depend on how it embraces its need to grow by seeing said growth as a qualitative opportunity instead of a quantitative problem. Ultimately, this would depend on a concerted effort of collaboration between different tiers of governance and consideration of national housing targets. This calls into question to what extent new planned communities are at the mercy of political administration, and less so as a social or design ideology manifested through planning.

6.6 Conclusion: A sexy old aunt

This bottom-up enquiry has been important because it reveals that local residents have a general sense of pride and a deep affection towards Harlow. People recognise the innovation and experimentation that they have been a part of and admit Harlow was years ahead in its employment structure and design. If anything, residents feel a sense of disillusionment with regards to what Harlow has become, which contrasts its original objective. In the introduction to this chapter, an extract by Harlow-born musician Darren Hayman shows him to be in ‘love with the clarity and bravery of their plan’ but suggests ‘homes are not always the best place for experimentation and innovation’. His understanding is shared by local residents who appreciate that Harlow’s legacy cannot

be oversimplified into a verdict of failure or success. While Harlow may appear to be in decline to the outsider or through a quantitative appraisal, residents acknowledge and support what it was originally. Hayman suggests metaphorically that Harlow is a sexy old aunt (Hayman, 2009). This is because time has proven a town ages more gracefully when it is allowed to 'grow and evolve and not be designed from the floor up'. In light of this localised narrative of the Harlow New Town case study this figurative device becomes relevant:

I'm interested in people that are unable to connect with each other — lost souls who are unable to love unconditionally and resigned to a never-ending sense of ennui... This time I wanted a character cut off from his true love by the green belt in a satellite town. Harlow was the perfect location... If you saw Harlow now you might say it was built in the 1970s but it wasn't, it was just 20 years ahead of itself. To my eyes it was beautiful and still is, though you'd be forgiven for missing its allure straight away. Harlow is a sexy old aunt with a few ill-advised face-lifts. (*ibid.*).

Nonetheless, by 2013 Harlow was statistically in decline. It is amongst the most socially deprived wards of the region with high levels of unemployment, low levels of attainment in education and insufficient access to housing. Although the residents' perspectives do not contradict this quantitative description, they do provide an added story that adds to our understanding of how stereotypes have been created, perpetuated, and in some instances misinterpreted.

Drawing conclusions from this section, the dispersal and rupture of self-containment is partly responsible for tipping the balance that we have identified across four key developmental issues. Firstly that Harlow is considered, from a bottom-up perspective, as an isolated suburb; more as a consequence of the social planning that linked communities to employment and less due to its planning typology. Nevertheless, the neighbourhood unit did generate feelings of isolation from the larger town, leading to a complicated side-effect when social planning was abolished in the 1970s. Secondly, this perception is perpetuated by the physical complexity of self-containment and its reliance on the employment-housing relationship, because pioneers decentralised to Harlow and they identified more with the employer than with the town. Self-containment at a regional level affected the interconnectedness of Harlow as its economy changed. Public transport was not provided as envisaged by Howard in the Social City model whereby different New Towns would connect with each other (Howard, 1965). Thirdly, Harlow's ability to live up to its own legacy will depend on how it harnesses opportunities for growth and expansion within a regional framework;

one that is based primarily around targets with no recourse to land acquisition through Compulsory Purchase Orders, and challenged by current practices of land-banking. Lastly, a consensus approach may have been part of the reason why transport and infrastructure was not joined up with the delivery of housing.

So on the one hand, the larger New Town planning issues brought out qualities of suburbia through the use of the neighbourhood unit that appears to create sprawl and isolation. This stereotype is unresolved when you examine the specificity of housing and street design. They each have inner-city qualities of experimentation, density and state subsidy. This is probably what created both stereotypes: that New Towns are suburbs, and that New Towns are large housing estates. In reality it is a hybrid of both. While the bottom-up narratives concur with the stereotype that New Towns typology is another version of suburban urbanism, it is precisely this suburbanisation that makes the town, in the eyes of the residents, comfortable, accessible and unique. If achieving a balanced community was a primary objective of the New Town, then its urban planning has helped attain this localised feeling of belonging and community.

Nevertheless, Frederick Gibberd's strong architectural conviction in favour of the Radburn layout and neighbourhood unit has created tensions between (favourable) views from the local resident, and (reactionary) views from the outsider. One of the outcomes of both these typologies is that they worked so efficiently in providing at a local level, that even residents tend not to understand their town as a whole and instead experience it through fragments in scale, a key characteristic of suburbia.

Local narratives point to the Right-to-Buy scheme as the critical turning point in their local historiography, when the New Town neighbourhoods shifted from being a desirable acquisition for the social mainstream (Malpass, 2010b; Malpass and Murie, 1999) to a symbol of failure where only the poor and weak in society lived. Despite evidence that demonstrates home ownership was an aspiration dating from as early as the 1950s, residents blame this policy of 1979 as the reason why their town 'fell into despair'. At an administrative level, the Right-to-Buy policy shifted the Council's responsibility from looking after a socially mixed community to being responsible for the most vulnerable and weak members of society.

The process of decentralisation particular to Harlow illustrates how the ideal of a balanced community was off to a precarious start from the beginning, and possibly never fully achieved. By uprooting the Mosleyite community from a poor East End

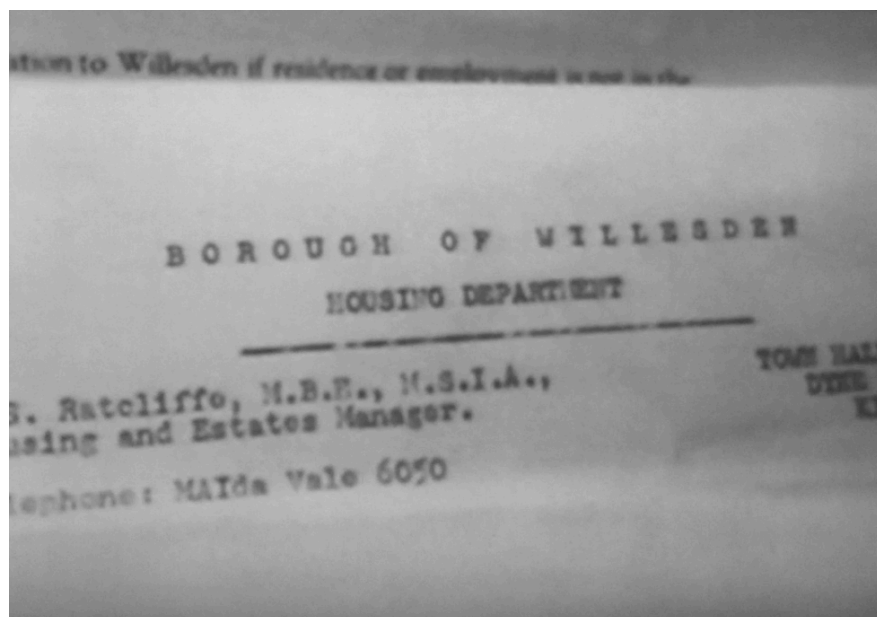
London and transferring it to a rural greenbelt dominated by a small and middle-class community, a two-tier society was inevitably created. Particularly in that working-class estates were created in a conservative greenbelt zone, making them socially unsustainable. For residents, departing Harlow became a status signifier. Similarly within the employment structure, if individuals were promoted within a company, moving away from the plant became a professional gain. This reveals a critical flaw in the New Towns structure. By trying to force social mix, households looked elsewhere when their social status changed. This is an important revelation within the current discourse of planning new communities that persists with the creation of mixed-income communities by demonstrating that a targeted community is also a type of social exclusion.

Residents blame the lack of Housing Associations' presence for the current deprivation in housing and the general decay of community spirit in their neighbourhoods. They concur it is a consequence of the shift from a friendly landlord (the Development Corporation) to an anonymous and large company managing housing stock (Housing Association). According to localised perspectives, it is the original New Town housing that is successful, while those provided in the 1980s and afterwards through Housing Associations have ruined the atmosphere and quality of life in the neighbourhoods.

In assessing the contemporary process of growth in Harlow, The legacy of self-containment has compromised its ability to adapt. Local opposition fiercely rejects the proposal to alter the Green Belt designation, based on arguments that the current housing proposal of Gilston Estate Park is a mirror of the 1950s New Town typology and will propagate more social and physical problems. Conversely, expanding Harlow internally into the green wedges that Gibberd designated as flexible expansion areas is impossible, because these have become sacrosanct. Land-banks encroaching the periphery of Harlow New Town are negating further opportunities to increase the housing provision, and are therefore hampering the local economy. In this respect, the stereotype that Compulsory Purchase Orders was an undesirable planning choice is once more brought forward for examination.

The following chapter continues this narrative by turning to the accounts of residents from Hemel Hempstead, commencing another bottom-up enquiry of the New Town process.

Chapter 7 Local Voices: Hemel Hempstead New Town



Husband narrates: When I got home I asked her if she'd seen the form, and she wasn't happy about it... I knew she was tired and fed up. Who wouldn't be, living in the conditions we were in?

Wife says: "Suppose you did get it then? Would you really give up your job as a regular bricklayer?"

Husband narrates: But they'll want bricklayers to build a New Town, won't they? I filled in the form and there was nothing I could do except hope.

Figure 7-a: A family living in Willesden applies for relocation to Hemel Hempstead

© Source: *A Home of Our Own 1951* (Thompson, 1951)

The film, 'A Home of Your Own' of 1951 narrates the story of a five-person family as tenants of a single storey two bedroom flat in Willesden Green. Their kitchen, dining and social family space is confined to a front room with a small window, while the back room is where all of the family members sleep. The mother is tired, and wary of the letter that 'came through the letterbox today' offering relocation to a New Town in exchange for manual labour. Her husband secretly fills in the application form because 'I do believe it could be true' and anxiously awaits a reply. The next scene shows the family living in a terraced two bedroom house, with a ground floor dedicated to family living 'with all the necessary amenities for a modern household' (Thompson, 1951). The husband strolls into the house after work and takes his wife out to dance at the local village hall and they have a romantic night out.

The film was prepared for the 1951 Festival of Britain and was aired as a propaganda message to promote relocation to a New Town. Perhaps it is easy to mock the promotional language and sentimental content but the twenty-minute film is endearing nevertheless. It is a story that rang true for many families living in London squalor and might possibly convince even today's Londoner that moving to a New Town is a good idea. The research for this case study revealed similar stories of relocation to Hemel Hempstead. Arrival at this New Town does appear to have been a blessing for the young families, despite its initial inconveniences:

We had to live with muddy front gardens and no paving for the first couple of years. But it wasn't a problem because we've gotten ourselves a home! [a heckle of approval by other seniors followed]. (110102-15HH).

Hemel Hempstead New Town is part of Dacorum Borough Council (DBC) and is fondly referred to as 'Hemel' by residents and civil servants, a mannerism adopted throughout this chapter. Similarly the local authority is referred to as 'Dacorum'. As in Chapter 6, the primary objective of this empirical discussion is to reveal the bottom-up narratives through a process of enquiry with local voices. It specifically addresses the second research question of this thesis:

To what extent can we reconceptualise the New Towns discourse by incorporating local perspectives into the legacy of this 1946 policy?

Evaluating this research question allows us to rethink the specific and limited understanding of New Towns. Talking to residents and employees of the local authority who dealt with the everyday problems of Hemel has been crucial in building this view from the ground. A rich narrative is revealed that exposes tensions even at the local

level, particularly between the residents and local authority employees. Ultimately this chapter allows us to nuance the New Towns discourse by drawing on historical understanding in conjunction with contemporary experiences. Whilst this is not a comparative case study, the objective of the empirical investigation for both Hemel and Harlow is the same. As a consequence, the structure of this chapter is similar to Chapter 6 on Harlow. Nonetheless, the narrative that emerges from Hemel is very different. Highlighting the differences and similarities between Harlow and Hemel helps to reinforce and explain the process of how this specific New Town developed.

The first section examines issues that have arisen as a consequence of the self-containment model, and conversely those that affect its current capacity to continue being a self-contained town. It explores how local residents are adamant that their neighbourhood is not a suburb and instead ascribes to the New Town ideology of creating a balanced community.

The second section discloses the design and planning issues contributing to the pathology of suburban urbanism and its perceived decline into an inner city suburb. The Radburn layout and neighbourhood unit critically contribute to the conditions endured in typical inner city suburbs, primarily around problems of unoccupied youth and perceptions of safety and security.

The third section evaluates the governance of Hemel and exposes decision-making nuances at both a local and regional level that have affected the way the town has developed. A contemporary analysis of the way the local authority has (not) embraced the New Town heritage reveals a distinct tension in the governance of this community.

The fourth section reveals contemporary challenges for the growth and expansion of this mark 1 New Town. This is done by examining a programme for development prepared by Dacorum called 'Hemel Vision 2020' combined with conversations with team members of the Planning and Regeneration team. This closing section provides an insight into the contemporary processes occurring within Dacorum, and links how the three lenses of self-containment, suburbanisation and governance are problematic for the development of this mark 1 New Town. One immediate insight would suggest that the future appears to be replicating problems of the past, but in reality it is a more nuanced process.

The conclusion of this chapter, ‘Just don’t talk of our New Town legacy’, approaches these bottom-up narratives in relation to the specific stereotypes identified by the expert voices discussed in Chapter 5, and also in relation to the discussion sustained about Harlow in Chapter 6. Furthermore, the conclusion links the micro issues revealed in this case study to the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 regarding housing and planning, and the New Town experiment of Chapter 3.

7.1.1 The master-plan for Hemel Hempstead New Town 1947 and 1949

Designated as a New Town in 1947, Hemel Hempstead was one of London’s first outer ring towns with a population target of 60,000 (subsequently revised to 80,000 in 1960).⁴³ Initially rejected as a site suitable for New Town development, Patrick Abercrombie’s London Plan envisaged a town north-west of London, closer to Redbourn with only a limited expansion of Hemel Hempstead. This preference is outlined in the Draft Hemel Hempstead Designation Order 1946 owing to the topography of the Gade Valley, which runs north-south, making development both difficult to control because of the contours and not distinctly new due to its existing town of 20,000 inhabitants. Abercrombie had expressed concern at the industrial expansion of Hemel which was located in the ‘outer country ring’ of the Greater London Plan prepared in 1944 (see Figure 2-b) because he envisaged it would merge with nearby Watford to become a dormitory extension. However, in 1944 Abercrombie’s preliminary edition of the Greater London Plan was made available only to local authorities and the press (Abercrombie, cited in Burton and Hartly, 2003: Hertfordshire Hemel Hempstead Gazette and West Herts Advertiser 1944), which led to fierce opposition for the proposed New Town near Redbourn. The County Council rejected Abercrombie’s suggestion, arguing that valuable farmland would be lost and it would be more productive to build on the existing qualities of a small town such as Hemel Hempstead. This led to a re-examination by various ministries and it was recommended to build on Hemel’s old town instead of building a fourth town from scratch.⁴⁴ Furthermore, the topography that Abercrombie regarded as ‘mitigating against further industrialisation’ was seen as an attractive benefit. Its pre-existing social,

⁴³ This is similar to Harlow’s population target, but as discussed in Chapter 4, Hemel Hempstead had an existing population of 20,000 so its growth ambition was relatively lower than Harlow’s (see Figure 4d).

⁴⁴ The precise outline of these events is unclear throughout Designation literature because no precise accountability is ever assumed by a single voice. However, throughout the early material there is a consistency in that the Hertfordshire County Council did not approve the North Western aspect of the London Plan and referred matters to the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Housing, Local Government and other senior officials to dispute the Designation Site.

commercial and industrial activities were seen as an advantage that would contribute ‘materially towards an early development as a New Town, recognising that further commercial and industrial expansion would still be needed’ (Draft Hemel Hempstead New Town Designation Order, 1946).⁴⁵



Figure 7-b: Proposed versus established designation site for Hemel

© Source: *Plan of Communities by Abercrombie (1944)* superimposed with red circles by researcher

⁴⁵ This material is available in Burton and Hartly, 2003.

Abercrombie supported the change because his Greater London Plan 1944 was only intended to be ‘diagrammatic’ (cited in Burton and Hartly, 2003: Hertfordshire Hemel Hempstead Gazette & West Herts Advertiser 1947). The local media recorded him emphasising that the New Town could be prevented from becoming dormitory to Watford if accommodation is prioritised to residents that wish to work and live in Hemel. This, together with ‘proper planning...to maintain an adequate belt of open country between the town and its neighbours’ (*ibid.*) would ensure, according to Abercrombie, that Hemel Hempstead would be self-contained and resist becoming a sprawling suburb. This ratifies the extent to which self-containment was ideologically believed to prevent sprawl and instigate balance. It relied on the normative parameters of planning to manage the new community by using green belt designation areas and allocating housing strictly to residents employed locally.

Changing the designation site for this New Town meant that Hemel expanded from old to new. This is interesting because it led to a different evolution as a mark 1 New Town compared to Harlow. One critical difference is visible in its housing stock. Due to Hemel’s existing population of 20,000-plus when it was designated as a New Town, there was already a generous amount of private housing on the market (120221-10G). According to local figures in 2003 ‘17,000 (28 per cent) of Dacorum’s homes were built as part of the 1950s and 1960s New Town development. The rest of the housing has a broad range of ages reflecting national trends’ (DBC, 2003). This variation in its housing stock has meant that Hemel developed naturally with differentiation of private and state-owned housing. Home ownership was an option from the outset, with 21 per cent of owner-occupied homes available in Hemel in 1961 but only 6 per cent in Harlow (see Table 8 and Table 9). It suggests that in Hemel, managers and higher-paid employees could look for private accommodation if they wished, instead of moving into the Development Corporation neighbourhoods. Presumably this also offset the impact when the Right-to-Buy policy facilitated home ownership, because there had already been mobility in tenure in Hemel long before 1979. Table 8 shows that by 1981, almost half of Hemel was owner-occupied (at 42 per cent) whereas in Harlow this figure was just under a quarter (at 23 per cent):

Table 8: Proportion of Hemel Hempstead Households by Tenure

Source: The New Towns Record 1946-2002 (Burton and Hartly, 2003)

Tenure Type	1951 (%)	1961 (%)	1966 (%)	1971 (%)	1981 (%)
Owner Occupied	N/A	21.1	23.6	26.7	42.2
Rented - New Town	N/A	68.9	69.3	67.6	52.2
Rented (Unfurnished)	N/A	6.5	4.6	4.9	4.01
Rented (Furnished)	N/A	0.7	0.2	1.0	0.6
Other/Not Stated	N/A	2.7	2.4	0.1	1.0

*Table 9: Proportion of Harlow Households by Tenure,
Source: The New Towns Record 1946-2002 (Burton and Hartly, 2003)*

Tenure Type	1951 (%)	1961 (%)	1966 (%)	1971 (%)	1981 (%)
Owner Occupied	N/A	6.5	9.3	11.0	23.4
Rented - New Town	N/A	90.3	88.0	86.5	74.9
Rented (Unfurnished)	N/A	1.5	1.6	2.0	0.8
Rented (Furnished)	N/A	0.3	0.16	0.3	0.2
Other/Not Stated	N/A	1.4	1.1	0.1	0.7

By providing a larger private housing stock from the outset, it would appear that the community is naturally more balanced in the long term. This effect is in stark contrast to Harlow where home ownership was possible in the early years only by leaving the New Town altogether, and thus became a status signifier of progression. In Hemel, by having a wide range of both tenure and architectural options, residents were able to distribute themselves more naturally without having to leave Hemel, thus strengthening the self-containment rate which Dacorum estimates is particularly high for the region at 61 per cent (DBC, 2005: 27). Although the data implies that Hemel has managed to sustain a healthy self-containment rate and balance in household tenure, the local voices provide a different picture.

Sir Geoffrey Jellicoe prepared a master-plan for Hemel in 1947 (Jellicoe, 1947). It was superseded in 1949 with a tempered version designed by the Hemel Hempstead Development Corporation (HHDC, 1952). The differences in both master-plans are not immediately apparent but the effect of this decision has had long-term consequences.

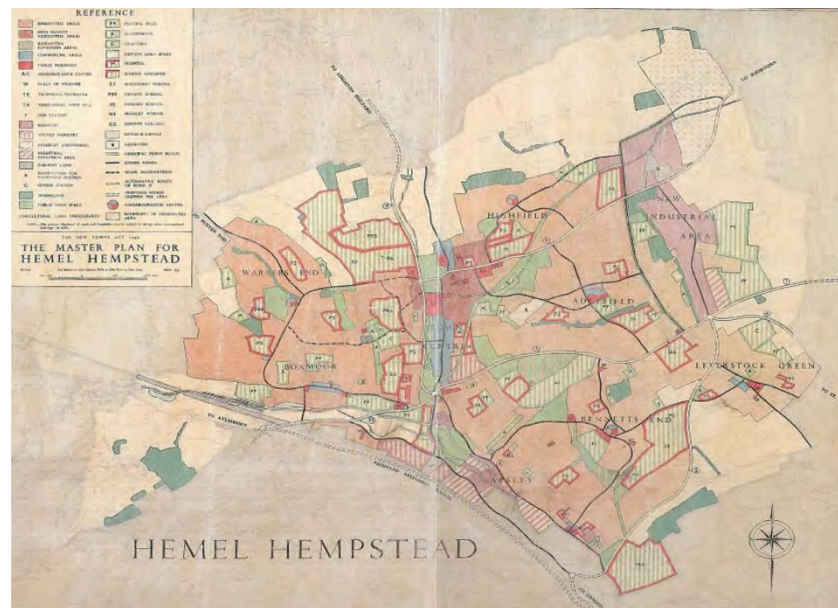


Figure 7-c: 1947 master-plan by Jellicoe for Hemel Hempstead New Town

© Source: IWM ((MOW) T 9465)

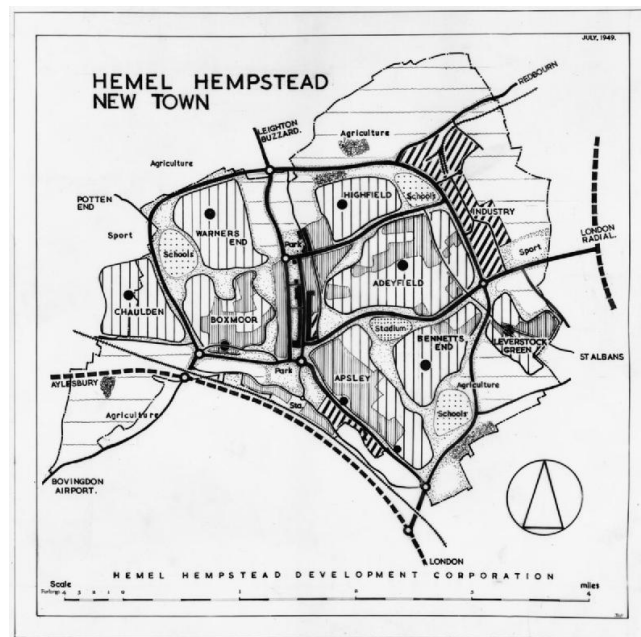


Figure 7-d: 1949 master-plan by Hemel Hempstead Development Corporation

© Source: IWM ((MOW) T 9465)

The empirical research for this section, and throughout the case study, focuses on Grovehill, Hemel's last neighbourhood to have been built under New Towns Legislation. The 1947 master-plan originally had seven new neighbourhoods including two older villages (Hemel Hempstead, and Boxmoor and Apsley) that were also absorbed. Grovehill is characterised in the 1947 master-plan as having 'good building land' and 'beautiful landscape' with projections of achieving 'equally subsidized and unsubsidized [housing]' for the proposed population of 9,000 new residents (Jellicoe, 1947). After a tour by Dacorum of the different neighbourhoods, Grovehill was selected

on the basis that there was a strong and active Local Action Group (LAG) and its design was a typical example of the New Town neighbourhood unit in terms of scale, amenities, housing diversity, mature public land, and as identified by Dacorum, similarities in its current challenges. The LAG regularly meets in the community centre and this dominated initial conversations. From a planning perspective the centre commands a strong presence in Grovehill, since it is designed as a focal point for the neighbourhood. However, it is proving problematic because of its perceived decline as an inner city suburb.

7.2 Self-containment: we are not a commuter town!

The introduction to this chapter has identified that self-containment is being challenged by the existing perception that Grovehill is undergoing a specific process of suburbanisation. Before assessing the variables that contribute to this characterisation, a brief outline on the residents is pertinent.

Hemel residents who were interviewed as part of the PAR workshops were mixed in age, ethnicity and socio-economic backgrounds. They represented a more mixed-community than residents of the MAZE workshops held in Harlow. Sharon (110131-13HH) is 59 years old and moved to Hemel Hempstead as a pioneer in 1953. Her family came from Wembley and her dad worked as a butcher. She is currently unemployed after having worked with the council for many years. Sharon's husband John (110131-10HH) moved to Hemel Hempstead as a New Town settler in 1950. He is employed in the food industry as an engineer in Maylands, the industrial quarter of Hemel. There was a strong sense of pride in that Hemel had been able to give their family a home, and they had witnessed the growth of the town as its local residents built it. Both Sharon and John described scenes of excitement when their families arrived at Hemel and everyone was a pioneer 'in the same boat' of adapting to new surroundings (110131-10HH). This contrasts with the pioneer stories of arrival in Harlow because the families did not decentralise as part of a homogeneous group from a specific London area, instead choosing to relocate in search of better employment opportunities. This creates a fundamental difference between Hemel and Harlow. Whereas the presence of Mosleyites influenced how pioneers settled into a community in Harlow, the Hemel pioneers have a shared history that started upon arrival at the New Town. The consequence may explain why, sixty years later, there was a sense of strong and cohesive community support throughout the PAR workshops in Hemel.

There are other, more implicit, details that illustrate a sustained improvement in the quality of life for the pioneers. Sharon remembers that moving from Wembley and ‘suddenly [we] had a garden and decent streets to play in’ meant the entire family was enthusiastic about relocation (110131-13HH). Others who moved to Grovehill in the 1970s and 1980s recall that even then Hemel Hempstead offered good value for money. It had good houses that were larger than average and usually provided a garden. Derek (110201-08HH), as another example, moved to Grovehill in 1973 from Central London. When interviewed, he was 76 years old and a very active member of the community as a churchwarden, trustee for the neighbourhood centre and member of the Local Action Group. He remembers moving to Hemel, which at the time was dominated by young families but to his concern this trend started to diminish over the years.

Anne (110201-06HH) is another example of a pioneer who relocated independently. She is 69 years old and recalls moving to Grovehill 34 years ago from the West Midlands with her husband and son, providing a story of how the self-containment model initially drew people in. Anne’s husband had found employment in Watford and they intended to accept the job but live in Hemel Hempstead because of cheaper housing. Instead, as they looked for a place to live in Hemel, the Development Corporation helped the family find local employment within the New Town and they rejected the Watford job.

The PAR workshops included residents who relocated more recently, and are not pioneers. Alexander (110201-07HH) is known locally as ‘Prince of Darkness’ because of his musical taste and his ongoing commitment to youth work through music projects. He is 52 years old and moved to Grovehill in 1994 from Watford to a council-owned property so that he could set up his own record production company, Plasma Music. Goverthan (110131-12HH) was another participant who relocated to Hemel in 2007 from London. He was 39 years old at the time of the workshop, and told us his wife and four children were offered a house in Grovehill neighbourhood shortly after arriving from Bhutan having already lived for some months in London. Steve (110201-05HH) was 53 years old and moved to Hemel in 1962 from London Bridge. He was working with the armed forces when he moved to Hemel. However, since leaving the army he has been unemployed and can only find short-term contracts. His last job was working a summer-shift in Heathrow and a winter-shift at the Royal Mail. Although the workshop was for residents of Grovehill neighbourhood in Hemel, one participant, Michael (110201-09HH), acknowledged he lived in another neighbourhood (Piccotts End) but

used Grovehill frequently for shopping and town hall meetings. At 68 years of age, he was retired and had most of his friends in Grovehill. He had been a pioneer of Piccotts End in 1976, a neighbourhood he explains is where farmers had large pockets of land that were bought by the Hemel Hempstead Development Corporation through Compulsory Purchase Order.

There was an overriding consensus that relocation to Hemel was characterised by a supportive local authority and an improvement in each resident's physical quality of life. The residents provided real-life stories similar to the family living in Willesden depicted in *A Home of Our Own* (Figure 7-a). These anecdotes are unique to the New Towns history because the Hemel Hempstead Development Corporation (HHDC) annual reports do not provide information regarding the origin of the newcomers.⁴⁶ However, an online archive prepared by the local authority, Herts Memories, has compiled some pioneer stories of arrival in Hemel:⁴⁷

I moved into my home in Hemel Hempstead with my husband and son on the 26th July 1955, and why do I remember the date so vividly, well it was my first home, as we had been living with my in-laws previously. The second reason was that when we moved into Long Chaulden the cement mixer was still being used in our back garden, and even though it was very noisy at times, we did not care as we were in our own home and that meant everything to us. (New, 2011: 8 November 2011).

This quote is similar to pioneer anecdotes and the expert critique that New Town delivery happened haphazardly, and often too quickly. The cement mixer in the garden coincides with stories of muddy shoes in the early days of arriving in a New Town. However, contrasting the critique established in Chapter 5, this was seen as a positive aspect of the pioneer arrival because it represented a new future being built by the newcomers. The first people to receive a home in Hemel Hempstead were workers recruited from different areas in London to build the town. While initially the workmen were housed in a large hostel, every year with increasing labour numbers, they were progressively allocated new houses as the neighbourhoods were built. If *A Home of Our Own* (Thompson, 1951) reveals that 'all I could do was hope' when the family made the

⁴⁶ The Development Corporation annual reports were produced in every New Town. Dating between 1948 and 1962, they offer a detailed description accounting the for the financial years' activities and an invaluable precise and detailed record of how the New Town was built.

⁴⁷ Archival material accessible from the 'Herts Memories' website has detailed stories of a handful of pioneers. It suggests most newcomers came from North-West London, i.e. Harrow, Willesden Green and Harlesden. Of course, relocation was related to employment so the origin of newcomers depended more on the factories that chose to relocate and where they had been based previously.

New Town application, the PAR confirmed that arriving into a town under construction emphasised this early feeling of elation and happiness.

7.2.1 Characteristics of an inner city suburb

Fondness regarding arrival in Hemel was swiftly replaced with a negative and saddened description of how the town then evolved. Speaking specifically about Grovehill neighbourhood, residents from the PAR workshops revealed that the automobile was its biggest foe. Although seen as a practical way around the hilly topography and separate neighbourhoods, the car has become a problem for the local residents due to the implications of commuting and parking. Local unemployment had forced residents to look for work that required them to leave Hemel and seek affordable commuting using a Greenline Express bus service to Victoria station in London. One of the few stops on the express is Henry Wells Square, the local centre in Grovehill. There was indignation and frustration amongst the locals that commuters would drive into Grovehill, park their car at the local centre and take the bus to spend all day in London. They claimed the council was uninterested in dealing with the matter even though it was very clear that ‘commuters bring their car and park it here to take the express bus into London or Watford. It’s full of cars and none of them are ours!’ (110102-15HH). The local frustration amounted to a sophisticated understanding that their neighbourhood was becoming a commuter town. While the car park is full, the shops and streets are empty:

This is becoming a commuter town. The Green Line to Victoria 767/768 stops in front of Henry Wells Square and people drive into the local centre, park in front of the shop and leave their car there all day. (110201-07HH).

Aside from the residents of the PAR workshops, shopkeepers in Henry Wells Square shared this concern because there was not enough business. Of seven shopkeepers interviewed, six of them were proprietors serving and operating the till. This is indicative of small businesses that are struggling to cope amid economic uncertainty. One interpretation is that the planning model has become redundant, since it does not serve customers outside of the New Town neighbourhood unit. One shopkeeper acknowledges that his clientele is restricted to the small neighbourhood community, because, ‘you wouldn’t come to Grovehill to spend time. Either you live here or you need bread and butter and you pay a visit to the shops. That’s it’ (110203-20HH). Shoppers were all local residents and whilst this fomented a strong ‘community feeling’ (110201-08HH) in the local centre, it was proving problematic for the local

shops and bringing into question the economic viability of the neighbourhood unit as a planning model.

Furthermore, in stark contrast to the earlier data showing a high level of self-containment in Hemel, the experience in Grovehill revealed a different perspective. With a high number of car owners, people were no longer confined to using their local centre or working within the boundaries of the New Town. When Grovehill was built in the 1960s car ownership was already inevitable. Unlike Harlow, for example, it was not designed with auxiliary cycling routes and instead assumed that car ownership would be an asset in every household. The effect has led to the emancipation of individual families as they search for new employment opportunities at the expense of breaking away from the self-containment model, realising Abercrombie's prediction that Hemel would become a dormitory town if the self-containment rate was not managed. This differs from Harlow where residents moved out of the New Town in search of new employment, creating a strong separation of social classes (between those that remained in Harlow and those who progressed out). Despite a difference in evolution, both instances confirm that the New Town ambition to redistribute both capital and social class was undermined as communities will naturally separate themselves as a consequence of environmental inequality. Reade (1987:93) attributed this to personal taste and status competition but somehow disregarded the most basic pursuit: employment. Naturally this presents a contradiction, because the original terms of reference for New Towns were specifically about creating well planned and managed new communities that would maintain a healthy economy. So why did pioneers start to leave Hemel?

As with all mark 1 New Towns, Hemel Hempstead was designed and built with one industrial centre. Maylands was planned to the north-east of the town because the 'prevailing south-west winds will keep smoke and noise away from the houses' (HHDC, 1949: 24). Factories were set up in an area estimated to employ between 7,000-10,000 people, which equates to roughly 20-25 per cent of new residents. The local industrial area was thus a main source of local employment but all new factories were for the manufacturing industry and light engineering.⁴⁸ As factories started to close down, the

⁴⁸ Rotax Ltd.; Commercial Centre; Multicore Soldiers Ltd.; Central Tool & Equipment Co. Ltd; Rolls Razor Ltd.; The London Ferro Concrete Co. Ltd; Alford & Alder (Engineers) Ltd.; Adressograph Multigraph Ltd. were the first factories in the Industrial Area.

majority of New Town residents lost their employment and have since found access to work very difficult. One resident said:

When Hemel was built there was a lot of industry but that's all disappeared... Dixons, Kodak, BP and soon Asos... all being replaced now with computerised systems. I've not found work again. (110201-05HH).

There has been a skills-related problem in Hemel Hempstead because as the factories closed, newer and computerised industries replaced them. The New Town population was low-skilled, trained to work in manufacturing industries, and have not been able to occupy the high-skilled labour needed by the newer industries. This resulted in outsourcing or relocation of new employees, whilst the previous labour workforce remained unemployed:

I can't get work anymore. The jobs available require different skills to the ones I have. Since I left the armed forces, fifteen years ago, I haven't found permanent work. I basically get short-term contracts to help out in big events, like when Heathrow needed their luggage sorted out. My last work was a six-week contract with Royal Mail to work over Christmas. (110201-05HH).

In 2009, Dacorum carried out an employment study (DBC, 2005) of Hemel Hempstead and identified the employment sectors: 5 per cent construction; 10 per cent manufacturing; 11 per cent transport and communications; 17 per cent agriculture and fishing; 26 per cent distribution (hotels and restaurants); and 26 per cent banking, finance and insurance (information technology and other related activities are a part of this sector). In effect, the manufacturing industry that was the main employer in the 1950s has been replaced by the knowledge-based industry of the 1990s. This industry is identified by Dacorum as falling into four main groups: (1) high-tech manufacturing; (2) finance and business services (FBS); (3) computing, research and development; and (4) communications and media industries. This is a reoccurring preoccupation amongst the residents. 'I'm not skilled enough for the work available' (110201-05HH) or 'so many of us are unemployed that the community spirit is fading... we just have nowhere to go' (110131-13HH). The result has been that either people leave Grovehill altogether, or that they commute to work outside of Hemel Hempstead. The local authority has identified long-distance commuting as a key problem, and noted that 'local residents have to commute out to access better-paid jobs, and that the lower-paid jobs in these Districts are taken by in-commuters' (DBC, 2005: 25).

One interpretation is that the planning principles of self-containment have restricted employment opportunities for local residents, forcing them to seek work outside of their town, which coincides with Willett's (2011) argument that even the 'best of planning intentions can be subjected to unintended consequences' (Willet 2011:4). However, revisiting the historical factors that originally gave rise to self-containment, as discussed in Chapter 2, this development can also be understood differently. As the chapter argued, philanthropist housing developments were essentially employer housing tied to visions and ideals of a few commercial industrialists. Their intention behind promoting self-containment was predominantly about exerting moral influence over tenants and managing housing, and less about creating new living conditions independent of industry and employment. Although the planning ideology of New Towns was a direct manifestation of the aspiration of social balance, it founded its delivery on the practical examples of industrial villages that pursued and promoted self-containment.

Nonetheless contemporary planning processes use the self-containment rate as a yardstick by which to measure sustainability. In Dacorum, this is recorded as 61 per cent and records 'the number of people who both live and work in the local authority area, as a proportion of all the area's working residents' (DBC, 2005: 27). In comparison to the other rates in South West Herts and neighbouring districts, Dacorum has the highest rate of self-containment. This presents a contradiction with the impression given by local residents because although Grovehill is sustainable by the suggested yardstick, it doesn't make sense for the residents who are isolated and jobless. So why the discrepancy between the experience within Grovehill neighbourhood versus the larger town? One explanation may be that Grovehill did not have public transport and infrastructure built into the neighbourhood unlike the earlier neighbourhoods built in the 1940s and 1950s. Instead, there is a 'hotch-potch' transport and road network (the origin of which is discussed further in this chapter) which means people rely heavily on their cars, or shuttle bus services that need to be provided by the council (100426-03HH).

Beyond the revelation that Grovehill has the characteristics of a dormitory suburb due to problems with its transport network, the local residents expressed feelings of isolation from the larger town itself. The neighbourhood unit has created a very tight-knit community insulated from the larger town. With 7,621 residents (DBC, 2009b), this figure is too low to support a village and too large to be a simple residential suburb:

You don't go into the High Street in Hemel at all...there is no connection between the neighbourhoods and the new town centre. (110201-09HH).

The lack of connection between the neighbourhood unit and the overall New Town is particularly emphasised because the original balance between homes and jobs changed as the local economy adapted to meet national demands. However, the impact of this economic shift (from an industrialised to a service-based workforce) seems to have only affected the New Town neighbourhoods in Hemel Hempstead. Dacorum is ranked 312 out of a total of 354 English Council areas in the Index of Multiple Deprivation, making it amongst the most affluent Councils in England. Conversely, three of Dacorum's 27 wards were found to be among the 50 most deprived wards in England, highlighting the diversity of the borough (DBC, 2003).⁴⁹ While Hemel Hempstead ranks well in relation to its region, the individual New Town neighbourhoods do not. Data on individual neighbourhoods suggests a tendency for the New Town elements of Hemel to deliver a lower quality of life and employment than the older neighbourhoods pre-dating the 1945 policy (see Table 10).

Table 10: Levels of deprivation in Dacorum: old Hemel versus New Town neighbourhoods

© Source: adapted from Department for Communities and Local Government (DBC, 2011)

Rank in the Borough	LSOA code	LSOA location by ward	IMD score	Characteristic
1	E01023348	Adeyfield East/West	28.29	NT neighbourhood
2	E01023357	Bennetts End	27.44	NT neighbourhood
3	E01023437	Woodhall Farm	27.36	NT neighbourhood
4	E01023404	Hemel Hempstead Town	27.17	NT centre
5	E01023393	Grovehill	26.21	NT neighbourhood
6	E01023405	Highfield	25.89	NT neighbourhood
7	E01023358	Leverstock Green	22.89	NT neighbourhood
8	E01023403	Highfield	22.89	NT neighbourhood
9	E01023395	Grovehill	22.56	NT neighbourhood

⁴⁹ Harlow is ranked as the 95th most deprived local authority in England which puts it in the most deprived 30% (HBC, 2010: 2).

Rank in the Borough	LSOA code	LSOA location by ward	IMD score	Characteristic
10	E01023397	Grovehill	22.05	NT neighbourhood
average	E01023383	Chaulden	10.22	NT neighbourhood
below average	E01023354	Apsley	7.05	old Hemel neighbourhood
below average	E01023381	Boxmoor	2.21	old Hemel neighbourhood
lowest	E01023383	Berkhamstead	1.9	neighbouring village
Explanatory note: This table has been adapted using the 2011 Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) measure used by the government in England and Wales to determine levels of deprivation and inequality. It measures deprivation across seven domains and the lower the score, the least deprived. Dacorum has an average score of 10.9. This table shows the top 10 most deprived wards within Dacorum and compares their score to the two 'old Hemel' neighbourhoods where housing predates the 1949 master-plan.				

Residents believe that to increase employment opportunities Hemel Hempstead will have to expand, but they unanimously emphasised the importance of maintaining the heritage of the New Towns by expanding in accordance with the neighbourhood unit. Their frustration at Grovehill becoming a commuter suburb was particularly passionate, because residents acknowledged that the neighbourhood was part of a carefully considered New Towns ideology that rejected commuter towns. They sustained that it was not the neighbourhood unit making their town feel like a dormitory suburb, but the existing employment structure. Their realisation signals a clear understanding of the neighbourhood unit and the planning intention of the larger New Town ideology. This has been considered a possible explanation of the post-suburban state by Mace (2013) in a review of Phelps and Wu's book on international suburbanisation (2011). According to Mace (2013:18), although the social, physical and economic manifestation of the suburb may change, the residents' local identity remains fixed in a construct. In the case of the post-suburban these may be images of suburbia, whereas in Hemel it appeared to be a collective paradigm of the New Town identity. Their understanding that 'we are not a commuter suburb' (110201-05HH, 110201-07HH) formed the basis of the PAR discussions and is the focus of the next section.

7.3 Newness and sameness: characterisation of an inner city suburb

Regional opposition not only challenged the location for Hemel Hempstead New Town, but also the first draft of its master-plan that was prepared by Sir Geoffrey

Jellicoe in 1947. Instead, it was superseded by a tempered version designed by the Hemel Hempstead Development Corporation (HHDC) in 1949 that adhered to Jellicoe's master-plan only diagrammatically:

While not revolutionary in design the New Town will be convenient; it can possess all modern necessary amenities; it will have all the beauty found in many English country towns of this size. (HHDC 1949).

The emphasis of the 1949 master-plan was to build on the qualities of what was already present in Hemel without being too prescriptive because 'a growing town is a living entity and its final shape in detail cannot be exactly predicted or prescribed' (HHDC, 1949: 13.1, item.4). A visible overriding characteristic is that the HHDC of 1949 aimed to maintain Hemel Hempstead as an 'English country town'. In fact, a book by Hemel Hempstead Development Corporation claims that Hemel Hempstead is the 'most important place to be designated a New Town' (HHDC, 1949: 14), due to the Charter it received from King Henry VIII for a market and because it had been a Municipal Borough since 1898. This is something Abercrombie had appreciated when positioning Hemel within the outer country ring of the Greater London Plan (Abercrombie, 1944). From a design perspective this is in stark contrast to Harlow's bold and ambitious view of creating a Modernist town. It indicates that Hemel, unlike Harlow, was not realised in the 'hierarchical, almost godlike manner' (Willett, 2011) characteristic of communities planned in the positive planning era.

In an interview with Tony Burton in 1995 Jellicoe recounted how he had been commissioned to prepare the 1947 master-plan, an anecdote worth reflecting upon because it illustrates a degree of randomness in the design process that has been a principle critique of the New Town experiment. According to Jellicoe, he was called at his office one day and offered to design a master-plan for either Harlow or Hemel Hempstead. He chose Hemel Hempstead because he knew Lord Reith personally and wanted to work with him, and after his acceptance Sir Frederick Gibberd was offered Harlow. Jellicoe and Gibberd knew each other, and had both been principals at the Architecture Association, but according to Jellicoe they had 'incredibly little knowledge of town planning then, incredibly little knowledge' (Burton and Hartly, 2003: Planners and officials / Sir Geoffrey Jellicoe). After a year, and a thousand pounds offered as professional fees, each architect produced a model for their designated town. Jellicoe recognises that neither himself or Gibberd had any previous experience when they were appointed, other than academic evaluations at the Architectural Association. This

highlights, once again, the extent to which a government policy for reconstruction can be inherently tied to the avant-garde planning and architectural debates occurring within academia (in this case, the Architectural Association), or patronage.

The principle aspect of Jellicoe's master-plan that was retained is the Water Gardens. This is a landscape that snakes through the valley and runs parallel to the High Street. It is a space that 'best captures the spirit of the British New Towns' (Turner, 2009: 26 September 2012) and is included in English Heritage's Register of Parks and Gardens of Specific Historic Interest. It is a cherished aspect of the New Town today, with residents claiming that it gives the town 'something unique' (110201-04HH) and 'completely different to the neighbouring villages' (110201-08HH). On the other hand, the most evident difference between both plans is the implementation of roads and infrastructure. The Development Corporation expressly disregarded Jellicoe's Services (transport) scheme, claiming that provisions would be 'implemented as the need is felt'.⁵⁰ One consequence is that arrival at Hemel Hempstead train station from London is awkward. Upon exiting the station, there is a green open field with ponies running freely. Although this is endearing, the town centre is either a 20 minute walk or a £7 taxi ride away. A local resident and planner says that fixing the existing transport links in Hemel is key to its success:

Transport is key to making the town work, the separation of the station from town centre, and the lack of east [to] west access is incredible. If you work in the industrial area [Marylands] there is no public transport to work. So people need to own cars to get around. Basically integrated transport planning would be key to making Hemel a sustainable and successful town. Right now transport is so unclear and illegible. It could benefit from cross-town movement. (120109-14HH).

The Development Corporation's conclusion was that existing road patterns would be used for some time until there was a real need for a new scheme. This was their way of making the best of the existing town infrastructure and appeasing the local residents and the local authority who were opposed to Jellicoe's proposals. In reality, one wonders if it was Jellicoe's proposal in particular that was displeasing to the locals, or the fact that the village was to become a New Town, with a newly decentralised inner city working class population. This illustrates one visible difference that separates Hemel from a progressive Modernist town such as Harlow. The modification of

⁵⁰ The dispute is well documented in Hertfordshire Hemel Hempstead Gazette & West Herts Advertiser on 11 April 1947 in an article titled: Hempstead Council to Discuss New Town Plan - "I don't Agree with Some things in It" - Protests Ald. Fletcher.

Jellicoe's Modernist vision is a recurring theme throughout the empirical investigation, adding a layer of complexity to the discourse on suburban urbanism. While the 1947 master-plan aimed for a coherent and unified Modernist expression, its 1949 replacement toned down the aspects of Modernity to contextualise the New Town as a planned community but in a rural belt. It is a theme that can be evaluated critically and in detail by focusing on how housing was built, and has developed, within the Grovehill neighbourhood unit.

The 1947 master-plan for Hemel outlined seven new neighbourhoods, each with a local centre and 'subsidiary shopping units, small parcels of industry, a small public garden and land for unorganised games, allotments and local public buildings of all kinds' (Jellicoe, 1947: No.71). Jellicoe established standards of housing densities for each neighbourhood, together with an allocation of tenure. While he refers to neighbourhood designation as 'guidance', the standards were quite specific. In Grovehill, for example:

GROVEHILL (14.7 persons per acre) (equally subsidised and unsubsidised). Good building land, but exposed to north. Beautiful landscape. Grammar school in commanding position from the north. (*ibid.*: No.76).

This specificity contrasts with the 1949 counterpart of the master-plan because 'the Corporation does not believe that rigid rules can be laid down as to densities, for these are largely controlled by the reactions of economics and public taste'. They establish that density would be governed by opportunity and demand and made a specific call to 'retain flexibility' (HHDC, 1949: No.13-1). In terms of tenure, while Jellicoe intended to establish guidance on the general character of the neighbourhood, he did not specify the individual design of housing, in an attempt to merge income groups and unify social classes (Jellicoe, 1947: No.72). The Development Corporation was more specific in this regard, acknowledging that privately-owned homes would be 'built to the requirements of individual purchaser[s]' and making specific allocation in the proportion of dwellings with regards to their cost type (HHDC, 1949: No.13-2). While the master-plan granted flexibility for neighbourhood units, it did not intend to merge social classes through its design of dwellings. Instead, it expressly identifies social balance as something that can only be achieved through a variety of employment and diversity of housing:

The Corporation is also conscious of the need for securing a mixture of social classes within the town and even within the neighbourhoods. There is not the same danger, as was envisaged in the New Towns Report, of a "one-

class town” owing to early construction of minimum standard housing, for a proportion of the existing community is of the middle-income group. Nevertheless, steps have been taken to ensure that larger size houses are available in the first neighbourhood to be developed and in the early contracts. The Corporation will ensure that a variety of dwellings is available in each neighbourhood. (HHDC, 1949: No.5-2).

Grovehill is built simply throughout but reflects the desire to provide a variety of dwellings. The housing is mainly built of brickwork, with wooden windows and pitched roofs. This is not a neighbourhood unit embracing progressive architectural design as seen in the 1950s housing of Harlow. It is presumably the reason why residents are content with their housing and did not complain of low-quality stock. In fact, Dacorum claims that of the 3,200 households in Grovehill, 947 are council homes, whereas the remainder are owned by residents with a mortgage (Grovehill, DBC 2012), meaning that this is a neighbourhood where home ownership is high. While there are occasional signs of low-quality materials, such as weatherboarding, the housing reflects 1960s and 1970s council housing demonstrating suburban qualities. As discussed in Chapter 2, since the Tudor-Walters report there existed a noticeable public aspiration to live in a cottage home, or at least, a house with a garden. It was fuelled by the perception that housing built by private developers was of a more traditional style whereas municipal housing resembled corporation suburbs. The housing in Grovehill reflects this aspiration to avoid corporation suburbs and build traditionally. Nevertheless, with the existing (private) housing stock available when Hemel Hempstead was built, class divisions were never really overcome, and blue-collar workers ended up living in the New Town neighbourhoods while the managers and white-collar workers moved to the traditional housing in the old village. As such, Grovehill is actually a very secluded neighbourhood both in its design and in its social division from the rest of Hemel Hempstead. Additionally, the neighbourhood unit secludes the community from the larger town and is thus perceived as nothing more than a large estate-like area of housing. Common complaints from the residents included:

Nobody outside of Grovehill knows we are here. Even the young’ens that live here don’t know about the community centre. (110102-15HH).

The seclusion can also be attributed to the hilly topography of Hemel, which makes a linear view of the town difficult if not impossible. Local authority officers were supportive of the neighbourhood unit because it left ‘lovely green wedges’ (100426-03HH) of public land between housing areas and ‘strengthened the community feeling’ (100426-01HH). Although the three points of contact in the Regeneration and Planning

Team were all fully supportive of the neighbourhoods, they chose to live outside of the New Town. ‘Oh no, I don’t live in Hemel’ (100426-03HH).



Figure 7-e: Images of housing in Grovehill neighbourhood, early 1970s

© Source: Burton and Hartly, 2003

Within the neighbourhood unit there are a series of clear and identifiable design and planning issues usually endured in typical inner city suburbs, primarily to do with problems of unoccupied youth and perceptions of safety and security. In the first instance, the Radburn layout has already demonstrated that it creates a non-traditional street typology in a pattern that isolates pedestrians. Residents referred to the homes as clustered in an awkward fashion ‘overlooking abandoned spaces’ (110201-07HH) and with ‘dodgy cul-de-sacs at the rear’ (110201-06HH). This arrangement of housing creates non-linear streets and back alleys that appear badly lit:

The rabbit warrens and side alleys are used by vandals to cause problems and if police come they don’t know the area so the kids hide and the police can’t catch them. (110201-05HH).

The street layout does make a confusing arrangement, and the endless combination of pedestrian routes facing onto similar garden fences precludes any visible landmarks, making navigation very difficult. When it is dark, people walk through alleys and narrow lanes and no amount of lighting will compensate for the vulnerability felt along these Radburn passages. The literature review on Radburn layout confirms this as one of the very contentious design aspects that make New Town neighbourhoods today feel unsafe and obsolete, coinciding with the expert criticism offered in Chapter 5.

Nevertheless, residents appreciate the design of their neighbourhood and acknowledge that it makes Grovehill unique. In their opinion, it is not the design of the neighbourhood that should change, but ‘people hanging out without a purpose’ (110201-09HH). This realisation exposes a gentle contradiction between how the residents want to view their New Town neighbourhood, and what is actually happening within it.

One dominant aspect of Grovehill that impacts the sense of security for its residents is the overwhelming number of loitering youth, and a concern for their (lack of) prospects for the future.⁵¹ Concern is twofold: for the youths who left and for those who remained. Accordingly, they were not qualified to find real employment and would no longer be able to live in a decent house even if they were employed. A small sample of concerns is as follows:

The young ones grow up and no one is here to replace them (110201-08HH).

My time is getting over but the youth is the future so we need to get the youth feeling that there is a strong community sense. If there is a strong community it can be a good place with a chance of employment. (110201-05HH).

The lack of facilities and opportunities for the local youth is a problem. And the influx of secondary students to Grovehill schools from other neighbourhoods. (110201-07HH).

There was possibly an imbalance of youth-related dialogue sustained throughout the workshops because the participants were predominantly fifty years old and above. ‘It’s none of your business’, ‘Sod off’ or a raise of eyebrows in disbelief were a few reactions received when youths were approached asking for a short chat. Informal interviews were held with young mothers during a crèche session at the local centre, and they also voiced concerns that were primarily about unoccupied youths and prospects for the next generation.

A major concern was the abandonment, disrepair and neglect that the previous youth centre had fallen into. Such effects were visible throughout Grovehill, as ‘groups of youth congregate in the darkness’ (110203-20HH) and ‘have nothing better to do than loiter’ (110203-18HH). If a young person (under 19 years) wants to ‘hang out with

⁵¹ According to a study prepared by Dacorum Borough Council, 21 per cent of residents in Hemel Hempstead are under 19 (DBC 2003).

friends in Grovehill there are not many venues for entertainment without leaving the neighbourhood' (110201-07HH). Either they meet in the local park, or hang around the shops in the local centre. An earlier critique by Aldridge (1979) of the notion of creating balanced communities in the New Towns is that it was 'limited to a narrow understanding of the British demographic' (Aldridge 1979:106). Whilst families were targeted for relocation, no evidence is available that provisions were in place to accommodate teenagers and young adults. It also illustrates the Labour Party argument that poverty created inner-city problems and was transmitted intergenerationally (Lawless 1981), endorsing the idea that decline may continue if families, children and communities are not cared for in urban policies. Such an understanding sheds light on Klein's (1978: 178-181) preoccupation stated in the Introduction, asking if New Towns would work if urban policy truly supported their development.

A population study conducted by Dacorum Borough Council (2009) does echo the local concern that there is a demographic imbalance in Grovehill. While a decline exists in younger age groups (under 30), there is an increase in the older population (over 60), with nearly a quarter of all households consisting of pensioner-older households (DBC, 2009). Secondly, New Towns have a higher-than-average young family rate which indicates that although birth rates are high, young people are moving out and not coming back:

New Town neighbourhoods that were developed most recently have a lower than Borough average age profile, with more young families and higher birth rates. The generation that originally moved to Hemel Hempstead as young adults is now at retirement age, and the proportion of 40-59 year olds, children of the original New Town settlers, is increasing. (DBC, 2009).

According to the PAR workshop, this trend exists because there are few opportunities for the youth in terms of training and employment. However, when the imbalance is interpreted in light of the New Town process of relocation, the lack of young people represents a deeper structural problem of a regional decentralisation policy. This is presumably a consequence of having specifically targeted young couples to settle in Hemel, and calls into question the criteria determined by the Reith Committee for a balanced community (Reith Committee, 1946c). Perhaps an objective in achieving balance should have included a wider demographic profile, instead of relying on

population projections to drive public policy.⁵² It demonstrates that balance is difficult to maintain and predict when a demographic is 'selected' in a model of self-containment. This also reflects Willett's (2011) assessment that communities are complex systems and 'linear models of development' do not respond to the 'unpredictability of change' (Willett, 2011:6).

Obedying a strict understanding of suburbanisation as set out in Chapter 3 (see discussion 3.2), Grovehill should be considered an inner city suburb, not an archetypal New Town planning manifestation. At this point a contradiction emerges that is difficult to resolve and may lend itself to an increased understanding of what Clapson (2003) calls 'nuanced anti-urbanism'. Despite typological and class-based developments in Grovehill that signal a suburban urbanism, the resident's experiential perception is far from this characterisation (Clapson, 2003: 51-78). Grovehill residents are highly aware that Hemel Hempstead was developed as part of a New Towns policy to create balanced communities for living and working. They understand that structural issues have developed over time forcing their neighbourhood into becoming a commuter suburb, but they are adamant that this does not portray their real identity as a neighbourhood unit. Collectively, they want a thriving local centre with shops that cater to the community needs; maintenance of the green wedges for enjoyable access to green spaces; and better lighting to offset the perception that they are in a neighbourhood that is not safe:

The mix of housing and shops and health centre in the town centre is important. As long as the housing is well built and maintained and the health centre is up and running. (110131-11HH).

We used to use the park on a daily basis for dog-walking and jogging. This created a good sense of friendliness but the council stopped looking after the park and now it is threatening. But it could be such a focus point for our community! (110131-13HH).

If we had some chairs in the town centre in front of the café, there would be more people outside. Right now there is nowhere to sit and it makes the centre feel worse than it actually is. (110203-21HH).

Bad lighting gives the perception of bad safety. This is easily fixed with motion-activated street lighting. (110201-08HH).

⁵² The first National Census was published in 1961 and its population projections influenced the course of public policy regarding New Towns. This is discussed in greater detail throughout Chapter 3.

The notion of perception is highly relevant to the experiential quality of the neighbourhood. Upon arrival in Hemel, the local authority team made an explicit warning that there were unfounded fears about safety, since Dacorum maintains a lower than average crime rate in relation to the East of England and the country (DBC, 2011). In Grovehill specifically, crime is slightly higher than the rest of Dacorum, but there is still a decrease in crime year after year.⁵³ Nevertheless, the overall impression of local residents is that they do not feel safe in their neighbourhood, because of three identifiable issues that can be attributed to the Radburn layout. Firstly, the awkward street pattern creates an increased sense of fear in the darkness. Secondly, the layout creates many patches of greenery that are difficult to maintain and therefore makes the housing areas feel unsafe. Last of all, the lack of infrastructure left some people purposeless who then chose to loiter in the street, which made them appear threatening. However, some residents were acutely aware that safety was a matter of perception:

I have always felt safe in Grovehill despite hearing about unsafety. I've always been perfectly happy and comfortable here... for thirty-four years now. (110201-06HH).

There is no space for people to hang out, there is no seating. So people just gather and this looks threatening. (110203-21HH).

This understanding by the local residents reveals a level of sophistication in the degree to which they both appreciate and reflect upon their environment. At a micro level, it demonstrates that residents have the ability to separate the ideology in planning from its unintended consequences. Additionally, if the Grovehill residents are disillusioned with the development of their neighbourhood, it is based on appraisals of its function more than its aesthetic. This can probably be attributed to the adaptation of Jellicoe's 1947 Master plan. Instead of a radical New Town typology, the Hemel master-plan of 1949 had been re-interpreted to appease local, district and regional opposition that led to more building of traditional housing stock (less newness) within an old town, to provide a wider range in tenure (less sameness).

⁵³ The year of 2010 to 2011 saw a 31 per cent decrease in overall crime (Grovehill, DBC 2012).

7.4 Rescaling governance: I am a firm believer in democracy, as long as it's a democracy of one!

The previous section revealed that opposition dominated the development of Hemel from the outset. At regional level it rejected Abercrombie's citing of the New Town near Redbourn. At the district and county level it forced Jellicoe's master-plan to be superseded by one prepared in collaboration with the Hemel Hempstead Development Corporation (HHDC, 1949). This presented an interesting opportunity to assess how existing residents provide important knowledge for the design of a new community. Not doing so would be misleading. The preparation of the 1949 master-plan by the Development Corporation consisted neither of locally elected representatives nor local residents. As discussed in Chapter 2, the main criticism of the Development Corporations has been their status as an agency expected to operate alongside local authorities, accountable only to central government but managed independently. It is traditionally depicted as an administration model only viable under a centralised planning system and one that zealously guarded their independence (Schaffer, 1979) and had omnipotent powers (Aldridge, 1979). However, the case of Hemel Hempstead Development Corporation appears to contradict this representation.

Gilbert Hitchcock was a member of the Hemel Hempstead Borough Council and Chairman of the Local Committee of the Commission for the New Towns when Hemel was designated. He confirmed that Hemel had established a good working relationship between the different agencies, contrary to the experience of other mark 1 New Towns:

We [the Borough Council] had a working relationship in the District Councils New Towns Association, of which I was Chairman at the time. The officers there exchanged views on how the relationships between the Development Corporations and local authorities were going on. My impression at that time, and I got on well with all of them, was that in most new towns there was a 'hell of a bust up' going on. This was a bust up between the local authority and Development Corporations...(Burton and Hartly, 2003: interview with Hitchcock).

Hitchcock attributes the success of those relationships to individual personalities who were positive, good at their jobs and who believed in the New Town experiment.⁵⁴ A good working relationship between the Borough Council and Development Corporation,

⁵⁴ According to Hitchcock: The General Manager, Sir William Hart, was very, very good; the Town Clerk, Charles Kirk, was young, obnoxious, pushing, prepared to fight and stand his corner; and the Secretary of the Ministry of Housing and Local Government, Dame Evelyn Sharpe was engaging (interview with Joyce Hartley 1995, reproduced from IDOX).

in turn, encouraged central government to support and enable local Acts that would facilitate New Town development. He was the only Labour member of the Borough Council and, according to his interview, the only member that supported the New Town idea. Although Hitchcock suggests that the delivery of Hemel required negotiation between different administrators, this is contradicted by his claim that Development Corporations are important because they give greater powers to a single organisation:

If you are going to build a new town, if you are going to have a fairly big expansion and provide balanced industrial, commercial and housing development, then I think you have got to give extra powers to the organisation responsible for it. I have always said, I am a firm believer in democracy, as long as it's a democracy of one! (Burton and Hartly, 2003: interview with Joyce Hartley 1995).

The quote implies that designation, delivery and management of the New Towns depended on good working relationship between the Borough Council and the District Council, but ultimately, powers were delegated to the Development Corporation. In his own words, it was a 'democracy of one'.

The Hemel Hempstead Development Corporation was wound up and its assets transferred to the Commission for New Towns (CNT) on 31 March 1962. These assets included housing and areas of residential development land. Although the remit of the Commission for New Towns was to hold and manage these assets, its emphasis was placed on their disposal. Commercial, industrial and development land was sold on the open market and in 1978 when the CNT centralised its administration, Dacorum Borough Council received buildings and land that had no negative or market value (cited in Burton and Hartly, 2003: Grant and Partners). Admittedly for the Council this has created an untenable situation (100426-02HH).

According to the local authority, the contemporary management of Hemel is difficult due to its multiplicity of areas. The distinct neighbourhoods each have a local centre and in addition to this the local authority has to maintain the main town centre. 'This is a huge burden on the Council and we struggle to keep up!' (100426-02HH). Furthermore, large wedges of green public space that had initially been purchased through Compulsory Purchase Orders separated the neighbourhoods. Whereas the local authority had to *manage* this land, it was largely *owned* by the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) and could not be developed. It highlights the difficult legacy of the New Town land acquisition model, where sites were purchased through Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) for management by the Development Corporation. Now the

responsibility for upkeep has been transferred to the local authority that has a very different finance and governance model. For example, any growth on New Town land will be both expensive, because the proceeds of future projects would not necessarily go back to Dacorum, and complicated, because it does not own the land outright. While growth is discussed further in this chapter, it is important to highlight that governance is the key to understanding the challenges around ownership rights to land. For Dacorum, the consequence of the stock transfer from Development Corporations to the Commission for New Towns is perceived more as a burden than an asset:

This is a bane and a blessing for us because people have the right amenities at their doorstep, but it also means we are looking after multiple high streets and communal areas as opposed to just one town centre. (100426-02HH).

The burden is further increased because the local authority is under pressure to increase its housing provision, and to meet regional targets of housing defined in the East of England Plan, but without powers to acquire land the way it could have under the positive planning era of 1940s. It creates a complicated scenario of providing housing without integrated planning, and mirrors what was already happening when the Commission for New Towns took over, as noted by Hitchcock:

Now in the last seven or eight years ‘planning’ is a word that is disappearing. If they see a hole they fill it up with houses. To hell with whether that is going to lower the general standard of the area, they don’t worry. All around here they have bunged houses in everywhere. (Burton and Hartly, 2003: interview with Joyce Hartley 1995).

The complexity of land management that Dacorum faces is visible to the local residents. Pioneers present at the PAR workshop were vociferous that the council ‘is not doing its job’ (110102-15HH). As revealed previously, neglect and maintenance of the spaces and infrastructure was one of the main reasons residents felt unsafe. In previous years ‘when the park was in its heyday’ (110201-06HH) residents would use it on a daily basis as a main route through the neighbourhood. A group of dog-walkers used to meet in the mornings on the benches, and mothers would walk toddlers to the playground:

Grovehill Park is a beautiful park that hasn’t been maintained for 20 years! Gypsies came and tipped it but they haven’t been back in 10 years! (110131-13HH).

The facilities in Henry Wells Square, such as the youth centre, have also fallen into a state of disrepair. The roof is leaking and the windows are boarded up. It doesn’t

look very inviting. All of these open green spaces are maintained by the local authority, as are the local community facilities. Despite the presence of a strong community action group and fundraising activities in Grovehill, maintenance is still collectively accepted as the Council's responsibility. If shops have litter in front of their stores, residents complain that the Council is not doing their job. Conversely, the perspective from Dacorum is that they are in a 'bind' (100426-02HH), with too much land protected by the ownership of the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) but it still being the responsibility of the local authority to manage it, which makes maintenance difficult. In short, the local authority concedes it cannot keep up with the demand (100426-03HH).

However, the dependence on the local authority can also be interpreted as an aspect of the New Towns legacy, when the Development Corporation was responsible for the management and wellbeing of its residents in a whole-life cycle. Similar to the experience in Harlow, Hemel pioneers had become accustomed to the Social Development Officers that looked after every aspect of the residents' lives. This was both voiced by local residents and implied in the disappointment they showed towards the Council that felt petty and unrealistic. The pioneers mentioned the pivotal role that the Development Corporation played in the early years in strong contrast to the 'terrible job that the Council is doing today... because they just don't care' (110102-15HH). It endorses the image of a large, nurturing and caring state that has understandably been labelled 'paternalistic' as identified in Chapter 5 by the experts. The political effect of this role is visible as the welfare state receded and transferred responsibility to the local authority. However, the effect on the ground is that a long-term dependency has remained, expecting the state to care for residents' needs from the micro (collecting street litter) to the macro (upkeep of parks and green spaces).

7.5 Contemporary growth and expansion: rebranding the old town

Hemel's need to expand reveals a slight tension that corresponds with its long-term aspiration of being a village in the country, as reflected in the contemporary process. Throughout meetings and conversations with the local authority planning and regeneration team there was a continuing desire to discuss Hemel's legacy as part of an older history, predating the 1940s. This came across orally and is manifested subtly in a regeneration strategy that has been prepared called 'Hemel 2020' (DBC, 2009; DBC, 2012).

We have incredible potential [in Hemel Hempstead] to bring the town into the twenty-first century with new jobs in a dynamic industrial area [in Maylands industrial quarter] and increased housing provision... to do so we need to update our image'. (100426-02HH).

A singular top priority for Hemel is to increase its housing provision, but the main barrier to implementing the vision is the residualised land model inherited from the Commission for New Towns, now under the Homes and Communities Agency. Dacorum wants to build new homes and meet the housing targets identified in the 2006 East of England Plan:

Hemel Hempstead is designated as a Key Centre for Development and Change (KCDC) within the adopted East of England Plan and as such is identified as a focus for significant housing (and related) growth. This implies provision of 17,000 new dwellings between 2006 and 2031. This is a minimum figure and will require an increase in annual build rates from an average of 360 dwellings/year to 680 dwellings/year. (DBC, 2009a: 3).

Although these Regional Spatial Strategies are no longer binding, the local authority recognises that by providing new homes, employment capacity will expand thus alleviating the challenges around self-containment. As with Harlow, the physicality of expansion has proved difficult and its procurement uncertain:

We just don't know where to go. The ideal would be to knock down some of the housing built in the 50s that doesn't really work today, but that has all sort of rehousing implications. We somehow need to build into wedges because the available land doesn't belong to us. [Dacorum Local Authority] (100426-02HH).

A growth and expansion feasibility study was conducted in 2009, which assessed three different growth options for Hemel Hempstead. It established that the necessary level of new housing provision exceeded the 'capacity of existing urban areas', so growth would have to occur in the form of urban extension areas on green belt land. The different options for growth were identified as a northern and an eastern option, where development occurs in 'large agglomerations'; or a dispersal option where urban extensions occur at the fringes making it 'easier to develop neighbourhoods with distinctive characters and qualities' (DBC 2009b: 117) as was the New Town planning ideology. In order to connect this contemporary attempt at expansion with original New Town ideas, the self-containment rate would have to be reinforced. Ideally, this would occur by increasing the local employment opportunities and also building new housing within the green wedges to prevent further sprawl. However, as with Harlow, the green

wedges have become protected land and a symbol of New Town typology. This presents an anomaly between respecting the larger New Town function of self-containment, at the expense of densification, or maintaining the design ideology of neighbourhoods separated by green wedges at the expense of a continued expansion. Originally the green wedges were designated to provide flexibility for the local authority in the New Town, but have subsequently become typological manifestations of the New Town planning ideology controlled by the centralised Homes and Communities Agency. This contradicts what Gallant, Andersson and Bianconiet (2006) identified as the purpose of green wedges and suggests they are less ‘management tools’, and more ‘restrictive girdles’ (171). This anomaly can be attributed to planning policy being overridden by design ideology, and demonstrates that the self-containment of New Towns is highly susceptible to this issue due to the scale at which it is managed and governed. It reinforces the critique in Chapter 2 that housing provision is provided in the process of managing a situation that has become out of control, but not necessarily through careful review or monitoring of the past.

One way in which Dacorum has attempted to negotiate the New Town legacy in its Hemel 2020 plan is by rebranding the image of Hemel. By emphasising its ‘old town’ legacy Hemel Hempstead is portrayed as a decidedly country town that protects the Chiltern countryside:

DACORUM 2031: A VISION

Dacorum's Sustainable Community Strategy has been fulfilled. The community recognises Dacorum as a happy, healthy, prosperous and safe place in which to live and work and to visit.

The natural beauty of the Chiltern Hills and the varied character of the countryside is admired and cherished. The countryside is actively managed and supports a healthy local economy and diversity of wildlife. Water quality in the rivers is good. Towns and villages have sufficient water supply. Carbon emissions have been reduced and renewable energy production is sensitive to its surroundings. New woodlands have been planted for the future and the borough looks much greener. Effective use has been made of developed land in the towns and villages, protecting the countryside.

Hemel Hempstead has been transformed through regeneration of the town centre and Maylands Business Park. The town is fulfilling its potential as a sub-regional business centre, important for green enterprise, and is meeting the locally generated demand for new homes.

The market towns of Berkhamsted and Tring and the large villages provide all the necessary services for their communities and surroundings.

The economy is buoyant and all parts of the borough have local employment opportunities, which are both varied and accessible.

Communities are inclusive and healthy. Minority groups are an accepted part of culture and diversity. New homes are affordable and cater for the needs of the population. Open space, facilities and services are accessible. New schools have opened and Hemel Hempstead has a new local hospital. Access to the Watford Health Campus is improved. Public transport is more widely used.

Differences in the character of each place are recognised and valued. Developments have added to character through their design, and sustainable construction is the norm. Special features, such as the Grand Union Canal, remain an active part of the heritage of the borough. The wider historic environment is valued and protected.

Figure 7-f: Dacorum Development Programme

© Source: DBC, 2012, p.8

This extract is taken from the Dacorum Development Programme 2011-2015 (DBC, 2012). The language evokes an image of a town with rural qualities, with no reference to its New Town legacy. Local authority interviewees were persistent in discussing Hemel as a part of the Hertfordshire County within a strategically located business centre; a town whose image had to be changed. These empirical observations suggest the Hemel Vision is as much part of a growth strategy as it is an exercise in rebranding. Despite a careful recognition that the spatial plan of Hemel is indebted to a Modernist physical and social planning ideology, the way forward was not by addressing problems specific to New Towns but as generic spatial challenges. Furthermore, the document manages to avoid using the term 'New Town' throughout, making clear references that it is time to move beyond this legacy:

We now have the opportunity to do things differently and break from the past, unlocking our full potential. This is an opportunity to really make a difference, and one which we will be judged on in years to come. (DDP 2012: 2).

This quote is carefully constructed. It does not discredit the New Towns legacy because ‘break from the past’ is not date-specific. Nonetheless, when read in full, the context is clearly about doing things differently and unlocking the ‘full potential’ that the post-war policy failed to achieve. Correspondingly, the empirical observation that the Council preferred to discuss ‘old Hemel’ was visible in the policy documentation. Enhancing the old town and including it within the Modernist town centre was classified a ‘corporate top priority’ calling for its older heritage to be promoted:

Lead officer	Project name	Purpose	Target 2011-12	Update Jan 2012	Target 2012-13	Beyond	Resources	Comments/links to generic themes
NB	Old Town Enhancement Corporate Top Priority	To enhance the “destination” of the old town as part of the offer for the wider Town Centre	Agree One way scheme and design rationale for environmental improvements and to develop an Old Town	NATHALIE TO UPDATE	Delivery of physical improvements as part of the Old Town improvement Strategy including consideration of Old Town Hall enhancements	Continue to implement Old Town Improvements Strategy.	HCC transport funding DBC Capital Funding - already identified	Sustainability Economic Development through improved investment into the old town

Old Town Enhancement Corporate Top Priority: To enhance the ‘destination’ of the Old Town as part of the offer for the wider Town centre.

Figure 7-g: Corporate top priorities for Dacorum Borough Council

© Source: DBC, 2012, p.19

A declaration of ‘where we want to be’ is provided in the Dacorum Development Programme as a futuristic statement set in 2031 (see Figure 7-f). It describes the town through an interesting combination of words; declaring it a ‘happy, healthy and prosperous place to live, work and play’. Although this was the primary objective of the New Towns ideology for creating a balanced new community, also in line with the recent objectives creating new Sustainable Communities (ODPM, 2003a). The plan makes reference to the existing New Town, and it does so under the guise of the terminology ‘Dacorum’s Sustainable Community Strategy’, neither negating nor endorsing that they are similar typologies. Nevertheless, the future expansion strategies for Hemel are expected to bring ‘conformity with established New Town principles’ by encouraging the continued application of the neighbourhood concept:

THE NEIGHBOURHOOD CONCEPT

A typical residential neighbourhood has about 2,500 people in 1,000-1,100 dwellings. A neighbourhood is usually of sufficient size to require a one form entry primary school.

Key infrastructure needs:

- Primary school (one form entry (1FE)) or access to primary schooling ¹
- Local shop(s) ²
- Community hall/cultural facility
- Access to health facilities and secondary schooling
- Public open space and other green infrastructure (e.g. for biodiversity)
- New highways and links
- Access to passenger transport

Typical land areas

Use	Size (in hectares)	Notes
Housing	25 – 27.5	At a net density of 40 dwellings per hectare
Public open space: - local use - playing fields and district use	3 4	On site On site or suitably located elsewhere
Primary School - one form entry - two form entry	1.4 2.4	

Typical distances to facilities and services ³

Facility	Distance (in metres)
Primary schools	600
Bus stop	400
Local shop	800
Community hall	800
Local park	400
Secondary school	1,500
Health facility	1,000

Figure 7-h: Assessment for alternative growth scenarios for Hemel Hempstead

Source: DBC, 2009a, p.16

This assessment is based on a Core Strategy Paper (2006) prepared by the Centre for Sustainability (C4S), and a consultation carried out jointly with St Albans City and District Council that emphasised the need to maintain the New Towns legacy.⁵⁵

This consultation included a series of principles to guide growth and reinforce the planning and design principles of the original New Town. These were supported by the vast majority of respondents. (Gardener and Brannigan, 2006: 3).

⁵⁵ The original document (Gardener and Brannigan, 2006) was accessed online and has a 'Copyright TRL Limited November 2006' preface that reads: "This report has been prepared for Dacorum Borough Council and St Albans City and District Council is unpublished and should not be referred to in any other document or publication without the permission of Dacorum Borough Council and St Albans City and District Council. The views expressed are those of the author(s) and not necessarily those of Dacorum Borough Council and St Albans City and District Council." Nevertheless it was referred to in the, Assessment of Alternative Growth Scenarios for Hemel Hempstead' (DBC, 2009a) that does not have a Copyright notice.

The consultation explicitly states that any growth should bring conformity with established New Town principles because they were fundamental for the growth of the town and would be considered ‘good planning’ (DBC, 2009a: 14). The neighbourhood unit had to be respected and repeated as a typology so that ‘growth at Hemel Hempstead will predominantly be based on the neighbourhood concept, to reflect its New Town context’ (DBC, 2009: 15). The outcome of the local consultation appears to ratify the PAR results that signal a local identity constructed through New Town imagery and ideology. It provides a contrast from the vernacular noted in the introduction and used by the local authority to represent Hemel Hempstead as a town beyond its New Town heritage. It can be used to illustrate a slight tension in dialogue; between the local perspectives, and the borough-wide vision stemming from planners and the Regeneration team, as to how each side envisions the growth and expansion of Hemel.

7.6 Conclusion: just don’t talk of our New Town legacy’

This chapter uses Hemel Hempstead mark 1 New Town as a second case study. It specifically addresses the subsidiary research question: ‘To what extent can we reconceptualise the New Towns discourse by incorporating local perspectives into the legacy of this 1946 policy?’ and locates the empirical investigation PAR within Grovehill, a neighbourhood unit built in the 1960s. While some similarities with Harlow can be identified, Hemel departs significantly in other respects, a conclusion of which is provided here and linked to the wider discourse established in Chapter 2 and 3.

Unexpectedly the findings in this case study revealed that the neighbourhood unit needed to be discussed under the lens of self-containment more than through suburbanisation. Whereas the neighbourhood unit has traditionally been placed within the Modernist discourse on design and access and become an archetypal manifestation of the era, Hemel has revealed it serves an important purpose in determining the self-containment rate. This is because the neighbourhood itself becomes self-contained from the larger town, and can become independent in its development. By separating residents in clusters of neighbourhoods, the natural complexity of communities as established by Willet (2011) in Chapter 3 is compromised. In Grovehill this was quantified through the Index of Multiple Deprivation (DBC, 2011) that showed Dacorum amongst the most affluent councils in England while simultaneously its New Town neighbourhoods were within the 50 most deprived wards in England. From a qualitative perspective, local residents expressed, as they did in Harlow, feelings of

isolation from the larger town and sadness (occasionally with a hint of resentment) that the neighbourhood was 'unknown' to other Hemel residents. Nevertheless, as Clarence Perry intended when he first designed the neighbourhood unit, it did reinforce a feeling of local community that created strong ties and an active support network for residents within the perimeter. Furthermore the local voices demonstrated their support and affection towards the neighbourhood unit through a persistent determination to construct the image of their neighbourhood as one of a New Town planning ideology, and not as a commuter-suburb.

In Grovehill neighbourhood while the car park is full the shops and streets are nonetheless empty. Dormitory towns and suburbs were the very essence of what New Towns were built to prevent, and the pattern in Grovehill is a lamentable return to what Ebenezer Howard and Patrick Abercrombie wanted to offset. Problems of commuting from the town and also youth loitering lend credence to the characterisation of Grovehill as a by-product of suburbanisation. Yet ultimately it is a stereotype predicated on the shaky assumption that local residents had no 'illusions' in the first place about their town as a planning model for a social realignment. Residents, in fact, are very aware of the New Towns ideology and understand that they were not supposed to be commuter-suburbs, or a dormitory town as Abercrombie predicted when he first designated the site for this mark 1 town. The resident appraisal that 'we are not a commuter belt' is contrary to the evidence, because Grovehill has inevitably become a suburban neighbourhood obeying the characteristics discussed in Chapter 2. This can be interpreted as either the residents romanticising their New Town legacy, or that they have subscribed to a derogatory notion of suburbia. Their argument makes a tacit accusation that suburbanisation is a consequence of the self-containment model due to an economic process (because unemployment has forced people to look for work in London) but not the result of a planning ideology.

Departing from the neighbourhood unit, on a larger scale, the self-containment rate in Dacorum is relatively high (61 per cent) compared to the national standard. Despite the local unemployment problems faced by local residents this indicates that residents do not leave the town if they change employment. This anomaly can be attributed to the housing stock that was already available in Hemel when it was designated in 1946. By 1961 Hemel had 21 per cent of owner-occupied homes, in comparison to Harlow's 6 per cent. Not only was home ownership an option from the outset, but it added diversity to housing in both design and tenure. By having variation

in the housing provision, Hemel has not suffered from too much newness or sameness and, contrary to the expert critique established in Chapter 5, it is not viewed by residents as one large council estate. Relatedly, Right-to-Buy was not a discussion sustained with the local residents. By 1981, shortly after the policy was facilitated, Hemel had owner-occupation of 42 per cent whereas in Harlow this figure was 23 per cent. Linking this finding to Chapter 2, it indicates that home ownership is a fundamental pillar in the redistribution of wealth and shows how the philanthropist example of managing a population to suit the landed class should have been more critically addressed by the Reith Committee to define the terms of a balanced community.

Issues around design-driven stereotypes were equally uncontroversial from a local perspective. Residents were pleased with the quality and design of their homes, which was admittedly not as innovative as Harlow's housing. This was emphasised even more in this case study because the Hemel Hempstead Development Corporation (HHDC) overrode Jellicoe's original master-plan and made an express provision for less radical housing. On the one hand this substantiates Etherton's (120130-06G) assessment that New Towns were a conservative model not illustrative of the Modernist discourse. On the other hand it demonstrates the degree to which academic debates in the Architectural Association impacted the development of New Town planning. Whereas Hemel Hempstead provides a more modest (uncontroversial, perhaps) vision of the New Town as opposed to Harlow, it is revealing that both case studies were designed by leading Architectural Association academics. Whereas Gibberd's master-plan of Harlow was realised, Hemel's was modified by its local Development Corporation. The only aspect of Jellicoe's view to have remained unmodified was the Water Gardens which is a local landmark of interest considered emblematic of New Towns design. The appraisal suggests that design-driven stereotypes are formed particularly in relation to housing, because that is where local residents want less innovation, whereas public spaces can be both experimental and innovative without carrying the weight of a negative stereotype.

The difference between the Borough Council and the residents in terms of how they wish to discuss the history of the town is important to the understanding of the New Towns experiment. It is sustained by the local authority's determination to discuss Hemel Hempstead as a village amongst the Chilterns and its careful construction of policy to (1) avoid New Town terminology, and (2) reassure the reader that its priority is to protect the Chiltern Hills countryside. This perception is challenged by the pioneer anecdotes that are proud of their post-war arrival into Hemel, and the fact the New

Town significantly improved the quality of their lives by offering them ‘good value for money’ and ‘houses with a nice garden’.

Lastly, it was difficult to discuss Hemel Hempstead with the local authority as a New Town, in terms of its planning heritage. Officers were keen to discuss Hemel Hempstead’s growth and targets by keeping a sharp focus on the future of the town. To discuss Hemel Hempstead as part of the New Town policy was difficult: the conversation would be led to pre-1947 when Hemel was a village amongst the Chilterns. A local distinction exists between the areas that predate 1947, referred to locally as ‘old Hemel’ versus ‘new Hemel’. However, a recurring trend throughout the bottom-up enquiry is that local residents are more willing (and interested) to talk about Hemel’s post-war history, in contrast to the local authority that sees the New Town as an ‘episode’ to be brushed aside. The last section of this chapter on growth and expansion reveals the difficulties in planning for the future without a thorough review of the past.

The local authority does not own the wedges of land between neighbourhood units and this has created complex ownership and maintenance problems for Dacorum. It is not necessarily an endorsement of the critique established in Chapter 5 that compulsory purchase was an undesirable planning choice. Instead, it suggests land purchased through CPO has undergone various stock transfers leading to untenable circumstances for the current local authority. This has been detrimental for the management of land and public green spaces, and also for its future growth and expansion.

The local authority has identified a need to provide new housing stock, but the planning characteristics of Hemel have made growth and expansion particularly difficult. From two principal assessments, expansion will either occur in large agglomerations or as a dispersal option at the fringes. As one of the last New Town neighbourhoods, Grovehill is a good example that the second option would only perpetuate the problem of new neighbourhoods becoming commuter-suburbs. However, this realisation would only be possible if a review was undertaken to assess past planning decisions and how they have affected Dacorum’s contemporary process of growth. This is precisely the challenge of this review, because new large-scale housing areas continue to be planned without a comprehensive assessment of previous housing policy.

Chapter 8 Conclusion

This thesis presents an alternative conceptualisation and a counter narrative for understanding the chronic problems around housing provision in England. Through planning, we have historically tried to manage these chronic problems of housing supply without a concerted effort to learn from the past by using and integrating local experiences of past policies and their effects. A principal objective throughout this thesis was to dissect the biased misrepresentation of the New Towns programme of 1946 to 1976 and in doing so reveal some useful perspectives on the continuous, yet never fully realised, attempts at building new communities in England. To achieve this, a primary research question was formulated:

- (1) Given the ongoing crisis in housing provision, how can a renewed study of the New Towns Programme help rethink planning's ideological challenges in building new communities today?

The first question would then be augmented by the following secondary research question:

- (2) To what extent can we reconceptualise the New Towns discourse by incorporating local perspectives into the legacy of this 1946 policy?

The first task required an exposition of the two larger themes embedded in planning: housing and politics. This was followed by an exploration of the contested narrative between them with regards to ideology and crisis (Chapter 2). To address the primary research question required two components: first, an examination of the contemporary legacy of the English New Town (Chapter 3); and second, an assessment of the specific stereotypes that have been created (and perpetuated) by experts regarding New Towns which led to their characterisation as unbalanced communities (Chapter 5). The secondary research question accepts that New Towns have been, for the most part, documented through an expert discourse that has created a specific and limited understanding of this post-war policy. It therefore questions, through empirical research, to what extent our historical understanding of New Towns is challenged once local perspectives are incorporated (Chapter 6 and 7). This secondary research question turns a conceptual problem established by Sandercock (2003) and Willett (2011) into a virtue. It provides an argument in favour of greater Participatory Action Research (PAR) and a mixed methods approach when evaluating broad-based and programmatic planning

interventions such as New Towns. This will be the focus of the first discussion in this Conclusion. The second discussion in this concluding chapter will address the personal and professional preoccupation established at the outset of the thesis, by drawing wider conclusions on the relationship between political ideology and housing problems, and its possible implications for the future of planning.

8.1 Rethinking New Towns by integrating local knowledge

The empirical observations show that the failure of New Towns is part misrepresentation and part truth. Although mark 1 New Towns do face some serious challenges in 2014, they did not actually suffer a downfall other than through media and political representation. Chapters 5, 6 and 7 reveal this dialectic between the expert views and the local perspective. I engineered this engagement of views, particularly in terms of the local voices, in order to provide a human dimension; acknowledging what it might mean to have been a pioneer of the New Towns programme and witness its development, but also to reconceptualise the New Towns discourse by incorporating local perspectives into the legacy of this 1946 policy. Instead of concluding with the case study findings, a thematic discussion is more revealing. A principal argument established in the Introduction to this thesis is that planning is trapped between political ideology and chronic problems of housing supply. Three critical lenses were employed to test this argument in relation to English mark 1 New Towns:

- (1) Self-containment (Structural issues)
- (2) Newness and sameness (Typological aspirations)
- (3) Governance (Political ideology)

Using these lenses, to what extent can the local perspectives nuance the New Towns discourse? Furthermore, does applying a Participatory Action Research (PAR) and mixed methods approach provide a methodological contribution to evaluate broad-based and programmatic planning interventions?

8.1.1 Structural issues: the bane of self-containment

Self-containment has surfaced as a particularly complex and thought-provoking discourse that has had a lasting impact at the local and regional scale. At the local scale, it has created difficult dependency issues for residents and a mono-skilled population

unable to adapt to changes in the socio-economic structure. While structural theories characterise the New Towns as a corporation suburb, where working-class households rented through the local authority via council estates, it is closer to an industrial suburb where blue-collar residential areas were dependent on their sites of employment. Clapson (2010) reviews these suburbs (identified by Harris) as:

Industrial suburbs [are] those suburbs that sprang up near to factories and other sites of employment, where a purely suburban residential tone was less in evidence, but which afforded their inhabitants some aspects of suburban living. While often mixed in population, industrial suburbs were more likely to be characterized by blue-collar households. (Harris cited in Clapson, 2010: 3).

Drawing attention to this distinction is important in that it allows a re-theorisation of why self-containment proved to be a bane for the New Town model, and why it should not be used as a yardstick to measure sustainability, as currently appears to be the case for Dacorum Borough Council.⁵⁶ I revealed this distinction with the use of the anecdotal stories of local residents, as they acknowledged that their bond to the New Town was built and strengthened more through the employer than through the town itself. Linking employment with housing was a primary objective of the self-containment model (Reith 1945), so whilst this dependency was inevitable, in the long term it was highly unsustainable. When the main source of employment is confined to an industrial area, local residents become vulnerable to wider economic changes within the country. To find employment outside of their industrial zone meant finding employment outside of their New Town. This implied either (1) a relocation of the entire family or (2) commuting to work outside of the New Town. When the majority of both Hemel and Harlow residents opted for the latter alternative, their neighbourhoods transformed into commuter towns against their will. The implication of this local historiography is two-fold. In the short term, New Towns proved successful as a consequence of having selectively housed new industry and the skilled working class from London. However, in the long term, the balance between industry and workforce became vulnerable to structural changes, compromising the New Towns stability. In the first instance, diversification of industry is not evident (although this was an explicit New Town objective) and has perpetuated a low-skilled workforce. In the second instance, it has

⁵⁶ In the case of Dacorum, as a measure of sustainability; the higher the self-containment rate, the more successful the town.

created an overwhelming reliance on the car for travelling and commuting because of the inefficiency of transport links in the New Towns.

At a regional level, the self-containment model relied on a managed economy to correct the imbalance of employment and contain conurbation growth (Hall 1973). This proved to be a decisive problem for the New Town industrial zones because it supported company plants but not their headquarters, and this had a profound impact on the local decision-making process (or lack of).⁵⁷ The lack of local decision-making made self-containment very limited in its industrial structure. Development through clustering appeared to be a viable shift away from the managed economy that would have enabled New Towns to adapt. However, the main barrier to shifting from a plant model to one of clustering was that towns had to break down their existing self-containment barriers, and this was both controversial and problematic within Borough and District Councils.

The barriers preventing adaptation and change appear to be more tied to the industrial and economic challenges of breaking away from self-containment than to the physical issues of spatial design and planning. Chapter 2 identified that although this notion is attributed to Garden City and New Town ideals, self-containment has its roots in the early philanthropist experiments of housing. The five per cent philanthropists created a precursor to New Town planning whereby if new settlements were tied to an industry, the housing would be easier to manage and control. This highlights an important reinterpretation of the precursor to the New Town programme. While the Garden City emphasised social ideas of owner-occupation and home ownership as a means of wealth redistribution, these remained largely ignored, because party politics and philanthropists' interests required housing to be controlled, but not redistributed. It was the ideology of the early philanthropists that formed the basis of the planning response; this suggests that planning, from its inception, was underwritten by an ill-conceived purpose.

Nonetheless, the New Town programme championed self-containment as a means of invigorating job creation and employment at a local level (Osborn, 1919; Reith, 1945; Schaffer, 1970; Aldridge, 1979), so why would industrial and economic challenges present themselves as a barrier? As part of the expert interviews in Chapter 5,

⁵⁷ Companies in London were limited in their permissions for manufacturing units when the New Towns were set up, so they might have set up a manufacturing factory in Harlow or another New Town but they would not have set their Headquarters in the New Town.

Steven Ward argues that this inconsistency is because New Towns were modelled on the Garden City created by Howard (1898) but executed as statist project, more as a way of managing the metropolitan area as opposed to creating the Social City that Howard intended (120221-10G). While Howard had very clearly expressed a larger vision for his Garden Cities as interconnected nodes making a regional social city, with the connection made explicit in his diagrams, self-containment was never part of the Garden City deal, and the notion was actually introduced in the London plan by Abercrombie as a way to manage London's growing population. This has since created barriers to land-use in the planning system that have been difficult to break away from.

But is it fair to say that self-containment hampered the growth of New Towns and their ability to innovate? They were, after all, towns that were connected to London and located only within a 20 mile radius. Were they as inflexible as New Town literature suggests? The answer to this is both yes and no. If the New Towns had provided significant transport infrastructure that joined the towns across the region and also connected to London, self-containment would probably not have such a negative legacy. Nevertheless, the understanding of self-containment is markedly different in Harlow, where it has become the hallmark of a bygone era and an unwise planning ideal. However, in Hemel, the Borough Council uses the self-containment rate as an indicator of success.

An essential feature of the Greater London Plan relied on the New Towns being self-contained entities for both housing and employment. However, the empirical chapters demonstrated that this concept was inappropriately applied across different scales and sectors; the housing estate, the neighbourhood unit, the industrial zone, the transport network and the South East region as a whole. Using self-containment at different scales has led to an unconnected and inflexible matrix of development. Significantly, a demographic for self-containment was also created that has resulted in a homogenous population profile. The empirical case studies also revealed the difficulties that arise when public policy is driven by population projections. Whereas creating a balanced community was a single New Town objective, it relied too heavily on achieving balance through class structure, overlooking demographic balance. The effect, sixty years later, is an ageing population and an unappealing town structure for young people who are forced to move out. This demographic imbalance questions to what extent population and demographic projections should be used in the formulation of planning policies for future communities.

8.1.2 Design and access: newness and sameness

I sought to evaluate why the innovation in architecture styles and urban design has been portrayed as a moment of decline in Modernity in Britain. Too much newness (in its housing) and sameness (of its urban design) is the overriding perception of the mark 1 New Towns. But style is subjective and while some experts claim there was too much innovation and experimentation, others claimed there was not enough. The latter are represented by the vanguards of Modernist debates led by the Architectural Association in the 1950s, and through the influential media coverage of Richard Waite, Editor of the *Architectural Review*. In part, his scorn for the mediocre expression of Modernism visible in the New Towns typology led to various publications questioning the merit of New Towns, as early as 1952. The debate around their design quickly became tarnished with pathological representations of New Town Blues and prairie planning, as a direct reference to the characterisation of New Towns as nothing more than suburban developments. Debates in the House of Commons demonstrate the extent to which politicians were influenced by media coverage. Although no direct reference is made to suburbanisation or New Town Blues, these themes influenced how government assimilated the legacy of New Town construction.

Another explanation offered in Chapter 2 is that the period of suburbanisation during the interwar years led to a very particular social aspiration around state-built housing versus housing built by private developers. As municipal housing programmes were facilitated, suburbia in Britain was a combination of both privately built housing that came in a diverse range of styles (traditional being the preference), and state-led housing experiments that tended to be monotonous with housing that appeared the same throughout. The differentiation between privately built housing and public-sector construction led to a simplified understanding that housing built with too much newness or sameness must be state-owned or a corporation suburb.

Interestingly, in Hemel and to a lesser degree in Harlow, the community recognises that their neighbourhood has appropriated characteristics of a commuter-town akin to the process of suburbanisation. However, there is a dominant recognition that they do not want to become suburbia because their New Town was specifically trying to prevent the sprawl of dormitory suburbs. Any similarity between the two typologies has been associated to problems around mobility, but not problems of New Town design. On the contrary, the local residents view their neighbourhoods as a mixed-use, live-work place with a strong sense of neighbourliness, which could be

mistaken for contemporary idealism around place-making and sustainable lifestyles. This typological aspiration and characterisation of their environment is very interesting in that it demonstrates how local communities can substantiate and appropriate certain planning ideologies, and are not swayed by academic findings or popular representations.

If New Town residents have accepted its typology, what is the reason for their stigmatisation? One dominant explanation offered by experts is that the British population is essentially anti-Modern and cannot appreciate the sameness in repetition of street layouts, or the newness of innovation in its housing stock. But this is a gross misrepresentation because amongst a large part of the population, Modernist architecture has been both popular and very influential in other aspects of British life. As one interview was conducted, this question was addressed in none other than the foyer of the Royal Festival Hall (RFH) on the South Bank in London, and the interviewee pointed out the success of the building even though it was a midweek morning:

Of course where we are sitting [RFH] is a reminder of that whole time. The festival of Britain of 1951 was very contemporary with the start of the New Towns, and public buildings in New Towns were just like this. You know the style is very clear. (120130-06G).

The Southbank complex has proven to be adaptable in many ways (in its design features, planning, and Southbank regeneration as a whole) and a public success. It mirrored the type of architecture built in the New Towns, particularly the town centre and neighbourhood centres. An unexpected revelation is that the language of the New Towns when expressed in the inner city such as the London Southbank feels reasonable and adequate. However, when this language is used in the rural South East, it conflicts with the idyllic image that the countryside is a place for cottage life and for a Conservative-voting population. The New Towns, by virtue of their pioneers and its spirit of progression countered this very basic ideal. Is it fair to then conclude that New Towns were not given the chance to flourish and adapt because these were Conservative areas and Modernity had no place in the green belt areas of England?

Within Hemel, this tension between the rural image of a village in the Chilterns as opposed to an urban town is all the more evident through the exposed dialectic between their policy statements and the denial of New Town references. Hemel's emergent local policy is trying to invigorate the 'old Hemel' image in a pursuit to move

away from its New Town legacy. Nonetheless, an overview of Hemel demonstrates it is a successful and flourishing example of a New Town, and this is supported by local enquiry with its residents. One distinction between Hemel and Harlow is that Hemel was designated in a village with a pre-existing population of 20,000 residents. This has allowed the New Town to develop in a very specific way, making allowance for a natural distribution of residents once professional or economic progression had been made. Instead of migrating out of the New Town as a status signifier, in Hemel, status was achieved by moving elsewhere within the existing town. This lends credence to the view that home ownership was seen as a personal wealth accumulator (Malpass, 2010) and less so that moving out of the New Town was a symbol of progression. In fact, people were moving out of Harlow in search of home ownership opportunities. Hemel's success can also be attributed to the design-driven stereotypes that were uncontroversial through a localised perspective. Residents were pleased with the quality and design of their homes, which was not as innovative as Harlow's housing. This is because the Hemel Hempstead Development Corporation (HHDC) made an express provision for less radical housing and overrode Jellicoe's original master-plan. In Hemel, these less radical and less innovative architectural styles of housing matched local expectations of typological aspirations.

One could argue that Hemel is not a New Town in its entirety, but more of an expanded town with the ideology and planning mechanism of the mark 1 New Towns. The concern is that by labelling all towns the same despite considerable variegations within each of the 22 New Towns, stereotypes have been created across the board, and are not necessarily relevant or applicable on a case-by-case basis. For the sake of clarity, it is perhaps more accurate to say that the New Town as a singular typology does not exist. By labelling twenty-two towns that have spanned a thirty-year history all the same, we legitimise the misconception that it is the same project.

8.1.3 Political ideology: re-scaling governance

The governance of New Towns is a key feature in its characterisation as an inappropriate, out-dated, administrative model. This is the result of a convoluted history of governance models that has devolved responsibility and decision-making from local to district, regional and central authorities; from a state-led Development Corporation to third sector agencies such as Housing Associations, and in so doing, affecting the planning response. A common misrepresentation of the New Town is that Development

Corporations were dismissed and considered inadequate because they were paternalistic, being controlled directly from central government and having no direct representation of local interests. They illustrate the conflicting ideology of a local versus a central state, and allow us to trace contemporary issues about governance to a tangible agency. A critical debate is unearthed in Chapter 5 from the House of Commons archives dating to 1956, revealing that concerns about New Town policy and its continuation were more a question of political ideology regarding housing than a discussion about the success or failure of the programme or its Development Corporations. While Labour believed housing could only be supplied from central government as a matter of public service, the Conservatives argued that housing should be supplied by the private market and driven by local demands.

The debates unveiled in Chapter 5 reveal how private developers were able to partner with New Town Development Corporations much earlier than is commonly acknowledged. It also demonstrates that as an organisational mechanism the Development Corporations coped with changes within the welfare state and were able to partner with the private sector in clear, legible agreements. Developers profited from the notion of self-containment and from the arrival of the car as they realised that the New Town programme was advantageous for the private sector. 1954 is revealed as a critical turning point for New Towns policy as Macmillan began the 'grand design for housing' (Malpass, 2010) leading to the eventual degrading of planning controls witnessed in the 1980s. This allows us to challenge the traditional understanding that the New Towns programme declined in the 1970s under Margaret Thatcher. The programme was being challenged as early as the 1950s despite its ability to assimilate change and to partner with the private sector. If the New Town programme was capable of adapting to the structural changes, then what is it about this policy that made it so unbearable to successive governments?

Whilst there is an accepted consensus over the welfare state and how it moved away from public service provision, housing was still believed to be a key public service that only the state could deliver. The New Town programme provides a clear illustration that even the Conservative party recognised this benefit. Despite a brief pause in New Town construction during the 1960s, it resumed the New Town programme in the 1970s because it was the only realistic policy whereby population projections could be addressed. One interviewee revealed in Chapter 6 that financially this is not a burden on the state, because the repayment of housing is made by the rents

returned, and the state only finances the capital investment of buying land.⁵⁸ As a consequence of the withdrawal of the state from housing provision, the New Towns are locked into an unsustainable conundrum of nowhere to grow: private owners (predominantly large house builders) have land-banked the periphery of New Towns, and other public-sector land (such as Harlow's green wedges) has become sacrosanct in the planning system. Furthermore, the issue of accepting housing targets has become a political dispute amongst local wards, and is now left to the discretion of the district. Ultimately any construction will depend on a concerted effort of collaboration between local authorities, district councils and national housing targets. This begs the question: To what extent is the building of new settlements at the mercy of political administration, and less to do with social or design ideology? This thesis reveals that land-banking is a far greater concern currently dominating housing provision. This is an interesting new route for further research, especially since it emerges that a centralised planning system abetted by the state is the best place to kick-start housing provision and yet the state still seeks to devolve responsibility to a discretionary and localised district framework.

Klein (1978:181) asked if new planned communities would work if urban policy truly supported their development. This research has demonstrated that when New Towns were supported by the comprehensive planning system they were successful at achieving the ambition defined by the Reith committee and Abercrombie's Greater Plan for London. However, as the comprehensive system was dismantled, through the instances explored herein, New Towns were left in a vacuum and became vulnerable to socio-economic and political changes. There is much affinity with Klein's (1978) concern and the research suggests that the discourse should now be broadened to understand in what way urban policy fails to support the development of new communities.

8.2 Political ideology and housing supply: implications for planning thought

In conclusion, this thesis has argued that understanding the New Towns programme through a lens of local perspectives provides significant insight into the wider debate of building new communities. I used evidence from experts and local

⁵⁸ This interviewee likens this to the way in which the state would subsidise building motorways.

residents to further debates on what makes communities appear unbalanced (or unsustainable) and provide a re-conceptualisation of the English New Town. What are the implications of the tensions between political ideology and housing supply for the wider questions regarding planning thought established in the Introduction?

The diminished provision in housing leads to problems of affordability, thereby creating two separate but interconnected housing crises (Overman, 2011). This research deals specifically with the question of provision. While Gallent and Tewdwr-Jones (2007) explore housing and planning as a parallel relationship, this research suggests planning has had a more subservient role. It has continuously reacted or responded to the crisis at hand by creating legislation as a means to manage or control the housing situation. An important revelation to understand the tension between housing and planning can be attributed to the way in which planning was born. Early political debates leading up to the 1909 Act were not centred around the argument that there was a housing crisis, but instead questioned the appropriate role of state because, essentially slum dwellings were a problem of the undeserving poor (Chamberlain, 1885). Focusing the debate on one of ideology and not crisis has subsequently led to a relentless and yet unfulfilling attempt to build new communities throughout the twentieth century. However, the building of these new communities has been used to address two very different needs. On the one hand, to increase housing provision through large-scale development to abate the housing crisis. On the other hand, to *promote* the building of new communities, some would argue as a tactical tool of political rhetoric, using symbols to define it: *How communities should live, organise themselves and be governed*. Both of these needs rely on planning and its normative framework. However, while the first has quantifiable objectives, the latter has a flexible objective that is frequently vague and continuously evolving to reflect party-politics. The realisation that planning is defended for what it symbolises and not what it achieves (Wildavsky, 1973:78) makes Wildavsky's critique highly relevant for contemporary discourse.

This is not to argue against the idea of building new communities because they can provide an opportunity for physical and social reconstruction and the research *does* make an appeal to rethink a few dominant characteristics of planning thought.

An ongoing critique of planning questions whether it could be considered a discipline or ad-hoc governmental decision-making (Wildavsky, 1973:127-153) prompted by its role as an activity of the state (Reade, 1987; Wildavsky, 1973). As the welfare state receded, political rhetoric and media representation encouraged the New

Towns programme to be considered a rupture in English planning history, a toxic term (Devine, 2012:120117-05H) and a dirty word (The Economist, 2014). New Towns have been theorised as a centralised and statist programme, with little relevance in contemporary spatial planning policy. A policy advisor to the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) summarised it clearly during an interview:

The New Towns programme depends, really, on national government. Identifying what they see as a suitable location for development and designating land for that purpose in a particular locality and then purchasing that land at present use value- and then using the uplift in value that accrued from the fact that it's now a site for development as opposed to arable land or whatever it was previously partly as a means of delivering the infrastructure necessarily to support a settlement. Now, if you have an overriding policy objective [of Localism] that localities themselves need to take responsibilities for growth and development then you can't really use the New Towns model in any way. (120126-04G).

This policy advisor is pessimistic about the realpolitik of English local government. He is also quick to disregard New Towns as a viable spatial planning policy for creating new communities by devolving responsibility back to local government. He leaps back one hundred years to the model that Howard proposed for his Garden Cities; of local responsibility and community trusts gaining from the betterment value of land (Howard 1898). Whether the policy advisor forgot that the New Towns programme was actually modelled on this Garden City ideal, or whether avoiding the connections simplifies the discourse of how new communities should be built, is an interpretation open to the reader. I argue that this quotation illustrates why we never learn, and that although a cleaner, leaner, untarnished vision is offered by returning to the Garden City model, it is counterproductive when there is a wealth of evidence and experience to be gained from the New Town model. In the Introduction to this thesis I asked in what way, and why, New Towns have become interpreted as *rupture* in planning history. Answering this inevitably widens the discourse to the story of planning. Phelps suggests in his book, 'An anatomy of sprawl' (2012) that the British planning system is unable to deal with major issues, including housing. This is because British planning has never been modern, and has instead muddled through policy initiatives. Nevertheless, in the short time-frame (1946-1976) when the system embraced radicalism in its policy initiation, and collective interests overrode private interests, there were quantifiable achievements: particularly in house-building. This thesis has demonstrated that New Towns are very different, and should not be considered collectively. As revealed by Harlow and Hemel, even within the same marks (of 1, 2, or 3) there are significant differences. They have

been victimised into the image of a statist project when in fact evidence (spanning a thirty year period) shows how they managed to evolve into different kinds of towns and were flexible models capable of assimilating change. The belief that these were large, soulless housing estates has been a view promoted by a media coverage that was too quick to give its verdict on the programme and too eager to use New Towns as a way of speaking out against central government. As the New Town became a contested political issue, and even when the programme demonstrated success, its virtues were rejected. If the faith/bias that politicians have in planning as having an outcome in social behaviour (Wildavsky 1973) made them more concerned in what planning achieves and less in what it symbolises, then the New Towns model would not be considered a rupture and instead it would be a valuable example for evaluation and future reference.

This leads us to the question of *how* we evaluate and study planning. As a study, housing provision is embedded in the field of town planning, urban design and urban geography, nested in planning history. This is problematic when trying to understand the history of new communities because of inherent problems that make monitoring of past planning policies impossible (Reade, 1987), coupled with the fact that planning as a sub-field of history does not exist (Sandercock, 2003: 38). In other words, planning cannot learn from the past and is instead studied within the planning profession, which is generally uncritical of the role of planning or the planner, omitting both diversity and critical perspective (Sandercock, 2003). Or, as this thesis has demonstrated, criticism has been so focused on the outcome of the 70s and 80s planning policies that the New Towns have been poorly appraised. These interconnected critiques (Reade, 1987; Sandercock, 2003) establish an urgent need to rethink how we evaluate past goal-driven policy programmes of building new communities. By asserting the importance of history to the planning process of housing provision, perhaps we can begin to understand not only why history appears to repeat itself, but also how this can be avoided in the future.

The specific methods of Participatory Action-Research (PAR) and case studies inquiry were selected above other data-gathering techniques because they enabled real engagement with the local community of New Towns. By recording the anecdotes of original pioneers, a critical perspective emerged that allowed me to understand the planning process through the eyes of the local residents instead of the professional planner. This acknowledges Hayden's (1995) concern of how experience can reach scholars and professionals or vice versa (*ibid.*:12):

A socially inclusive urban landscape history can become the basis for new approaches to public history and urban preservation.... A new inclusive urban landscape history can also stimulate new approaches to urban design, encouraging designers, artists and writers, as well as citizens, to contribute to an urban art of creating a heightened sense of place in the city.

Working specifically with mark 1 pioneers and local voices generated important insights not available in the existing New Town literature. The New Town pioneers provided a nuanced understanding of their town, free from the weight of judgement; of retrospective analysis; and of the desire to create a linear narrative. Doing so emphasised Willett's (2011) stance on the complexity of communities and how they provide important human knowledge that should be incorporated in their understanding of future planning processes. It also presented a challenge in terms of writing up this thesis. How could I present this research in a way that was faithful to the complexity, clarity and honest reflections that New Town pioneers provided?

This concern prompted the use of Sandercock's (2003) principle of storytelling as a way of presenting planning history when presenting my findings. According to Sandercock, history is a construct of storytelling affected by two important factors. The first factor is 'time itself', which (in passing) provides new perspective; whereas the second is the ability of scholars to 'revise historical knowledge investing it with contemporary meaning' (Sandercock, 2003:37). For Sandercock, existing histories have led to what she calls the 'noir' side of planning that omits both diversity and critical perspective. This noir side has occurred because 'the mainstream planning historian has typically seen their subject as the profession and the object as describing and (and celebrating) its emergence' (Sandercock 2003: 40). Whilst this thesis does not attempt to re-write planning history, it relies on this critique as a guide for connecting the mixed methods to a narrative enquiry. Sir Peter Hall (1980) identified that planning served three sets of actors; politicians; bureaucracy; and community. An important contribution this thesis makes is that 'pioneers' should be included as a fourth actor. Throughout this research pioneers have set themselves apart as a group with vested interests and local-knowledge that is quite different to the overall community. Pioneers are the local residents who are directly affected by planning initiatives and can provide specificity of both their impact and legacy. Whilst 'community' as an actor is important, there is a differentiation that needs to be qualified.

This Conclusion establishes that the two research questions of this thesis have a two-fold implication making an significant contribution to knowledge. In the first

instance, the problems established in the Introduction provided an opportunity to apply Participatory Action Research (PAR) and mixed methods to an evaluation of broad-based and programmatic planning interventions like New Towns. This contribution overcomes what Reade (1987) considers the principle failure of planning: that monitoring is impossible as long as planning is an activity of the state. Despite Sandercock's (2003) critiques, if methodological evaluation incorporates community knowledge to the planning process, then planning history could be reoriented to describe the emergence of planning as an activity of the 'activator' and its 'ordinary people' (Kynaston 2008:22). Furthermore, we could invest Wildavsky's 1973 title with contemporary meaning so that it reads:

'If planning does not learn from the past maybe it does not have a future.'

Reframing Wildavsky's (1973) title underlines the two pressing concerns that underpin this research. Firstly, that the ambition of building new communities should not be used as a smokescreen for trying to abate the ongoing housing problems. Secondly, that planning needs to distance its purpose and role as an activity of the state, to ensure its framework is not used as a tactical tool for spatialising political rhetoric.

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1965	New Towns Act, 1965 (consolidated from the New Towns Act 1946 and 1959)
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1976	Development Land Tax
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2008	Climate Change Act
2011	Localism Act

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Appendices

Appendix A: Memorandum of Agreement between The Architecture Foundation and Dacorum Borough Council

Source: Produced by researcher in conjunction with The Architecture Foundation

<p>A MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING</p> <p>between</p> <p>Dacorum Borough Council</p> <p>and</p> <p>The Architecture Foundation</p> <p>regarding</p> <p>Re-Inventing the British Neighbourhood Centre for the 21st Century:</p> <p>Grovehill Design Charette at Hemel Hempstead</p> <p>Putting Localism into action</p>	<p>1. INTRODUCTION</p> <p>This Memorandum of Understanding sets out the principles underpinning the project Reinventing the British Neighbourhood Centre for the 21st Century at Grovehill, Hemel Hempstead and related activities by Dacorum Borough Council (DBC) and The Architecture Foundation (AF).</p> <p>The researcher for this project is Helena Rivera (HR) who will act as coordinator between the AF and DBC (see <i>Roles & Responsibilities</i>). Helena is acting on behalf of and with full support of The Architecture Foundation.</p> <p>2. PURPOSE OF THE MEMORANDUM</p> <p>The purpose of the Memorandum of Understanding is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure effective co-operation between DBC and AF by using transparent processes and guidance.• Clarify roles, responsibilities, timelines and finance for the project.• Ensure innovative design ideas for Grovehill community centre and test what localism means in action. <p>3. PROJECT DESCRIPTION</p> <p>Putting Localism in action at Grovehill Neighbourhood Centre: This is a design charrette for the sustainable redevelopment of Grovehill Neighbourhood Centre based on parameters established by the local community. This community consultation and design charrette will become part of a post-doctoral research collaboration that investigates how the British New Town should be redefined for the 21st Century. This is a project the AF has been collaborating in since 2006 together with Kingston University and is funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC).</p> <p>The design charrette will seek design ideas for a strategy that redevelops Grovehill neighbourhood centre into an exemplar sustainable new community hub using retrofitting & infill-physically, socially and economically- as a process. The strategy will be developed prior to the charrette through community consultation. The aim of this consultation is to involve the local community in defining the parameters and setting a brief for the redevelopment of their neighbourhood centre.</p>
<p>Helena Rivera is the researcher on this Collaborative Doctorate Award and is using the Ideas competition as a means for collecting empirical evidence for research. The specific points of interest are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To work with a local residents & stakeholders group to help identify their needs and establish the site provisions. This will test bottom-up planning procedures• To discover local and tangible solutions to sustainability. This will help develop a long-term user-driven sustainability programme. A resident's Agenda 21.• To identify how the role of the community neighbourhood centre has changed within a historical context of the English New Towns (towns built under the New Towns Act of 1946).• To assist the design charrette and act as an 'interpreter' between the Practices and the local residents & stakeholders. <p>Deliverables</p> <p>It is expected that the design charrette will make provision for the deliverables established through local community consultation. Some or all of the deliverables might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 200 housing units (a mixture of houses and self-contained flats).• A community centre (with a programme of activities & use).• Commercial space (with a link to the main town centre of Hemel Hempstead which is physical and/or programmatic).• Health centre.• New public space.• Energy-generating infrastructure.• A concept strategy for Grovehill Neighbourhood as a whole that orientates pedestrians, cyclists and vehicle navigation towards the neighbourhood centre.• An appropriate landscape design strategy.• An ecological conservation strategy that will enhance and preserve the biodiversity of Grovehill and its 'greenbelt'.• A suggestion of 'green points' that will be added to a long list. These are points of action that will steer the quality of the green content for the project. They are real and precise sustainable construction deliverables usually with an ecological focus, a set number of which have to be used by contractors. The aim is to apply small-scale sustainable measures that bring diversity to the project and flexibility (through choice) to the contractor. It is a successful initiative developed by B01, the City of Tomorrow in Malmö, Sweden).• Youth provision• A Strategy open to new technology as it becomes available <p>Ideology</p> <p>It is expected that the design ideas will acknowledge the significant role that the community neighbourhood centres had in the 1950's New Town planning ideology and will propose a</p>	<p>contemporary take on the notion of a neighbourhood centre, asking pertinent questions about its current function both spatially and socially.</p> <p>The charrette will be looking for innovative reconfiguration of the existing site that reflects shifts in today's lifestyle, household configurations, work-home-leisure patterns and community needs. Whilst identifying and nurturing what already works well on the site, it should challenge the use of existing space and enable the site to become a new focus of the community.</p> <p>Localism</p> <p>Hands-on and sustained community involvement is at the very heart of this project. The AF sees this as a unique opportunity in which to test ideas of the Big Society promoted by Central Government with specificity in notions of Localism. Some of the key issues it would like to address, based on the 'Communities and Local Government Committee on the Government's Plans for Localism and Decentralisation' held on November 9, 2010, are:</p> <p>Localism and decentralisation can strengthen government at both the national and local levels.</p> <p>Community involvement and decentralisation to local communities should be seen by local authorities as a means of strengthening local representative democracy rather than as opposed to it. There are many difficult issues to be faced in decentralisation to local communities, which are likely to limit its development. Their potential is most likely to be realised with support by local authorities committed to community involvement. Central government should leave local authorities to experiment in finding ways most appropriate for their localities without departmental interventions.</p> <p>Central policies on localism and decentralisation are likely to be successful only if there is real authority for those policies in central government and procedures to enforce them over all departments.</p> <p>To realise the potential of these policies local authorities will have to cast aside a habit of deference which has limited some, although not all, to being agents of central government rather than local governments for their areas.</p> <p>"Place-based budgets" could transform the working of the fragmented system of community governance, provided local authorities are given powers to match their responsibility for these budgets.</p> <p>Localism and decentralisation require a significant increase in the taxation powers of local government.</p> <p>Sustainability & Retrofitting</p>

Critical to the success of this project is the question of procurement. It is necessary to identify a range of approaches that reflect the current government's ambition to build sustainably, to emphasise on Localism and decentralisation and to promote good (local) governance. By promoting retrofitting and infill, the local community will be able to identify more clearly what works (and what doesn't); the sustainability of the project (from design through to disposal of materials) will be enhanced and best value will be promoted both in terms of viability in numbers, and environmental and ecological protection of the area. Using retrofitting and infill as an approach would guarantee local businesses to operate throughout the different phases of the regeneration.

There are a number of successful projects in Europe that can be used as examples of economically viable, innovative and sustainable redevelopment. The AF can present a few should DBC require further information.

It is expected that the design charrette will propose design solutions in a holistic sense addressing social, environmental and economic needs of the site:

Environmental sustainability: by addressing material and construction issues.

Economic sustainability: by generating local opportunities for entrepreneurship, employment and ad hoc activities. Offering flexibility for unplanned development.

Social sustainability: by strengthening networks and establishing a programme for lasting community participation. Developing an agenda of future activities for the Action Group.

Outputs of the project include:

An action group (consisting of local residents and stakeholders) will define the needs for the site and set key deliverables. The AF will lead the action group and help translate the needs into a strategy for the design charrette.

- The brief is presented via the AF network to chosen practices
- The practices will undertake a 3-day charrette
- The process and results are shown in an exhibition and/or through a digital publication (or other mediums depending on funding)

Incentive

The design Practices (between 3-5) chosen by the AF will be paid a working fee of at least £150 for every day of the 3-day charrette. This will be financed by DBC.

3. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Stage 1: Defining the Brief

1. DBC to introduce AF to an action group at an appropriate venue in Hemel Hempstead.
2. HR to meet with the Action Group to develop the brief. This can be weekly sessions over a 4-week period or an intensive week with daily sessions. To be confirmed by DBC.
3. AF to select the Design Practices.
4. Photographs and appropriate information (site plans) to be collected by DBC and handed over in digital format to AF. This includes copies of the original New Town plans for Grovhill.
5. AF/HR to establish working relationship with the International new Town Institute (INTI) and/or Netherlands Architecture Institute (NAI).
6. AF & DBC to research additional funding sources for documentation and dissemination of competition results.

Stage 2: Writing the Brief

1. HR to write the brief. This will be a translation of the community consultation exercise.
2. Expert advisory group (including Local Action Group) and DBC to review the brief before publication. Any changes to the brief are subject to approval by the local community.
3. AF/HR to present the selected practices with the brief.

Stage 3: the Charette- a 3 Day event

1. Day 1: DBC and AF to organise a site visit for selected practices. Chris Taylor, a Councillor representative and HR to attend.
2. Day 2: Design workshop with key players (Chris Taylor, A Councillor representative, A Local Action Group representative and HR to attend)
3. Day 3: Presentation of results. The local action group and councillors should be present.

Stage 5: Follow-up programme for finalists & winner (Subject to further funding)

1. AF/HR to open a project website to publish the process and results.
2. AF/HR to publish a document about the exhibition and results together with past work on New Town research carried out under this project (i.e the 3-day seminar for New New Towns).

4. TIMELINE AND KEY MILESTONES

The project must be completed by March 31 2011. These are proposed key milestones that need to be agreed and approved by DBC and AF:

Signed Memorandum of Agreement by all parties involved..... January 21 2011.
Digital information and site plans to be handed over from DBC to AF by... January 21 2011 .
Steering meeting with Local residents led by Nikki McIntyre January 24 2011
Dates for Community consultation workshops set and confirmed by..... January 24 2011

Local Practices suggested (DBC) and information sent to AF by..... January 24 2011
Practices chosen (AF) and attendance confirmed by..... January 24 2011
DBC to receive practice profile of chosen practices by..... February 1st 2011
Community Consultation Workshops (2 x 2-day workshops)..... week commencing January 31 and/or Feb 07 2011
Community Consultation Workshops to terminate by..... February 14 2011
Design Charette commences..... Week commencing Feb 14 and/or Feb 21 2011
Presentation of Design Charette to have occurred by..... March 3 2011

5. FINANCE

Each organisation will cover the staff costs concerned with delivery of the project. In addition there will be a number of costs to be covered through funding or where possible in kind support.

Item Description Amount	Paid by	
Action Group Brief Workshops, refreshments and venue	DBC	£300
Action Group Brief Compilation & Revision of Brief	AF	£100
Fees per practice per day	DBC	£150

5. PRESS AND PUBLICITY

All communication materials should receive approval from each partner (with at least two working days' notice) prior to publication or production.

6. PROJECT MEETINGS

Fortnightly telephone meetings should take place between the partners to discuss progress and address any issues on a continual basis.

7. COMMENCEMENT DATE

This Memorandum of Understanding will have deemed to have come into force on 15 November 2010.

8. AGREEMENT

This Memorandum of Understanding shall run for a period of 5 months until the end of March 2011 and shall be subject to review and extension on an annual basis or at the request of either party to the agreement.

9. TERMINATION

This Memorandum of Understanding may be terminated for reasonable cause by either party by notification in writing before the 30 of November 2010 or the publication of the competition brief (whichever date is earlier).

Signatories to this agreement

Dacorum Borough Council	Architecture Foundation	Architecture Foundation
Name: Chris Taylor	Name: Sarah Ichioka	Name: Helena Rivera
Signature:	Signature:	Signature:
Status in the organisation:	Status in the organisation: Director	Status in the organisation: Researcher
Date:	Date:	Date:

Appendix B: Schedule of Exploratory visits to New Town communities

Source: Produced by researcher

Exploratory Visits		
Place	Date	Material Collected
Letchworth Garden City, UK	08/2006	Visual material
Welwyn Garden City, UK	09/2006	Visual material
Hampstead Garden Suburb, UK	11/2006	Visual material
Malmo Bo01, Sweden	01/2009	Structured interview (not recorded)
Hammarby Sjostad, Sweden	02/ 2009	Structured interview (not recorded)
Hoogvliet, Netherlands	03/2009	Structured interview (not recorded)
Eight different Shanghai New Towns, China	05/2010	Visual Material

Appendix C: Schedule of initial visits to New Towns

Source: Produced by researcher

New Town Visits		
Place	Date	Material Collected
Harlow New Town	17/03/2009	LA meeting & NT tour
Skelmersdale New Town	07/06/2010	LA meeting & NT tour
Northampton Expanded Town	10/05/2010	LA meeting & NT tour
Hemel Hempstead	01/09/2010	LA meeting & NT tour
Basildon	08/02/2010	Individual & self-guided
Crawley	06/04/2010	Individual & self-guided
Stevenage	07/07/2010	Individual & self-guided
Bracknell	10/03/2010	Individual & self-guided

Appendix D: Schedule of Interviews: Local voices in Harlow New Town

Source: Produced by researcher

Local Voices Harlow New Town					
Code	Name	Company	Development/ New Town	Interview Type	Interview Date
090317-00H	Jane Greer	Regeneration & Enterprise, Regeneration	Harlow	Individual	17/03/09

Local Voices Harlow New Town					
Code	Name	Company	Development/ New Town	Interview Type	Interview Date
		Manager			
090317-01H	Chris Beasley	Delivery Manager at Harlow Renaissance	North Harlow	Individual	17/03/09
120117-04H	Andy Allocca	Regeneration Project Delivery Manager	Harlow	Joint with 1201-03HH	17/01/12
120117-03H	Sarah Swan	Priority estates Officer, Regeneration & Enterprise Team	Harlow	Joint with 1201-04HH	17/01/12
120117-01H	Alastair Howe	Architect	Harlow	Individual	17/01/12
120117-05H	David Devine	Harlow Museum Archivist	Harlow	Individual	17/01/12
		Places for People	North Harlow		
120117-02H	Jane Lesley Howe	Resident, School teacher at Mark Hall secondary	Harlow	Individual	17/01/12
140212-13H	Ines Newman	Harlow District Council; South East Economic Development Strategy Group (SEEDS)	Harlow	Individual	14/02/12
260312-05H	MAZE :residents association on The Briars, Copshall Close and Aylets Field	Susan Lawton	Harlow	Workshop	26/03/12
260312-06H	MAZE	Margaret Cochrane Secretary	Harlow	Workshop	26/03/12
260312-07H	MAZE	Roy Jackson Vice-Chair	Harlow	Workshop	26/03/12
260312-08H	MAZE	Su Lawton - Chair of Maze	Harlow	Workshop	26/03/12
260312-09H	MAZE	Rita Jackson Treasurer	Harlow	Workshop	26/03/12

Local Voices Harlow New Town					
Code	Name	Company	Development/ New Town	Interview Type	Interview Date
260312-10H	MAZE	Dave Cochrane - committee members and	Harlow	Workshop	26/03/12
260312-11H	MAZE	Mavis Capon- committee members and	Harlow	Workshop	26/03/12
260312-12H	MAZE	Councillor Dennis Palmer- Ward Councillor, Staple Tye Ward, Harlow Council.	Harlow	Workshop	26/03/12
260312-14H	Sarah Swan	Priority estates Officer, Regeneration & Enterprise Team	Harlow	Joint with MAZE	26/03/12

Appendix E: Schedule of Interviews: Local voices in Hemel Hempstead

Source: Produced by researcher

Local Voices Hemel Hempstead					
Code	Name	Role	Development / New Town	Interview Type	Interview Date
100426-03HH	Tara Clark	Project Co-Ordinator, Strategic planning and Regeneration, Dacorum Borough Council	Hemel Hempstead	Individual	Various 2010-2011
100426-01HH	James Doe	Dacorum LA , Assistant Director of Planning	Hemel Hempstead	Individual	
100426-02HH	Chris Taylor	Dacorum LA, Group Manager Strategic Planning and Regeneration	Hemel Hempstead	Individual	Various 2010-2011
110201-04HH	Ruth Clinch	Author & first generation transfer	Hemel Hempstead	Individual	01/02/11
110201-05HH	Steve Curtis	Unemployed, veteran of Armed Forces; occasional work at Royal Mail	Hemel Hempstead	Workshop 1	31/01/11
110201-06HH	Anne	Trustee of Neighbourhood association & elected Councillor, Pioneer	Hemel Hempstead	Workshop 1	31/01/11

Local Voices Hemel Hempstead					
Code	Name	Role	Development / New Town	Interview Type	Interview Date
110201-07HH	Alexander Bhinder	Councillor	Hemel Hempstead	Workshop 1	31/01/11
110201-08HH	Derek	Church Warden at the Community centre	Hemel Hempstead	Workshop 1	31/01/11
110201-09HH	Michael Nidd	Retired, Secretary for Luton Town & Village Communities	Hemel Hempstead	Workshop 1	31/01/11
110131-10HH	John Warner	Food Industry Engineer	Hemel Hempstead	Workshop 2	31/01/11
110131-11HH	Bob	Fireman, Employed by LA	Hemel Hempstead	Workshop 2	31/01/11
110131-12HH	Governthal Silwal	Freelance, Tutor for Social Care	Hemel Hempstead	Workshop 2	31/01/11
110131-13HH	Sharon Warner	Resident & employed in council	Hemel Hempstead	Workshop 2	31/01/11
120109-14HH	Michael Osman	Planner, PlanReg	Hemel Hempstead	Telephone	09/01/12
110102-15HH	Senior meeting Group	John Narrowway (68)- Norma Narrowway (67)- John Saunders (82)- Janette Fernandes (73)- Herman Fernandes (86)- Linda Acheson (61)- Joyce Ellicott (74)	Hemel Hempstead-Grovehill Community Centre	Group	01/02/11
110203-16HH	Cindy	Pet Shop Proprietor (47)	Henry Wells Square - Shopkeeper	Personal	03/02/11
110203-17HH	Tania	Store Manager at Martin's Newsagents(35)	Henry Wells Square - Shopkeeper	Personal	03/02/11
110203-18HH	Guido	Laundrette Proprietor (60+)	Henry Wells Square - Shopkeeper	Personal	03/02/11
110203-19HH	George	Baker Proprietor	Henry Wells Square - Shopkeeper	Personal	03/02/11

Local Voices Hemel Hempstead					
Code	Name	Role	Development / New Town	Interview Type	Interview Date
110203-20HH	Helen	Off-license Employee	Henry Wells Square - Shopkeeper	Personal	03/02/11
110203-21HH	Julie Banks	Manager of Community Centre	Hemel Hempstead-Grovehill Community Centre	Personal	03/02/11

Appendix F: Schedule of Interviews: Expert voices of New Towns

Source: Produced by researcher

Local Voices Hemel Hempstead					
Code	Name	Role	Development / New Town	Interview Type	Interview Date
120116-01G	Christophe Egret	SEW (Studio Egret West)	Architect & Urbanism General	Individual	16/01/12
120124-03G	Andy Thornley	LSE, Emeritus Professor of Planning	Urban Planning Policy General	Individual	24/01/12
120124-02G	n/a*	Strategic Planer & regeneration manager for English partnerships and HCA	South East	Individual	24/01/12
120126-03G	Alan Holloway	Director of Retrofit For Life, Penoyre & Prosad	Retrofit for Life	Individual	26/01/12
120126-04G	n/a*	Consultant to HCA, IPPR author of Transferable Lessons from New Towns to Growth Areas	New Labour Policy General	Individual	26/01/12
120126-05G	Michael Edwards	Planner & Professor	Planning History General	Individual	26/01/12
120130-06G	David Etherton	Architect & Crawley Pioneer	Crawley	Individual	30/01/12
120130-07G	David Chapman	Architect		Individual	

Local Voices Hemel Hempstead					
Code	Name	Role	Development / New Town	Interview Type	Interview Date
120208-08G	Caroline Fraser	CABE Urban panel; new Town report	General	Individual	08/02/12
120531-09G	Richard Rogers	Urban Task Force	Helicopter expert	Individual/P hone	31/05/12
120221-10G	Steve Ward	Oxford Brookes Professor	New Town Historian	Oxford Brookes	21/02/12

*Note: Anonymity requested

Appendix G: Schedule of Supervisory discussions

Source: Produced by researcher

Schedule of Conversations: Supervision team at University College London (UCL)				
Ref	Name	Capacity	Recording Reference	Tutorial Date
120331-01S	Mark Tewdwr-Jones	Bartlett (UCL); Primary supervisor	M-T-J-1	31/03/2012
120331-02S	<i>ibid.</i>	<i>ibid.</i>	M-T-J-2	31/03/12
120331-03S	<i>ibid.</i>	<i>ibid.</i>	M-T-J-3	31/03/12
120523-04S	<i>ibid.</i>	<i>ibid.</i>	M-T-J-4	23/05/2012
120307-05S	Pushpa Arabindoo	Geography (UCL); Secondary Supervisor	PA-3	07/03/12
120529-06S	<i>ibid.</i>	<i>ibid.</i>	PA- 3/4	29/05/12
120321-07S	<i>ibid.</i>	<i>ibid.</i>	PA-4	21/03/12
121127-08S	<i>ibid.</i>	Geography (UCL); Primary Supervisor	PA-5	27/11/12
121127-09S	<i>ibid.</i>	<i>ibid.</i>	PA-6a	27/11/12
121212-10S	<i>ibid.</i>	<i>ibid.</i>	PA-7a	12/12/12
121212-11S	<i>ibid.</i>	<i>ibid.</i>	PA-7b	12/12/12
121212-12S	<i>ibid.</i>	<i>ibid.</i>	PA-7c	12/12/12
121212-13S	<i>ibid.</i>	<i>ibid.</i>	PA-Intro	01/02/13
130201-14S	<i>ibid.</i>	<i>ibid.</i>	PA-intro	01/02/13
140805-15S	<i>ibid.</i>	<i>ibid.</i>	Draft 2	05/08/2014
130201-15S		Upgrade Seminar; Pushpa	UPGRADE	19/03/12

		Arabindoo & Mark Tewdwr-Jones		
Lost in theft	Nick Phelps	Bartlett (UCL); Secondary supervisor	Draft 1-8	31/10/13

Appendix H: Formal plan/prompt for expert interviews

Source: Produced by researcher | Reduced in size from A3 landscape to A4 portrait

Interview Guide:

Name	
Capacity	
Contact Details	
Date	
Location	
Time	
Recommendations	

Part I: What has happened?		
Theme	Primary Question	Prompts
POLICY	How have you seen NT policies evolve in the last few decades?	<i>How did you study and learn about NTs?</i> <i>What is your experience of working within a LA on the back of the NT legacy?</i> <i>Has policy been unfair to the NT's?</i>
	Why did the NT fall off the policy radar so quickly once they were set up?	<i>NTs disappeared quickly from the policy radar-why such negativity?</i> <i>There was a serious policy of developing inner cities through the 60's...did the NT policy become irrelevant, why?</i>
	What happened to undermine the aspirations and original remit of the NTs?	<i>Is a weaker form of political vision more amiable to change? Or top-down planning?</i> <i>Tell me about issues attached to NT legacy...</i>
	Can you identify critical moments in Planning History that contributed to the decline of NT?	<i>What is the role of the Thatcher years? (maybe city-centre renewal programme)</i> <i>How does Blair depart/include NTs in his 'urban renaissance'?</i>
	What is the linkage/barrier between aspirations and delivery ?	<i>Is there an effort to include lay voices in the formal process of policy-making?</i>
COMMUNITY	What are the contemporary attitudes of new towns?	<i>Is there a strong sense of community in NT?</i> <i>How long before you felt you 'belonged' in the new town?</i>

Part I: What has happened?		
Theme	Primary Question	Prompts
	How did public perception feed into top-down policy?	<i>Was this even a concern?</i> <i>Was it the aspiration/habits in society that didn't allow the NT communities to continue?</i>
	Did the communities achieve 'balanced'?	<i>How do you understand this?</i> <i>What was the success or failure in achieving (or not)?</i> <i>Is this social engineering?</i>
	What role did change within the country/ society play in public perceptions of NT?	<i>How do you understand the structural effect?</i> <i>For example, the loss of manufacturing meant self-sustained was no longer viable</i>
	How decisive was the post-war spirit in enabling NT's?	<i>Were NTs only possible because of the post-war damage/mood? So were they 'an episode'?</i>
HOUSING	Tell me about housing	<i>What is your experience of working in a LA that manages a large chunk of NT housing?</i>
	Do you think the setting up of housing associations distracted the focus of new towns and de-value NTs as housing destinations?	<i>How is housing stock differentiated between commission housing and council tenants?</i> <i>Did the differences blur/merge housing stock and has that created a disadvantage for the reputation of NTs?</i>
	Is there a big difference between the plight of social housing in general and the plight of new towns/housing?	<i>Does that mean all housing of NTs is reduced to housing of poor quality- and is that fair?</i>
	Was the forward-thinking, modern and innovative approach to building houses its downfall?	<i>The 50's/60's NT's were all about Modernism and high modernity...how/why have they come to represent all that is cheap quality and bad housing?</i>
	When does 'social housing' start receiving negative public perception ?	<i>Is it the housing that is bad, or its tenants?</i>
	Did the right-to-buy help reduce class divisions or intensify them?	<i>Do you think home ownership has been a cultural aspiration because of the 1979 policy or preceding this?</i>
	Was the design of NT housing so fixed in an ideology that it didn't allow for change with the times?	<i>What design aspects were flexible, and which were fixed/static?</i> <i>What are the strengths and weakness' of NTs (design-wise)?</i>

How to take forward?		
Theme	Primary Question	Prompts
POLICY	What should be the role of the state in planning new communities?	<p><i>Should planning large-scale developments be left to the user group/ the private industry / the state?</i></p> <p><i>Is there an ideological difference between new towns /growth areas/ eco towns</i></p>
	Did the SCP address the legacy of NT's? How?	<p><i>Describe aspects of continuity and change</i></p> <p><i>What were the key tools in analysing and identifying NT legacy?</i></p> <p><i>What was the impact of 'transferable lessons</i></p>
	What policy was made as part of SCP that responded to issues of NT's?	<i>I haven't found links/references between the SCP and NTs...am I misreading their similarity?</i>
	What was different about the implementation of policy under New Labour ?	<i>How is the understanding of 'sustainable' different to 'balance', aside from technical environmental concerns?</i>
COMMUNITY	What do you think about public participation in planning?	<p><i>In light of change that has occurred since 1940s, what sense of community should be expected in a future town?</i></p> <p><i>What types of memories will shape communities of the 21st Cen?</i></p> <p><i>Has the importance of belonging to a community changed?</i></p> <p><i>How long before you felt you 'belonged' in the NT?</i></p>
	To what degree is public participation an/or involvement used as an agency of propaganda ?	<p><i>What is the usefulness?</i></p> <p><i>Is it more than box-ticking?</i></p> <p><i>How can public participation be used to affect planning?</i></p> <p><i>What would you say is the tool used today to promote large-scale developments (on behalf of the activators)?</i></p>
	Tell me about self-build schemes and local initiatives	<p><i>Is a weaker form of vision more amiable to change? Or is it about a local, grassroots, and informal group?</i></p> <p><i>But then how can a local community have a joined vision?</i></p>
	Can place making be achieved with low-cost housing?	<p><i>What do you think is the bedrock of a place making?</i></p> <p><i>Did CABA help identify it?</i></p>
	How do you tackle social deprivation indices through planning & regeneration?	<i>Can we rely on housing projections and IMD for future housing policies?</i>

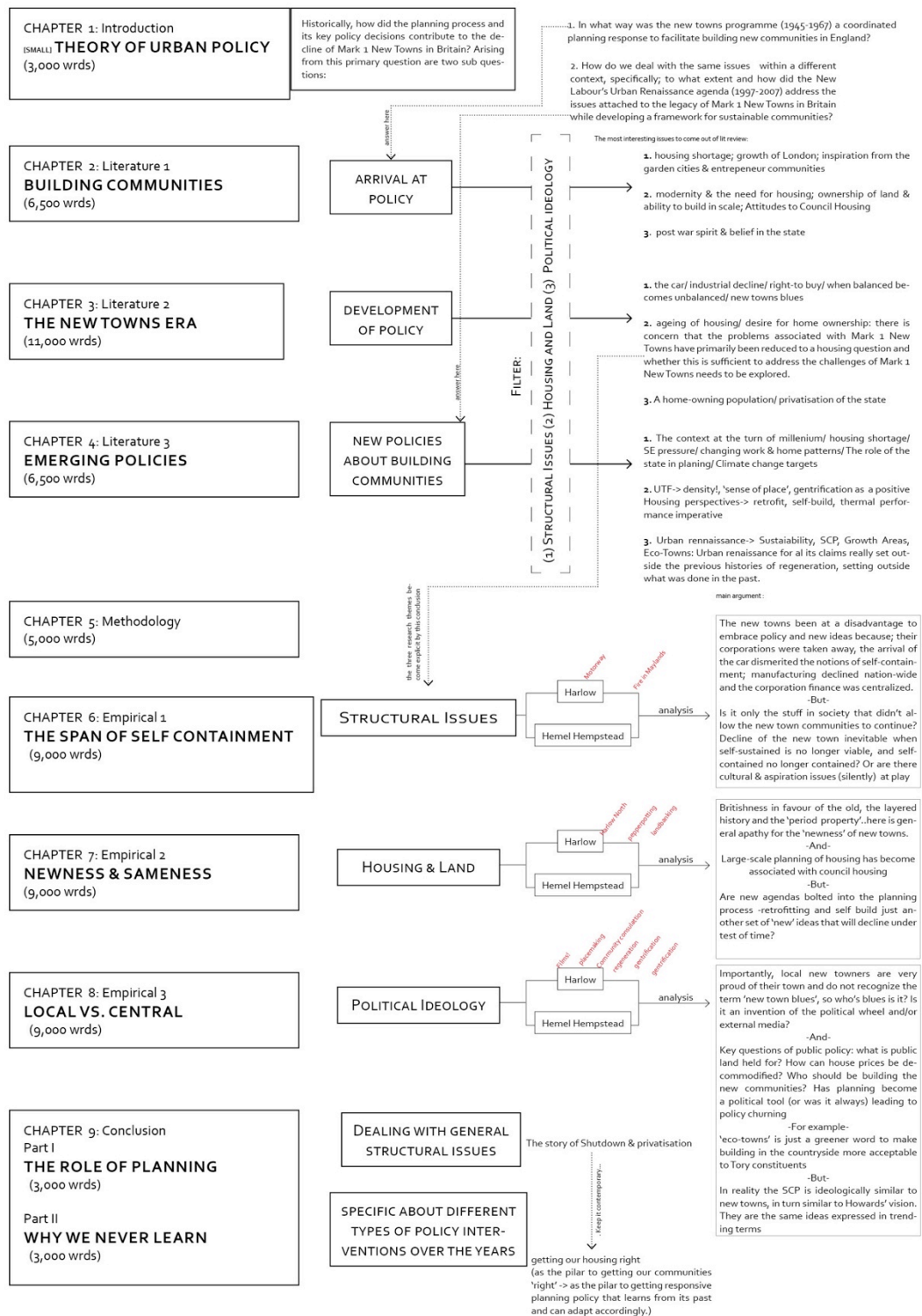
How to take forward?		
Theme	Primary Question	Prompts
HOUSING	What set of urban issues did New Labour inherit?	<i>And is its response one of regeneration, redevelopment, reconstruction...?</i>
	Provide new housing or to improve existing stock?	<i>How can we 'catch up' with housing demands?</i>
	Under pressure for sustainable growth, are there opportunities in retrofitting as procurement ?	<i>Describe the main challenges/ obstacles</i> <i>Should the planning profession have an obligation/ duty of care to suggest funding schemes?</i> <i>Is decanting an option?</i>
	What is the difference between retrofit and refurbishment ?	<i>Regenerate, upgrade, refurbish, amend</i> <i>What are the social implications in either</i>
	What agency should be delivering housing?	<i>State-led; private-led; partnerships</i> <i>How should low-income groups access better housing</i>
	Why, with all the available funds throughout 1997-2007, was the housing shortage not solved ?	<i>What is the role of the volume house builders?</i> <i>Tell me about the green belt...</i>
	Is it fair to say that under NL there have been many initiatives and a great amount of investment with too little to show for it ?	<i>Has it been political rhetoric?</i> <i>Is the planning system hesitant?</i>
	What is the nature of ' the problem ' today?	<i>Is it a housing crisis or a political crisis?</i> <i>Is it fair to say the housing crisis has never been solved?</i>

Appendix I: Thesis Organograms

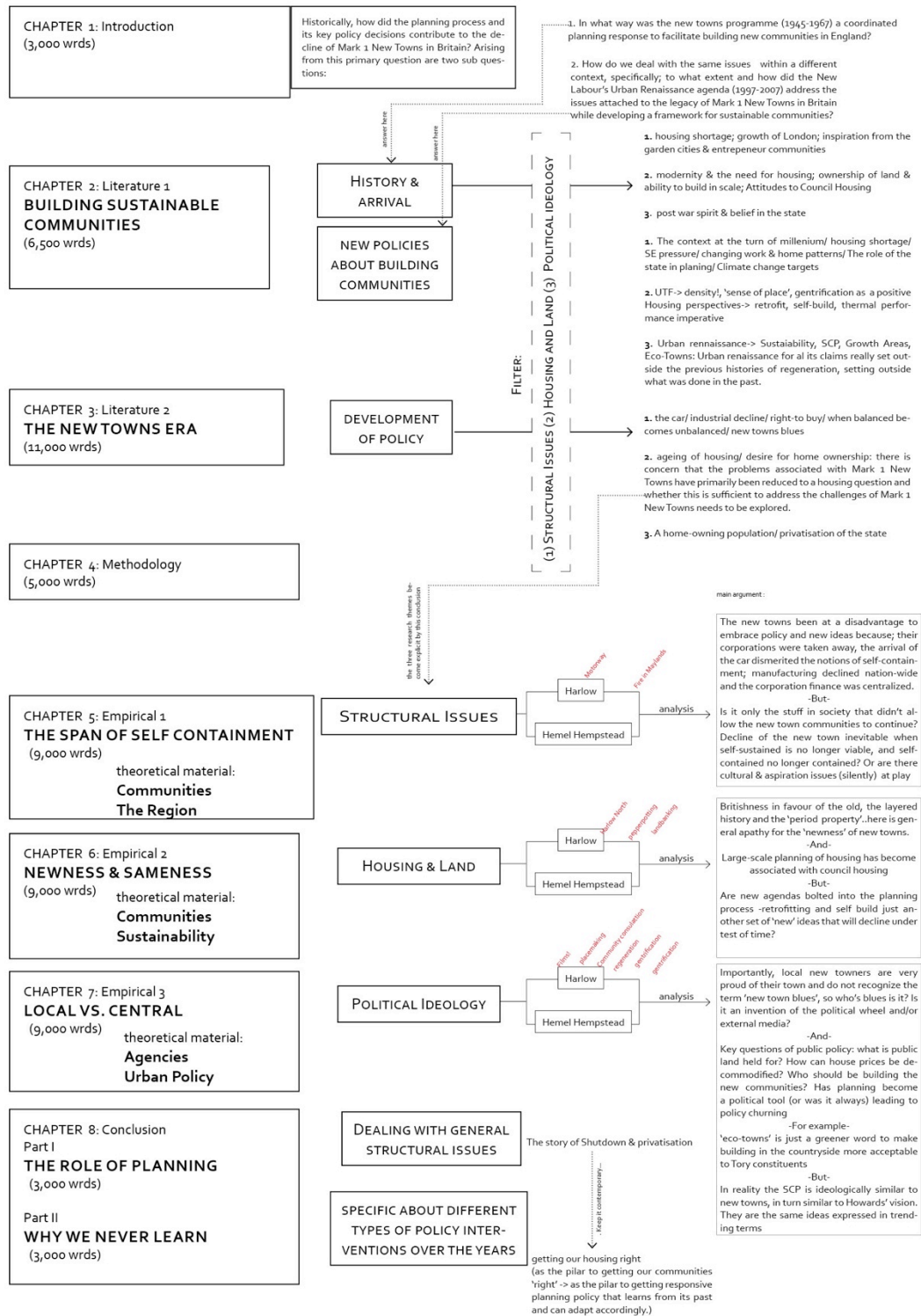
Source: Produced by researcher

Version 1.0: February 12, 2012

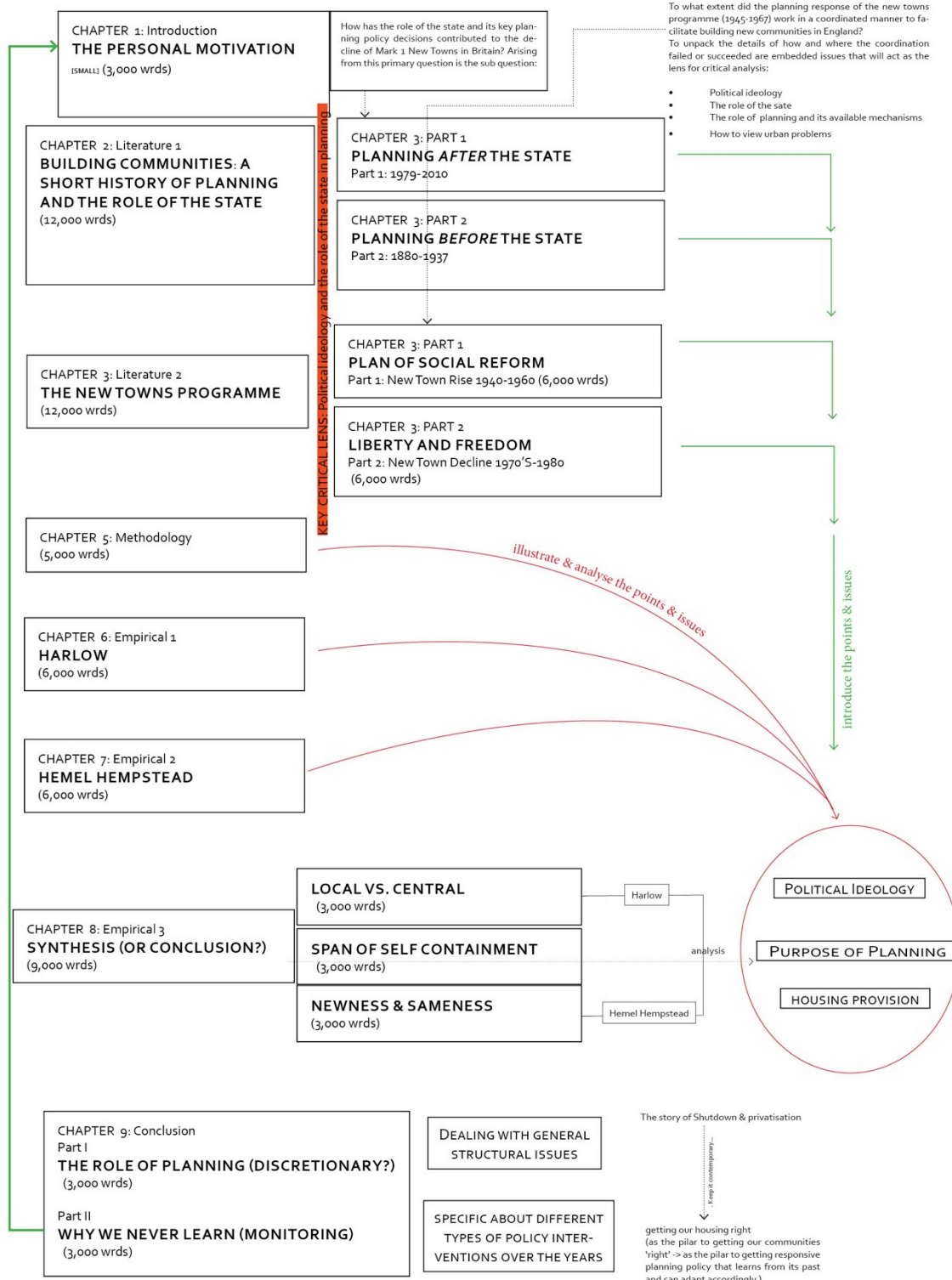
RE-INVENTING THE BRITISH NEW TOWN FOR THE 21ST CENTURY



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